



## Vision, innovation, and leadership in research libraries



Ronald C. Jantz

Scholarly Communications Center, Rutgers University Libraries, 169 College Avenue, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, United States

### A B S T R A C T

This study examined the relationship of research library visions, as embodied in a publicly posted vision statement, and the innovativeness of the library. The literature on organizational vision is abundant and generally reveals a positive relationship between vision, visionary leadership, and a variety of organizational factors. Many researchers state that a vision, communicated throughout the organization, is a critical element of organizational success and those entities without a vision are “stumbling in the dark”. In this study, library professionals rated each research library vision statement based on established attributes and it was found that the resulting vision statement score was positively and significantly related to the innovativeness of the library.

### 1. Introduction

Organizations are the major mechanisms for achieving societal goals (Hage & Aiken, 1970). For the research library,<sup>1</sup> these goals are expressed in the vision and mission of the organization. Scholars and practitioners are studying the vision and mission of organizations and, more specifically, how these concepts are communicated in formal statements (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). A vision statement describes a future preferred state and it is an indispensable element of organizational life that energizes members and drives the organization forward. Creating the right vision is one of the toughest and most challenging tasks for leadership.

Vision, innovation, and leadership are intertwined in multiple and complex ways. A close reading of Martin's (2016) work on academic library leadership reveals how leadership styles, vision, and innovation are intimately related. Important leadership attributes include the creation and sharing of a vision for the library, being innovative, and having the self-confidence to forge ahead in a changing environment. In earlier studies of research library innovation (Jantz, 2015, 2016), significant factors found to be related to innovativeness included the integration of the leadership team and the singular leader's attitude toward organizational change. The premise in this study is that a powerful vision statement, communicated throughout the organization, can energize members to higher levels of commitment while also contributing to greater job satisfaction and creativity, resulting in new ideas and a more innovative culture. Consequently, one might expect

that the vision and innovativeness of the library will be significantly related – the focus of the study reported here.

### 2. Problem statement

A vision describes a future preferred state of an organization and the corresponding statement, communicated throughout, is a critical factor in the future success of the institution. Kilpatrick and Silverman (2005) stress the importance of a vision statement for nonprofits, given that these organizations lack the feedback provided by profit and loss statements.

The research on visionary leadership is extensive with many definitions of vision. Zaccaro and Banks (2001) cite seven definitions, however all of these have a set of common components. Briefly stated, a vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization (Nanus, 1992). Kilpatrick and Silverman (2005) define a vision as “a compelling, easy-to-understand description of how the nonprofit would like the world to change in the next three-to-five years, what role the organization will play in that change, and how the nonprofit will measure the success of its role” (p. 25). Most definitions stress the motivational aspects of vision as an aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the stated timeframe. In crafting a credible vision, the leader must be aware of the limits of the organization and the boundaries imposed by the external environment. For some organizations, a three-year timeframe may be

E-mail address: [rjantz@rutgers.edu](mailto:rjantz@rutgers.edu).

<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term “research library” refers to those institutions that are members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). ARL is a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries at comprehensive, research institutions in the U.S. and Canada that share similar research missions, aspirations, and achievements.

too short and there are external economic and political realities that must be taken into account. Bennis and Nanus (1985) identify the essential dimensions of a vision statement – “...a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists” (p. 89).

Many research libraries do not acknowledge the importance of a vision and most library employees do not understand the content expressed in these statements and how the vision statement might affect their own work. Given a dynamic external world, statements about the future and purpose of the library are essential components of a strategic plan and should evolve to keep pace with change. Unfortunately, many statements about vision published on library web pages just don't work. In addition, some libraries do not consider a vision statement important, focusing primarily on day-to-day management challenges. The premise of this study is innovativeness will be an important attribute in a library seeking to provide the services required by the 21st century university and a powerful vision will help leaders create this more innovative institution.

### 3. Literature review

Vision is a key concept in the study of leadership and organizational change and can be succinctly defined as an “idealized goal to be achieved” (Ruvio, Rosenblatt, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010, p. 145). Leadership is about vision, and a compelling vision, communicated throughout the library and the university, can significantly increase the probability of organizational success. Visionary leadership encourages innovation, inspiring what may at first appear to be unachievable. Unfortunately, in the more autocratic organization, a leader can mandate policy and make decisions without a vision—a style that is tantamount to stumbling in the dark. Nanus (1992) proposes an appropriate metaphor for these organizations “a lifeboat adrift in turbulent seas with no oars, no compass, no maps—and no hope” (p. xviii).

#### 3.1. Vision—organizational factors and performance

What are the characteristics of a powerful and transforming vision statement and how do statements about the future provoke and sustain behavior? Van der Helm (2008) proposes a framework for studying vision and describes seven different types of visions including humanistic, religious, organizational, and personal. He claims that all of these visions work because they have three common attributes: a claim about the future, a reference to an ideal future, and the desire for deliberate change.

Vision can relate to organizational structures where a more flat-tened structure leads to increased innovation but also difficulty in maintaining a coordinated effort throughout the organization. A more hierarchical, top-down management structure will be more efficient but will also restrict the innovative capabilities of organizational members. These issues have led Collins and Porras (1991) to develop a theoretical framework for understanding organizational vision consisting of two major components: a guiding philosophy and a tangible image. The guiding philosophy is a set of motivating assumptions and principles while the tangible image includes the organizational mission and a vivid, engaging description of what one would expect when the vision is accomplished.

In perhaps the earliest large-scale empirical study of organizational vision, chief executives in one national and three regional

samples participated in a study of the content and structure of their organizational visions (Larwood, Falbe, Kriger, & Miesing, 1995). Corporate chief executives were asked to write a brief, one-sentence statement of their visions for their firms. In order to evaluate the content of their statements, these executives were also asked to analyze the statements by applying 26 items from a list provided by the authors. The authors report that vision statements represent a multifaceted structure with formulation, implementation, and innovative realism being the most important factors. No differences in vision were found with respect to region or firm size. One important methodological conclusion from this study: It appears viable to empirically test many of the concepts that have been developed concerning vision statements.

In a comprehensive longitudinal study to examine the effects of vision on performance, Baum, Locke, and Kirkpatrick (1998) used structural equation modeling and found that vision content and attributes can have an impact on the growth of a company. However, the context, size, and environment of an organization can affect the efficacy of vision statements. Gulati, Mikhail, Morgan, and Sittig (2016) used content analysis and evaluated the relationship between the quality of vision statements and organizational performance in U.S. hospitals. Their study revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between vision statements and at least one of four performance measures. Jing, Avery, and Bergsteiner (2014) have found a positive relationship between vision communication and financial performance and staff productivity in small professional service organizations.

#### 3.2. Vision and leadership

A vision must be communicated to be effective. Carton, Murphy, and Clark (2014) have studied how leaders can use rhetoric to create a shared sense of purpose among followers and thereby improve organizational performance. These researchers used multiple methods to demonstrate how combining vision imagery with a small number of value concepts can boost performance.

Westley and Mintzberg (1989) examine the experiences of a number of visionary leaders to identify different types of vision creators. They report that most researchers appear to agree that visioning can be broken down into three stages in which 1) the envisioning of a desired future state 2) when effectively articulated and communicated to followers 3) serves to empower those followers. These researchers state that “visionary leadership encourages innovation.”

Nanus (1992), pp. 28–32 has explored the pivotal role of vision in leadership and identifies seven properties that provide guidance for leaders to create a vision statement. The vision statement should – be appropriate for the organization, exhibit standards of excellence, clarify purpose and direction, inspire, be well articulated, reflect the uniqueness of the organization, and represent an ambitious undertaking. In a related study of vision statements, researchers have uncovered a core set of characteristics that comprise a powerful vision. These characteristics – abstractness, brevity, challenge, clarity, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire – have significant impact on both client and employee satisfaction (Baum et al., 1998; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010).

The singular leader can create a vision, however most visions are developed in a group environment. In their review, Foster and Akdere (2007) note that employees hold three types of future

organizational images – the expected future, the ideal future, and the feared future. The varied images suggest that it is important for employees to participate in the vision creation process. In their integrative review, O'Connell, Hickerson, and Pillutla (2011) note that vision creation is triggered when there are tensions between what the organization is in the present and what it might become in the future. Triggers can emerge during periods of disruption in the environment or from circumstances surrounding a leadership change. Ultimately, a vision becomes a mental model consisting of two forms – the descriptive model reflects the organization as it is whereas the prescriptive model reflects the organization as it might be (Strange & Mumford, 2005).

Visionary leadership and visions are less likely to emerge in larger, more bureaucratic organizations. Berson, Shamir, and Avolio (2001) report significant negative correlations between organization size and three vision themes – optimism and confidence; challenges and opportunities; specificity and direction. This negative association in larger organizations results from members feeling distant from the leader and thus less affected or informed about the vision, suggesting leaders should keep their units to a manageable size. In a related ethnographic study, Landau, Drori, and Porras (2006) challenged the predominant view of vision scholars who have regarded vision as a factor in successful change and a means of overcoming obstacles. These researchers found that employees in a government R&D organization experienced frustration when the reality they confronted was no longer reflected in the vision.

Obviously, creating a vision is only the beginning of the visioning process. Westley and Mintzberg (1989) report that the means of communication is as important as the vision content. The vision must be communicated and shared resulting in assimilation by all members of the organization. Studies have shown that the articulation of a vision is related to organizational performance (Deluga, 2001; O'Connell et al., 2011). One of the most striking propositions in the integrative review is stated as follows:

In the absence of clear and effective vision communication, mere development of a vision statement may have no impact on and potentially may decrease individual and organizational performance (O'Connell et al., 2011), p. 117.

Beyond the communication process, the organization must take up the task of implementation –connecting vision to mission, strategy, plans, and decisions. Visions can vary based on leadership style and organizational context and a leader can encourage action using a variety of techniques including authority, modeling, intellectual stimulation, goal setting, and team building (Kantabutra & Avery, 2010). Although the responsibility for developing a vision and mission falls largely on the leader of the organization, employees frequently contribute to these important tasks. However, Kopaneva and Sias (2015) report findings that suggest a “substantial lack of congruence” (p. 358) between employee and official versions of vision statements.

#### 4. Vision and the research library

The literature review has demonstrated the importance of vision statements; their positive impact on organizational performance and employee satisfaction; and the challenges of communicating and promulgating the vision throughout the organization. Relevant to the library context, researchers (Ruvio et al., 2010; Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000) have found that the content of visions in a nonprofit will need to be more inspirational in order to influence and motivate followers

whereas the business leader will frequently couch the vision message in terms of practical aspects such as economic and business factors. Why is a vision important and do library leaders consider a vision statement to be a critical element of their strategy?

Leadership in research libraries is more difficult today, given a complex external environment, rapidly advancing technologies that affect every aspect of librarianship, and the differing views of multiple stakeholders. The university is increasingly focused on scientific research resulting in stiffer competition for funding. Fewer faculty require their students to use the library and there is a lingering ambivalence among administrators regarding research and teaching priorities (Lynch et al., 2007).

Major organizational change, innovation, and leadership have been interrelated since the beginning of the modern library. Starting in the late 19th century, one can see that radical change occurred frequently in the library where early practices, sometimes chaining books to shelves, were dramatically reversed to emphasize access and use. Melvil Dewey, an early library leader, innovated in almost every aspect of librarianship – instituting the first reference service, creating an interlibrary loan service, and founding the Library Bureau. Radical change also led to the founding of Johns Hopkins University and the creation of the first research library in the United States (Conner, 2014).

Although the first 35 years after World War II were a period of unparalleled growth for libraries (Hamlin, 1981), more recently, researchers have suggested that academic libraries will require changes in form and structure to adapt to a rapidly changing external environment (Atkins, 1991; Budd, 2012). Many library leaders have articulated the need for major changes in the academic library. In advocating for a transformation, Stoffle, Allen, Morden, and Maloney (2003) have posited that the “choice is to change and thrive or live in the past and fail” (p. 363). To survive and thrive in the future, organizations must change and adapt to the external environment, however most major organizational changes simply do not work (Burke, 2002). The successful library leader will have to match the pace of change not only in the university but also in the broader environment beyond the borders of the institution. In these disruptive times, as Nanus (1992) suggests – “Leaders master the context rather than surrender to it” (p. 10).

Implementing a vision will create opportunities for organizational change and renewal, however significant and successful organizational change is rare. Typically, the change process is not well planned, resulting in a messy and chaotic transition (Burke, 2002). Many research libraries maintain the traditional organizational bifurcation into technical and public services units. This long-standing structure supports traditional services – reference, liaison, instruction, cataloging – but makes it more difficult to launch totally new services, innovations that don't fit naturally into these established units.

Researchers have reported empirical evidence that demonstrates the positive effect of vision statements on performance in various organizations including nonprofits (Baum et al., 1998; Gulati et al., 2016; Jing et al., 2014; Landau et al., 2006). Riggs (1998) states the case quite clearly for academic libraries:

For effective library leadership to exist there must be a vision. For leadership to succeed, it needs form and function, process and purpose, and that all begins with a clearly articulated vision of the future of the library (p. 57).

The vision for the library involves core beliefs that include creating

the library for the future, respect for individuals, enabling organizational members to achieve their full potential, and empowering each member to question the decisions made by management. Nanus (1992) suggests there are important questions to be asked that raise warning signs and demonstrate the need for a vision. Is the library losing legitimacy? Is there excessive risk avoidance? Do organizational members trust and respect top management? Is the library having difficulty keeping pace with technology and socioeconomic developments? Riggs (1998) states that frequently “library leaders view the future as rather bleak” (p. 60), a future that is predetermined based on financial resources. In this atmosphere, library leaders may defer to the vision of the parent institution thereby foregoing an opportunity to communicate and develop the unique contributions of the library.

In a study of innovation in 26 nonprofit organizations, Light (1998) suggests that leaders should ask hard questions and seek honest answers about why the organization exists. Given a dynamic external world, statements about the future and purpose of the library are essential components of a strategic plan and should evolve to keep pace with change. Unfortunately, many published statements about vision just don't work and are held in contempt by employees as mere ornamentation (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Very few libraries have acknowledged the importance of having a vision, frequently focusing on the mission, an ineffective substitute. Most library employees are unaware of their organization's vision and mission, or being aware, do not understand the content expressed in these statements. Giesecke offers a way out of this dilemma by stating that there are two essential qualities for the library director—self-confidence and the ability to build a shared vision. “When the vision is shared and values are understood, staff will be better able to make decisions and design workflow that will help the organization achieve its vision” (quoted in Herson, Powell, & Young, 2003), p. 51.

In his study of transformational leadership in academic libraries, Martin (2016) reports that “librarianship must be remade and revamped and a new vision of libraries developed and articulated” (p. 272). For transformational leaders, the creation and communication of a vision becomes an essential activity. To bring about this transformation, a vision is necessary that provides a mental image of where the library wants to be in 3 to 5 years—an image that can provide direction and motivate the entire organization. In articulating the organizational context, leaders must depict the nature of the status quo and how the future state will eliminate existing deficiencies (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Most important for library leaders who are transforming their institutions, a vision statement can act as a bridge between the current and future state of the organization.

## 5. Research framework

The research presented here continues the author's work to understand the innovativeness and organizational performance of research libraries. Although the literature review has cited studies of vision statements, research in this unique niche remains relatively sparse. This study examines the vision statements of 50 university research libraries that participated in a study of organizational innovation conducted by the author.

The objective of this study is to explore the quality of research library vision statements and to determine how these statements relate to two organizational characteristics: the innovativeness of the organization and the size of the organization. The methodology has been adapted from earlier research by Baum et al. (1998) where vision statement attributes were related to organizational characteristics. These researchers extracted seven important vision statement attributes from a review of leadership theory. Subsequent research has

demonstrated that the presence of all seven attributes—abstractness, brevity, challenge, clarity, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire—in a vision statement can create powerful images which impact the satisfaction of both customers and staff in organizations (Kantabutra & Avery, 2010).

## 6. Methods and data

### 6.1. The population and sample

This study reuses data from the author's dissertation on innovation. From the population of libraries in the United States that are members of the Association of Research Libraries, the author created a sample of 50 libraries by contacting university librarians and obtaining approval for their leadership teams to participate in an innovation study. These library directors typically selected 3 or 4 members of the leadership team to participate in the study. The average team size was 3.6 members, including the university librarian. Online surveys were sent to the university librarian and the library top management team for all 50 libraries. Library leaders responded to statements regarding their attitudes toward change, the external environment, ambidexterity, the management team, organizational structure, demographics, and which innovations their institution has adopted.<sup>2</sup>

### 6.2. The innovation performance variable

The innovation performance construct was defined as consisting of three dimensions that relate to the library's innovative capabilities. First, the innovation adoption decision reflects the ability of the organization to make a decision to proceed with implementation. To this end, survey respondents were asked if they had made a “decision to adopt” for each of 32 library innovations. The resulting indicator, sometimes referred to as *innovation magnitude* (Gopalakrishnan, 2000), represents the breadth and depth of innovation and is compiled from the organization's decisions regarding the implementation of selected innovations. Secondly, innovation must be more than just an idea or a decision; the innovation must be implemented and have significant user impact. It is possible that a decision is made to adopt an innovation but never undertake the implementation because of resource constraints, political controversy, or other blocking factors. For the second component of the innovation performance construct, the decision to adopt is augmented by the extent of implementation of the innovation and represents the organization's effort directed to realizing the innovation. The third dimension of innovation performance addresses the flexibility of the library and the ability to simultaneously conduct both exploratory and exploitative activities that can result in both incremental and radical innovations (He & Wong, 2004). These three dimensions—innovation magnitude, extent of implementation, and balance between incremental and radical innovations—are aggregated to form the innovation performance construct.

### 6.3. The library vision variable

Kirkpatrick, Wofford, and Baum (2002) suggest that the best approach to exploring library vision is to use vision statements that have been documented (as opposed to a verbal statement in an interview) and examine how these statements relate to the organizational context and performance measures. Following this approach, this author selected two experts in research and academic libraries who rated each library vision statement based on the core

<sup>2</sup> The survey for the innovation study can be viewed at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7282/T37D2S88>.

**Table 1**  
Research library vision statements on library websites (N = 50).

| Presence of vision statements | Frequency of occurrence | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Library has vision statement  | 33                      | 66.0       |
| No vision statement           | 17                      | 34.0       |
| Total                         | 50                      | 100.0      |

**Table 2**  
Vision statement, organizational size, and innovativeness (N = 33).

|                        | M      | SD     |
|------------------------|--------|--------|
| Vision statement score | 32.39  | 5.96   |
| Library size           | 283.82 | 134.15 |
| Innovativeness         | 39.95  | 13.77  |

**Table 3**  
Correlations (N = 33).<sup>a</sup>

|                        | Vision statement score | Library size      | Innovativeness    |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Vision statement score | 1                      | 0.20              | 0.45 <sup>c</sup> |
| Library size           | 0.20                   | 1                 | 0.35 <sup>b</sup> |
| Innovativeness         | 0.45 <sup>c</sup>      | 0.35 <sup>c</sup> | 1                 |

<sup>a</sup> Although not the focus of this study, readers will note that there is also a significant and positive relationship between the innovativeness of the library and size. This result was demonstrated in the earlier study and is typically based on the greater resources and the willingness to incur more risk in the larger library.

<sup>b</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

attributes that comprise a powerful vision statement: abstractness, brevity, challenge, clarity, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire.

As a first step to establish rater consistency, a trial rating process was conducted in which each rater scored a selection of eight library vision statements along a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*the attribute was not present*), through 4 (*the attribute was present at a moderate level*), to 7 (*the attribute was present at a high level*). A single vision statement score was computed for each institution by summing the scores across the seven vision attributes. The resulting scores from each rater were highly correlated.

After the trial process was completed, each rater was sent the official online survey that included the vision statements of 33 research libraries.<sup>3</sup> Using the same process as in the trial, the raters scored the attributes for each research library. To compute the final vision statement score for each institution, the scores from each rater were averaged to produce a single numeric value (Appendix A).

For the correlation analysis, the vision score and two organizational variables are used: the size of the library in FTE<sup>4</sup> as reported by the Association of Research Libraries for academic year 2013/2014 and the innovation performance of the library. The innovation performance variable is from the dataset the author created in the aforementioned study of innovativeness in research libraries. In this earlier study, the innovation performance variable was constructed based on decisions regarding innovations, the extent of implementation of

innovations, and the organizational balance of incremental and radical innovations. These three innovation dimensions were aggregated to form a single factor for the innovative performance of each library (Appendix A).

## 7. Vision statement analysis

Strong vision statements reflect leadership optimism, confidence, and the importance of organizational members' contributions. In an examination of research library websites, considerable variation in the presence of vision statements was found. In the sample of 50 libraries, 33 (66%) had vision statements (Table 1).

Earlier research has reported the need to distinguish between the content of vision and mission statements (Berson et al., 2001). It is clear from our analysis that some libraries have combined vision and mission into a single statement. Although it might be more convenient to create one statement, this blending can make it more difficult to communicate the two concepts and distinguish between the desired future state and the purpose of the library. Appendix B includes some of the high scoring vision statements from the sample of 50 research libraries. The innovation performance and vision scores for the 50 research libraries are included in Appendix A. Means and standard deviations were calculated for vision statement scores, library size, and innovativeness (Table 2) and correlations were calculated to support hypothesis testing (Table 3).

### 7.1. Correlations of vision statements with innovativeness and organizational size

The first hypothesis focuses on the relationship between the vision statement score and the innovation performance. One might expect that major innovations would emanate from the research libraries that have powerful vision statements. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

**H1.** The vision statement score for research libraries will be positively correlated with the innovation performance of the library.

A Pearson correlation was performed to assess the relationship between the vision rating score and the innovation performance of the research library. The correlation was positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level,  $r(31) = 0.45, p < 0.01$  (two tailed), therefore hypothesis H1 was supported. The underlying assumption for this hypothesis is that a powerful vision statement will be inspiring and motivate all employees to look for ways to improve the services of the library. The literature review reinforces the idea that a well-formed vision statement leads to improved organizational performance and greater employee satisfaction. These in turn can lead to more employee creativity and new ideas, important antecedents of organizational innovation.

The second hypothesis examines the relationship between the vision statement score and the size (FTE) of the library. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

**H2.** The vision statement score for research libraries will be negatively correlated with the size (FTE) of the organization. In larger research libraries, it is expected that the vision statement will be less well formed.

A correlation was performed to assess the relationship between the vision rating score and the size (FTE) of the library. The correlation was not statistically significant and hypothesis H2 was not supported.

## 8. Discussion

The findings suggest that libraries with powerful vision statements, based on the seven vision attributes, are also typically

<sup>3</sup> For the analysis, only 33 of the 50 libraries had vision statements. See Table 1.

<sup>4</sup> FTE stands for full time equivalent and is an indicator of the size of the library.

innovative. There are a number of factors that might play a role in this relationship.

### 8.1. The leader's vision and role

The style and personal traits of the library leader are usually embedded in the vision statement. An effective leader is results oriented and one who “adopts challenges and new visions of both what is possible and desirable” (Nanus, 2001, p. 4). This type of leader can envision a preferred state for the organization and create a shared vision that is communicated, stimulating followers to develop innovative and creative solutions to the problems facing the institution. The resulting ideas are the precursors of an innovative organization. It is likely that this visionary leader will not only create a compelling vision statement but also engage the entire organization in realizing the vision, resulting in a more innovative organizational culture.

Part of the visionary leader's role is to provide the resources to achieve the vision. In an earlier study, a library director's positive attitude toward exploratory work was found to be significantly related to the innovativeness of the library (Jantz, 2016). This attitude is an essential aspect of the challenge and orientation toward the future, two of the attributes of a powerful vision statement. The visionary director's support of exploratory work would also be likely to result in ideas that culminate in innovations and enhanced innovative performance for the library.

### 8.2. Vision and organizational size

Despite the non-significant correlation of size and the vision statement score, prior research does suggest that larger, more complex organizations are preoccupied with management issues and therefore spend less time on creating and communicating a vision. In addition, a larger organization may be involved in more diverse interests and services, making it more difficult to construct a coherent vision statement encompassing all dimensions. However, the lack of support for hypothesis H2 suggests that other factors in large organizations affect the creation and quality of the vision statement.

### 8.3. Vision and organizational performance

In a nonprofit organization such as the research library, organizational performance is a nebulous concept, made more challenging by goal ambiguity and the conventions imposed by professional norms. University administrators have quite different views of the library than those of students and faculty. Although surveys of faculty and staff can provide guidance as to how to improve services, these surveys typically create a near-term focus on efficiency and traditional services that can sacrifice the future. A vision statement helps the library leadership balance near-term requirements with future goals.

Creating the vision statement is only the first step to enhancing the performance of the research library. As mentioned earlier, the vision statement must be communicated and promulgated throughout the organization so that every organizational member understands the future state to be achieved in three to five years. Through this process, employee behavior is shaped to ultimately influence organizational performance. It is only through this shared understanding that the library leader will see the impact of a powerful vision statement. The impact on organizational performance has been demonstrated empirically in other nonprofits and

professional services (Gulati et al., 2016; Jing et al., 2014).

Creating a credible vision statement is difficult work. Communicating the statement throughout the organization is even more difficult and time consuming. It is natural for library leaders to use traditional management practices that can produce immediate results. In discussing important qualities for ARL directors, Giesecke states “the ones that I find most essential are self-confidence mixed with optimism and ability to build a shared vision” (quoted in Hernon et al., 2003, pp. 51–52).

### 8.4. Limitations

Analysis of vision statements alone offers a limited context in which it is difficult to understand the process of vision communication and implementation. In addition to creating the vision statement, it is important to also communicate the vision to the entire organization. This study did not gather data on the extent of communication in each of the libraries. In addition, some of the visionary libraries might have had vision statements but might not have posted them on the Web, though it should be noted that, in most cases, a library that is proud of and acting on their vision would also be likely to post that vision publicly in order to enhance the communication process. In any event, there are ample opportunities for more research on how libraries are communicating and implementing their visions.

The finding indicates a moderate correlation between vision statements and innovativeness.<sup>5</sup> The correlation was significant and in the positive direction. Obviously, a bivariate correlation does not take into account other relationships that might exist between vision statements and various performance indicators. In addition to understanding how communication of the vision affects performance, a more comprehensive study could include indicators other than innovativeness. Perhaps what is needed is a study of organizational effectiveness that takes into account the multiple dimensions of performance in the research library and in the broader community of academic libraries. It is hoped that this initial step in examining the role of vision in libraries will encourage others, both researchers and practitioners, to explore the role of vision and vision communication.

## 9. Conclusion

Westley and Mintzberg (1989) discuss the profoundly symbolic nature of visionary leadership and the importance through words and actions of helping followers see and realize the vision. Librarians in early history have used imagery and metaphor to conceive new visions and today's generation of librarians are “renouncing the past and reaching beyond the library itself for language and image to define and describe new visions and plans” (Nardini, 2001, p. 134). However, if vision does not take on meaning for individuals and the organization as a whole and if the vision does not have implications for attitudes and behaviors, it is not worth the time spent crafting it (Foster & Akdere, 2007).

The vision statement is a beginning and the vision will only come alive through communication and active sharing. Without a vision statement, the research library may revert back to traditional services, a comfortable and manageable stance but not one that will help advance the university. In his book on self-examination and the future of librarianship, Budd (2008) suggests that we have to first find a way “to understand the complex relationships among collections, services, communities, publishing, access, and professional responsibilities” (p. 244). A carefully constructed vision statement will place these roles in perspective and will demonstrate the future potential of the library to all stakeholders.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen (1988) states that a correlation coefficient of 0.10 is weak, a correlation coefficient of 0.30 is considered moderate whereas a value of 0.50 or larger represents a strong correlation.

### Appendix A. Innovation performance and vision scores for 50 research libraries

The following table displays the innovation performance and vision score for each of the 50 research libraries in the vision study. Those institutions with a vision score of zero did not have a vision statement posted on the library website.

| Institution | Innovation performance | Vision score |
|-------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1           | 8.97                   | 30.0         |
| 2           | 18.12                  | 17.0         |
| 3           | 18.71                  | 14.5         |
| 4           | 19.59                  | 33.5         |
| 5           | 22.95                  | 26.5         |
| 6           | 23.66                  | 0.0          |
| 7           | 25.10                  | 27.5         |
| 8           | 26.12                  | 0.0          |
| 9           | 28.56                  | 25.0         |
| 10          | 29.51                  | 35.0         |
| 11          | 29.70                  | 38.5         |
| 12          | 30.79                  | 36.0         |
| 13          | 30.99                  | 0.0          |
| 14          | 33.13                  | 32.0         |
| 15          | 34.00                  | 34.0         |
| 16          | 35.49                  | 33.0         |
| 17          | 36.67                  | 34.5         |
| 18          | 37.00                  | 33.5         |
| 19          | 37.03                  | 0.0          |
| 20          | 38.66                  | 0.0          |
| 21          | 39.38                  | 0.0          |
| 22          | 39.38                  | 0.0          |
| 23          | 40.43                  | 38.5         |
| 24          | 41.03                  | 0.0          |
| 25          | 41.33                  | 0.0          |
| 26          | 42.06                  | 0.0          |
| 27          | 42.29                  | 0.0          |
| 28          | 42.60                  | 0.0          |
| 29          | 42.80                  | 41.5         |
| 30          | 43.22                  | 32.5         |
| 31          | 44.18                  | 31.5         |
| 32          | 44.91                  | 36.5         |
| 33          | 46.08                  | 0.0          |
| 34          | 46.38                  | 30.0         |
| 35          | 48.53                  | 28.0         |
| 36          | 49.18                  | 33.0         |
| 37          | 49.77                  | 30.5         |
| 38          | 49.93                  | 35.5         |
| 39          | 50.58                  | 0.0          |
| 40          | 51.51                  | 39.0         |
| 41          | 52.29                  | 39.5         |
| 42          | 53.95                  | 38.0         |
| 43          | 54.44                  | 0.0          |
| 44          | 54.46                  | 32.0         |
| 45          | 57.87                  | 0.0          |
| 46          | 58.25                  | 36.0         |
| 47          | 58.51                  | 36.0         |
| 48          | 60.13                  | 25.0         |
| 49          | 61.60                  | 35.0         |
| 50          | 72.10                  | 0.0          |

### Appendix B. Highly rated vision statements

Three of the highly rated vision statements are included here. Each statement was evaluated using the seven vision attributes – abstractness, brevity, challenge, clarity, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire.

The Libraries will energize, engage and inspire all of our users. We will be recognized as: an open and accessible learning environment, both physical and virtual; a preferred gateway to global information resources; and a secure repository for scholarship created by and for the University.

We strive to be full partners, peers, and colleagues engaged in the pursuit and discovery of knowledge. We will always put the needs of our users first; we will strive constantly to improve service; and we will assess the quality, relevancy and usability of all that we do.

We will be a world-class research library with a global reach, providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for learning, collaboration, and knowledge creation. As partners in research and education, and leaders in delivery and preservation of library collections, we will leverage technology and reward innovation to ensure the University Libraries will be a destination of choice.

The Libraries will be a strategic institutional asset that develops and delivers new methods of creating and supporting knowledge resources. We will enrich teaching and learning and fuel research at the university and worldwide.

## References

- Atkins, S. E. (1991). *The academic library in the American University*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Baum, J., Locke, E., & Kirkpatrick, S. (1998). A longitudinal study of the relation of vision and vision communications to venture growth in entrepreneurial firms. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83, 43–54.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Berson, Y., Shamir, B., & Avolio, B. (2001). The relationship between vision strength, leadership style, and context. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 12, 53–73.
- Budd, J. (2008). *Self-examination: The present and future of librarianship*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Budd, J. (2012). *The changing academic library: Operations, culture, environments*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.
- Burke, W. (2002). *Organization change: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Carton, A., Murphy, C., & Clark, J. (2014). A (blurry) vision of the future: How leader rhetoric about ultimate goals influences performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(6), 1544–1570.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Collins, J., & Porras, J. (1991). Organizational vision and visionary organizations. *California Management Review*, 34, 30–52.
- Conger, J., & Kanungo, R. (1988). Behavioral dimensions of charismatic leadership. In J. A. Conger, & R. N. Kanungo (Eds.), *Charismatic leadership: The elusive factor in organizational effectiveness* (pp. 78–97). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Conner, M. (2014). *The new university library: Four case studies*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Deluga, R. (2001). American presidential Machiavellianism: Implications for charismatic leadership and rater performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 12(3), 339–363.
- Foster, R., & Akdere, M. (2007). Effective organizational vision: Implications for human resource development. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 31(2), 100–111.
- Gopalakrishnan, S. (2000). Unraveling the links between dimensions of innovation and organizational performance. *The Journal of High Technology Management Research*, 11(1), 137–153.
- Gulati, R., Mikhail, O., Morgan, R., & Sittig, D. (2016). Vision statement quality and organizational performance in U.S. hospitals. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 61(5), 335–350.
- Hage, J., & Aiken, M. (1970). *Social change in complex organizations*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Hamlin, A. (1981). *The university library in the United States: Its origin and development*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- He, Z., & Wong, P. (2004). Exploration vs. exploitation: An empirical test of the ambidexterity hypothesis. *Organization Science*, 15, 481–494.
- Hernon, P., Powell, R., & Young, A. (2003). *The next library leadership: Attributes of academic and public library directors*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Jantz, R. (2015). The determinants of organizational innovation: An interpretation and implications for research libraries. *College & Research Libraries*, 76, 512–536. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.4.512>.
- Jantz, R. (2016). *Managing creativity: The innovative research library*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.
- Jing, F. F., Avery, G. C., & Bergsteiner, H. (2014). Enhancing performance in small professional firms through vision communication and sharing. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 31, 599–620.
- Kantabutra, S., & Avery, G. (2010). The power of vision: Statements that resonate. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(1), 37–45.
- Kilpatrick, A., & Silverman, L. (2005). The power of vision. *Strategy & Leadership*, 33(2), 24–26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10878570510586810>.
- Kirkpatrick, S., Wofford, J., & Baum, R. (2002). Measuring motive imagery contained in the vision statement. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13, 139–150.
- Kopaneva, I., & Sias, P. (2015). Lost in translation: Employee and organizational constructions of mission and vision. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29(3), 358–384.
- Landau, D., Drori, I., & Porras, J. (2006). Vision change in a government R & D organization. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42(2), 145–171.
- Larwood, L., Falbe, C., Kriger, M., & Miesing, P. (1995). Structure and meaning of organizational vision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(3), 740–769.
- Light, P. (1998). *Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Lynch, B., Murray-Rust, C., Parker, S., Turner, D., Walker, D., Wilkinson, C., & Zimmerman, J. (2007). Attitudes of presidents and provosts on the university library. *College & Research Libraries*, 68, 213–228.
- Martin, J. (2016). Perceptions of transformational leadership in academic libraries. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56, 266–284.
- Nanus, B. (1992). *Visionary leadership: Creating a compelling sense of direction for your organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Nanus, B. (2001). *Visionary leadership: Creating a compelling sense of direction for your organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Nardini, R. F. (2001). A search for meaning: American library metaphors, 1876–1926. *The Library Quarterly*, 71(2), 111–140.
- O'Connell, D., Hickerson, K., & Pillutla, A. (2011). Organizational visioning: An integrative review. *Group & Organization Management*, 36(1), 103–125.
- Riggs, D. (1998). Visionary leadership. In T. F. Mech, & G. B. McCabe (Eds.), *Leadership and academic librarianship* (pp. 55–65). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Ruvio, A., Rosenblatt, Z., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (2010). Entrepreneurial leadership vision in nonprofit vs. for-profit organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21, 144–158.
- Stoffle, C. J., Allen, B., Morden, D., & Maloney, K. (2003). Continuing to build the future: Academic libraries and their challenges. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 3, 363–380.
- Strange, J., & Mumford, M. (2005). The origins of vision: Effects of reflection, models, and analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 121–148.
- Thompson, J., Alvy, G., & Lees, A. (2000). Social entrepreneurship: A new look at the people and potential. *Management Decision*, 38, 328–338.
- Van der Helm, R. (2008). The vision phenomenon: Towards a theoretical underpinning of visions of the future and the process of envisioning. *Futures*, 41, 96–104.
- Westley, F., & Mintzberg, H. (1989). Visionary leadership and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 10(Special Issue), 17–32.
- Zaccaro, S., & Banks, D. (2001). Leadership vision and organizational effectiveness. In S. J. Zaccaro, & R. J. Klimoski (Eds.), *The nature of organizational leadership: Understanding the performance imperatives confronting today's leaders* (pp. 181–218). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ronald Jantz has a BA and an MA in mathematics from the University of Kansas and the University of Michigan, respectively. He worked for many years as a software developer and manager in Bell Laboratories, one of the world's best-known research and development organizations. In 1996, he returned to academia and earned a master's degree in library science and a PhD from the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University. At Rutgers University Libraries, he serves as the digital library architect and continues his research into the innovativeness and organizational performance of nonprofit institutions. Some of his recent publications have appeared in *College & Research Libraries*, *Journal of eScience Librarianship*, *Library and Information Science Research*, and *New Review of Academic Librarianship*.