

Strategic Uses of Evaluation and Performance Measurement

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Introduction

This paper examines aspects of strategic planning and management and explores ways in which evaluation can be integrated with the wider context.

The terms *policy* and *strategy* are closely related, and in some cases are used interchangeably. I follow Allen & Wilson (1997) and distinguish between them.

Policies provide the principles for courses of action.

Strategies define the means of implementing courses of action.

A more formal definition of strategy can be found in the literature of management.

Strategy is the *direction* and *scope* of an organisation over the *long term*: which achieves *advantage* for the organisation through its configuration of *resources* within a changing *environment*, to meet the needs of *markets* and to fulfil *stakeholder* expectations. (Johnson & Scholes, 1999, p.10).

This definition sounds as if it were designed for commercial organisations, but the same basic concepts apply in the kind of public sector and not-for-profit organisations for which many librarians work. We all have stakeholders, and like it or not, libraries and information services of all kinds are competing with other units and organisations to meet the needs of markets, which can be defined as potential users. We can readily see that this definition of strategy adapts to 'organisations' such as local and national governments.

Note the words highlighted in *italics*. It is something of a paradox that strategy is generally defined as "long term" when the political reality is all about the short term.

Strategy operates at several levels, and we can distinguish at least three of these.

Organisational strategy is about the overall purpose and scope of the organisation.

Business strategy is about competing successfully in a specific market. A **business unit** is part of the organisation for which there is a distinct external market for goods or services. In the public sector, the equivalent of a business unit might be a part of the organisation or service for which there is a distinct client group.

Operational strategy is all about the deployment of people and other resources to deliver the higher-level strategies.

Most librarians operate at the level of the operational strategy, and so it is not surprising that most of the literature of performance measurement is at this level. All the manuals and standards are directed at defining and using evaluation at the operational level. There are examples of ways of taking a more holistic view. In 1995 we read:

'Performance indicators are designed to give a fully rounded picture. Therefore any judgement [of a library] must take indicators from each aspect of performance [since] these aspects are interrelated.' (Joint Funding Councils, 1995)

More recently the balanced scorecard technique has become recognised as a more universal statement of the same concept and has had some application in libraries (Pienaar and Penzhorn, 2000). This paper is not a review of methods, but the added value approach also has some potential for evaluating achievement of strategies. (Karunaratne, 1978; Ford, 1989; Hudson, 2000; MacEachern, 2001).

As has been pointed out (Willemse, 1995; Cullen 1998), operational indicators are usually defined by librarians, and their acceptance by funding bodies at higher levels has been difficult to achieve. I believe that the reason for this is that we have not been very good at relating library activities to the higher-level strategies - business or organisational. I want to explore ways in which we might do that.

What then are the strategic uses of evaluation and performance measurement? It is clear that they can be used in two ways: firstly to assess the achievement of strategy and secondly to influence the development of strategy.

Assessing strategic outcomes

First, then, some examples of strategy to illustrate how evaluation and performance measurement is, or might be, used to assess the achievement of strategies. These come from a number of levels. In decreasing order of generalisation, they are

- Supranational
- National - government
- Library sectors
- National

- Public
- Educational
- Specialist

I will take them in reverse order.

Specialist libraries

Specialist libraries, for example those serving a business, or a health care facility, are usually well integrated with their parent organisations, and a lot of work has been done on the value of the library's contribution. There is a useful compilation of review papers that give some pointers (Feeney and Grieves, 1994).

Educational libraries

An excellent example of a well thought out performance measurement structure integrated with library goals and mission was described at the first Northumbria Conference (Willemse, 1995). However, that paper did not explicitly describe the links between the library's activity and the mission of the university it served.

Typically a university librarian is presented with an outward facing mission statement like the following:

The University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning within an environment of internationally recognised research. (University of Bristol, 1998, p. 1)

This is translated into a series of strategic goals or objectives, which give some clues as to how we might go about fulfilling the mission. What are the indicators of performance that enable the librarians to determine whether they are contributing effectively to the university strategy?

'Unless we can show how a library contributes or does not contribute...to the educational life of its market, the library manager is inevitably in a weak position *vis à vis* his academic colleagues' (Xavier, 2000, p. 27).

My suggestions for evaluating the library's contribution to the university strategy are shown in Table #1.

Table 1: Library performance related to university objectives

University Strategic Objectives	Library Objectives	Activities (examples)	Outcomes (???)
Enhance its status as an internationally recognised research university	Maintain and improve status as a research library	Build extension to main library. Adequate funding to support academic research programme	Research collections attract staff and students. External funding received
Provide excellent teaching at all levels	Meet expanding demands for provision of support of teaching and learning	Electronic reserve collection of teaching materials. Targeted services for part-time and distant learners.	Happy students Alumni donate money for library
Produce graduates who are adaptable and alert to the benefits of lifelong learning		Students trained in information skills	Alumni reporting value of information skills training
Give greater emphasis to growth in postgraduate student numbers, particularly research students	Improve services to post-graduate students	Extended opening hours in vacations	Happy graduate students
Maintain a balance of basic, strategic and contract research	Improve capability to support research	Adequate budget to maintain access to journals	Happy academic staff
Promote interdisciplinary research both within itself and with other institutions	Co-operate with other libraries to support research	Free access for external researchers. Co-operative acquisitions with other local universities	Happy researchers
Recruit and retain excellent staff and improve their effectiveness through training and development	Recruit and retain excellent staff and improve their effectiveness	Programme of transferable skills training for all library staff Increased involvement in development and research	Competent and adaptable library staff
Optimise the use of resources to improve the working environment and range of services for students and staff	Seek ways to improve efficiency and co-operate with other sections of the University to develop information services	Close links with Computing Service and Education Technology Service to develop managed learning environment and hybrid library	Services perceived as 'joined up' by users
Improve the quality of the environment for the people who live and work in the University and for the wider community	Improve working environment	Ergonomic workstations for all Air conditioning fixed	Happy library staff and users
Achieve a level of income, which will allow for balanced growth, adequate capital investment and provide a sound financial base	Increase ability to generate income	Level of income achieved	Happy administrators

One of the strategies of the university is to maintain its profile as a research-intensive university. Can we demonstrate at all that anything to do with library services has any impact on the research quality? In the United Kingdom every 4 or 5 years there is a Research Assessment Exercise, in which publicly funded universities are required to take part. The outcome of this exercise leads to a series of scores: each university is assessed on the research quality in each of its subjects researched, and for a period of 4 to 5 years after the exercise the government funding to those universities is determined in part by the results of the exercise. By adding the scores on each subject together for each university, we can get an overall score for the research quality of the university. We can then plot this against almost any input or output relating to library services. Whether by chance or not it turns out that there is a clear correlation between use of the ISI databases and the research assessment scores (East, 1997). There is then perhaps an argument to use this indicator strategically to justify the continued subscription to ISI databases or to suggest, if they don't already subscribe, that

funds should be made available in order to boost the chances of a university in gaining better research scores.

Public libraries

A survey of UK public libraries has shown that a majority were engaged in community development work, but in only a minority of cases was there a formal strategy (McKrell and others, 1997). The majority were monitoring their effectiveness in this area, but there is not enough detail in the survey to show how this is being done: a list of comments gives pointers to places where further enquiry would be fruitful. A more complete example was described at the second Northumbria Conference (Giappiconi, 1998). I have extracted some information to illustrate my general point (Table 2). Those who have visited the public library at Fresnes (France) will appreciate that Thierry Giappiconi has certainly been very effective in attracting funds to develop library services there.

Table 2: Public policy and the public library (adapted from Giappiconi, 1998)

Community Strategic Objective	Library Goal (example)	Performance Indicator (example)	Outcome (???)
Encourage reading and development of the book and literature	Support, stimulate and extend school work in reading training	Number of books borrowed per user aged 6-14 years	Literate population

National Libraries

Some national libraries are examples of a rare breed: libraries which are not part of larger organizations, but whose purpose in life is just to exist. It is not quite so simple, because they do have to get funding from government sources. The Library of Congress has become a national library by stealth: it was designed as a library for the United States Congress, but its mission reveals the truth:

The Library's mission is to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future preservation (quoted in Davies, 2000, p. 167).

The Library adopted a strategic plan in 1997, but the *Annual Report of the Librarian* for 1998 does not give the main headings of the strategy, nor does it specifically identify achievements related to the plan. There are a few numbers that can indicate how well the overall mission is being met (Table 3).

Table 3: Achieving the Library of Congress mission (compiled from Library of Congress, 1999)

Mission	Measure	Staff	Transactions/staff
Make resources available to Congress	>560,000 requests	714	Approx. 800
Make resources available to American people	> 1.1 million enquiries	765	>1440
Make resources useful	>2 million items used		>2625
Sustain & preserve universal collection	Ca 3.8 million items acquired, discarded, preserved, etc.	1189	Ca. 3200

Table 4: British Library strategic directions (adapted from British Library, 2001)

Strategy	Possible Performance Indicators (examples)
<i>Collection building strategy</i>	
Ensure improved coverage of the UK national published archive	% of UK publications available
Increase collecting of digital materials	% of UK digital publications available
Develop greater collaboration with other libraries	% of non-UK publications available nationally
<i>Access strategy</i>	
Make the library's collections more accessible to users	% of searches of OPAC that find items that are in the catalogue
Extend opportunities for enjoyment	% of visitors who enjoy

One strategic aim that is mentioned in the Annual Report is that determining costs of processes is a high priority, so we might expect future reports to show some scrutiny of the numbers in the final column.

There is no question that the British Library is meant to be a national library. It is now in the middle of a period of rapid change and strategic development. It has long been known as an international research library of world renown with major collections available to anyone who needs to use them. It is perhaps interesting to look back at an earlier strategy. The National Lending Library (NLL), now part of the British Library, was originally established to increase the availability of scientific and technical literature in the UK. The strategy to achieve this had two dimensions: coverage, and speed of supply. There is some independent evidence of the impact that the Library had on the speed of supply. In 1958-59, the median supply time for interlibrary loans to UK university libraries was 10 days (Mackenzie, 1960). This was before the NLL had got into its stride. Fifteen years later, by which time the NLL had become the major supplier of interlibrary loans,

the median supply time had come down to 6 days (Barker, 1974).

The British Library has recently issued a document outlining its new strategic directions, defining its main and enabling strategies with illustrative outcomes. Table 4 gives some examples of headings in the strategy and my suggestions as to how these might be measured.

I should stress that these are only illustrations. The Library commissioned a study to clarify relationships with university libraries, which made some recommendations about the kind of performance regime that would be required (Office for Public Management, 2001). The strategy to increase co-operation with other institutions has been made operational, in part, through the Co-operation and Partnership Programme and funding is available to develop co-operative programmes with public libraries and academic libraries. The resonance with government policies (see below) is shown through the initial call for proposals, which was to work with public libraries to widen access to collections and to support lifelong learning.

Table 5: Information policy values in action

Policy values (Overman and Cahill, 1990, reported in Rowlands, 1997b)	Government information principles (from Carbo, 1997)
Access and freedom: people need to be well informed	Convenient access to all government information;
Privacy	Services accessible to all persons
Openness: the right to know about decision making processes	Safeguard privacy
Usefulness: fit for purpose	Education and training in rights and responsibilities
Cost and benefit: reconciling commercial interests with the public interest	Ensure quality, integrity and appropriate preservation and archiving
Secrecy and security	No charge on the superhighway widest possible cost-effective dissemination
Ownership: intellectual property rights, and reconciling commercial interest with the needs of individuals	Ensure security
	Private sector to provide value-added information and services
	Consultation with all interest groups

National strategies

Now, to turn to the context within which libraries operate: national and supra-national information policies and strategies. We must ask the question - What are strategies at this level for? Are libraries and information services self-evidently Good Things, so that the purpose of a national strategy is to nurture and sustain them? After all, "...survival...is itself an index to majority opinion" (Orwell, 1947), and libraries have certainly survived. Perhaps we can get some clues from looking at how things work now, whatever the situation may have been in the past.

It is my impression, looking from outside, that there have always been visions of national information policies in the USA. Perhaps this is because there has been for a long time now a government agency, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, responsible for advising the President and Congress on policy. Overman and Cahill (1990) described the values that underpinned US Federal activities in the information policy area over several decades. We can illustrate the application of these values by reference to the Clinton-Gore administration's vision of the "information superhighway". Carbo (1998) has described the development of the policy on the National Information Infrastructure, giving the strategic overview. The 'Government information principles' she describes map so neatly on to the values (Table 5), that it looks as if the original analysis by Overman and Cahill did indeed identify the fundamental values.

So, the strategy for developing the US National Information Infrastructure is underpinned by some fundamental values. These values can be considered to reflect the interaction between two dimensions of information policy. One dimension is about the flow of information, and the other is about value. These

dimensions can be illustrated in a 2 x 2 matrix (Table 6).

Returning to the strategy for developing the US National Information Infrastructure, the five fundamental goals of the strategy can be summarised as to:

1. Make information technology work to advance American values: this covers the top half of the matrix - mainly Citizenship, but also cultural identity in the Protectionism box.
2. Use information technology to build stronger communities: Citizenship.
3. Enable everyone to participate: the left hand side, Citizenship and Consumer Choice.
4. Ensure that everyone takes responsibility: Citizenship and Protectionism
5. Maintain world leadership in developing the Information Superhighway: Competitive Advantage.

Supra-national

The European Community has had a number of strategies related to libraries and information services over the years, and Oppenheim (1998) has provided a useful summary, albeit now outdated. The latest initiative is to promote the development and use of European digital content on the global networks - E-content. This will focus on the market implementation of Europe's content potential and not on the technological aspects of the global networks. The strategic objectives are to:

- improve access to and use of public sector information
- enhance content production in a multilingual and multicultural environment
- increase dynamism in the digital content market

Table 6: Mapping the information policy construct (from Rowlands, 1997a)

Information as a public good	
<p>INFORMATION FOR CITIZENSHIP <i>open, unrestricted information flows</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free public libraries • Internet • Freedom of information • Access to democracy • Advice services • Legal deposit 	<p>INFORMATION PROTECTIONISM <i>closed, restricted information flows</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data privacy • censorship • national security • commercial secrecy • cultural identity • national champions
Information as a tradable commodity	
<p>INFORMATION FOR CONSUMER CHOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freedom of the press • the mass media • universal service • public-private synergy • charged library services • infotainment 	<p>INFORMATION FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intranet • competitive intelligence • patents • intellectual property rights • market research • consultancy

Table 7: Information indicators for the nation-state (extracted from Berman & Phillips, 2001)

Element of Social Quality	Input	Process	Outcomes	Impact
Empowerment	Information resources available: networks, public access points, web sites, etc.	Accessibility of information sources and participation in networking.	Achievement of informational competencies and capabilities. Use of information in daily life.	Self-reported, subjective evaluations of personal empowerment and quality of life achieved through use of information resources.

Overall, the strategy seems to fit into the matrix already described above (Table 6) but the difficulties in evaluating it are clear. Taking the first of the objectives, how do we measure access to public sector information now? Can we operationalise that concept to define a metric that will still be valid after that information has been made available electronically? The concept of “improving access” has more than one dimension. One dimension means, “increasing the range of information that is available on the Internet” and that is relatively easy to quantify. Another dimension is “the time taken to get information”. Do we have a benchmark now for this metric, and when we have digitised everything, how will we normalise the metric to allow for the fact that not everyone has access to the Internet from his or her home?

Social quality

The analysis so far has still failed to answer the question, “What are high level strategies for”? The concept of social quality may be useful. This has been defined as:

‘The extent to which citizens are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potential.’ (Beck and others, 1997, page 3)

The dimensions of social quality show how a government might adopt policy aims that were intended to increase social quality.

Socio-economic security: the way in which essential needs of citizens are fulfilled by systems and structures for welfare provision.

Social inclusion – the principles of quality and equity and their structural causes.

Social cohesion – the processes surrounding social networks and infrastructures.

Empowerment – enabling citizens to develop their full potential.

Since some of these dimensions are potentially mutually in opposition in regard to outcomes, it is necessary to use them as a sort of balanced scorecard involving all processes and outcomes to get an overall view. Berman & Phillips (2001) have applied this model to the information context and have illustrated the concept with some information indicators at various levels. Table 7 gives the framework for the Empowerment element.

The UK government and its agencies have been quite active in supporting libraries recently and their policy agenda can be interpreted in terms of the dimensions of social quality (Table 8).

The initiatives for public libraries are steaming ahead, and keeping track of all these initiatives is a major task for a non-specialist. One of the more

Table 8: Social quality and UK library and information strategies

Dimension	Strategies relevant to libraries
Socio-economic security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Grid for Learning (networking schools) • People’s Network (networking public libraries) • SuperJANET (networking higher education) • New Opportunities Fund (digitisation of content) • Distributed National Electronic Resource
Social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National curriculum - key information skills for children • IT training for teachers • IT training for public library staffs • eLib - Netskills training materials (for librarians)
Social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of information legislation • Electronic delivery of government services
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most of the above

Table 9: Achieving the People’s Network – UK indicators (Peoples’ Network, 2001)

Indicator	Value at 16 May 2001
<i>Network infrastructure</i>	
Libraries with internet access	62%
<i>Training and staffing</i>	
Libraries which provide some form of internet training to customers	93%
<i>Content and service development</i>	
Library catalogue remotely accessible to customers	33%
Enquiry services available remotely to customers	55%
Libraries subscribing to e-journals or e-data services	53%
<i>Networked services policy</i>	
Libraries with electronic collections development policy	20%
Libraries with Internet filtering software	64%
Internet charging policy employed	86%
Partnerships and collaborative working Libraries with commercial partnerships to deliver ICT access	24%
Libraries involved in collaborative digital content creation	78%

unusual features of this group of strategies is that evaluation of achievement is ongoing. There is a database of indicators on the web, NETbase, where we have measures and indicators of performance relating to network infrastructure, training and staffing, content and service developments, networked services policy and collaborative working. Table 9 illustrates some of the relevant indicators.

It is perhaps significant that the director of the network project is Chris Batt, who was a member of the Public Libraries Research Group, one of the groups that had a lot of influence on the development of a performance measurement culture in UK libraries.

Public library standards

In carrying these policies through to realisation, the present UK government, while giving the kind of political support to public libraries that has been lacking for many years, has at the same time increased the degree of accountability to central government. The latest expression of this has been the publication of a set of standards, examples of which are given in table 10. These are explicitly related to the social inclusion agenda.

Table 10: Standards for UK public libraries (extracted from Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2001)

Strategic objectives	Measure or indicator	Standard to be achieved by 2004
Convenient and suitable access	% of households living within n miles of a static library	85% within 2miles (rural) 100 % within 1 mile (inner London)
Electronic access	% of libraries with access to on-line catalogues	100% of libraries open >10 hours per week
Ensure user satisfaction	Electronic work stations per thousand population % of users reporting success in obtaining specific book	0.6 65%
Provide choice in books etc	% of users reporting success in gaining information from a search or enquiry	75%
	Quality index	To be devised
	Items added per year per 1000 population Time taken to replenish lending stock	216 8.5 years

Table 11: Organisational strategies (adapted from Johnson & Scholes, 1999)

Type of organisation	Dominant dimensions	Characteristics of strategy
Professional service	Cultural Political	Negotiation and compromise to accommodate conflicting interests
“Muddling through”	Incremental	Strongly influenced by groups with control over critical resources Routines embedded in history
Public sector	Political Enforced choice	Imposed by external forces Restricted choice
“Externally dependent”		Groups dealing with external environment have most influence Political activity within organisation and between external agencies

Influencing the strategic process

This analysis of the higher-level strategies gives us the framework to help in the second strategic use of evaluation and performance measurement: to influence the development of strategy. There is a spectrum of strategy development, which can be described as ranging from systematic to chaotic (Johnson & Scholes, 1999).

- Logical incremental
- Rational command
- Muddling through
- Externally dependent

Two of these are relevant to most librarians (Table 11).

Libraries are typically professional services embedded within public sector organisations, so it is easy to see how in this context there may be conflicts between the different levels of strategy.

For example:

- Government policy: commitment to lifelong learning and social inclusion
- University strategy: increase number of students on part time and distance learning masters' level courses
- Library services: conflicts arise because part time students need longer loan periods than full time students

Policy makers and strategists

In order to influence strategy we need to identify the policy makers and the strategists.

A useful typology was set out by Strachan & Rowlands (1997), which can be adapted to allow for a distinction between policy and strategy (Table 12).

Table 12: Policy makers and strategists (adapted from Strachan & Rowlands, 1997)

Policy-maker/ Strategist	Role	Information sources
Legislator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make decisions • set policy direction • monitor issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public opinion, constituents, press, lobby groups • political parties, system outputs (e.g. from Commissions, bureaucracy, etc) • debates in legislature, policy papers, expert opinion, etc
Bureaucrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop strategic options • implement strategies • review strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system outputs • commissioned work • policy papers, expert opinion, analysis of indicators, data and trends, research data etc
Interest group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop issues • advocate policy and strategy • lobbying/agenda setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • published data and indicators • research results in the literature • own/commissioned research

The same authors have identified factors affecting use of information by policy-makers, summarised as:

BARRIERS TO INFORMATION TRANSFER AND USE:

- situational - operational data not directly relevant or in suitable format; too much; time and cost constraints;
- cognitive - technical language; failure to recognise importance; complexity of issues;
- scientific - probabilistic nature of information makes policy making difficult; no research in area; difficult to perform experiments to produce information that can reliably be generalised to policy problems.

FACTORS PROMOTING INFORMATION TRANSFER AND USE:

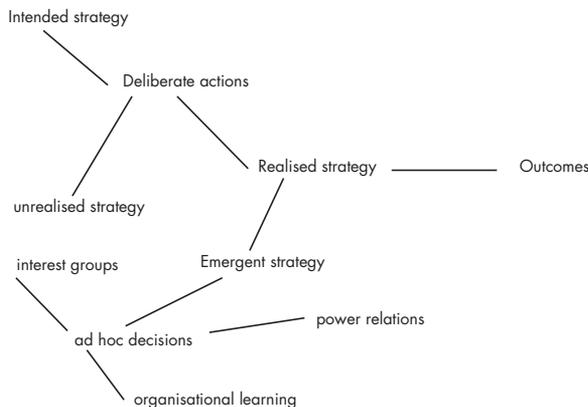
- policy makers have a preference for:
 - information from research funded, conducted or commissioned by themselves;
 - information which accords for their intuitive feel for a problem;
 - interpersonal sources over print-based;

clearly presented materials that avoid technical jargon and make limited use of statistical quantification (Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993); synthesised and evaluated research which includes a discussion of the policy implications of the results (Nelson et al., 1987).

There are some examples that can be cited of librarians seeking to influence the strategic process: one successful (Carmel, 1995) and one that has some potential (SCONUL and HCLRG, 2000).

Why bother?

The importance of getting involved can be demonstrated by an illustration of the policy making process (after Mintzberg, 1994).



It is clear that if the outcomes are evaluated only in terms of the intended strategy and deliberate actions, then the services being evaluated may be in danger of being perceived to be performing badly. In the organisational context, a library service is clearly an interest group. It is desirable therefore that both are recognised by the library managers in order to influence the strategy and to ensure that the evaluation relates to the emergent strategy.

Synthesis/way forward

Since most libraries and information services actually serve multiple constituencies, it is important that strategies address these multiple needs, and that evaluation should be both multifaceted and holistic, involving as many of those affected by the strategies as possible. This immediately shows that evaluation must be both quantitative and qualitative; the balanced scorecard offers a convenient tool that encompasses both aspects.

It is in the interests of librarians to have as large a group of potential users as possible, and as many capable users as possible. When evaluating information strategies, we need to ask who will benefit, who has access to services but is disadvantaged, and who is excluded? How do these outcomes square with those intended originally? (Eisenschitz, 1997).

In order to achieve our goals there is no alternative to getting involved in the development of organisational strategies. In attempting to influence strategy, using whatever evaluation and performance data is appropriate, it is important to recognise that there are three interpretations of the policy-making process (Rowlands and Turner, 1997).

- Rational actor - based on perfect knowledge, explicit goals, cold analysis, objective, impartial, fair.
- Bureaucratic imperative - influenced by values and beliefs, organisational context, uncertainty, short term, incremental.
- Garbage can - choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in

which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, decision-makers looking for work!

At the evaluation stage, it helps to assume that policy-making is a rational process. In terms of writing history, long after the event it becomes clear that the garbage can model is always present, with elements of rationality and bureaucracy thrown in, and that the balance between them shifts with time and place.

Finally, the process of policy making has been described in terms that could be used to describe strategic evaluation, and indeed the whole practice of performance measurement:

“...a primeval soup [in which] ideas float around, confront one another and combine. The soup changes in a process of natural selection, survival, demise and recombination.” (Kingdon, 1984, p. 104)

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