

Determining the VALID Organizational Structure

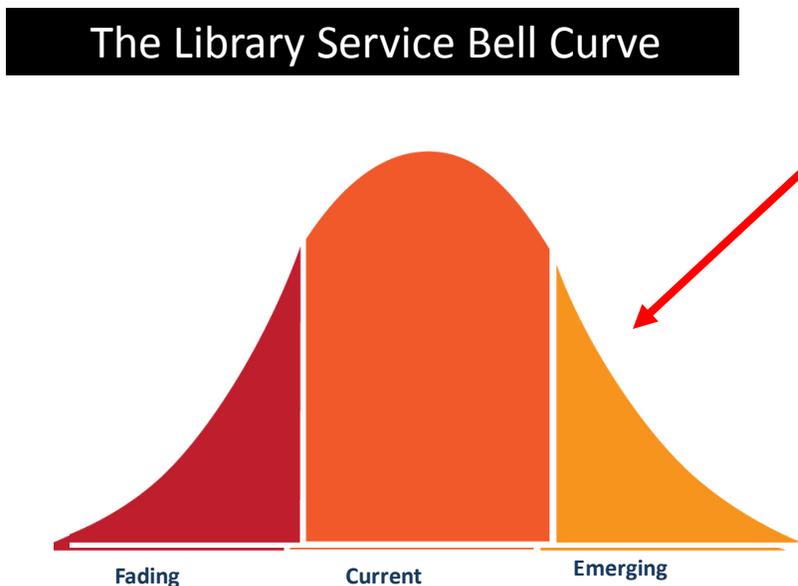
Workshop with Liz Bishoff

Liz provided an overview of structural issues, including competing values, that are involved in determining an optimal organizational configuration. Specifically, with respect to a library service platform, she noted that the LSP is the technical foundation for all services that VALID participants might want to provide. You can't have a house without a solid foundation. On the other hand, buyers don't purchase a house based on the foundation. VALID's buy in from its users, including both funding to support its work and the time and staff needed to accomplish its tasks, come from users who see a compelling value to a service VALID provides—but this service either requires or might take away from the LSP infrastructure in order to build it. For example, state and university administrators might see value in collaborative research support, but this service is developed at the expense of, and ideally should depend on the infrastructure, created by the LSP. This is the chicken and egg problem writ large.

Grace Agnew noted other risks and issues facing VALID. A key issue is VALID's relationship to VALE. VALE is comprised of 56 organizations, ranging from community college/small university members to large research universities. There are also public library members who are in consortia with academic institutions. All VALE institutions have been served through the collective negotiation and purchase power for electronic resources, but not all VALE libraries see a need for a shared LSP or would be served by an LSP that supports complex collections and significant faculty research agendas. VALE and VALID will need to address the relationship going forward, where there are at least three potential options: (1) VALID becomes entirely separate from VALE; (2) VALID offers a service similar to collective negotiation that all VALE libraries see value for, such as universal borrowing, or (3) VALID offers specialized services that libraries beyond the alpha and beta institutions can select for added value and added cost, such as electronic theses and dissertations or an institutional repository. The question for this last strategy is timing. Do VALID members expect to opt in for a service pay up front for its development or purchase after

the fact? What happens if the interested VALE members select other options while the service is under development?

VALE and VALID will need to address the relationship issue, which is crucial to the ongoing identity and work plans of both organizations, going forward, before a VALID organizational structure can be developed. It was discussed in the meeting that VALID does serve a critical role already as VALE's research and development arm for services that may not seem immediately useful to all members immediately but that represent emerging higher education needs that ultimately effect all VALE organizations, just possibly at different times and with different levels of need. It was generally agreed that VALID could be the 20% of effort that all libraries should place on services to support changing higher education needs and that it is short sighted to demand that anything VALID develops be immediately useful to a VALE member for there to be buy in for its development. Agnew's slide of the spectrum of library service was referenced:



It was also noted that other statewide consortia seem to be moving toward deeper collaboration and operating more and more as one system for core

services. Collaboration can provide economies of scale and also greater opportunities and less risk for change, given that the needs of higher education are changing rapidly and the use they make of traditional library services is correspondingly shrinking. Can VALE afford to collaborate less when other states are recognizing the need to collaborate more?

Another identified issue is that the relationship with NJEdge remains to be addressed. Will it be only fiduciary? Will NJEdge, with its plans to offer repository services to its members end up competing with VALID or collaborating? Will VALID and NJEdge co-develop, perhaps engaging in grants together, with the very successful NJVid as an exemplar, or will NJEdge become a vendor of services to VALID and VALE institutions?

Liz developed a matrix that could help participants explore organizational issues as they effect VALID through the medium of four core organizational structures, based on an axis of structure, from loose to high, and size, from small to large. The participants were divided into four teams, to address each quadrant resulting from the conceptual axes:



The participants divided into four teams to consider the organizational models in terms of the following attributes:

- project purpose;
- role/responsibilities;
- technology;
- staffing;
- communication;
- space and facilities;
- governance;
- finance

Team One: Highly Structured Large Organization

There are lots of rules but still an organic, evolved organization that is not necessarily hierarchical but does involve a lot of people contributing.

Project purpose:

- Leverage university/college resources
- Reduce redundancy
- Increase access
- Increase efficiency
- Improve research productivity and inter-institutional collaboration
- Increase institutional sustainability
- Improve learning productivity through collaboration

Roles and responsibilities:

- Define/manage people/staff
- Repurpose existing staff, processes, services
- Transform existing staff, processes, services

Technology

reliable and a quantum leap from current and flexible but with a reliance on standards.

Staffing.

We need more! More skills and cross training.

Faster staff development is needed, as well as executive leagersup.

Is a mix of local and contractive employees needed?

Whatever the staffing configuration, it must be highly adaptive and cross trained.

Space and facilities

Does a large organization need a lot of space? Not necessarily. It can be dispersed, with centralization provided virtually, so a hybrid physical footprint. Large but agile.

Communication: must be pervasive, virtual, core , fast and easy. Use same channels for different stakeholders. It should be “just in time” actionable and efficient.

Governance

This organization needs structured decision making and centralized rules.

Behavioral rules are needed, as well as contractual commitments between partners and with VALE.

Governance must be accountable and transparent.

VALID should be the innovation arm of VALE.

VALID services should be:

- Secure
- Optional
- Adaptive
- Open to input

Decision making should be carefully defined.

Finances

Finances require defining the allocation from each participant.

Financial support results from repurposing current resources but also by finding new funding sources.

Financial support can come from:

- State (?)
- Members/participants
- Grants
- Corporations

Team 2: Highly Structured, Small Organization

Purpose: “Advance the research and education in the state’s universities (also the VALE mission) through technology and a digital infrastructure that is a collaboration of the libraries and IT in each institution.

VALID’s role is RD&I—Research, Development and Implementation, through the following activities:

1. Research and evaluate appropriate technologies. Recommend centralized technologies to fulfill mission
2. Test and deploy
3. Respond to feedback
4. Keep abreast of new technologies and changing higher education needs. Propose new developments
5. Encourage adoption through:
 - a. Demonstration of value
 - b. Marketing
 - c. Training and support

A small, highly structured organization is one with strictly defined objectives and contractual accountability.

Clarity is provided through well-defined and understood 3-5 year goals, realized through an annual action plan.

Staffing:

The action plan is realized through contractual obligations with real penalties for non-compliance for staffing contributions by each organization. The staffing commitment must be in writing with staff identified by name but also with contingency plans for staff turnover.

High structure is provided by explicit contract and the annual action plan. The only full time person hired by VALID is a project manager to:

- Coordinate efforts of staff designated by contract
- Ensure completion of action plan milestones
- Make day to day decisions

- Manage staff through the individual organizations—reporting, negotiation, etc.
- Technologically literate, to make decisions about quality and quantity of work and changes to action plan milestones

The project manager does not directly manage staff, so relies on contractual definitions to evaluate participant work. The contract needs to specify meaningful consequences if an organization does not meet its contractual obligations. Direct staff management is the province of each organization, based on input from the project manager.

Space/Facilities

Organizations should rotate office space for the project manager. This gives every organization an opportunity for face to face time with the PM. The rotation can be based on module or service leadership at an organization, thus tied to action plan milestones.

A highly interactive virtual organizational space with wiki, threaded discussion, and a testing sandbox needs to be provided.

Communication

The project manager must communicate up, to keep the governing body and stakeholders informed, communicate down, to ensure project teams meet their milestones and communicate outward to keep the larger community engaged and interested.

VALE is responsible for holding individual organizations accountable, via contract, for marketing, for setting clear goals and for leveraging the contributions of NJEdge.

Finance.

In order to ask for financial support from interested stakeholders, VALID must have clear goals and a strong value proposition explaining how organizations

will be better with VALID services than without. In addition, should have a strong demo service that is immediately appealing to a large range of stakeholders, such as ETDs or a research repository.

Governance:

It all starts with the VALE strategic plan. VALID should be an integral part of the VALE strategic plan.

VOSC and VOIT are performing well and should continue, but a full time Project manager is needed to operationalize the efforts and ensure deliverables are completed on time.

The contracts between VALE/NJEdge and participating organizations are critical for successful staffing to complete deliverables.

Team 3: Unstructured, Small Organization

Purpose: advance the teaching/learning/research mission of New Jersey Higher Education community by implementing a shared open source LSP.

Role/Responsibilities: Development is critical. An open source LSP, e.g., OLE, won't do everything for consortia so need development, which should be outsourced. Perhaps deal with another university to develop for us.

Organization divided into three stages:

Initial implementation:

Contractual project manager for the implementation phase, which consists of the project manager and the VOIT team. Policy decisions will be decided by VOSC.

Operational system:

VOSC, expanded by added implementers

VOIT

Project manager

Continued Development:

Technical teams for local triage

VOIT team for things that escalate to the secondary level.

“We are the vendor.”

Everything is cloud-based for various reasons, particularly access to servers.

NJEdge will be the fiduciary agent

Staffing:

A project manager, who is an outside hire, reports to the project and not to a member organization.

A communication liaison-could be a part of the project manager’s responsibility or that of the steering committee, as long as it is not neglected.

Facilities/Space – cloud based.

Physical location of PM could be provided by a member organization or the person could work from home as long as there is a store front office for meetings, public presence, etc.

Communication will be an issue since the organization is small and unstructured. There needs to be a clear division of internal communication, which might be the project manager or VOIT, and external, which involves marketing to stakeholders and will involve the project manager and VOSC.

The issue of VALID’s relationship to VALE is critical. There are several options:

1. VALID a part of VALE.
2. VALE separate from VALE. VALE has a seat in VALID’s top organizational structure. VALID works directly with NJEdge or other service vendor.

3. VALID is an entirely separate organization from VALE with no ongoing relationship.

Finance: Financial decisions depend on governance, but there are two phases with continuing costs. Fees are collected from participating institutions similar to the dues currently paying. A new member pays less than continuing member fees until they are up and running.

Initial startup costs are unlikely to be paid by VALE but may be paid by members and outside sources, such as a Foundation.

Team 4: Unstructured, Large organization

Project Purpose: enable the unique and share the common. Redefine services: Cataloging, Circulation/ILL, Resources, Systems, etc.

Role/Responsibilities: An unstructured organization consists of groups that arise to support projects. Each group should have a multi-dimensional membership, consisting of “thinkers” or “doers” or both.

There is a fluidity in group membership, so an organizational coordinator/communicator with exceptional listening skills is needed.

Staffing: The structure of the LSP dictates the staffing. There will be centralized staffing for systems (server, network, data management). Functional groups will manage:

- ERM (electronic resource management)
- Describe (cataloging)
- Acquire (fund management, resource purchasing)
- Document delivery
- Inter/intra borrowing

Space/Facilities should be used for Important services that are immediately developed to show value:

1. A collaborative storage facility within or outside participating institutions (“the common”)
2. Libraries repurpose freed space for collaborative research and development centers as well as “one stop shopping” mall for research and development collaborations with faculty and staff (“the unique”).

This approach ties the infrastructure to compelling value add to appeal to funders. Each organization would design R&D spaces specific to their institution to demonstrate the unique needs of the organization.

Communication is critical to overcome the unstructured approach and will include:

- web portal pushing information to mobile devices, desktops, etc.
- group meetings and workshops
- reports, newsletters, broadcast announcements
- annual conference/retreat for groups

Governance

- There will be a board/ steering committee, on the assumption that VALID remains part of VALE
- Functional teams will be responsible for design, implementation and further development of each module
- Operational staffing

Each alpha library pays \$\$\$? seed money to continue development, overseen by board/steering committee

A cost per unit needs to be established for all services. Base institutional fee on institutional size.

SWOT Analysis of the four organizational types

#1 Highly Structured Large Organization

Strengths

Get a lot done quickly

Seen as powerful

Easier to sell to administrators

Powers that be are behind it, has visible support

Pressure is off the local organizations

Well resourced

Diversity of skills and points of view

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities

Accountability

Redundancy for mission critical needs

Can exist virtually, in the cloud, working from home, reallocation of people, contract for services, a hybrid organizational model.

Visible and responsive staff results in support at the local organization

Weaknesses

Large staff is high cost

The high structure results in a bureaucracy

Less agile and flexible

Less adaptable—slow moving juggernaut

Less responsive

Less innovative

Sustainability is an issue. It requires a lot to run a large, distributed organization of quasi voluntary effort

Scalability is low

Redundancy where it is not needed

Hard to move initially from a small effort to a larger, more structured effort

Organizations opt out due to cost, slowness of results

Longer start up

Change in administration at any participating library threatens the ongoing collaboration

Without good communication, participating organizations feel powerless, “done to, not done with.”

Threats

An external organization comes in and says we can do it.

Administration could be outsourced

Longer start up risks losing buy in from the Beta institutions

Opportunities

Considerable staff buy in because they are doing the work. Ownership

#2 Highly Structured Small Organization

Strengths

Accountability. It is enforceable, contractually and in “court of public opinion.”

Responsive

Hold people as well as organizations responsible

Cost effective

Flexible –it can respond to changing environment through negotiated annual work plans

One FTE- contractually mandated PM who is not affiliated with any organization

Easy to understand your responsibilities

More innovative but with clearly defined rules and responsibilities

Quick start up. Good for initial start up

Less risk. With only one hire and not a lot of investment, it can “fail gracefully.”

Job descriptions of local staff allocated to VALID through contract align with annual needs and can change with changing needs

General viability—strategy can be used for a number of projects, LSP, research repository, etc.

There is control over who does work, and work can be shared equitably

No single organization dominates

Weaknesses

Diffusion of responsibility to members. If everyone is in charge, is anyone in charge?

Communication at all levels is a challenge—between PM and projects, PM and administration, within projects, etc. PM must manage communication, coordinate projects and manage contractual obligations. A lot to ask

Have to convince members to sign contracts that may limit their ability to respond to unforeseen local needs

Won't be as responsive, performance can't be measured as readily as staff with line reporting to a manager

Grows more slowly than a self contained organization.

Growth and change will be impacted by local needs at individual organizations and not just by the needs of VALID.

Slower implementation. Needs must be well defined, staffing found, gaps between staffing and needs defined, and contracts negotiated and worked through legal infrastructure at each organization.

Cost of implementation is high

Slower to address problems, particularly those not foreseen in the annual workplan.

Less productive.

At the mercy of staff changes at local organizations, particularly if a key player leaves and the organization is unable to fill the post.

Coordination of contract and responsibilities must be handled as well as coordination of effort

Many participants would prefer to write a check than to dedicate staff

Change of management at a participating library could result in a change of willingness to participate.

Individual institutions can still pull out. Would need built in redundancy for development to avoid this, which is expensive.

Can't respond as quickly to threats and opportunities as a less structured organization can.

Opportunities

Buy in. Individual organizations are paying for it so will make it work

If it is operating well, it has good visibility so additional organizations will join

A successful organization may draw additional funding.

Can obtain grants and interest Foundations in additional support.

The structure can grow services beyond the initial plans

A successful organization will draw quality staff to the individual participating organizations, people who want to work on this project.

Threats

The Kualico announcement was a threat to all organizations but it appears from what Grace learned at Kualico Days that the OLE participants have rejected the Kualico approach and affirmed their commitment to community/open source with no restrictions on multi tenant use. Their final recommendation to Kualico is due in mid to late December.

No fall back strategy if external decision makers, such as the Governor or State, decide a different strategy is required.

High visibility can result in co-option by the state, etc.

Unstructured Small Organization

Strengths

Least risky in terms of initial investment

It is what we are doing now, so it is what we are used to, familiar

Easy to implement and employ

A lot of buy in already

Low cost. Only funding for the project manager is needed for start up and funding for some customization of software

Participation is voluntary, fund as needed. Not a lot of additional effort required for this strategy

Weaknesses

This organization results in a slow process. Risk losing members and interest.
Attrition

No accountability

No institutional commitment

Lacks vision and a persuasive statement of purpose

Lack of a consistent, long term plan.

Lack of a communication strategy and an advocacy program

“Volunteerism” does not work for bread and butter, mission critical services

No clear responsibilities

No funding to make things happen.

No risk, but no reward

Not perceived to be doing mission critical work for individual organizations

“Doesn’t look like we mean business. If the status quo works, why are we here?”

Threats

It is too easy to ignore us. We can just disappear

We can be made irrelevant, individually, if we don’t collaborate to change the paradigm of library service.

Other consortia are headed in the direction of deep collaboration. We can miss the boat.

Stakeholders are getting bored. It is a challenge to stay relevant and exciting with too few resources and no stake in the outcome

Suceptible to abandonment by individual participants with no cost to the institution pulling out, not even a loss of face. This has already happened.

Opportunities

We are already in this structure so we are aware of its weaknesses and are ready to do something.

This structure enables us to make a quick response, since it doesn't depend on funding or established processes

Best structure for quick change. Most flexible.

#4 Unstructured Large Organization

Strengths

Adequate staffing for whatever is needed

High visibility but more flexibility than a structured large organization

Diverse

Well resourced

Scalable

More creative and innovative since structure tends to militate against new ideas and abrupt changes of plan

Large staffing combines both thinkers and doers without necessarily asking them to be the same people.

Progressive.

Similar to unstructured small organization but better resourced.

Focus is on coordinated effort rather than project management

Weaknesses

The size is a weakness, coupled with lack of structure

Needs a strong communicator in a lead position who is a good listener. These people are in short supply and difficult to attract to a position without long term stability

Requires consensus building to move forward, which is a slower process than simply mandating something occur

The type of coordinator required for this organization probably doesn't exist

The coordinator becomes a single point of failure and thus a significant risk to the organization's success

Lack of clear leadership

Highly innovative structure that paradoxically has the most difficulty implementing change.

Opportunities

More creative. Ideas of outlier staff more likely to get a hearing.

Diverse participation in functional groups. More people are able to express an interest and participate than if participation were highly structured and defined.

Have sufficient resources, particularly in terms of staffing, to get something done.

Can attract funding due to visibility, scope and diverse set of participants, some of whom may have grant and fund raising experience.

Threats (same as highly structured, small organization. Repeated here)

The Kualico announcement was a threat to all organizations but it appears from what Grace learned at Kualico Days that the OLE participants have rejected the Kualico approach and affirmed their commitment to community/open source with no restrictions on multi tenant use. Their final recommendation to Kualico is due in mid to late December.

No fall back strategy if external decision makers, such as the Governor or State, decide a different strategy is required.

High visibility can result in co-option by the state, etc.

Next Steps

Liz Bishoff, with the assistance of Carl Grant, will provide a report.

VOSC will consider the major issues and conclusions of the workshop and report, particularly the VALE-VALID relationship.

VALE's strategic planning effort and Executive Board will also consider the relationship of VALE and VALID. As possible, given the timing for planning in both organizations, VOSC's recommendations will be considered in the VALE planning process

VALID must develop a clear rationale and value proposition that can be presented to the stakeholders responsible for funding and support. These include VALE, the administration at each VALID institution and the state agencies with oversight for higher education.

VALID must design an organization in the spectrum of small, highly structured, for phase I of its initial implementation, with the understanding that a small, less structured organization may be optimal when the core services are mature, in order to foster innovation and the ability to successfully respond to the rapidly changing higher education environment, in New Jersey and elsewhere.

Once an organizational structure that is deemed adequate for development and initial implementation is designed, it will need to be costed and the financial support identified. This may consist of additional dues for all VALE members or an assessment for alpha and beta implementers that may be prorated or occur at a specific point in the preparation for migration to OLE. It may also represent an ask to stakeholders, including university and statewide administration or to foundations or granting agencies. It must be tied to strong and compelling goals accountability to the funders.

Participants voted for the organizational structure most appropriate for the current phase of VALID implementation. It was agreed that we are really in a plotting structure with features of more than one structure and that while a small highly structured organization appears best for initial start up and development,

we will probably move toward a large, less structured organization as we mature and innovation and ongoing responsiveness become the critical needs.

Distribution of Participant votes

