

Chapter 2

Academic Library Innovation Through a Business Model Canvas Lens: A Case of South African Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries need to play a central role in providing user-centred services and enhancing users' quality of experience through digital innovation in the era of digital transformation. In the process of digital transformation, the businesses are transformed whereby new emerging approaches, best business practices, and new business models such as Business Model Canvas, are developed to support digital libraries innovations. Digital libraries are at the core of achieving higher education strategic priorities and critical pillars that include teaching and learning, research, and community engagement in an environment undergoing rapid digitalization. The Business Model Canvas thus offers digital libraries a lens through which to design innovative digital services to support the critical pillars of South African higher education institutions. This chapter explores the value of the Business Model Canvas in supporting creative digital services to internal patrons such as students, academics, researchers, and external patrons such as policymakers and industries.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are significantly changing due to the emergence of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality Internet of Things and globalisation (Khalid et al., 2018). The covid-19 pandemic has increased the speed of digitization, and the necessity for innovation as HEIs go through unprecedented change, uncertainty and transition. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced digitalization and transformation in most HEIs, placing more significant pressure on offering an innovative learning experience (Rof et al., 2022). As a result, academic libraries are expected to play a central role in providing a creative learning experience, and as such, the fast pace of change has impacted academic libraries. Higher Education Institutions leaders must thus transform colleges and universities to benefit students and society (Keller, 2020). Historically, academic libraries have been reluctant to change, often waiting for a particular technology to reach market saturation before reacting to a new trend (Wheatley & Hervieux, 2019). However, in the increasingly digital, as technology evolves globally, academic libraries are also seeking innovative pathways to serve faculty and students more effectively and often adopting digital technologies for service functions (Adebayo et al., 2019). The current volatility in the HEIs environment offers a platform for academic libraries to innovate and play a central role in providing user-centered services and enhancing students' quality of experience. Such a transformation may include offering digital deposit services, digitization services, research data management, metadata creation, digital cataloguing and conserving, and counselling regarding digital copyrights and informational alphabetizing (Marginea & Kifor, 2021).

In transforming from the traditional mode of service delivery to a user-centric high-quality service provision, the business model canvas offers academic libraries a lens to innovate and transform into what, according to Marginean and Kifor (2021), is a user-led Digi modern library. As Peacemaker (2014) highlights, whilst there are few practical tools to explore innovation, the business model canvas offers librarians the potential to map and transform current practices and create new value for stakeholders. (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010) describe the business model canvas as an ontology that visualizes business models using the nine key components, namely: value proposition, key activities, partner network, essential resources, cost structures, revenue model, client segments, distribution channels and client relationships. Despite the business model canvass' potential in supporting innovation and transformation for academic libraries, the area remains relatively unexplored in South African Higher Education Institutions. This chapter explores the business model canvas potential for digital libraries in HEIs in South Africa.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As observed by Juma, Wamukoya and Wekullo (2014), digital library initiatives in Africa largely revolved around university libraries whose efforts in this area were made possible by the need to transform and strengthen their highly inadequate print collections. Many digital library projects such as that of the Association of Africa Universities (AAU), Rhodes University in South Africa, the University of Nigeria and the African Digital Library (ADL) are some of the digital library projects being implemented in Africa to ensure that university communities can access the growing quantities of digital resources. Although a substantial number of HEIs and information centres have shown interest in developing digital libraries to adapt to changing library environment, one big challenge for a successful digital library project is the

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