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**Success does not equal value**

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*NB This paper refers primarily to work done for the European Parliament 2009-13 and is linked to earlier papers for IFLA and ECPRD conferences and for the 'IFLA Journal' and 'Library Trends'. This paper expresses the personal views of the author and does not represent the official view of the European Parliament or the UN. For convenience, the term 'parliamentary library' was used in the original papers to cover collectively all types of parliamentary library, information and research service, as represented in the IFLA Section, and it is used in the same way here. 'Assistant' refers to the office staff of an individual Member.*

**Part 1. Confronting the myths**

The discussion of parliamentary libraries and their history is mainly amongst professionals and it is founded on an assumption – rarely examined – that parliamentarians need high-quality information services. The existence of this supposed need derives from an Enlightenment ideal of the Member taking decisions on a full-information rational decision-making model. This need is taken as an explanation for the origin of parliamentary library services; service developments can be seen as responses to changing needs; and the need for a library can be projected into infinity. As reported by Cuninghame, to take only one possible source, there is:

"a general acceptance that a modern democratic parliament and modern parliamentarians need library services, research and information services...if they [the parliamentarians] are going to be effective"<sup>1</sup>

But the model can be questioned. At a very practical level, how is it possible for Members to process the information necessary to make fully-informed decisions? If it was possible in the small-state 19th Century (and even that was questioned at the time) how is it possible for more or less the same number of Members to maintain control over the mass of 21st Century regulation and administration? Decision-making by individual Members is surely less systematic, and their use of information a more subtle and complex topic, than the ideal suggests. A limited study of the actual history suggests that the historical importance of the parliamentary library is as part of a necessary myth projecting the modernity<sup>2</sup> of the parliament and the legitimacy of its decisions. The standard narrative of parliamentary library history - that the evolution of parliamentary libraries is a response to the needs of Members - is not supported by the evidence. The evolution of the services over time mostly has its origins in the copying of other parliaments and services, responses to expert opinion (e.g. academics interested in parliamentary reform) and wider professional developments. It has been important for parliaments to project the image of well-informed decision-making, and there were well-intentioned reforms to improve the availability of good information, but we should not confuse the image, and the desire, with the reality. Members generally do not use library services to the extent or in the way that the myth suggests. It has been argued what is probably the strongest parliamentary library in the world makes almost no impact on legislative decisions. So far as is known, no parliamentary library has published strong evidence of its impact on decisions.

The argument is *not* that Members take decisions on an irrational basis or that parliamentary libraries are useless. There are different kinds of rational decision-making and it can be argued that the full-information version is not the most relevant for elected representatives. Equally, the parliamentary library can be doing highly effective work *without* supplying comprehensive high-quality and objective information for every decision by Members. The point is: do we want to continue professional discussions around a myth, or do we want to understand how Members actually work and make a more effective practical contribution to democratic decision-making? For old-established services the myths no doubt have a residual value and both parliament and library can happily maintain them. But those old-established services evolved in a world that no longer exists, and new and developing services cannot simply copy them. It can be argued that the myths serve to protect practical work that is actually of value. Against that, they create risks. If taken literally, they set libraries up to fail and they may lead to misguided development of services. They can demoralize the personnel of libraries where the experience is short of the "ideal" and who might imagine that other services really are different. In any case, the power of the myths is failing. Today, "library" is no longer a strong

signifier of modernity and rational decision-making. And modernity and rational decision-making are themselves losing their power as sources of legitimacy<sup>3</sup>.

Is there a more plausible model for how Members work and make their decisions? The earlier papers suggested an alternative paradigm of Members' information work based on the concept of bounded rationality and, in particular, the work of Gigerenzer on 'fast and frugal' decision-making. This alternative was tentatively proposed more on the basis of elimination than voluminous evidence - 'full-information' decision-making was simply not plausible, so what kind of serious decision-making *was* plausible? There was some backing from close reading of academic research but not a comprehensive set of evidence. Now, substantial additional research evidence can be referenced. In addition to recent work by Ringe on individual Member decision-making in the European Parliament, there is work on the US Congress from the 1980s and earlier, which was not examined for the earlier papers.<sup>4</sup>

## **Part 2. So what? Practical conclusions on informing Members**

If we abandon the myth of full-information decision-making and adopt a more pragmatic view of how Members actually make decisions, then how might this change the practical approach of a parliamentary library? One response is to drop the quasi-academic model and adopt a form of asymmetric strategy. Most parliamentary libraries are not large enough presences in their institutions to be unavoidable. They are likely to be out-delivered by competitors in serving the obvious key players on the obvious current policy priorities. They are unlikely to prevail in internal 'politics' regarding access to decision-making and decision-makers. And they have been too concerned with the formal quality of the information they supply and not enough with raising the quality of information that is actually used.

An asymmetric strategy considers that parliamentary libraries are not short of opportunities to deliver services but they do lack resources. Rather than try to do everything and to take on competitors head-to-head, better to find areas of weak resistance or opportunity where the library's effort can be focused.

One tactic is to follow the unobstructed paths. In big organisations there might always be someone to block or delay a project, for their own good reasons. Libraries seem to excel at fixing on 'essential' projects and keep pushing on these obstructions – but it simply dissipates resources and energy. Better to go round the obstruction, or find something else to do where there is not a blockage. This also ensures continuous movement which brings other strategic benefits.

With limited resources, an asymmetric strategy suggests concentrating resources on some topics rather than aiming for universality. By picking up on topics at an early stage then incrementally building new products on the topic as it moves downstream, the library has the possibility to develop an audience and specialist knowledge (with an impact on reputation) with the least possible investment. The early stages are also when competition is least. Once an issue has been addressed by a formal legislative proposal the leading decision-makers will be overloaded with offers of information. Closer to the point of decision the library may have an impact targeting the second-tier decision-makers and notably 'invested nonexperts'.<sup>5</sup>

Speed of delivery and accessibility of the products are both key. Libraries can move very fast to deliver summaries of quality information or lists of top sources. They can aim to make those products attractive, easy-to-read, concise and constructed to standard formats so that clients can use them easily and quickly. These are all differentiators from academic research and similar competing products. The products should be easy to get hold of and libraries should be creative in the channels they use. The European Parliament Library offers a subscription system to Members but also stocks some shelves in the Members' bar with copies of its latest briefings. It is also important to be fast in developing and testing new products, to stay ahead of competitors who will inevitably seek to copy successful library offerings.

Instead of scattershot attempts to reach all Members, libraries can target the most motivated and the potential multipliers. The market for some in-depth information is probably, at best, a handful of specialist Members. These specialists act as information gatekeepers for other Members so by serving them, the library serves all. But competition to reach these people is strong so the library must adapt to their needs – which might mean offering informal discussions with specialist staff rather than long papers.

The asymmetric approach can be summed up as 'fast, frugal and focused' – in terms of methods and products as well as strategy.

### **Part 3. The new frontier: value**

#### *The case of the European Parliament*

It seems this 'myth' of modernity and rational decision-making that sustained parliamentary libraries was never very powerful in the European Parliament. In recent decades, both the relevance and effectiveness of the Library have been repeatedly challenged by Members and the administration. In the last ten years the service has had a steady increase in demand, a high level of client satisfaction, an effective and even certified approach to quality, and a track record of following best practice and successful innovation. Members again questioned its usefulness in 2011. We should not be surprised by this, as library value for stakeholders does not relate to

“measures of internal library processes such as input and output measures, external perceptions of quality, and satisfaction with library services. Internal, service quality, and satisfaction measures are of great utility to librarians who seek to manage library services and resources, but they may not resonate with institutional leaders”<sup>6</sup>

The demand from Members was for a 'new concept'. The Library's response was to acknowledge that no matter what success we appeared to have, notably with the Assistants of Members, we had failed to demonstrate to Members that we offered value.

We needed to make our value more tangible for Members and/or we needed to change to increase the value we delivered to Members personally. The two things that appeared clear, from some earlier deliberation, were

- Volume of use and client satisfaction are not enough to demonstrate value
- 'Value' in a parliament flows from Members.

The first point has already been discovered by some other libraries

““the mere fact that a library service is being used does not mean that the service makes a difference or has a positive impact on the users.” In addition, input counts, output measures, and satisfaction feedback are not clearly correlated with the success of [the library's host organisation]”<sup>7</sup>

#### *The challenge of value.*

'Value' and 'impact' have become important words in all kinds of library recently, probably under the pressure of austerity programmes but also responding to more tectonic changes – what are libraries for in the digital age? This wider discussion so far seems of limited use for parliamentary libraries. In as far as 'value' is defined it generally relates to the library's contribution to measurable organisational results.<sup>8</sup> Academic libraries, for example, can try to demonstrate the link between their services and research output or examination results; company libraries can try to trace an impact on business decisions with a financial value. This approach hits two problems in parliaments: the measurement of the value of final outputs (e.g. legislation) is problematic; and the library's impact on those final outputs may be very indirect and otherwise hard to trace. So far, we have to work on value without those obvious measures for parliamentary libraries.

If parliamentary libraries have to begin to justify their real value they might consider the case of corporate libraries, which came under that kind of scrutiny much earlier:

While corporate managers “state that they would like libraries to provide quality information, save time, and lower corporate costs, few managers can state the function of the special library within their organization and most have no procedure for measuring library value. More than 60% of managers responsible for evaluating library staff and justifying library budgets did not know the value of their library. A more recent study of executives showed they could not easily identify performance measures that demonstrate library value; 82% did not know their organizations had libraries at all”<sup>9</sup>

Value poses a professional challenge in terms of defining and measuring it. It also poses very practical challenges: first, under-valuation of what the Library already does; and second, change needed to deliver a real increase in value for Members.

#### *Defining value*

Everyone knows what 'value' is - until you come to agree a precise definition. Apart from its broad sense in ordinary language, 'value' has multiple meanings in economics and also philosophy. The word is often used without precisely defining its intended sense, so interpretation of texts is not always straightforward.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Absolute and relative value*

In the European Parliament we believe that the value delivered by the library is under-estimated by Members. This difference in perception is partly explained by some concepts from economics and business.

*Relative value* is of more practical importance than *absolute value*. First, something might have a high absolute value (e.g. water is needed for life) but be in such plentiful supply (water again, at least in Belgium) that its actual value/price is very low. In a situation of apparent information overload and 'free' access to massive quantities of internet information, is it really a surprise that the library is not valued? Private-sector information services also have difficulty persuading clients to pay for what is apparently free elsewhere. Even worse, behavioural economics suggest that "free" produces 'predictably irrational' results.<sup>11</sup> People choose something that is 'free', or has something 'free' added, even when their own preferences and a rational calculation of relative value should lead them to take an alternative.<sup>12</sup> Libraries cost time and effort *in a more tangible way* than searching Google at the desk. So clients tend to choose 'free' Google/Wikipedia rather than risk trying the library – even those clients who know the library should give a better result.

The value of something to a potential buyer is also relative to what they *already* have, and what alternatives are available. The important valuation is not the absolute one but the *additional* value the product would give. As an example, if we assume the first choice in information research is generally *Googlipedia* and in a given research case this meets 75% of the need. Most clients will have this 75% already. If we then assume that there is a beautiful library product that meets 90% of the requirement. The usual library view is that its offer is near-perfect – it has a value of 90%! But in the client's view it is worth a mere 15% - the extra they would gain. And to get their additional 15% they must take a risk, invest in working through the library's service processes, and deal with the extra information. The nett value of the library's product in that case is something less than 15%, possibly even a negative value once time is considered. How often does this need to happen before clients give up on the library, either through their own experience or through reputation?

#### *Information as a commodity*

Much information has become, in economic terms, a commodity – at least in the eyes of some potential clients. By 'commodity' is meant a fungible product – one seen as basically the same, no matter who is the supplier, and competition is therefore primarily on price or convenience of supply. (Sugar or petrol are examples of commodities – you probably don't much care who makes them or where you buy them). Unless you want to compete as a commodity supplier then you must find a way to differentiate your product. As professionals, we understand that all information is not the same and there are levels of quality. But we also know that many (e.g. some staff in Member offices) do not make such clear distinctions. This perception is crucial for the valuation of Library services. If *Googlipedia* and the library are seen as alternative sources for the same basic product then (1) we are precisely in a commodity market which drives our value down (2) our perceived value bears little relation to our absolute value because the extra we appear to give is not very high (3) if the client does not believe that our information will give something extra, then they may never even try our service to find out the truth (4) we are competing against 'free'. In as far as Members and their staff see information as a commodity then the library will be undervalued and under-used.

#### *Value as Utility minus Price & lifetime costs*

The most operational definition of value that we found came from marketing strategy:

"To customers, value is the utility or total satisfaction that they perceive the product to offer, less the price they have to pay for it, and less the other operating costs they have to incur over the life of the product."<sup>13</sup>

The aim of organisations is then to create value for customers by increasing utility and/or lowering the price and/or lowering other costs of ownership. For libraries, this is simplified to increasing utility and/or lowering costs to the client. But note that 'cost' is not just price but all the costs of acquisition, putting to use, maintenance and disposal of the product. This definition is no easier to measure in a parliamentary library than other definitions we looked at, but it does give a clear indication of the kinds of action that can lead to an increase in value.

#### *The 'Value Curve'*

One influential approach to value is the concept of the 'value curve' as a tool for analysing market strategy.<sup>14</sup> It might appear esoteric in relation to parliamentary libraries but it offers some very pertinent lessons. The basic approach is to identify the key features of a generic product and then rate the competing brands in each of these key factors of competition. (The rating is based on the perceived strength of the offer – it is not a strictly

scientific calculation).<sup>15</sup> The resulting assessment of performance on each feature for each brand is then charted on a graph - producing a 'curve' for each one. The classic response to the competition illustrated in the curve is to try to increase performance on each key feature so that the company becomes the leader in the sector, at least at a given price-point. The result is endless competition on these key features. Alternatively, a company might narrow its focus by specialising in serving a particular market segment where they *can* be the leader. However, the academics who developed the 'value curve' suggest that some companies have developed a more creative approach by redefining the market space.<sup>16</sup> One of the alternative strategies is to reduce investment or even completely withdraw from competition on some key features which the company thinks clients do not really value. Organisations therefore cut unnecessary costs, allowing either a cheaper product and/or extra investment on specific features that they think clients value more. This approach can also lead to simplification of the product for clients, which may be a further advantage.

Reflecting on the 'value curve' in relation to parliamentary libraries, consider this:

- Parliamentary libraries have routinely compared and copied each other in developing and delivering services. They are not directly competing but we can certainly identify some common key features on which they would compare themselves. There are some leading services that have set the standards to which others aspire. There are networks to transmit 'best practice' so success stories tend to be copied. So there is convergence around certain features and practices, but at the same time services are competing fruitlessly because they will probably never match the resources of the strongest services; and 'best practice' might not actually be 'best' in every case as success depends on institutional history and operating environment. A practice may be successful because of a specific ecology, it does not necessarily transplant with the same success
- What the parliamentary library does may be professionally verified as 'valuable', but are we sure that *everything* we do is really considered valuable by our clients? Are there things we could cut and no-one would really notice? One of the flaws in the traditional model of competition is that it can result in 'overserving', where features are boosted to levels that only add costs, not value for the actual client. As Kim and Mauborgne observe

"rarely do managers systematically set out to eliminate and reduce their investments in factors that an industry competes on. The result is mounting cost structures and complex business models"<sup>17</sup>

Does that sound anything like parliamentary libraries? Equally, are there features we could introduce or build up that would make a major difference to value as seen by our clients? The convergence around 'best-practice' and common service features offers an illusion of success and safety. Rather, we need to think radically and independently about what we might do within our resources to deliver the best value for our Members. Academic librarians have apparently understood that amongst them

"many individual libraries have not realized their full potential in support of institutional missions" and are accordingly pursuing radical change "the transformed library seeks to fulfil the campus's goals, even endeavors that currently do not involve the library. This represents a significant turn from the time-honored practice of measuring success against peer libraries, in favour of judging ourselves by how libraries help their institutions succeed"<sup>18</sup>

The notion of simplifying services also finds support from the field of behavioural economics. In business, as noted in the 'value curve' literature, and in academic experiments, it has been found that a wider offer, a more complex choice, can lead to lower sales. Clients find it easier to take a decision when offered a restricted range of options. If there are too many elements to the decision, especially unfamiliar elements, potential clients just walk away.<sup>19</sup> Libraries offer quite complex services because they are aware of many distinctions between types of content, sources, methods of presentation and searching, types of client etc. Are they too sensitive and focused on perfection when clients operate on a 'good-enough' basis? Does the wealth and complexity of the offer actually put clients off?

A rough-and-ready value curve exercise for the products of the European Parliament Library underlined that on only a few aspects of performance could the Library be considered a leader amongst the competition. Those aspects (e.g. choice of information, objectivity & authority of information) are probably less highly valued by Members than other aspects such as speed and customisation. The exercise underlined just how unassailable a good Assistant is as the primary source of information and, interestingly, the strengths of the Assistant and the Library are largely complementary. Other competitors (e.g. lobbyists, political group

secretariats) also had areas of strong advantages to the Library, as well as some disadvantages. The leaders vary in identity but the Library on almost every important point is stuck some way behind.

### *Practical conclusions*

The following are some conclusions on value which the European Parliament Library followed up with projects to test and exploit the insights – it is a work-in-progress.

1. As an information service we came to the startling conclusion (well, it startled us) that **high-quality information as such will never be a compelling offer for Members. We must think of our service in terms of benefits a Member will recognise.**<sup>20</sup> We believe that the package of Library services together can make a contribution to Member success, primarily through improving the quality of information supplied to them through their office. 'Member success' of course has many meanings, especially at different stages in their career and in the life of the parliament. Offices and the way they handle information are also varied. So the offer to contribute to Member success implies (a) a good knowledge of the individual office and its needs (b) a very flexible deployment of services to achieve customised support. We identified six components of Member success on which we could map Library products: making an impact on parliament; making best use of limited time; engaging with civil society; keeping informed and up-to-date; running an effective & efficient office.
2. **The simplest approach to value is to see it as utility for the client *minus* all costs to the client.** Increasing value is then about identifying actions that increase utility within the same or less cost; and actions to reduce costs, especially the costs to Members of using the library. This approach is perhaps obvious but *libraries have focused more on the professional quality of what they supply*. It is the utility perceived by Members, not the professional judgement of quality, that is important for value. 'Costs' include all the work someone has to do to find the service, participate in the service process and work with the results of the service. We need to look beyond our usual horizon in considering cost. For example, if we hand over information (high-quality in our eyes) that takes the Assistant hours to turn into something useful for the Member then that detracts from our value. To be more valuable, *products need to be closer to their intended end-use*.
3. **Cost-per-customer appears a particularly productive area to consider.** The EP Library disperses a lot of resource on transactions serving individual low-level clients and on proactive information probably used by a similar audience. There are exceptions, but the service is based more on *transactions* than *relationships*. This type of business does not lead to much value *as perceived by Members*. Cost-per-client is probably high: serving 1000 clients each with one single transaction in a year is likely to be less efficient than serving 100 clients ten times a year. Investing in promotional activity that gains a new client just for a single transaction will be less efficient than that which gains a client who uses the library regularly and long-term. Each new client requires a certain investment in explanation. A multiple-transaction client will spread their costs of learning how to use the library, they will have a clearer idea what to ask for, and expect, they will probably get more and be more satisfied with it. The cost to the client, and the utility they gain, should both be better for a regular client than for a one-off client. So the library needs strategies to systematically convert a user of one product into a user of multiple products, and to convert single-use to repeat-use - at the level of individual Assistants and especially at the level of offices. The aim is quality of relationships rather than just volume of transactions.
4. **Under-valuation** is a serious issue and becoming more so with the dominance of Google/Wikipedia. Libraries must differentiate or die. Communications to sell the corporate and other invisible benefits of the library are a priority.
5. **Service features should be aligned to what Members actually value rather than to some professional/industry standard.** We should be aware of 'best-practice', take what works for our Members but not be slaves to it. We have to be creative, and to be ruthless in eliminating work that does not actually add value in proportion to its costs.
6. Thinking about the value curve will probably lead towards **simplification of the offer**, because of lower costs and concentration of resources on features that really make a difference. But simplification is also good because people will be more likely to actually choose and use your service. Libraries tend to invest in perfection, over-complicate, over-explain, and offer too much choice.

7. **We have no overwhelming advantage over the competition in any single area that is of permanent value to most Members.** (We have advantages but not in areas with permanent value). We do not believe that we can significantly change this within any realistic future resource allocation. However, we do believe that **we offer a unique package of services that can contribute to Member success.** The EP Library is the only supplier of services in the information domain with a fully comprehensive offer for individual Members. This offer includes everything from training to writing; good-quality, helpful and reliable service; a choice of selected, objective and authoritative information; dedication to individual Members. The *package* is the competitive advantage.
8. An effective Assistant is one of the Library's strongest competitors in terms of it achieving a positive value with Members. But they are also partners of the Library, and **the Library's strengths and those of a good Assistant are highly complementary.** The partnership aspect should be developed in a more explicit way and sealed at a higher level - with the Member – so that due value is assigned to the Library.
9. We should see **Members' offices as 'legislative enterprises'** and approach service on a business-to-business model.<sup>21</sup> One insight that arises from this perspective is that libraries can appear to be very successful in serving many individual clients without necessarily delivering value to the 'businesses'. In providing and marketing services it is important to understand (a) the role of the direct client and their service request in relation to the business, not just them as individuals, and (b) who in the business is taking decisions about research strategies. The decider or influencer on research work may not be the client and may not always be the Member
10. **Use indirect communication and take care of external reputation.** Publication outside the parliament of library products (e.g. research reports, information research products) can lead to greater internal awareness and use of them. Reports finding their way into the media are the most powerful examples, but consider also (a) information that circulates within a policy community that also includes parliamentary staff or Members (b) products that can be found using Google or Wikipedia may reach Assistants more easily than through internal parliament channels (c) the long-term development of reputation that may have internal benefits.
11. **Cut the cost of quality information.** The human choice of fast & frugal decision-making is based – often unconsciously - on the cost/benefit of acquiring information. 'Good-enough' information that is easy to find and process will win against better information that costs more to find and process. If this logic is followed then cutting the cost of high-quality information ('cost' meaning mainly working time) is crucial. In that light, for example, the user-friendliness of the initial client interface and basic service procedures are strategic issues. Improvement in them can cut client costs and so improve the chance they will choose quality information.

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<sup>1</sup> Cuninghame, 2009

<sup>2</sup> ‘Modernity’ in the sense of ‘up-to-date’ but also modernity defined “in terms of the rational justification of social and political arrangements, the universal applicability of reason in human affairs...[etc.]” Dryzek & Dunleavy, pp. 290-291

<sup>3</sup> In the postmodernist view, globalisation, individualisation, multi-level governance, complexity, novelty in the character of policy problems, new sites and forms of political action and – notably for the case of parliamentary libraries – “the undermining of expert authority”, all lead to an ‘institutional void’. Dryzek & Dunleavy, p. 297.

<sup>4</sup> How Members dealt with information before the internet/online revolution cannot be taken as a safe guide for how they deal with information today. But neither can we simply assume that *everything* has changed. I am grateful to Professor Ringe for his recommendations concerning this earlier research – he is not responsible for my choice or interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> See Ringe (2010)

<sup>6</sup> Oakleaf, p. 11

<sup>7</sup> Oakleaf, p. 83. The opening quote is from Botha, Erasmus & Van Deventer.

<sup>8</sup> See for example ‘The essential competence – demonstrating value’ Sandra Ward & Ian Wooler, Online Information 2011 Proceedings pp. 41-50. Also the article ‘ROI 2020’ by Andy Havens and Tom Storey in the OCLC Newsletter ‘Nextspace’ No.17, December 2010 (<http://www.oclc.org/us/en/nextspace/017/1.htm>) which has some interesting discussion and references to projects.

<sup>9</sup> Oakleaf p.84, reporting work by Matarazzo & Prusak from 1990 and by Lustig from 2008.

<sup>10</sup> There is a useful survey of definitions of value in Oakleaf, pp. 20- 24. This very extensive report also looks at issues of value for other types of library, and has a great deal of material on measuring value.

<sup>11</sup> Ariely p.240 "According to the assumptions of standard economics, all human decisions are rational and informed, motivated by an accurate concept of the worth of all goods and services and the amount of happiness (utility) all decisions are likely to produce. Under this set of assumptions, everyone in the marketplace is...striving to optimize his experiences..." "Behavioural economists, on the other hand, believe that people are susceptible to irrelevant influences from the immediate environment (which we call context effects), irrelevant emotions, shortsightedness, and other forms of irrationality..."

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* pp. 60-61

<sup>13</sup> Doyle, p. 73

<sup>14</sup> Originally proposed in a Harvard Business Review article - Kim & Mauborgne (1999) - and subsequently much adopted and adapted. The same authors presented the concept at greater length in a book (Kim & Mauborgne (2005)). Some of the case studies presented look, with hindsight, ill-chosen (Enron! and also Borders bookshops) but it just underlines that one smart strategic move does not create permanent success.

<sup>15</sup> The authors assume that a better offer also costs more (Kim & Mauborgne (2005) pp. 26-27). Based on some scanning of available literature this causes some confusion in application, with some users emphasising that the vertical scale is a measure of investment in a feature whereas others stress it as a measure of relative performance.

<sup>16</sup> Kim & Mauborgne (2005) p. 29

"four key questions to challenge an industry's strategic logic and business model:

- Which of the factors that the industry takes for granted should be *eliminated*?
- Which factors should be *reduced well below* the industry's standard?
- Which factors should be *raised well above* the industry's standard?
- Which factors should be *created* that the industry has never offered?"

<sup>17</sup> *ibid* p.30

<sup>18</sup> Oakleaf p.28, quoting in the second part Simmons-Welburn, Donovan & Bender.

<sup>19</sup> Chakraborty

"[Ariely] describes an experiment where academics set up a tasting booth in a store in California. On some days they put out six kinds of jam, on others 24. When the booth had 24 types, it was mobbed - "there was more colour, more excitement". But it was the sales that were truly remarkable: with six jams on show, 30% of customers bought a jar; when 24 were out, only 3% did. "Jams are hardly complex things, but people saw 24 stacked together and thought: 'I have no idea how to deal with this.'"...Contrary to economic belief that more choice is better, confronted with too much complexity, we make bad decisions, or stick with what we have

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already got.... [People] "...have habits!" he beams. Orthodox economists don't recognise habits. "They assume ordinary people do a constant cost-benefit analysis on everything they do. But actually, after you reach a decision, you say, 'That's the end of it!' - and just continue." It is noted that habits are one reason why more competitors entering an industry does not immediately prompt customers to swap - a point that might be considered in relation to Assistants who arrive in parliament already with the Google/Wikipedia habit.

<sup>20</sup> This derives from the concept of the 'Customer Value Proposition' (CVP) which is a statement of the key benefits potential clients should expect from a product. The term was popularised (but not invented) by Kaplan & Norton.

"The value proposition defines the company's strategy for the customer by describing the unique mix of product, price, service, relationship and image that a company offers its targeted group of customers. The value proposition should communicate what the company expects to do for its customers *better* or *differently* than its competitors." Kaplan & Norton (2004) p. 40

The CVP focuses on benefits for the client, not features of the product. (A classic illustration: Black & Decker is not selling power-drills, it is selling holes). Creating the CVP requires an effort to take the customer's rather than supplier's viewpoint. Most organisations are focused on products and features but to connect with clients they need to think in terms of the *benefits* the product will bring the client. In our own context, good information is not a benefit it is a means to an end. Sources: Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D.P. (1996). *The Balanced Scorecard*. Boston, USA: Harvard Business School Press. Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D.P. (2004). *Strategy maps*. Boston, USA: Harvard Business School Press.

<sup>21</sup> A reference from the original IFLA paper; the concept of 'legislative enterprise' was previously analysed by Whiteman