**SWOT/SWAC ANALYSIS**

Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats---the SWOT---facing your library is an important part of strategic planning, which is vital to the continued success of libraries of all types, including academic, public and special. As the Northeast Kansas Library System noted in an internal audit, conducting a library SWOT analysis "will help you to focus your library's services and programs on areas where you are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie  
  
Assessing a library's strengths, areas in which it is already successful, includes looking at staff skills and competencies, programming, budget maintenance and community relations. Planning for the library's future based on its strengths should include ways to maintain and improve existing success.

Analyzing a library's weaknesses also means evaluating internal operations. G. Edward Evans and Patricia Layzell Ward, authors of "Management Basics for Information Professionals," point out that weaknesses may lie in the same areas as strengths. Careful analysis of library weaknesses suggests which areas need improvement. Weaknesses also identify areas that need attention to reduce the negative impact of their weaknesses.

Opportunities

* Factors outside the library itself should be evaluated to see what could be acted upon to benefit the library. Library opportunities may present themselves in "economic, political/legal, technological, or sociocultural environments," says Anthony C. Danca in his analysis of SWOT. For example, awareness of a high economic status of the library's main patron base provides a population likely to participate in fund-raising activities.

Threats

* Analyzing library threats also means evaluating factors outside the library that hinder its success. Like opportunities, many threats stem from the economic and political environment, says Danca. For example, economic downturns threaten to reduce the budgets of publicly funded libraries. Maintaining current awareness of threats allows the library administration to plan and act. This area requires frequent attention because the external environment often changes quickly.

Other Considerations

* Evans and Ward explain that although conducting a library SWOT analysis takes significant time, the benefits are worth it. They further explain that the analysis fosters thinking through the planning process based on the external library environment and the internal library capabilities. The analysis process provides information on the current state of internal and external factors, many of which directly impact the continued viability of the library organization.

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*A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique that involves scanning the internal and external business environment to determine whether a specific goal is attainable and what needs to be involved in achieving that goal.*

### Other People Are Reading

## Strengths

* + The "S" in SWOT stands for strengths, internal factors that are favorable to achieving the desired outcome. Strengths may include product patents, trade secrets, exclusive access to resources and company reputation.

## Weaknesses

* + The "W" in SWOT stands for weaknesses, internal factors that may interfere with achieving the desired result, including high overhead, lack of supplier relationships and poor reputation.

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## Opportunities

* + The "O" in SWOT stands for Opportunities; these are external factors that may help in reaching the desired outcome, including new technologies, increased customer demand and loosened regulations.

## Threats

* + The "T" in SWOT stands for threats, external factors that may hinder the achievement of the desired goal; these include changes in customer preferences, intense competition in a particular market and governmental regulations.

## Using the SWOT Analysis

* + Once a SWOT analysis has been completed, it should be reviewed to determine whether the desired outcome is feasible. Management should focus on how to capitalize on each strength and opportunity, and how to mitigate each weakness and threat