

12th EAHIL Conference

*Comparing the effectiveness of
alternative investigation methods for
library environmental evaluation*

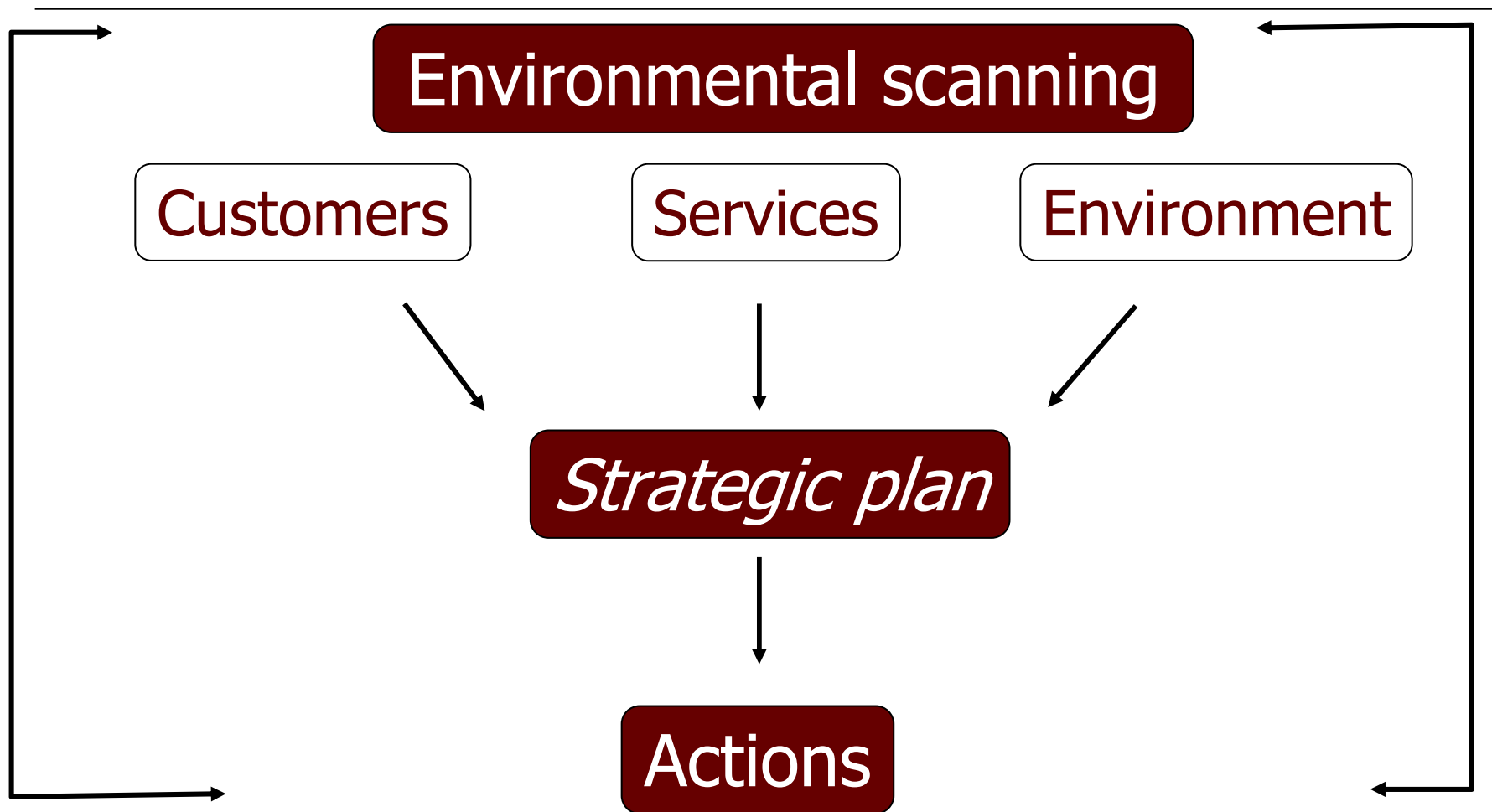
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What is the future for academic libraries?

- What are the user needs?
- How can we communicate with our users?
- How can we stay close to our users and let them know that we are there?

Marketing Backbone





Environmental scanning

- How to make that first step ?
 - LibQUAL+ survey
 - Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
 - A toolkit for academic and research libraries
 - American Library Association (ALA)
 - Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
 - Focus groups
 - Semi-structured interviews



LibQUAL+ questionnaire

- 22 standardized questions
 - User perception of service quality
 - Access to information
 - "Library as place"
- 5 additional questions (local service)
- Comment box



LibQUAL+ strengths

- An easy way to begin environmental scanning
- The survey is conducted by others
- A standard tool allowing comparison between institutions



LibQUAL+ weaknesses

- ❑ Several questions might be ambiguous
- ❑ The analysis takes time
- ❑ A risk exists : those analysing the data might draw misleading conclusions



Assessment of user satisfaction by the staff

□ Observations

- A rather accurate opinion of user satisfaction
- Staff more critical of themselves
- Great opportunity to involve the staff in our marketing project



Marketing@your library (1)

- Strategic marketing for academic and research libraries
 - Guides, slides, examples
 - Several working options
 - Working alone
 - Working with a small leadership team
 - Working with the whole staff
 - U.S. procedure
 - Adapted to our own context



Marketing@your library (2)

- Several activities
 1. Preparing to develop a promotional plan
 2. Carrying out library user research
 3. Adjusting the library strategic plan
 4. Promoting the library



Carrying out library user research

- Who are our customers?
- Who has an influence over the future of our library?
- What do our customers want and need?



Ways to learn about your customers (1)

- Methods that we have already used
 - National or regional surveys (LibQUAL+)
 - Academic department surveys
 - Quick satisfaction questionnaires
 - Library-use analysis
 - Short informal interviews
 - Planned department discussions
 - Surveys completed while students take a particular class
 - Using the library ourselves
 - Observations



Ways to learn about your customers (2)

- Methods that we have never used
 - National survey on quality of libraries
 - Yearly surveys of each customer group
 - Focus groups of selected customer groups
 - Observation of interactions
 - Chat room discussion
 - Suggestion drop boxes or display walls



Achievements made due to ACRL method

- This procedure allowed us to:
 - Ask good questions in a structured way
 - List the different categories of users
 - Identify current needs (satisfied or not satisfied)
 - Consider future needs
 - Stimulate staff involvement and motivation

Validation of the results

Focus groups?

Semi-structured interviews?



Focus group : definition

- *Krueger R.A. (1994)*
 - « A carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment »
 - « A special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures »



Focus groups: several advantages

- ❑ More data, and faster than individual semi-structured interviews
- ❑ A wide range of topics
- ❑ Direct interactions between participants and researcher
- ❑ Non-verbal responses
- ❑ Synergistic interaction
- ❑ Participant agreement



Focus groups: several disadvantages

- ❑ Difficulty of gathering people together
- ❑ Difficulty of controlling the group (leader)
- ❑ Bias from the moderator if he/she influences the discussion according to his/her expectations
- ❑ Difficulty of drawing general conclusions



Advantages of semi-structured interviews

- Structure of an interview
 - Detailed guide
 - To consider all issues
 - To prevent the discussion from going astray
 - Comparison of answers



Conclusions (1)

- Environmental scanning
 - LibQUAL+
 - ALA and ACRL toolkit
 - Asking for staff opinion



Conclusions (2)

- Validation of data by users
 - Focus groups do not seem appropriate
 - Our objective is not to reach agreement between participants
 - The approach is time-consuming
 - It is necessary to be trained or to seek the collaboration of an expert
 - Semi-structured interviews

Thank you for your
attention