

Change—The Innovative Process



Overview

The management of a large public library in a midwestern state has come to the realization that, for the survival of good information services in this dynamic, demanding community of users, it is necessary to change in order for the organization to survive and prosper. Among other things, this may mean empowering all levels of responsible workers in the library system to participate fully in a change process that might be initiated. This would probably mean that old ways of looking at things may need to be discarded and a culture of empowerment developed to address issues and enhance quality of services.

The popular concept of a paradigm shift, in order for major changes to occur, most often means changing the culture into a new organizational structure with a realignment between what customers need and the requirements that would place on the workplace and workforce. It requires reviewing individual worker efforts with revised organizational goals.

This, then, can be viewed as the important role that change could play in developing information services in all types of libraries and other information centers. This chapter presents an introduction to the topic of change and its affects and effects on information services organizations in a universally changing global environment.

FACTORS PROMOTING CHANGE

The old cliché that “the future isn’t what it used to be” holds true today more than ever before in the provision of good knowledge-based information

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services in which the focus is no longer primarily on processes and procedures and particularly not on the physical entity called the library, but more specifically on users, those seekers and their information needs. Lively, sometimes heated, discussions center not on whether there should be change, but how to identify what should be done differently and how best to do it. In information services circles, just as in most areas of society today, one can hear various proposed, sometimes conflicting, alternatives to the status quo. Many change strategies are expressed, at least initially, in the form of a “how” question: “How do we get people to be more open or to assume more responsibility or to be more creative or be more productive?”—all questions and issues focusing on the means of doing things. Intertwined is the question of “what?": “What changes are necessary, what measures should be in place to ensure performance, what standards need to be applied, what do we want to accomplish with change?” The primary and most basic question of all must be addressed before either of them can legitimately be addressed, however, and that is one of “why?” “Why do we do what we do? Why can’t or why should we identify a better way of doing what we do?” All of this questioning leads to an underlying question of “What does doing something differently really require? What indicators can be used to predict success? What new or different standards should be applied? What measures of performance are we trying to affect?”

A successful outcome of that questioning of change requires a review of the culture of the organization and a questioning of the mindset necessary to accept the need for change, combined with a basic understanding of change and how to manage it. Understanding reduces uncertainty and promotes openness, good communications, and a clear vision. Effective leadership and empowerment are additional components in a positive end result. Strategic change, even reengineering, is the outcome of this questioning and learning process.



Some Definitions

Change: Those situations in which performance of job functions requires most people throughout the organization to learn new behaviors and skills.

Empowerment: Encouraging and authorizing workers to take the initiative to improve operations, reduce costs, and improve product quality and customer service.

Reengineering: Examination and alteration of a system to reconstitute it in a new form and the subsequent implementation of that new form.

Paradigm shift: Significant change from one fundamental view to another, which often includes a discontinuity.

The most difficult change-driven task, however, is that of implementing new methods and systems into an already long-established organization. That effort is not easy because it requires a delicate balance and a deliberate progression toward renewing the organization through a series of time-consuming initiatives that demands questioning the status quo.



What Do You Think?

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy offered this sage advice almost fifty years ago. Has the information services community been able to live up to that pronouncement? If so, how? If not, what first steps must be taken?

Many outside factors serve as primary agents for change in information services. Those so-called environmental pressures, outside the organization, are most often ones over which the organization can exercise little control—such as legislation—or no control at all—such as economic trends. Faced with such external forces, the information services organization is challenged in its effort to develop a successful outcome. One of the most important external factors is the development of new information technologies as an ongoing phenomenon. Historically, the introduction of new technology—from the electric typewriter to the duplicating machine, and from the fax machine to the computer, with all of the peripheral developments—has been a driving force and has resulted in major change in the organization of information work. Most recently, the impact of technology has become ubiquitous, sparked by the Internet and powered by telecommunications technologies that have enabled major changes, not only in what is done, but also in the way it is done. This development has both encouraged and enabled partnerships, consortia, and collaborative alliances that are now transforming theories and principles of organizational development into systems and services in a faster and more comprehensive manner as information webs link information workers with users of information and seekers of knowledge. Those technological structures are making a comparable impact on the global information village as did the invention of printing more than five hundred years ago. This universal revolution affects library and information services perhaps more than any other profession. This technological impact has focused efforts of libraries and other information services organizations on what can be described as amorphous relationship areas of organizational culture and people within the organization.

In addition, several global changes have affected knowledge-based libraries and information centers. Primary among them are:

- The emergence of a global complex that enables information services centers, as a part of the information economy, to offer a greater variety of services—in-house, online, consortial, and virtual access projects.
- The development of a changing political and social matrix that enables seekers of information to express disenchantment with the status quo and to demand alternatives.
- The creation of a so-called knowledge economy in which greater effort is spent on procuring ideas and information in a global society in which knowledge has become an important central factor in development.

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These initiatives present new challenges because, although information services organizations cannot control much of the changing world around them, they can control how they respond in the area of information services and can choose whether to anticipate and embrace change or to resist it. Organizations can choose to view change as a cause or a condition and thereby become reactive or proactive.



What Do You Think?

When the only tool available is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Do you think Mark Twain's tongue-in-cheek admonition has any relevance to the use of technology in providing information services? If so, how does it apply?

For knowledge-based organizations, the ongoing revolution already has launched a gigantic wave of change. How customers seek, access, use, and value information have forced new physical and intellectual structures to meet those needs. Immediate decisions are made to effectively organize and commit resources in support of the future of technology, employee development, and other ongoing or new priorities or initiatives. The information services organization should be managed, or more appropriately guided, in a way that effective decisions can be made. However, the framework for identifying and implementing change continues to be shortened. This requires managers and staff at every level to be immediately accountable for their performance as a result of present decisions about the future of their primary information services initiatives, based upon best-guess assumptions about the future.

In some extreme scenarios, management theorists and consultants have advocated redesigning organizations through such popular techniques as that of reengineering,¹ a term that has become synonymous with redundancy and downsizing. However, such a process of radical change requires reinventing the structure, systems, and services of libraries and information centers to achieve projected improvement and to present a value-added profile. Other theorists and consultants encourage more fundamental restructuring, whereas a few take it one thought farther, forecasting the need to cope with what has been called an "age of unreason." With few dissenting opinions, it is accepted that the present time of discontinuity and ferment—what some have called chaos²—demands reevaluation, renewal, revamping, even redesign of previously rather stable library and information service organizations. In that process, futurists, trying to predict outcomes, are making forecasts concerning the importance of various forces that have been growing for some time. To coin an alliterative phrase, "confusion about comprehensive change complicates compliance with contemporary conditions" in library and information service.



What Do You Think?

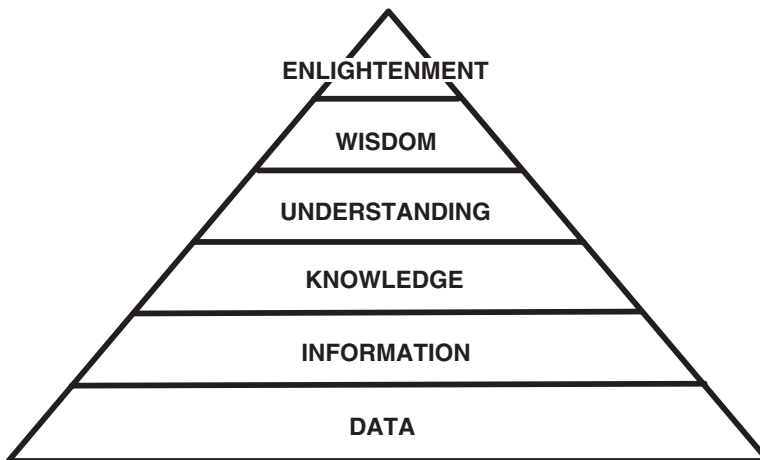
As new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance and also to keep pace with the times.

Does Thomas Jefferson's statement ring true today? If yes, can you cite specific examples? What new "truths" have been discovered and what "manners" have changed in information services?

At the same time, information services organizations have felt dramatic internal change pressures, precipitated by such factors as ethics and social responsibility and the desire for team building and empowerment. Other change factors can be discussed in relation to values and attitudes toward work life, organizational structures, and even application of different management theories and practices in library and information service organizations. All of this activity can be viewed as focusing information services within the organization primarily on providing information to customers. This philosophy of knowledge management, a relatively recent concept for libraries and information centers, is proving to be a catalyst for change—creating an atmosphere in which focus is no longer upon processes taking place in buildings called libraries, but upon knowledge workers as information intermediaries and upon organizing systems to capture that knowledge embedded therein and then transmitting it to those customers who seek answers.

This process is spawning a new set of information-to-knowledge management vocabulary terms: knowledge work, knowledge workers, knowledge management, and the all-encompassing concept of a knowledge society. Knowledge now is the primary resource, and the dynamics of knowledge impose change in the very structure of knowledge-based organizations.

Figure 3.1—Hierarchy of Data to Enlightenment



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Links between information, the services and systems to access it, and the application of knowledge, with the conversion to wisdom being the desirable outcome, affect every transaction in a library and information service organization's development, management, and successful performance. However, this change activity phenomenon produces a paradox because an organization's success depends upon its ability to maintain stability while managing change. A delicate balance between the concept of control and the need to inspire on the part of management requires planning, development, and maintenance. Knowing what to change and how to change are imperative for the process, and this requires an understanding of how a knowledge-based organization's direction of change and innovation can shape the level of knowledge transfer because implementing that transfer requires self-direction and teamwork.

Library and information services organizations today require knowledge workers whose chief resource is their ability to think conceptually and act logically on what they know. This also demands combining energies and talents of groups of people with an open, two-way communication strategy—with all members taking responsibility for actions—versus the so-called grapevine approach, which in the past prevented organizing to achieve desired results. Individuals working in such a proactive organizational setting view change not as happening to them but as an opportunity to create what they have agreed upon as a viable future.

Both deliberate planning and directional change, then, are required, because without the order that planned change provides, an organization is crippled, and without change, a knowledge-based organization is no longer viable, becomes obsolete, and is quickly superseded by other entities willing and ready to take the risk, unfortunately oftentimes with a profit motive.

EMPOWERMENT—AN AGENT OF CHANGE

There is a tendency for individuals to discount change as a force in an organization's life, while at the same time embracing it in their own personal lives. As an example, research has shown that almost a third of all U.S. workers are so-called discounters, who routinely reject the significance of potential future change; another 40 percent are so-called extrapolators, who believe that the trends of the recent past will continue into the foreseeable future. However, 40 percent of the discounters and extrapolators indicate that they are currently going through a major, self-initiated change in their own lives or careers, and another 40 percent are actively planning to undertake such a change.³ How can this variance of attitude toward acceptance of change in personal lives but resistance to change in the organizational life be explained? Perhaps the answer lies in an organizational culture and value system that traditionally would present barriers to change. Those barriers can be identified as:

- Failure to create a sense of urgency for change.
- Lack of a clear vision.

- Not removing the obstacles to change.
- Failure to anchor changes into the organization's culture.
- Failure to follow through with plans.⁴

When libraries and information centers are confident of their success and believe that they are necessary, complacency easily becomes a trap. Although historic success has been built on innovative ideas, there is a common tendency to rest upon those past laurels. But a continuation of that success requires a reawakening and renewal in today's competitive environment, and this is an active and deliberate process. From the human side, barriers to that success are both psychological and institutional, with most being in the minds of knowledge workers rather than on organization charts.⁵ Predictably, this requires a reorientation and recommitment of all people, managers and nonmanagers, professional and support staff, working in knowledge-based organizations. It also requires a marketing program that informs both customers and potential customers that their information and knowledge needs can be met. It is obvious that without due preparation, change can place any organization on a confrontation course because it is a threatening process and change can easily get out of control. To address that resistance, one must look at what is happening in knowledge-based libraries and information centers.

Information services organizations are now finding it beneficial to embrace change. Initially, some have reevaluated the types of knowledge and skills needed by the workforce in anticipation of future needs. They have developed concerted efforts to form alliances with educators of information professionals to identify core subjects and values necessary for current and future services. With this knowledge and ethical approach has come empowerment of professionals with increased authority and more freedom to be creative. This also enables the ability to diffuse ideas that encourage change and improvement across information services boundaries. A common aspiration, the vision, which will be discussed in more detail under strategic planning, can form the basis for a vision of information services in the organization. Those human resources—complemented by materials and methods, techniques and tools, those components to which long-established management principles traditionally have been applied—remain the core of a changing knowledge-based organization's life, and its success depends upon their knowledge and commitment.

Various other factors also drive strategic initiatives for change in library and information services, including costs of services, speed of delivery, changing values and expectations of customers, entrepreneurial activities, and quality of the value-added service, all enhanced by the technological climate and those global communication systems that promote the reconfiguration of knowledge-based organizations and their services. In such a dynamic environment, the significance of what is done and how it is done is continually challenged by questioning why it is done or, in some cases, why it is not done. But with each one of those components being affected by this phenomenon of change, each presents its own challenge to an effective process of change.

PARADIGM SHIFT—MYTH OR REALITY



Try This!

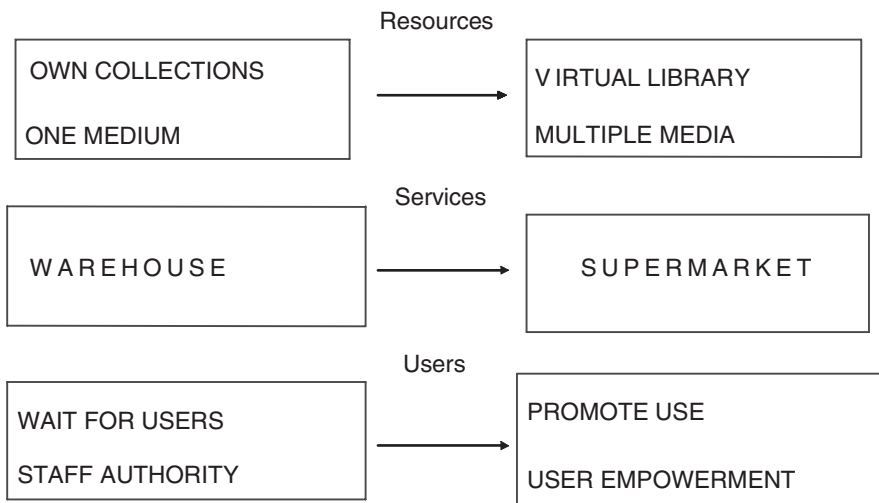
Mahatma Gandhi once said, “We must become the change we want to see.”

Is a paradigm shift in response to changing information service necessary? What external factors are forcing library and information services organizations to do things differently? What are the impediments to change in traditional library organizations?

The most important avenues of change have produced a paradigm shift in the resources, in the services, and in the user orientation within knowledge-based organizations and in knowledge workers’ responsibilities for services and systems in those organizations. This continuing paradigm shift now presents the best yet opportunity for comprehensive organizational change.

Change is just as threatening to top managers as it is to other members of the organization. In particular, it threatens autocratic administrators because it can force decision making of a more mundane nature to a lower level in the organization. In addition, the refinement of responsibilities of teams of knowledge workers also diminishes the image of a finger-snapping manager making all the decisions. In such a scenario, there may be a feeling of loss of authority, being unable to control certain outcomes, and that is what occurs if the management style is not one of openness and collaboration. From the top and through every level of the organization, a reorientation requires acceptance of

Figure 3.2—Information Paradigm Shift



new ideas, learning new techniques and skills, breaking old habits, and adapting to new behavioral patterns. If the process is perceived as threatening, it requires a more delicate, deliberate, calculated approach with much preparation and gentle persuasion. In such a setting, each member of the organization is expected to become somewhat of a risk taker, prepared to abandon approaches that no longer work. Tough questions must be asked: What sort of work is affected as smart technologies are developed and employed? What do knowledge professionals do better than the technologies? How can knowledge workers be organized for optimum impact?

It can be observed that knowledge-based organizations are rapidly moving from individualism, or task orientation, toward more teamwork and process development. Staff participation in the decision-making process; unionization and collective-bargaining efforts; decentralization of information services; flattening of organizational hierarchies; and collaborative employer/employee workplace arrangements, including programs like maternity and parental leave, flextime and flex-place, part-time and job-sharing, and an end of mandatory retirement age—all of which are designed to meet changing needs and interests—are examples of change factors that are having an impact on organizational culture and character and have helped produce a feeling of shared responsibility toward achieving a vision of knowledge-based services.

Empowerment is the key factor and accountability the motto. Because change remains difficult to quantify and somewhat elusive to manage, however, there is no one successful model to follow. The important thing to consider is that change can be accomplished when it is done to improve, innovate, and exploit the knowledge base, and a new organizational profile can emerge. Risk is the primary factor in this equation, but there is no other alternative. A common vision and mission hold the organization together, and team effort provides the vital link to achieving goals, with accountability measurement tracking the success of the mission. Educating, informing, and involving knowledge workers is an important step in planning change because information about needed change helps individuals and organizations adjust to the inevitable and helps motivate so that change can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. Therefore, in the process, an organization cannot abandon recognition of prior achievements of individuals and the organizational whole because that could demoralize people who contributed to those past successes. The corporate memory, that body of data, information, and knowledge residing in files but also primarily in memories of staff, is valuable as a source of knowledge in fulfilling the strategic aims and objectives of an organization. The internally “looking around” aspect of the planning process, the performance evaluation and motivational aspects of the human resources function, the motivational aspects of the leading function, and the feedback options and budgeting applications of the controlling endeavor provide important information about both external and internal forces promoting and facilitating change and offer options for making tough choices, decisions about future directions of the knowledge-based organization. Change also requires constant awareness of each identified organizational role in the goal-oriented, information-intensive, knowledge-based organizations in which the previously mentioned teamwork and process are replacing individualism and a task orientation. This involves designing, implementing, and evaluating programs to meet the

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market's needs and desires and using effective financing of resources, communications of services, and distribution of systems to inform, motivate, and service a market that is also fluid.

Library organizations, as future-focused knowledge-empowering entities, are attempting to anticipate and redefine customer needs on a regular basis and expand and shift services in this fluid environment. In this process they have become more flexible and people centered. This is obvious as many information services organizations have become committed to:

- Reordering priorities.
- Retraining staff.
- Reorganizing space.
- Renewing equipment.
- Restructuring the hierarchy.
- Redirecting financial resources.



Try This!

It is interesting that there are so many different, sometimes conflicting, ideas about change and what it means for information services organizations. Identify five things that you think need to be changed in the provision of information services and then get a colleague or classmate to make the same list. How many of the characteristics were on both lists? If they were all different, speculate on reasons.

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

The past quarter-century has seen enormous change in society and in library and information services. Managers of libraries and other information centers previously spent little time on external matters. Today, a major portion of every manager's time is spent on external matters: with civic organizations, trustees, or corporation members at board meetings and individually; in fundraising by cultivating relationships with philanthropic-minded individuals and foundations as well as other potential funding authorities; lobbying government officials and other decision makers at many levels; in collective-bargaining sessions, in meetings with friends of libraries groups, and with higher administration and funding agencies or authorities in defense of the budget or support of strategic-planning efforts; and on other public relations matters such as gathering and disseminating information to the press, to decision makers, to customers, and to colleagues.

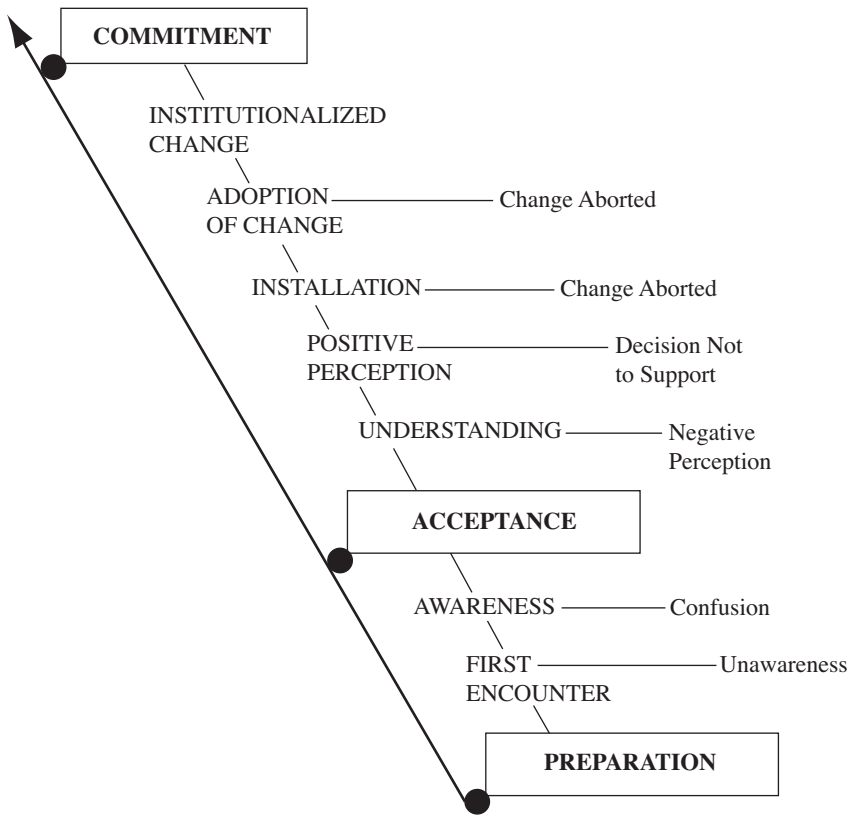
The primary focus upon customers—gauging their information/knowledge-seeking patterns and assessing their information/knowledge needs in order to develop plans, policies, practices, and procedures that satisfy those needs—presents new challenges and requires changing patterns of

service and attitudes. This has precipitated a move away from what might be called an authoritarian hierarchy to smaller work groups in which people manage themselves, with the response time to action being shortened in the process. Workers' roles in adopting a change environment are enhanced as they are allowed, as far as capabilities permit, to grow beyond a traditional hierarchical job to the point of being involved in team problem-solving activities.⁶ Work design is becoming more flexible and self-organized, and in many cases human-to-human and human-to-machine networking is replacing the hierarchical organizational form. Information intermediaries working in those no longer institution-bound organizations are challenged to become educators, coordinators, and facilitators. The trend toward the flattening of the organization means that communication and decisions are more immediate and apparent within groups of workers at appropriate levels, and those changes are not easily portrayed in solid lines, or even dotted lines, on organization charts. This flattening of organizations requires greater collaboration as new approaches are developed in management planning, personnel development, systems analysis, and control activities. Seeking a balance between initiative, delegation, and control is a meaningful challenge for those who are ultimately responsible for action, with motivation and trust becoming paramount. Employees are more empowered as they become more sophisticated, articulate, and unwilling to settle for what management theorists call the lower-level needs. "Managing participation is a balancing act: between management control and team opportunity; between getting the work done quickly and giving people a chance to learn; between seeking volunteers and pushing people into it; between too little team spirit and too much."⁷ This requires managers to become better teachers and coaches, mentors, and developers of human potential, rather than "whip-wielding autocrats trying to force change."⁸ The way change is managed has become as important as the outcome of the change process itself. Managers are learning to acknowledge the transition and to cope with the continuous barrage of new ideas, advanced technologies, sophisticated information access, and the need for interpersonal and intraorganizational relations.

The idea of a virtual organization is no longer unthinkable as the digital or virtual library becomes a reality. To implement new ideas and services requires participation by all who are affected by such change. The thought of restructuring requires consensus and a common vision of and core values for the organization's future. Therefore, understanding what the change process means and then becoming committed to it is a continuing process from the time that an organization first officially recognizes, and therefore encounters, the need to change until the point when change is initiated, internalized, institutionalized, and valued, as illustrated in figure 3.3.

At every point along this continuum of change, the process can be, and sometimes is, aborted for a variety of reasons. For instance, with the "understanding" point in that continuum, a person or group can have a positive perception, in which the process continues, or a negative perception. If it is negative, steps must be taken to bring that person or group along to the point of understanding and having a positive response. This does not mean coercion, but education and gentle persuasion.

Figure 3.3—The Continuum of Change



Try This!

Bertolt Brecht once wrote, “Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.” Discuss “things” that are now in place in library and information services organizations that are different than in the “good ole days.”

DIAGNOSING CHANGE

Two approaches to change can be identified in organizational structures.

1. Unplanned change is the most prevalent and is likely to be disastrous because it usually presents a situation that forces an organization to react. Such change usually occurs when pressures for change are intense and almost out of control or if the process is being mis-managed. Negative forces, such as poor management and lack of

vision, which can cause organizational decay, are examples of such unplanned change.

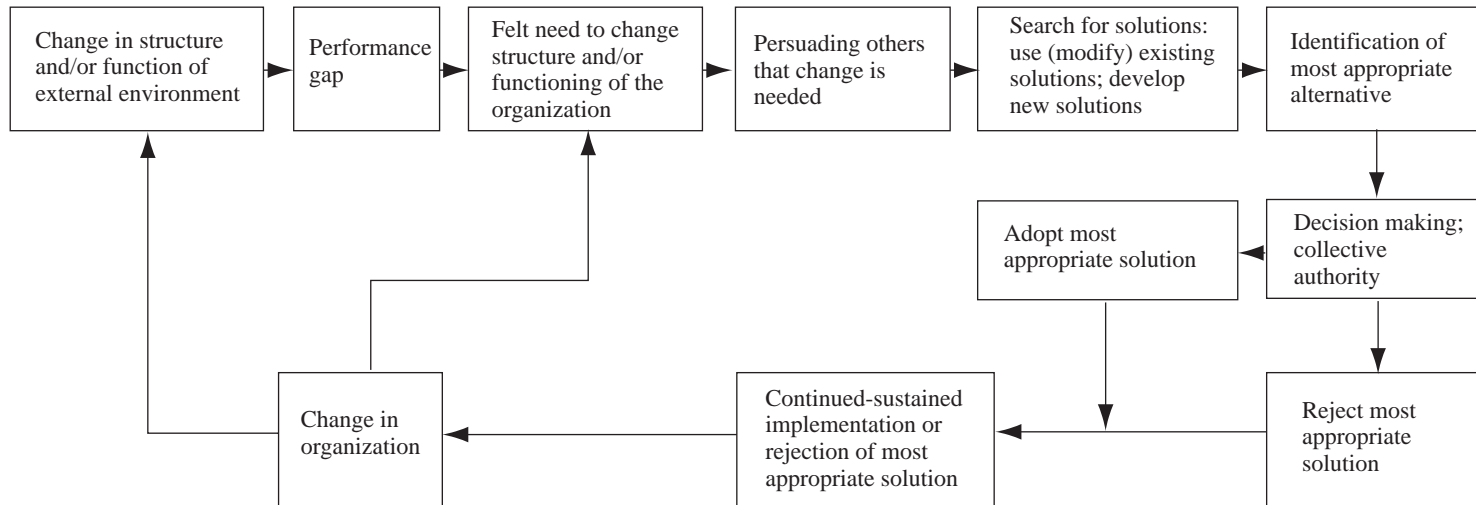
2. Planned change, on the other hand, usually encourages all in the organization to buy into the process, thereby bringing about renewal or recommitment on the part of the organization and the people working in it.

Although change is sometimes forced upon an organization from outside, causing it to react, successful change efforts most often come from within as calculated effort on the part of people working in organizations who have recognized the need. An informed approach to managing change enables library and information center personnel to join together in strategic thinking and envisioning a strategic vision for the organization while at the same time deciding upon necessary choices about technological and facility investments, staffing, and service needs. This process involves a deliberate progression toward renewing the organization by creating conditions, encouraging participants, and soliciting resources to accomplish that transition. Change is sometimes costly to implement yet inevitable in the current life cycle of libraries and other knowledge-intensive organizations. It should be obvious that the difference between planned and unplanned change is that of being proactive rather than reactive when the time is right. Proactive change recognizes the need for change, and it is easily revealed in a SWOT analysis that considers the strengths and weaknesses in the organization as well as the opportunities and threats that exist in the external environment (see chapter on strategic planning). This deliberate approach can guide the identification and establishment of goals for change, can help diagnose relevant variables, and can aid in the selection of a change technique to be employed. It also should set the stage for planning the initiation of change, implementing the process, and then evaluating its impact.

Theorists describe the change process as being either incremental or fundamental, with incremental being based upon preserving successful aspects of what has been created before and building upon that. Fundamental change, on the other hand, is based upon abandoning what has gone before, challenging those old concepts, and doing things in a new, completely different way. There are proponents of both approaches, each stating the strengths and logic of a particular approach. In any case, it is apparent that organizations must be flexible and agile.

Two approaches to bring about positive change in libraries and information centers can be identified. One is that the organization conducts the process in-house with staff assuming responsibilities for developing the plan led by individuals within the organization (self-appointed or management-appointed teams to address various aspects necessary in the process). Guidelines for this method can be found in the professional literature. A second approach is that of employing change agents, brought in from outside the organization, who are responsible for helping adapt the organization's structure to a changing environment, directing the speed and focus of organizational change, and controlling conflict. One effective process using that approach is the Star of Success Model, which provides consultants for change with an objective way of addressing a series of questions and factors to consider in a process of organizational change.⁹

Figure 3.4—Change Is an Evolutionary, Cyclical Process



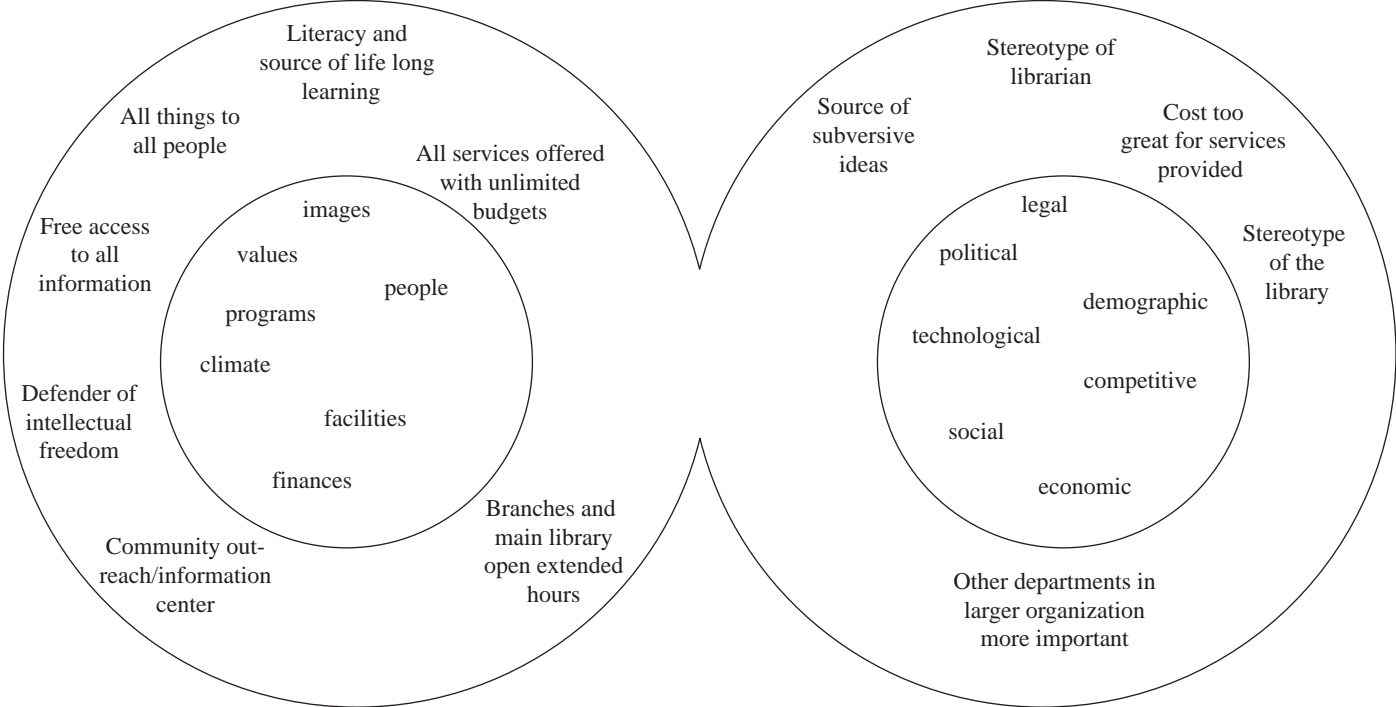
Effective change agents, whether they are brought in from outside or are members of the staff, try to ensure that people are not afraid of what is to come and are able to put the traditions of the organization into some perspective while recognizing that “We’ve always done it that way” is a strong argument on the side of those satisfied with the status quo. Those doubters must be persuaded that yesterday’s success may be tomorrow’s failure. Gentle but firm persuasion and inclusiveness all along the way is needed in changing not only the way that people act, but also the way they think. This positive process, then, requires trust and participation by all. An internal environment that fosters change includes the organizational structure itself, the strategic-planning process, the decision-making process, strategies for improving communication and staff morale, team building and conflict management, and the accountability factor that controls what is done and the way it is done, all of which must be encouraged by management and gently directed by leaders in the organization. Modification of attitudes and behavior of individuals, a delicate process and one that cannot be management controlled, is just as important as those other factors in the internal environment. The culture of the organization and the set of beliefs and expectations that are shared by members, those ethical values and social responsibilities, must be identified and preserved.

As with any major process, there must be a plan for change, a road map of getting from where the organization is now to where it wants to be. This process is facilitated by a few simple questions, prevalent in all good planning exercises (who, what, when, where, how, and, most importantly, why). A lack of preparation and imaginative follow-through are ingredients for failure in any change initiative. The change process is evolutionary because tasks, technologies, and even organizational structure are dictated by constantly changing environmental pressures and relationships. Those influence the attitudes, habits, and values of persons working in the organization, in a changing political, economic, social, and technological climate. As an example, change in attitude among elected officials as to the government’s role and responsibilities has direct impact on financial support for libraries and information services. Such a shifting focus, as it occurs, should be capitalized upon as elected officials and decision makers begin to recognize the importance of information, converted into knowledge in the social services and economies of countries and local areas. The question of fee-based services versus free services in public libraries, with the concomitant issues of the data-rich and information-poor, is a specific example of a social question that influences individuals working in libraries and information centers and their guiding principles and operations. These are but examples of library and information services reacting internally to external opportunities or pressures. Those various components must be considered as a whole because each one affects and interacts with all of the others.

LIBRARIES AS OPEN SYSTEMS

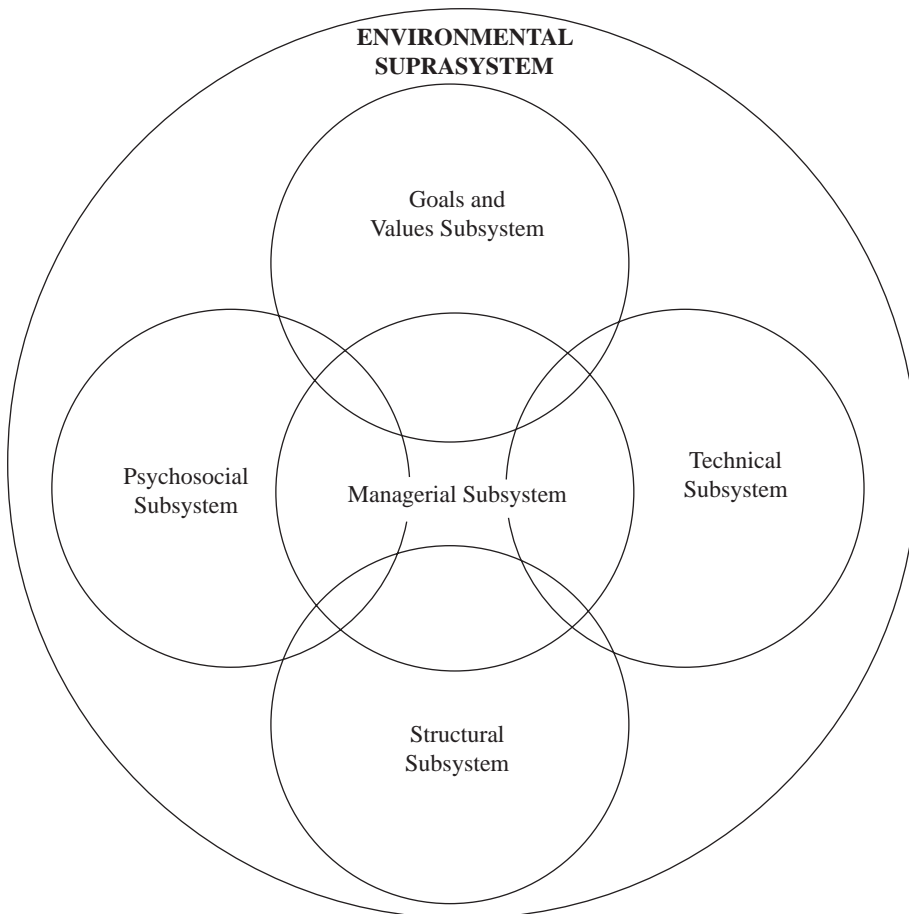
The library of today can be considered an open system that receives input from the outside, absorbs it, transforms that information, and then transmits it back into the environment. This proactive type of organization includes a number of subsystems that, in turn, respond to this change cycle. This

Figure 3.5—Internal and External Pressures



requires that a change in any one component of the organization leads invariably to a change in all components.¹⁰ It also means that goals and objectives are determined, to a great extent, by that larger environment, and, if the organization is to be successful, it must depend upon that outside input to be able to produce usable output against which the success of goals and objectives can be measured. Further, the psychosocial subsystem is formed by individuals and groups interacting both within the system and with groups of individuals outside the system. Additionally, the structure of the organization subsystem determines the way assignments are divided and work is carried out, those being reflected in documents such as organization charts, performance evaluation processes, policies relating to service and structure, and procedures manuals. Finally, the technical subsystem is shaped by the specialized knowledge, skills, and techniques required and the types of technological equipment involved. These subsystems continually interact in

Figure 3.6—Interrelationships of the Various Subsystems.



Source: F. E. Kast and J. E. Rosenzweig, *Organization and Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985). Used with the permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

informal and formal ways within the overall system. Each points to the challenge of developing a multidimensional knowledge-rich, technologically savvy environment and the need to plan for that eventuality. This interaction is reflected in the larger managerial subsystem that encompasses components of the entire organization and is subject to the greatest change.

Change in both placid and turbulent organizations, whether planned or unpredicted, almost always is accompanied by tension, anxiety, resistance, and conflict. Those negative forces can and must be analyzed and minimized to facilitate the success of the change process. Change, affected unilaterally by the hierarchy in which the “definition and solution to the problem at hand tends to be specified by the upper echelons and directed downward through formal and impersonal control mechanisms”¹¹ is a recipe for disaster because that attitude and approach is one of the major causes of tensions, anxiety, conflict, and resistance to change. Human nature dictates that change initiatives sometimes fail because the primary factor of people working in organizations is not adequately accounted for.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE



Try This!

Without changing our patterns of thought, we will not be able to solve the problems that we created with our current patterns of thought.

—Albert Einstein

What patterns of thought are prevalent in your view of information services today that are likely to change tomorrow?

Resistance to change, sometimes destructive but oftentimes creative, relates primarily to emotional, philosophical, and procedural conflicts among individuals and groups and within the process. It is in human nature to be tentative about change, particularly if they do not understand why it is being initiated. Resistance, as well as acceptance, can provide important feedback. If it is identified early and managed properly, it can facilitate the change effort with minimum difficulty. Empowerment remains the key factor. Most change initiatives that fail do so because human factors are not taken into account adequately.

Resistance occurs for a variety of reasons:

- People do not understand or do not want to understand the need for change. People have time invested in the status quo. Some truly do not understand, and too often this reaction is interpreted by change advocates as defiance. Other persons may disagree with the need for change, basically denying that it is necessary. Certain categories of

people resist change more than others. It has been pointed out that people who have been in an organization longer are more resistant to change because they have more time and money invested in the status quo. People who have less time invested have no strong commitment to the old way and are more adaptable to new situations.

- People are skeptical about the success of the effort. People sometimes have not been fully informed, an indication that effective communication is a key factor that is sometimes lacking. Communication is a two-way street. How a message is transmitted and if it is successfully received are both necessary components. If resistance is viewed as noncompliance with change, it can build the change climate to a higher intensity of resistance. Communication is an important management responsibility to see that everyone is kept fully informed. Sometimes information about change is restricted, thereby causing resistance. Several experts have pointed out that not only will providing opportunities for individuals to have influence over and participate in the change process lessen resistance to change, but also providing continuing involvement after the initial change effort “will produce significant increases in motivation, satisfaction, and performance.”¹² A lack of understanding of how and what to change causes confusion.
- People’s habits and securities are threatened. They may feel their basic assumptions, their personal values, and their senses of security or friendship are threatened. Change introduces new conditions and requires different skills and knowledge. People may become anxious about their own personal situations and about their future responsibilities or even if they have a future in the organization. Self-preservation becomes paramount in the mind because self-confidence is threatened.
- People may be satisfied with the status quo, with the way things are and with current priorities and working relationships, particularly because groups of individuals may be comfortable working together. Often groups are comfortable together, and the pressure of a group norm influences attitudes. This pressure may influence attitudes toward change, forcing the burden of proof upon those seeking change. In addition, some groups may lack motivation and therefore do little to support its implementation.
- People have vested interest and what they view as a clear perception of what is needed or wanted, and even though they may be somewhat open to change, it is only on their own terms. With increasing complexity in organizations comes a greater disparity of backgrounds, attitudes, and values, thereby allowing greater likelihood of individual or group resistance.
- The speed with which change occurs causes greater strain on the organization. The organization itself may not be able to cope. When overwhelmed by change, people resist. Rapid change makes people nervous, and fear becomes an inhibitor. On the other hand, once the

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process has begun, some may become impatient with the slowness of progress, which leads directly to the next point.

- Inertia in an organization requires considerable effort in order for it to be redirected. Such strain forces pseudoconsensus on groups and places greater reliance on managers as coordinators, negotiators, and arbitrators, as well as motivators.
- The organization may not be ready for change. Certain preconditions, as previously discussed, are required but may not yet be in place. Speed in instituting those preconditions cannot be forced. Trust must be established at all levels, and leaders must be ready and capable of implementing the proposed change and must exude that confidence.
- Rapidly changing technology and societal conditions render some individuals obsolete. It is impossible to remain in the same job for life, and even if a person did remain in one position, the job itself would change. Obsolescence is one of the most serious problems facing individuals in today's society. Obsolescence means the degree to which a person lacks the up-to-date knowledge or skills necessary to maintain effective performance on the job. In addition, many things, including the information explosion and dynamic change stimulated by the knowledge revolution; personal characteristics, particularly psychological; and work environment and climate, influence obsolescence. The acceleration of change has resulted in a progressive decline in the useful lifetime of previous formal education and training, thereby requiring continual education on the part of individuals and staff development on the part of organizations.
- Change is difficult to implement. Any type of transformation or transition is difficult. It is difficult to let go of a way of doing things, a way of organizing work and working life, to imagine a different future. Change cannot be forced upon the organization by the dictate of managers; no person wishes to have change in the working environment forced upon him or her. Likewise, every effort must be expended to preserve the agreed upon traditions, values, and character that are vital to the organization's life.

In many cases, it can be anticipated that there will be some resistance to change; therefore, resistance must be recognized, valued, and managed. The organization as a whole must explore the core of that resistance, validate its existence, and try to minimize its impact through understanding and problem solving. This kind of negotiation is what experienced change agents are good at, facilitating change in organizations.

A status quo attitude in times of universal change can render stagnation, and stagnation condemns organizations to obsolescence.

CONCLUSION

Change in organizational behavior of libraries and information centers is the result of recognition that today's knowledge-intense climate requires a

different structure, attitude, and outcome on the part of those organizations. It requires collaboration and cooperation among all levels of workers, primarily in self-directed teams. Managerial systems and practices in some libraries and information centers were introduced in a more leisurely past without the current rate of change, and some of those systems, created in that more stable, predictable world, may no longer work effectively. For example, bureaucratic control, a holdover from the past, is being replaced by peer control, customer control, and automated control. In many successful library initiatives, teamwork, team building, team sharing of core knowledge and new directions, and team incentives now provide flexibility and total organizational learning modes.

Organization charts now depict new organizations of groups with collective responsibility for service to customers, with a focus on customer requirements. The challenge is to convert resistance into commitment and status quo attitudes into new initiatives as the change concept is implemented. The remaining chapters of this textbook discuss components necessary to be considered as that change is instituted in knowledge-based library and information service organizations.

NOTES

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