**Developing a Strategic Plan for T Public Library**

**Part One: Literature Review; Environmental Scan and SWOT; Mission, Values and Vision**

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Abstract

This submission includes part one of a two-part review of the library strategic planning process focusing on the T Public Library located in T, California. It provides an overview of the SWOT process from an academic standpoint and then an assessment of the actual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the T Public Library based on an extensive environmental scan conducted in cooperation with library staff, particularly SLIS student and T Public Library employee Karen Horner. The library is at a critical junction in its long history, having just moved to a state-of-the-art facility at the center of town which adjoins the offices of the city government of T. Rapid population growth (particularly of the youth demographic), fiscal austerity and personnel changes are among the key challenges the library faces at this time.

*Keywords:* T Public Library; City of T; strategic planning; SWOT; mission; environmental scan

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**Part One: Literature Review; Environmental Scan and SWOT; Mission, Values and Vision**

The T Public Library has a vibrant history and has played a significant role in the T community dating back to the late 19th century. It remains an independent entity operating outside of T County’s larger system of libraries. A recent move to a newly constructed building shared with the City of T government has reinvigorated community interest in the library and its services

This analysis will touch upon some initial aspects involved in the strategic planning process; specifically, it provides a literature review on the topic of analyses of an organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), an environmental scan of the T Public Library – both externally and internally – with an accompanying SWOT analysis, as well as suggested mission, vision and values statements for the library as it looks to its challenging but promising future.

**Literature Review**

The history of a SWOT analysis originated from the Harvard Business School with efforts by researchers to analyze business case studies (Panagiotou, 2003).  During the 1950s, two Harvard professors, George Albert Smith Jr. and C. Roland Christense, started working with organizational strategies for their field of study.  However, it was not until 1957 that another Harvard professor, Kenneth Andrews, stated that all organizations must have clearly defined objectives (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007) and promoted the idea of a SWOT analysis as a strategic planning tool. By the mid-1960s, strategic planning was being discussed widely in academic circles.

During the 1970s, Stanford professor Albert Humphrey developed a Team Action Model management concept that enabled groups of executives to manage change (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007).  By the 1990s, that new framework was applied to the SWOT analysis.  In the mid-1990s, George Panagiotou added “telescopic observation” strategy.  A telescopic observation strategy provides for a structured observation of the business environment (Panagiotou, 2003) and augmented and focused the environmental scan, a tool that works hand-and-hand with a SWOT analysis.

This type of analysis is explained by Pickton and Wright (1998) as a study of an organization’s internal and external environments.  The purpose of a SWOT analysis is to examine these factors when creating a long-term strategic plan.  SWOT analysis allows for the identification of strategic issues that will impact the organization to the greatest extent (Johnson, 1994).  An organization’s environment is continually changing; the identification of weaknesses and threats can help that organization plan ahead effectively.  Panagiotou states that a SWOT “invites decision makers to consider important aspects of their organization’s environment and helps them organize their thoughts” (Panagiotou, 2003).

**Procedure of Performing a SWOT**

A SWOT is one tool to help organize the information collected from group analysis. Pre-planning for a SWOT is an important initial step in organizing the process in a way that allows for an efficient amount of time and effort to go into actual research, discussion and analysis, according to Nelson (2008). One of the first actions to take place is to prepare the group that is implementing the SWOT by discussing the reasons for the development of a strategic plan using SWOT. Then members of the group can introduce the SWOT process to those that are unfamiliar with it; it may be that the way the company or organization ultimately performs a SWOT is different from initial expectations (Nelson, 2008). According to Heather, the purpose of this phase is to discover any issues that arise within the group from this first introduction to SWOT and to plan for changes as needed (1994).    
Once there is an agreement on how the process will move forward, the next phase is information collection.  Koch advises that it is important to collect current and updated information about an organization’s internal and external environments because to not do so leads to information gaps that result in inaccurate analyses (2001).  One tool that gathers the most current information is the environmental scan. This kind of scan collects information about issues that could potentially affect the long-term outcomes for a company or organization.  Some of the information included consists of economic, political, societal, and technological factors, as well as market and customer research (Germano & Stretch-Stephenson, 2012; Koch, 2001).   
After information collection, the established group collaboratively discusses and identifies factors that relate to an organization’s mandates as well as to its mission and values.  According to Heather, this identification stage is the part of the strategic planning process that helps set goals (1994), an important step in creating customer value and long-term success (Germano & Stretch-Stephenson, 2012).

Others recommend that the group specifically chart strengths and weaknesses based on internal environment factors and opportunities and threats based on external environment factors (Heather, 1994). After developing a chart or list, the next steps involve creating a scale based on each item’s relevance to the company to find the most important and relevant SWOT factors.  A discussion of any contradictions that arise and the subsequent performance of a still deeper analysis is recommended (Pickton & Wright, 1999).

According to Koch and others, it is important when conducting a SWOT to consider the future implications of the internal and external environment. Since the internal and external environment is always changing, any single SWOT should not be set in stone or act as the final product to the strategic planning process. Strategic processes like a SWOT analysis should be a continuous cycle that is performed often to gather the most current information and adjust the SWOT as needed (Germano & Stretch-Stephenson, 2012; Koch, 2001).

**Successful Uses of the SWOT Approach**

There are many examples within academic literature that indicate that the SWOT analysis is used frequently and successfully (Balamuralikrishna & Dugger, 1995; Duren, 2010; Dyson, 2004; [Lockerby & Stillwell, 2010](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=406&UserID=19638&AccessCode=C4D18580D9C1475798A88358E3317694&CitationSuffix=)). Numerous studies show that this type of analysis delivers very useful information about the state of an organization and provides ideas on how to improve existing services so a company or institution can reach its full potential.

In the specific case of libraries, Rooney-Browne and McMenemy studied whether libraries can remain important and impartial players in providing information to their users. According to their research, new technological developments such as the internet and personal computers can undermine the role and importance of libraries [(Rooney-Browne & McMenemy, 2010)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=390&UserID=19638&AccessCode=EAAA766CDE704A45A3B64BCD006FFDEA&CitationSuffix=). Rooney-Browne and McMenemy (2010) indicate that the SWOT analysis has been used to expose libraries to a more commercial way of thinking about the effects of outside technological influences. There is a need within libraries to explore in a strategic fashion both the external and internal factors that may have an impact on day-to-day operations. For instance, if libraries hope to remain important players in the field of education, the leaders need to identify and advocate for efficiency and relevance of services, according to Rooney-Brown and McMenemy (2010).

Similar ideas were raised by leaders from the German National Library of Science and Technology (TIB). Their use of a SWOT analysis was a very useful experiment leading to changes in their strategic plan and ultimately their library procedures. Specifically, their results provided the management with “nine strategic areas for action” that helped to determine the development of strategic goals for this special library [(Düren, 2010, p. 164)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=391&UserID=19638&AccessCode=7DE4A0673A4446AA898A1E29EA2FA01F&CitationSuffix=). Some of the recommendations included improvements in staff education and the need to expand on funding opportunities.

In addition, the SWOT analysis can be used specifically to help set up new library initiatives. Cervone shows that results of the analysis have benefitted managers as well as library leaders as they clarify long-term goals for the creation of digital projects, for instance. At the same time, the SWOT investigation helps to detail the environment under which the institution is presently operating [(Cervone, 2009)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=397&UserID=19638&AccessCode=0D79EE81226C4C2384474DBC52318D0B&CitationSuffix=). For example, the National University’s library in San Diego performed a SWOT analysis of all its major library departments in order to determine how to enhance services for distance education students. The report indicated that there were many tools and resources already available to the library’s distance education student but that these needed promotion so that students would be knowledgeable about them [(Lockerby & Stillwell, 2010)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=406&UserID=19638&AccessCode=C4D18580D9C1475798A88358E3317694&CitationSuffix=).

As mentioned previously, the development of technology has brought many challenges to the library as an institution of learning. Coles, Graves and Cipkowski (2010) argue that marketing and self-promotion are becoming important tools of the trade. In order to stay relevant and valuable to the community, libraries need to reevaluate their users’ needs, and the resources and services they are providing. The SWOT analysis is an appropriate and effective tool for the job, and it goes hand in hand with marketing promotion [(Cole, Graves & Cipkowski, 2010)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=408&UserID=19638&AccessCode=4EF291AAC546405DA017DA2BDC88E1C5&CitationSuffix=).  According to Cole et al (2010), it is important for library boards to analyze every aspect of the current services they are providing. In addition, surveying its users on their experience with the library services is also an important aspect of the analysis in their estimation.

The SWOT analysis allows an extensive examination of all the positive and negative aspects of the institution. For example, the Old Dominion University Library, in Norfolk, Virginia, performed a SWOT analysis in 2008 and learned a great deal of information about the institution and its users. According to librarian Tonia Graves, the analysis provided three recommendations: to improve marketing and promotion of library services and resources; to further develop and enhance of the library’s Facebook page; and to create a web page specifically for graduate students [(Cole, Graves & Cipkowski, 2010)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=408&UserID=19638&AccessCode=4EF291AAC546405DA017DA2BDC88E1C5&CitationSuffix=).

Dyson outlines the successful application of SWOT analysis in a broader educational setting by the steering committee at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. The entire university participated in the process of identifying the university’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Each section of the SWOT analysis was cross-examined with suggestions for new strategies to be considered. It was discovered that the process provided the management team with a great deal of knowledge about the organization and potential solutions for the future [(Dyson, 2004)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=401&UserID=19638&AccessCode=22163C61BDD248DBAE73F8C22332BD23&CitationSuffix=). Some of the specific changes mentioned by Dyson included the enhancement of the local research institute, improvements in residences, new fundraising strategies and a new human resources policy for the university.

As described by Radha Balamuralikrishna, many vocational schools use the SWOT matrix to acquire a deeper understanding of their institution. By looking at the external and internal factors that have an impact on the way a school operates, managers and administrators are able to make decisions about both the creation of new programs and the removal of programs or courses irrelevant to the curriculum [(Balamuralikrishna & Dugger, 1995)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=410&UserID=19638&AccessCode=A0BA0987FEE24BC4B18C4F50255A1788&CitationSuffix=).  This sort of real world popularity and effectiveness is demonstrated throughout the academic literature on the subject ([Balamuralikrishna & Dugger, 1995](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=410&UserID=19638&AccessCode=A0BA0987FEE24BC4B18C4F50255A1788&CitationSuffix=); [Düren, 2010](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=391&UserID=19638&AccessCode=7DE4A0673A4446AA898A1E29EA2FA01F&CitationSuffix=); [Dyson, 2004](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=401&UserID=19638&AccessCode=22163C61BDD248DBAE73F8C22332BD23&CitationSuffix=)), and it establishes SWOT as a well-used tool in both the for-profit and non-profit worlds.

**Criticism of the SWOT Approach**

Hill and Westbrook offer a well-crafted critique of SWOT in their essay, “SWOT Analysis: It's Time for a Product Recall” (1997).  This work is widely referenced and points to some important areas of attention for those currently employing the SWOT technique. According to the article, the tool as promoted by Harvard’s Kenneth Andrews (Andrews, 1971) in the ‘60s has outlived its usefulness in a modern era (Hill and Westbrook, 1997).

Other business academics have concurred that SWOT needed to be revisited in principle. In 1980, Harvard professor Michael Porter promoted an approach to SWOT that had a firmer basis in analysis of internal and externals, a distinction that lead to the idea of “seeking a fit between the two perspectives” (as cited in Hill & Westbrook, 1997, p. 47).  Another prominent critic of the SWOT process was the well-regarded business writer Henry Mintzberg, author of *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994).  He is less optimistic that the SWOT is of any use whatsoever in strategic planning, as it is essentially unanalytical in his view (1994).

Hill and Westbrook’s work (1997) was based on a study of 50 companies involved in a large-scale program to promote strategic planning among United Kingdom-based manufacturing firms.  Twenty of the firms utilized SWOT in a fairly well-documented fashion, thus providing a basis for review of its effectiveness and shortcomings from an academic perspective. The researchers’ major concerns are that the method tends to result in “very general points” and seldom involves the use of numeric data (p. 49).  They continue by pointing to seven specific weaknesses, including: use of “unclear and ambiguous words and phrases” and “no logical link to an implementation phase” (p. 51).  In short, they find it to be a “generic solution” that “cannot be an effective tool of analysis in the 1990s” (p.51).

Koch (2000) looks at the strategic analysis process with an eye to how SWOT can both benefit and hinder outcomes.  He argues that the misuse of SWOT explains the reason behind much of the criticism of the approach. “Is it appropriate for the judgment of the suitability of an analytical tool to be exclusively based on cases of its misapplication and poor usage?” (Koch, 2000).  His key argument indicates that while the technique shows some promise when used with foresight, the process can amount to “a poorly structured, very general, hastily conducted exercise that produces unverified, vague and inconsistent inventories of factors” (Koch, 2000).

Chermack and Kasshanna (2007) also treat SWOT in both the context of “use” and “misuse” as part of their study of how the process can be used in a human resource department context.  They distinguish between the use of SWOT for the entire organization and its use for individual units such as human resources. They also reference others as contributing to the idea that SWOT can be used for groups, teams, organizations, or even mere plans (2007).  This work agrees with and draws upon Blamuralikrisha and Dugger’s 1995 writing on SWOT (2007) which concurs with the sentiment that “SWOT is a dynamic process for decision-making and is actually a form of brainstorming” (as cited Chermack and Kasshanna, 2007, p. 388). However, they retain the caveat that SWOT must be “used properly” and go on to outline a five-step protocol to this end (p. 390).

Another concern sometimes raised is that the process has been misused “to justify a previously decided course of action rather than used as a means to open up new possibilities” (Chermack and Kasshanna, 2007, p. 392).  The authors conclude that while SWOT is in wide use, other models stands to surpass the SWOT approach, which itself has not been subjected to “rigorous documentation” in a research context (p. 395).  These ideas are furthered by Pickton and Wright (1998) who conclude that “SWOT factors require detailed investigation in order to understand their nature and implications” (p. 109).

**What More is Needed for SWOT**  
 A clear dichotomy exists in the arena of SWOT academic literature.  Mainly, there are ample and vocal critics who feel that the method has outlived itself (Hill and Westbrook, 1997; Mintzberg, 1994).  However, the ubiquitous nature of the SWOT method argues in its own favor.  Chermack and Kasshanna (1997) conclude that “the practice of SWOT analysis is alive and well” though many lack “a deep understanding of the procedure, best practice, or research-supported method” (p. 395).  Thus there is a clear need for further academic investigation of the method based on actual practice, as well as the use of research methods that support more rigorous evaluation of its successes and failure.

More recent investigations indicate that there is a need to research the SWOT analysis from different viewpoints. Chermack and Kasshanna suggest looking into qualitative research methods that would provide a better understanding of the SWOT matrix. Also, allowing participants who are involved in the SWOT analysis to provide more input based on their personal experiences and knowledge would allow for more creativity during the process and, consequently, would bring better results (Chermack & Kasshana, 2007). Moreover, public sectors are looking more toward a “resource-based view” (Bryson, Ackerman & Eden, 2007, p. 702) of strategy as an alternative to the traditional SWOT analysis.  Resources are an important part of any organization and they have an impact on the way the institution is performing and achieving success.

In addition, Helmes and Nixon (2010) explore ideas for further research of the SWOT procedure. They indicate that there is a need to be aware of the fact that the environment is constantly changing and that this element should be reflected in the SWOT analysis. Also, there is the belief that the SWOT procedure, in order to be fully achieved, should be linked with additional research such as literature reviews, workshops, personal interviews and scenario planning (Helmes & Nixon, 2010). Moreover, Coman and Ronen recommend using such tools as event-factor analysis, focus current reality-tree and the core-competency tree analysis as options that would improve that parts of a SWOT analysis that deal with strengths and weaknesses [(2009)](http://wizfolio.com/?citation=1&ver=3&ItemID=396&UserID=19638&AccessCode=B766A2A3CBF94758BB3E0421CD490781&CitationSuffix=).

**Environmental Scan: External Factors**

**History and Demographics**

T Public Library is single-branch library located in and funded by the City of T, California.  In 2010, the City of T had a population of 59,278 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).  This represents an increase of 34.7% since 2000 (Advameg, 2012), which far outpaces the statewide growth rate of 10 percent for the same period (Johnson, 2011).  The County of T, with a population 442,179 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), funds a system of libraries with 15 branches.  No county library branch is located in the City of T, the region’s second most populous city; the city has had its own independently operated library that dates to 1886 (TPL, n.d).  According to the TPL website, the city’s library was expanded in 1905 with a $10,000 donation from the Carnegie Foundation and was lead from 1931 to 1963 by a single director, Miss Elizabeth LaCell. The library belongs to the San Joaquin Library System, which is a network of ten public library jurisdictions in California's Central Valley, according to its website ([http://www.Tpubliclibrary.org/](http://www.tularepubliclibrary.org/).

Geographically, T is located in the heart of California’s Central Valley and at the foot of Sierra Nevada mountains.  An extensive dam and canal system built over the last 150 years is capable of providing ample water flow to the region’s agricultural industry (ECORP, 2006); and the area is one of the most productive agricultural producers in the country (Thompson, 2010).  The city is part of the Visalia-Porterville metropolitan area and is situated about ten miles from Visalia, California, the largest city in T County with a population of 124,442 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).  The mission statement for the city is as follows: “To promote a quality of life making T the most desirable community in which to live, learn, play, work, worship and prosper” (City of T, June 21, 2011).

According to current Mayor Wayne Ross, the City of T “still maintains its small town charm and traditions” and enjoys “highly ranked high schools and elementary schools” (2012[)](about:blank). The community hopes to soon see the completion of a local campus of the College of the Sequoias, as well as an expansion of the T Regional Medical Center resulting from the success of recent bond measures, according to the Mayor’s Message (Ross, 2010).  As with many cities in California, the T is experiencing the effects of a multi-year economic downturn.  Of particular concern has been the loss of new construction, which has put pressure on the city’s budget due to significantly lower impact fees revenues, according to their Comprehensive Annual Financial Plan for 2010 (Thompson, 2010).

**Resident Profile**

According to the United States Census Bureau, 33% of T’s residents are under the age of 18, as opposed to 25% on the state level (U.S. Census, 2010).  Similar to California as a whole, the City of T has a significant Hispanic population. The census data indicates that the city includes 53.5% Hispanic residents, with 56.6% of residents speaking English at home and 36.9% of residents speak Spanish at home.  The next most significant racial and ethnic groups are African American (4.3%), Asian (2.4%) and mixed racial background (2.1%), according to the U.S. Census (2010).

**Economic Brief and Trends**

While the City of T has historically benefited from its location at the crossroads between ports to the north and south (County of T, 2012), today’s economy reflects more complex factors and vulnerabilities.  The rapid growth in population had resulted in many construction jobs over the previous decade.  However, many of these jobs were lost during the downturn in the economy resulting in a regionally high unemployment rate (Thompson, 2010).  The Visalia-Porterville area has among the highest foreclosure rates in the state, and homeowners have been greatly affected by declining property values (Associated Press, July 26, 2012).  With 59.8% of local households owning their residences (U.S. Census, 2010), this development has had a significant residual impact on the area’s economy and residents.

According to the County of T Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2011, the region has a solid agricultural industry and this remains a stabilizing economic factor:

The County is the number one producer of dairy products in the United States, and is the nation’s second highest-ranking county with regard to total agriculture and livestock production. The County’s total crop acreage is over 1.6 million. The climate of the County is such that it produces outstanding citrus crops (Woodward & Garcia, 2010).

A number of major companies have their headquarters in the T region, including U.S. Cold Storage, Haagen-Dazs, Kraft Foods and Land O’Lakes (Ross, 2012).

The website citi-data.com offers a broad overview of the economic indicators for T.  The medium household income is $40,907, which is about 30% below the statewide average of $58,931; however, that is up from $33,637 in 2000.  Housing is significantly less expensive than the statewide average, coming in at a median $171,171 in 2009.  That is an increase from $92,900 in 2000. Median gross rent is $828 and the cost of living index is 86.3 as of 2012.  The regional jobless rate was reported at 16.2%, whereas the City of T’s unemployment rate was lower at 13.8%.  This still amounts to 3,400 unemployed city residents as compared to 21,000 with jobs, which has a significant negative effect on the city’s tax base and residents’ purchasing power (Advameg, 2012).

**Local Governmental Agencies and Trends**

The City of T government, which oversees and shares a new building with the T Public Library, has received awards for adhering to national standards for excellence in governance, according to their annual financial report (2010). They produce and publish a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report that includes budget amounts approved for the library (Thompson, 2010) .  The city has funded the building of the new library with the agreement that the library’s foundation will work toward paying back the investment to the city, according to library employee K. Horner (personal communication, October 2, 2012). The annual budget for the coming year reflects no debt or interest expenses for the library nor expenses to rent the facility or payment of debt to the city (City of T, 2012).

Local K-12 public education is provided by the T City School District (K-8) and the T Joint Union High School District (9-12), which together serve approximately 14,500 students, with enrollment increasing and new campus construction planned in the near future ([www.tcsdk8.org)](about:blank) ([ww2.T.k12.ca.us)](http://ww2.tulare.k12.ca.us/)).  Students at all grade levels have access to the Accelerated Reader (AR) reading progress monitoring system, with books at site libraries marked to show AR levels. In addition, the T Public Library provides information on its website on how to access appropriate AR reading materials in its collection, according to employee K. Horner (personal communication, October 2, 2012).

**Sociocultural Factors**

Nearly half of the local population is of Hispanic origin and 38% speak Spanish as their primary language.  Finding ways to serve this population is a priority of the public library system in T, according to library employee K. Horner (personal communication, October 2, 2012).  This service challenge may require purchasing materials in both English and Spanish, offering basic computer use classes in both English and Spanish, providing staff or volunteers within the library setting who are bilingual and offering library events that appeal to a representative set of cultures and economic backgrounds.  Additionally, cultural awareness and sensitivity become factors in serving varying cultural backgrounds.  Management must “ensure that everyone has, and demonstrates, respect for the views of others,” among other issues (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 60).

**Legislative and Regulatory Developments**

The California Association of Libraries reported (Dillon and DiCaro, Sept. 4, 2012) that a bill—SB 1044—authored by State Senator Carol Liu (Democrat-21st District) would impose a series of requirements on cities that opt to withdraw from county library systems. The bill failed to clear the Senate Rules Committee before the session ended, according to Dillion and DiCaro. They indicated that the aim of the bill is to make withdrawal more difficult, as that is seen as a means to cut library jobs and reduce benefits.  It was sponsored by the Service Employees International Union.  A portion of the bill would make the effects retroactive to cities that have already separated from county systems and are using private contractors to operate their libraries. It is not known at this time whether SB 1044 could affect the T Public Library and any possible future plans to shift to private contracting for library services. In addition to this legislation, the CLA points to bills that frame the annual state budget as ongoing important factors in libraries’ future plans (2012).

**Environmental Scan: Internal Factors**

**Facilities**

When the library was seeking a move from its old building, the then library director was the driving force in making a new home that would be modern and also provide more of a community type center to promote the library as the focal gathering place in T, according to TPL employee K. Horner (personal communication, Oct. 2, 2012).  She indicates that incorporating sound environmental building practices was a natural step in the building’s design phase and an architect was sought that was familiar with green design.  Funding was sought through grants and from the City of T; the Library Foundation has agreed to pay back the City of T over a few years. The new building was just awarded a LEED silver certified status.  The state-of-the art facility is also unique in that it integrates with the City Hall.

The stunning new building is profiled on the website of Page and Moris, interior design consultants whose projects include the recently completed cutting-edge remodel of the library at San Francisco State University.  Page indicates that the aim was for the building to be “the cultural and civic heart of the community” and to reflect the agricultural heritage of the region (2012):

The architect was Paul Halajian, Taylor Teter Partnership. The design of the building is inspired by the area's prominence in agricultural dairy production, with forms that recall dairy barns and silos. Page + Moris provided interior design that followed the architect's lead with selection of building colors that are exciting and finishes that are durable and "green". A gutsy-scaled line of custom furniture was designed and includes reader tables, computer tables, newspaper stand, and browsing display units. Tables for Children's and Teens' are cloverleaf shapes with resin/ash tops and accessible metal clad cylindrical bases (Page, 2012).

**Staffing and Management Changes**

The T Public Library is in a transitional period at present with both a new building and a new management structure (personal communication, Oct. 2, 2012).  Operations in the new facility have been solidified under a compartmentalized management structure in which adult, youth and reference each operate as semi-autonomous departments.  Following the retirement of the long-time library director, management authority fell upon the department heads who oversee several full-time staff members known as library assistants in addition to seasonal help.  K. Horner states that the volunteer program has expanded recently, and these individuals now play an active role in basic library operations including shelving and check outs (personal communication, October 2, 2012).

A new position called the Parks, Library and Recreation Director has been added above what was formerly a more traditional arrangement of a library director who reported directly to the city council.  This new position was described on the City’s website ([http://www.ci.T.ca.us/employment/current.asp?ID=3554](http://www.ci.tulare.ca.us/employment/current.asp?ID=3554)) as follows:

The Parks, Library & Recreation Director will assume full management responsibility under general administrative direction, to assist in planning, directing, managing, and reviewing the activities and operations of Recreation, Parks, Library and Senior Services; to coordinate assigned activities with other City departments and outside agencies; and provide highly responsible and complex administrative support to the City Manager.

The position was recently filled by a long-time city employee, Rob Hunt, who has no direct experience in library operations (Sonnichsen, October 3, 2012).  The library will be adding a new position of library manager at a lower salary level, and that individual will take on some of the tasks formerly handled by the library director, according to K. Horner. One major staffing goal is to improve employee training (personal communication, October 2, 2012).

**Services**

The new schedule of library services is eclectic, progressive and aimed to stimulate new interest in the library across broad segments of the community. Employee K. Horner offers this description:

There are 20 computers available in the computer lab for all patrons to access, plus 5 laptops that patrons may check out for use inside the library. There are also 6 computers just for children roughly 12 and under, in the youth department. Each patron is allotted 60 minutes a day for use on the computers. All the computers are connected to the internet and there is free Wi-Fi.  There are 4 OPACS in the adult section of the library, 2 in the juvenile section and 1 in the teen area. All are available for the public use. Free classes are offered, such as beginning keyboard and intro to internet. Computer classes are available in English and some in Spanish.  In the computer lab, there are printers available for patrons, color and black & white, screen for classes, and in the Olympic and Charter Room there is audio/visual equipment and set ups for conference calls, movies, games, and video conferencing. Each of these rooms are available for people and groups to rent (personal communication, October 2, 2012).

**Librarian Viewpoints**  
 Two librarians with management responsibilities who currently work at T Public Library answered responses to group questionnaires (personal communications, Oct. 7, 2012 & Oct. 10, 2012).  This feedback provided a broad view of the hopes and challenges faced by the library during a difficult time of fiscal austerity and changing expectations for library services.  
**Funding**

The library is funded primarily by the City of T. The 2011/2012 Maintenance and Operations budget (City of T, June 21, 2011, p. 149) calls for $227,590 in expenditures, a sum both recommended by the city manager and approved by the council.  This represents an increase from $202,760, which was the actual expenditure for 2009/2010.  The largest sum is allocated for the acquisition and maintenance of books and magazines at $100,000 and, secondly, professional and technical services at $58,000.  This Maintenance and Operations budget does not include labor costs. These are detailed in the summary report for the library and total $655,680 for salaries and benefits (City of T, June 21, 2011, p. 147). There are no current expenses for capital outlays or debt service. Specific salary expenditures include $102,050 for one library director, $151,790 for three librarians, $78,810 for two senior library assistants, $63,940 for two library assistants and $31,450 for one library aide  Several part-time positions are budgeted for at $77,270 and seasonal/extra help, overtime and vacation/sick leave amount to an additional $37,810. Benefits for employees amount to $144,100 (City of T, 2011, p. 148), a sum that fell short of the library department’s request by approximately $15,000.  Most of the other budget allocations met or exceeded the department’s requests (City of T, June 21, 2011, p. 147-149). Additionally, a grant from the City of T for library literacy provides for $104,207 in targeted funds in 2011/12 (City of T, June 21, 2011, p. 182).

**Vendors**

Library employee K.Horner provided the following description of the library’s vendor relationships (personal communication, Oct. 2, 2012):

The T Public Library utilizes Baker & Taylor as its primary vendor for books. Other vendors that T Public Library may use are Ingram and Amazon. All media is ordered through Amazon and if a book is unable to be ordered, the library will contact the publisher directly. This is unusual since TPL is considered a popular library and most material is accessible. TPL is also a member of the San Joaquin Library System, and offers interlibrary loans from other libraries throughout the Central Valley that are in the system. The library uses Horizon, as the libraries catalog system and cataloging services is through Valley Cat, catalogers are located in Fresno and are responsible for copy cataloging and adding materials to Horizon. E-book service is provided by 3M Cloud.

And, on the matter of online access to library resources, Horner adds:

On the library’s website, patrons can access the OPAC system to search for materials and request items from outside the library. There is no online tutorial to assist patrons; their only option would be to call during library hours for assistance. Through the website patrons can access some of the research databases, such as Novelist and Learning Express. It is simply links to the databases, no particular assistance is provided other than calling during library hours for help.

**Employee Perceptions of Planning and Management**

Overall, morale is high and employees seem to love their jobs and are thankful that they work at the library, according to SLIS student and TPL employee K. Horner. There is a general sense of camaraderie, and management has traditionally been viewed positively by the employees with no large divide between management and employees. The biggest staff concern is the loss of the library director position and the new management structure created by the city, where the parks and recreation director will oversee the library, with a new position of library manager being created to handle everyday operations (personal communication, October 2, 2012).  One of the three current librarians is in contention for the position.

An informal survey was administered by K. Horner to gauge library employees’ attitudes toward elements associated with the planning process and management (personal communication, Sept. 30, 2012).  Six employees were polled.  While it is not advisable to make generalizations from such a small and informally administered polling sample, a few conclusions can be reached from this survey.  Most employees agree that the mission statement influences their day-today operations.  Several employees somewhat disagree with the suggestion that employees are confident in the management team’s ability to plan for the future.  All agree or strongly agree that management makes an effort to explain its goals and objectives.  Most strongly agree that the needs of the library patrons are actively considered in making changes.

**SWOT: Analysis Section**

The T Public Library opened its doors in its present location in August 2010.  Internally, several factors influence the strength and weaknesses for the T Public Library.  Externally, the environment and the potential for growth opportunities affect the library. This SWOT analysis looks at external and internal factors that have an impact on the performance of the library.

**Internals (Strengths and Weaknesses)**  
*Strengths*

T Public Library has numerous strengths that enhance its performance and benefit the T community.  The new facility is located in central T near downtown, close to walkways, bike paths, a bus facility, and has made the library more accessible for the majority of the public. The new building is safe, welcoming and comfortable, with an open layout. The library staff is a strength, with many long-term experienced and dedicated employees. They are devoted to the success of the library and aim to provide excellent customer service. Librarians are knowledgeable in library procedures have professional expertise and training in librarianship. The library also offers a valuable opportunity for volunteers to be an important component of the daily running of the library for personal satisfaction and community-building. Another strength is the opportunities for the community to become involved and support the library through the Library Foundation and the Friends of the T Public Library. The library offers numerous community resources for free, such as tutoring, CSET work experience, volunteer opportunities, computer classes, story time, book clubs, kids’ activities, class tours, knitting club, and numerous other programs. In order to accommodate a multilingual community, numerous materials, programs, signage, and classes are offered in different languages. Several staff members are bilingual. Another strength is technology: the library stays current with technology and trends, offering free wi-fi, over 20 computers and laptops that are available for public use, e-readers and a constantly updated website and Facebook page. The library is part of a larger resource-sharing library system, the San Joaquin Valley Library System, which allows patrons to access materials from other libraries and provides a large online resource database that is available off-site. Lastly, two of the best strengths the library has are its excellent reputation and its ability to draw patrons from outside the city.

*Weaknesses*

With internal strengths come internal weaknesses. While the library offers excellent service, there are numerous areas that need to be improved upon. It offers limited public hours of operation and a limited number of staff. Both of these limitations are due to a lack of funding. Another weakness is the limitation for expansion. While the library is housed in a new facility, there appears to be no room for expansion outside and inside the library. There is a lack of teen services for a large teen demographic and the area inside the library for teens close to capacity. The youth services librarian does not hold a master’s degree, and there are few programs for teens. The library offers a current website but offers no online tutorials or research assistance after hours. While e-books are offered, there is a very limited selection. There is a lack of expertise in cataloging by staff, and a need for a greater focus on collection development. The library offers no distinct training for staff in daily operations, and sections are departmentalized with no cross training of staff. Since the library is part of the city, another weakness is that staff in certain cases can be bumped by other city employees with greater seniority, even if the more senior employee has no experience with libraries. The library is also currently restructuring higher level management. The library director has retired after decades of service and the direction of library will be under the Parks and Recreation department.

**Externals (Opportunities and Threats)**   
*Opportunities*

While the weaknesses of the T Public Library are noted above, a number of opportunities exist both to improve services and programs that are available for patrons and also to strengthen the role of the library in the local community. One is to build a cohesive plan to increase and stabilize revenue through a multi-pronged approach that includes training an existing staff member to take on grant writing and matching grant opportunities with library needs; increasing donations (and raising the library’s public profile) through more Friends of the Library fundraising events; and bringing in community expertise to start a library endowment fund. Combining these efforts with a low-budget marketing campaign would not only boost funding but would also encourage community engagement with the library and build support and good will for TPL needs.

Another possible area of opportunity is to build closer connections with the local K-14 education community. California law specifically allows for partnerships between public and school libraries (California Education Code §§ 18100-18104). As a result, forging direct ties between the T public school systems and the College of the Sequoias and Porterville College could offer enhanced collection resources, librarian expertise, and an expanded patron base to support the T Public Library. The library could also offer targeted services for home-schooled students.

Expanding services for Spanish-speaking patrons also provides valuable potential for growth. T has a significant percentage of Spanish-speaking households that would likely use the library more fully if there were a larger collection of Spanish language books and periodicals, English as a Second Language tutoring, citizenship classes, and more bi-lingual computer training. This would not only increase the library’s patron base but would also start a virtuous cycle of greater integration between the Spanish and English-speaking T communities and positively affect the academic outcomes of children from Spanish-speaking homes.

*Threats*

The greatest threat to the T Public Library was and continues to be declining funds from its main revenue stream, the City of T. The State of California’s recent fiscal crisis and economic downturn resulted in a large drop in tax revenue for the city, and the library is competing for limited resources. The library is perceived as less important or valuable by some city officials, including the current mayor, and it is difficult to change that view with fewer staff and funds available for library advocacy and marketing. In addition, even when a library staff position is saved from the chopping block and is open to be filled, T has few people with library skills and expertise available to apply, so it is challenging to keep a highly qualified staff in place.

The pace of change and evolving role of libraries is also a threat to the library, just as it is currently for libraries all over the country. The ease of access to the internet and e-books has altered patrons’ views on the value of traditional library resources such as reference services and even some print material collections. While the T Public Library is adapting to 21st century needs, it is struggling to stay ahead of a rapidly transforming library culture. It is especially difficult for the library to bring in teen patrons as they shift into a digital world to meet their social, cultural, entertainment and academic needs, and it is particularly important for the library to reach out to this demographic to make sure they stay connected with the library as they move into adulthood.

**Mission, Values and Vision Statements**

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the T Public Library is to support the personal, educational, and professional needs of a diverse community.  To achieve success, the T Public Library will provide a suitable learning environment, current technology, and community based programs.  A friendly, well-informed library staff will serve by providing access to a wide variety of resources and committing to excellent customer service.

**Vision Statement**

The T Public Library seeks to act as the heart of the T community by being a gathering place that provides information, literacy, and cultural resources in a comfortable, attractive and welcoming environment. The library will be a public library, a civic space, and a community gathering spot. By being the gathering place for the diverse community of T, the library will be a place to find educational resources, fulfill intellectual development and growth, and foster community outreach and development. The goal is to meet the needs of a diverse and growing population by providing a knowledgeable staff that aspires to provide the highest level of customer service. The T Public Library seeks to provide the best staff, volunteers, collections, services, and programs for the people of the City of T.

**Values Statement**

The T Public Library is committed to supporting its community. The library will ensure that its collection and the services it provides reflect the multicultural diversity of the its patrons. The library recognizes the importance of creating an innovative environment for the community through new technology. Staff and volunteers seek to inspire, educate and create positive change through the library. The library strives to provide its employees and volunteers an excellent work environment that allows them to cultivate their skills and abilities while serving the community.  To fulfill our mission and achieve our vision, the library is dedicated to remaining true to its values, which are outlined as follows:

**Community:** Patrons will have access to the most up-to-date resources. Developing the e-book collection, maintaining and preserving the print collection, ensuring that weeding procedures are performed regularly, and purchasing new and scholarly significant resources that meet the research needs of patrons are important priorities. In addition, engaging a vast volunteer program is not only helpful in running daily library operations and services during tough budget times but also means that members of the community feel that they are an integral part of the library.

**Collection:** The library is very proud of its setting in a diverse community and is devoted to providing more services in the Spanish language in order to reflect its patron base. It is important to ensure that the needs of the community are fulfilled and reflected in the collection and services that are provided by the library.

**Service**: The library seeks to ensure that it is providing the necessary services that are requested by users. Some of them include on site research help, access to computers and the internet, e-book readers, online databases and resources, free computer classes, book clubs, kids clubs, free community lectures and a young adult book club. In order to support all these services the library is planning to expand its hours of operation.

**Education:** In order to make sure that the community is engaged with the library, management is reaching out to young readers by supporting local schools.

**Staffing**: Library management is committed to maintaining professional standards among management and staff. It is important to keep the lines of communication open between all levels of employees to allow creativity and to be open to suggestions. Management has an ‘open-door’ policy and is working hard on maintaining high morale levels among the staff.

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