**Case Study**

**“Repositioning Libraries and Librarians**

**for the Next Generation”**

**Facilitated by Peter E. Sidorko**

# “Repositioning Libraries and Librarians for the Next Generation”

# Case Study

# *The Background*

Atlantis University Library (AUL) in the landlocked Kingdom of Atlantis is the premier academic library of the country. It serves a student population of approximately 14,000 plus a 3,000 strong faculty. The Library takes pride of its 400 years of history and the rich collection of Atlantisian materials, which go back to the early twelfth century. By decree of the King, however, the mountainous country had been closed to the outside world since the 1960s to maintain the purity of Atlantisian culture. Intellectuals and politicians protested against the decree but they were all put to jail. The Atlantisians had to accept the fact and keep their heads down. As a result of the “close door” policy, the country lags behind in development and AUL cannot compare with other academic libraries in the neighbouring countries, in terms of resources, facilities and technology. A visiting librarian shared with her friends in private (she signed a non-disclosure undertaking before the visit) that “the library building is in derelict, books are shabby, electronic resources are very limited and technology is in the 1990s. Its print collection of Atlantisian materials is great and well catalogued though”.

In the country there are 4 other universities. All of the libraries in these universities provide a similar range of services from acquisitions to cataloguing to collection development to reference. Some collaboration has taken place among the 5 university libraries (who have formed an alliance called the Kingdom of Atlantis Libraries Alliance - KoALA) but this has been largely limited to interlibrary lending and as a forum for librarians to share experience and expertise. Proposals for collaborating in other areas of library work such as joint purchasing and sharing of catalogue records were once tabled but none of them could go through upon the objection of AUL. Inevitably AUL was seen by other university libraries as not collaborative, and sometimes even snobbish.

# *The Change*

February 29 was a day that the Atlantisians should remember. It started as just another day for the Atlantisians - people lived quiet lives as usual. At 10:34 am, however, TV and radio programmes were interrupted by a special announcement: the King was dead at the age of 87 after ruling the country for 60 years.

The country was back to “normal” when the Crown Prince ascended to the throne after the 7-day mourning. The new King, who was in his 30s, did not follow the same path of his grandfather and decided to open up the country gradually. Other countries welcomed the change, particularly in developing social, cultural and economic relationships with a country which has one of the world’s largest shale gas reserves. They sent delegations to Atlantis, bringing with them all sorts of gifts, proposals and ideas. All of a sudden and like other premier research institutions in the country, AUL received friends from all over the world, together with tens of thousands of books, mostly in English, a language that staff members were not familiar with.

Almost at the same time, the AUL Librarian who had been on the helm for more than four decades retired. His successor, Oliver Oneoneo, was an Atlantisian librarian educated in the United States. He had served in several senior positions in American academic libraries before accepting the invitation of the President of the University to serve his motherland. Specifically, he was asked to re-build the AUL into a library for the next generation.

On the first day Oneoneo reported duty he told the President that he needed to re-vitalize the staffing of AUL in order to build the next generation library. To this end additional funding allocation from the University, or a 35% increase of the annual staffing budget, was essential. Regrettably the President told him that the oil money had yet to come in and funding conditions of the University remained very tight. Nevertheless, he was promised a 10% increase if the staffing proposal was approved by the University within the next two weeks, when the annual budgeting exercise came to an end.

Upon returning to his office, Oneoneo was absorbed by the staffing profile he got from the Deputy Librarian just before meeting the President. He wondered what he could do with the promised 10% increase to improve the library’s staffing, which could be summarized in the following statements:

1. No. of library staff: 64;
2. Average age: 45 years old;
3. Ratio between professional and support staff: 1 in 4
4. Staff with university degree: 36
5. Staff proficient in foreign languages: none;
6. No. of years in library: average > 10 years;
7. Work performance: very good on average; and
8. No. of requests for transferring to other library departments: nil.

The Deputy Librarian also told him that staff members are hardworking, self-motivated, loyal and committed to the library.

# *The Task*

Your team represents Oneoneo and the senior management of the University Library. Like the other Units of the University, you are asked to submit a 3-year staffing ***proposal*** that will help AUL to develop into a next-generation library. The ***proposal*** should start with the rationale for making the changes and actions to be taken in upgrading the staffing over the next three years, subject to human resources constraints. Otherwise the 10% staff budget increase will not be approved. Your team has 10 minute to present the ***proposal***.

# *The Instructions*

* Your table of participants is a planning team comprising Oliver Oneoneo and his library’s senior management.
* Your team needs to develop a plan and deliver it as a presentation to the University Management Team. You will need to be able to explain why your suggestions are the best ones. You should aim to produce a series of ***concise recommendations in dot point form*** using flip charts or a Powerpoint presentation.
* To insure that you develop the best solution, your group should first brainstorm the issues.
* A spokesperson for each of the teams will need to give a presentation to the whole group on what their group decided should be done and why. Laptops will be provided for this purpose, if necessary. The case study presentations will take place on Monday afternoon starting at 2 pm. Each team will have a **maximum** of 10 minutes for their presentation including time for questions.
* The case study is designed for you to have some fun as well as have the opportunity to deal with a range of current topical issues. Try to step outside personal and professional boundaries for the purpose of this exercise.
* Peter and YC will be available for you to ask questions and seek advice or further guidelines.
* As is true with most casework, there is no one correct set of recommendations. Your aim however, is to produce a team response with solid reasoning.
* Some formal time has been set aside to allow your team to work on the case study. You are encouraged to make use of less formal times as well such as breakfast, lunch and dinner times. It is expected that you should need no more than 3 hours of group work to complete your assignment.
* During the course of your case study work, take the opportunity to think about the material that has been presented during the Institute to inform your decisions about what are the most important challenges and their solutions.