Book review

Business Planning for Digital Libraries: International Approaches

Edited by Mel Collier. Leuven: Leuven University Press,
2010, 237 pp., € 54.50

Mel Collier, Professor and Chief Librarian of Leuven University Library is nearing the end of his career as a librarian. Looking back he identifies two major challenges which faced and still face librarians: integrating computer technology into the library and learning to manage a library like an enterprise that provides value for money.

The first challenge is widely documented in the literature, as *LIBER Quarterly* itself reflects. Much less is written about the second challenge, that of business planning — and where issues of business planning *are* being addressed they are often dealt with in a fragmentary way. The volume under review is intended to fill that gap. Moreover, it intends to bring lots of fragments together in an integrated view at business planning for digital libraries. I quote the author in his definition of the term:

> 'Business planning for digital libraries is here defined as the process by which the business aims, products and services of the eventual system are identified, together with how the digital library service will contribute to the overall business and mission of the host organizations. These provide the context and rationale, which is then combined with normal business plan elements such as technical solution, investment, income expenditure, projected benefits or returns, marketing, risk analysis, management and governance.' (Collier, 2005).

In other words:

– 'What is the value proposition?
– Does the proposed digital library have a unique selling point?
– Who are the target customers and what is the (scale of) the target market?
– What are the key enabling technologies?

– What are the risks?
– Who pays?' (p. 15)

In other words yet again: 'Business planning for digital libraries is about sustainability.' In the twenty-first century libraries too must must prove their worth, and each and every expenditure must be justified.

The world of business planning is a relatively new world for librarians, so the timeliness of this volume is beyond any doubt. Moreover, the editor's hand and his intention to present an integrated view is noticeable through-out the volume. Even those contributions which stray somewhat from the intended purpose (as inevitably some papers will do in any edited volume), are brought back into the fold by clear summaries which also allow readers to pick and choose from the wide array of subjects covered in the volume:

Framework Chapters

– Business planning for digital libraries (introduction), Mel Collier
– Business model innovation in digital libraries: the cultural heritage sector, Harry Verwayen (Europeana)
– Digital libraries in higher education, Derek Law (Strathclyde)
– Digital libraries for the arts and social sciences, Ian Anderson (HATII)
– The impact of the digital library on the planning of STM libraries, Wouter Schallier (LIBER)

Practice Chapters

– E-journals in business planning for digital libraries, Hilde Van Kiel and Mel Collier (Leuven)
– E-books: business planning for the digital library, Hazel Woodward (Cranfield)
– Business planning for e-archives, Dirk Kinnaes, Marc Nelissen, Luc Schokkaert and Mel Collier (Leuven)
– Issues in business planning for archival collections of web materials, Paul Koerbin (Australia)
– Organizing digital preservation, Barbara Sierman (KB)
– Business planning for digital repositories, Alma Swan (Key Perspectives)
– Problems of multi-linguality, Geneviève Clavel-Merrin (Swiss National Library)

- Business models for open access publishing and their effect on the digital library, David C. Prosser (SPARC Europe)
- Digital library metadata, Stefan Gradmann (Humboldt)

Case Studies

- FinELib: an important infrastructure for research, Kristiina Hormia-Poutanen and Paula Mikkonen (Helsinki)
- The digital library of Catalonia, Lluís Anglada, Ángel Borrego and Núria Comellas
- Digital library development in the public library sector in Denmark, Rolf Hapel (Aarhus)
- Digital libraries for cultural heritage: a perspective from New Zealand, Chern Li Liew (Wellington)
- APEnet: a model for Internet based archival discovery environments, Angelika Menne-Haritz (Berlin)
- The California Digital Library, Gary S. Lawrence (formerly University of California)
- The Oxford Digital Library, Michael Popham (Oxford).

The added value of this volume is, of course, in its integrated approach. Posing the same fundamental questions over and over again: What is the value proposition? What is the unique selling point? Who are the target customers? What are key enabling technologies? What are the risks? Who pays?

Not all of those questions are answered satisfactorily, of course, but the volume introduces a way of thinking that can certainly benefit many librarians — especially in 2011 when funding cutbacks threaten many a library service.

This leaves me but one minor point of criticism: why publish a book about business planning for digital libraries in print only?

Reference

Collier, M. (2005): 'The business aims of eight national libraries in digital library co-operation: a study carried out for the business plan of The European Library (TEL) project', *Journal of Documentation* 65(5).

Inge Angevaare