

[East Baton Rouge Parish Library](#) vs [Coy C Carpenter Library](#) (Wake Forest University School of Medicine)

East Baton Rouge Parish Library:

This sparse strategic plan immediately raises some questions. Clocking in at a hefty four pages, the plan is in stark contrast to the literary works that are common to large institutions, instead reading as a pragmatic primer, a visitor digestible brochure or memo. Yet the sparseness of the plan may not be for brevity's sake, which is always the nobler, but may instead hint at deprivation and a lack of strategic foresight. Striking is the first line of the document which notes that the plan is intended for an entire decade of administration. This suggests that the library is slow, unable or unwilling to adapt to new technologies, political developments and economic circumstances. A great deal can happen in a decade: from 1990-2000 the internet was created and became a widespread and life changing phenomenon. From 1930-1940 the world experienced an economic depression of unseen proportions, a world war and subsequent economic rebirth, and the rise of new political orders which would irrevocably change the future for all of humanity. With such a lengthy plan time, it makes one wonder the usefulness of such a document. The other strategic plans I have encountered in my studies were for 1-3 years.

The generic, unspecific, broad terminology used in the definition of values and mission further suggests a library in stagnation or deprivation, attempting to do whatever it can do to marginally provide library services to citizens. The strategic goals and objectives substantiate this suspicion as they seem to hover upon improving and focusing on areas which could be considering job training and social services rather than the eager proliferation of knowledge. The library appears to service a demographic that is lower class, and attempts to attend to the many issues which plague that demographic in roles which are not traditional to a library. East Baton Rouge library refers to this initiative as "Learning for Life-Long Success" and appears to essentially be job and character skills teaching. The hope is that through this effort, the institution "contributes to economic development in the City of Baton Rouge/

Parish of East Baton Rouge.” Only one of the four (only four, really?) strategic goals focuses on information retrieval and librarianship proper.

The document itself is written as sort of an annual checklist and standard operating procedure rather than a strategic plan and has few specific objectives to accomplish. It reads “assess staffing levels for maximum customer service and work to achieve optimal staffing needs” under “Providing Access to Information” – yet this is a standard operation of library administrations and needs not to be detailed on a strategic plan. An effective strategic plan, at least in my mind, should be a “game plan” to accomplish a specific list of long term (strategic) objectives, similar to an operational order used in the military. A strategic plan is by definition a plan which involves the application of a stratagem to accomplish something. Basic job requirements should not be listed in the strategic plan.

Coy C Carpenter Library:

The methodology for constructing this strategic plan is quite different from East Baton Rouge. The document begins with a clear definition of who the library is intended for, namely medical students and professionals, and their community affiliates, networked with or attending Wake Forest University Medical School. The guiding principles focus on the proliferation of the knowledge within the library, as well as reaching out to the community in order to establish “an ideal physical environment in which to promote learning, research, and improved patient care.” In this sense the Coy C Carpenter library has expanded the domain and responsibilities of the library to include improving the wellbeing of the community by offering them a place to learn about medicine.

Next the strategic goals are presented, following a regurgitation of the university’s own strategic plan. I thought that this was a most elegant way to present the strategic goals as it draws a clear connection between university policy and the policy and goals of the library. The strategic plan breaks up the university’s vision into digestible segments and then attaches several objectives to accomplish

those principles. I also thought it was interesting that the plan was posted directly on the website rather than in a PDF document. All indications point to the fact that it is updated regularly, and is probably at most a year old.

The strategic goals focus on improving and increasing access and awareness of the collections maintained, to “build a library that is accessible to any users at any time.” This suggests forward thinking and an eagerness to adapt to the emerging and imminent web 2.0 and Wikipedia world of new information retrieval. By digitizing content, the institution hopes to establish universal and open access, with special attention devoted to establishing inter-library associations and cooperation. Most of the strategic goals, in contrast to the other library, are centered on the proliferation of knowledge rather than social and community services. In this manner the Coy C Carpenter Library appears to be serving as a traditional library, except in the sense that is shifting to accommodate the strategic realities of the era.

There is one group of strategic goals which are unique for this sort of library, namely those having to do with assisting healthcare professionals treat their patients better by ensuring they have access to the latest medical journals, research and books. One of the objectives is listed as “Assist with improving the quality of patient care.” The library takes on an important role here as a gateway of new information to those seeking the latest research and study, not simply as a housing ground for static, outdated collections.