

Shrink to fit: adapting the strategic plan in an academic library as a coping response to risk

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Abstract

In this study, we intend to observe how a strategic plan can be used as a risk management tool, in the scope of academic libraries. Risk is perceived by individuals and institutions when faced with environmental changes which threaten stability or integrity. In libraries, these changes show in structural alterations, that is, in decreasing human, material and financial resources, and this implies having to develop strategies to accommodate new situations. Inspired by concepts from the fields of management and psychology, this paper analyses risk management and strategic planning as an adaptive response to change. This idea is furthered with the case study of a university library, which shows how adapting to such challenges is possible. We report a management strategy which includes a SWOT analysis about the performance of the library, and the subsequent reorganization of fields of action and redefinition of goals and tasks. The strategy comprises all the efforts made by the library to deal with specific demands, both internal and external, which triggered stress situations and coping with them, revealing a successful adaptation in light of change. The study concludes that reducing and concentrating efforts is one way to respond to everyday organizational challenges, looked upon as risks. This case can serve as an example and source of inspiration for other libraries dealing with diminished resources.

Keywords

Academic Libraries, Strategic Planning, Strategic Management, Risk Management, Coping, Portugal

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Introduction

This text is part of a line of research that articulates library management with concepts drawn from Psychology. In general, Psychology seeks to unravel individual and collective human behavior, explaining cognitive, motivational and socio-cultural variables, among others, throughout the entire life cycle. However, some of its concepts are useful for reflecting upon organizations. Theoretical sources of Psychology resort to diverse, though essentially experimental methodologies, and allow for the understanding and development of perception and intervention on an individual in different contexts. As organizations are basically organisms composed of people, psychology is a fundamental field involving human action and, at the same time, it justifies changes in organizational strategies. When talking about change and adaptation, it's useful to understand the concepts of environment, risk and coping, in order to establish interesting connections between library management and the management of change, including dealing with stressful events and developing adaptive strategies. Thus, an academic library is an organizational space that should be the target of investigation, reflection and action, in particular as regards understanding effective adaptation strategies in constantly changing contexts. That is the purpose of this study.

Libraries in a changing environment

In changing times, libraries continue to face identity problems and uncertainties about the way forward. Does their role continue to make sense in the digital era, since information is accessed directly by users? Does the way they are organized continue to be right? Which programmes and activities should they promote? Will reading on paper cease to exist?

Walter and Neal (2014) situate these issues in a wider-ranging reflection that needs to be made. Based on the analysis of the most significant actions of librarians (meetings, congresses, guidance documents), they conclude we must identify barriers which still have to be transposed, and think in a novel manner, helping to create a better future for individuals and communities. The authors suggest this can be achieved by facing existing challenges: inadequate funding, shortcomings in decision support, difficulty establishing priorities, competition with other means of information, and so on. In fact, we must rethink “what we are, how we are viewed and understood, and how we do it” (Walter & Neal, 2014, p. 614). At the same time, we should promote a more holistic, comprehensive and collaborative action for the development of a university library (Delaney & Bates, 2015) and try to accommodate risk management in these organizations (Horava, 2014), in the context of strategic planning.

The ideas proposed by these studies inspired us to reflect about the sustained development of libraries and the way these can deal with adversity. We propose strategic planning as a suitable response to these challenges.

Facing problems and coping with risk

Throughout life, people and organizations go through different stages of development, with steps marked by crises. These crises have been studied by Psychology and shown to be conducive to growth, thanks to the change and learning that they trigger, despite being accompanied initially by some discomfort. New, different situations also set in motion similar reactions, associated with uncertainty, fear of change and stress, triggered by situational requirements that overload the available resources. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are responsible for the forerunning theory that explains the usual

reactions to stress. In short, the model these authors present has four main points: 1) coping is a process that stems from an interaction with the environment; 2) whose job is to manage the stressful situation (rather than dominate or control it); 3) based on a previous appraisal that provides the perception of the event (damage, threat or challenge); and 4) for which resources and behavioural efforts will be mobilised to reduce, minimise or tolerate the internal or external requirements, that is, to cope (Antoniazzi, Dell'Aglio, & Bandeira, 1998). The concept of coping has been described as the set of strategies people use to adapt to adverse or stressful situations.

In organizations there are also cases where there is a need for change, due to internal or external factors. Here, adverse situations are often connected to risk (Linkov & Palma-Oliveira, 2001). Risk is the predictable possibility of real harm, damage or loss. In order to face these difficult conditions, systems and organizations use adaptative management. This concept acknowledges uncertainty in knowledge about the system, whereby no single management policy or strategy can be selected with certainty in the impact. Instead, this way of management is able to adapt to emergent conditions, reducing uncertainty, and enhancing learning in a safe-to-fail manner (Linkov & Palma-Oliveira, 2017). In a way, adaptative management and stress management are organizational tools which can be compared to individuals' coping strategy.

Using these ideas of coping and adaptative management, we can thus propose an analysis model to compare common features in individuals and organizations:

Table 1. Comparative analysis model

	Individuals (coping)	Organizations (adaptative management)
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<i>Interaction with the environment</i>	yes	yes
<i>Appraisal and perception of risk or threat</i>	yes	yes
<i>Mobilisation of resources and efforts to deal with the challenge</i>	yes	yes
<i>Adaptation, rebalancing</i>	yes	yes

It should be noted that the original models of both coping and adaptative management have many features that are not comparable, such as the influence of personality styles in the coping process, which has no parallel in the case of organisations. However, given that in each case the original models are much more complex, it is interesting to observe how some similarities stand out in comparable contexts.

Strategic Plans as a resource to deal with challenges

Strategic plans are acknowledged as tools for communication and affirmation of the role of libraries, as well as precious tools in current, medium and long-term management in organizations and in academic libraries in particular, precisely in order to settle these difficulties (Saunders, 2015). According to Feather and Sturges (2003), a strategic plan may be considered “a process and framework for relating an organization to its environment, defining its scope and direction, and deciding actions needed to achieve specified goals” (pp. 621-622). In fact, plans indicate routes and define the best ways to achieve goals. The authors add that “This involves gathering and processing information, identifying and evaluating options, deciding and refining objectives, formulating and implementing plans, monitoring and reviewing progress” (p. 622). This thought is in line with that of other authors (Targino & Sousa, 2017; Stoffle, Renaud & Veldof, 2015) and with our own perspective about needing to go “back to

basics". In other words, faced with so many stimuli and at the same time with limitations in action, we must stop to think about our priorities and the core functions we cannot forego and should focus on more than ever, simplifying processes, procedures and courses of action to the maximum. As Payne (2005) declares, "the challenge for the library manager is to understand the environment, develop effective partnerships, and ensure that the library is at the heart of students' learning" (p. 201).

Likewise, strategic plans focus on a future vision and are therefore so often associated with growth and expansion. However, they seek to establish priorities, which is all the more important when resources are scarce. Currently, organizations are encouraged to do more with less and strategic plans have become increasingly important (Stueart & Moran, 2007). By clarifying methods and objectives, they enhance communication between peers (technicians and librarians of the work team), thus saving effort. On the other hand, as Franklin (2009) states, strategic alignment is a key factor for the success of a crosscut implementation plan in an academic library. So we can consider that strategic plans fulfil an important role in the adaptative function of organisations.

Methodology

This work presents a case study, based on a literature review about strategic planning, combining conceptual lines from the fields of psychology and organisational psychology – Coping and Adaptative Management – to analyse and reflect upon an intervention in a university context. Case studies are characterised by the depth in which they address an example in their context, reflecting the perspective of the participants involved, and therefore being idiosyncratic and specific (Amado & Freire, 2017). The literature review including choosing documents that highlight the importance of

strategic plan in organisations, especially those developed by higher education librarians and libraries, in the application of good practices. At the same time, we turn to theories of psychology and organisational psychology to explain and describe how people and organisations face problems. In summary, this process has three stages:

- 1- Appraisal of the situation and risk perception
- 2- Mobilisations of resources to face adversities
- 3- Rebalancing and stabilisation.

Thus, through theoretical and experimental studies, we seek to substantiate the subsequent case study. It consists of an action/intervention regarding the use of a strategic plan to face a situation considered as being risky for the organisation and characterised by a shortage of resources. Based on the description of the above mentioned stages applied to the case, we intend to show evidence that may sustain the example in question and make it reproducible for future applications.

Appraising the situation and perceiving the risk

Good planning is based on in-depth knowledge of the context in which we find ourselves, with a view to establishing arrival points which translate into the goals to be achieved. In the words of Doan & Kennedy (2009), “usefulness and appropriateness is achieved through strategic alignment, thereby opening the door of opportunity for innovative products and services” (p. 351). In fact, planning is above all about monitoring the current situation, so we can act upon it and obtain interesting and beneficial consequences. With this in mind, and aimed at quality management, the library which is the focus of this study regularly promotes an internal analysis of its performance, monitoring its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and

threats surrounding it. This analysis first implies a careful observation with the intention of globally characterizing the library. At the start of 2017, driven by the need to regain momentum, we repeated this exercise, which is presented below.

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is the starting point of this planning and the basis for projecting a future reality. According to Harmon (2017), “SWOT analysis is a planning and brainstorming tool that helps people evaluate an idea or project for a business or formulate a business plan. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats” (p. 2). The SWOT analysis is an evaluation tool which is traditionally applied in the entrepreneurial milieu and seeks to organize specific information regarding these four topics, in order to detect problems and predict solutions. It identifies how different internal and external facts influence the service and how it is organized or managed.

The versatility of this tool is such that it can also help in the management of libraries. Mapulanga (2013) has already described his application in the case study about a strategic plan implementation experience, in the library of the University of Malawi. The SWOT analysis is essential to ensure that conditions, means, resources and wills are gathered around concrete objectives and should be carried out with the contribution of the whole team. As Brenner, Kear, & Wider (2017) say, “inclusive planning takes time, dedication, commitment, and work. It is not easy” (p. 30). However, this is precisely the secret of a well-built strategy, as they go on to say: “[it] is crucial that all library staff understand the drivers of change, help shape organizational decisions, and feel ownership of what is put into operation (Brenner, Kear, & Wider, 2017, p. 28). Thus, the purpose of such an analysis, which provides an in-depth knowledge of the situation, is to maintain or reinforce strong points, using them to fight against threats and to find the best opportunities to resolve weak points.

Next we will list the aspects of the SWOT analysis which were detected internally by the library team members.

As regards the strengths, that is, the internal features which are recognised as being most significant, important and causing positive impact on the management of the Division, the following are defined:

Table 2 – Strengths

<i>1. Good general quality of print collections</i>
<i>2. Good quality and quantity of digital collections</i>
<i>3. Access to digital content in suitable platforms (EDS, Springerlink, A-to-Z)</i>
<i>4. Excellent evaluation of services on behalf of the users</i>
<i>5. Team's response capacity to unforeseen events</i>
<i>6. Working competencies as a team, of all the elements</i>
<i>7. Permanent update and suitability of the training given to users</i>
<i>8. External national and International recognition, visible in the demand for visits and internships.</i>

As for the internal features which may be pointed out as showing fragilities in the Documentation Division, the following were listed:

Table 3 – Weaknesses

<i>1. Difficulty in maintaining the general cleanliness of the space</i>
<i>2. Poor accessibility of web pages / sites</i>
<i>3. Differences in the follow up of users at the service desk</i>
<i>4. Inconsistencies in the internal image of the library</i>
<i>5. Lack of clarification and subsequent recognition of the role of the library in the institution</i>
<i>6. Lack of consistent communication for user autonomy</i>
<i>7. Lack of specific training for teachers and researchers</i>
<i>8. Obsolete catalogue with limitations in its features</i>

In the external environment we find opportunities which may foster an improvement in certain aspects of the Division's management:

Table 4 – Opportunities

<i>1. Library's participation in training actions in and out of the classroom</i>
<i>2. Availability of technologies for optimizing internal processes</i>
<i>3. Openness of the community to the digital format</i>
<i>4. Existence of virtual platforms for supporting training management (moodle, online registrations, etc.)</i>
<i>5. Renovation of the institutional sites in 2017</i>
<i>6. Implementation of new working technology platforms (Koha) in the University of Lisbon</i>
<i>7. Possibility of autonomous management of spaces</i>
<i>8. Dynamics created in activities involving the participation of teachers (Reading group, Capacitar)</i>
<i>9. Affirmation and visibility of the library in relation to its counterparts (projection through studies, papers, research...)</i>
<i>10. Possibility of integrating a National Network of Higher Education Libraries</i>

Finally, still on the subject of the external environment, some difficulties were found which may negatively impact the development of daily work in the library:

Table 5 – Threats

<i>1. Intermittence of investment in the library</i>
<i>2. Lack of a consistent policy for Open Science and subsequent lack of participation of some teachers in terms of self-archiving their scientific production in the Repository</i>
<i>3. Progressive reduction of the work team</i>
<i>4. Weak cohesion among ULisboa libraries and inexistence of a cooperation policy with tangible results</i>

By crossing these factors, we can go further in our question for solutions. If, on the one hand, we face the threats of reduced staff and funding, lack of cohesion among ULisboa libraries and consistent policies to frame the actions of the library in cooperation, on the other hand we may seek to counter these threats with our strong points. Transversal competencies and the staff's ability to adapt are a guarantee for overcoming possible difficulties. Our good print and digital collections should be the basis for the

development of value-added services and the recognition that the library has already earned may be used to promote the creation of internal policies that influence the cooperative aspects of networking.

Opportunities can help combat our weak points. The lack of specific training for teachers and researchers can definitely be countered by the team's experience in training and the already established situation involving the participation of teachers.

Additionally, the library's ability for self-affirmation regarding its counterparts, and the opportunities provided by technologies, together with the service adapting to new platforms, will bring recognition to the library's role in the institution. Also, the service provided will become more coherent in that the foreseen changes can contribute to a global manner of guaranteeing user autonomy in searching and using information, through more consistent formats and simplified accesses.

Mobilizing resources to face adversities: redefining strategic intervention areas

With this first analysis, which gives us the details of our current where and when, we now have the information to think about the best way of acting upon this reality and distribute actions to be developed, based on the team's strategic intervention areas and the above mentioned mission of the library.

In the strategic plan carried out between 2012 and 2016, we chose to express the following areas as intervention priorities:

1. Supporting research
2. Supporting learning
3. Developing collections
4. Quality and innovation

Until the start of 2017, the team's work projects followed these guidelines. Currently, and considering the previous analysis, it should be noted that these areas continue to underlie the work carried out by the Library. Based on a rationale of improving processes, the intervention objectives rooted in these strategic areas also continue.

- Continuing support to research, collaborating in the searches and purchases needed for projects and in divulging results of the research, namely through the Repository and referencing scientific production in ULisboa, thus contributing to greater visibility and impact of the science produced.
- Continuing support to learning, through the systematic training of users in the resources provided by the library, best practices in terms of servicing and improved ways of communication with the public.
- Continuing quality management, by evaluating and systematically improving the resources and services made available, with a view to ensuring user satisfaction.
- Promoting the adaptation of the Division to the new challenges posed by the digital era, namely as regards the development of virtual services and collections, aimed at valuing and modernising the Library, optimising economic factors, collaborating internally and externally to fulfil these objectives.

Considering the previous SWOT analysis and the current context, we thought of organizing work in three new strategic areas: Organization and Management; Training and Literacies; Dissemination of Knowledge. Figure 1 shows the three areas in concentric circles of intervention. The whole technical team (six members with technical qualification and the head of the Division) is involved in all the areas.

Figure 1. Representation of the strategic intervention areas



Organization and Management

The operational core of the Library is the area of Organization and Management. This is where we find the tasks and activities linked to the routines of technical documentation treatment, to tools for the management of collections, to the organization of spaces and to measuring quality. Working platforms (systems which ensure the core operational of the library) are also related to this area. The focus is internal management and emphasis is placed on the team's good performance. The first area of intervention is built around three main projects, which gather the main tasks for fulfilling the underlying objectives.

.1 Organization and Management of Spaces

The organization and management of spaces takes into account the efficient use of available physical spaces, including depots, reading rooms, technical offices and circulation areas. To that end, it is important to predict the growth and/or reorganization of thematic areas, the classification and shelving of different collections, the application of selection and disposal criteria, especially in relation to donated collections.

.2 Organization and Management of Collections

The Management of Collections requires an approach coupling exchanges and interdependencies. The development of collections cannot be separated from the whole in which it exists. This whole is the larger organization where the library is included as a service but also, more widely, the community which contextualizes the library in question. Managing collections includes selecting, cataloguing, indexing, classifying and releasing the full documental mass in open access for the enjoyment of users. The great challenge of this project is the change of the platform underpinning the bibliographic catalogue, and much attention must be paid to every step of the technical document treatment and its successful adaptation to the new reality – in terms of parameter settings, adjustments, team training and set up. Regarding what will be visible to users, great care must be taken to make the interface user-friendly and to adapt explanatory information (both oral and in print) to the new reality.

.3 Metrics and Quality

Successful organization and management should be based on constantly measuring internal performance, on sounding users and on seeking to correspond to the highest standards. The Library should keep up the high level of satisfaction achieved in the past years, taking into account the experience accumulated. The main challenge of this project has to do with choosing indicators in light of the emergence of a National Network of Higher Education Libraries. Aligning our internal parameters with those chosen at national level will be very important. Thus, closer attention should be paid to the objectives, forms of (automated) collection and projection of results. User surveys should also continue to have an ongoing perception of their satisfaction regarding library services.

Training and Literacies

The Documentation Division's second circle of action is the area of Training and Literacies. This field comprises all customer services and the training given to users. Here we find the tasks associated with the library users, including loans, inter-library loans, social network management, exhibitions, direct contact with users in the reading rooms and within training actions in information competencies. The aim is users' optimum use of the resources prepared and made available in the first intervention area. So the priority is interaction with the local community, with a strong focus on the development of literacies for a successful use of the library as a support to learning and research. This includes customer service, user training and outreach activities directed at the academic community. One of the aims of this area is to contribute to students' integral formation, providing alternative activities and readings that complement the knowledge acquired in terms of formal education.

.1 Customer service

In this project we should consider contact with users, both on site and by other means. This will include the improvements to be made, namely in users' follow up, in giving an appropriate response to each situation and in the best practices to explain the best ways of searching and accessing print and digital information. In the following years, the challenge of this project will be to use the new document management platform, simplifying processes and implementing useful features, all aimed at user autonomy.

.2 User training

The main aim of training is the successful use of available resources, thus contributing to the development of competencies in information literacy – knowing how to search, select, evaluate, organize and present information. The users' training project includes requests by teachers (in the classroom) and free-registration workshops, offered by the

library. It also comprises study visits and professional internships carried out in the library. The challenge of this project concerns constantly adapting the training offer to users' needs and, in the short term, converting contents now offered in a traditional format into e-learning. We will also seek to simplify the management of registrations, automating the process on a suitable platform.

3. Outreach activities

On the other hand, the library may contribute to academic competencies other than Information Literacy. Other outreach activities should be kept and furthered, considering students' integral formation and a policy of encouraging culture, reflection and critical thinking. The reading group *Duas de Letra*, the event *Capacitar*, the monthly exhibitions and the digital interaction that takes place via social networks and sites are fundamental to fulfil this objective.

Dissemination of Knowledge

The area of Dissemination of Knowledge is the third strategic intervention area of the Division of Documentation. Here we seek to take teachers' and researchers' work to a broader level, contributing to its accessibility.

This area is included in the more comprehensive circle (Figure 1). It comprises all transversal actions whose main aim is to divulge the scientific knowledge produced by teachers and researchers, in the framework of Open Science. The idea is to highlight and project scientific work, through the catalogue and the Institutional Repository and by supporting teachers' and researchers information needs throughout the whole production cycle. Therefore, this area includes managing purchases for teaching and researching, organizing research guidance and support documents, and training actions related to Open Science. By Open Science "we mean its free availability on the public

internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself” (Budapest Initiative).

.1 Projection of research

The library can highlight internal scientific production by executing component parts (book chapters and articles in journals) and cataloguing, thus giving visibility to current production through the bibliographic catalogue. More searches generate more use and consequent citations. In this project it is important to keep these data updated, creating links between print documents and their digital versions, whenever possible, in the institutional repository. Publications may also be highlighted in monthly reviews, in the form of updated reading suggestions. Finally, as regards purchase management; purchase proposals of bibliography to support research and teaching are subject to a procedure which, once activated, will contribute to the maintenance of updated, adequate collections.

.2 Support for teachers and researchers

To support teachers and researchers in their academic and scientific objectives, the library will provide training (yet to be defined) and support documentation to facilitate the development of competencies in the following fields: advanced search of information, impact factors, choice of journals for publication, generation and management of researcher profiles, self-archive of scientific production, and management of scientific data, among others. The main challenge is that teachers and researchers have access to practical tools to help them in their daily routines.

.3 Open Science

The challenges of Open Science and respective government guidelines require ongoing work on managing the institutional repository, including depositing theses and dissertations in a digital format, and helping teachers and researchers in the self-archiving of their own documentation. The challenge of this line of work for the next few years concerns the digitalization of printed theses, so they can be inserted in the repository. Making large-scale documentation available generates more international consultations, thus projecting research results worldwide and enhancing citations and referencing of this scientific production on a global scale.

Each of the strategic intervention areas must correspond to concrete goals, which will help us focus our efforts and better perform our daily routines and new tasks. In *Organization and Management*, the most internal intervention area, directed at processes and procedures for technical routines and for the improvement of practices, we must manage the reorganization of the depot spaces, including new shelves; Select duplicated or irrelevant documentation for weeding / elimination; Monitor the classification of specific thematic fields and reorganize them if need be. Another priority is to ensure adaptation to the new platform of bibliographic management, Koha, by having the team undergo internal training. Finally, we must rethink our indicators at an internal level; align the elements for data collection with the team; and align with statistical indicators for Higher Education Libraries.

The area of Training and Literacies is based on proximity with the public. Hence its priorities relating to the quality of customer service. Its goals are to improve communication with users; Rethink the design of divulgence materials; Keep library-managed web pages updated; Implement helpdesk software for managing training and

events; Adapt training to the moodle platform, and improve the impact of outreach activities with the community.

Finally, with respect to the area of Dissemination of Knowledge, interesting horizons are also opening up. This is an external field of intervention, turned to the world, to internationalization and the expansion of knowledge produced within the institution, seeking to maximize its impact and divulgence. We must guarantee support for research with purchase management; Ensure print-to-digital conversion of theses; Introduce data in the repository and make contacts to request authorizations; Improve teachers and researchers' guidance, including mentoring, designing and divulging specific leaflets or information documents focused on competencies for Open Science.

Rebalancing and stabilising performance

The detailed presentation of the construction of a strategic plan in an academic library sought to echo the previous literature review, which pointed out the advantages of this management tool. In our opinion, this shows we can look at our initial study, especially with the SWOT analysis, as an inspiration for the improvement of processes and procedures. In fact, if we consider that any weak point can be overcome by opportunities for improvement and if we can find in our strong points the possibility to fight threats, then the achievement of objectives is within our reach. Converting each one of the projects that were outlined into individual objectives is the best way of ensuring their achievement. It is precisely by dividing actions into achievable, measurable, adequate objectives, which are at the same time a challenge for the team and an improvement in terms of service when implemented, that each one of them can be carried out.

In short, the areas of intervention will count on the regular collaboration of all team members – those responsible for each area and the technicians, with the supervision and direct involvement of the Head of the Department. Articulation and interconnection between projects will allow greater flexibility and grant greater solidity in achieving the planned actions.

According to Franklin (2012), academic libraries can reap benefits when reshaping their strategic plan by aligning with their campus academic plan and emphasising on supporting the institution's strategic mission, and moving toward organization units that directly support their university's missions. The library in question, aware of the social context and the transformation context required of higher education institutions, has positioned itself crucially, presenting the lines of action which can demonstrate the direct contribution of this service to ensure forms of innovation that reinforce its mission to support research and teaching.

We found that after ascertaining the existence of difficulties, the exercise carried out resulted in an adaptative response. Contributions from Psychology and Management show us that this type of response is typical of a resilient organisation (Folke, Hahn, Olsson, & Norberg, 2005; Downes, Miller, Barnett, Glaister, & Ellemor, 2013) – an organisation which plans, absorbs, recovers and adapts (Linkov & Palma-Oliveira, 2017), continuously learning and improving.

Final remarks

The lessons that are learned from Psychology show us how individuals and organizations use strategies to deal with adversities. Faced with a particularly difficult context, we must become aware of our surrounding environment, assess situations and

perceive possible risks. In the case in question we resorted to a SWOT analysis. This tool provides detailed observation of the contextualized situation. In light of this awareness, theory tells us to embrace change. Changes were implemented by modifying working fields and reorganizing them, taking into account staff shortage, greater external pressure and new challenges raised by the changing context that libraries are living, especially concerning Open Science. Finally, studies tell us to learn and adapt. Our account in this paper is one more stage of a fertile learning process, involving the whole team in the planning and applying the strategic plan, which we believe will help us adapt realistically, with positive consequences.

This study sought to make a valid contribution so that other libraries look at its example and apply the same kind of exercise and pursue service improvements through strategic planning. It would be interesting to include a wider range of libraries, namely within the University of Lisbon, to understand whether similar actions translate into similar concrete results, and to set the conditions for sustainable extrapolation.

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