Establishing Governance for Project and Service Management

Jason S. Glenn
University Libraries
Carnegie Mellon University,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US,
jglenn@andrew.cmu.edu

Kenneth L. Rose
University Libraries
Carnegie Mellon University,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US,
kr2e@andrew.cmu.edu

ABSTRACT

Recently, the Carnegie Mellon University Libraries began to implement a new strategic plan, which greatly increased the number, complexity, and scope of new projects and services sponsored by the Libraries. Historically, initiation, planning, and management of projects and services within Libraries lacked both codified processes and uniform management tools. Libraries' leadership quickly realized that the rapid increase in the size of the unit's project and service footprints had rendered such an unstructured approach to project and service management untenable. In response to leadership's concerns, the Libraries' Digital Strategy team launched an effort to establish a structure of governance around project and service management within the University Libraries. This paper will review the selection process for new project and service portfolio management tools, as well as the effort to define project initiation and management and service transition guidelines, with the intent of providing a framework for establishing project and service management governance in similar organizations.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Information systems • Information systems applications

KEYWORDS

Project Management, Service Management

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1 Introduction

In November 2015, Carnegie Mellon University released a 10-year strategic plan, "Strategic Plan 2025" [1], which includes the goal of creating "An Interconnected Network for Research and Creativity." A strategic recommendation in service of this goal is to "Create a 21st century library that serves as a cornerstone of world-class research and scholarship." As a result CMU Libraries began the work of developing library faculty not simply as professionals with expertise in traditional librarianship, but as information specialists with a charge to partner with other members of the campus community in the pursuit of research, teaching, and learning. In addition, the Libraries set out to [2]

- Collaborate with peer institutions to provide coordinated access to a global collection of information resources.
- Steward the evolving scholarly record and champion new forms of scholarly communication.
- Be recognized globally as a leader in the development of the scholarly information ecosystem.

Over time this effort greatly increased the number, complexity, and scope of new IT projects and services sponsored by the Libraries. Historically, however, the initiation, planning, and management of projects and services within the CMU Libraries lacked both codified processes and uniform management tools. As a result, the Libraries' Digital Strategy team launched an effort to establish a structure of governance around project and service management within the division, with the intent that this new structure would govern not only IT projects, but Library projects as a whole. This paper will review the selection process for new project and service portfolio management tools, review newly established project initiation and management and service transition guidelines, and suggest a framework for establishing project and service management governance in similar organizations.

2 Background

2.1 Project Management/Project Portfolio Management (PM/PPM)

Prior to 2019 CMU Libraries used a combination of Google Forms/Sheets and Drupal as tools for project portfolio

management. Library faculty and staff could submit project proposals via Google Forms. Once a project was approved it was added to an “active projects” Google Sheet. This document was used by the Projects Board to review and update the status of projects. Libraries used a website powered by Drupal to document the status of projects for library faculty and staff. Project teams used a wide variety of tools to facilitate project management. The established project management/portfolio management “ecosystem” called for a lot of manual work since there was little to no integration between its tools and applications. The Library Leadership Team called on us to evaluate PM/PPM tools and come back with a recommendation. We selected Smartsheet, a third-party project management, portfolio management, and work flow management tool. The enterprise version offered SSO integration, which was a key selection criterion, an affordable cost per user license, and a reasonable minimum number of licenses. While multiple tools were capable of providing a useful PM/PPM/SM platform, Smartsheet was the “right size” for the organization when considering the feature set and overall cost.

2.2 Service Management

Although the University Libraries have always offered a robust service catalog to the campus community and members of the public, the documentation and management processes for these services have been ad hoc in nature, historically. Furthermore, within the past ten years the number of internal and external digital and web services has increased significantly. Digital Strategy’s need to efficiently manage the IT and human resources associated with these new digital service offerings highlighted the need for a more formalized service management solution. Initially, the Digital Strategy team developed an in-house, Drupal-based solution for managing the IT service catalog. During the time that Smartsheet was being evaluated for use as the Libraries’ project and project portfolio management tool it was also evaluated as a potential tool to manage the IT service catalog. At the conclusion of this review the team determined that Smartsheet would be a suitable platform for managing the service catalog as well. From that point on the goal was to establish a “single source of truth” that would allow project managers, service managers and owners, and library leadership to track projects from initiation to completion. An additional goal was to provide a service transition tracking mechanism for those projects with services as deliverables. Future plans include using Smartsheet to document the Libraries’ service portfolio as well.

3 Implementation

The overarching goal of this exercise was to produce a “single source of truth” for all of the University Libraries’ projects and services. Using Smartsheet, the University Libraries has established a system to formalize the review and management of projects and services. Library staff and faculty can submit project proposals through a Smartsheet form.

Upon submission, the system sends an auto-reply stating the proposal was received. The request is automatically added to a sheet labeled, “Proposed Projects Ledger”. Library leadership reviews all project proposals on the proposed projects sheet and designates each project “Approved”, “Rejected”, or “On Hold”. Leadership can add notes to explain the reasoning for rejecting a project and/or the next steps and timeline for revisiting a project that is placed on hold. If a deliverable for an approved project is a service, the Libraries’ service manager coordinates with the project manager to identify the service owner, draft the service definition, draft a service level agreement, document a service transition plan, and update the service portfolio accordingly.

The system facilitates standard processes for project team collaboration as well. Smartsheet has PM/collaboration functionality built into it. Licensed users can add faculty and staff project team members to projects within the system as collaborators. Collaborators can edit, update and add content to project sheets, providing transparency to all project team members and sponsors.

The implementation team created an active projects dashboard that is available via a persistent URL. It provides a high-level view of in-flight projects. In addition, key milestones and deliverables are surfaced to the active projects dashboard. Faculty and staff can drill down to specific project sheets as well as tasks assigned to them across all sheets. This helps to provide transparency for all members of the organization, with respect to active projects. While project teams are still free to use whatever tools they like for project management purposes, each team is responsible for updating project milestones within Smartsheet. This preserves the flexibility, with respect to project management tools, that library faculty and staff are used to, while creating a built-in incentive for project teams to leverage the project management capability of the centralized Smartsheet system.

Once a project has reached its conclusion, information about that project is recorded in a sheet labeled, “Project Outcomes Ledger”. This sheet tracks delivered projects, delivered services, and failed projects. If a deliverable for a project is a service, the service catalog is updated accordingly.

Figure 1 illustrates the implemented project workflow.

Figure 1: Project Workflow

4 Lessons Learned

Simply implementing a PM/PPM tool and making it available to the organization is not enough to create organizational change related to project management. Given this fact, the implementation team garnered several lessons from this exercise that can be applied to similar efforts at other organizations. When selecting a PM/PPM tool:

- (i) Start with a clean slate, exploring multiple options while acknowledging the organizational limitations or constraints.
- (ii) The tools chosen should facilitate the organization's processes; not the other way around.
- (iii) Document the organization's desired project approval and service transition workflows first, then evaluate each solution candidate against that model.
- (iv) Organizational buy-in is key. Hence, organizational leaders must champion the chosen solution.

5 Conclusion

Establishing a framework for project and service management can be a challenging task. First the organization must define project initiation and management and service transition guidelines. Having the proper tools in place helps to ensure organizational success as well. The selection process for new project and service portfolio management tools must be guided by the principal that the tool must fit the organization's project and service management processes. The processes should not be modified to fit the tool. The tool the CMU Libraries selected will help to provide the sufficient structure for project management

and service transition that the Libraries need to more efficiently pursue the goals associated with the 2025 strategic recommendation for University Libraries. The process the CMU Libraries used to establish project and service management frameworks and to select a PM/PPM tool can be used to guide similar organizations attempting to formalize project and service portfolio management.

REFERENCES

- [1] Carnegie Mellon University Strategic Plan 2025, <https://www.cmu.edu/strategic-plan/index.html>.
- [2] Carnegie Mellon University Strategic Plan 2025, Strategic Recommendations, Creating a 21st Century Library, <https://www.cmu.edu/strategic-plan/strategic-recommendations/21st-century-library.html>.