12th EAHIL Conference

Comparing the effectiveness of alternative investigation methods for library environmental evaluation
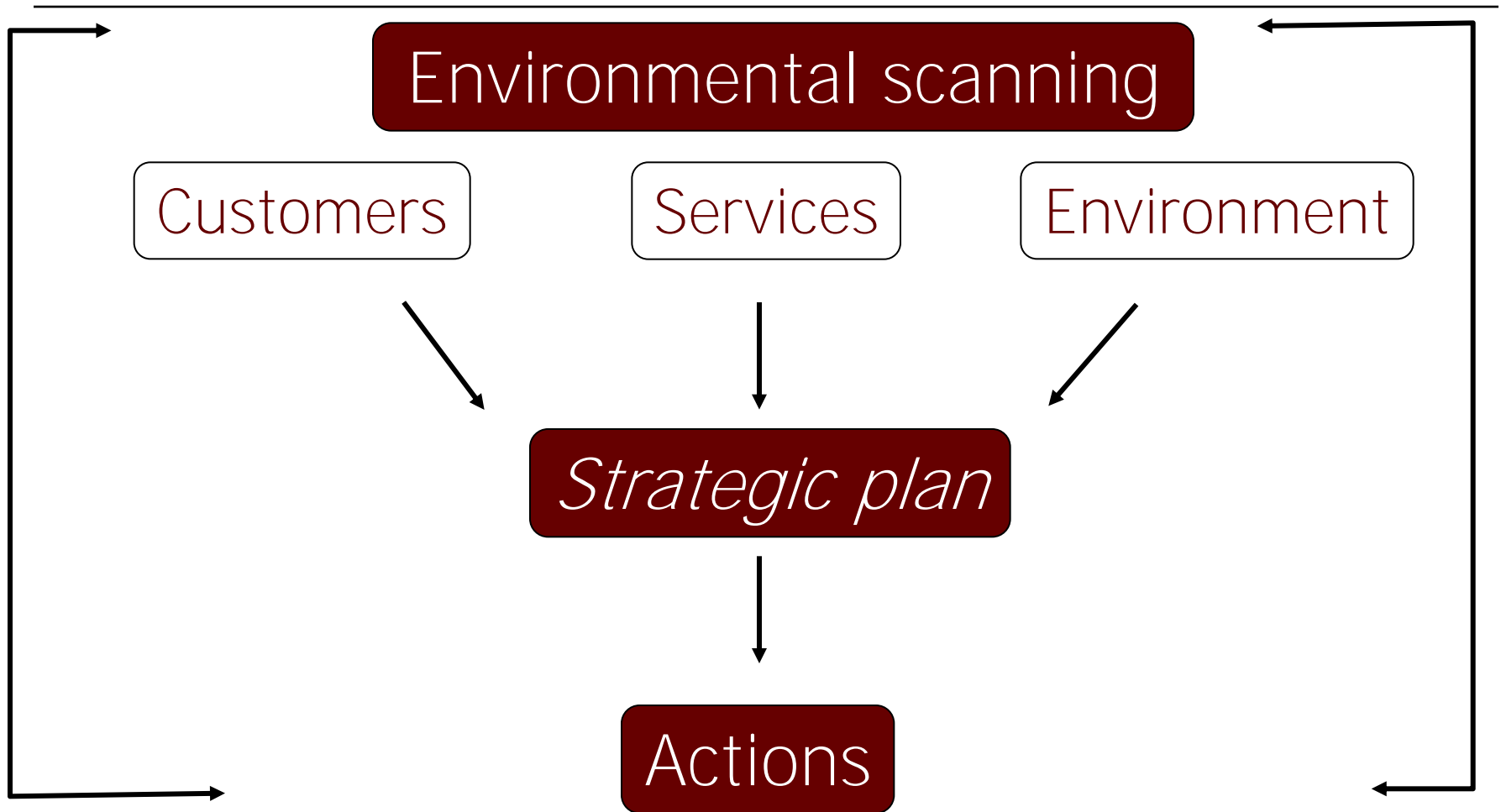
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What is the future for academic libraries?

☐ What are the user needs?

☐ How can we communicate with our users?

☐ How can we stay close to our users and let them know that we are there?

Marketing Backbone

Environmental scanning

Customers   Services   Environment

Strategic plan

Actions

Environmental scanning

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

LibQUAL+ questionnaire

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

LibQUAL+ strengths

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

LibQUAL+ weaknesses

- Several questions might be ambiguous

- The analysis takes time

- A risk exists : those analysing the data might draw misleading conclusions

Assessment of user satisfaction by the staff

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

Marketing@your library (1)

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

Marketing@your library (2)

□ Several activities

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

Carrying out library user research

- ☐ Who are our customers?

- ☐ Who has an influence over the future of our library?

- ☐ What do our customers want and need?

Ways to learn about your customers (1)

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

Ways to learn about your customers (2)

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

Achievements made due to ACRL method

□ This procedure allowed us to:

- Ask good questions in a structured way

- List the different categories of users

- Identify current needs (satisfied or not satisfied)

- Consider future needs

- Stimulate staff involvement and motivation

Validation of the results

Focus groups?

Semi-structured interviews?

Focus group : definition

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

Focus groups: several advantages

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

Focus groups: several disadvantages

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

Advantages of semi-structured interviews

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

Conclusions (1)

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

Conclusions (2)

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

Thank you for your attention