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# Develop Your Strategic Thinking Mindset – Or Else!!

*Ensuring Your Library's Future by Developing Your Strategic Thinking Mindset*

Lustra Fjord, Norway

With Jeff Russell







If you don't know where  
you're going . . .

Any road will get you  
there.

Lustra Fjord, Norway

# Our Agenda

1. Discuss the importance of strategic thinking.
2. Define what strategic thinking is and factors that help create a strategic thinking mindset.
3. Identify the *levels* of thinking, planning, and acting (and where you spend YOUR time!).
4. Explore strategies for developing a strategic thinking mindset in yourself and others.

# The Strategic Thinking Mindset: Definition and Value

In your small groups discuss . . .

- What does it mean to be a strategic thinker as a library professional?
- What are the benefits to our library and to ourselves when we develop a strategic thinking mindset?
- What are the consequences/costs to the library and to ourselves if we don't develop this mindset?







Jotunheimen National Park

If you're not at the table . . .  
**You're on the menu!**

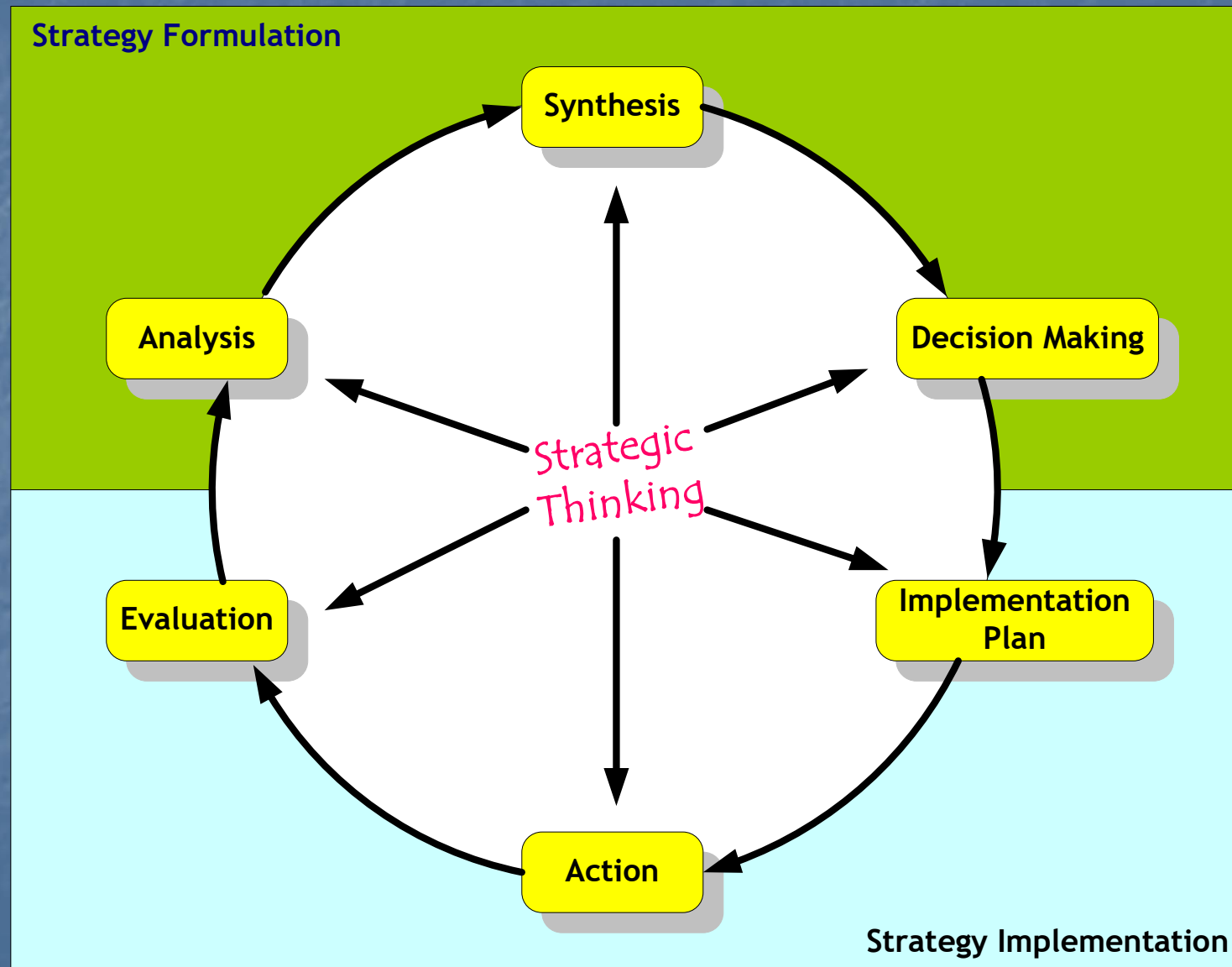


# Insanity . . .

Repeatedly doing  
the same things in  
the same way and  
expecting *different*  
results.



# Strategic Thinking and its Impact upon Strategy Formulation and Implementation





# Strategic Thinking for a Library Professional Is . . .

A way of examining and understanding your library's circumstances within a **larger context** which, in turn, enables you to identify, understand, and **proactively engage current and emerging issues** that are likely to have a significant **strategic impact** on your library's success.

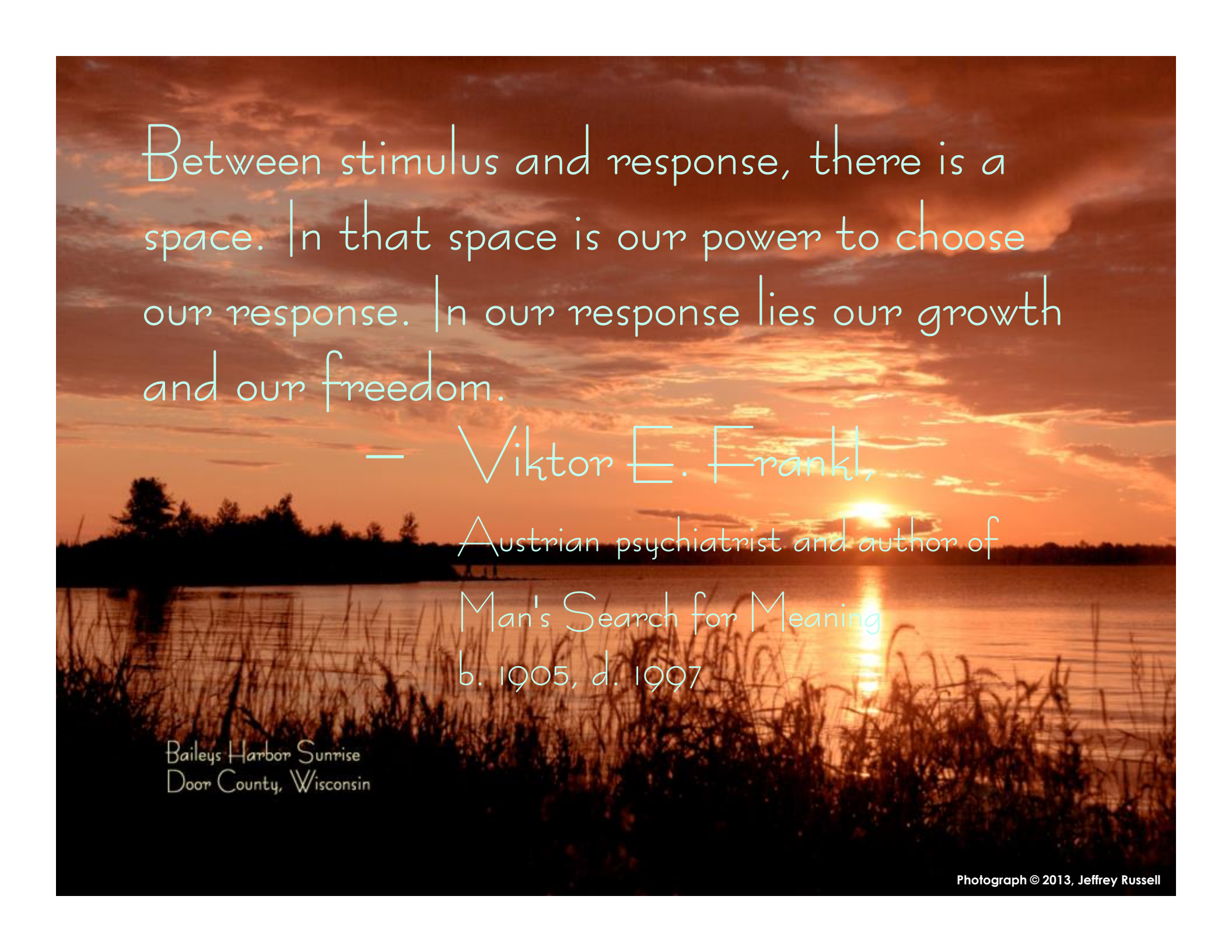
# Strategic Thinking's Context

- The purpose or aim of the library – *What are we here to accomplish or create in the world?* For a library professional: *Do I understand the library's primary business and its larger purpose?*
- The purpose, role, and value of the person's work contribution - *How do I personally contribute to the library's larger purpose? What am I here to accomplish or create?* For a library professional: *What is my value here? What is the difference I am here to make?*
- The library's core values - *What core values should guide every decision and action I make in my work?* For a library professional: *How will these values influence my everyday decisions?*



# Strategic Thinking's Context

- The current and future needs of our patrons and other stakeholders- *What do my customers/clients expect of me today? How are our patron's needs changing and why?* **For a library professional: How are my customers' needs changing?**
- What is occurring in the library's environment - *What forces and trends within and outside of the library are likely to affect my or the library's future effectiveness and success?* **For a library professional: What library trends suggest my potential future role/function/success?**



Between stimulus and response, there is a  
space. In that space is our power to choose  
our response. In our response lies our growth  
and our freedom.

— Viktor E. Frankl,

Austrian psychiatrist and author of

Man's Search for Meaning

b. 1905, d. 1997

Baileys Harbor Sunrise  
Door County, Wisconsin



# Strategic Thinking

## Strategic thinking involves . . .

1. Holding an image of the vision or ideal future for the library in one's mind.
2. Drawing upon and being shaped by the library's core values.
3. Being awake and aware – continuously scanning the environment — looking for opportunities and threats.

# Strategic Thinking

4. Seeing the patterns and relationships in events and circumstances.
5. Recognizing the interconnections and interdependencies before making decisions and taking action.
6. Making decisions and taking actions for the long-term that are shaped by the vision, core values, awareness of the environment, and awareness of the interdependencies.



# Going Beyond Easy

- Strategic thinking means going beyond the easy “yes” or “no” and instead explores the possibilities of either/or – and the gray in between.
- **Example:** It’s easy to say “Yes!” to a corporate sponsor of a reading room, a collection, or a youth engagement program . . . But what are the long-term implications of saying “yes” or “no?”



Control your destiny . . . Or somebody else will!

— Jack Welch, former CEO

General Electric

Lustra Fjord, Norway



# Thinking/Planning/Action Levels . . .

Level	Desired Result	Style of Action	Underlying Value/Key Question	Current % of Time	Desired % of Time
Strategic	Helping the organization achieve an ideal future. Optimizing desired long-term outcomes given internal resources and environmental constraints.	Future-minded, long-term focus. <b>Exploring alternative possibilities and pathways</b> to achieve success and tackle critical issues.	Controlled instability toward a larger purpose. Leveraging opportunities. <b>What's next for the library?</b>		
Interactive	Exceeding expectations. Going above and beyond. <b>Anticipating library needs and problems.</b>	Proactive. Getting out in front of things. Never being surprised.	Continuous learning and quality improvement. <b>What am I learning today that should change my practice tomorrow?</b>		
Operational	Maintaining the status quo. Ensuring consistency. Controlling/guaranteeing results. <b>Developing good systems</b> that translate strategic plans into action.	Short-term focus. Fixes problems. Maintains smooth operation. Strives for operational excellence.	Stability and Control. <b>How do I keep things going along as smoothly as possible?</b>		
Tactical	Meeting expectations. <b>Solving daily library problems.</b> Responding immediately to emerging issues. <b>Delivering value!</b>	Reactive. Short-term focus. Getting results today.	Surviving! Making it through another day! <b>What must I do right now to solve today's problems?</b>		

100% 100%

# How do you spend YOUR time?

*In your small group . . .*

- Share your “current” and “desired” percentages.
- Discuss:
  - *Is there an “ideal” distribution of your time? What is it?*
  - *What prevents us from achieving our ideal time distribution?*
  - *What are the consequences for (a) our libraries and (b) us as library professionals if we spend most of our time at the tactical level?*





Culture eats strategy for breakfast . . .

- and lunch
- and dinner
- and during snack time!

Lustrafjord, Norway



It's not enough to be industrious; so are the  
ants. What are you industrious about?

—Henry David Thoreau

Lucas Point, Monterey



# Actions to Develop the Strategic Thinking Mindset

- What THREE actions can you take to develop, strengthen, enhance your strategic thinking mindset?
- What THREE actions can you take to develop, strengthen, enhance the strategic thinking mindset in others on your team?

# Developing a Strategic Mindset

1. Expect all library staff to be strategic thinkers – make it part of their hiring, orientation, and development.
2. Build strategic thinking into every job description.
3. Integrate the vision and core values into library planning and goal setting processes.
4. Invite library staff to share/discuss what they are learning from patrons and what they see happening around them that might have a bearing on the library's future success and a library professional's role.
5. Debrief library challenges, problems, and crisis from a strategic perspective — pursue strategic insight and learning.



# Developing a Strategic Mindset

6. Define the “ends” not the “means” to get there – and invite them to help build the right pathway.
7. Take time to listen and acknowledge everyone’s creative ideas.
8. Give employees the **freedom** to make decisions (autonomy) — but also **provide them context** and a framework within which to operate (core values).
9. Encourage everyone to **challenge current library practices** (do this only if you really mean it!).
10. **Share library success stories** - where the library and its employees are the heros!

# Developing a Strategic Mindset

11. Invest in building a **strong library community**.
12. Walk the **talk** – **model great strategic thinking** in how you approach your own decision making, problem solving, crisis management, etc.
13. Take time, as a library team, for a **strategic thinking “retreat”** where you escape from the tactical and operational levels and focus on learning and insight – even if only for a half-day!





Sometimes I lie awake at night, and I ask  
myself: "Where have I gone wrong?"

Then a voice says to me . . .

"This is going to take more than  
one night!"

— Charles M. Schulz  
Charlie Brown in "Peanuts"

Boglands and Clouds  
Connemara National Park

**Good luck integrating insights  
from this session into your  
everyday decisions and actions  
as a library professional!**

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