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Community, complexity, the public library and community orientation.

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Abstract

Purpose

This paper presents a model of the complexity in public libraries based on a case study of Cumbria Libraries, a public library service in the North West of England. The model illustrates the complexity of the library as a societal organization with multiple stakeholder perspectives. The model is based on community orientation as a form of market orientation, in combination with other multiple strategic orientations that combine to add value for stakeholders within the community.

Research design

The study is based on a case study of Cumbria Libraries. The data were gathered during field via conversations, interviews, photographs, documents, and observations including 85 participants from multiple stakeholder groups. The analytical approach blended Thematic Analysis and Situational Analysis.

Findings

A key finding was the existence of multiple strategic orientations, and the criticality of the leadership roles in managing the complexity, and in motivating staff and community stakeholders towards offering a cohesive, and relevant service suitable for community needs.

Originality

There is currently no literature on strategic orientation in libraries. The paper present an original model illustrating the complexity of the strategic orientations identified within the case study.

Keywords:

Strategic orientations, public libraries, community orientation, societal organisations, case study, complexity

Note: This work was first presented at the 3rd International Conference on Integrated Information, September 5-6, Prague, Czech Republic, <http://history.icininfo.net/2013/>

Introduction

Strategic orientations are the guiding principles that influence an organization's strategic plans and activities (Noble, Sinha & Kumar, 2002). Organizational success is often linked to strategic orientation (Narver, & Slater, 1990). It is important then for an organization to implement the appropriate strategy or strategies in order to ensure success, and continued survival in increasingly competitive environments. For businesses this success is measured by profitability. For non-profit organizations the objective analogous to profitability is survival.'(Narver & Slater, 1990). Non-profit organizations can be defined as organizations that explicitly respond to a community need; creating value for society rather than profit (Mahmood & Yusif, 2012). Public libraries can be seen as non-profit organizations having a clear societal role. The survival of public libraries has been the focus of a number of recent UK reports calling for new strategic directions to sustain libraries for the future in the light of economic constraints (ACE, 2011; Capita, 2012; Chartered Institute of Library and

Information Professionals, 2012, MLA, 2010). There has been much discussion on the changes facing libraries with library authorities addressing the challenges differently, but many looking to communities to support services with volunteer initiatives (Public Library News, 2013; Usherwood, 2010). Adopting an appropriate strategic orientation could aid change management and ensure survival in what is a “changing landscape” (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2012). This study considers a number of the strategic options for libraries from a management perspective.

Understanding the core dimensions of the chosen strategic option is fundamental to determining the suitability of the library strategy. This study explores the nature, and complexity of the strategic orientation of one public library service in England that has recently undergone a service review and organizational change. The findings presented here are from a wider study that investigated market orientation (MO) in libraries specifically in relation to innovation and performance (Sen, 2013). In the strategic marketing domain, market orientation is defined as ‘... the organization culture... that most effectively creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers [or users/customers] and, thus continuous superior performance.’ (Narver, & Slater, 1990: 21). Narver and Slater’s (1990) definition of MO includes three behavioural components; customer co-ordination, competitor orientation and inter-functional co-ordination. Other activities attributed to organisations that exhibit market oriented behaviour are responsiveness, intelligence gathering, and intelligence dissemination (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Narver and Slater’s (1990) definition of MO is seen as having a strategic focus, whilst Kohli & Jaworski’s (1990) definition is seen as being based on marketing activities. These two seminal papers form the basis of decades of ongoing research within the literature.

The wider study (Sen, 2013) revealed a number of key findings: (1) library professionals define MO as in the management literature; (2) MO had a negative relationship with performance (3) the relationship between MO and performance became significantly positive when combined with an innovation orientation (InO), evidencing multiple orientations (4) there are unexplained factors influencing performance that warranted further exploration. The work presented in this paper presents the findings from a case study of Cumbria Libraries. The case study was designed to explore the unexplained factors in the context of public libraries, strategic orientations and performance, and to develop an understanding of the situation.

The findings focus on a single library service, following a period of review and strategic change. A Library Service Review (LSR) had been undertaken to address declining use, a trend not confined to Cumbria (DCMS, 2010). As a result of the review, a new model of service provision was developed. The new strategy, a community orientation (CO), focuses on community needs, and aiming to improve access to service for users. A CO is seen as being relevant in the public sector with the community as the focus, and with community intelligence used to support decisions that meet community needs (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011). A CO is described as being a form of MO (Proenca 1998). CO is often referred to in the community health literature (Proenca 1998, Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011).

This period of strategic change at Cumbria Libraries provided an opportunity for analysis of the situation through the extensive community engagement undertaken in the LSR, and in this case study. The case study looked at the situation from multiple perspectives - managers, staff, users, politicians.

Data Collection

Cumbria Libraries proved an ideal case for this study having undertaken a strategic review of their services. From a researcher perspective the aim was to understand the strategic orientations and their impact on performance, and to explore the complexity indicated by earlier phases of the study. The data were gathered during field visits (April-Nov. 2012). The data consisted of a series of conversations, interviews, photographs, documents, and observations including 85 participants from multiple stakeholder groups. Access was given to 100 documents relevant to the LSR, (16 further documents were collected during the fieldwork). The LSR documents included feedback from a community profiling exercise, and community consultation exercise; and included the customer perspective. Customers were therefore not surveyed during the fieldwork.

The data analysis methods

The data were coded and analyzed taking using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data', then used aspects of Situational Analysis. Situational Analysis is a qualitative approach that is flexible, holistic and suited to exploring complexity (Clarke, 2005). It involves a series of mapping techniques, some similar to concept mapping. Memos, and reflective notes aid the elucidation of the data. Themes that emerged were categorised aided by the mapping techniques.

Two thousand and ninety six initial coded words and statements were generated. These fell into nine broad categories: culture, leadership, challenges and constraints, strategy, communication, access, staff, performance and success. This paper focuses on the 'strategy' theme that was identified, that identified multiple strategic orientation within the context of the public library.

Results and discussion¹

Case study context and characteristics

Cumbria is the second largest county in England. It has a mix of rural and urban communities geographically widespread, and having limited road and transport networks. Cumbria is the second least densely populated county in England. 52% of Cumbria's population live in rural areas. Carlisle is the only city. Barrow-in Furness is in the 105 most deprived local authorities in England, while South Lakeland is amongst the 20% least deprived. There is a high percentage of residents aged 60+ (27%). The main industries are farming, tourism, and the nuclear industry.

Cumbria has 48 static libraries including 7 Local Links (small branches), 5 Library Links (unmanned community services), and 3 mobile libraries; 250,000 people are registered users, with 1 in 5 of the population being 'active borrowers'. In 2010 1.8 million books and 350,000 other items were borrowed, an 18% decrease on 2009. People engaged in approximately 250,000 computer sessions. Visits dropped by 20%. Library opening hours vary between 53 hours to a few hours a week. Users have an over representation of 'wealthy achievers', with those who are 'hard pressed' or of 'moderate means' under represented (D).

In 2011 a LSR was commenced. The LSR aimed to establish positive and innovative outcomes reflecting best practice and benefiting customers The LSR commissioned a demographic profile, and socio-economic profile of the users. The stakeholder engagement exercise aimed to understand public views and identify areas for improvement. During the consultation many thousands of contacts were made with stakeholders with over 4000 individual comments recorded and analysed. Ideas for improvement mainly focused on service improvements such as improved opening hours. The social element of a library was seen as important and any new community library initiatives needed to strive to maintain this as a valued aspect of the service. Mobile libraries presented a 'dilemma' being a much loved service, but no longer viable. Alternative options needed to be explored (D). Also savings were needed to ensure sustainability. Any change would be of concern to staff and customers and that good communication would be needed throughout any change. As a result of the LSR, a new model of provision was developed, a community orientation, with a focus on community needs, and improved access (C, D). Cumbria has seen a number of success stories from these initiatives, one such success story being the opening of a community library at Dent, a rural village that previously had a very limited service offered by the mobile library once a week. This library now has a service two full days a week, run by volunteers, but supported by the Community Library Officer, is offering extended hours across one of those two days, and has increased visitor numbers, and the services available to users.

Strategic orientations

Strategic orientations are the guiding principles that influence an organisation's strategy and

¹ NB 'D' relates to documentary data, 'C' relates to data from an interview or conversation. A list of documents is available in Sen (2013).

activities (Noble, Sinha & Kumar, 2002). The data revealed evidence of multiple orientations at Cumbria Libraries. In the document analysis there was explicit reference to a ‘community orientation’. A CO ‘is when the community itself is the most appropriate focus of attention, rather than the individual, and the community is the most potent resource for solutions’, (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011). A CO is a form of MO, with the use of community intelligence, and strategic flexibility being critical to enabling proactive responsiveness (Ginn, Gregory, & Lee, 2006). Other orientations were visible e.g. an innovation orientation InO, and evidence of an emerging entrepreneurial orientation (EO). Innovation orientation refers to the extent to which new ideas are pursued proactively. In the literature innovation is a key element of an entrepreneurial orientation, together with pro-activity, and risk taking (Miller & Friesen, 1978). Both pro-activity and risk were visible within the data: Document D45 explains the changes as, ‘...*changing dynamic of the service from reactive to proactive.*’, but one manager saw this as being tempered by a “, and giving examples from experiences working for a different authority. This manager felt that Cumbria had a ‘*natural wariness*’. Both innovation orientation and entrepreneurial orientation are information and knowledge intensive, requiring the use of information, and intelligence to support decision making, and requiring organisational learning. Each of these orientations is discussed below together with evidence from the data.

Market orientation

There is evidence of a MO being adopted, having an awareness of the competitive environment that libraries operate in, being heavily customer orientated, with staff, working together towards clear goals exhibiting inter-functional co-ordination, (the service functions working together), in meeting objectives (Narver & Slater, 1990). Other activities attributed to organisations that exhibit MO behaviour are responsiveness, intelligence gathering, and intelligence dissemination (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Examples of these behaviours are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of evidence of Cumbria Libraries adopting a MO

Dimension of MO	Evidence form the data
Competitor orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One manager described the competitive environment as a ‘<i>crowded marketplace</i>’, with ‘<i>a lot of competition</i>’, being ‘<i>up against Amazon, e-books, supermarkets..</i>’ (C). • ‘<i>External competition comes from external activities, and I’m thinking of young people who spend half their time watching TV, and the other half playing computer games.</i>’ (C).
Customer orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction is high (D), ‘<i>between 95-96%</i>’, with complaints being rare, and ‘<i>customers really appreciate the staff</i>’ (C). • ‘<i>...the customer should drive the service.</i>’ (C)
Inter-functional coordination -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One manager discussed the designing of a specific building, and said how it had been a ‘<i>joint thing with staff...the relationship with staff</i>’ being ‘<i>...central to what we do.</i>’ (C).
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One manager reported that there is a ‘<i>cohesive management team</i>’ (C). • Cumbria tries to target key user groups; ‘<i>...we’ve responded, and we’ve listened</i>’ (C). • ‘<i>We have to talk to our customers, and listen to our customers, and we have to be very mindful of what is happening in the wider world...</i>’ (C).
Intelligence generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the LSR. ‘<i>They [the Intelligence Observatory] produce an array of figures that we can delve into. They will manipulate the figures for you if you need specific information about particular geographic locations.</i>’ (C). • ‘<i>They can give us area profiles of things which does help us.</i>’ (C).
Intelligence dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior managers, stated, ‘<i>Theoretically the management meeting structure should diffuse down...and then that is supplemented with things like staff guidance notes, and staff instruction notes that go out</i>

as well.' (C).

- As one manager commented *'You have to take time to engage with staff'* (C).
-

Community orientation

For Cumbria having a MO means being aware of the communities it serves. The Library Service appears to demonstrate a strong *'community orientation'* where the generation, dissemination, and use of community intelligence is used in strategic response to environmental pressures. Behaviours related to MO and therefore CO are visible in the data (Table 1). Researchers see CO as one form of MO (Ginn, Gregory, & Lee, 2006). Corey, Corey and Callanan (2011) identified two key aspects to community oriented organisations; (1) the community as the focus of attention, and (2) the community itself being a source of solutions to problems. The focus of the service changes and developments is quite clearly the community (D), with a number of community initiatives such as book drops, community libraries, community library workers, and community partners (C, D). The community have been active in providing solutions. One manager described how the service had initially *'put feelers out'* to instigate a book drop in the community, and how people in the community were *'really keen'*. The manager described it as the people *'coming together as a community'* to provide a solution (C).

Learning orientation

Intelligence is key to a learning organisation, and a learning orientation (LO), which refers to the organisation wide activity of creating and using knowledge to enhance performance. A LO is proposed to be an antecedent of innovativeness, which in turn influences performance (Calantone, Tamer, & Zhao, 2002). Library managers stressed the importance of being a learning organisation, and that applying to the individual as well as the service. Relating to the service - *'If you don't develop you die don't you.'* (C); and to the individual *'I think you are learning every day; a constant learning process', 'If you don't do that you've had it really'* (C). The importance of a *'creative environment'* was stressed in which new things could be tried out (C). The appropriate environment to support organisational learning appears strong and positive, with one manager commenting *'I say if it doesn't work we will work out why it doesn't work and move forwards again.'* (C).

Innovation orientation

MO is often associated with innovation. Innovative had a strong presence in the data indicating an InO; an InO being, the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation (Calantone, Tamer, & Zhao, 2002). Innovation is also closely related to organisational learning and hence a LO, as the innovation process involves the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge in the implementation of new ideas (Hurley & Hult, 1998).

The documentation highlighted innovation in a number of areas across the service e.g. innovation in alternative methods and models of service delivery (D); in changing the ways people access the service (D); in encouraging ideas from staff (D); in using money differently (D); take a *'radical approach'* to service delivery (D). The evidence in the documents was supported by comments from the library managers who gave examples of innovative projects were Cumbria was *'the first one in the country'* (C). The managers also talked about delivering services to remote areas; *'We are trying to think of innovative ways of addressing that isolation problem.'* (C).

The innovation shown by staff was commented on (C), with staff being creative, and always coming up with ideas; *'The libraries staff are terrific, immensely imaginative...very innovative..'* (C). Senior managers encourage innovation in staff and this is valued, *'[name of senior manager] is very supportive, and very keen that the library service is innovative and develops and serves the community.'* (C).

In the public sector innovation could be described as social innovation with new ideas meeting social goals. Social innovation is about change, and about improving quality of life (Pol & Ville, 2009). Cumbria Libraries are changing the way they deliver their services through their innovative approach to community initiatives. Any such changes need capturing as evidence of the positive impact that the service developments are having on the communities. This is a challenge when the delivery of the services is embedded in a multiple stakeholder innovation network. Intense community engagement is required to develop an effective approach to social learning where the 'interactive and dynamic process in a multi-actor setting where knowledge is exchanged and where actors learn by interaction and co-create new knowledge in on-going interaction' (Sol, Beers & Wals, 2012:3). The service needs to foster a culture of developing trust and commitment between local stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of socially innovative service initiatives.

Brand orientation

Brand orientation (BdO), is where the 'Brand orientation emphasizes the significance of the brand identity' within the organizational culture behaviour, and strategy.' (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2013:16). The BdO at Cumbria Libraries appears weak. Library managers feel that the library service had lost its specific identity over the years because of County Council policies: '*...corporate centre as tightened...everyone has now got to be branded as Cumbria County Council, and they do not like anyone being a sub-brand under that...*' (C). If the Library Service wants a strong brand orientation and clear identity then it needs to establish a clear internal mission, vision, and values that are reflected and communicated in its brand image. This is difficult with the constraints of the parent organization. With BdO the customer comes first, but brand identity also influences the culture, behaviour, and strategy of the organisation (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2013). Branding can be successful in changing the perception of the library and in increasing library use (Hariff & Rowley, 2011).

Entrepreneurial orientation

Cumbria Libraries are to some extent demonstrating entrepreneurial orientation (EO), in which organisations demonstrate the ability to take risks, to be innovative and proactive (Miller & Frieson 1978). Though this orientation has long been discussed in relation to business, in the public sector, it is related to social enterprises, where competitiveness and profits are not paramount, but social innovation, social cohesion are paramount, bringing about social change and improvements through the '*development of better service delivery models.*' (El-Haddadeh, & Weerakkody. 2012:290). The library leaders are the '*change agents*' in this process who 'adopt a mission to create and sustain social value, recognise new opportunities to serve this mission, engage in an innovation and learning process, act boldly without limitation, and exhibit a sense of accountability for both their resource input and their created outcomes' (Dees, 1998). Accountability is a key issue in any publicly funded public sector service, again evidenced in the documentation (D).

The library leaders at Cumbria are definitely change agents, good at recognising opportunities (C). The mission of creating social value is articulated in the documentation (D), but this could be communicated more widely through the library values and branding orientation. Engaging in innovation and learning is actively pursued, acting boldly is in evidence through the vision for the service, and the subsequent implementation of changes. .

Nicholls (2008) proposes that social entrepreneurship has three dimensions (1) sociality, (2) innovation (3) MO.

Social entrepreneurs are open to collaboration between the public sector, the private sector, and the voluntary and non-profit sector in achieving their goals. Their success is not measured by profits, but by cost effectiveness, improvement of social cohesion, and quality of people's lives (El-Haddadeh, & Weerakkody: 2012). Measuring these outcomes in Cumbria would be helpful in demonstrating the impact and success of the community initiatives.

Service orientation

The service offering is considered in relation to the customer and community needs that define the market. There is a need to deliver sustainable public services; as one manager commented when discussing the mobile library service; *'Can we find an added value, a more sustainable approach.'* (C). Sustainability in relation to service developments is also explicit in the documentation (D). Service priorities were observed being discussed at some length in team meetings (C). One manager highlighted the problem that there are *'a lot of services to sustain.'* (C); and the services are very busy (C).

Service orientation relates to employees and their ability to be *'helpful, thoughtful, considerate, and co-operative'* (Hogan, Hogan, & Busch, 1984: 167). The focus is on what employees do in service interactions to ensure service quality. Service orientation complements and support customer orientation. Service orientation is about the attitudes, and behaviours that employees have towards customer, and an organisation that supports service orientation is about the values, and beliefs, and culture that enables service oriented behaviour. Managers and staff demonstrate strong service values, and service orientated traits e.g. being courteous, and helpful (D), and *'customers really appreciate the staff'* (C). The service ethic is supported by the organisation as customer service training is seen as a priority, and being rolled out despite a restricted training budget (C). There is also an initiative to develop customer service standards to ensure basic standards and service quality across service points regardless of the differences that do exist (C). Maintaining standards and service orientation can be more difficult to manage when implementing a more devolved community service. Service Level Agreements go some way to address this challenge, but effective communication and monitoring is needed to ensure standards are maintained (D).

Multiple strategic orientations

The multiple orientations identified, and discussed in relation to key management concepts illustrate the complex and dynamic environment currently affecting libraries services. Figure 1 maps those strategic orientations, key concepts, and dimensions diagrammatically illustrating the relationships and complexity.

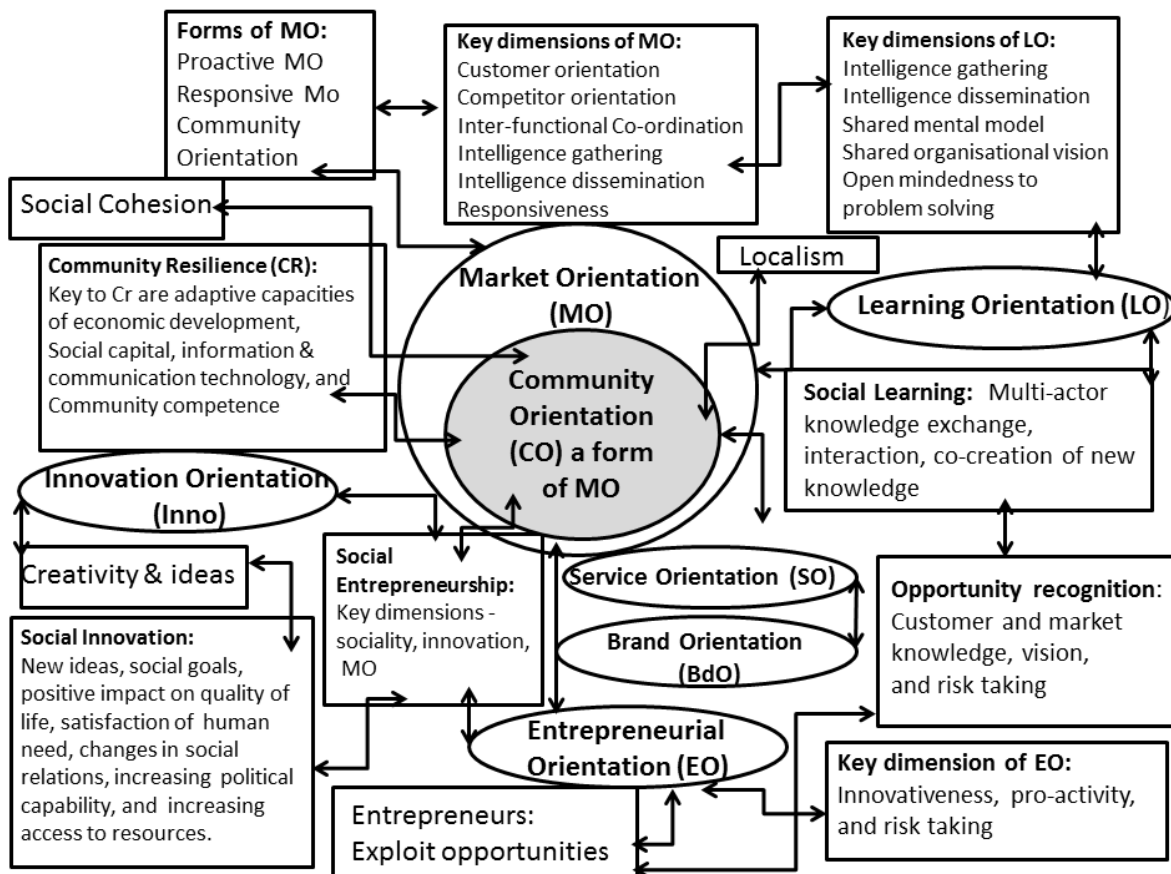


Fig. 1 The relationships mapped between multiple strategic orientations, and key concepts

The arrows indicate affinity between particular constructs based on their definition and shared dimensions. For example, intelligence gathering is a conceptual dimension that is shared by both MO and LO. Innovation as a concept is a dimension of social innovation as and social entrepreneurship.

Cumbria demonstrates behaviours signifying multiple strategic orientations. Identifiable in the data is evidence of MO, LO, BdO, IO, EO, and SO. This list may not be exhaustive. There may be other latent orientations. This demonstrates the complexity of the public library environment, especially in a period of review, transition, and transformation. As service changes bed-in the emphasis on the strategic orientations may need to change. This means the constant monitoring, reviewing, and maintaining awareness of the library environment is critical.

At the heart of the model is CO as a form of MO, with the communities being the target markets; the aim to improve performance. Performance evaluation should be a joint initiative between the service staff and community members, preferably incorporating quantitative and qualitative indicators (Pateman, & Williment, 2013). There may be other outcomes and benefits, such as community or social cohesion engendered through increased community engagement and social and community interaction (Pateman, & Williment, 2013), the strengthening of communities, trust between the authority and the community (Chrisisa, 2013), and increased community resilience (Dudley, 2013). Cumbria are beginning to see anecdotal evidence of such positivity in the community. The Library Link at Dent is an example of the where the community have come together to maintain the service provision, supported by the library service and the Community Library Worker. The service already has increased footfall, has improved the service that can be given to the local school, has increased opening hours beyond what was offered by the mobile library, and is already valued by the users, and local community [C].

Pateman and Williment (2013: 215) stress the importance of the ‘unknown’, in community-led work, as staff cannot be sure what direction the community will want to take. Staff and the library service need to be flexible, adaptable, need to listen, to learn, and accommodate change. Listening

and learning are characteristics found within learning organisations. In a CO focused context learning should encompass multi-actor learning (Sol, Beers, Arjen, & Wals, 2013). Multi-actor learning in a social context is considered social learning which is a dynamic process 'where knowledge is exchanged and actors learn by interaction and co-create new knowledge and on-going interaction' (Sol, Beers, Arjen, & Wals, 2013: 38).

Linked to social learning is the concept of social innovation. From learning comes change. Social innovation is about change (Pol & Ville, 2009). Social innovation is innovation in a social context. Cumbria's community initiatives could be described as socially innovative demonstrating new ways of working to achieve social needs.

Any new venture and change is a risk. Risk taking is seen by Miller and Frieson (1978) as being a dimension of EO, along with innovation (as in InO), and proactivity.

To address social and community needs libraries can partner not just with people in the community, community organisations, third sector organisations, but also with commercial organisations (DCMS, 2010). For example Cumbria have co-located services in a shop, and in a public house. The library pays a fee to the business to house the library, so both organisations benefit, and so does the community. Hamilton-Pennell (2008: 1) thinks that 'public libraries are natural partners in local economic development efforts', and suited to social entrepreneurship. According to the literature there are three dimensions to social entrepreneurship, sociality, innovation, and MO (El-Haddadeh, & Weerakkody, 2012). Cumbria Libraries demonstrates behaviour that could be categorised within all these dimensions. If libraries function as social enterprises, then library leaders can act as social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs are change agents (Dees, 1998), who: '... adopt a mission to create and sustain social value, recognise new opportunities to serve this mission, engage in an innovation and learning process, act boldly without limitations, and exhibit a sense of accountability ...' (El-Haddadeh & Weerakkody, 2012: 290). In this definition terms are apparent that link to the management concepts discussed. Social entrepreneurs highlights the need to recognise new opportunities. Opportunity recognition emerged as a theme in the case study as a skill required of managers. Entrepreneurs find and exploit opportunities by taking advantage of knowing or recognising things that others do not. This requires managers to remain agile, keep up-to-date with the sector or domain, and have acute knowledge of customer needs and services. An antecedent to opportunity recognition is prior knowledge of the customer and markets (Shane, 2000), illustrating the affinity of opportunity recognition with MO and a LO. When there is economic pressure and increased competition, managers in organisations have to take risks, be proactive entrepreneurs and be market-oriented (Edil, Erdil & Keskin, 2004).

Leadership

The findings have implications for library leaders who need to have strong communication networks, and feedback mechanisms in order to identify and respond to constraining issues that may be outside their direct control in view of the complexity of the library services service environment, and multiple stakeholder networks. The management of these issues requires strong leadership skills, and possibly different leadership skills to those traditionally used in library service management. Leadership was identified as being critical to the success of the service within the case study and is discussed further in Sen (2013). Having strong leadership in place, directing the strategic activities, and ensuring appropriate levels of investment are all antecedents for MO to thrive. The importance of leadership, and top management abilities and support is widely researched in the management and marketing literature. Aggarwal & Singh (2004) state that MO needs commitment from higher level management, who then encourage MO behaviour's amongst staff within the organisation. Within the Cumbria case study, staff frequently reported the importance of library leaders giving 'direction' (C5), and the importance of having strategic direction as a 'way forward' for the service was documented (D14). One of the early seminal papers on MO states that the 'emphasis that top management place on market orientation' 'is critical for them [employees] to be sensitive and responsive to market developments.' (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; p. 64). However, there has been on-going discussion on the lack of leadership within libraries, and the criticality of developing leadership skills to enable the transformational change that is needed in the library domain (Hicks & Given, 2013; Goulding, Walton & Stephens, 2012; Jorden, 2012; Janes, 2009). A recent Arts Council report (2013) was clear that the

current situation in libraries ‘poses significant leadership challenges for the library sector. Most notable is the need for asymmetric leadership – mobilising resources behind libraries’ core purpose while meeting the particular needs of individual communities’ (p. 3). Leadership is quite clearly being recognised as critical to the success of libraries in the current complex climate.

Conclusions

The multiple orientations identified in this case study illustrate the complex and dynamic library environment. This paper presents a model of multiple strategic orientations based on a case study of Cumbria Libraries, a public. The model illustrates the complexity of strategic issues in the public library environment, and identifies the library as a societal organization from multiple stakeholder perspectives. The strategic model for Cumbria centres on a community orientation as a form of market orientation, in combination with other multiple strategic orientations. This model is likely to be different for different organisations responding to the needs of differing communities. A key implication for the library service is the need for strong leadership. This leadership is critical in understanding the complexity, in identifying the appropriate strategic mix, in establishing multiple communication networks, in communicating common goals on one level, whilst allowing for diversity and multiple goals across the community, and in motivating staff and community stakeholders towards offering a cohesive, and relevant service suitable for community needs.

As the data are derived from a single case study the findings are not generalizable. However, the model and main lessons from this research could have interest for other libraries and public sector services. The study offers a contribution in clearly identifying multiple strategic orientations in evidence in public libraries, and in evidencing the complexity of the strategic issues for public libraries.

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