

## **Strategic Planning**

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LIBS 674: Management and Leadership in Library and Information Studies

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October 17, 2022



## **Summary**

For my analysis I chose George R. Farmer Jr. Law Library of West Virginia University. Within the library's strategic map the law library seeks to serve "students, faculty, staff, and the residents of the state of West Virginia" (West Virginia University College of Law, 2022). The library is located near the Evansdale area of Morgantown, West Virginia. The library features two levels which include a rare book room, study carrels, and a large seating area with panoramic windows for a view of the surrounding area. It is located within the college of law.

## **Mission**

The mission of the library is to provide teaching and research support to the West Virginia University College of Law. The library also functions to serve "the West Virginia bench (licensed judges within the state and local court system), practicing bar (licensed attorneys), and the general public" (West Virginia University College of Law, 2022). Ultimately the library's goal from the University marketing standpoint is to prepare future lawyers to serve in the profession to an American Bar Association (ABA) set standard.

## Part I

The Library prides itself as being founded in 1878 and being ABA approved since 1923. It markets the law school as being competitively affordable and ranked highly on a national scale. From reading the strategic map the central focus of this library and why it exists is the motive for being a regional leader for teaching the practice of law, but yet to also be nationally recognized. A lot of rhetoric within the strategic map consists of projecting an image of being ethical and professional. Other terms that seem to be common across the libraries (as well as College of Law) documentation includes “intellectual freedom, diversity, expertise, and professional growth” (West Virginia University College, 2019).

After thoroughly navigating the library’s website (and I do mean thoroughly, because I found out a lot on how their website is structured by using the google chrome developer tool and analyzing the HTML). I believe the website is mostly written in-house, but uses EbscoHost and WorldCat for the database search engine. So I absolutely feel as though the institution is supportive of faculty, staff, students, and even the surrounding community (although in part II, I have a recommendation). The core principles effectively state their values, which is also followed up by a fairly simplistic graphic for their outreach and service goals. The wording is about as straightforward as it gets. For the emphasis on improvement for this library’s strategic planning I want to focus on the community outreach, more specifically what the library is actually doing or should do to better serve those in the local community with legal resource referencing.

I only saw one instance of reference help to outside entities for legal support (geared toward no/low income persons in the surrounding community) with a disclaimer any reference help provided by librarians would not be considered as actual legal advice which stated the

following: “no information provided to you is provided as legal advice nor does our assistance to you establish an attorney/client relationship. We cannot provide any legal advice, interpret legal materials, or suggest a solution to any legal matter you may have” (West Virginia University College, 2022). This linked to only a portable document file which was more or less a list of non-profit organizations, state government entities, and others geared to help low-cost legal assistance in West Virginia. I’d like to note this was an interesting policy disclaimer to see, considering I saw that one of the librarians I looked more into had a Juris doctorate but I’m assuming unless you pass a bar exam you cannot practice. Personally, working in a Health Sciences Library I have not yet come across a disclaimer that reference help should not be taken as medical advice (I wonder if legal implications have been considered more so just by the nature of being a law library?). However, just from the information posted alone (through libguides and various other pages) I believe the law library at WVU is more than capable of providing accurate reference resources for low-cost supportive legal information for the community of West Virginia. The issue still remains of how to better allocate this information to those that can benefit from it the most. I would like to see more information on the topic of community outreach initiatives that serve this strategic planning purpose more thoroughly .

## **Part II**

I propose a public relations outreach initiative to 1) Hear what community members would like to receive/what they think may benefit their understanding or literacy/navigation of legal information that can be accessed through the library either online or on location and 2) Provide those who attend these outreach initiatives basic/general literary reference materials (such as more intricate brochures) to better prepare themselves in their legal support searches as well as becoming informed of resources available. To help with issues such as property rights,

landlord-tenants laws, environmental law, etc.. The library has already created a PDF to list some useful entities within the state, but I believe with enough time spent more can be done on this front to target those in the community that are likely more in need of this kind of information relative to their individual situation. The community input portion is important because it “helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other, librarians cannot develop a product of service in a vacuum”(Moran & Morner, 2017, pg.133) therefore the need to create programming designed specifically for community outreach is essential to achieve the overall strategic plan for any library. Even more so for specialized libraries with specialized expertise.

To achieve this, some sort of quarterly or (perhaps twice a year) outreach programming implemented that is in the form of an in-person gathering/event in areas deemed more in need of this type of service/information would suffice (if it isn't already available for those in the communities within West Virginia that are considered no/low income). I wasn't able to find any sort of outreach like what I am proposing on the website, so I believe this would be beneficial. There is a head of outreach librarian, but this library position also includes the title of attorney services and digital initiatives. How much actual community outreach on this front occurs isn't clear via the website.

Although the pursuit of this plan isn't likely to bring people into the library per se “in a government agency or nonprofit, sales are not the focus; rather, people coming in the door is what management wants to achieve”(Hussey & Velasquez, 2019, pg.130). Nor will it bring any real sort of financial gain to the university as a whole; it does fulfill the library's obligation to provide a service to the greater community (the public) laid out within their strategic plan. It could additionally serve as a way to better market the library's and university as a whole; plan/commitment to the West Virginia community.

The plan of action from my perspective is to partner with one or several of the entities listed [here](#) on the library's website to tactically plan events geared to serve/inform such groups. Those being targeted for this outreach will perhaps be less likely to be served by modern/today's social media/internet driven programs. Hence the need to really research which communities could be positively impacted as well as working with those groups in more direct contact with these community members. Considering that as of a 2016-2020 ACS economic household income report on West Virginia "26.7% or 195,592 households"(MCDC ACS Profiles) bring in an income of less than \$24,999; the need to serve the broader community in some way (that the law library can provide) is apparent to me.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.law.wvu.edu/files/d/35c61a6f-6ce4-4fde-8291-35bd2c08b48c/places-to-get-help-placard.pdf>

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