Assessing Organizational Culture: Moving towards Organizational Change and Renewal

Carol Shepstone
Head, Access Services Division, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Lyn Currie
Head, Education Library, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Abstract
This paper presents a method for assessing a library's organizational culture. Culture plays a critical role in creating a work environment where employees are committed and contribute to the success of the organization. A research project was conducted at the University of Saskatchewan Library to examine the ways in which the library's culture influences the work of library staff and the effectiveness of the library.

Phase 1 of the study focused on librarians and described the current cultural environment of the library: identified subcultures that exist; examined the congruence between subculture(s) and overall organizational culture; discussed those aspects of the culture(s) that impede or facilitate the work performance of librarians; and described the extent to which librarians, both new and established, are able to participate, influence and affect change. Phase 2 extended the study to include the perceptions of organizational culture, both existing and desired, of all other library staff to provide a complete picture of the library's organizational culture.

The research study was conducted using the Competing Values Framework (CVF), which has been used extensively in research studies to examine the impact of culture on organizational issues. Their Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) assesses key dimensions of organizational culture and provides a picture of the fundamental assumptions on which an organization operates and the values that characterize it.

In the U of S study the CVF was used to: (1) identify the various cultures that exist; (2) assess the impact of organizational culture and sub-cultures, on the work environment and the progress and success of librarians; (3) examine the impact of culture on organizational issues such as attracting, developing and retaining librarians; examine the organizational culture from the perspective of all library staff, again identifying sub-cultures, congruencies, disconnections and similarities among a variety of formal and informal groupings. Finally, it contributed to the development of recommendations concerning transforming the current culture into a desired new culture, introducing changes to the organizational structure, leadership and management initiatives and new support mechanisms that facilitate a positive, creative and rewarding working environment for library staff.

Introduction
This paper presents a method for assessing a library's organizational culture. It explores the application of Cameron and Quinn's[1] Competing Values Framework (CVF) in an academic library setting. The framework provides a tool for understanding the current organizational culture and a map for moving to organizational change and renewal. The framework and the associated Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) are discussed in the context of a case study conducted at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library which examined the ways in which the library's culture influences the work of library staff and the effectiveness of the library. The study employed the CVF to describe the dominant current and preferred organizational cultures and to identify the existence of subcultures. This methodology was augmented with additional questions and structured interviews in order to explore in-depth some of the particular factors that facilitate or impede librarian and organizational success.

What is Organizational Culture?
The concept of organizational culture has been

much discussed and debated in business management and organizational development literature. Concepts, theories and definitions of organizational culture from a range of disciplines have been employed by scholars in an effort to better understand the complexity of culture and its central role in how we function in groups and the success of organizations. Considering the work of Schein[2] and others[3] we have broadly defined organizational culture as a collective understanding, a shared and integrated set of perceptions, memories, values, attitudes and definitions that have been learned over time and which determine expectations of behavior that are taught to new members in their socialization into the organization. In its most positive sense, culture plays a critical role in creating a work environment where employees are committed and contribute to the success of the organization. Culture creates stability and creates a sense of cohesion.[4]

Why Examine Organizational Culture?

Our research explores how the organizational culture of the library gives identity, provides collective commitment, builds social system stability and allows people to make sense of the organization.[5] It also considers the acculturation process exploring how librarians (tenured and pretenured) assimilate and/or influence the culture, values and perspectives of the library.[6] Understanding organizational culture is a necessary first step to thinking about and discussing organizational change, renewal and improvement. Change in organizations involves changes to fundamental perceptions, beliefs, patterns of behavior and norms, and ways of sense-making that have developed over long periods of time. Plans for change must be carefully integrated into the existing culture, recognizing the potential points of resistance and finding opportunities to build on existing strengths. While Schein[7] notes that it is creating and changing culture that distinguishes leadership from the activities of management, it is a clear understanding of current and future priorities and the participation of the entire organization that ensure that the changes are successful.

Our Research in Context

Our interest in research into organizational culture began at the time when the University of Saskatchewan Library was experiencing significant change with fifteen of its thirty-eight librarians

"new" to the organization, having commenced work at the Library within the past five years. Addressing their needs became a major and an immediate management responsibility. At the same time the Library appointed a new Dean, who upon arrival initiated a strategic planning process for the Library. It was our intent that our research would help inform this institutional planning and contribute to the development of organizational changes and supports that facilitate a positive, creative, and rewarding working environment.

The circumstances which prompted our research interest are not unique to the University of Saskatchewan Library. Many Canadian libraries are beginning to experience rejuvenation in human resources. A Canadian Association of Research Libraries response to the *8Rs Canadian Library Human Resources Study: The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries*,[8] estimated the retirement rates in the academic sector to reach 43% by 2014, a concomitant loss of professional staff in management positions, and an increased need to hire new librarians.[9]

While we have long recognized the external pressures driving the change in libraries, we are now experiencing changes from within as well. A changing workforce influences the direction and shape of existing organizations. This is particularly the case when mature and stable organizations, like the University of Saskatchewan Library and many academic libraries, are faced with an influx of new staff. Understanding organizational culture is a first step in reshaping organizations for effectiveness and organizational success.

The Literature on Organizational Culture

The volume of research which uses organizational culture to understand the social meaning, structure, and effectiveness of organizations is immense. The business and management literature in particular includes a considerable amount of research which addresses the importance of understanding organizational culture in order for change to be implemented, managed, and integrated so that organizations of all types can function successfully. Each professional discipline also has its own body of literature that includes discussion of the importance of organizational culture. Given the diversity of the organizational culture literature, we will limit our discussion to the literature dealing with the Competing Values Framework methodology.

Since their development in the early 1980's,[10] the

Competing Values Framework and the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument[11] have been used extensively to examine organizational culture in a variety of settings. This has included organizational change in large industrial firms such as Ford Motor Company,[12] the relationship between organizational culture characteristics and the quality of worklife in health care settings,[13] and the cultural characteristics of industries in Qatar to determine the viability of implementing TQM in those settings.[14]

The CVF has been used to help identify the needed areas of change within organizations, and to manage the change process. It has been used as the basis for creating a comprehensive manager training program and to determine job satisfaction and engagement,[15] to examine characteristics of learning organizations,[16] and has been applied in higher education institutions, public-sector bodies and in corporations. A number of studies have demonstrated the statistical reliability and validity of the Competing Values Framework approach and the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument.[17] Cameron and Quinn[18] have collected cultural profiles using the OCAI from more than three thousand organizations and have developed a "typical" dominant culture type for organizations from a number of sectors.

The CVF has also been discussed in terms of its potential usefulness in library settings. Faerman[19] explored the CVF as a management tool for examining organizational performance and for the design of organizational change. She examined how libraries might move to user-centredness using the four competing and complimentary quadrants of the CVF. Varner,[20] in his doctoral dissertation, explored the application of this cultural assessment framework to an academic library setting and demonstrated that the CVF provides a neutral (non-threatening) presentation of information to initiate discussions of organizational change. Kaarst-Brown et al.[21] discussed the use of the CVF as a tool for understanding organizational culture in libraries from all sectors, the role of organizational culture in the socialization of new librarians, and the use of the CVF to identify dominant cultures and subcultures. Lakos and Phipps[22] explored the utility of the CVF in creating or developing a culture of assessment in learning organizations. With the exception of the Varner study however, we did not discover any research literature that discussed the experience of applying the CVF and the OCAI in a library setting.

Methodology
Applying the Competing Values Framework
We adopted the Competing Values Framework as our methodology for assessing the organizational culture of the University of Saskatchewan Library. It provides a theoretical framework for understanding organizational culture, offers a reliable and validated instrument for diagnosing that culture, and a systematic strategy for changing the organizational culture. It allows researchers to derive an organizational culture profile that reflects underlying attributes, including the management style, strategic plans, climate, reward system, means of bonding, leadership, and basic values of an organization.

Our interest in subcultures was also well served by the framework and the ability to evaluate the strength and variations in subgroups adds to the depth of the analysis. Using the CVF methodology offers the opportunity to compare local findings to "average" dominant cultures in similar (or dissimiliar) organizations. Cameron and Quinn have also offered practical guidance on how to most effectively create a strategy for cultural change and enhancing organizational effectiveness.[23]
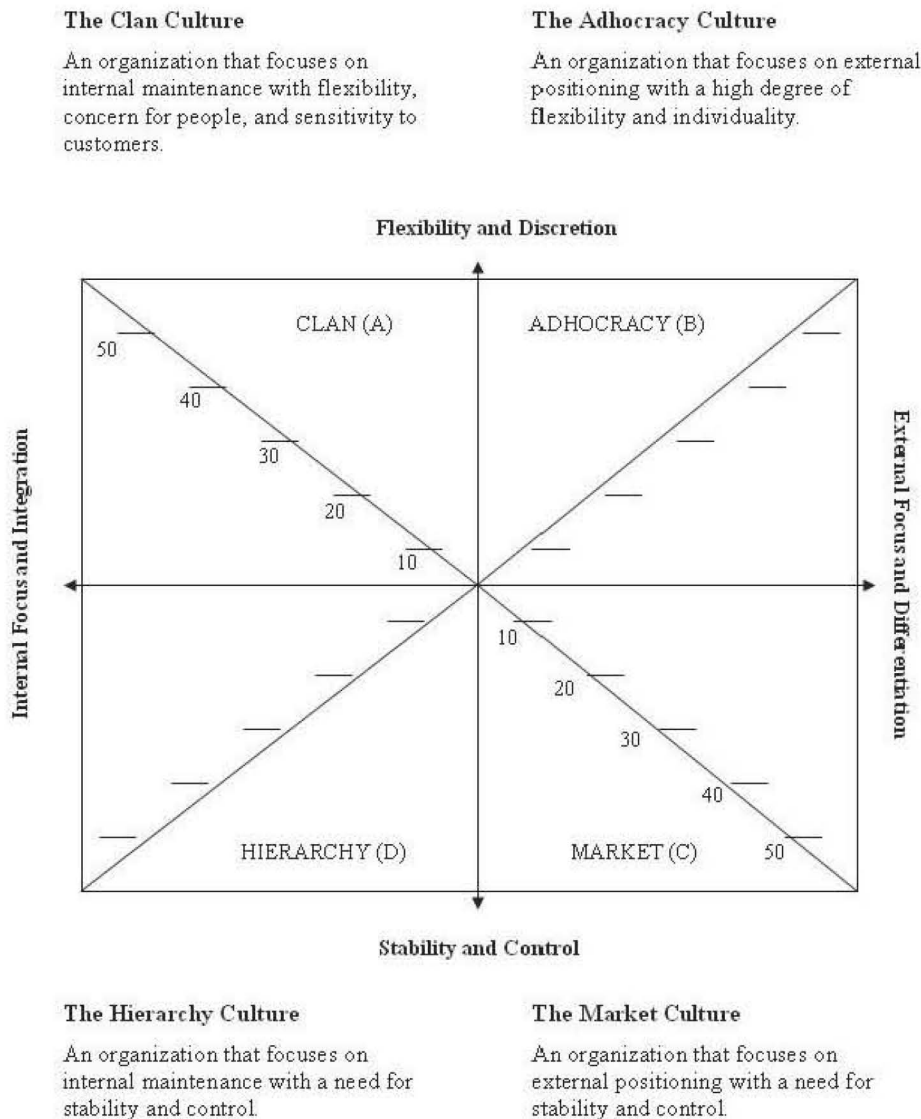
The methodology is very appealing in its simplicity both in the application and interpretation. The OCAI is easy for participants to complete and straightforward for the researchers to code and analyze. The ability to graphically represent or plot the scores on the OCAI helps to describe and communicate the findings in a meaningful way and stimulates a high level of interest and engagement in the organizational assessment.[24]

The CVF distinguishes between two major intersecting dimensions in organizations. One dimension (horizontal) reflects the extent to which an organization has a control orientation. That dimension runs from an emphasis on flexibility, discretion, and dynamism to an emphasis on stability, order, and control. The second dimension (vertical) reflects the extent to which an organization is focused on its internal or external functioning. This dimension runs from an emphasis on internal orientation, integration, and unity to an emphasis on external orientation, differentiation, and rivalry. These two dimensions form four quadrants which represent a distinct organizational culture and define what people value about an organization's performance. The four core values represent opposite or competing assumptions. Each

continuum highlights a core value that is opposite from the value on the other end. The dimensions therefore produce quadrants that are also competing, and contradictory along the diagonal. Each quadrant is identified as a cultural type representing basic assumptions, orientations, and values. Thus four dominant culture types emerge from the framework. This is graphically presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Competing Values Framework Organizational Culture Model

The Clan Culture

An organization that focuses on internal maintenance with flexibility, concern for people, and sensitivity to customers.

The Adhocracy Culture

An organization that focuses on external positioning with a high degree of flexibility and individuality.

Flexibility and Discretion

CLAN (A)   ADHOCRACY (B)
50
  40
    30
      20
        10
Internal Focus and Integration   External Focus and Differentiation
          10
            20
              30
                40
HIERARCHY (D)   MARKET (C)   50

Stability and Control

The Hierarchy Culture

An organization that focuses on internal maintenance with a need for stability and control.

The Market Culture

An organization that focuses on external positioning with a need for stability and control.

From Cameron, Kim S. and Quinn, Robert E. 2006. *Diagnosing And Changing Organizational Culture: Based On The Competing Values Framework*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Each of the CVF quadrants represents a particular set of organizational cultural characteristics. The hierarchy culture is characterized as a formalized and structured place to work where formal rules and policies hold the organization together, procedures govern what people do, effective leaders are good coordinators and organizers, maintenance of a smooth running

organization is important, and the long term concerns are stability, predictability, and efficiency. The market culture is characterized as a results-oriented workplace where leaders drive the organization toward productivity, results, and profit; an emphasis on winning holds the organization together; the prevailing concern is on competitive actions, achieving goals and targets, and increasing its competitive position. The clan culture is typified by a friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves; leaders serve as mentors; the organization is held together by loyalty and tradition; commitment is high; the emphasis is on the long term benefit of individual development, high cohesion and morale; and a premium is placed on teamwork, participation, and consensus. The adhocracy culture is characterized by a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative workplace where people take risks; leaders are visionary and innovative; the commitment to experimentation and innovation holds the organization together; readiness for change and meeting new challenges is important; and the emphasis is on being at the leading edge of new knowledge, services, and products. It should be noted that no one cultural type or set of characteristics is considered to be superior or more valued than another. Organizations often embody qualities in all four quadrants, and emphasis in any particular quadrant may shift over the course of time.

The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) poses a series of statements to respondents that reflect the key elements in describing organizational culture. Scores on the OCAI are used to plot a graphic representation of the types of culture that are dominant in the library, the fundamental assumptions on which the library operates, and the values that characterize it. It is also possible to identify subculture perspectives within structural units, professional staff, paraprofessional staff, management, or as in the case of the first phase of our research, tenured and pretenured librarians. By considering the preferred organizational culture, the framework can also be used to predict organizational performance and identify the cultural characteristics that members think should be developed and enhanced, or in some cases de-emphasized, to match the future demands of the environment and the opportunities that it represents.

The University of Saskatchewan Library Case Study

The U of S Library case study involved the administration of a four part questionnaire and structured interviews with the pretenured librarians. Part One (Participant Profile) of the questionnaire captured information about the number of years worked at the U of S Library, number of years in the profession, and tenure status. In Part Two (Current Organizational Culture) respondents were asked to answer six questions on the OCAI to reflect their perception of the current state of the U of S Library. The questions contained four descriptions of academic libraries and respondents were to distribute one hundred points among the four descriptions depending on how similar the descriptions were to the U of S Library. A sample question is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Sample of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument

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Part 2 Organizational Profile of the Library

Please answer the following six questions to reflect your perception of the *current state* of the U of S Library system. Each of the questions contains four descriptions of academic libraries. Please distribute 100 points among the four descriptions A, B, C, D depending on how similar the description is to the U of S Library. None of the descriptions is any better than the others; they are just different. For each question, please use 100 points.

2.1 Dominant Characteristics (Divide 100 points)

A. _____ Library A is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.

B. _____ Library B is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.

C. _____ Library C is a very formalized and structured place. Policies and procedures generally govern what people do.

D. _____ Library D is very competitive in orientation. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very production oriented.

In Part Three (Preferred Organizational Profile) of the questionnaire, participants answered the same six questions according to how the Library should be in five years in order to be highly successful. In Part Four (work environment questionnaire) respondents rated forty four statements on a five point Likert scale according to the degree to which they accurately described the Library. Part Five provided two open-ended questions seeking any additional comments about factors that support or impede their work success.

Results

All librarians at the University of Saskatchewan Library were included in the study with the exception of the two researchers and four librarians who were on leave at the time of the study. Thirty six librarians received the questionnaire and twenty four responded (a response rate of 67%). Twelve of the thirteen "new" librarians (the pretenured librarians appointed within the last five years) and

twelve of the twenty three "established" tenured librarians responded. All pretenured librarians were invited to participate in a follow-up structured interview. Eight interviews were completed with seven transcripts released.

Plotting the Culture

Using the scores on the OCAI, we constructed an organizational culture profile to create a picture of the U of S Library's culture with its dominant aspects as it currently exists. We also plotted the preferred culture to compare the extent to which the current culture matches (is congruent with) the preferred culture and to identify where cultural change might be in order. As we were interested in investigating the possible existence of a subculture represented by the pretenured librarians, we plotted their scores separately from the tenured librarians. Figure 3 shows the current culture profile and Figure 4 the preferred culture profile expressed by both groups.

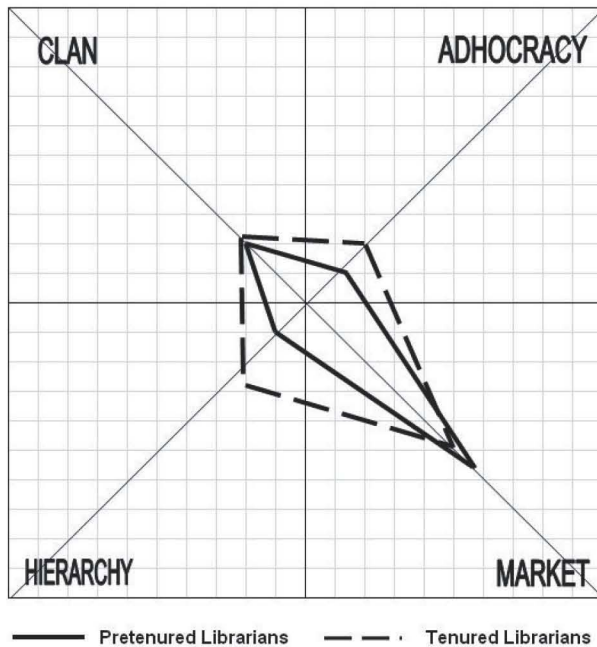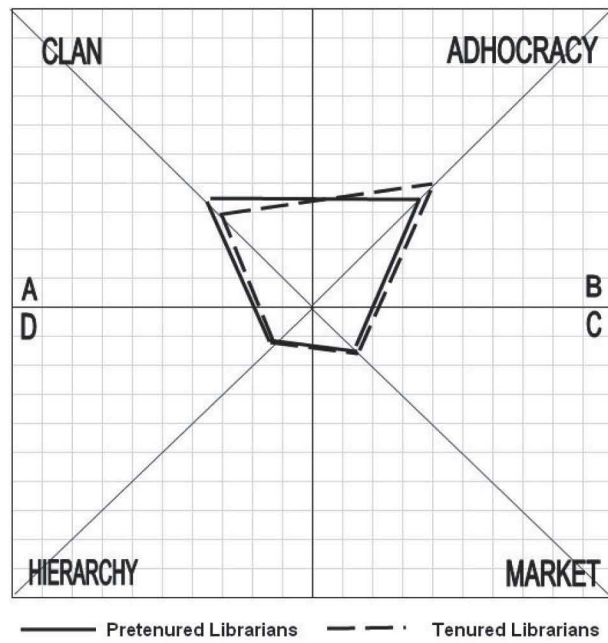**Fig 3. Current Organizational Culture Profile**

Fig 4. Preferred Organizational Culture Profile

The Current Organizational Culture
The U of S Library scored highest in the Market culture quadrant for both pretenured and tenured librarians. A market culture describes an organization focused on external positioning with a need for stability and control. The major concern is getting the job done and on transactions. People are competitive and goal oriented. The leaders are hard drivers, producers, and competitors. They are tough and demanding. The glue that holds the organization together is an emphasis on productivity and winning. Reputation and success are common concerns. The long-term focus is on competitive actions and achievement of measurable goals and targets. Success is defined in terms of market share and penetration. Competitive pricing and market leadership are important.[25] This U of S Library culture plot does not vary widely from the "average" organizational culture plot identified by Cameron and Quinn from their investigations of over one thousand organizations.

The Preferred Organizational Culture
We plotted the preferred culture and compared the extent to which the current culture is congruent with the preferred culture. On the preferred culture profile the Library scored highest in the adhocracy culture quadrant for both librarian groups.

Organizations with this dominant culture are considered a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick their necks out and take risks. The leaders are considered to be innovators and risk takers. The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to experimentation and innovation. The emphasis is on being on the leading edge. The organization's long-term emphasis is on growth and acquiring new resources. Success means gaining unique and new products or services. Being a product or service leader is important. The organization encourages individual initiative and freedom.[26]

Existence of Subcultures
By plotting the scores separately for pretenured and tenured librarians we were able to compare and identify differences in perceptions between the two groups on the current organizational culture and the preferred culture. According to Cameron and Quinn an analysis of scoring should be sensitive to differences of ten points or more.

Responses were similar for the two groups for the current organizational culture. While both groups saw the library as dominated by the market culture, the pretenured librarians scored it notably higher (by thirteen points) than the tenured librarians. The tenured librarians scored the library

as more hierarchical (by ten points) than the pretenured librarians.

A comparison of responses for the preferred culture revealed that all librarians prefer an increase in the adhocracy dimension (twenty-six points higher for the pretenured librarians and twenty-two points for the tenured librarians) and a significant reduction in the market culture (thirty-nine points less for the pretenured librarians and twenty-eight points for the tenured librarians). The pretenured librarians also showed a preference for increased elements of the clan culture, scoring an eleven point difference between where the organization is currently on this dimension and where they would like it to be. These ten point differentials between the tenured and pretenured librarian groups suggest they represent subcultures in terms of their perceptions about the current and preferred cultures of the library.

Cultural Congruence

Cultural congruence indicates that various aspects of the organization's culture are aligned and reflect the same set of cultural values. Determining cultural congruence for the library involved plotting each of the six cultural attributes on the OCAI: organizational characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, organizational glue, strategic emphasis, and criteria of success, to determine the extent to which each attribute reflects (is congruent with) the same dominant culture type. For both the current and preferred culture profiles the plots were consistent within the tenured and pretenured groups, indicating a congruent culture within each group. Research has shown that congruent cultures are more typical of high performing organizations. Having all aspects of the organization clear about and focused on the same values and sharing the same assumptions eliminates many of the complications, disconnects, and obstacles that can get in the way of effective performance.

Work Environment Factors

The work environment portion of the questionnaire and the subsequent interviews with pretenured librarians were developed to augment the cultural profiles and to provide additional information about the degree to which there was agreement that particular factors were perceived to inhibit or support librarian success. The statements fell into five theme areas: organization and culture; governance and decision making; role of managers;

recruitment, orientation and support; and the role of colleagues. Interview questions were developed to explore in more detail themes that emerged in the responses to these statements and the two open ended questions.

A preliminary analysis of this data, reported elsewhere,[27] further illustrates the differences in perceptions and experiences between the tenured and pretenured librarians. The areas of most pronounced difference included perceptions about the stability and predictability of the organization; the degree of respect, and valuing of contributions; opportunities for involvement in the administrative life of the organization; the ability to influence decision making and library priorities; the role of managers; and the role of colleagues. This data supports the Competing Values Framework findings of shared subculture perceptions within these two groups. Recurring themes in the interview data reveal that pretenured librarians are seeking the type of support from managers, colleagues, and library leaders which reflect the adhocracy and clan culture characteristics: guidance and direction; leadership by example; feedback and support; recognition; clear decision making; skilled management; respect and trust; orientation and mentorship; professional discourse; innovation, and creativity; and support for research activities.

Conclusions

Outcomes from the University of Saskatchewan Study

This research has helped us to make sense of our own organizational culture. We have learned that while there is general agreement among all librarians about the current organizational culture, there are some notable differences between the experiences, perceptions, and expectations of the pretenured and the tenured librarians. These differences are important as they have implications for how effectively the library can move forward, and for the continued success and retention of individual librarians. An awareness of these differences is critical not only for managers and those in leadership positions, but also for all librarians in order to understand how the organization is changing with the influx of "new" librarians. Although subcultures do exist in the library there is agreement in terms of the preferred organizational culture, one emphasizing a transition from a market and hierarchy culture to an adhocracy with stronger elements of a clan

culture. We are all moving in the same direction, working toward a similar preferred organization.

Organizations often shift dominant cultural characteristics as they move through their life cycle. Quinn and Cameron[28] found that clan cultures with an emphasis on adhocracy are most often found in newer organizations while market cultures with a focus on hierarchy often exist in mature organizations. This has led us to speculate whether the desire for a shift to an adhocracy culture with increased clan elements in our library can be attributed, in part, to the influx of new professional staff and/or to the part played by new leadership. Does this signify a type of organizational renewal? In the next phase of our research we will investigate this further and expand our survey to include all library staff in order to capture a more comprehensive picture of the current and preferred organizational culture(s) and to understand the influence of other subcultures within the organization. We will also be looking for opportunities to integrate our findings with the library's current strategic planning process. We are also interested in replicating our case study in other academic libraries in order to gather comparative data on organizational culture analysis for university libraries in Canada.

Importance of Assessing Organizational Culture

Assessing organizational culture provides an opportunity to take the "directional temperature" of the organization. Understanding the current organizational culture of the library and looking for areas of common understanding about the organization provides a starting place for organizational change. By observing the areas of greatest discrepancy between the current culture and the preferred future culture a road map for change can be developed.

The Competing Values Framework is one of the most used cultural assessment methodologies available to organizations planning and managing major change.[29] Its value lies in the process for identifying what needs to change in an organization's culture and for developing a strategy to initiate a culture change process and facilitate organizational transformation. Varner found that using the CVF in an academic library resulted in a complex, multidimensional understanding of organizational effectiveness; revealed deep seated values that reflected how the library might respond in times of crises; and that the CVF can be used for organizational change that encourages,

participation and collaboration to achieve change, what Varner terms "action research."[30]

Understanding organizational culture as we move through times of change is critically important.[31] University libraries in Canada are facing a change from long periods of human resource stability characterized by long-term, well established, librarian complements to incorporating a growing number of newly recruited librarians. This will require an adjustment in management style and leadership direction. A shift in culture during these times of change should not be surprising. Concern for organizational culture is more than an issue of recruitment and retention. It is at the heart of organizational effectiveness and success.

Managing Organizational Culture Change

Cameron and Quinn propose a six step process for systematically managing culture change. It involves reaching consensus on the current culture; achieving consensus on the desired future culture; determining what the changes will and will not mean; identifying the key values, desired orientations, and behavioral principles of the new culture; determining strategic actions to be undertaken; and developing an implementation plan. The intention is to create a broad consensual vision of what the desired future will be, what the critical elements of the organization will be, what will change and what won't change, and what will be preserved in the current culture—capitalizing on the core competencies, the unique mission, and the special organizational identity that has been created over time.

For the U of S Library, managing the change process involves focusing on what it means to increase the adhocracy and clan cultures and decrease the market and hierarchy cultures. This means shifting a mature organization to a new cultural model. Stating what is meant and what is not meant by this change and articulating the benefits that will accrue to the library from more emphasis on adhocracy and clan cultures will provide a more concrete understanding of the desired organizational culture change. This shift in emphasis is beginning to surface in the course our strategic planning activities. As researchers, we are interested to explore how the preferred cultural characteristics might independently emerge through this process.

Since culture change is about behavior change, an important element of action planning is to

specify what people will be doing in the desired culture.[32] There has to be agreement on acceptable individual behavior. It must be consistent with new or desired cultural values and be reinforced by reward and recognition. Achieving lasting change in organizations requires getting employees involved in planning and implementing change. As Schein points out: "learning and change cannot be imposed on people. Their involvement and participation are needed in diagnosing what is going on, figuring out what to do, and actually doing it."[33]

Cameron and Quinn[34] discuss the critical skills and competencies managers must develop in order to facilitate the culture change effort. It is a process heavily reliant upon self-reflection and self-assessment. Personal work plans and continued improvement are emphasized as key in this process for leading a cultural change. Quinn's[35] work in mapping managerial competencies and leadership roles to the quadrants of the CVF is helpful in illustrating how leaders can most appropriately focus their skill development.

At the University of Saskatchewan Library, our challenge now is to integrate the findings of our research into our new strategic planning process, and to encourage our colleagues to engage in discussion around what we have learned to date about the current and preferred organizational cultures. Our findings have confirmed our hypothesis of the existence of subcultures within the librarian complement. At the same time, we were interested to discover a high degree of agreement about a preferred culture. Expanding our research to include all library staff will help to create a more complete picture of the organization to better understand how the organization functions as a complex, complimentary, and in some cases competing set of units, groups, and individuals. What we value, how we make sense of our environment, and how we teach new members is essential to how we operate as a healthy and successful organization.

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