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Excellent Libraries: A Quality Assurance Perspective

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Abstract

[Extract] The proliferation of inspirational leadership and management publications available in libraries and bookshops suggests that there are many paths to excellence. Much of the literature is written with a business or corporate audience in mind; however, it is a source of ideas, theories and models that, potentially, can be applied in public or not-for-profit organizations. One theory which has enjoyed a long history of debate and discussion in management studies is quality management, variously referred to as TQM, Quality Assurance, Total Quality Control or one of many other alternatives. In this chapter the applicability and potential benefits, as well as the challenges and obstacles, of adopting one version of total quality management in a library setting are examined. This discussion of the application of quality management in libraries is based on the experience of the University of Wollongong Library (UWL) in selecting and adopting the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF), administered by Standards Australia International.1 In adopting a quality framework, hereafter referred to as the ABEF, UWL intended to evaluate its progress towards its stated vision, mission and goals by applying for the associated Australian Business Excellence Award, (ABEA). The latter includes a major submission and rigorous on-site audit by qualified evaluators. Organizations can choose to enter the awards at different levels. In 1996, less than two years after adopting the framework, UWL was evaluated and received recognition at 'achievement' level. Two years later, evaluation at Award level resulted in reaching Finalist status and in 2000, UWL became the first library to compete with a range of profit and not-for-profit organizations to receive an Australian Business Excellence Award.

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I. Introduction

A. <u>Background</u>

The proliferation of inspirational leadership and management publications available in libraries and bookshops suggests that there are many paths to excellence. Much of the literature is written with a business or corporate audience in mind; however, it is a source of ideas, theories and models that, potentially, can be applied in public or not-for-profit organizations. One theory which has enjoyed a long history of debate and discussion in management studies is quality management, variously referred to as TQM, Quality Assurance, Total Quality Control or one of many other alternatives. In this chapter the applicability and potential benefits, as well as the challenges and obstacles, of adopting one version of total quality management in a library setting are examined.

This discussion of the application of quality management in libraries is based on the experience of the University of Wollongong Library (UWL) in selecting and adopting the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF), administered by Standards Australia International.[1] In adopting a quality framework, hereafter referred to as the ABEF, UWL intended to evaluate its progress towards its stated vision, mission and goals by applying for the associated Australian Business Excellence Award, (ABEA). The latter includes a major submission and rigorous on-site audit by qualified evaluators. Organizations can choose to enter the awards at different levels. In 1996, less than two years after adopting the framework, UWL was evaluated and received recognition at 'achievement' level. Two years later, evaluation at Award level resulted in reaching Finalist status and in 2000, UWL became the first library to compete with a range of profit and not-for-profit organizations to receive an Australian Business Excellence Award.

The 'quality journey', as it is commonly known, provided the opportunity to examine all elements of the Library, its structures, systems, services, processes and people. Through a lengthy process of planning, implementation, review and improvement the goals of the quality program were achieved. Of greater significance, the organizational learning and development which was integral to the journey was more far-reaching and transformational than UWL leaders could have envisaged at the outset.

Reflection on both progress and process has been a feature of the journey. The adoption of what was widely perceived as a business-oriented management system was new in the library world and attracted interest from both within and outside the profession. The process of internal and external reflection produced insights which may be of interest to others and are recorded below, chiefly within the context of each section heading, as well as in Section VI, 'Challenges and Insights'.

Although the role of leadership is not discussed in detail, without the vision, commitment and perseverance of leadership, transformational changes of the kind described in this chapter are

unlikely to be wholly successful. Intrinsic motivation is briefly discussed in the conclusion; it is a critical driver for leaders and change agents. Possessing the relevant competencies for change management, discussed in Section VI is vital; *wanting* to transform an organization, whatever it takes, is an irreplaceable leadership attribute.

B. Context

The University of Wollongong Library is the primary information and resource service for the University of Wollongong, a medium sized university, located in the Illawarra region 80 kilometres south of Sydney, NSW. The Library provides services and resources to the central campus, a South Coast campus and access centres, the Sydney Business School, a campus in Dubai, the Wollongong University College (entrance level students) and a network of geographically remote students. Services are also provided to the University's business arm, UniAdvice, to strategic partners, such as local industry and to alumni. Although our primary clientele is those connected with the University, we provide services to the Illawarra community wherever possible.

In 1975, the University was established as an independent entity. The Library at that time was a small traditional, inwardly focussed operation comprising 99,415 volumes, 1,100 subscriptions and a clientele of approximately 2,000 students, mainly local high school graduates, qualified for university entrance. Today, the Library has expanded its range of services to match the growth of the University and is considered a leader in the higher education sector in continuing to deliver quality services during unprecedented changes in Australian universities and during a similarly transformational period for library and information services.

The demand for a traditional book-based service, centred on a single location is still a significant component of our business and, while there is a slight downward trend in clients entering the building, 11% over the last three years, loans have increased in the same period by 13%. It is too soon to consider that the print-and-study-space concept is obsolete. The physical space provided in 1975 approximated 4,600 sq m. Today, available space is over 10,000 sq m, which includes the Shoalhaven Campus and the Curriculum Resources Centre. The collection includes 660,000 volumes, and almost 10,000 serial subscriptions, mostly in electronic format. These resources, as well as electronic serials, electronic books and readings reflect the needs and expectations of clients for resources and services which can be delivered independently of the physical location of either the service provider or the consumer of the service.

Undergraduates now number approximately 18,000 including those in remote locations. Over 50% of students, including the 25% who are international students, are drawn from outside the region. Other major client segments include 969 academic staff and 4,390 postgraduate students. The Library receives 82% of its budget from the University's operating grant, 11.3% from international fee-paying students and 6.7% is earned as income.

II. The Search for Excellence

In its earliest days, the Library was characteristic of its time in being conservative, hierarchically structured and risk-averse. The appointment of a new University Librarian in

1986 signalled an agenda for change. Strategic planning was instigated in that year, accompanied by management training for senior staff. Organization-wide staff development was embraced as a driver of change and a staff development committee was formed in 1988. With the establishment of the new position of Deputy University Librarian in 1989, it was possible to accelerate the pace of change. From 1989 to 1994, experimentation with various management models resulted in a team-based structure, increased involvement of staff in planning, progress in the use of technology and a performance management system. These developments formed a useful foundation on which to build further improvement.

As the pace of technological change accelerated and expectations of services increased, it became apparent that change would be a constant, but often unpredictable, factor in the library and information environment. The Library executive recognised that an appropriate framework in which to manage constant change in all aspects of the business would be critical to future success and sustainability. Following consideration of a number of factors, the Australian Business Excellence Framework, see note[1,] was selected in 1994 as the Library's management and change-guidance framework.

The Framework provided a structured and integrated management system. It linked a focus on people and clients, leadership and planning, areas which had been progressively improved, with data and information systems, process management and improvement, and an emphasis on business results, areas which had been less rigorously addressed. It appeared possible to commit fully to the principles underpinning the framework as they accorded with existing management values and with the business philosophy the Library executive hoped to adopt in the future.

The Library commenced what is commonly known as a 'quality journey' in 1994. There were many reasons for the choice of the ABEF to guide this 'journey'. Questions uppermost at the time, and perhaps worthy of contemplation today were: How does a rather small, sparsely funded, regional university library aspire to excellence? How does a library established in 1975 compete, in an increasingly competitive environment, with wealthy, centuries old, metropolitan libraries?

In the library world, excellence has traditionally denoted extensive collections, capacious facilities, sufficient staff and, yes, a service orientation. The first three attributes are largely resource-dependent. In the provision of service however, there appeared to be a clear opportunity to excel. Excellent service, it was believed, required excellent people and high quality, cost-effective supporting processes.

"While acknowledging that, in many instances, there is no substitute for significant, comprehensive on-site collections, technologically driven improvements in the distribution of, and access to, resources has seriously undermined the *bigger is better* value proposition. The perception that wanted information is ubiquitously and freely available and that libraries no longer have a vital role in universities has provided further impetus, in terms of future viability, for libraries to demonstrate that they are not only essential to the success of the university's researchers and students, but are of strategic importance in achieving the university's mission and goals." (McGregor, 2000).

In adopting the Australian Business Excellence Framework, discussed in more detail below, the Library not only sought to improve its performance in all areas but to measure and compare performance and outcomes with other organizations. The result was to demonstrate

competitiveness with others and the primacy of the Library's role in assisting the University to achieve its goals, especially those aimed at the attraction and retention of students.

The banner chosen for the introduction of the program was *Quality Service Excellence*. These three elements underpin most quality philosophies and signalled succinctly the key aims of the UWL quality program.

III. Defining Quality

There is no shortage of literature on the subject of quality management. The terminology includes Quality Assurance, Continuous Improvement, Total Quality Service and Total Quality Management. Groenwegen and Lim (1995) discuss some of the definitions of TQM, its use in libraries and universities and the interpretation of quality in these contexts.

'Quality Assurance' tends to be associated with industry and implies an emphasis on procedures and documentation. As Dawson and Palmer (1995, pp.14-15) explain, "…QA operates by the use of documented formalised procedures which can be monitored and evaluated by internal QA inspectors and assessed by external quality agents for local, national and international accreditation."

'Quality' is a prevailing, if poorly defined, concept in universities. " …the literature on quality in higher education is scattered with assumptions that a university is about quality." (Groenwegen and Lim, 1995, p. 6). With the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) by the Federal Government in 2000, 'quality assurance' and 'quality audit' have greater currency in Australian universities. However, the understanding of these terms by AUQA appears to be closer to the meaning ascribed to TQM than to QA.

Quality audit is defined by AUQA as "a systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve objectives" (Australian/New Zealand Standard, 1994 quoted in the Australian Universities Quality Agency Audit Manual Version 1 May 2002).

The manual goes on to explain that the purpose of audits is "to investigate the rigour and effectiveness of the organization's performance monitoring against its plans and that relevant processes and mechanisms are "effective in achieving the stated goals" (AUQA Manual, 2002, p.17).

Without re-examining these definitions or listing the many concepts attributed to quality, the definition which best describes the understanding and the aims developed for the UWL quality program is: "TQM is defined as a structural system for creating organization-wide participation in the planning and implementation of a continuous improvement process that meets or exceeds the expectations of the organization's customers or clients. As many organizational development experts have noted, 'TQM is a journey, not a destination'" (Shaughnessy, 1995, p.1).

Shaughnessy goes on to discuss the problems which the TQM terminology may cause with its focus on management, frequently an unpopular term in universities. Because of the emphasis of TQM on process improvement, it is sometimes argued that the system pays insufficient

attention to outcomes. However, "an overriding objective of TQM is the improvement of the quality of customer outcomes…" (Shaughnessy, 1995, p 2).

In 1994 when the Library embarked on its 'quality journey', AUQA had not been established. The desire to be audited or evaluated against recognised standards, however, was important to the Library then and remains important today. Although library services are included in an AUQA audit, given the scope and complexity of universities' core purposes, teaching, research and learning, audit schedules generally do not permit a detailed investigation of the library and other supporting elements of the university. Moreover, AUQA's five-year audit cycle is an unacceptably long gap when assessing progress in a rapidly changing environment.

The framework adopted by the Library is now known as a business excellence rather than a quality framework, see note[1]. Interestingly, the reason for the change was the unpopularity of the 'quality' terminology. For the Library of 1994, the 'business excellence' label would have presented a barrier in terms of acceptability. By 2000, when the Library applied for a business excellence award, the terminology was no longer an issue.

IV. Adopting a Business Excellence Framework

Prominent in the 1994 decision making process was the desire for a total management framework to guide the implementation of improvements to internal structures, systems and processes. Investigation suggested that such a framework would also assist in identifying further improvements as well as enabling effective management of the inevitable changes and developments mandated by external forces, such as the revolution in information and communication technologies.

A quality or business excellence framework was seen as a model for organising and integrating initiatives and building on previous change interventions. McGregor (1991) describes an early change intervention at UWL. At this time, the obstacles to change were considerable and included staff resistance, low morale, low performance, limited distribution of managerial skills and limited commitment to organizational growth and improvement.

A key learning from this earlier change effort was that the involvement of staff in planning and implementing change is critical. Although accepted as a truism in change management theory, implementation of the theory through genuine involvement in planning, as opposed to the mere communication of information about plans, is probably less well accepted and practised. Another insight was the need for extensive staff preparation. Skill development and educational opportunities for all staff are vital facilitating factors in any change effort. Often the training and development associated with change implementation is directed to supervisors or group leaders alone.

One of the 'Principles of Business Excellence' on which the Australian Business Excellence Framework is premised is: " the potential of an organisation is realised through its people's enthusiasm, resourcefulness and participation." (ABEF, 2003). This principle was already internalised by the library executive as evidenced by the commitment to staff development and performance management established prior to 1994.

All of the twelve principles (see Table I) were philosophically acceptable to the Library executive and, in essence, they comprise statements of good management practice. As stated in the Framework: "These foundational Principles which have evolved over the past 50 years, are supported by a body of published research that underpins all similar frameworks throughout the world" (ABEF, 2003).

Of considerable appeal, therefore, was the ABEF's utility as a holistic management framework. The disparate elements of effective management practice: human resources, industrial relations, customer relationship management, leadership strategies and planning processes are all integrated in a model underpinned by a systems approach and informed by systematic data collection, information and knowledge management (see figure i).

As reported in McGregor (2003), the seven categories create a specific structure or context in which organizations can review, question and analyse their leadership and management system.

The *Leadership & Innovation* and *Customer & Market Focus* categories are seen as *drivers* of all other components. The *Strategy & Planning Processes* and *People* categories are shaped by the drivers and can be seen as supporting processes that *enable* or facilitate achievement in all other areas. The *Data, Information & Knowledge* category is shown as weaving throughout the model to illustrate its integration across all aspects of the organization.

The *Processes, Products & Services* category is shaped by the drivers, supported by the enablers and fundamentally focussed on how work is done to achieve the required results of the organizations. The *Business Results* category is about organizational outcomes or overall performance and depends on the design of, and interrelationship between, the other six categories. If organizations want to change their *Business Results*, then they must improve in all six categories (summarised from Standards Australia International, *Australian Business Excellence Framework – 2003*). For a more detailed description of the framework, its categories and items see the Framework document and papers by McGregor (1997, 2000, 2003).

Table I
The 12 Principles of Business Excellence

The 12 Principles of Business Excellence

1. Direction
Clear direction allows organizational alignment and a focus on the achievement of goals

2. Planning
Mutually agreed plans translate organizational direction into actions

3. Customers
Understanding what clients value, now and in the future, influences organizational direction, strategy and action

4. Processes
To improve the outcome, improve the system and its associated processes

5. People
The potential of an organisation is realised through its people's enthusiasm, resourcefulness and participation

6. Learning
Continual improvement and innovation depend on continual learning

7. Systems
All people work in a system; outcomes are improved when people work on the system

8. Data
Effective use of facts, data and knowledge leads to improved decisions

9. Variation
All systems and processes exhibit variability, which impacts on predictability and performance

10. Community
Organisations provide value to the community through their actions to ensure a clean, safe, fair and prosperous society

11. Stakeholders
Sustainability is determined by an organisation's ability to create and deliver value for all stakeholders

12. Leadership
Senior Leadership's constant role-modelling of these principles and their creation of a supportive environment to live these principles, are necessary for the organisation to reach its true potential.

Fig i
Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF 2003, p.13)
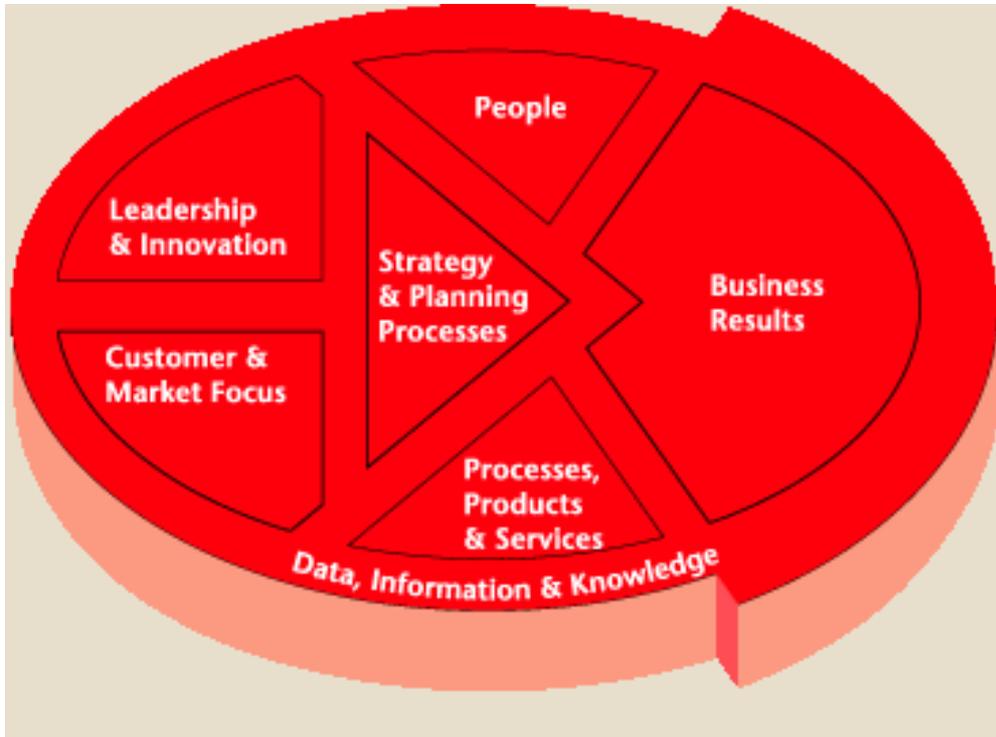
As well as achievements in the 'People' category, the Library had a history of strategic planning, a track record as early adopters of technology and a focus on service and user assistance commonplace in so many libraries. In the categories of 'Strategy & Planning Processes' and 'Customer & Marketing Focus', there were improvements to make but the foundations were present. Other categories, however, presented challenges of greater magnitude.

The 'Data, Information & Knowledge' category involves collecting, analysing and presenting data to use in prediction, performance measurement and decision-making. In other words, input and output measures such as budget quantum, collection growth, circulation, reference enquiries and so on would be insufficient to meet the requirements of this category.

Similarly, the 'Business Results' category with its emphasis on indicators of success and sustainability presented a daunting hurdle. In spite of the immensity of the challenges inherent in these and other categories, it was concluded that they were not insurmountable. It was recognised that an increasingly complicated, constantly changing library and higher education environment required a management structure to assist in clarifying and managing the complexity. On reflection, the framework has been invaluable in maintaining a holistic perspective and in reducing preoccupation with technical and technological problems. The

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emphasis on establishing direction and long-term goals is an antidote to the distraction of immediate problems.

As mentioned above, for reasons of competitiveness with other information providers and for positioning within the university, the Library sought benchmarks or performance indicators that would measure outcomes and overall organizational performance. These indicators would, desirably, be sufficiently robust to withstand close scrutiny by stakeholders and would enable the Library to compare itself with recognised 'best practice' organizations. Within the Library and information sector at the time, benchmarks and indicators to measure effectiveness as well as outcomes were difficult to find.

In adopting the ABEF, there was a clear commitment to evaluate overall performance through application for a quality or business excellence award. UWL was one of the first to enter this arena and the first to be successful in achieving an Australian Business Excellence Award. Other award winning organizations include a wide range of corporate organizations, legal firms, public service organizations and utilities and local government. Size varies from small, local firms to multinational corporations. Inevitably, in the decision making process, the question of the relevance of a business framework to libraries was canvassed at length.

V. Libraries as Business Organizations

A. Are Libraries Different?

Business organizations primarily measure the return on their investment, their profit margins and, for some, the return to shareholders. Businesses produce goods or services that are sold for profit. Libraries are different in that their main product, information, is not 'used up' when 'consumed' and does not usually generate a cash flow. They are 'public good' organizations.

The value or return on investment delivered by libraries is of a social, educational, or cultural value and this is difficult to measure. The difficulty of applying accounting standards designed for commercial enterprises is discussed in Carnegie (2003). Difficult as it is to measure the value of library resources and services, since they are funded mainly by the taxpayer's dollar, it is reasonable to expect to demonstrate some accountability or return on the funding body's investment.

If, however, libraries are compared with other organizations in terms of functions and structures then the differences between profit and not for profit organizations appear, at least on the surface, to be minimal. Like corporations, libraries are required to manage budgets, and may generate a surplus, if not a profit.

Leadership, strategic planning and human resource management are as essential to effective and efficient libraries as they are to good business organizations. Their importance is reflected in the growth of management programs for librarians, emphasis on management education in library schools and the growth of journal literature devoted to these topics. Like other organizations, the impact of technological change has been pre-eminent in the last twenty years and management of information and communication technology consumes a large proportion of library leaders' portfolios. In recent years, concepts such as client relationship management, partnership management and promotion and marketing have assumed greater importance in libraries, as they have in the commercial world.

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Perhaps one of the most controversial issues, especially in higher education, is whether the adoption of business principles and practices should extend to thinking of, and referring to, students as customers.

<center>B. <u>Are Students Customers?</u></center>

A number of articles have addressed the concerns some academic staff and university administrators have with using this terminology in the education environment. Schwartzman (1995), in considering the application of TQM to education, discusses the advantages of portraying students as customers such as recognising them "as participants in the educational process instead of passive recipients of whatever the institution decides to dish out". He concludes, however, that the advantages are "outweighed by the dissimilarities between commercial transactions and education" (Schwartzman, 1995, p.1).

Quinn (1997), in discussing the application of quality concepts in the non commercial setting of academic libraries, sees difficulty in defining the customer in an environment of many different potential customers such as students, faculty, administrators and parents, all of whom may have different expectations of the Library.

This is a dilemma posed to many organizations serving a diverse customer base and is not confined to academic libraries. It can be overcome, however, through the process of developing performance indicators. The articulation of all customer and stakeholder groups and their unique needs and expectations helps to firstly identify the various customer segments the library must serve, and secondly to signal the performance areas that are of vested interest to the various customer groups, for example, see Table II. The University of Wollongong Library uses the terminology 'client' rather than 'customer'. The Performance Indicator Framework (PIF) lists all of the performance indicators which have been identified as relevant guides or gauges of performance against goals and critical success factors. The PIF also lists some of the measures against each indicator. These are the actual data-collecting methods. A key instrument used for measuring client satisfaction is the Rodski Customer Survey which has been adopted by all Australian university libraries. It has similarities with the North American instrument. LibQual+.

Table II
Extract from UWL Performance Indicator Framework

Client group	Expectations	Performance Indicators	Measures
Students	- Service excellence - Knowledge and understanding of needs - Skills to identify, locate and evaluate information - Access to resources and facilities	Access to resources Client satisfaction	% Materials immediately available - Shelving accuracy - Database usage % Clients satisfied (Rodski Customer Survey) - Number and type of

			client feedback incidents
	• Collections relevant to their needs	Access to information literacy	• Number of clients participating in information literacy tuition
			• Workshop evaluations
		Facilities use rate	• Facilities use
			• Entry gate counts
University Executive	• Leadership in the library and information community • Satisfaction of the scholarly information needs of the University • Expertise in the navigation of complex and diverse scholarly information environments • Cost efficient operation	Leadership effectiveness	• Number of staff involved in professional committees • % Strategic plans achieved • Benchmarked leadership results
		Effective budget utilisation	• Expenditure against targets • Processing costs
		Client/stakeholder satisfaction	• % Clients satisfied • Number and type of client feedback incidents • Number of clients using services
		Information Resources Fund usage	• Expenditure against targets • Cost of supply • Speed of supply • Collection relevance

The arguments against the 'customer' terminology advanced by Quinn and others are more than adequately dealt with in the work of Hernon, Nitecki and Altman (1999). Sirkin puts the case simply: " A library patron or user is a customer. He or she is demanding a service and expects that service." (Sirkin, 1993, p.72).

The views of many of the Wollongong faculty would echo those of Schwartzman and Quinn. Although well aware of these views and addressing them with diplomacy, UWL staff and their student customers have, nevertheless found the customer service concept empowering and fulfilling. As one UWL client said via the feedback system: "I don't know what you guys have done in this quality management stuff, but it shows!"

In Australia, with an increasing number of students paying either a percentage or the whole of their tuition fees, the demand for excellent customer service seems likely to rise to a crescendo. A recent example of the changing perspectives of students is found in a newspaper

article describing a strike by university staff in Sydney: "When I'm paying that amount of money, I'm a customer and I want to be treated like a customer" (2003, Australian Higher Education Supplement). The student had paid $20,000 up front for his degree and said the strike had cost him a couple of hundred dollars.

In concentrating intensively on client service satisfaction, UWL recognised that excellence would not be achieved by considering service satisfaction alone or in isolation from other factors directly contributing to both satisfaction and quality. Hernon and Altman (2001) and Hernon, Nitecki and Altman (1999) have extensively explored the relationships between customer satisfaction and service quality. In applying the ABEF, the Library was able to embrace and to measure both service quality and client satisfaction. The salient feature of the Framework is that all aspects of organizational management and development are interrelated. It is "an integrated leadership and management system that describes elements essential to organizational excellence" (ABEF, 2003, p. 5). Further, there was a strong belief that staff skills, knowledge and attitudes, as well as their satisfaction levels, had a direct impact on the quality of service.

Heskett (1997) makes the case for a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. Hernon and Whitman (2001) quote from Heskett and go on to say: "The attitude and role of staff members are key to any service organization that values its customers. While the library has no choice over who its customers are, the library does control the selection of employees. For this reason, it makes sense to hire staff who have a customer service interest, indeed fervor; to train them accordingly; and to equip them with the authority to satisfy the customer within the context of the vision and mission of the library." (Hernon and Whitman, 2001, p. 39).

Client service attributes became key criteria in position descriptions at UWL, were included in advertisements and interviews and were reiterated during the induction process. From the outset, potential employees were made aware of the importance of the Library's vision for quality, service and excellence. Equally important, was the development of the desired attributes in all existing staff, not just new staff or those involved in frontline services. To quote Heskett " In many services, satisfaction is mirrored in the faces of customers and the people who serve them…..but it's clear that this magical interaction doesn't occur without a great deal of preparation and thought." (Heskett, 1997, p.111).

In hiring and training all staff, regardless of whether their primary location would be technical services or frontline services, customer service skills were deemed to be essential criteria for selection. All Library staff participated, and continue to participate in staffing service desks. In this way, focus on clients and their needs are maintained, as is the awareness that excellent service is central to the mission, values and performance of the Library.

It is sometimes asserted that library staff have an inbuilt service ethic and that no further attention to this attribute is needed. Regardless of predisposition or personality, consistently excellent service means organization-wide commitment on the part of all staff. Client focus, therefore, is enshrined at UWL in values, client charters, service standards, policies and position profiles. Training and development opportunities are provided for all staff, including casuals, and programs are updated regularly. Feedback from clients is solicited, welcomed, responded to within a standard time period and acted upon, wherever possible.

Excellence in service requires constant attention and reinforcement. In1995, the second year of the 'quality journey', a slogan *Year of the Client* was adopted to reaffirm the Library's commitment to excellence in this critical area. Actions that year included formation of a Client Service Committee, a major Client Survey, development of training programs in client service and formation of a client service quality improvement team. All staff signed off on a commitment to client service incorporated in a booklet of service guidelines. The guidelines were developed in a series of workshops in which all staff participated and are now included in induction kits for new staff.

The Client Service Committee led the achievement of a number of objectives including the development of service standards and the introduction of a feedback form to capture compliments, comments and complaints (CCCs). This formed the foundation for a systematic approach to client feedback. Now available online and supported by a database, the 'CCCs' have provided a wealth of useful data over time and generated many improvements to all aspects of services.

Recognition and reward strategies were also addressed early in the journey and the Client Service Committee drafted the criteria for a client service award that has been awarded bi-annually since 1995. A client service policy, developed in the same year, outlined the elements of service guaranteed to clients. These include reliability, consistency, quality, courteous staff and a safe and clean environment suitable for study.

Enhancing client focus meant paying attention to all of the multifarious components outlined above. This however, did not constitute a major obstacle to the introduction of a change strategy such as that mandated by the ABEF. In introducing other components of the Framework, the Library found that while some staff were eager to embrace and lead the changes, others were reluctant and slow to participate. An explanation may be found in the perceived characteristics of library staff. Alternatively, as change theories suggest, any organizational grouping will include a percentage of people who embrace change, another group which accepts it and usually, a smaller percentage of people who actively resist change. A brief consideration of how library staff may differ from other employee groups follows.

C. Are Library Staff Different?

Perceptions of professions and occupations tend to be based on stereotypes. It is not the purpose of this chapter to investigate this phenomenon. In an early piece of research in library school, this author found that the stereotype of the mousy, dowdy, almost invariably female librarian was the norm in a range of popular and more serious literature. An Australian newspaper article of the 1980's described librarianship as the 'grey blur' profession. Perhaps perceptions have changed since then, as librarians are increasingly recognised for their early adoption and expertise in technology-based innovation, for their involvement in teaching and for possession of a range of skills vital to the information society.

Perceptions seem to persist, however, and personality inventories, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI), to some extent give credibility to aspects of the stereotype. Research conducted by Isabel Myers (1998) and others in their investigation of type theory, supports the claim that certain MBTI types appear to be more attracted to some occupations than others. Myers' research finds that "..…the modal type of librarians is ISTJ" (Myers et. al., 1998, p. 301).

ISTJ is the descriptor for personality preferences for 'introversion', 'sensing', 'thinking' and 'judging'. "ISTJs appear to be attracted to, and are probably comfortable in, work environments that are efficient, secure, predictable, and conservative, and that permit and promote personal responsibility in their work lives" (Myers et.al., 1998, p. 66). The authors go on to say that research suggests "stability and personal control in the workplace are increasingly rare. The qualities that are valued, such as teamwork, rapid adaptability to change, flexibility and the like, are not typically comfortable and natural parts of the ISTJ personality." (Myers et. al., 1998, p. 67).

The following is a very brief description of the ISTJ preferences and their associated characteristics: "Introverted: Concentrate quietly on ideas and information; Sensing: Look at facts; Thinking: Analyse information objectively and Judging: Follow an organized system to find materials" (Myers et. al., 1998, p 301). These characteristics fit well with the traditional cataloguing role, for example. This is not to suggest, however, that there is not a wide range of other types attracted to librarianship.

In 2000, an analysis of 66 permanent staff at the UWL confirmed the modal type for the Library to be ISTJ. The next most popular type was ISFJ. Other types in the sample included at least one representative of all but one of the sixteen types identified by Myers and Briggs.

Without wishing to give undue emphasis to the predictive uses of type, the MBTI has proved a valuable tool for both individual and organizational awareness. It has been used with particular benefit in team building, communication and change efforts. Myers et. al. (1998), and other sources, provide useful strategies for managing change and for raising organizational and individual awareness of the value of difference.

The most valuable lesson to be learned from type theory is that a balance of the different types is desirable, especially in problem solving and decision-making. "The theory of psychological type suggests that the best decisions include using all the perspectives identified by the MBTI functions (Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, and Feeling) and experience with groups in organizations confirms this." (Myers et. al. 1998, p. 339).

If, as Myers suggests, "....rapid adaptability to change, flexibility and the like, are not typically comfortable and natural parts of the ISTJ personality," (Myers et. al., 1998, p. 67), then this awareness is usefully translated into relevant communication and training styles. Additionally, if assurance is given by the organization's leaders that the preferences of all staff are equally valuable and valued in the workplace, then the strengths of the ISTJ can contribute not only to change effectiveness but to the full range of processes and projects. ISTJs are characterised by Myers et. al. as practical, sensible, systematic and realistic with a logical, fact-based approach to decision-making.

It is probable that at least some members of library staff are drawn to the profession by a desire to assist and provide service to others. It is interesting that the modal type for the UWL Lending Services Team is ESTJ. With the substitution of a preference for extraversion over introversion, ESTJs enjoy interacting and working with others while still valuing facts, logic and pragmatism.

From experience, however, it is clear that a service ethic cannot be assumed to be present and must be defined, communicated and instilled in staff in various ways, including measurement, evaluation, training and development.

A. VI. Challenges and InsightsEquipping Staff to Measure

The only categories of the Framework which consumed more time on the 'quality journey' than client satisfaction and the associated concept of client relationship management, was the data analysis and quality process categories. The skill set least in evidence amongst Library staff included the ability to analyse and graphically present data and other information and the understanding of statistical variation.

"A profession that sees itself as 'doing good' is less concerned with outcomes and impacts, since it sees its activities as inherently positive. Assessment activities also require a certain skill set, which has not been readily available to the profession" (Lakos, 2001, p. 313).

Education for librarianship has not by and large equipped library staff with the requisite skills to conduct measurement and evaluation. Statistical and data analyses are not commonly taught, nor are decision-making, problem solving or financial analysis and reporting. To succeed in implementing the Framework, to demonstrate improvement and to measure and benchmark performance, it was essential for staff to acquire the necessary skills.

Training programs, first led by an external consultant and then developed internally, introduced staff to the so-called 'quality tools' and the basic concepts associated with measurement and evaluation. This same skill set was vital in the development of performance indicators and measures. An organization-wide approach was mandated as leaders and staff alike lacked the requisite knowledge. Team members, their leaders and the university librarian all participated in workshops to firstly, map core processes and secondly, to develop agreed indicators and measures for all core functions and processes.

Staff members who had received external training developed workshops, tailoring examples to be more accessible and applicable to a library setting. A lengthy, often arduous process resulted in an initial set of indicators which have been reviewed, revised and refined over time. On reflection, it was probably a benefit that all learned together and that staff could see that their leaders were genuinely grappling with the same new ideas as they were.

B. Development of KPIs

Since it was intended that team members would be responsible for conducting, analysing and reporting their team's performance, ownership of the indicators and the measurement process was critical. In many organizations a quality manager or similar position is responsible for the analysis and reporting process. A position of Quality Coordinator was established at UWL in 1996, however, all teams continued to be responsible for their own measurement and reporting, seeking advice from the Quality Coordinator only when needed.

Measures to support indicators such as 'document delivery frequency' could be relatively easily constructed to include 'fill rates' and 'turnaround times'. More demanding was the development of indicators in the Framework's category of 'Business Results'. Benefits or

value to the Library's community and stakeholders could not readily be expressed in financial terms. The question of value measurement for information and educational 'products' is discussed by McGregor (2000) and concludes with acceptance of Broadbent's (1991) position that: "When the real impact of an information system cannot be measured, the perceived value may have to be accepted as a proxy. The perceived value approach is based on the subjective evaluation by users and presumes that users can recognise the benefits derived from an information service……" (Broadbent, 1991, p. 98).

Ultimately, UWL adopted one Key Performance Indicator (KPI): *Client and Stakeholder Satisfaction*. All other indicators and measures provide data and other information to support this KPI. Evaluation of performance, however, does not rely on client perception of satisfaction alone. Business oriented performance indicators were developed to measure, for example, supplier performance, budget utilisation and facilities use.

It is recognised that, despite the development of many robust and useful indicators, some measures, such as surveys and feedback incidents, are essentially measures of perception. Conscious that the development, administration and interpretation of indicators can be time-consuming and must be justified in an environment of resource constraints, research continues on identifying indicators which are objective and able to withstand academic scrutiny. As flexibility and change agility may be the key determinants of future organizational sustainability, effort was directed also to developing a sustainability model and the beginnings of indicators to measure these concepts, see figure v.

C. Managing the Change Process

Using the ABEF as a reference point reinforced that performance measurement is only one element in an integrated structure which includes establishing future direction or vision, developing goals and strategies to realise the vision, ensuring implementation through action plans, determining how success will be measured and then feeding the results of evaluation back into the planning and improvement cycle.

Knowledge and experience of quality management was identified as an essential competency for all middle and senior managerial roles. Quality awareness is a core training requirement for all staff. Potential recruits and existing staff are thus aware of the continuing importance of this skills set.

At UWL the Library executives were familiar with change management theory and had some experience in its practical application. Preparation for the introduction of the ABEF, therefore, followed established principles. This approach was vindicated by the widespread acceptance of the 'Quality Service Excellence' program amongst staff. Their responses, in the main, ranged from compliance to enthusiasm. Some took more time than others to participate in developing team plans and performance indicators and to actively embrace the quality program.

A brief discussion of 'change' principles which were found to be particularly effective follows. Of primary importance is that leaders should have realistic expectations of the length of time needed to implement and integrate an organization-wide change, involving, as the UWL quality program did, cultural change, individual and team development and significant learning of new skills and knowledge.

Before announcing a new direction, it is important to have the commitment of the senior management team and ensure that they understand and can explain the philosophy and purposes of the program in a way that takes into account the different learning and communication styles of staff members. Inevitably, some cynicism with the new, business-oriented terminology will be apparent. In these cases, it is worth taking the time to explain terms and concept with examples of library application. Identifying gatekeepers or change agents, those staff who are change-oriented and who are influential with other staff, is valuable in disseminating the message in more informal contexts.

The importance of systematic communication cannot be overemphasised. Effective communication depends on the development of a variety of mechanisms, processes and actions, enabling the dissemination of consistent messages on a planned and regular basis. Successful internal communication is perhaps the most often criticised aspect of organizational management and the most difficult goal to achieve. This was the case at UWL and internal communication has been the subject of a quality improvement team, as well as regular review and improvement actions.

D. Rewards and Recognition

Leaders and gatekeepers alike should be encouraged to model the values and behaviours associated with the change effort. Recognising and rewarding active participants in the process provides visible symbols of the espoused values. Incentives to change, in the form of awards and other recognition, are motivating for some staff. The question of performance-related rewards in libraries is yet another challenge as rewards which are common in business organizations, such as bonuses, promotion and fringe benefits, are not readily available to Library managers. It is possible, however, to try to understand what it is that rewards people and how this differs amongst individuals.

Leaders tend to make assumptions about what is rewarding, as was the case at UWL. After an initial round of awards for excellent service and exceptional performance, a brief staff survey was administered and the results were used to tailor rewards to meet the most commonly expressed preferences. Publication of a rewards and recognition policy and leaflet helped ensure that the process and the criteria for each form of recognition were transparent. A rewards scheme assisted in engendering a competitive spirit, particularly amongst teams which, in turn, encouraged higher performance and increasing comfort with the more competitive environment in higher education libraries, discussed earlier in this chapter.

A further insight from the UWL experience was that for many staff, the less tangible benefits of the application of quality principles were significant. The opportunity to develop new skills, for instance in data collection and analysis and process and project management, provided a new level of interest for many staff engaged in routine jobs and, for some, career progression opportunities.

Concepts associated with the ABEF such as 'empowerment' were motivating also for many staff. 'Empowerment' is one of those management terms which is not readily acceptable to all. Open discussion of the concept with all staff to explore and agree on the intended meaning for use in the UWL context contributed to staff acceptance. The development of a model, see figure ii, to illustrate the shared meaning which had been developed helped also. Many staff, in fact, enthusiastically embraced the concept and the opportunities it presented for taking initiative, making decisions and planning their work schedules. Success of the

empowerment strategy was largely due to the knowledge management structures and communication strategies which supported it.

Fig. ii
Empowerment – Finding the Balance
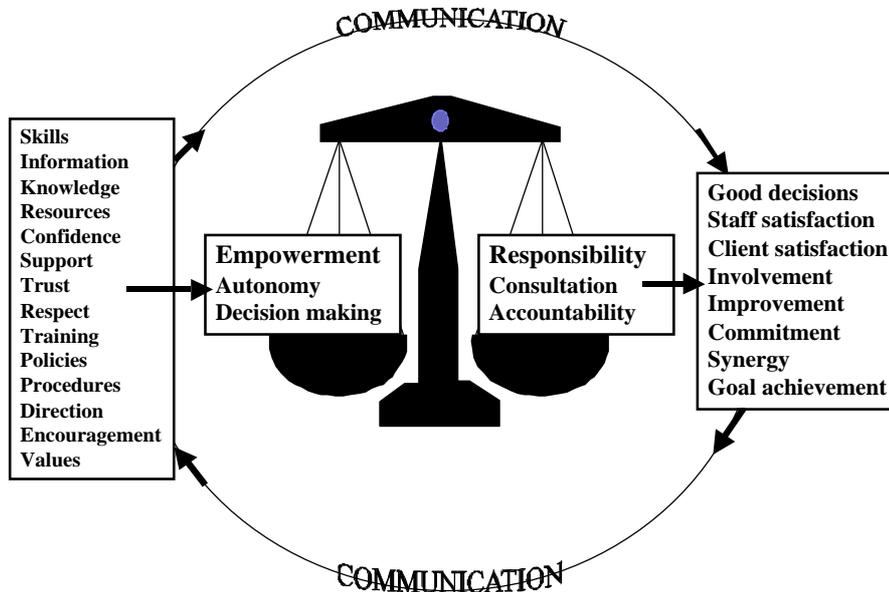
Knowledge and learning was incorporated in the values and 'Ideal Culture', discussed below, and represented in the vision, mission and goals. The importance of continuous learning underpinned most human resource management strategies. The inclusion of core competencies in performance management processes was aimed at linking evaluation and learning in a process intended to be developmental for both staff member and team leader.

Ultimately, becoming the first Library to win an Australian Business Excellence Award provided recognition throughout the University and the profession and this was rewarding and confidence building for all Library staff.

Of the personal attributes useful to those planning to lead change of such magnitude, persistence, focus on the vision or planned outcomes and sense of humour would rank amongst the most important. Persistence in achieving the envisaged change is essential for many reasons, not least to counter the possibility of 'quality' being labelled as the latest management 'fad'.

Availability of resources, such as staff time and dollars, is an obvious though sometimes overlooked planning prerequisite. The required resources are not great. Funding allocated to the implementation of a quality framework at UWL was insufficient to make a difference in terms of traditional competitive indicators such as collection size. It was possible, however, through following the precepts of the ABEF to achieve many challenging goals, to introduce

new services and process improvements and to achieve a culture of assessment, all of which combined to achieve a competitive edge for UWL.

VII. Organizational Culture

"The concept of culture relates to the ideas and assumptions which are developed by people in any social group and which have a major impact on group behaviour and judgments." (Dawson and Palmer, 1995, p.167).

In a climate of constant change, growing competition and expanded student expectations of services, organizational flexibility is paramount. Traditionally, libraries are highly structured, regulated and hierarchical with defined departmental boundaries. Perhaps library organization charts reflect the rule-based structure of cataloguing and classification systems and the adherence to codes essential to the effective retrieval of information.

One of the early initiatives introduced at Wollongong to reduce the emphasis on hierarchy was to design a flatter, more flexible structure with teams as the primary structural unit. This was not simply a matter of regrouping or relabelling. The process, referred to as 'team-building' included extensive preparation and training, in recognition of the reluctance of some staff, accustomed to working more or less alone, to become team players. In many cases, teams were extended to include previously separate functions. Interaction and cross-fertilization were further encouraged by the formation of quality improvement teams to address perceived performance gaps. Standing committees to manage staff training and development, client services and quality assurance were also formed. All teams included representatives from different groups and levels of staff.

An empowerment model underpinned team building, see figure ii. Teams were able to establish their own objectives, in accordance with broad Library goals, could modify team processes and were able to solve problems as a team, using quality processes and methods. As well as establishing the conditions for goal ownership and achievement, a more favourable climate for flexibility and process improvement was put in place. The concepts of 'teams' and 'teamwork' became building blocks for the organizational culture, characterised by staff commitment to assessment, goal achievement and flexibility, cultural hallmarks which the Library executive aspired to develop.

 "TQM is the first managerial movement that has specifically considered culture and the values that develop in an organisation" (Dawson and Palmer, 1995, p.55). The culture envisaged in TQM theory is one that supports flexibility, continuous change and commitment to organisational goals. Roadblocks presented by an hierarchical structure, rigid top-down management and minimal input by employees into decision-making, were familiar to those involved in early change efforts at UWL. The Library executive strongly believed that cultural alteration and improvement were both necessary and possible; and that they must accept responsibility for leading the change and for modelling the attributes and behaviours conducive to the envisaged culture.

By 1994, progress had been made in addressing the constraints of a culture characterised by conservatism, hierarchy and resistance to change. The key initiatives of the 80's and early 90's had been strategic planning, team building, staff development and performance management. Most staff responded positively to the first three although opposition from some

staff to a team-based structure was surprisingly persistent. The introduction of performance appraisals for all staff, although carefully researched and sensitively managed, caused a greater level of apprehension and required a longer lead-time than team building. A robust performance management system was critical to the achievement of assessment element in the envisioned culture as it introduced the first tangible elements of evaluation and improvement. Staff gradually started to accept the notion of accountability for goal achievement as well as recognising the benefits of relevant skill development.

Application of the principles embedded in the Australian Business Excellence Framework enabled changes to be integrated into the 'normal' workflows of the Library. Longevity was envisaged for the ABEF as UWL's management model and quality assurance was not to be construed as distinct from other processes. In essence, the aim was to drive a cultural change which would achieve a sense of overall responsibility for organizational performance, previously considered to be mainly within the province of the library executive.

The articulation of shared values formed the basis for identifying those shared beliefs and norms which underpin organizational culture. In developing the initial set of values, most staff agreed that valuing clients, teamwork and continuous improvement, for example, should be included. A second iteration of the values changed the focus to 'satisfied clients', 'partnerships' and 'open communication'. In the latest review in 2002, a number of the previous values were felt to be so well integrated that they could be omitted from the published values statement. Instead, 'Satisfied Clients' was replaced with 'People First' to embrace both external and internal (staff) clients; 'Knowledge and Learning' was replaced with 'Sharing Knowledge and Learning' to capture commitment to organizational learning. One impetus for reviewing the values was to examine their congruence with the notion of an 'Ideal Culture'.

Understanding and internalisation of the 'Ideal Culture' was enhanced by defining each of the values with behavioural examples, supplementing the concepts with personal attributes, such as 'approachable', 'self aware' and 'flexible' and with performance attributes appropriate to each staff group. Both sets of attributes were incorporated into Position and Person Profiles, previously known as position or job descriptions. The performance management process was revised to include evaluation against the attributes. The 'Ideal Culture' is described in UWL brochures as: "the working environment to which we aspire, in which every staff member strives to uphold the Values, is actively developing the desired personal Attributes and is building their knowledge and skills to achieve relevant Performance Attributes." Implicit in the last part of the definition is the valuing of assessment at individual, team and organizational levels.

As described in McGregor (2003, p. 8), "All staff received extensive in-house training in quality tools and techniques and participated in self-assessment exercises and numerous surveys. Most importantly, all staff contributed to the development and review of vision, mission, goals, values, performance indicators and measures. Each team was, and remains, responsible for administering and reporting its own measures. Although this was challenging in many instances, the outcome of the process was reinforcement of a long-standing goal: to develop a culture of commitment and assessment. "

The importance of a culture of assessment in bringing about change in libraries is discussed by Lakos (2001). Lakos defines a culture of assessment as: " …an organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis, and where services are planned

and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for customers and stakeholders" (Lakos, 2001, p.313). He goes on to articulate a number of conditions which should be present for a culture of assessment to develop. These include focus on customers' needs, the inclusion of performance measures in plans, the commitment of leaders to assessment and external focus.

Enabling staff to understand external forces affecting the Library and its plans or, in other words, to 'see the big picture', was a key strategy in the cultural change which accompanied introduction of the ABEF. The strategy included explanation of environmental influences at meetings, sometimes by expert guest speakers, attendance at conferences and in-house seminars, staff involvement in SWOT analysis and strategic planning and dissemination of information via multi-layered communication mechanisms. Of primary importance was the articulation of knowledge management policies and processes to support the sharing of knowledge, information and experience.

These elements all formed part of integrated strategic planning and environmental awareness processes. Relating general trends to the impact on specific library tasks and services, as well as emphasising the importance of every team's involvement in adapting their functions to relevant external changes, was revelatory for some staff. Of benefit also was that staff were better equipped to participate in faculty planning and university working groups, thus making progress towards one of the Library's goals of increased involvement in the University's planning processes.

Broad knowledge of the higher education environment and awareness of external forces was of the greatest importance in the development of all goals, strategies and performance indicators. As Cullen (1999) explains:

"Performance measurement is a highly political activity and must be seen as such, at the macro or micro level. We must look outwards to social and political expectations made of our institutions and ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of our significant client or stakeholder groups; we must use our planning and goal-setting activities in a meaningful way, incorporating appropriate measures, to demonstrate our response to this external environment, and our willingness to align our aspirations to broader corporate goals. But we must also look within and seek to promote an organizational culture which acknowledges the political nature of measurement. This means using performance measurement to:

- Indicate the library or information service's alignment with broader organizational goals;
- Demonstrate the integration of information services with the key activities of the organization, or of the community;
- Support the library's position as the organization's primary information manager and service provider" (Cullen, 1999, p. 25).

Given the importance of developing flexibility or adaptability in the organizational culture, it was necessary to go beyond continuous improvement and provide cultural support for risk-taking and innovation. Policy and procedural support was accompanied by the introduction of an award for innovation. The organizational value, 'initiative' is defined in terms of supporting risk-taking, learning from mistakes and looking for solutions and innovative ideas. 'Flexibility' is an agreed personal attribute and both personal attributes and values are components of the 'Ideal Culture' discussed above. Flexibility or adaptability is critical as

discussed by Heskett (1997): "…the single most important indicator of adaptability was the adherence by management to a clear set of core values stressing the importance of delivering results to various constituencies, especially customers and employees…" Heskett, 1997, p. 250).

Heskett describes a project encompassing 200 firms in nineteen industries to examine the relationship of performance and culture and found that: "The clear differentiator between high and low performing firms, all with strong cultures, was the ability of each firm to adapt to changing environments…" (Heskett, 1997, p. 250). It was observed that organizations which "install devices for maintaining adaptability not only greatly improve their chances of sustaining high performance over time, they increase their chances of achieving successful transitions from one leader to another" (Heskett, 1997, p. 250) The 'device' chosen by many firms was continuous quality improvement "forcing an organization to compare itself with the best performers and generally become less insular in its thinking" (Heskett, 1997, p. 250).

VIII. Benchmarking

Within the Australian Business Excellence Framework (2003 p. 44), benchmarking is defined as: "a method of comparing and measuring processes and outcomes with those of recognised leaders, with the intent of improving performance." At UWL benchmarking has been used for process improvement and for comparing performance with organisations regarded as 'best practice', as assessed by the Australian Business Excellence Awards evaluators. Comparing or benchmarking performance may often lead to improved process efficiency, however, the primary benefit is the identification and harnessing of good ideas and applicable strategies, as well as stimulating critical thinking about all of the library's activities.

At the beginning of the 'quality journey', benchmarking was an unfamiliar concept. As with all elements of the ABEF, it was important for the Library to determine its approach to benchmarking, in other words, the intentions and desired outcomes which would underpin benchmarking activities. Secondly, implementation or deployment was planned; who would be involved, what training would be provided and how benchmarking partners would be identified. Thirdly, how the indicators and measures identified for benchmarking success would be monitored and evaluated was determined. Lastly, following evaluation and analysis of benchmarking projects, how results would be incorporated into future planning was established.

The process outlined in the previous paragraph illustrates the Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement cycle which the ABEF has developed to guide the design of systems and processes, see Table III. Known as ADRI, the cycle is also used as an assessment matrix for award applicants in preparing their submission for an Australian Business Excellence Award and in the subsequent evaluation visit.

Table III
ADRI (ABEF 2003, p. 30)

Approach	'Thinking and planning' Identifies the organisation's intent, the thinking and planning it undertakes to design the strategies, processes and infrastructure to achieve the intent, including the design of performance indicators to track progress
Deployment	'Implementing and doing' Describes how strategies, structures and processes have been put into practice
Results	'Monitoring and evaluating' Demonstrates how measures or achievement associated with the Approach are monitored and examines trends in performance
Improvement	'Learning and adapting' Examines what has been learned and how this learning is used to improve the approach and deployment

UWL has engaged in process benchmarking with other university libraries and in both process and organizational level benchmarking with organizations outside the library sector. While there is value in benchmarking with peer organizations, it may be to the detriment of libraries if they exclude other organizations, which are recognised leaders outside the sector, as potential network partners simply because they are perceived as being 'different'.

Organizations of all types, including higher education institutions, are grappling with issues such as: demonstrating value, managing scarce resources, managing client relationships and meeting changing client and stakeholder needs and expectations. Competition, market differentiation, partner and supplier relationships and future viability are as applicable in higher education today as they are in global corporations. While organizations outside the library and information sector may have different goals and objectives, what is being sought through benchmarking is creative, innovative solutions to common issues and problems.

The issue of understanding, valuing and managing organizational differences highlights what benchmarking is not, that is, adopting another's practices verbatim as a solution to a problem. This holds true for good or best practices observed in another library. Benchmarking can provide the necessary catalyst for adjusting, adapting or modifying practices to best suit the specific needs of the library, while adoption of any changes should take into account the mission, goals and environmental constraints which are unique to each organization.

Benchmarking with other libraries has been an important activity to focus attention on continuous improvement. Processes that have been scrutinised by UWL include: document delivery, acquisition of resources, cataloguing, loan returns and shelving practices. Working with high performing libraries in these areas has highlighted opportunities to re-engineer processes, consider new or different technologies, or simply eliminate steps in processes which no longer add value to the final product or service.

Partnering with recognised leaders outside the library and information sector, however, has provided the opportunity to observe continuous improvement and innovation initiatives beyond established organizational paradigms, providing the necessary stimulus to actively challenge and question the efficacy of existing practices. Participation in the Australian Business Excellence Awards enabled access to partners who had already been recognised as

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'best practice' organizations against established criteria and principles of excellence. Despite the diversity of organizations within the benchmarking networks such as legal, pharmaceutical, telecommunications and health care organizations, all share common issues and processes. Examples of processes examined within these benchmarking networks included: internal communications, management of change and human resource management.

Of particular interest was a project conducted jointly with the Wollongong City Council which is responsible for local government in Wollongong. The Council was recognised with an Australian Business Excellence Award in 1998. The purpose of the project was to examine customer perception of value when a customer is engaged in a service transaction and to determine whether core values were common across a variety of service scenarios.

A number of issues must be addressed within the ABEF's 'customer perception of value' item. These include: how organizations measure whether or not customers believe they have received fair value and how organizations communicate customer perception of value in order to help staff at all levels contribute to achieving customer satisfaction goals.

Joint research activities included focus groups and surveys of a broad cross-section of the community including: university students, parents with young families, single income earners, disabled citizens and aged pensioners. Participants in the study identified a series of common value attributes that were considered important by each segment across the four service scenarios. The positive relationships and commonality found amongst survey respondents provided valuable input into the development and delivery of customer service skills training and the management of customer service relationships for both the Library and the City Council.

Internally, benchmarking delivered a number of benefits for UWL. These included improved understanding of internal systems and business practices; establishment of key success factors and measures of productivity; new ideas leading to either continuous improvement or breakthrough change and improvement in understanding and meeting the needs of clients. Sharing and discussing the results of benchmarking and evaluation was salutary for many library staff who thought that processes were already as efficient as possible.

Externally, benchmarking and networking with non-library organizations has expanded awareness of libraries, their current roles and the challenges they face which, it would be fair to say, remain relatively unknown outside the profession. As an Award winning organization, the Library has welcomed visitors and prepared presentations for those taking part in 'Business Study Tours' organised by the Awards administrators. Visits and presentations provided opportunities to showcase library achievements, resulting in increased respect and recognition from those participating in the tours and their parent companies.

IX. Success and Sustainability

A. Indicators of Success

As discussed in Section IV above, integral to the decision to commit to the ABEF was the intention to evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of all the various change efforts by applying for an Australian Business Excellence Award. The process involved preparation of a fifty-page submission outlining progress against all categories of the Framework. A team of

accredited evaluators conducted an audit against the submission, followed by an on-site evaluation. An extensive feedback report was provided to applicants, regardless of whether the organization was to be recognised with an award. This external feedback was invaluable to UWL in both identifying improvement opportunities and in recognising strengths.

Although the Business Excellence Framework was found to be largely applicable to non-profit organizations, some aspects were more challenging than others. For example, Category 7: 'Business Results' consists of two main sections or items 'indicators of success' and 'indicators of sustainability'. The expectation in this category is that overall organisational performance, both in the present and as predicted in future, will be demonstrated.

Broad indicators of financial performance available to corporations, such as profit margin and return to shareholders are not applicable to libraries. However, financial performance can be measured in terms of effective and efficient budget management, including strategic fund allocation, as well as a range of other broad quantitative and qualitative indicators and measures. The following is an extract from UWL's award submission (University of Wollongong Library, 2000), which articulates the approach taken to measuring and demonstrating organizational performance followed by some examples of 'indicators of success'.

- "The Library's KPI is *Client and Stakeholder Satisfaction*. All contributing indicators measure significant components of our business and can be aggregated to evaluate overall organizational performance. Satisfied and supportive clients are the hallmarks of our success. Satisfaction of stakeholders with our strategy, management framework and recognition by those outside the University indicate success in the business dimensions of our overall performance.
- Overall performance is assessed using lead and lag indicators, depicted in our Performance Indicator Framework (PIF). We determine the PIF's fitness for purpose by the reliability and relevance of data collected; ease and speed of extracting and extrapolating data and information and ability to measure stakeholder expectations.
- We also use the PIF as a diagnostic tool to predict future performance, eg indicators such as leadership effectiveness, budget utilisation, application of innovation and technologies and acquisition of skills and knowledge.
- We recognise that it is critical to improvement efforts and to our goal of leadership in the information industry, to benchmark against external standards whenever we can identify those relevant to our business.
- Teams monitor lead and lag indicators on a monthly basis, the Library executive reviews key data and indicators quarterly and formal reports are prepared on a half-yearly and annual basis. Performance is also reviewed and recorded in the Annual Report to University Council; this provides the opportunity for key stakeholders to comment on our progress.
- Goals and critical success factors are developed to meet stakeholder expectations and to make progress against strategic initiatives. Performance Indicators are used to evaluate success and have been developed for all goals and critical success factors."

Some examples of results cited in the submission by client and stakeholder category include included:

"Stakeholder Group 1 – University Executive

- Process improvement, through analysis of measurement data, benchmarking outcomes and feedback from external evaluation, resulted in an overall processing cost reduction of 22% since 1997.
- Salary costs have been effectively contained while providing the highest level of investment in information resources. Savings have been redeployed to technology investment and planning future services.
- Planning success is evidenced by over 80% of stated actions being achieved within the planning cycle each year.
- Leadership effectiveness is demonstrated by benchmarking against other university leaders.

Stakeholder Group 2 –Clients

- The Academic Outreach program is founded on personalised contact and coaching to optimise new products and services.
- Client satisfaction with our services is high and we continue to set improvement targets.
- Client feedback illustrates our success in applying business excellence principles, eg*: I wish the rest of the University would have similar standards. Keep using the ABEF – it pays for you and your clients.* (Alexander Hausner, November 1999).
- Success is dependent on our staff to a great extent: on their commitment, readiness for change; excellent client skills and their initiative, see figure iii.
- Achieving the *Investors in People* [2] standard has benchmarked the Library against world-class organizations."

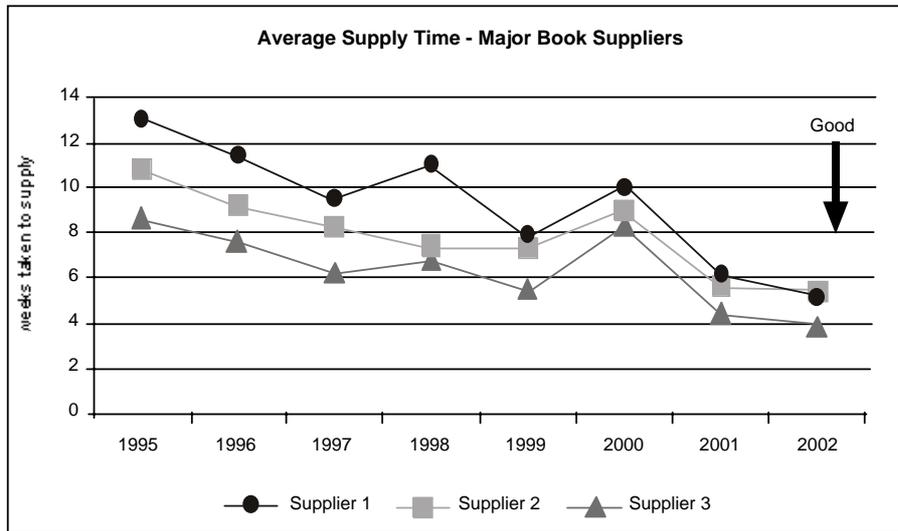**Fig iii**
Staff Indicators of Success
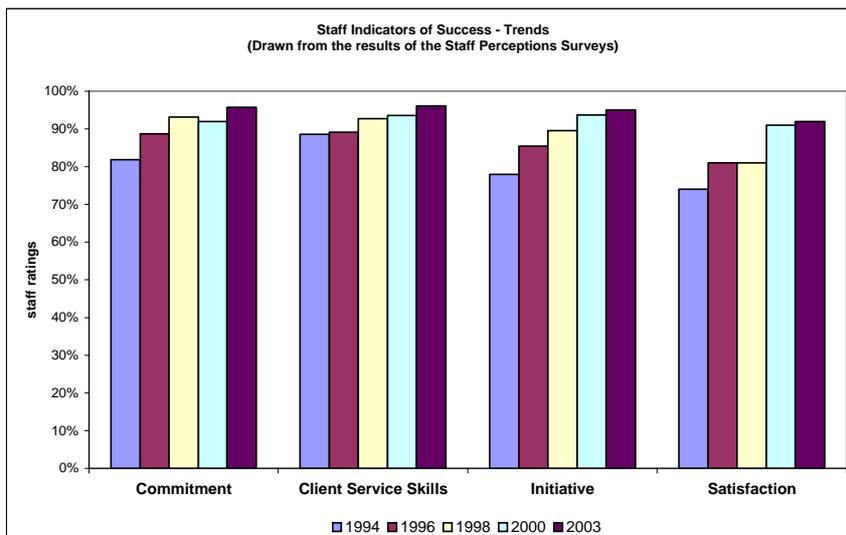
Stakeholder Group 4 – Suppliers
- Working closely with suppliers has developed mutual understanding of requirements; raised their performance levels in meeting our needs for timely, accurate, cost-efficient supply; and developed innovative solutions, see figure iv.

Fig iv
Average Supply Time

Stakeholder Group 5 – The Community
- Secondary school penetration rates have improved by 33% since inception in 1998, and student confidence levels in using Library services after the program have been maintained at 95%-98%."

B. Indicators of Sustainability

The second item in Category 7, 'indicators of sustainability', is concerned with the collection of information to predict likely future relevance and viability. Again, some of the business related concepts such as market trends were not immediately accessible. They were, however, concepts which were considered long and hard leading to, for instance, the development of a marketing plan which documented the various client groupings or segments and the services available for each. Additionally, the plan facilitated identification of groups needing additional specialized services. This in turn enabled progress towards achievement of one element of UWL's vision, that is, to provide exceptional service, customized to meet individual needs.
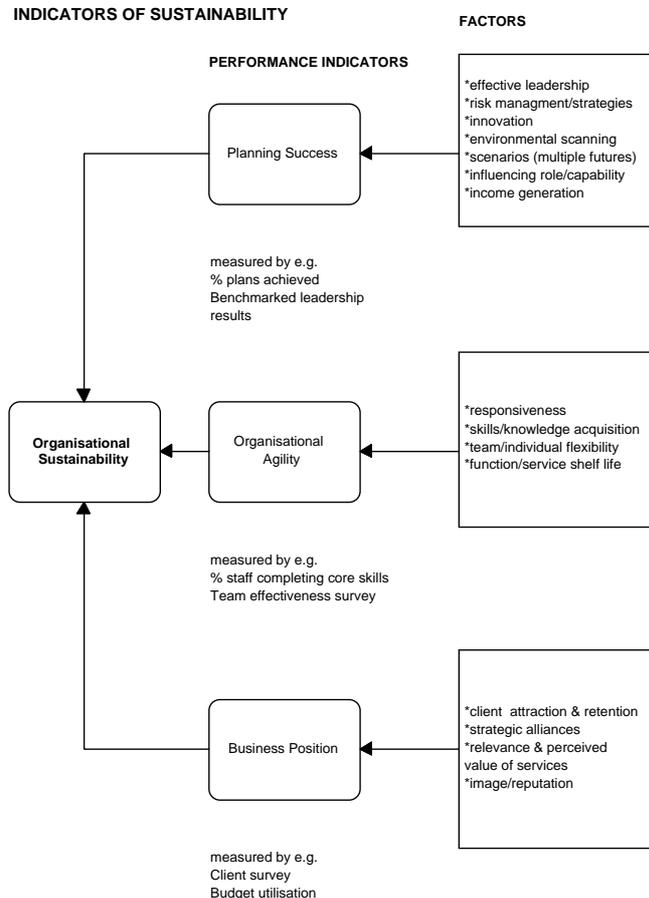
The following extract (University of Wollongong Library, 2000), articulates the approach taken to demonstrating sustainability.

- "Best practice studies in the higher education sector indicate that dynamism is as important as past achievements and is probably a better guide to future performance.
- We have positioned ourselves to be an indispensable partner in the University's business. The Library is widely regarded as the heart of the University, as a model of excellence in service and as possessing a 'different' culture.

- Acutely aware of the volatile and increasingly competitive environment in which we operate, and of the many risks involved in choosing one strategy over another, we intend to continue collection and analysis of all factors which impinge on our business so that choice and positioning is based on the best possible information.
- We have identified the factors which will influence our ongoing success and incorporated these in our planning processes.
- We keep key stakeholders informed of how we add value for mutual advantage and of strategies for managing threats and opportunities, eg providing expert input into planning campus-wide strategies, such as flexible delivery, internet access, research infrastructure, generic skills, human resource policies.
- We form worldwide alliances to influence publishers, suppliers, other information providers and potential competitors, by working with them to determine roles, future pricing, service models and by aligning ourselves with influential partners. We work through consortia to negotiate the best possible coverage and pricing of resources
- We invest in our staff, in skills and knowledge acquisition and in leadership development, in relevant and carefully tested technology and innovation in all aspects of the business, as these are critical to our sustainability.

A model was developed to illustrate the approach and how it would be measured, see figure v.

Fig. V
Indicators of sustainability model

INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABILITY

FACTORS

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Planning Success

*effective leadership
*risk managment/strategies
*innovation
*environmental scanning
*scenarios (multiple futures)
*influencing role/capability
*income generation

measured by e.g.
% plans achieved
Benchmarked leadership
results

Organisational
Sustainability

Organisational
Agility

*responsiveness
*skills/knowledge acquisition
*team/individual flexibility
*function/service shelf life

measured by e.g.
% staff completing core skills
Team effectiveness survey

Business Position

*client attraction & retention
*strategic alliances
*relevance & perceived
value of services
*image/reputation

measured by e.g.
Client survey
Budget utilisation

Addressing and implementing the precepts of Category 7 provided extensive learning opportunities at individual and organizational level. To realize that sustainability into the future cannot be assumed, even for 'public good' organizations such as libraries was valuable in itself. Library staff became increasingly aware of the competition posed by internet search engines, commercial online learning providers and some information technology staff who believed that mastery of systems and search software is all that is needed for successful information retrieval in the online era. Another benefit was found in analysing and demonstrating the tangible and intangible value the Library is able to deliver to its clients and stakeholders.

X. Conclusion

As demonstrated throughout its submission for the Australian Business Excellence Award, the University of Wollongong Library had measured performance internally and externally, both within and outside its industry through benchmarking and evaluation against national and international standards.

In its pursuit of excellence UWL adopted a quality management framework, as a matter of choice not, as is often the case, to comply with government or parent body fiat. As outlined by Crosling (2003, p. 43), UWL adopted …"an *intrinsically motivated* approach – one driven by shared values and aspirations" as opposed to "an *extrinsically motivated* approach – one driven by imposed rules and regulations…"

The many benefits accrued during the University of Wollongong Library's quality journey have been presented in other papers by McGregor, (1997, 2000, 2001, 2003). Some of these benefits and insights have been delineated in this chapter. Perhaps the defining benefit is that the decision to embark on a quality program through adoption of the Australian Business Excellence Framework has been validated over time. It is now almost ten years since the commencement of the journey. The principles and philosophy of the ABEF have been integrated into the work of all teams; 'quality' has become part of the way of 'doing things'. This has translated into the recognition for service excellence and the competitive positioning of the Library envisaged at the outset. There is confidence in the ability of the Library's staff, working together as well as in partnership with clients and stakeholders, to identify solutions to whatever challenges both the Library and its parent organization may face in the future.

Application of the principles and the assessment dimensions: Approach, Deployment, Results and Improvement has encouraged a collective focus on the core competencies of the Library; that is, what the Library must do well for the achievement of its vision, mission and goals. The Australian Business Excellence Framework, while providing insight into good and best practices, does not prescribe what organizations *should* do to achieve competitive advantage. Each organization must design and execute the systems and structures which best fit its mission, its operating environment, stage of development and its range of situational variables to achieve the best possible strategic advantage.

As discussed by Barney (1995), the challenge for any organization is the development of a management configuration that simultaneously exploits and develops the core competences and efficiency practices in a manner that is not easily replicated by its competitors. Despite

the ease of imitating processes and practices, organizations that are successful in strategy selection and execution are often leaders in developing complex, sophisticated and often intangible competences and resources, such as organisational culture, features not prone to easy duplication.

The anticipated indicators of success will be tested by the critical audience of the intended strategy; whether the users of the system can be convinced that it will deliver best value and services to its customers and other key stakeholders (Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

Notes

[1.] The Australian Business Excellence Framework was previously known as the Australian Quality Framework and was administered by the Australian Quality Council. Similarly, the Australian Business Excellence Award was previously known as the Australian Quality Award.

[2.] For a description of the 'Investors in People' Standard and its application in the University of Wollongong Library, see the following publications:
Denny, Lorraine (2000). University of Wollongong Library - Investors in People, *AIMA News*, 15 June, pp.1, 4.
Denny, Lorraine (2000). What 'Investors in People' have done for us. *NATA Certification Services International*.
Jantti, Margie (2000). Investing in people, *Momentum, The Quality Magazine*, 1.
Or the following website: http://www.ncsi.com.au/

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