

A Proposal for an Enterprise Architecture Program

A County Public Library System

ICT-4010 Enterprise Architecture

Mark Kuhn

University of Denver University College

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Instructor: Dr. Steve Else, Ph.D.

Background

County Public Library Systems exist across the nation, and have been serving their communities with books, movies, newspapers, computer access, and many other forms of media and digital programs for many years. This essentially 'free' service is made possible typically via funding from county and local tax dollars. County Public Library Systems operate on a set budget and are obviously a non-profit organization. Being able to cut costs is the only way for them to possibly increase employee wages, and better their offerings to the community.

Besides serving the community with the aforementioned resources, libraries also strive to (1) develop programs for further learning and well-being, (2) embrace and support emerging technology both internally and externally, (3) identify new and innovative ways to deliver library content and services, (4) increase community awareness of and engagement with library programs, services, resources, and collections (Boise Public Library 2016).

Most County Public Library Systems follow a coordination operating model, which achieves a high level of data integration between the libraries. All libraries utilize similar if not the same Integrated Library System (ILS) for checking out books and other media, searching what is available, as well as at what location. This integration of data allows libraries to find media they may not have on hand, and have it transferred if needed. It's possible that some library systems operate with a unification operating model however, this can greatly depend on the difference of local funding. Within the same county, there is often a library in a larger town or city that receives a good deal more funding given there are more tax payers to support

additional funding. These extra funds can be invested in more advanced technology platforms and provide different services, which in turn lowers standardization.

Situational Overview

With the rise of the internet and its wealth of easily accessed information, the existence of libraries is being threatened. According to Matthews, libraries are now seeing the broadest spectrum of customers they've seen in history (Matthews 2011). "The six generations (including that Gen Next of adolescents) that comprise 21st Century library customers create significant differences in library service demands, with the most drastic difference between the Great Generation and the Millennials" (Matthews 2011). This gap in age drives different demands. The younger Millennials looking for digital content and internet access, while the older group that grew up without technology seek what they are used to, print media in the form of books, newspapers, or even microfilms.

County Library Systems must work hard to maintain traditional library resources, but they must also look into an Enterprise Architecture program to develop a new strategic alignment, and an enterprise architecture management plan to help move them to a new architecture that will best align with advances in technology, and the community's new demands.

Digital content from providers like Amazon and Google Books can host far more media than a local library ever could. They can also provide the title immediately as opposed to waiting a couple weeks for that same work to be transferred to your local library if they do not have it in inventory. This digital content will only continue to grow, and access and associated costs will likely only become easier and more affordable.

All of these external changes have devalued the library's benefit to the community (Matthews 2011). The devaluation is simple. If a county library is not offering desirable products and services, the community will have no need to visit the library. When this occurs on a large scale, local government sees this and then prepares a budget to reflect that. It's somewhat of a catch-22, as it is difficult for libraries to provide new and better services without more funding from county and local government. This is where Enterprise Architecture can help map out new goals and strategic initiatives, products and services, and the technology needed to support them (Bernard 2012).

Proposal for Action

Many county libraries across the nation have no Enterprise Architecture program in place. Because of that, they did not have the discipline to look at future changes, and how their strategic goals and initiatives needed to change, to maintain or increase their value in the eyes of the community they aim to serve.

With that said, our first recommendation is to develop new goals and strategic initiatives at the current state to better align with the community's needs and wants. These goals and strategic initiatives will then aid in defining the new products and services to be offered. These will vary by location, but digital content, programs, and courses that external sources cannot offer, seem to fit the ongoing theme. Programs and courses are not something the community can find elsewhere that are little or no cost to them. Offering these programs and courses will greatly increase the value offered by the library and the community will appreciate this. The increase in value could even lead to an increase of funding, which would then allow the library to offer even more programs and courses.

Our next recommendation would be to support these goals, initiatives, products, and services by improving upon the IT engagement. The IT engagement for the new programs and courses really would not be too involved. They would just need personal computers with internet access, and of course applications needed in accordance to the program or course subject. It would also be wise to allocate some funds to improve upon the county library website. It would be very beneficial to post all the programs and courses with dates, but also allow for the community user to register for the program or course directly from the website.

Some libraries have also been looking into leaving the barcode world for radio-frequency identification (RFID) for use in books and other physical media that can be borrowed from the library. RFID allows for rapid charging and discharging of books when they are checked in or out. They are able to 'scan' several books at a time greatly reducing staff time. In fact, book drops could have a built in sensor which would then only need staff to place them back where they belong. RFID also solves the misplaced book dilemma. Staff spends a lot of time looking for misplaced books within the library, and if they had an RFID system, it could easily inform staff the physical location of the book. Finding misplaced books and not re-purchasing them also saves on operating costs. The downside to RFID is the initial investment which can be costly, but these costs are recouped and then some with the benefits the system provides.

Conclusion

Understanding one's operating model, and aligning a new Enterprise Architecture program and IT engagement that support each other, will ultimately develop a strong foundation for execution. One that can achieve its goals and strategic initiatives for the current

view, but also help plan for future changes. We believe if the proper steps and time are taken to develop a fitting Enterprise Architecture program, your County Library System will gain value in its community members eyes. IT investments can have significant upfront costs, but with a proper Enterprise Architecture aligned to it, one can rest assured that it is the right call, and the costs will be recovered from the new benefits they provide.

References

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Appendix A: County Library System Proposed Core Diagram

