

2017

# Managing Transitions: Using William Bridges' Transition Model and a Change Style Assessment Instrument to Inform Strategies and Measure Progress in Organizational Change Management

Julie L. Miller

*Butler University*, [jlmille5@butler.edu](mailto:jlmille5@butler.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian\\_papers](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian_papers)

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Miller, Julie L., "Managing Transitions: Using William Bridges' Transition Model and a Change Style Assessment Instrument to Inform Strategies and Measure Progress in Organizational Change Management" (2017). *Scholarship and Professional Work*. 74.  
[https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian\\_papers/74](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian_papers/74)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholarship and Professional Work by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact [omacisaa@butler.edu](mailto:omacisaa@butler.edu).

## Managing Transitions

---

### Using William Bridges' Transition Model and a Change Style Assessment Instrument to Inform Strategies and Measure Progress in Organizational Change Management

---

**Julie L. Miller**

*Butler University Libraries*

As academic libraries redefine their services and roles within higher education, library leaders are charged to implement transformative changes. The biggest leadership challenge in effecting change is the human element: helping employees to embrace and implement the changes necessary for transformation. This case study describes the change management process used by Butler University Libraries in 2013-2014 to migrate to a cloud-based integrated library system that streamlined workflows and drove reorganization. It provides background and context for the system migration, and describes methodology of the change management process, focusing on two tools: the Ryan Change Style Assessment and the book *Managing Transitions* by William Bridges and Susan Bridges. The case discusses the practical limitations of this approach to change management as well as anticipated and unanticipated outcomes.

#### **Background**

A nationally recognized private non-profit university, Butler University's academic mission is to provide the highest quality of liberal and professional education and to integrate the liberal arts with professional education by creating and fostering a stimulating intellectual community built upon interactive dialogue and inquiry. Located within the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, the University has approximately 4300 undergraduate students and 500 graduate students. Irwin Library is the main library and houses collections in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. The Ruth Lilly Science Library is located within a separate academic building in close proximity to academic departments in the sciences and health sciences.

Butler University is a member of the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI), a consortium of 23 (now 22) libraries founded in 1992 with grant funding from the Lilly Endowment Inc., a philanthropic organization located in Indianapolis, for the purpose of automating library services. This automation project drove the implementation of the Internet at most of the PALNI member institutions—evidence that the library staff were technology change agents at their institutions (Frye *et. al.*, 2009, pp.40-41).

In 2013 PALNI libraries were using an integrated library system (ILS) developed in the 1980s. Each member institution had its own instance of the ILS, and routine maintenance—which required that each workstation be individually updated with every change in the software—was time and labor intensive. PALNI formed an ad hoc committee to review the next generation of ILS systems and to make a recommendation to the Board for a web-scale system that would streamline system maintenance and library workflows, as well as provide opportunity for deeper collaboration among the consortium's member organizations. Informed by this review, the PALNI Board of Directors selected OCLC's Worldshare Management System (WMS) as its new ILS to be implemented in Spring-Summer 2014.

The timing of the system migration was fortuitous for Butler University Libraries. The University had hired a new dean of libraries in 2012 who initiated a strategic planning process that involved faculty from across the university, administrators, staff, students, and representatives from internal and external partner organizations. One of the strategic priorities of the Butler University Libraries' plan for 2013-2017 was "reallocation of resources," with goals to realign the allocation of operating budgets, staffing, and library spaces in alignment with the strategic plan. The migration to WMS provided an opportunity to streamline library service workflows, thereby freeing up staff capacity to develop and expand library services, especially scholarly communication and information literacy initiatives.

## Methodology

When the PALNI Board of Directors selected a web-scale library system, they intended to use the system as a catalyst for change that would decrease direct costs (i.e., membership fees) and indirect costs (e.g., labor required to support and maintain the system). Another desired outcome was increased opportunities for collaboration through consortial borrowing and lending of print collections, collaborative collection development, and shared expertise, such as specialized cataloging in foreign languages and music, among other ideas. Such collaboration represented major changes in the internal processes of member institutions. To help staff prepare for and participate in the development of these processes, the Board hired the Singer Group, library consultants with expertise in change management.

The Singer Group introduced PALNI members to the Ryan Change Style Assessment published by The Ryan Group, Inc. The Ryan Change Style Assessment is one of several instruments available to assess how an individual responds to change. A self-scoring instrument, the Ryan Change Style Assessment identifies four change styles based on scales in four dimensions: (1) preferred role during change (lead-follow), (2) emotional expression (low-high), (3) orientation (people-task), and (4) openness to change (excited-cautious). The scoring results place each respondent into one of four change styles: Initiator, Collaborator, Protector, or Questioner (see Figure 1). Supporting documentation from The Ryan Group, Inc. provides information about the needs and contributions of each style during change (Ryan, 2009).

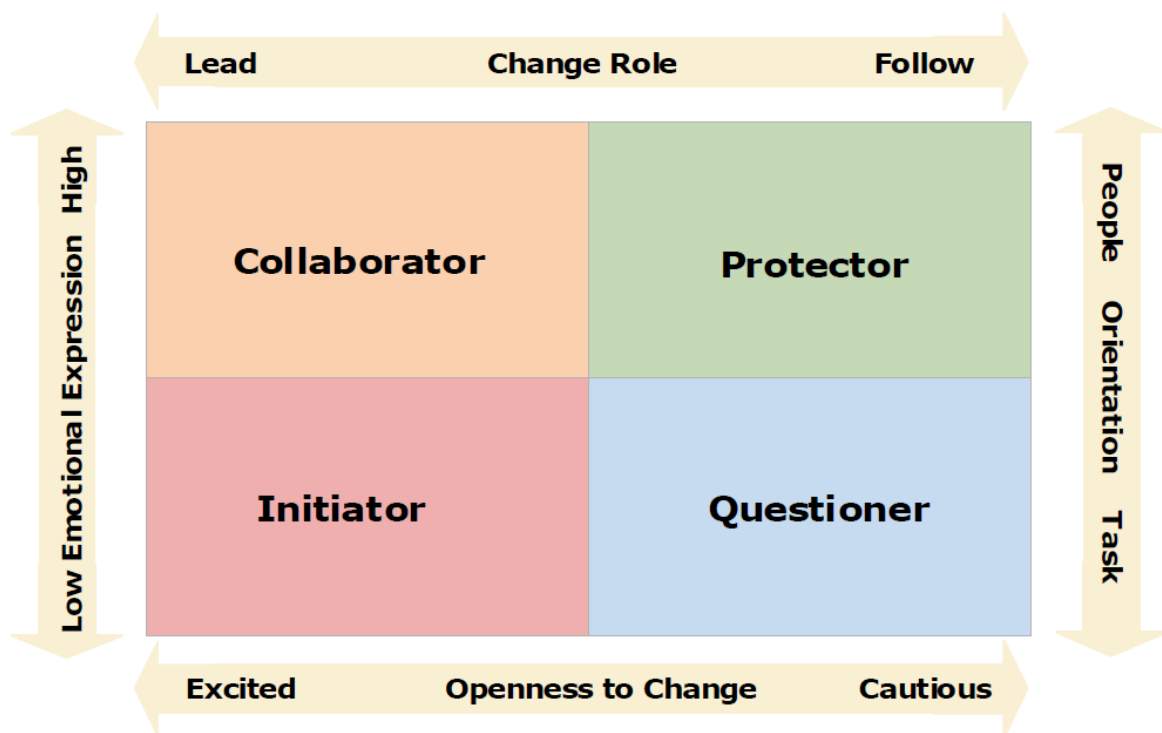


Figure 1. Ryan Change Style Map. Used with permission of The Ryan Group, Inc.

PALNI paid for each employee of the 23 member institutions to take the Change Style Assessment, and the Singer Group facilitated training at an all-staff meeting to discuss the profile of each change style. This training provided employees of Butler Libraries the opportunity for self-reflection, a common vocabulary for talking about possible responses to change, and tools for interacting with others during the change process. In his article "Anything Can Happen in the Zone" Josh Petrusa, Associate Dean of Collections and Digital Services at Butler Libraries, described the benefit of using the Ryan Change Style Assessment: "Having [each style] identified for our staff helped us all relate to each other and see behaviors in the proper light. Each style plays a role in helping an organization through change...." (Petrusa, 2016, p. 5).

The library leadership group compiled the results of the Change Style Assessment and discussed the implications of our overall mix of change styles. Figure 2 shows the distribution of change styles among the 23 Butler library employees who took the Change Style Assessment during the planning phase. Nine staff were identified as Collaborators or Initiators, the two change styles identified as excited by change. Four of the five members of the library leadership group were included in this group. Fourteen of the library employees who took the assessment identified as Protectors or Questioners, the two change styles that are cautious about change, indicating the majority of library employees would probably be slower to adapt to change than others within the group.

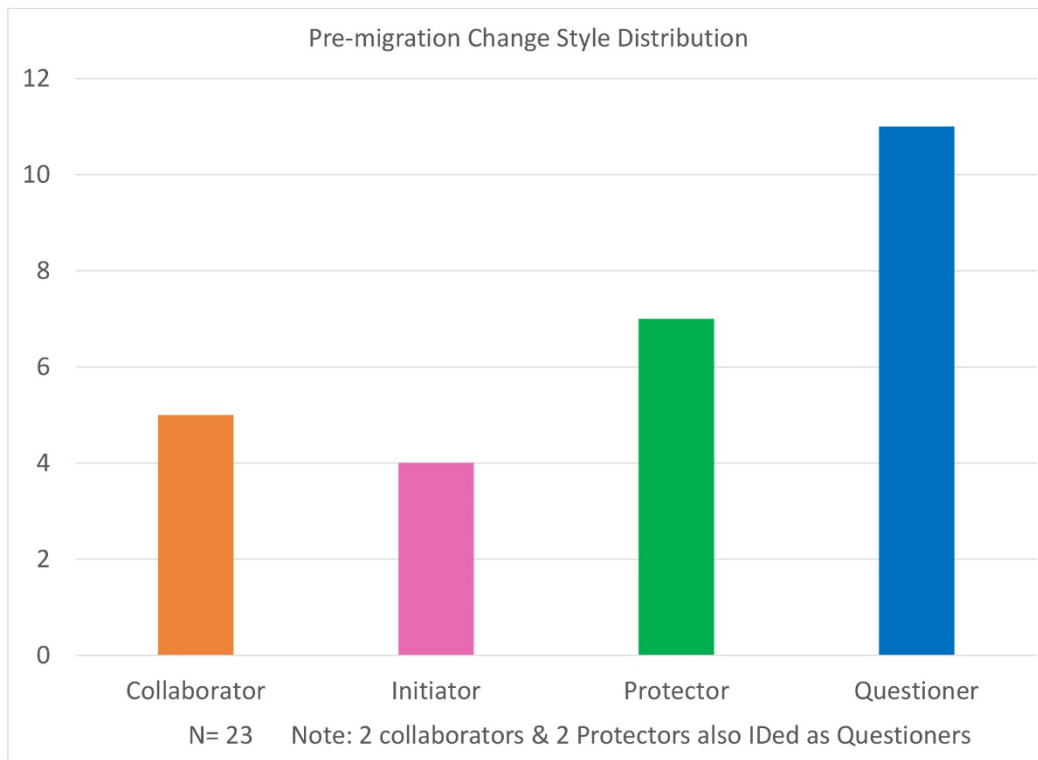


Figure 2. Distribution of Butler Libraries Staff by Change Style

Based on the Ryan Change Style profiles, the four change styles complement each other. For example, the Protectors appreciate personal reassurance and sincere expressions of appreciation during transitions. They also appreciate being asked directly for their input and opinions. Their contributions to the change process include making sure others were okay during the change and providing insight with regard to the effect of change on other constituent groups—qualities that complement the characteristics of Initiators, who tend to be decisive and focused on taking action without always considering the impact on others. Questioners, on the other hand, appreciate detailed information (data!) and ample time to make decisions. They also appreciate clear direction with regard to priorities and time management. They contribute quality control and an organized approach to change—qualities that complement the characteristics of Collaborators, who are less focused on the details. Use of the four change style profiles became a powerful tool for the library leadership team as we developed strategies for change management during the migration planning process (Ryan, 2009).

The second tool employed by the library leadership team was *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* by William Bridges and Susan Bridges. Based on the work of ethnographer Arnold van Gennep in studying rites of passage in various cultures, the Bridges' Transition Model focuses not on *change* (which is situational and happens to us) but on

*transition*, which is the psychological process of internalizing change (Bridges, 2009, p. 3). The model describes three phases of transition: (1) Ending, Losing, Letting Go, (2) The Neutral Zone, and (3) The New Beginning (See Figure 3).

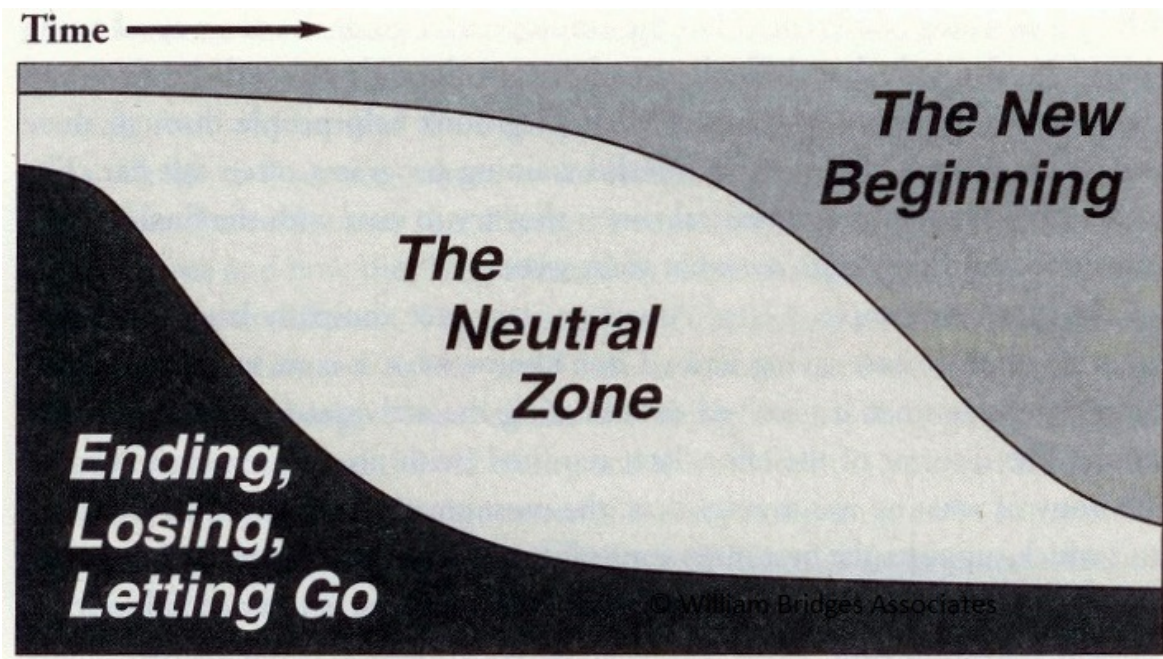


Figure 3 The three phases of transition. © William Bridges Associates. Used with permission.

Bridges provides a brief description of each phase:

1. Letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This first phase of transition is an ending, and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses.
2. Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational. We call this time the "neutral zone"; it's when the critical psychological realignments and repatterning take place.
3. Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. This is when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that make the change begin to work. (Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5)

*Managing Transitions* gives practical advice to help employees through each phase. While planning for the system migration, the library leadership team discussed each chapter at our biweekly meetings. This common reading provided a shared vocabulary for discussing change as well as concrete suggestions for helping staff to let go of the old way of doing things and to envision themselves taking on new roles and developing new, more efficient processes.

Because the leadership team was using both the Ryan Change Style Assessment and the Bridges book simultaneously, we developed the idea of combining the two tools into a pre- and post-migration exercise to measure employee readiness for and integration into their new roles following system migration and reorganization. In May 2014, three months before the migration go-live date, we held an all-staff meeting. During one of the activities, we provided a print-out of the three phases of transition figure from *Managing Transitions* (see Figure 3). Each employee was given a dot sticker to place on the map to indicate their current position relative to their readiness for the system migration. They were not aware that the dot was color-coded to correspond to their change style. We collected the maps and compiled the placement of all dots onto one map (see Figure 4).

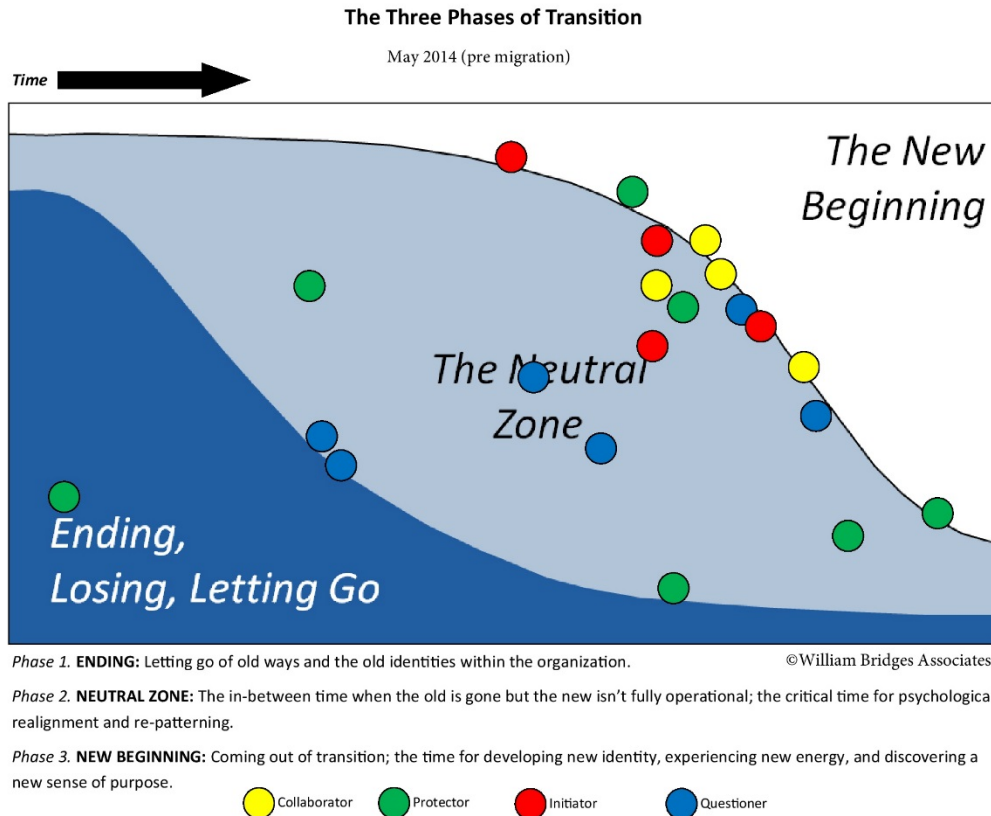


Figure 4. Pre-migration map of staff readiness for change adapted from the Bridges Transition Model with permission of William Bridges Associates.

### Pre-migration findings

The pre-migration map of staff readiness for the migration showed that ten of 21 employees (47%) placed themselves on the border between the “Neutral Zone” and “A New Beginning”—they were ready for change. Not surprisingly, three of them identified as “Collaborators” and three identified as “Initiators,” the two change styles of the Ryan Assessment that are excited by change. Seven of the employees (33%) placed themselves within the “Neutral Zone.” All four change styles were represented in this group. Four employees (20%)—two Protectors and two Questioners, the styles cautious about change—placed themselves inside or on the border of “Letting Go.” This initial map demonstrated that most of the employees with change styles open to change were ready, while many of those cautious about change were less likely to feel ready for a new beginning. The leadership team used these findings to be more intentional in addressing the concerns of Questioners and Protectors by communicating detailed information about migration tasks and workflow changes as information became available and by reassuring employees that changes due to the system migration would not result in elimination of positions.

The pre-migration map became an essential tool for the leadership team in developing strategies for communication and decision-making. The transition strategies used by the leadership team during the migration implementation phase included intentional over-communication of all issues related to the system migration, for both internal and external communications; ceremonial events to acknowledge critical milestones; and increased employee engagement in redefining their roles and position responsibilities. The table below (Figure 5) provides some examples of strategies developed by the leadership team to assist employees in the process of internalizing and adapting to changes in their roles, responsibilities, and workflows:

Strategy	Target Audience	Purpose(s)	Example
Over Communication	Library staff	Set timelines	Weekly migration status updates via email
Event	Library staff with 15+ years of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of their work</li> <li>• Reminders of technological advances (changes survived)</li> </ul>	Tea with the Sages
Engagement re: new roles and responsibilities	Library staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Joining a community of practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCLC WMS online tutorials;</li> <li>• PALNIHub portal for staff communication</li> </ul>
Engagement re: new roles and responsibilities	Library staff; Stakeholders	Realigned staffing based on streamlined functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised organizational chart;</li> <li>• New titles for positions</li> </ul>
Engagement re: new roles	Library staff; Stakeholders	Realigned staffing based on streamlined functionality	Physical relocation of selected positions
Engagement re: new roles	Library staff	Realigned staffing based on streamlined functionality	Pilot site for OCLC workflow observation / analysis
Letting Go	Library staff	New functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrew from FDLP program;</li> <li>• Consolidated two interlibrary loan operations into one;</li> <li>• Ceased periodical check-in process</li> </ul>
Event	Library staff	New functionality	Check out books at Star Fountain with iPads (because we can!)

Figure 5. Change Management Strategies Used during System Implementation

Three months after the system migration, the mapping exercise was repeated to assess progress toward employee integration into their roles using the new system.

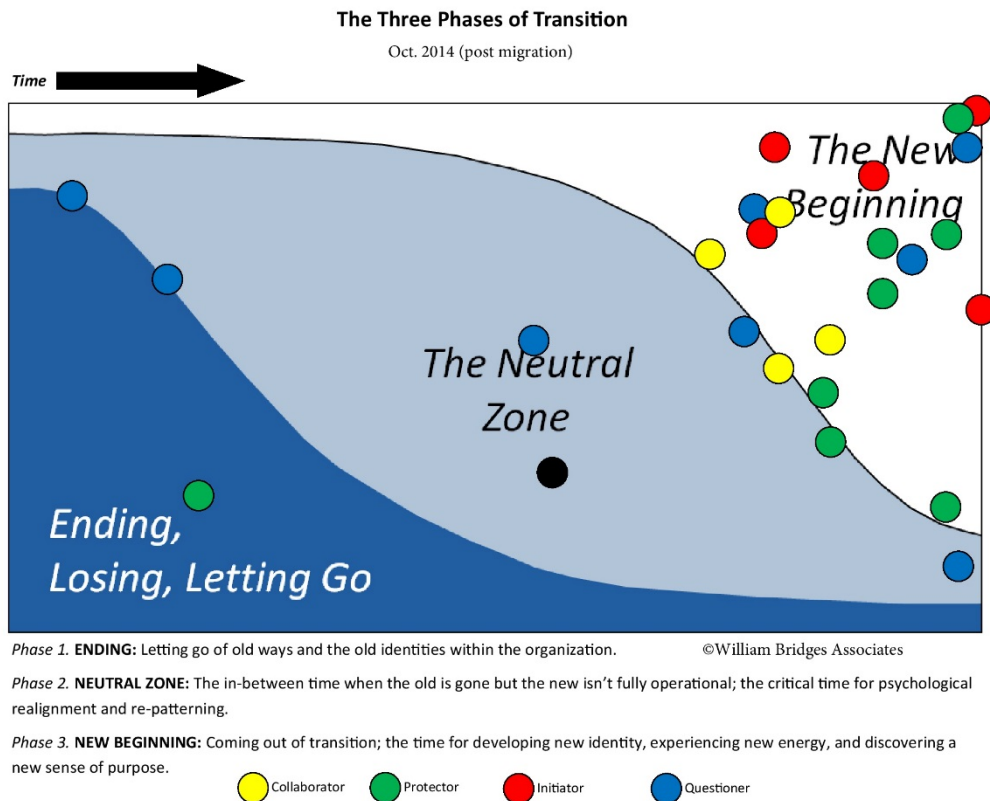


Figure 6 Post-migration map of staff readiness for a new beginning adapted from the Bridges Transition Model with permission of William Bridges Associates

### Post-Migration Findings

The post-migration map (Figure 6) showed that twenty of 26 (77%) of library employees positioned themselves in or on the border of the “New Beginning” phase, three (11.5%) positioned themselves within the “Neutral Zone,” and three (11.5%) positioned themselves in the “Letting Go” phase. All of those who placed themselves in the “Neutral Zone” or “Letting Go” phase identified as Questioners or Protectors. One person, likely a stakeholder who was an invited guest at the meeting but who had not taken the Ryan Change Style Assessment, used a black pen to mark their position on the map. Overall, the leadership team felt that most employees had successfully navigated the Neutral Zone and were excited about the new beginning using the WMS system and about the development of new services made possible by efficiencies in the web-scale system. At this point in the change process, supervisors were aware of those individuals struggling with their new role during the change. Two employees who had difficulty adapting left the university within a year of the system migration, one to seek other employment and one to retire.

### Practical Limitations

The purpose of the pre- and post- system migration maps was to be able to visualize, generally, staff perceptions of their readiness for the system migration by change style. We therefore made the mapping process anonymous, and we did not attempt to draw conclusions about any individual’s progress toward “The New Beginning” phase. Also, the library experienced some staff changes during the period between the creation of the two maps depicting staff “location” relative to the phases of transition; some individuals who participated in the pre-migration mapping exercise did not participate in the post-migration exercise, and vice versa.



## Conclusions

Used in combination, the model for successful organizational change presented in *Managing Transitions* and the Ryan Change Style Assessment instrument provided the leadership team at Butler University Libraries with an effective process for minimizing disruption and discord during a transformative system migration. The outcomes we had anticipated included:

- improved communication through a common vocabulary for change management;
- better understanding of and ability to leverage individual and collective change styles to improve morale;
- a smooth migration facilitated by better communication and improved morale;
- increased capacity for new library services. Ultimately, Butler Libraries repurposed two positions in support of scholarly communication initiatives, including development of our institutional repository and archival digitization projects, and the position of serials librarian was repurposed as an electronic resources librarian.

The outcomes we did not anticipate included:

- improved decision-making through balanced change-style composition on teams, including search committees and task force committees;
- institutional recognition of the library organization as a resource for change management, including requests to present our process at a workshop for Academic Affairs leadership and the Academic Affairs staff development program;
- revitalization of the library organization's image as a forward-looking, vital resource. For the first time, the Provost invited the library to host a lunch for the Butler University Board of Trustees in which we presented an overview of the strategic plan as well as new initiatives. This event significantly raised the visibility of the library across the University.

Additionally, the migration to the web-scale system has resulted in lower direct and indirect costs for PALNI member organizations, which has made it possible for the consortium to fund additional staff, including a full-time scholarly communications director and a full-time knowledge-base and licensing librarian to support member libraries. The consortium has also explored deeper collaboration facilitated by the web-scale system—including new models for sharing expertise, e.g., a full-time staff position at Butler University that is funded fifty percent by PALNI to provide administrative support for the consortium. We have implemented a consortial borrowing and lending program called PALShare that costs significantly less than traditional interlibrary loan with shorter turn-around times and increased access to our collections. The PALNI consortium has also partnered with libraries in the Academic Libraries of Indiana (ALI) in a Shared Print Initiative to identify and retain scarcely held items in academic libraries in Indiana and to reduce redundancy in our print collections. All of these changes have been facilitated by the WMS implementation and by the steps we have taken to prepare library employees for change.

## Works Cited

- Bridges, W. and S. Bridges (2009), *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Da Capo Press/Perseus, Philadelphia, PA.
- Frye, Larry L., V. Lucas, and L. R. Miller (1999), "Technology Partnerships: The PALNI Success Story", *Indiana Libraries* Vol. 18 (Suppl 1), pp.39-43.
- Petrusa, J. (2016), "Anything Can Happen in the Zone: Library and Departmental Change Driven by Migration to a Cloud-based Library Management System", *Library Leadership & Management* Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 1-9.
- The Ryan Group, Inc. (2009), Change Style Assessment Package. Dallas, Texas. Available for purchase at <https://ryangroup.contentshelf.com/product?product=I1302250000013BE>.