
The following similarities and differences in the strategic plans of these two organizations can be identified:

**Mission statements**

Both strategic plans include the libraries’ mission statements. The commonality of being part of a larger organization comes through in the scope of both the USC Libraries and the Library of Congress mission statements.

Part of an academic institution, the USC Libraries built their Strategic Plan 2011-2013 upon the university’s strategic directions. The Libraries’ mission statement, for example—“the USC Libraries actively support the discovery, creation, and preservation of knowledge. We develop collections and services that support and encourage the academic endeavors of faculty, students, and staff; build a community of critical consumers of information; and help develop engaged world citizens. Through these means, we contribute to the continued success of the University of Southern California” (USC Libraries, & University of Southern California, p. 8)—is indicative of the Libraries’ alignment with the parental institution’s mission: “development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit” (University of Southern California, 1993).
Whereas both institutions’ mission statements are closely aligned with those of their parent institutions, the Library of Congress’ mission statement has a broader scope, going far beyond serving only the U.S. Congress. This seems to be driven by the historical change of the institution's role in American society. Established primarily as the U.S. Congress’ support service—to house a collection of law books to support legislative work of the Congress—the Library of Congress has since become the largest library in the world with more than 151 million items including books and other materials in 470 languages. “An agency of the legislative branch of the U.S. government, the Library includes several internal divisions (or service units), including the Office of the Librarian, Congressional Research Service, U.S. Copyright Office, Law Library of Congress, Library Services, the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Office of Support Operations” (Library of Congress, *General Information*). Consequently, the Library’s mission changed from serving the Congress to serving all American people: “To support the Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the benefit of the American people” (Library of Congress, 2010, p. 1). Along with the Library’s mission changed its audience—expanding from a branch of the government to the entire nation.

**Vision Statements**

The USC Libraries feature their vision statement in the strategic plan: “The USC Libraries will be an innovative, inspiring, and integral partner in the scholarly achievements of USC faculty, students, and staff. In so doing, we actively contribute to the development of knowledge and the advancement of society” (USC Libraries, & University of Southern California, p. 8). The Library of Congress, on the contrary, did not include a vision statement in its strategic plan. As vision statement is considered an important part of library strategic
framework acting as one of the catalysts to action (Disher, 2010, p. 66), the lack of vision statement in the LOC strategic plan reveals the room for growth in the Library’s strategic planning. By including it, the Library will demonstrate the "current status of the library environment and ...the direction of where the library wishes to go," according to Disher (ibid.).

**Strategic Goals**

Given the multitude of resources featured by the Library of Congress, as well as its complex organizational structure, its strategic plan is refreshingly simple and straightforward. It envisions five institution-wide strategic goals:

1. Provide authoritative research, analysis, and information to the Congress
2. Acquire, preserve, and provide access to a universal collection of knowledge and the record of America’s creativity
3. Sustain an effective national copyright system
4. Lead and work collaboratively with external communities to advance knowledge and creativity
5. Manage proactively for demonstrable results.

The USC Libraries Strategic plan emphasizes the participatory development process, through which the main themes were identified: discoverability of library resources, integration with community, and the physical and intellectual environment of the libraries. These themes laid the ground for the new plan’s strategic goals:

1. Discoverability: to become a more active partner in discovery—at USC and beyond—through applying the expertise of library faculty and staff and by increasing awareness, accessibility, and informed use of our collections and services
2. Integration with our community: to become more thoroughly and systematically integrated into the research programs, teaching curricula, and learning activities of our users

3. The intellectual and physical environment: to cultivate a physical and intellectual environment that encourages exploration, enables discovery, and supports engagement with and amongst members of our community.

Supporting Strategies / Activities

In their strategic plans, both organizations offer concrete strategies of accomplishing their main strategic goals. The Library of Congress, for example, in order to support its first strategic goal, suggests sustaining acquisitions of global physical collections, increasing the amount of digitized content available on the web, etc. Similarly to the LOC strategic plan, the USC Libraries Strategic Plan features activities supporting each of its main strategic goals. E.g., in order to support the discoverability goal, it suggests exploring mobile and other innovative web technologies and applying them to appropriate library services and resources (USC Libraries, & University of Southern California, p. 30).

Unlike the LOC strategic plan, however, the USC Libraries strategic plan includes neither the public benefit statements nor the measurable outcome and result statements, ultimately resulting in a less specific plan of action. The Library of Congress, in turn, does provide a public benefit statement and the outcomes and results statement. For example, the public benefit of its first strategic goal is described as “Congress and the American people have a national collection of knowledge that is valuable, usable, and easily accessible today and into the future” (Library of Congress, 2010, p. 14). According to one of the outcomes, the Library has assessed and preserved over 20 million items in all formats (from fiscal 2011 baseline).
Values

Both organizations feature similar sets of values, with slight differentiation related to the nature and characteristics of their main audiences:

*Library of Congress Values*

- Service
- Stewardship
- Excellence
- Collaboration

*USC Libraries Values*

- Service
- Integrity
- Scholarly inquiry
- Innovation
- Effective communication
- Social responsibility
- Library as a place

External Factors

The USC Libraries place no specific emphasis on the external factors, such as opportunities and threats, in their strategic plan. Instead, these factors are accounted for throughout the entire document, in the supporting activities sections. The Library of Congress, on another hand, does feature a section dedicated specifically to the external factors anticipated to influence the Library’s ability and prospects to meet the main strategic goals. This section, however, contrary to Erica Olsen who suggests paying close attention to both threats and
opportunities (Olsen, *SWOT Analysis*), is limited in scope to the specifics and volatility of Congressional agenda, changes and unpredictability in publishing and distribution of innovative and traditional works, and challenges in the overall federal fiscal environment.

**Time Frames**

The Library of Congress strategic plan was designed for five years, whereas the USC Libraries’ strategic goals were developed with a shorter, two-year plan in mind. This seems to indicate a greater flexibility of the USC Libraries in their readiness in adapting to change drivers, for example, the advances in technology as they relate to the library’s operations and services.

**References**


