

## WA! The Wu Wei Academic Librarian

Anita M M Liu,

Associate Professor, Dept. of Real Estate and Construction, The University of Hong Kong.

[ammliu@hkucc.hku.hk](mailto:ammliu@hkucc.hku.hk)

### ABSTRACT

#### Purpose:

This paper examines the integration of the Western concept of *dynamic equilibrium* and *wa*, the Eastern concept of *harmony*, and how *wu wei* (maintaining *centrality*, hence, stability, in a dynamic environment) is fundamental to the sustainable development of the library system in a harmonious manner.

#### Approach:

The Western concept of *self* and the Chinese Taoist concepts of change and stability are used to examine the role of the human being – the librarian – in the constantly evolving environment.

#### Research proposition:

The four competing values faced by the librarian are based on the needs to adopt (1) internal focus, (2) external focus, (3) flexibility and (4) control. The four competing values generate issues confronting the academic librarian: (1) Frustration – what challenges and pressures do academic librarians currently face in the university environment specifically? (2) History and destiny – what lessons can the history of libraries in universities give us about their future role in the scholarly community? (3) Constraints – what are the possible environmental barriers which might prevent librarians working dynamically in parallel with or ahead of university ‘strategists’, to secure their vision as key players in tomorrow’s academy?

Conflicting forces from library stakeholders are analysed in a competing values model which encompasses the elements of organisation systems and organisational culture.

#### Implication:

The competing values framework provides the basis for formulating a research agenda to investigate the central role played by university libraries in the societal development of human-kind.

**KEYWORDS:** dynamic equilibrium, harmony, competing values, library

Conceptual Paper

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, libraries have been central to universities and, thence, the preservation and development of knowledge. For Aristotle and Plato, the professor sat in the chair and delivered his wisdom to the audience orally; as directed by the professor, the reader stood at the lectern and read passages from the book(s) to supplement the professor's oratory.

However, knowledge and views have never been popular universally and so, throughout history, repositories have been 'purged' by powers who held views and had interests at variance with those recorded. As knowledge evolves, views (gradually) change – but seldom in welcoming and smooth ways, as experienced by Galileo. Those who assume the role of custodian of the records of knowledge have, on many occasions, found themselves in direct and grave danger.

Today, the role of the librarian appears a trifle less dramatic – fortunately, most of the overt danger and violence seems to have abated. However, certain overt and covert threats remain – not, obviously, life-endangering but important none-the-less. Strangely, some may be attributed to the very purposes of libraries – the storing of the ever expanding, vast quantities of data and information and access to those – no wonder frustration and stress are on the increase!

## WA, HARMONY AND DYNAMIC EQUILIBRIUM

*Wa* is a primary concept and behavioural objective in Japanese culture for both personal and business relationships (Parry, 2006; see also Winfield, Minzuno and Beaudoin, 2000). Adopted from China, '*Wa*' is translated to mean 'harmony', 'peace', 'unity', 'reconciliation'. *Wa* underpins the modern cultural constructs of collectivism and long-termism primarily (see, e.g., Hofstede, 2001) and impacts on other cultural dimensions such as power distance. What seems unclear is whether *Wa* is instrumental or is consequential in the structuring of society as very formal and hierarchical. Like Japanese, Chinese and other Eastern cultures, Western cultures share concepts of 'face' (reputation and dignity) and desire harmony, however, the roles and approaches are significantly different. In Eastern cultures *Wa* is both a means and, most important, the primary goal in relationships; whereas, in Western cultures, harmony is a process of balancing desires – of establishing an equilibrium between individuals' and organisations' objectives and rights. (See, e.g., Parry, 2006.)

Harmony refers to "the nature of interpersonal interaction and actions engaged in by social actors within a given organizational content and structure" (Earley 1997:34) and is, thus, conceptualised as a systems-level dynamic process of behaviour regulation, as opposed to a static or stable outcome. In Earley's model, the influence of social actors' desire to regulate face propels harmony (at the individual level), cultural values and norms concerning social regulation impact harmony (at the societal level) and institutional practices and organization structure influence harmony (at the organization level). According to Earley, resource theory (Fiske 1991) in cross-cultural research can be integrated with the concept of cultural values (Triandis 1994) to identify four social ties – market pricing, authority ranking, communal sharing and equality matching – in order to examine patterns of interaction, expectations of intent and social and personal responses to actions.

Harmony is not an equilibrium point which is 'static' in nature. For example, it does not mean that the society is in harmony and, therefore, there is never conflict amongst members. It is unrealistic to hope for such a static state to last. In the (Chinese) Tao concept, the *yin* and *yang* are under constant actions of integration and differentiation (as well as constantly alternating between stillness and motion) while seeking unity through balance (and dynamic equilibrium). "Dynamic equilibrium implies a constant movement or motion that happens to present no movement or motion because of the nature of corresponding (and opposing) reaction" (Earley 1997:140). The concept of Wa (or harmony) is examined in the Western and the Chinese archetypal approaches.

### Western Approach

In Western literature, the concept of equilibrium has long implied a steady state, or balance, but recent thinking and research have stimulated a great deal of interest in dynamic equilibriums and chaotic systems (Gleick 1987). In such systems, starting conditions have a profound effect on the eventual behaviour of the system. In organization studies, Giddens (1984) suggests that an equilibrium point is a constraining concept because it creates an illusion of stability where none really exists. Giddens's (1984) notion of structuration, points to a dynamic view of social systems where equilibrium is not static. Social systems consist of several constructs, including structure (or the rules and resources organised as properties of a system), system (or reproduced relations between actors and collectivities that are organized as regular social practices), and structuration (the conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and, therefore, the reproduction of the systems themselves). Structuration, hence, focuses on a given pattern of interaction that changes as a function of time.

To the social psychologist or organizational behaviourist, the concept of equilibrium may involve an individual's participation within a given social setting. In the traditional model of Lewinian field theory (Lewin 1951), there exists a general domain of influence in which a person (P) operates and functions in the environment (E). Within E there exist a number of forces,  $F_1$  to  $F_n$ , each moving P towards some desired goal (G). It is assumed that the goal is desired by those parties propelling P in such a direction. (Liu and Walker, 1998, and Liu, 1999, develop a model for evaluating construction project outcome based on this goal approach.) In the Lewinian sense, harmony represents the point at which these forces are reconciled and P is no longer in a state of movement or motion, i.e., the nature of harmony reflects a balance of forces acting on P in E such that their summated influences are equal to 0.

Hence, Earley (1997) argues that harmony is not simply a balance point or congruence between interacting parties' behaviours and expectations but involves the nature and patterns of (social) exchange. A significant view of social exchange is proposed by Emerson (1962) in the power-dependence relations model where social exchange is conceptualised in terms of power differentials and dependencies among various people in social groups. Emerson argues that social relations, typically, entail mutual dependencies, e.g. an employee who depends on his/her supervisor for job relevant resources (e.g., information) is in a weaker power position since the supervisor is capable of withholding such resources – consider the case of the government and the universities in fund allocation. Unbalanced power relationships do not always lead to an equalization of power. Emerson gives the example of an unpopular woman who is dating a popular man where the man may try to take advantage of the relationship by soliciting sexual favours contrary to the woman's morals. Such an unbalanced power

situation might become balanced when the woman decides that dating is not useful and, thus, removes the man's advantage, or remains unbalanced when the woman decides to succumb to the advances, thus, maintaining the man's advantage. In the Chinese context, the dynamic power distribution creates (sometimes disturbing) motion which may have positive and negative effects on the self (the individual). The individual is advised to adopt *wú wéi* (無為) in the Taoist approach.

### Taoist approach

Taoism existed long before Lao Tzu 老子 (circa. 500B.C. – in the Zhou Dynasty 周朝 which was from 1027 to 256 B.C.) and Confucius 孔子 (551-479 B.C.). *Tao* 道 (or *Dao*) is quite widely appreciated in the West through the many translations of *Tao Te Ching* 道德經.

In Taoism, the concept of *wú wéi*<sup>1</sup> (無為) is explained as the path adopted by the sage, i.e. inaction is a proactive way to maintain centrality. As something comes from nothing<sup>2</sup>, the stillness embraced within the central core of a moving entity (as depicted in a dynamic environment) is the source of energy to bring forth new life after the commotion – for within the haven and sanctuary in the core is least disturbance and destruction. Commotion cannot last forever and the person who has been capable to retain energy and a clear head can lead the way out of chaos, at the appropriate time, to turn a new page. The more the commotion is, the higher the need to protect the sanctuary at the core.

The importance of maintaining centrality is emphasized. It is symbolised as possession of “one-ness”<sup>3</sup> or unity. When “one-ness” is attained at the core, even when there is no action, “nothing is left undone. ... The myriad creatures (all matter and beings) will be transformed of their own accord. ... And if I cease to desire and remain still, the empire will be at peace of its own accord.” (Lau 1963: 96, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 37). For in times of commotion in a chaotic environment, 動而愈出 “the more it works, the more comes out”, i.e., the more one tries to intervene, the more chaotic it becomes, hence, “better to hold fast to the void” 不如守中, (Lau 1963: 61, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 5), i.e. maintain the stillness and take no (especially, impulsive) action.

However, how may one be able to maintain centrality and embrace unity (one-ness)? The understanding and the ability to handle opposing forces is crucial, hence, the concept of *harmony*. In *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 28, it is written, “Know the white but keep to the role of the black” 知白守黑, “Know honour, but keep to the role of the disgraced” 知榮守辱, “and you will return to being the uncarved block” 復歸無極, i.e., return to where it begins – which

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<sup>1</sup> “A man of the highest virtue does not keep to virtue and that is why he has virtue. A man of the lowest virtue never strays from virtue and that is why he is without virtue. The former never acts yet leaves nothing undone. The latter acts but there are things left undone. A man of the highest benevolence acts, but from no ulterior motive. A man of the highest rectitude acts, but from ulterior motive. A man most conversant in the rites acts, but when no one responds rolls up his sleeves and resorts to persuasion by force.” (Lau 1963:99, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 38) 上德不德是以有德，下德不失德是以無德。上德無為而無以為；下德為之而有以為，上仁為之而無以為，上義為之而有以為，上禮為之而莫之應，則攘臂而仍之。

<sup>2</sup> “The myriad creatures (all matter and beings) in the world are born from Something, and Something from Nothing.” *Words in parenthesis added by authors.* (Lau 1963:101, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 40) 萬物生于有，有生于無。

<sup>3</sup> “Of old, these came to be in possession of the One: Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid; Earth in virtue of the One is settled; .....It is the One that makes these what they are.” (Lau 1963: 100, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 39) 昔之得一者，天得一以清，地得一以寧，... 其致之一也

can be interpreted, in one sense, to return (beyond unity) to nothingness. (Lau 1963: 85, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 28). Therefore, the opposing forces of the white and the black, honour and disgrace required (harmonious) integration, or, the Western concept might see it as a neutralizing process of positive and negative forces.

### Hé (or Wa) 和

The positive and negative elements in all matter and beings are referred as *yang* and *yin*. Harmony is encompassed in 冲氣以為和, the concept that all things possess *ying* and *yang* and “are the blending of the generative forces of the two” 萬物負陰而抱陽(Lau 1963: 103, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 42). So, how can one harmonise the *yin* (-) and the *yang* (+) forces which arise (in) from all matter and beings?

It is advised that one’s “glare” (renowned reputation, meaning expert and referent power) should be softened (和其光) and the “sharpness” (principles to the verge of stubbornness) should be made blunt (挫其銳) in order for the “knots” (conflict) to be untangled (解其紛). The mechanism for untangling the knots through actions to “soften the glare” and “blunt the sharpness” is by means of one’s ability to “block the openings” 塞其兌 (stop being influenced by provocative, instigating voices) and “shut the doors” 閉其門 (stop being influenced by distorted misinterpretation of events) – in doing, so, the actions (and non-actions) of the sage will lead to the final outcome which would have been most appropriate no matter whatever actions (or non-actions) are taken, i.e., the “mysterious sameness” of equifinality (Lau 1963: 117, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 56) : 挫其銳, 解其紛, 和其光, 同其塵, 是謂玄同. Hence, at the height of commotion, one is wise to block out the confusion to maintain one’s centrality, i.e., not be confused and drawn into a whirlpool of, say, power struggle. At such times, it is also wise to dim one’s glare (so as not to attract jealousy from others) and blunt the sharpness (divert the on-slaughter) of external threatening forces. At the end of all commotion, nothing (no matter or beings) should be blamed for the final outcome because of equifinality<sup>4</sup> 玄同 (a concept used also in Western management literature).

Henceforth, when does one harmonise? The sage carries out any necessary actions before the commotion – appropriate actions taken before commotion will diffuse (and nullify the effects of possible) commotion<sup>5</sup> (Lau 1963: 125 *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 64). Such ability requires a man’s clear and observant mind to foretell commotion and this ability is attained by keeping the stability in the man’s central core (or the ‘void’), i.e., maintaining the stillness and, hence, clear vision. Therefore, the wise leader is behind the blueprint and takes every step strategically before conflict arises. Such a leader is able to diffuse conflict before its materialization because his/her wisdom guides one’s mind to merge with the minds of the people, e.g., followers, stakeholders. Literal translation of (Lau 1963: 110) *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 49, is “The sage has no mind of his own, he takes as his own the mind of the people” 聖人無常心, 以百姓之心為心 – that, in modern management terms, is what participative management advocates – participative management has been hailed as an effective management approach (Plunkett and Fournier, 1991; Wagner, 1995; Ledford and Lawler, 1994). Since participative management is not directive as in the authoritarian approach, it

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<sup>4</sup> The term, equifinality, is used in systems theory and contingency theory in management literature. For further explanation, refer to Gresov and Drazin (1997).

<sup>5</sup> “It is easy to deal with a situation before symptoms develop; .... Deal with a thing while it is still nothing; Keep a thing in order before disorder sets in.” (Lau 1963: 125 *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 64) 為之于未有, 治之于未亂

sometimes seems as though the 'wise' leader is doing nothing: "One does less and less until one does nothing at all, and when one does nothing at all, there is nothing that is undone" (Lau 1963: 109, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 48) 無為而無不為, 故取天下者, 常以無為.

Therefore, the *wú wéi* person (one who, apparently, does nothing and carries out no action<sup>6</sup>) is, in fact, the one who acts with wisdom in judging "when" and "how" to act, as well as "what" to act (and not act) upon.

## HARMONY AND CULTURE

In the Western approach, the key to understanding harmony is the person's self concept and the link between the individuals' (and organization's) actions, social context and cultural setting. In order to understand self concept, it is important to consider (1) the underlying *motives* of the self and (2) the source of an individual's judgments of the self – *self worth*. Hence, the over-simplified approach of relying on individualism-collectivism to predict peoples' in-group and out-group behaviours (towards harmony) may not be as reliable and straightforward as hypothesized.

According to Earley (1997), there are three basic *motives* that guide the *self* concept: (1) enhancement, (2) efficacy, and (3) consistency.

The self-enhancement motive creates a general tendency to distort reality in order to maintain a positive self-image. Self image needs are shaped partially by culture but particularly by the unique individual characteristics of the *self*. Triandis (1995) gives the example of an individual (let us take it to mean an entity, "*the library*") from a collectivistic culture whose goal is to excel in school (*the society*) in order that his parents (*the university authorities*) be proud of him as his contributions positively reflect on his family (*the university*), however, in an individualistic culture, the focus is on personal accomplishment for recognition of the individual (*the library*).

The second motive, self-efficacy, is a judgment of one's capability (*the library's capability*) to accomplish a certain level of performance (Bandura 1986). A perceived collective efficacy is crucial for what people choose to do as a group (*a group of libraries*), how much effort they put into it and how persistent they are when facing failures (Gibson 1995). The strength of groups lies, partly, in peoples' sense of collective efficacy, however, it is not clear how collective efficacy is shaped by the social environment and whether it is more likely to develop in certain cultures than in others (Earley 1997).

Relying on the concept of collectivism, it is easy to hypothesize that, in collectivist cultures, an emphasis on teamwork and collective action exists – so, it is likely that many employees have had many of their successes in a group context – which suggests that their efficacy will be highest if they are working in a group. In contrast, people from individualist cultures experience less teamwork, and so, their sense of collective efficacy may be lower than that of members of successful teams in collectivist cultures. However, empirical evidence (Earley et al 1996) suggests that the relationship of cultural background to individual and collective efficacy may not be so clear-cut. For instance, Earley et al (1996) hypothesize that (a) individualists who are provided with high performance individual feedback would have a

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<sup>6</sup> No action of his/her own desire but adopting that of the people's. How to achieve this is where wisdom lies.

stronger sense of self efficacy than those who are provided with low performance individual feedback, regardless of the group performance feedback that they might have received, (b) in contrast, collectivists would attend to and sample from group performance feedback rather than individual performance feedback. However, it is found that individualists have to rely on 'contrasting' feedback, i.e. their self efficacy improves only when their individual (high) performance feedback is accompanied by group feedback showing that their group performed more poorly than they did themselves. For collectivists, their efficacy (individual and collective) improves when individual (high) feedback is accompanied by group (high) feedback.

The third motive of self-consistency enables *the self* to connect current events with prior experiences in order to maintain a coherent self-concept. That affects the individual's (*the library's*) perceived legitimacy of organizational phenomena such that activities which are consistent with an individual's (*the library's*) values and beliefs are more likely to be accepted than ones which are more alien, e.g., those university's activities which are consistent with the library's values and beliefs are more readily acceptable to the library.

*Self worth* is (1) a product of the public evaluation gained from others, (2) self evaluation determined by own (personal) standards, and (3) based on the contribution one (*the library*) makes to the collective (*the university/society*) to which one belongs (Breckler and Greenwald 1986, Triandis 1995). According to Triandis (1995), the public self represents cognitions concerning generalized others' view of the self (*what do others think of the library*), is sensitive to the evaluations of significant others and seeks to gain their approval; the private self represents cognitions that involve traits or actions of the *self* and focuses on internalised standards of behaviour (*the library focusing on internal affairs*); the collective self is guided by collective action, i.e. achieving the goals of and fulfilling one's role in a reference group (*the library fulfilling its role and maintaining standards within a group of libraries of equal calibre, e.g., participating in LibQual+*). Triandis argues that the formation of the three selves is modified by culture, i.e. the development of the private self is enhanced in individualist cultures, which emphasise independence and self-actualisation, and the collective self is most directly tied to collectivist cultures which emphasize conformity, obedience and reliability. However, Earley (1997:104) cautions that the interaction effect is not as straightforward as once thought.

The self-concept dictates the way in which people (or organisations) define themselves with regard to others – as in social identity theory (see, e.g., Tajfel 1972) – the relationship of a person to the social environment is an important aspect of the social actor, e.g., how does the library view its role in society? It is important to note that as organization(s) and people regulate harmony (intra- and inter-group), they do so as members of a complex, dynamic social system that has multiple group memberships and loyalties.

Coupling the self concept discussed with the *Tao* approach, the *wú wéi* person appreciates *self* in the context of man-and-environment (e.g., with nature, heaven, earth, all matter and beings). In view of the complex relationships rendered by the almost infinite number of events which may happen (cf. chaos theory), the regulation of harmony is an on-going process for the *wú wéi* person. The *wú wéi* person adopts his 'still' (and strategic) position at the central core and, apparently, does nothing (to counter-fight, counter-argue, counter propose etc.) during chaos. That brings forth the notion of competing values which represent the various (sometimes conflicting) interests of stakeholder groups in the library.

## THE COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK

The question of "how to organize" is fundamental to the issue of effectiveness. Any organization has to consider resource allocation and interests judgements (each individual has an unconscious set of values). The systems approach views effectiveness as the ability to acquire scarce resources that enables the organization to survive and preserve its integrity. The goal approach views effectiveness as the degree to which the organization attains ideal end states. The systems approach emphasises functional complementarity among the parts of an organization and stresses the need for maintenance; the goal approach sees organizations as rational systems that enable the various parties involved to accomplish certain objectives. Theoretically, the systems approach (Kast and Rosenzweig, 1972) emphasises adequate resources to avoid undue strain on the system and the goal approach (Cyert and March, 1963) stresses the preferences of interest groups. The dominant coalition proposed by Pennings and Goodman (1977) incorporates both the systems view and the goal approach to combine the open systems notion of complex organizations with the assumption that organizations represent a political arena of different interest groups. (1) Organizations are seen as open systems having exchange relationships with their environment and with subsystems that render a contribution to the whole and to each other; (2) organizations also comprise internal interest groups, or constituencies, with members that share distinct values and interests who make claims on the organization; (3) the dominant coalition comprises a direct and indirect representation or cross-section of horizontal constituencies (subunits or departments) and vertical constituencies (employees, management, owners) with different and, possibly, competing expectations and values.

Because expectations and values tend to be implicit, most individuals are unaware of their possessing an ideal set of preferences about organizing, nor are they aware that there may be advantages to be gained in having directly opposite preferences. The contradictory nature of values led Quinn (1988) to develop a competing values model for studying organizational goals, effectiveness and culture. The two factors of resources (external focus) and values (internal focus) in a context of organizational development over time give rise to the framework (developed from Quinn, 1988; Cameron and Quinn, 1999) adapted for examining the relationship between the librarian and library users in figure 1.

Figure 1  
Competing Values Model (adapted from Cameron and Quinn 1999)

The competing values framework in figure 1 represents the competing forces in the east-west directions (internal vs. external focus) and the north-south directions (flexibility vs. control). For instance, the librarian may face resource constraints as the university and government funding body dictate/direct resource allocation. As shown in figure 1, while the librarian may have a clear set of values (of what the library is and what it may offer to society) which govern his/her *internal focus* on the consolidation and operation of the library functions, the government funding body has an *external focus* and a clear set of guidelines on resource allocations, hence, their emphasis on goal setting and control. These two groups represent the east-west direction of the competing values in figure 1.

Outside the university authority structure, the users of the library (students, staff, alumni etc.) will have their own perceptions of what facilities the library should provide. However, since their goals and expectations differ, their demands on facilities types and standards also differ. In general, they would like to see flexibility and *decentralisation* of decision-making so that their views can be obtained and taken into account. On the other hand, the university authorities require *centralisation* of major decisions (especially financial ones) and emphasises control. These two groups represent the north-south direction of the competing values in figure 1.

The four competing forces give rise to the four quadrants of organization systems (in figure 1), i.e., human relations system (clan culture), open system (adhocracy culture), internal process system (hierarchy culture) and rational goal system (market culture).

The *clan* culture (which is internal focus but wanting flexibility) emphasises loyalty and tradition where “commitment is high. ...The leaders are considered to be mentors and, perhaps, even parent figures.” (Cameron and Quinn, 1999:87). Both the hierarchy and clan cultures are internally-focused. The *hierarchy* culture is a “very formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do. The leaders pride themselves on being good coordinators and organizers .... Formal rules and policies hold the organization together. The long-term concern is on stability and performance with efficient, smooth operations. Success is defined in terms of dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low cost. The management of employees is concerned with secure employment and predictability” (Cameron and Quinn 1999:87).

In Cameron and Quinn’s (1999) model in figure 1, the north-south directions of conflicting forces are the “flexibility and discretion” vs. “stability and control”. The *market* culture depicts an organization “that focuses on external positioning with a need for stability and control”, which means it is a “results-oriented organisation whose major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive and goal-oriented. The leaders are hard drivers, producers, and competitors. 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” (Cameron and Quinn 1999:87). The cultures which incorporate the *stability and control* elements are the *hierarchy* and *market* cultures.

In the evolution of organization theories, it is increasingly recognised that instead of being rational entities, organizations often are, in fact, irrational, hypocritical, uncoordinated, and highly political miniature societies (Cameron and Ettington, 1988). Thus, it seems plausible that once the irrationality, ambiguity and unpredictability of organizations are understood, their performance and effectiveness would be greatly improved by undergoing appropriate culture change and adopting better organizational design. The librarian may have to take up the challenge.

In each of the four quadrants in figure 1, the librarian is present to make an impact. For instance, in the human relations system, the librarian is best to adopt a clan culture with the users to understand the users’ perspectives, i.e. towards commitment, focus on maintenance (of relationships, communication, and understanding) with flexibility. In the internal process system, the librarian is to adopt a hierarchy culture to transform the views (and wishes) of the university to realisable functional-task operations for the library, i.e. towards consolidation of procedures and control. In the open system, the librarian may adopt an adhocracy culture to

play go-between among the library users and the government (via the university), while translating the wishes of the users to the government (via the university), the librarian aims to define workable goals for the benefits of the university, the government, the society and users within allocated resources, i.e., towards adaptation and expansion, flexibility and individuality. In the rational goal system, the librarian is adopting a market culture to assist the university to set departmental goals for the library, provide information for the university to negotiate with government for funding, promote the library in society and abroad to establish status, i.e. towards goal setting, external positioning and control.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the face of such competing forces shown in figure 1, it is hardly a surprise if the librarian is voicing out the taxing elements which confront the operation of a modern library: (1) Frustration – what challenges and pressures do academic librarians currently face in the university environment specifically? (2) History and destiny – what lessons can the history of librarians in universities give us about their future role in the scholarly community? (3) Constraints – what are the possible environmental barriers which might prevent librarians working dynamically in parallel with or ahead of university ‘strategists’, to secure their vision as key players in tomorrow’s academy?

In order to pursue answers to the above questions, a proper research agenda is required. Ad-hoc data collection on users’ perspectives may provide a glimpse of the current situation but may not be helpful to assist the librarian to plan strategically for the development of the modern library and mark its positioning locally and internationally.

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Figure 1 Competing Values Model of the Library Management System (derived from models from Quinn 1988 and Cameron and Quinn 1999)

