



Book Review

Review of *Integrated Library Planning: A New Model for Strategic and Dynamic Planning, Management, and Assessment*

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of the book *Integrated Library Planning: A New Model for Strategic and Dynamic Planning, Management, and Assessment* by Myka Kennedy Stephens. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-3937-6 \$62

KEYWORDS

Planning, library planning, library administration

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Planning for libraries is often a challenge. How can you add new services if there is not sufficient funding? How can you reinvent spaces without the commitment from your governing institution? Questions like these often mean that planning seems insurmountable. The reality is that there are many types of planning and what is proposed in *Integrated Library Planning: A New Model for Strategic and Dynamic Planning, Management, and Assessment* might just be what you are looking for. It is thoughtfully executed to appeal to nearly any type of library from small, rural public to large academic. The book is clearly laid out to provide a roadmap of what integrated planning is and how it can benefit your library.

The book is written by Myka Kennedy Stephens, a library director for a small, private, specialty library. In addition to her librarian position, Stephens is the CEO and founder of a company that provides coaching and consulting services to professionals in libraries and related fields. Her experience in both speaking and writing on the topic allows her to have carefully honed her knowledge on the topic and applied it to libraries where she has worked.

Overview

The book is a concise 160 pages that does a number of things for a library planner. It provides an overview of integrated planning and how a library can develop such a mindset (chapters 1 and 2). There is a discussion of the building blocks for integrated planning (chapter 3), the actual planning process (chapter 4), and actual implementation (chapters 5 and 6). Chapter 7 deals with the long-term effects of using this process. There are two appendices that share resources and sample documentation that give the reader tools to begin the process without having to reinvent the wheel.

Strengths

There is no doubt that the book is logically organized and clearly written to provide a reader with no or little planning experience with the tools to be successful in such an endeavor. This does not mean it is too simplistic for the seasoned planner. Since it is an introduction to a new way to plan, there is plenty of meaty discussion dealing with the reasoning and value of implementing integrated planning. Stephens is clear about the approach to this type of planning.

Each chapter is set up in a similar fashion. Case studies that reflect the author's experiences are interspersed with examples of integrated planning in fictitious libraries. This nicely puts theory into practice and shows the reader how different aspects of integrated planning could look in a real setting. In addition, each chapter has a summary at the end. This might even be a good place for the novice strategic planner to begin since the overview is useful as a precursor to the more in-depth portions of each chapter.

A solid introduction gives more of the author's background in relation to this process. In addition, it briefly outlines each chapter and then gives recognition to a substantial list of civil rights leaders who are memorialized in the fictitious case study library names.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 outlines the overall integrated library planning process. It defines what readers will find discussed more deeply throughout the book.

There are three main tasks that need to be accomplished before any planning begins. Chapter 2 outlines the need to evaluate the ability of the library to pivot to integrated planning, building support for such a move among various stakeholder groups, and finally, assembling the necessary teams to make the adoption of such a planning process successful.

Chapter 3 is titled "Foundation and Groundwork." It is the linchpin of the whole planning process and may be the make-it-or-break chapter for readers. Stephens suggests between six and twelve months for this stage of planning, with nine months being ideal. Reviewing background information, developing mission and vision statements, and a SWOT analysis are part of the preparation that needs to be accomplished prior to the actual implementation. There is a suggestion that a departmental overhaul could occur at this point to better align work and tasks to the ultimate goal of having a strong integrated planning process.

Stephens makes it clear that several tasks need to be accomplished before actual planning can begin and then be implemented. Chapter 4 covers some of these basics that create the foundation for integrated planning to be successful. Reviewing the mission, setting goals, and communicating the process with all the affected stakeholders is essential to ultimate success. The detailed work of building action plans is well documented here along with flow charts that serve as guidelines for both the novice and experienced planner.

Chapter 5 focuses on what must be done to implement the planning process and make it successful. Of note is the discussion concerning the monthly review cycle. The author acknowledges that the rhythm of developing the prescribed monthly review will emerge time for any given library but emphasizes that sticking to this process will ultimately pay off in the long run. Each monthly review should consist of three tasks: 1) reviewing and assessing library operations in relation to the plan, 2) reconciling the library's finances, and 3) discussing data that reflects what has happened, predicting what could happen, and the impact of all this on the library and its patrons. A monthly report focusing on communication, assessment, and continual planning serves as the tool to create the energy for successful implementation (p. 82).

Long-term assessment and adjustment are discussed in Chapter 6 and the need for continual planning and celebration of accomplishments is covered in Chapter 7. Both chapters deal with integrated planning beyond the initial implementation and focus on the steps to be taken to sustain the process over a period of time. As we all know, institutional planning, done

correctly, is a continuous process. Stephens' discussion of the horizon of planning helps to outline the overall process. This is where assessment occurs. The final two chapters help put all of that into perspective.

Two appendices cover helpful resources and tools as well as provide sample report outlines. The former addresses where you can discover answers to questions that may not be answered by the book. The latter is fundamental to a significant part of the planning implementation and its success.

Weaknesses

There is little to be wanting in terms of details of integrated strategic planning with this book. Although additional real-life examples might be more helpful to the reader for context, the author's use of their own experiences does give at least some basic examples of the most important sections of each chapter. Coupled with the author's lack of experience in a more traditional public or academic setting it does make the planning process presented more hypothetical and it could be more difficult to relate to.

Conclusion

Simply reading about integrated library planning and going through the motions to implement it does not mean the job is done. The author emphasizes this and provides a strong argument for the diligent work needed to successfully carry out this planning initiative. Perpetual planning, in conjunction with strong communication and routinized assessment that reflects on creating forward momentum, is true integrated library planning. This book serves as a primer, but in doing so creates a strong foundation for putting this untraditional manner of strategic planning into actual use. Readers will find value in this innovative way to accomplish a supervisory task that can be considered drudgery under traditional routes. It serves to both enlighten and educate in a clear and concise manner.