Clarity Task Force

Agenda

April 3, 2019, 9:30 a.m. – Noon
SWAN Headquarters
800 Quail Ridge Dr
Westmont, IL 60559

1. Introductions
2. Review Task Force Charge
3. Strategic Plan Review – Role of Task Force in Process
4. Identifying Issues – Surfacing the Shared Diagnosis
5. Calendar Setting (Date/Time/Place) through June 2020

Task Force Membership:

1. Kerry Halter, Technical Services Manager, Batavia Public Library District
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2. Kristina Howard, Adult Reference Manager, Tinley Park Public Library
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3. Michelle Kurczak, Head of Youth and Young Adult Services, Messenger Public Library of North Aurora, MKurczak@messengerpl.org
4. Cindy Maiello Gluecklich, Director, Melrose Park Public Library
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5. Amy Prechel, Head of Access Services, Downers Grove Public Library
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6. Angela Romano, Fiction and Reference Librarian, Oak Lawn Public Library
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7. Ahren Sievers, Reference Technology Librarian, Elmwood Park Public Library
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8. Colleen White, Cataloging Librarian, Oak Park Public Library
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SWAN Staff:

- Dawne Tortorella, Assistant Director, Chair
- Aaron Skog, Executive Director
- Scott Brandwein, Bibliographic Services Manager
- Steven Schlewitt, Information Technology and Support Services Manager
- Tara Wood, UX Manager

Clarity Task Force
Charge, Composition, Objective

The name of the group will be the Clarity Task Force.

The Clarity Task Forces serves as an operational task force of member library front-line staff, representing a wide range of expertise. This Task Force is collectively charged with assisting the SWAN Executive Director in evaluating core Library Services Platform software and services and how it is implemented in our consortium. Membership expertise and creativity are critical to the success of surfacing areas of improvement, increased efficiency, and future exploration/experimentation.

Advisory Group Composition

Recommendations for membership of the Clarity Task Force will be submitted by the SWAN Executive Director for approval by the SWAN Board of Directors. Active members from our SWAN Advisory and User Groups will be considered, with approval sought from their respective Library Directors before invitations are sent. The selection criteria for individuals will be based on their solutions-driven contributions to the SWAN membership.

Objective

The group will assist SWAN in surfacing and documenting areas of dissatisfaction and frustration with our Library Services Platform, as well as help provide direction in priorities for research and exploration. The group will look at specific areas of inefficiency and concern including:

- acquisitions processing bottlenecks,
- circulation practices,
- resource sharing,
- patron access to resources.

This group will also look at the product roadmap of releases and how that impacts implementation into SWAN's project list and strategic priorities.

Members of the Clarity Task Force will be expected to:

- Attend advisory group meetings either in person or through online conference as often as every month;
- Attend other SWAN advisory groups;
- Attend Quarterly membership meetings;

The duration of the Task Force will be from April 2019 through June 30, 2020.

The Task Force will be chaired by the SWAN Assistant Director. Activities of the Task Force will be provided to the SWAN Board in the monthly SWAN Operations Report.

Mission, History, & Strategic Objectives

SWAN is an organization of member libraries participating in an library services platform (LSP) with the mission to improve services for Member Libraries by sharing resources, technology and a planned process of individual and collective growth. SWAN's vision is that SWAN will set the standard of excellence as a library technology consortium. SWAN works to focus consortium resources on shared strategic initiatives while building upon a tradition of excellence and dedicated service.

Values

As an organization, SWAN values:

- Collaboration
- Cooperation
- Commitment
- Innovation
- Reliability

Currently SWAN's strategic initiatives are to:

- Provide excellent customer service
- Optimize work effectiveness
- Formalize SWAN action/decision making process
- Foster a collaborative and cooperative consortium culture
- Create operational excellence/product leadership
- Diversify and grow

The Business We are In

At its core, SWAN provides for the automation of library tasks, including but not limited to a shared online catalog, circulation activities, interlibrary loan, patron file maintenance, library materials acquisition and serials control. To achieve this, Member Libraries jointly finance an library services platform for the automation of library functions with the staff and equipment required to manage and run the system.

Target Market and Industry

SWAN's market is, simply put, libraries. Public, school, academic and special libraries may belong to the consortium and enjoy the benefits of resource sharing as well as the efficiencies of an automated system. Adding libraries to the consortium provides an increasingly diverse and strong set of resources for patrons and helps to ensure financial stability and potential for SWAN. Some libraries choose to be stand-alone operations, and there are several other library services platforms in Illinois, but there is recognition within the state that supporting and growing shared library services platforms is beneficial to the residents of Illinois.

Detailed Description of Business

With more than 1.5 million titles and 8 million items, SWAN is one of the largest systems in the world and is an invaluable resource not just to its members but also nationally and internationally. There is a strong commitment to resource sharing and successful reciprocal borrowing and interlibrary loan programs. The database has more than 1 million registered patrons and the system manages almost 18.5 million circulation transactions annually. Technology has provided the opportunity for innovation within SWAN by enhancing services and enabling many patron-centered self-service features. Some of those features include book cover images, contents and reviews of materials, the patron account management, personal reading lists, and patron placed holds and renewals. The consortium has installed a search interface allowing users to access multiple resources with one simple search. In addition, the membership has added options for patron digital signatures and digital patron photos.

History

SWAN was formed in 1974 when staff from nine public libraries located in the south suburban Chicago area formed the System Wide Automation Network (SWAN) consortium. Currently, 97 libraries (including 92 public libraries, 2 college libraries, 1 school library, and 2 special libraries) make up the consortium. SWAN became an intergovernmental instrumentality in September 2010. Previously, the Metropolitan Library System had been the legally recognized agent for SWAN.

View a timeline of of SWAN milestones.

Strengths and Core Competencies

A key component to the consortium is member cooperation. By sharing the cost of central site

equipment, computer and database maintenance staff, and telecommunications, libraries of all sizes and types have realized the advantages of automated resource sharing and found it possible to offer their patrons the best in resource sharing. The common patron database provides for efficient and quick interlibrary loans. In addition, libraries who could normally not afford to offer their patrons the best and newest in technology in an online catalog are able to do so through their membership in SWAN. The original commitment to providing enhanced and effective services has guided SWAN members through their shared history. That libraries of all types and sizes have worked together for over forty years is proof of this commitment. Within the consortium, each member library has retained its own identity, but each has stayed committed to working toward a common vision of enhanced customer service and operational excellence. Through the Library Services Platform provided, SWAN member libraries serve their communities better and faster, clearly proving to be the taxpayer's best available return on investment. Importantly, reliability has been the top priority for SWAN. The SWAN staff work very closely with the members to ensure limited downtime (the average amount of downtime is less than 1% of available uptime) and a high quality, authoritative database. A history of strategic initiatives plus a tradition of excellence and commitment has made SWAN a consortium known around the world for cooperation and collaboration plus service, stability and innovation.

Challenges

There are several challenges facing SWAN. The first is economic. SWAN has always received a portion of financial support from the Reaching Across Illinois Library System. With state funding of systems under stress, SWAN members may need to fully support SWAN. This will require study of SWAN services and potential changes in operations and services. The second challenge is the capacity of the current LSP software in relation to adding new members, expanding functionality, and providing consistent levels of service despite a wide range of old and new technology in operation in the member libraries. The third challenge is continuous evaluation of new technology, determining its value to SWAN and its operations.

Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

Introduction

This plan is intended as a guide for the SWAN Board and Executive Director over the five years between 2019 – 2023. A tactical plan will be updated each year.

Identity: Defines how decisions are made

Mission: Defines the problem in society the organization is trying to solve

Vision: What is the organization's solution?

Purposes of this Strategic Plan

1. Sets high level **strategic objectives** (*where* you are trying to go)

2. Articulates the underlying **rationale** (*why* you are trying to go there)
3. Establishes agreed upon **markers** (*how* you will know you are making progress)
4. Provides **guiding principles** for execution (*what* is the right path)

Identity, Mission, and Vision

Identity

SWAN provides resources and services to member libraries and the constituencies they serve and is governed as a representative democracy of elected Board members who represent the entire membership. Decision making is driven by the patron experience, patron rights, and security.

Mission Statement

SWAN seeks to improve patron ease of access to information, resources, and services through serving our member libraries. SWAN is dedicated to supporting our community of member libraries by sharing resources and technology.

Vision Statement

SWAN sets the standard of excellence for member and patron experience. We are the catalyst in creating and nurturing an ecosystem of ingenuity and collaboration. We engage in open dialogue with our membership and use purposeful communication in our community. We utilize careful planning of our key resources and are ready to seize opportunities as they arise.

Objective 1: Develop a Shared and Accurate Diagnosis of Member Dissatisfaction Around the Existing ILS and OPAC (Staff Interface and Online Catalog)

Rationale

The SWAN software platform is at the center of the chosen mission for the SWAN organization. The membership survey and interviews conducted as part of the assessment and analysis revealed member dissatisfaction exists at a meaningful enough level.

Satisfactory solutions depend on proper diagnosis: "What are the contributors for member dissatisfaction?"

There are three possible contributors to the problem:

1. **SWAN staff** (i.e. should provide more training, adequate documentation, etc.)

2. **SWAN member libraries** (i.e. have different opinions on how software should work, should embrace common practices, need a role in developing solutions, etc.)

3. **Vendors** (i.e. need to invest more resources in product software development, development cycles are prone to delays, etc.)

SWAN is missing a *shared* diagnosis. The below actions will lead to a clearer understanding of where SWAN's member dissatisfaction stems from and will allow us to develop adequate solutions to counter it.

Markers

- A prioritized list of SWAN software platform related problems has been developed with input from member libraries and patrons (see Objective 4).
- SWAN Executive Director and the board systematically work through the list and develop initial diagnostic hypotheses that considers the role of all three potential contributors (staff, member libraries, vendors).
- Where there is disagreement or uncertainty, SWAN Executive Director proposes short term "triangulation" experiments to obtain more accurate data. Each experiment should intentionally modify one of the three potential contributors to discern what moves the meter on which problems.
- The experiments are agreed to by the board. Results are tracked and reported.
- At the end of this process, the Board and Executive Director agree on properly nuanced diagnoses of the major problems of the ILS and connected platforms.
- These findings are shared with the broader membership.

Guiding Principles

At this stage, the primary goals are gaining insight and developing a culture of collective ownership of problems.

Research and performance enhancements SWAN completed within Objective 1 should not lose sight of finding ways to improve the patron experience as part of objective 4.

Objective 2: Deliver on the Solutions that Can Be Readily Implemented, While Focusing on Long Term Solutions

Rationale

With the (a) prioritized list of problems and (b) the shared and accurate diagnoses, SWAN should then be better positioned to execute solutions. The solutions that have the greatest possibility of success will be ones that depend on SWAN staff and member libraries. These solutions should have a measurable positive impact on member library staff and patrons.

Markers

- SWAN board and staff agree on the prioritized list of solutions to be executed (emphasizing ones that are most under SWAN control). This agreement is communicated to the broad membership.
- SWAN staff executes on the list.

- Member satisfaction shows improvement (i.e. compared to most recent net promoter scores).
- SWAN staff increases its engagement of SirsiDynix to impact performance improvement.
- Current contract with SirsiDynix is renewed while SWAN gathers membership feedback from Objective 1 and evaluates its options for its future library services platform.
- SWAN explores other community driven software solutions that can be implemented on top of the SirsiDynix Symphony ILS.
- A feasibility study is conducted about alternate software
- Board and Executive Director make a long-term decision about the ILS, catalog, or other components of SWAN's platform: accept the constraints of the library commercial market or more aggressively pursue the community driven, open source options.

Guiding Principles

SWAN board and members focus on research and development.

SWAN will build solutions that steadily improve the ecosystem within the consortium to steadily improve SWAN's software platform.

Objective 3: Reconstitute as a Mission Driven 501c3 with Clear Representative Governance Practices

Rationale

A 501c3 organization will more clearly express a mission-centric identity than an "intergovernmental instrumentality." For the 501c3, a mission statement around an overarching "public good" is definitional. For an Illinois Intergovernmental Instrumentality, the "governmental" identities are definitional.

The "public good" requirement of a 501c3 reinforces the explicit inclusion of patron experience into a new mission statement. Practically speaking, becoming a 501c3 removes burdens hampering current governance such as insufficient quorums and barriers to participation (i.e. requirement to be physically present at meeting; prohibition of email as vehicle of decision-making). Another practical advantage will be to support grant seeking (Objective 6) as 501c3 is a more natural and understandable fundraising vehicle.

Reconstituting as a 501c3 provides a context for exploring new governance policies and practices which could include:

- Designated board seats by type, geography, size
- Term limits by libraries (not just by individuals)
- Expanding the number of board seats

Representative democracy sometimes means a board member must hold the proper tension of representing some defined constituency AND the greater public good – like a legislator.

Markers

- Board committee is formed to draft a new set of bylaws for 501c3 incorporation that addresses the representation issues.
- Executive Director completes study investigating all relevant implications and proposes an execution plan.
- Vote is taken.
- Plan is executed.
- Process is developed for SWAN staff to spend more time onsite at member libraries to serve as "eyes and ears" on behalf of the board, giving members greater confidence that their interests are being represented.
- New board is constituted. There could be overlap with current composition, but there is a true "reboot."
- Purpose and structure of all member meetings (whether quarterly or some other frequency) is clarified and communicated to the membership.
- Invest in board development and training, especially in this transition process

Guiding Principles

This objective should underline the collective mentality required of the new board members: that when they enter that role, they are acting as a representative of the interests of all the members *and their patrons* – not representing their own library.

The board must also commit to owning their authority and resist temptation to push things to mass member decision making. However, opening more channels to gain informative input from members should be done.

Objective 4: Increase Presence of the Patron Perspective

Rationale

Regularly receiving input from the patron as end user will be especially important as SWAN implements solutions for patron facing interactions. Simply inserting the words "patron experience" into the mission statement is not enough; this must be translated into practices that inject the patron perspective into decision making.

The patron perspective is the best way to achieve more standardization of resource sharing activities and act as a counterweight against (note: "counterweight" not "complete erasure of") the tendency towards library by library customization.

Markers

- SWAN board and membership embrace that patron perspective should serve a determinative role.
- SWAN has a defined structure and strategy to regularly convene patrons and access their input.

- SWAN staff can cite data about patron needs which includes member library staff insights.
- The practice of testing potential new features or ideas with patrons directly is built into the roll out process.

Guiding Principles

SWAN uses a variety of research methods to find the solutions that best meet the needs of our patrons and represent the demographics of the SWAN library community.

Objective 5: Strengthen the Collective Identity

Rationale

Community driven solutions depend on a collective responsibility.

There is a desire for opportunities to share expertise and provide other kinds of peer support.

Markers

- SWAN leadership—board and management—allocate resources towards building a collective identity.
- Vision and rationale for SWAN events like the recent member conference are communicated explicitly.
- SWAN staff adopts more peer learning and peer support responses, helping to connect members to the knowledge resident in the collective.
- Evidence of members proactively reaching out to other members and receiving the help they need.
- Survey feedback from collective identity building events show high levels of appreciation and the set goals were achieved.
- Explore grant funding for these initiatives (see Objective 6 for rationale).
- Choose topics and design collective events so as to reinforce other strategic objectives: i.e. events that anchor everyone more in patron perspectives.

Guiding Principles

SWAN must consistently and repeatedly provide the rationale for building collective identity. There are many avenues towards building the collective identity—shared experiences, leadership practices, organizational routines, messaging, etc. all are tools that should be used.

Objective 6: Seek External Funding Options to Support the Research & Development Initiatives of SWAN

Rationale

We want to keep membership fees low while embracing innovation.

Markers

- A grant writing capacity is either developed in house (i.e. freeing up some portion of Executive Director or Assistant Director time) or outsourced.
- A proposal pipeline is developed based on SWAN priorities that can be matched against funding opportunities.
- An experiment is run with corporate sponsorship and cross-network branding, testing the hypothesis that SWAN can leverage its geographic and numerical scope to attract sponsors.
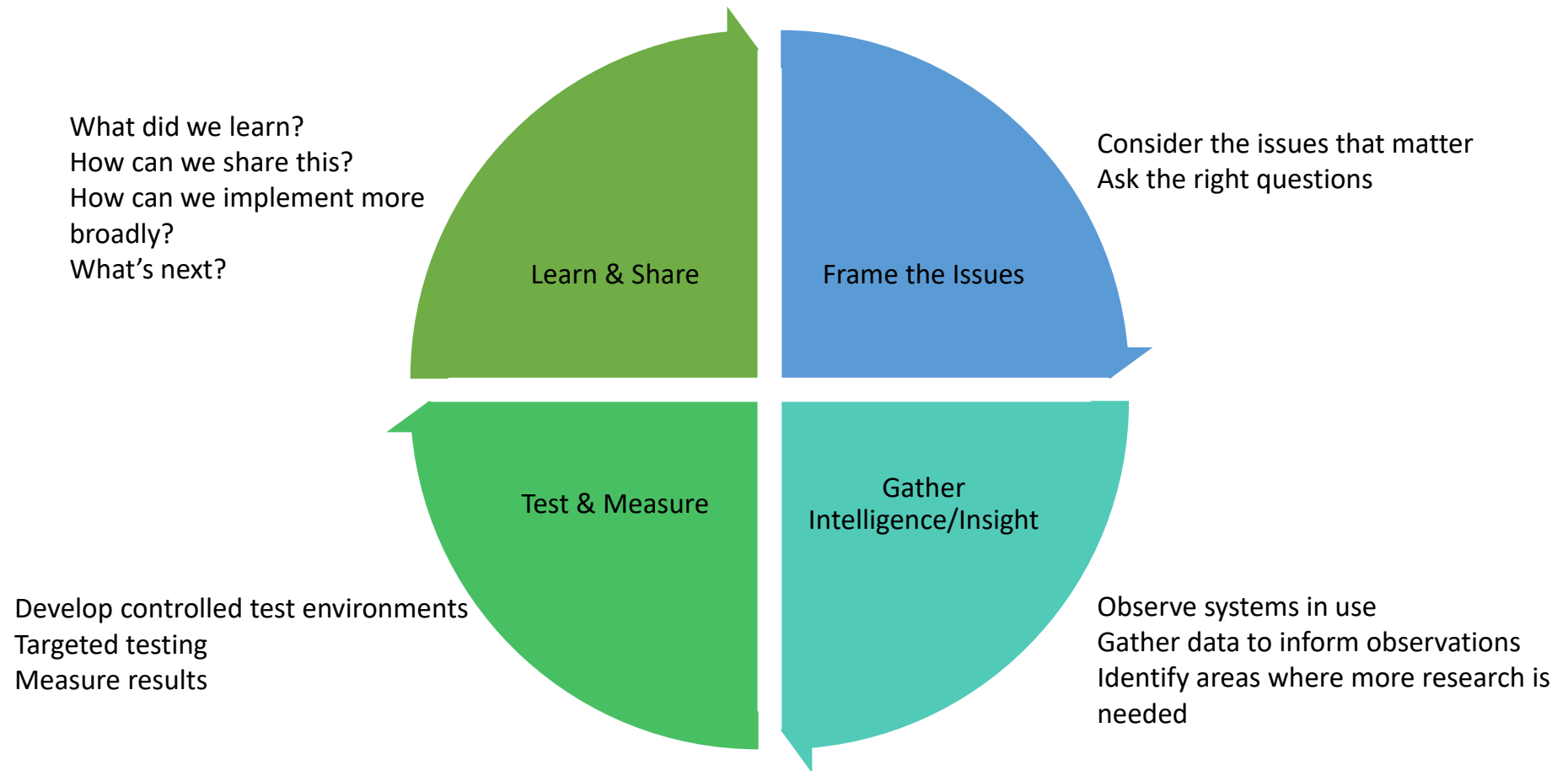
Guiding Principles

Start small and experiment in this effort. Build on success.

Source URL (modified on 02/11/2019 - 18:00): https://support.swanlibraries.net/node/64899

Clarity Task Force: Develop a Shared and Accurate Diagnosis

What did we learn?
How can we share this?
How can we implement more broadly?
What's next?

Consider the issues that matter
Ask the right questions

Learn & Share

Frame the Issues

Test & Measure

Gather Intelligence/Insight

Develop controlled test environments
Targeted testing
Measure results

Observe systems in use
Gather data to inform observations
Identify areas where more research is needed

Model based on Mike Rhodes, Strategy by Design Four-Phase Decision Making Process
https://managementhelp.org/blogs/strategic-planning/2015/12/22/50-tips-and-tools-for-effective-strategic-thinking/