

The Transit Lounge: a view of organisational change from a point in the journey

Barbara Paton, Deputy University Librarian, La Trobe University
b.paton@latrobe.edu.au

Lea Beranek, Resource Delivery Services and Audiovisual Collection Development Librarian,
La Trobe University
l.beranek@latrobe.edu.au

Ian Smith, Manager – Library Human Resources, La Trobe University
i.smith@latrobe.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Article Type

Case study

Purpose

To review the organisational change processes in an academic library in the context of change management theory.

Design/methodology/approach

The process of achieving organisational change in La Trobe University Library, a medium-sized Australian academic library is examined. The focus is the library's experience of effecting wide reaching changes in interconnected areas of organisational structure, client services delivery and the physical service environment and facilities. The drivers for undertaking change in service delivery are outlined and the changes that have been implemented are discussed. The practical experience of achieving change is examined using the framework of key change management theory and expert advice.

Findings

La Trobe University Library has been a leader in innovative service delivery and an early adopter of technologies to improve services; however it had not previously experienced significant organisational change. The library initiated a number of strategies to address resistance to the changes, achieving some success. Workshops for staff to better understand and cope with change were introduced. Extensive consultation and communication with staff was undertaken; finding the balance between perceived inadequate communication with staff and communication overload was a challenge. People are the key factor to success in any organisational change and the library's experiences confirmed the need to attend to the people element in any change process. Planning and leadership were core elements to achieving successful change.

Originality/value

Provides a useful comparison between management theory and expert advice on organisational change and the practical experience of a library.

Keywords

Change management; Organisational change; Organisational structure; Academic libraries

INTRODUCTION

Change and responding to change are ongoing processes. Several years ago La Trobe University Library embarked on a journey of organisational change after a long period of relative stability and constancy. The diplomat, economist and author John Kenneth Galbraith is said to have once wryly observed that:

Faced with the choice between changing and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof. (quoted by Bridges, 1991, p. 9)

This sentiment will ring true for all managers who have, at some stage, had the task of achieving change in their organisations! Change can be particularly difficult to achieve in organisations which have long established and largely settled patterns of operation.

La Trobe University Library has always been a leader in innovation and service delivery. In the 1980s it was one of the first academic libraries in Australia to implement all modules of a turnkey library management system and it has continued to be an early adopter of new technologies to improve services for students and staff and make operations more effective. The library has been updated, extended and refurbished to accommodate large numbers of computer workstations for client use and to respond to the needs of students for group study and collaborative learning environments. A strategic planning process, with input from a wide range of staff at all levels in the development of an annual action plan, guides the direction of the library. Comprehensive programs for staff development, performance management and continuous improvement are in place.

The library is well integrated into the university. Moreover, it is the only Australian university in which the staff with professional library qualifications have academic standing. The respect in which the library and its staff are held by the faculty and administration has meant that achieving organisational change has been supported in the wider university. However, when it came to changing the organisational structure, it was a new experience for us and Galbraith's observation struck a chord.

The changing nature of client enquiries, self-service initiatives and the implementation of new technologies such as digitisation of high use materials were drivers for the implementation of new modes of service delivery. The organisational changes undertaken, while not extending to the whole of the library, have nevertheless been wide reaching including all areas of client services delivery in an academic library. This paper relates our experience of change at this point in that journey in the context of organisational dynamics and change management theory, focussing on comparing this practical experience with what the theory tells us, what to expect and how to manage what happens.

The elements of the changes undertaken will be briefly outlined, this forming the basis for a discussion of the impact of these changes on service delivery, staffing structures, and workflows, benefits to clients, and the requirement for changes to the physical environment in the library. The benefits to library clients and improvements in library services, and the contributions to library staff satisfaction will be described. The paper will conclude by reflecting on our experiences and the lessons learned (successes and failures) on this journey.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The La Trobe University Library is a medium-sized academic library providing services to academic staff, researchers, and postgraduate and undergraduate students across six geographically dispersed campuses in the state of Victoria, Australia. The total population of the university is 29,000 with total library staff of 145. The library at the Bundoora campus is the largest of the five campus libraries and opened its doors for students and staff in 1967 in a newly established university. The 100 members of library staff provide services to 17,000 students and 2,500 staff.

In recent decades the Bundoora Campus Library has experienced significant changes driven by the digital era of information resource provision and delivery as have all academic libraries. It was recognized in 2002 that to enable the Library to more effectively achieve the goals and objectives of the Library Strategic Plan over the following five years, a re-shaping of the library organisation would be required to realign it with the priorities for service to clients as identified in the Strategic Plan. Rather than a “whole of organisation” change, it was agreed that a phased approach would be less disruptive and would be followed.

The first step in the organisational change plan focussed on the areas of delivery of services to clients in the library which support the delivery of information resources and services. Several sections of the library were undertaking the same functions, or delivering the same or similar services, for different formats of material – lending and returning, bookings,

reservations, and reserve (high use) collection. There was potential to increase the effective management of staff resources by having these functions undertaken by one pool of staff. There were also small teams of staff in the audiovisual services and interlending and document delivery whose specialised knowledge presented difficulties in sustaining the service in periods of absence of these team members. The prospect of integrating these teams into a larger pool of staff and training additional staff in these particular areas was attractive. The plan that was developed sought to utilise existing staff more effectively in an environment of increasing service demands from clients, increasing costs of information resources, and a static Library budget. The core of the plan as outlined in the next section involved the restructuring of three divisions to form two sections comprising a number of teams. The restructure was implemented in early 2003, with the changes impacting on all areas of client service delivery.

Following the implementation of the restructure in early 2003, the next stage in the journey was a review of how face-to-face services were being provided. At that time the library had six staffed service points in the building. This process commenced as result of a number of changes or anticipated developments.

- There was a blurring of areas of responsibility across service desks as a result of the increasing numbers of electronic resources.
- New services and new ways of delivering services were being considered or planned. For example, a centralized telephone enquiry during service during peak hours that directed calls away from the service desks had been trialled. If implemented fully, this could lead to changes in responsibilities and position descriptions. Also self service options were reducing transactions at some service desks.
- Changes in the nature of the work being done by staff were emerging e.g. changes in types of enquiries at the main Information Desk as demonstrated in the results of a survey conducted in May 2003.
- Shifts in workloads between and within service areas were occurring e.g. decrease in serials check-in transactions and transfer to management of electronic subscriptions, increase in electronic reserve activities, changes in numbers of different types of queries, decrease in volume of reshelving in the Serials collection with the move from print to electronic journals.

The library also faced the need to address the challenge to staff all service points for all of the library opening hours during a period of contracting staffing levels.

The aim of the review was to recommend a model to deliver quality services in public areas that would be sustainable over the next 3-5 years. We had embarked on a process to move to a more flexible organisation, more easily able to respond to the changing environment, and therefore the review did not attempt to see beyond the next few years. A draft proposal was

developed for discussion within the library by July 2004 . However the impact of the earlier organisational change on staff resulted in the phased implementation being delayed until mid-2005. By the end of 2006, the number of service desks had been reduced from six to essentially three main service points.

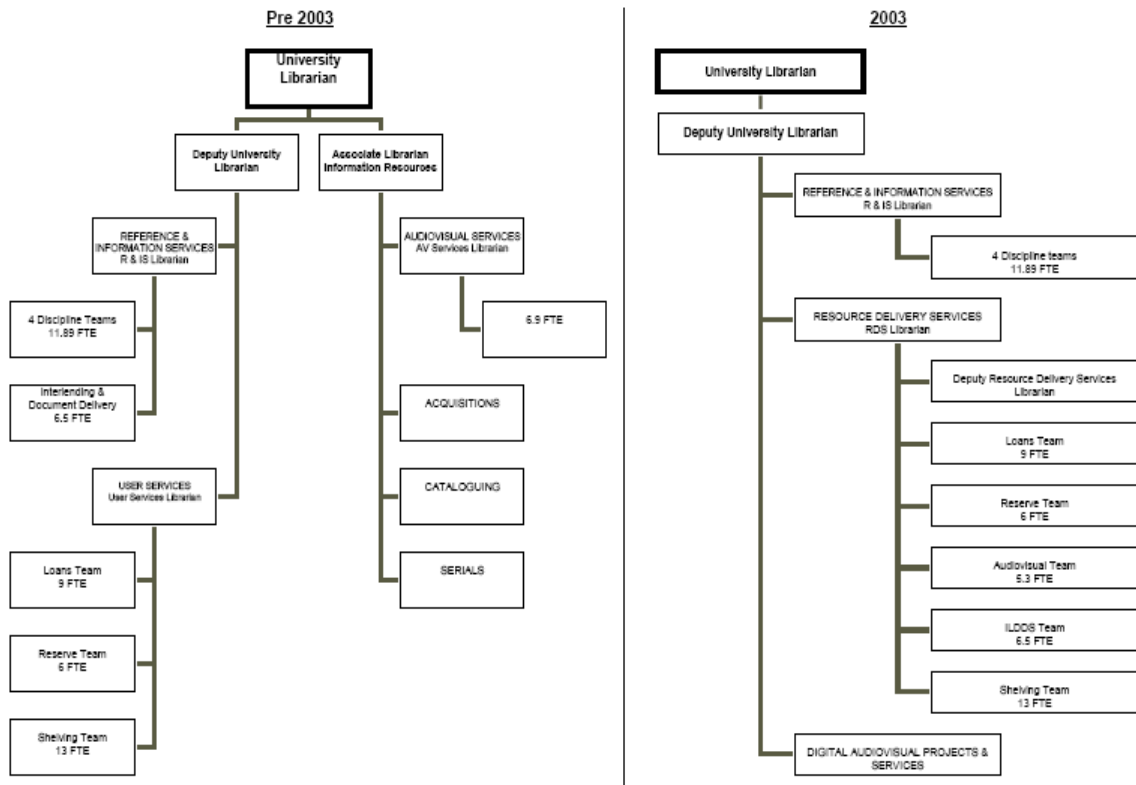
OUTLINE OF THE CHANGES

Restructure of Client Services

The process followed in developing the plan and related consultations with staff was determined by the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement between the University and the employment unions. The development of an organisational impact statement was the first step in the process, followed by consultations with staff – as individuals and in groups - before arrival at the final change proposal. A number of changes were made along the journey as a result of the consultations with staff, and incorporated into the final plan.

Three divisions (User Services, Audiovisual Services, Reference & Information Services) comprising approximately 55 staff (excluding casual staff) were restructured to form two sections, Resource Delivery Services and Reference & Information Services. The audiovisual services and interlending and document delivery teams were integrated into the Resource Delivery Services section. The new structure also provided for a Deputy Resource Delivery Services Librarian position to assist with the management of the larger section. The teams of reference librarians remained in the Reference & Information Services Section, essentially unchanged.

Figure 1: Organizational Structure before and after the changes



The reorganisation required an associated redeployment of staff and changes in reporting lines for a number of staff. Some positions changed significantly and consultations were held with the individual staff members.

Staff in Resource Delivery Services were restructured into five teams each with a major focus on one of the five areas of service (Loans, Reserve, Audiovisual, Interlending & Document Delivery, Shelving). As a result of that restructuring staff were required to work in any of the areas of the Section, including rostered duty at any of the public service points staffed by Resource Delivery Services.

This organisational change provided a more consistent service by streamlining workflow across all teams. A comprehensive staff training program was implemented to equip staff with the required skills to work in areas other than their core area. An example of the success of training and cross working was evident in the electronic reserve service which had been established due to an increase in demand for high-use material to be available online for both on- and off-campus students. A coordinator was sought from the staff within Resource Delivery Services to implement the workflow required in consultation with the Resource Delivery Services Librarian. A group of staff who were skilled in cataloguing, scanning and searching the web to link to appropriate databases were brought together to focus on this

activity. Staffs from other teams within Resource Delivery Services were also trained to assist with digitisation and cataloguing during peak times. More broadly, the dispersal of skills across the teams provided a pool of staff to draw on for the specialised areas of audiovisual services and interlending and document delivery services that had been one of the objectives of the restructure.

Staff involved in working across the teams benefited through opportunities to increase their knowledge of the library and to develop additional areas of expertise. While staff members in existing teams have retained a core set of skills by being members of a team with a particular focus, through training and experience they have gained a broader working knowledge of the range of activities in the restructured service areas.

Review and Restructuring of Service Points

The review of how face-to-face services were being delivered was coordinated by a small committee comprising the Deputy University Librarian (convenor), Associate Librarian (Information Resources), Reference and Information Services Librarian, and the Resource Delivery Services Librarian.

The review commenced in November 2003. The major steps in the review process were:

- General informal discussion session on how we delivered face-to-face services to users in the public areas of the library and to canvass ideas on how service delivery could be improved
- Documentation of existing services – what, how, by whom
- Task forces formed to review the literature for examples of library face-to-face public services/models, visit other libraries (in person and virtually) to see how face-to-face services are provided to patrons. Expressions of interest were sought from staff across the Bundoora Campus Library to participate in these task forces
- Reports from task forces were reviewed by the coordinating committee and a shortlist of possible ideas/models was developed that addressed criteria established
- Open discussion session with library staff of feasibility of implementing short-listed ideas/models
- Proposal prepared for discussion in the library (July 2004)

The model for service delivery included a number of key ideas that had been contributed by staff and was further refined in consultation with library staff. It was proposed that the resulting model be achieved through a phased transition process over a period of 12-18 months.

The plan included the following elements:

- Implementation of self-checkout and reduction in the number of mediated loans transactions
- Reduction in the number of service points and integration of service provision at fewer service points, i.e.
 1. Closure of the Serials Desk and relocation of enquiries and the Serials material on closed access at the Serials Desk, to a new Inquiry Desk
 2. Closure of the Interlending and Document delivery Service (ILDDS) counter and integration of basic ILDDS enquiries and collection of ILDDS items into the Inquiry Desk
 3. Integration of Loans, Reserve and the basic Information Desk function into one desk – the Inquiry Desk
- Serials staff and Resource Delivery Services staff rostered at the Inquiry Desk
- Introduction of Rovers as a regular service over limited hours, Monday-Friday (e.g. 11am – 3pm) focussing on provision of assistance at computer workstations
- Reference librarians focused on provision of in-depth, complex reference and research advisory service – the Research Help Desk
- Possible reduction of the span of hours that the Research Help Desk operates, compared with the former Information Desk

Figure 2: Service points before and after the changes

Pre 2006		2006	
Level 2	Information Desk	Research Help Desk	Level 2
	Loans Desk	Inquiry Desk	
	Reserve Desk		
	Interlending & Document Delivery Counter		
Level 1	Serials Desk		
Level 2	Audiovisual Desk	Audiovisual Desk	

Self-checkout was implemented in December 2004, the Serials Desk was closed in November 2005, and the Inquiries Desk and the Research Help Desk (ID & RHD) were implemented in July 2006. Activity at the ILDDS counter was significantly reduced with most queries being directed to the Inquiry Desk.

During the implementation planning phase, roles of staff working at the new service desks were more closely defined, training programs were developed and implemented. These tasks were undertaken in consultation with, and with a significant degree of involvement by the staff in the library.

For the Inquiry Desk and the Research Help Desk to be implemented successfully, some physical reorganization was necessary. Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) issues were

considered carefully in consultation with the OH&S representative of the University and library staff. External professional advice was sought to ensure a successful and cost-effective outcome.

The model provided for an expansion of the range of activities of a number of staff across the existing Resource Delivery Services and Serials sections. For some staff, the tasks did change, and the range of material they dealt with expanded. Staff have extended their knowledge to allow them to respond to different sorts of enquiries. The reduction in the number of mediated loans through the implementation of self-checkout allowed staff at the new Inquiry Desk to focus on answering basic information and catalogue enquiries and to assist students with navigating the library web site. There has also been the opportunity for staff who were not involved in rosters at public service points to be involved in delivery of face-to-face services.

Librarians from Reference and Information Services focussed on complex reference enquiries and in-depth reference and research advisory services at the Research Help Desk. The staffing complement at the desk was reduced in peak times from two librarians between 10am and 6pm Monday – Friday to one librarian except for specific weeks of peak activity when two staff were retained from 11am – 3pm Monday – Thursday. The librarians had more time to devote to other activities such as information skills programs, academic liaison, collection development and participation in library initiatives.

The introduction of “rovers” to provide a mobile service across the three levels of the library was trialled during the second half of the academic year of 2006. The rovers focussed on first line IT troubleshooting and support, assisting students with basic searching in the catalogue and the web, and providing directional assistance. Although this service proved successful, it was not able to be implemented in 2007 due to budget constraints.

The implementation was monitored closely and periodic meetings were held with staff in Resource Delivery Services and Reference and Information Services. Two one-week periods in August and October 2006 were selected to record and analyse in detail the activities at the new desks.

Key outcomes of the service points review were:

- more effective use of reference staff knowledge and expertise
 - reference staff focussed on handling more complex reference enquiries and not handling as many basic catalogue, informational and directional queries
 - reduction in rostered desk hours of reference staff
- more effective use of loans/reserve staff knowledge, expertise and time
 - loans and reserve staff handling fewer mediated loans transactions

- loans and reserve staff focussed on a broader range of enquiries
- loans and reserve staff have broader range of knowledge and skills
- introduction and continuing growth of self-service loans leading to reduced queues and more efficient use of client time
- majority of general collection borrowings being undertaken via self-service
- mobile assistance in the library providing help at point-of-need at library workstations (“rovers”) demonstrated to be effective and appreciated by students

Activity at the desks will continue to be monitored and further adjustments made during 2007.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – THEORY AND EXPERT ADVICE

There is a plethora of literature available on managing change (for example, seminal works include: Bridges, 2003; Kotter, 1995 & 2002; Senge, 1999). Some core themes recur though the varied prescriptions for success in achieving organisational change.

Achieving Change Requires Change Readiness

Because it is people who make up organisations it is they who will either embrace or resist change. For organisational change to succeed and take hold it is important that there is readiness for change at both individual and whole-of-organisation level. Creating change readiness entails building individual and, thence, organisation-wide momentum, excitement and commitment to change, and a sense of need and urgency for change.

Achieving Change Requires Planning

Organisational change is a complex and long-term task. Planning is critical to success. A change management plan can work in a variety of ways:

- mapping how the organisation is to move from its current state to a desired future state;
- linking together disparate parts of a change process, establishing priorities, timelines, responsibilities and mechanisms for review and (where necessary) revision, and engaging people in the process;
- communicating about the changes - informing employees and others what is to happen, when and why.

Effective planning for change should begin well before changes are to take effect and should be the product of wide consultation, at all levels of the organisation, with the people who are to carry out the changes. Clearly articulating the links between the overall change and the

work of each work group, and ultimately each individual in the organisation, is important. A detailed process of consultative change planning can be an important means of establishing these important linkages.

Flexibility in planning is important, but so too is an appropriate degree of structure and control. Both elements must be balanced so that there are adequate and effective structures and controls along with sufficient flexibility to allow for changes and adjustments to plans when circumstances demand this.

Achieving Change Requires Leadership

Effective change requires good and sustained leadership. Commitment, vision and direction from the top of the organisation is critical with clear articulation of vision goals, timelines, expected achievements and review points. Change messages must be realistic and genuine. Real organisational change is not something that can be simply imposed. Top-down direction setting for change should be balanced with genuine involvement of people throughout the organisation in determining the direction and implementation of change. Change leadership by middle managers and supervisors throughout the organisation is a vital element of successful change as is the role played by “change champions” – people working at any level of the organisation who understand the need for, and are interested in achieving, change. The best chance for change to persist and to be truly effective is where the changes are achieved through a partnership between those who lead the organisation at a senior level and those who are close to the everyday practical work of the organisation.

Achieving Change Requires Management and Support

Clear management focus is important: ensuring that the change objectives, and progress towards them, are kept at the forefront of the organisational agenda, both literally and metaphorically. The change initiative – activity, progress, setbacks (if any) - should become regular and prominent agenda items at key meetings throughout the organisation. Change managers must watch for and counter change stalling. Stalling can arise from organisational inertia and the tendency of things to gradually slip back to the old ways of working. Stalling may also be the result of active blocking of change by those who stand to lose from the changes and/or those who are simply opposed to the changes.

Achieving change can take a long time with potentially difficult organisational and individual transitions and trade-offs to be made. Things often get worse before they get better. In such an environment it is easy for those in the thick of the changes to lose confidence that change can be achieved. Identifying and celebrating achievements, even if they are small, can play an important role in maintaining momentum and inspiring action towards achieving desired

change goals. Trouble-shooting is another important aspect of managing change. Identifying and fixing trouble spots, promptly and practically, can turn potential change blockages and obstacles (which may become rallying points for change opponents) into wins for the change process. Obstacles and setbacks must be openly acknowledged and taken into account. By openly examining failures and weak points in the change effort – with input from all those who have a useful perspective – change managers can learn from errors and encourage employees and leaders to learn from experience, to take risks and to think outside of the existing organisational parameters.

Basic infrastructure and support for the change process is important too. Adequate staffing, money, time and other needed resources must be in the right places at the right time. Organisational systems must be properly aligned with the needs of the change program. Human resources systems, in particular recruitment and performance management processes, have an important role to play in achieving and embedding change as do training and development programs. Training in new job skills and knowledge as well as programs designed to assist people to work through the impact of changes are required.

Achieving Change Requires Effective Communication

Communication is critical in achieving successful and persisting change. Employees are more likely to commit to change when they have full and clear information about the nature of changes and the reasons for change, what has been achieved, and what is still to be done. Conversely, people are more likely to resist change when clear and honest communication is absent.

Some basic rules apply to good organisational communication:

- Recognise that organisations vary and communicate accordingly. Use a variety of communication methods including, depending on the intended audience and message: meetings/forums (small and large); written communications (formal and informal); and individual face-to-face discussions.
- Listen – don't just talk. Communication should be two-way and genuinely interactive with encouragement to comment openly and to seek information and clarification. It is important to genuinely listen to, and consider, what is being said – both good and bad – about the changes.
- Demonstrate commitment to genuine and open communication at all levels of management and involve all managers in the process of communicating about change. Make communication regular, timely, honest, clear, interactive and easy to understand. Make communication open and honest - including giving information

about success and about failures or mis-steps, if and when these latter occur. Avoid jargon and hype.

- Take sufficient time to communicate. Successful organisational change takes time. So too does communication about change.

These are important at any time but especially so when communicating during times of change.

Achieving Change Requires Recognition and Response to Resistance

Change resistance is natural and an expected part of any organisational change. Understanding why and how opposition to change occurs, and developing the ability to respond effectively, is thus crucial to the success or failure of change efforts. Change resistance manifests in many different ways and in different degrees - from mild expressions of reservation, through to active hostility and attempts to delay, subvert, or stop change. Change resistance may at times be well founded – for example where changes have been poorly thought through by those responsible for initiating the change – or simply a refusal to let go of the old to make way for the new.

The key to effectively managing change resistance is clear understanding of the nature of, and reasons for, resistance. A contextually sensitive response which engages with change resistance, takes it seriously and listens in order to assess the validity of the resistance, may turn initial resistance and opposition into support for change. In other cases authority and power may need to be used in order to overcome hard-core resistance to change. In these circumstances change managers will fare better if they have already gained moral and organisational authority by engaging with and responding to expressed resistance – rather than always just attempting to overcome such resistance.

Achieving Change that Persists Requires Follow Through, Evaluation & Learning

Achieving sustained organisational change is a long range task. The process of change does not stop when the most visible parts of a change program have been completed. Many failed change efforts fail at precisely that point – changes being overturned by either organisational inertia, a desire by some to return to old ways, or a combination of both factors

For change to really take root the impact and outcomes of change must be honestly evaluated. Questions to be asked include: have the expected benefits been achieved?; what can be learned from how the change was handled?; what might have been done better?; what remains to be done?

Achieving Change - People are the Key Factor

The “people” element in organisational change underlies any and all change efforts and holds the key to success or failure. Change happens only when people make it happen; other than in exceptional circumstances, change cannot simply be imposed. Attending to and handling well the human factor in any change process can be the key to success. Conversely, poor handling of the people element may be the biggest hurdle to achieving change and may exacerbate all of the other common causes of change failure.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – THE LTUL EXPERIENCE CONTRASTED WITH THE THEORY AND EXPERT ADVICE

Against the backdrop of the expert advice on how to achieve successful organisational change, what has been our experience to date? Out of the prescribed advice above, what worked, what didn’t work and what is still to be done?

Readiness for Change

As noted earlier, the library had not previously experienced significant organisational change. Many of the library staff were comfortable with their working environment and the managers realised that particular care would be required in facilitating the change. Significant change was underway in the wider university in both academic and administrative areas. Managers emphasised to staff the urgency for organisational change in the library – that we needed to make the proposed changes and if we didn’t initiate change within, change could be imposed from outside the library.

In the initial stages of restructuring, in one specialised area, there was a noticeable inertia to accept the proposed changes - especially acceptance of the notion that an outcome of the change would be more effective utilisation of staff during peaks and troughs in workload. The staff felt that these changes would erode their status and unique expertise, and they were uneasy about being integrated into the restructured Resource Delivery Services section. Extensive consultation with both individual staff and trade union representatives was undertaken to address this issue, and gradually the momentum for change gained impetus.

With the restructure in place and the experience that this brought, library managers had expectations that the next phase of change – the review and restructuring of service points – would be accepted more readily by staff. This was not the case, and moving to the next phase was judiciously delayed for 6-8 months.

Planning

There were two parts to the planning of the client service areas restructure. Considerable planning was undertaken by the senior management group (University Librarian, Deputy University Librarian, Associate Librarian, and Manager – Library Human Resources) before the proposal was discussed with section managers and other library staff. This planning by a core management group prior to consultation with staff was a requirement of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement between the University and the trade unions. The second phase of planning occurred after consultation with staff on the change proposal; the change implementation plan was developed with the involvement of staff at all levels in the affected areas. Inevitably staff were dissatisfied with the absence of consultation in the early phase of planning.

Partially as a result of this experience, a different approach was adopted for the service points review. That review was initiated with a general informal discussion session on how we were delivering face-to-face services to users in the public areas of the library and to canvass ideas on how service delivery could be improved. All Bundoora Campus Library staff were invited to attend this session. Following the session, a call for expressions of interest was issued for staff to form small teams to explore further a number of the ideas raised. The use of teams to investigate different aspects and issues continued to be used throughout the review.

Other aspects that are standard to planning were utilised during the changes, such as development of implementation schedules and identification of milestones, development of feedback and review mechanisms including regular discussion sessions with staff on progress, review and documentation of procedures, and development of familiarisation and training programs. The managers of the change were conscious throughout of the need to question “is it working?”, and to be flexible and make adjustments in the plan and timeline in response. There were times when we could have pressed ahead but instead responded to a perceived need for lengthy consultation. On the one hand this caused delays in the implementation, but momentum was created once staff came on board.

Leadership

The senior management group provided sustained leadership throughout the change processes. In announcing the restructure of the client service areas, the University Librarian emphasized the need for organisational change in the library and set this in the context of the changes that were happening in the wider university. The objectives of the restructure were stated clearly and an implementation plan and timeline were communicated to staff.

The review of service points was coordinated by a small committee comprising four senior managers: the Deputy University Librarian (convenor), Associate Librarian, Reference and Information Services Librarian, and the Resource Delivery Services Librarian. This group took a very active role in leading and championing the change, encouraging staff to participate in the development and refinement of ideas, identifying points in the process where flexibility was required, and continually re-stating the objectives of the review.

Our experience was that once the need for change was accepted, some staff championed the further uptake of the changes by promoting the benefits to their colleagues. This represented leadership at the “peer” level, and proved to be very effective and enduring. The library also provided the opportunity for interested staff to participate in working groups that were established to:

- investigate how other university libraries provide face-to-face services to clients and how salient features from these models could be adapted
- examine the role and duties of staff who would work at the new service points
- develop suitable training sessions

Many staff came forward to be involved in a leadership role to further the library objectives in these organisational changes.

Management and Support

The two change initiatives described in this paper took a long time overall (4 years) and acknowledging progress and celebrating achievements and milestones were important features of the change processes. Implementation plans on the staff intranet were regularly updated with completion dates for individual steps, and progress was outlined at periodic review meetings with staff. The achievements of team projects were noted in staff meetings and in library email bulletins. Major milestones such as the closure of the Serials Desk and the start-up of the Inquiry Desk and the Research Help Desk were celebrated with a library afternoon tea for the staff.

One of the strategies that was effective in breaking down barriers between the five teams in Resource Delivery Services was suggested by one of the staff in the section. A lunch for all members of the teams with home made soup and crusty bread provided by staff members themselves was held in the staff lunch room in the library. Several of these “soup lunches” were organised over the early months following the restructure, and provided opportunities for building those important interpersonal bridges between individuals that were necessary for the effective operation of the section.

Training programs were developed to give staff the confidence and knowledge to undertake the broader range of duties required of them. Staff needed to be able to move seamlessly between the Loans, Reserve, Audiovisual, and Interlending & Document Delivery teams as well as participate in rostered duty at any of the public service points staffed by Resource Delivery Services. The newly formed Inquiry Desk necessitated staff to answer basic information and catalogue enquiries and to assist students with navigating the library web site. Extensive training was required to raise their skill levels. Once the staff were performing the new duties at the Inquiry Desk, the library initiated a review of the position classifications of those staff, the result of which was reclassification to a higher level. It goes without saying that this outcome was warmly welcomed by the staff. It also provided demonstrable evidence of management support for the staff and may assist in encouraging positive response to future changes.

In addition to the knowledge and skills training programs, workshops for staff to better understand and cope with change were introduced. These “Changeability Workshops” and “Team Building Workshops” were developed and delivered by an external consultant to the library’s requirements and were a first for the library. The need for training to improve change acceptance emerged from the consultations and ongoing review discussions with staff during the first organisational change.

For the Inquiry Desk and the Research Help Desk to be implemented successfully, some physical reorganization was necessary. Occupational health and safety (OH&S) issues were carefully considered in consultation with officers from the University OH&S office. Advice was also sought from external OH&S professionals to ensure a successful and cost effective outcome which met all occupational health and safety requirements.

Communication

We put significant effort into communication, and we told the staff that we intended to do that. We didn’t always get it right but we did work hard at communicating with staff via group and individual meetings, discussion forums, email news, postings on the staff website, and so on.

The restructure of the client service areas required that a formal consultative process be followed. Once the proposal for the restructure was distributed to library staff and trade unions, a series of consultations with library staff and trade union personnel took place. Many of the issues raised during the consultative processes were incorporated in the plan. Also, changes to position descriptions and reporting lines in the restructure were discussed with staff and the relevant unions. In addition to these mandatory consultation points, there were both individual and group meetings, and regular review meetings throughout the process.

Staff complained that communication during the restructure was inadequate, so this was an area to which managers paid particular attention in the review of service points. Wide consultation with, and participation by, library staff were key features of the review, with working groups undertaking investigative projects on specific aspects. Regular communication with staff occurred throughout the review and implementation of the various changes. Reports of working groups, notes of group meetings and discussions were made available on the staff website, which was used as a major vehicle for communication by making these documents readily available for staff consultation.

However during the review, staff appeared to become blasé about the plethora of communication. It became obvious that both an under-supply and an overload of information were to be avoided and we observed that effective communication lay somewhere between the two extremes.

Recognizing and Responding to Resistance

There was significant resistance from staff to the changes described in this paper.

The library anticipated various modes of resistance and invoked a number of strategies to facilitate their resolution. For example:

- Extensive consultation with all stake-holders
- Implementation of various workshops and other collaborative opportunities
- Comprehensive training and mentoring
- Making senior staff available for counselling on demand
- Consistent exposure of the benefits of the restructuring via the website, Q&A feedback and PowerPoint presentation sessions.

The library experienced considerable success with these strategies. In the restructure of client service areas, consultation with individual staff resulted in the incorporation of a new position of Deputy Resource Delivery Services Librarian into the restructured section – a step that was necessary to effectively manage the larger section. Also, negotiations with one senior staff member who had management responsibility prior to the restructure, resulted in the staff member assuming a different role that recognized the individual's expertise, and the achievement of the desired outcome of the restructure. As a result of these instances of listening carefully and responding to constructive suggestions, we were able in other instances to move forward with planned changes.

However, special handling was required for a small number of difficult cases. This involved one-to-one counselling. As with any large organisation, intractable cases may be encountered.

Evaluation and Learning

Assessment of the outcomes of the changes is ongoing. Full integration of the five teams in the Resource Delivery Services section to reach a “one team” vision remains a goal to be achieved, but we are getting closer.

Progress continues to be monitored within the work groups and at management level, with periodic reports and reviews of activity. The library has a number of committees at both strategic and operational levels whose roles include being informed about anything that would affect the library or its staff adversely, including resistance to change. Regular meetings permit ongoing review and evaluation of successes and failures of organisational changes. This includes review of achievements, how things could have been done better and what remains to be done.

We have learned what worked and what didn't work, and incorporated that knowledge into successive iterations of change.

People - the Key Factor

The library's recent experiences in organisational change have reinforced the need to attend to the people element in any change process. As can be seen in the detail above, we did learn that the key to success is to recognize the human factor and act accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The approach of La Trobe University Library has been appropriate for the culture and history of the library at the time. The process of whole of organisation change that can be very disruptive has not been followed; rather change has been initiated in phases. Changes in other parts of the library, for example information resources (or technical services), have been interspersed during the period described. The impact of those changes on the client services areas of the library introduces an iterative process of further change.

The lessons learned have contributed to a better understanding of the organisational dynamics in the library and the processes of organisational change. We have a growing body of staff willing to embrace new ideas and to regard change as the path to improving services for our staff and students.

Change takes time, like a journey. There will be rest points along the way, but no end point. This paper has described the experience of one library in the journey of organisational change from a rest point in the Transit Lounge.

REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

- Bridges, W. (2003), *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2nd Ed., De Capo Press, Cambridge MA.
- Coghlan, D. (1993), "A Person-centred Approach to Dealing with Resistance to Change", *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 10 -14.
- Kotter, J.P. (1995) "Why Transformation Efforts Fail", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 59-67.
- Kotter, J.P. (2002), *The Heart of Change: Real-life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass.
- Perren, L. (1996), "Resistance to change as a positive force: its dynamics and issues for management development", *Career Development International*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 24 – 28.
- Senge, P. [et al], (1999), *The Dance of Change: the Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations*, Nicholas Brealey, London.
- Waddell, D. & Sohal, A. S., (1998), "Resistance: a Constructive Tool for Change Management", *Management Decision*, Vol.36, Iss. 8; pp. 543 – 548.

Reports and documents relating to the organisational changes referred to in this paper are available on request from the authors.