NSW Legislative Assembly standing Committee on Public Works

Inquiry into the joint use and co-location of public buildings

Submission by Dr Alan Bundy
University Librarian
University of South Australia
Holbrooks Road Underdale SA 5032
Tel (08)83026260 Fax (08)83026362
email alan.bundy@unisa.edu.au

This brief submission focuses on the potential for enhanced collocation of public libraries with educational institution libraries as joint use libraries, and with other public buildings and services. It is complemented by a paper on joint use libraries by the author of this submission, published as a chapter in McCabe, G and Kennedy, J eds *Planning the modern public library building* Westhart Greenwood Publishing, 2003.

Context
Public libraries, including the state libraries, are the most heavily trafficked public buildings in Australia. Consistent with the worldwide increasing investment in them as 'the new village green' (Hugh McKay), 'safe places to go' (Eva Cox), 'streetcorner universities' (Alan Smith, UK Minister), over 170 of the 1560 public library building in Australia are being replaced or significantly extended and remodelled in the period 2000-2005. NSW has an increasing number of fine new public libraries, something which has been facilitated by Australia's only Library Building Advisory Service, a very successful initiative of the State Library of NSW led by Dr D Jones.

Public libraries, well located, designed and resourced, are places of social capital development which underpin lifelong learning. They are used by the people throughout their lives, from cradle to grave and regardless of their personal circumstances. No other public agency is used by this age range, or by such a diversity of people. Because of their community connection role, the best location for a local public library is commonly close to, or integrated with, major retail venues. However numerous public libraries in the last 30 years have been collocated with educational libraries or with local government customer services centres or community centres, particularly in rural and regional areas.

About 9 per cent of Australia's 1600 public library outlets are now joint use, the majority being combined school and public libraries in rural areas. That number is increasing. NSW has not been a leader in implementing the concept, about which great care has to be taken as such libraries have proven to be vulnerable to failure or dysfunctionality in Australia and overseas. Some, however, have been very successful.

NSW does have a number of examples including Bateman's Bay (university/TAFE/public), Minto (3 schools/public), Talbingo (school/public), Bungendore (school/public), Ourimbah (TAFE/ university). In the right circumstances, there is potential for more such libraries, particularly in rural and regional areas. It is therefore suggested that a review of joint use libraries, and of public libraries in NSW collocated with other facilities is undertaken to

1 Identify them, and how they operate
2 Assess their benefits and disadvantages
3 Identify potential other joint use libraries throughout rural and regional areas as possible replacements for older and inadequate public and other library buildings.

Joint-use libraries—the ultimate form of cooperation

Dr Alan Bundy

Chapter contributed to a book on library planning to be published in 2002 by Greenwood Press, USA

INTRODUCTION

A core value of libraries and librarians locally, nationally and internationally is cooperation, more so than perhaps any other agency and profession. The manifestations of that client-focused cooperation are many, but the ultimate manifestation and challenge is a joint-use, or combined, library. It is not, however, a form of cooperation usually initiated or advocated by the profession. Despite this, interest in the concept continues, and the number and variety of joint-use libraries is increasing worldwide.

DEFINITION

A definition of a joint-use library is:

> A library in which two or more distinct library services providers, usually a school and a public library, serve their client groups in the same building, based on an agreement that specifies the relationship between the providers.

Such libraries, typically the combining of a public library with an educational institution library, have existed for nearly a century. From numerous failures of the concept during the last forty years in particular, lessons have been learned.

Joint-use library variations include libraries for two or more educational institutions, research institutions, government agencies and even business corporations. This chapter is concerned primarily with the most common type of joint-use library, the school housed public library or school community library, less frequent but increasing variations of which are the community college and university housed public library.

THE LITERATURE

The published and unpublished literature on joint-use libraries relates mostly to school community libraries. That literature, as a whole, emphasises the susceptibility of joint-use libraries to failure or dysfunction. It is substantial, but includes few indepth and evaluative studies. Amey's review of this literature therefore led him to the conclusion that it '… tends to be disjointed, discontinuous, largely descriptive and particularised' (Amey 1987 vii). Of its largely negative tone, he observed '… it reads like the story of Job … an endless chronicle of righteous endeavours, undone by unanticipated calamities' (Amey 1987 vii).

Still the best record of the literature is the 514 item bibliography in his *Combining libraries: the Canadian and Australian experience* (Amey 1987 390-425). Also of substance is the 330 item bibliography in the Californian State Library's *Public and school libraries: issues and options of joint-use facilities and cooperative use agreements* (Berger 2000). These are complemented by the bibliography in *School and public library relationships* (Fitzgibbons 2000 41-50) and in *Combined libraries: a bibliography* (American Library Association 2001). This covers exclusively US literature from 1984-1999, and in particular items from Colorado.

BACKGROUND

School housed public libraries date back to at least 1906, with one having operated continuously in New Hampshire, USA, since then. Another in Canada has operated since 1940. Informally they have existed even longer, it often being the practice in rural areas to allow parents and other members of the community to borrow from school libraries where they exist, and have acquired books suitable for adults. A first instance of this was recorded in the State of South Australia in 1875.

The negative literature about them commences with a 1963 US survey of 154 libraries (White 1963). White herself made no recommendations, but the librarians responding to the survey were very critical of the concept and its reality. Their objections included:
- schools are usually distant from the business and shopping areas frequented by public library clients
- the differing purposes of school and public libraries—one meeting the specific curriculum needs of the school, the other the broader and more diverse needs of the public
- the conflicts between the two administrations
- the unlike demands on the school and public libraries
- insufficient specialist training to allow either type of librarian to deal effectively with public and school clients
- wasteful duplication in the book collection
- lack of real savings
- reluctance of the public to use a library in a school

By 1977 the negative tone of the literature had not shifted much, an international study of joint-use libraries funded by the State Library of Florida concluding:

> … it is unlikely that a community able to support or now supporting separate types of libraries would offer better school and public library service through a combined program, because the combination of factors required to promote a successful combined library program seldom occurs (Aaron & Davie 1977 120).

The Florida study did note, however, that 'the combined program presents a possible alternative to limited or nonexistent services under certain conditions', but that 'there is no documented evidence that economy results'. It recommended that:

> … communities with limited resources that are considering this approach should not select the combined program to improve library services except under the following circumstances: (1) that implementation of the concept allows the hiring of professional library personnel where such positions previously had not existed; (2) that this alternative provides a means of strengthening resources available in the community; (3) that an adequately planned program of services to meet both public and school needs is developed and implements; and (4) that a systematic evaluative procedure is used on a regular basis to determine the status of the program and provide for future directions (Aaron & Davie 1977 131).

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

The next significant publication was Amey's 1979 book *The Canadian school-housed library* (Amey 1979). In this, Amey brought together a wealth of information, data, commentary and analysis of 179 school community libraries in Canada, 43 per cent of them in the Province of Alberta. The majority of the libraries were in rural areas, serving communities with an average population of 3,685, about the maximum population to be recommended for school community libraries in, for example, Australia. The size of the Canadian communities served ranged, however, from less than 100 to city populations of over 50,000. Most of the libraries

had commenced after 1970. Amey's book was a response to the lack of consolidation of material on school community libraries. His concern was that:

> … as long as the information on the subject remained dispersed and elusive, researchers would have to continue to duplicate each other's efforts in ferreting in out, or make decisions on the basis of insufficient evidence (Amey 1979 xii).

In reviewing and analyzing the successes and numerous failures of the libraries in Canada, Amey posed the question, 'are school housed public libraries a good thing?' His response to the question was, despite the fact that 'The provincial and territorial reports contain a stockpile of ammunition for those who would fight the concept', that 'It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that a school housed public library will never work for any community at any time' (Amey 1979 5). He urged the need for 'the most careful planning' before attempting a school community library.

Amey's book commenced with a perceptive prologue 'Combined school/public libraries: some basic considerations' by his Canadian colleague Ken Haycock.

At the time he was writing Haycock was Coordinator of Library Services for the Vancouver School Board which operated four school community libraries. It was with knowledge of the reality of the libraries that he observed the tendency to overlook experience with them:

> … to extend the services to the public and the school while miraculously saving the taxpayers' money at the same time. Interestingly enough, the move for combination quarters tends to come from school trustees and not citizens in a community. Savings to the taxpayer are purported to be found in the avoidance of duplication of expensive materials and overhead expenses such as the building, lighting, heating, and custodial services. However, if reading by the adult or the student is inhibited, there is only a poor return on investment (Amey 1979 7).

Haycock continued by observing that although school and public libraries are educational agencies with broadly similar aims, their specific purposes, approaches and operational methods are quite different. However he concluded that, despite the different roles of school and public libraries, school community libraries had real potential where expert, informed, planning preceded decision-making. Haycock also stressed, as did the 1977 Florida study, the importance of continuous evaluation:

> Good management practice means constant evaluation on a formal and informal basis from both perspectives. Too frequently, one partner, usually the school where there has been a strong program, gains in service but public library service suffers because it is evaluated not on the basis of what should and can be, but on the basis of what was—'something is better than nothing' (Amey 1979 10).

THE PENNSYLVANIAN EXPERIENCE

The first doctoral study on joint-use libraries was Jaffe's 1982 University of Pittsburgh dissertation *The Combined school/public library in Pennsylvania* (Jaffe 1982). This examined past and existing school community libraries in the State under three sections. The first described the 12 school community libraries in Pennsylvania which had ceased as joint-use libraries since 1965. Factors identified by Jaffe in their demise were lack of funds (five libraries); vacated facilities (three libraries); dissatisfaction and lack of use (three libraries); and retirement of librarian (one library). He examined the 11 operational school community libraries in Pennsylvania, which were primarily in sparsely populated areas. Of these libraries, he observed that several were at risk because of financial difficulties and falling school enrolments.

Despite the condition of the school community libraries in Pennsylvania, Jaffe correctly concluded that:

> The combined school/public library controversy will not soon diminish. Shrinking funds and community desires to maximise use of facilities will maintain pressure for its consideration. The underlying observation is that some communities would have no or minimal public library service without this organisational format (Jaffe 1982 2).

As local evidence of this conclusion Jaffe noted that, despite the literature generally advising against combined school and public libraries, several communities in Pennsylvania were considering their establishment. He suggested that success was more likely for those proposed libraries if a five element framework was followed:

- The combined school/public library requires as a minimum, one school librarian and one public librarian working with adequate support personnel in a framework that permits mutual planning and application of goals and services
- The combined school/public library should be designated in advance of use with adequate space and selected separate areas for school, public and staff use
- The combined school/public library must strive to select and acquire a balanced collection for all patrons and establish the most simple and useful means of access to materials
- The combined school/public library must aggressively develop and participate in formal mechanics for resource sharing eg networks
- Governing structures and channels of authority in the combined school/public library must be formally established and permit efficient decision making and resolution of conflicts without abandonment by any party of financial support without due and proper notice (Jaffe 1982 100)

A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL STUDY

The next major study was Amey's 1987 *Combining libraries: the Canadian and Australian experience* (Amey 1987). It remains the closest to a definitive text on joint-use libraries.

In his introduction Amey relates his contact with public library professionals strongly opposed to joint-use libraries, contact which had led him to conclude that:

> Too much of what has gone before has been tainted by professional jealousy and narrow mindedness… the information in this book will provide a basis for a cooler, more open and objective appreciation of the subject (Amey 1987 xv).

The first part of the book is devoted to joint-use libraries in South Australia, which Amey observed:

> … may seem at first glance a rather unlikely location to focus upon. South Australia, however, is *the* laboratory for joint-use exploration. It is the only place in the world in which a State has adopted as official policy a plan of library provision based upon school community libraries (Amey 1987 pviii).

This part of the book also contains, in addition to papers on school community libraries, a paper on joint community college-public libraries. Its second part describes some of the Canadian experience, and the third part focuses on the evaluation of joint-use libraries, described as 'a thorny problem for school community libraries' (Amey 1987 pxi). This was because of the deficiencies of standards for school and public libraries, lack of standards for joint-use libraries and because there were special aspects of joint-use libraries not measurable by separate standards:

> Truly successful school-public libraries are greater than the sum of their parts. They are unique social institutions that merge and cooperate, by means of their integrated collections

and services, to offer enhanced community access and involvement. Attempts to cut the school community library in two and make separate comparisons against two different standards are not sufficient, for they overlook the special concerns and achievement that grow out of the corporate nature of the joint-use library (Amey 1987 pxii).

Part four of *Combining libraries* contains five Canadian and Australian legal agreements for joint-use libraries, it being noted that the South Australian agreement for rural school community libraries 'is the most detailed, well conceived, and thoroughly tested manual available anywhere' (South Australia 1982).

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

The outcome of a South Australian political mandate to rapidly provide rural communities with public libraries was the commencement from 1977 of 46 school community libraries serving rural populations of up to 3,600 people, although a few now serve larger populations. All of these in 2002, sometimes in new or extended buildings, have developed into technologically advanced libraries with a wide range of electronic resources and very rapid access to over 3 million books and other resources in the State's public library system (Bundy 1997). They are complemented by a number of urban and regional school and community college based public libraries.

THE FLORIDA EXPERIENCE

Shirley Aaron, the investigator in the 1977 Florida study became, with Amey, the best known international commentator on joint-use libraries. In 1993 she updated her 1977 study, reporting that:

> The impetus for renewed interest in combined school and public libraries stems from state and local efforts to find more economical ways to offer community services. Combined libraries appear to be a cost saving device for eliminating needless duplication and making effective use of existing facilities. Further, the 'one-stop school' concept advocated by Governor Lawton Chiles supports the centralisation of selected community services as the school site (Aaron 1993 120).

The pressure for public schools to demonstrate accountability through community access to underused school facilities has undoubtedly been one reason for proposals for joint-use libraries in several countries.

Aaron undertook a review of the published and unpublished literature, from 1985 to 1992. She concluded that much of it reiterated previously stated advantages and disadvantages of school community libraries.

> Proponents often cite savings from shared facilities, personnel, collections, maintenance services, and utilities; increased hours of operation; addition of professional personnel to a program otherwise unable to afford qualified staff members; availability of information in a broader range of formats; and provision of library services to small communities lacking a sufficient tax base to support an independent public library. Major disadvantages frequently identified include the staffing difficulties associated with attempting to adequately meet the needs of students and community members through one program; the reluctance of adults to use a library located in a school building during school hours; differing site requirements for public libraries and schools; the reluctance of students from other schools to use a public library located at a school site; and the censorship of adult materials considered unsuitable for a school collection (Aaron 1993 123).

Among Aaron's observations was that community members and decision-makers are often not willing to accept the professional judgment that a joint-use library may not provide adequate services to all client groups. She therefore concluded that there was a need for a kit

to assist community members and librarians to determine the potential effectiveness of a joint-use library. This call was responded to well in several jurisdictions, including Wisconsin (1998), Southern Ontario (1999) and California (Berger 2000). Two other major conclusions were drawn by Aaron. One was the need for an evaluation method, as a refinement of 'Amey's … important approach to evaluation and planning' (Aaron 1993 126). The other conclusion was that:

> … the unified library approach (rather than two separate programs in one facility) so common in rural sections of Australia and in some parts of the United States merits further investigation to determine its effectiveness (Aaron 1993 126).

UNIVERSITY—PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Although school community libraries numerically dominate the joint-use library scene, since 1990 there have been major, and sometimes controversial, joint university-public libraries developed in countries such as Australia, Finland, Latvia, Sweden and the USA. They follow the long-standing precedent in European countries, such as Germany, where some university libraries also function as state public libraries. Germany is now considering at least two school community libraries also.

The Swedish experience

In describing such a university-public library development in Sweden the authors stated:

> A central location both for the community citizens and for the students was seen as a very important prerequisite if the project was to succeed … In a world characterized by lifelong learning the combined library resources should give citizens, students and researchers a high-quality service (Gómez 1998 22).

The Härnösand Library, which opened in February 2000, retains separate library directors, and is being developed in the context of a Swedish government expectation that research and public libraries should work more closely together.

Another Swedish university and public library, which opened in 2001, is the Almedal Library in Gotland. Unlike Härnösand, it has one director but with two employers and two responsible authorities. That director has stated that for integration to work 'it is important to understand who is your boss…the borderlines are easier to distinguish, and you are more secure in the work of integration'. He also has commented that:

> When the plans to bring together the university library and the public library were agreed upon, a furious debate broke out in Gotland—a debate which went on for a long time and involved several different levels. It was town against country—old public library tradition of popular enlightenment against a utilitarian 'education society'. Differences in class and social structures come to light (Rabe 2002 32-33).

The US experience

Contemporaneous with the Swedish developments has been the Nova Southeast University and Broward County joint-use US$45 million library in Florida. This opened in December 2001 and is unusual—if not unique—worldwide because it is a collaboration between an independent university and a public body. A key claimed advantage of the library, as in many other joint-use libraries, is that members of the public have direct access to all materials in the library, and over longer hours of opening than in many public libraries.

The most controversial joint-use library project in the USA has been the partnership between California's San José State University and the City of San José to open in 2003 an eight-

storey 475,000 sq ft library—the largest to be built at one time west of the Mississippi. Described in publicity as 'a large-scale example of a recent and growing trend in resource sharing', this has generated as much acrimony as the Almedal Library in Sweden, and for similar reasons. Not least of the reasons has been the University's faculty and their SOUL (Save Our University Library) campaign and website. It was a campaign supported by some librarians, one of whom wrote to the convenor of the faculty protest 'By no means is there anywhere near widespread support among librarians for the type of future your University Librarian and City Librarian envision' (Harger 1998).

The initiators of the proposal for the library, the University President and the City Mayor, suggested in 1997 a cost of US$40 million. This is now US$177.5 million (including relocation), only a minor saving on the projected US$180 million cost of two separate libraries. This has been justified as 'constructing a facility of much higher quality at a reduced total cost' (Freeman 2001 22).

AN ESSENTIAL CONNECTION

Dr Patricia Senn Breivik, the Dean of the San José University Library, has also highlighted the rare opportunity such a library presents for an accelerated whole-of-community approach to information literacy development—an issue for public libraries, and not just schools, community colleges and universities, to address.

In this context, public libraries worldwide typically have at least 30 per cent of their clientele in common with educational institution libraries—students and teachers. This emphasises the challenging common endeavour to develop information literate young people and convince tomorrow's decision-makers, during their formative childhood years, of the value of investing in libraries. In addition to the clientele they have in common, school and public libraries have three shared goals:
- ensuring that students develop as information enabled learners
- providing access to a wide range of analog and digital resources
- motivating students to benefit from libraries and their professional staff for educational, informational and recreational purposes

There is a voluminous literature about the very important connection between the school library and the public library. An excellent US reference about this, which includes a substantial contextual section on joint-use libraries, is *School and public library relationships: essential ingredients in implementing educational reforms and improving student learning* (Fitzgibbons 2000).

An Australian survey of school and public libraries about their connection in 2000 showed that teacher and public librarians are aware of the importance of them working together. Among the positive responses were those from school community libraries, such as

> Having worked in a school library previously I can see the tremendous benefit derived by students in having a public library on site. The availability and ease of procuring hard-to-find resources is fantastic, and the interaction between the general public and students is good (Bundy 2001 152).

In making that essential connection between school and public libraries, the most effective way may be through a joint-use library. This educational advantage of a joint-use library is given little weight in the literature. As public libraries focus more on their information literacy role, this should change.

OTHER ADVANTAGES OF JOINT-USE LIBRARIES

Experience in joint-use libraries compared with separate public and other services suggest the following possible advantages. An overriding consideration is that of the synergy of a joint-use service—that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The purported advantages are economic, social and educational. Joint-use libraries:
- represent efficient use of public money
  - staff costs may be shared between authorities
  - buildings and facilities may be provided more cost effectively
  - resource acquisitions may be coordinated to provide savings eg in reference material
  - there may be savings in operating costs
- provide a greater quantity and quality of collections, electronic resources, services and facilities than is possible with separate services and smaller budgets
- provide access to more staff than in each separate service
- allow extended opening hours
- are convenient to clients in providing all services on one site
- facilitate the collection in one place of archival and local history material of interest to the whole community
- allow more flexibility in providing and obtaining resources and making innovations
- provide access to more than one system for support services eg professional development
- promote greater community interaction by providing a community focal point
- provide greater access to information on community services
- increase the community's awareness and understanding of current education practice
- promote lifelong learning through the educational role of the joint-use library
- encourage the development of a positive attitude in students towards school
- provide more avenues for promotion of the service
- bring different community groups together on the governing board
- may provide a social justice outcome for smaller communities which could not support separate services

These, and a number of issues such as conflict in philosophies, approaches to censorship, internet filtering, security, unions and governance are discussed by two US library directors in 'Share and share alike' (1999).

KEY PLANNING SUCCESS FACTORS

The literature has also delineated the key success factors for joint-use libraries. These are:
- a formal agreement endorsed by all cooperating authorities is essential
- the agreement should include the essential items but not attempt to cover all policy issues
- that agreement should provide for dissolution of the joint-use library
- the level of service provided must be equal to or better than that which could be provided in separate facilities
- system wide support is essential eg for staffing, professional development and advice and financial support
- a governing board should participate in the establishment of the service, to develop ongoing broad policy for its operation and to determine goals and budget priorities. A profile must be established for each joint-use library to define the community to be served
- provision must be made for any projected growth of the profile community
- choice of site is critical (if the site is predetermined and not ideal, an extra effort must be made)
- very good signage is necessary, in the environs and on site
- opening hours should meet the needs of the profile community

- physical facilities should be appropriate to the profile community
- there should be awareness of the special needs of the profile community
- staffing levels should be adequate and the composition of the staff should reflect the requirements of the profile community
- staffing should be integrated it possible
- support structures should discourage too rapid fluctuations in staffing numbers
- the library director should be a professional librarian and have freedom to manage, including having direct control of staff and budget
- the library director should be represented on the senior decision-making and policy bodies of each constituent institution
- direct two way communication should occur between the director and funding bodies
- regular consultation with, and reporting to, all parties concerned should occur
- regular internal and external evaluation of the library should take place

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AGREEMENT

The literature places considerable emphasis on maintaining a written record of all understandings and commitments leading to the establishment of the library. Similarly emphasised are the content and detail of formal agreements. If these are deficient in five major aspects, in particular, the operation of a joint-use library may prove to be extremely demanding, and at worst very stressful, for its staff. The five areas which need to be emphasised in agreements are space, staffing and staff development, information technology, the role of a governing board, and evaluation.

Space

Joint-use libraries in schools often do not present well as public libraries because of lack of space, and an institutional ambience. All libraries, particularly because of the demands of information technology, tend over time to need more space. Once joint-use libraries are functioning it may be very difficult to gain agreement on the need for more space and, more critically, who should pay for it. In Australia, for example, municipal local government, as the public library provider, has proven to be reluctant to contribute to extensions of libraries on State Education Department premises, and in which it has no legal equity. Agreements should specify how the need for more space will be identified and brought forward, and how it will be paid for.

Staffing

It is for good reason that joint-use library staff should be carefully selected. They need special qualities of advocacy, marketing, organisation, diplomacy and commitment to the concept—it is one of the most challenging and demanding areas of professional employment. However the reality is that many joint-use libraries are a development of an existing school library. This means a change management process for the staff already in it is desirable, but is rarely considered. Poor attitudes and service to the public may result.

Work overload and unpaid work to meet dual, sometimes even triple, responsibilities is common, particularly in small joint-use libraries. Inadequate levels of staffing can be particularly conspicuous in school community and community college-public libraries during student vacations, when the library must continue to function as a public library.

Of even greater moment is the extent of the integration of the staff. Lack of integration can be an industrial, personnel, and public relations minefield if staff have different managers, operate under different salaries, working hours and other conditions, and do not contribute in meeting the needs of all of the library's clientele. There *are* examples of libraries which

appear to function well with staff reporting to different managers and with different conditions of service. They tend to be the larger joint-use libraries. Experience shows that, if it can be achieved, the best approach is for all staff to be employed under the same conditions of service and responsible to one library director. As an example of how this can be done, one joint-use university/community college/public library in the State of Western Australia gave library staff the option of transferring to the most favourable of the employment conditions of the three partners. This proved to be the University's conditions. All staff are now employed by the University, with the community college and the public library effectively contracting their service to it (Hamblin 1998).

Information technology

Information technology and how it is to be prioritised, paid for, found space for, and supported, needs to be specified. This is such a critical part of the operation of any library that uncertainty about responsibilities can significantly undermine its effectiveness and staff morale. Of particular importance is a clear understanding of which library management system will be used in a new joint-use library, and how it will be upgraded or replaced in due course.

The governing body

The role and meeting schedule of a governing board should be defined in the agreement. In many instances, as for the school community libraries in South Australia, the governing board may consist of representatives of teachers, students, the school principal, the local authority or municipality, the community, and the library director, with a community member as the chairperson. However this broad constituency may be more problematic if a legally constituted public library requires a board of trustees separate from the school board, as is the case in parts of the USA.

Evaluation

Regular inhouse and external evaluation of all types of libraries, their operations and client satisfaction with them, is becoming increasingly common. It has particular value for joint-use libraries. Because the objectives of many joint-use libraries are not easily quantifiable, the emphasis in evaluation methods will be qualitative, but must necessarily be combined with quantitative measures of success. A regular, externally facilitated review of the library, commencing within three years of its establishment, should be specified in the agreement, as well as how that review is to be paid for. Difficulties in joint-use libraries tend to lay unrevealed to their partners until there is a crisis. Provision of a mechanism for transparent external evaluation will minimise this. Such a mechanism should build an ongoing self-evaluation and assessment of performance as detailed by Amey (1987 224-260).

PLANNING A JOINT-USE LIBRARY: A CHECKLIST

The following checklist is based on that developed by Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (1998). It is specific to school community libraries but much of it can be applied to other combinations such as community college library-public library and university library-public library. A negative or equivocal response to a significant number of the items in the list suggests serious reconsideration of the proposal.

Planning

Yes No

- ❏ ❏ Similarities and differences in the mission statements of the school library and the public library are understood and reconcilable
- ❏ ❏ The school and public library catchment areas are similar
- ❏ ❏ A preliminary feasibility study has been conducted
- ❏ ❏ Relevant groups have examined the complementary roles of school and public libraries and are aware of the services, resources, and access that must be offered to meet the needs of both client groups
- ❏ ❏ Community groups are involved in, and support, the decision to have a joint-use library
- ❏ ❏ Teachers and the Student Representative Council are involved in, and support, the decision to have a joint-use library
- ❏ ❏ The parties that will govern the library will define their responsibilities in a formal agreement
- ❏ ❏ An evaluation program will be specified in the agreement.
- ❏ ❏ Dissolution of the joint-use library will be provided for in the agreement
- ❏ ❏ Population growth or decline projected for the catchment area has been considered

Administration and funding

- ❏ ❏ The operation of the library has been agreed to, including the opening hours, budgeting, access to resources and activities, and authority for daily decision making
- ❏ ❏ Collection development and access policies consistent with the mission statements have been developed for both the school and public library use

Access to information, resources and facilities

- ❏ ❏ A policy for access for all age groups and maturity levels has been agreed
- ❏ ❏ It is accepted that children and teachers from other public and private schools in the community may use the library
- ❏ ❏ It is accepted that home schooled children and their parents may use the library
- ❏ ❏ The library will be accessible by the public at any time it is open, and through a visible public entrance
- ❏ ❏ Censorship, internet access and filtering issues have been addressed
- ❏ ❏ It is recognised that the group licensing of electronic products may require special negotiation and investment
- ❏ ❏ The library provides adequate space to implement the full range of school and public library services and technology
- ❏ ❏ The library has potential for extension
- ❏ ❏ A process for identifying and addressing future space needs is included in the agreement
- ❏ ❏ The need for some clients to be transported to the library is recognised
- ❏ ❏ The possible need for the library to offer a home delivery service is recognised
- ❏ ❏ The title of the library will make it clear who may use it
- ❏ ❏ The importance of directional and site signage is recognised
- ❏ ❏ Furniture, furnishings and ambience is as non institutional as possible

☐ ☐ Public washrooms are available in the library or adjacent to it

☐ ☐ A community meeting room is available

☐ ☐ Provision is made for people with disabilities

Attitudinal factors

☐ ☐ Decision-makers, administrators and employees are genuinely enthusiastic about the project and dedicated to making it work

☐ ☐ Improving facilities, service, resources and access—not saving money—is the primary motivation in developing the library

☐ ☐ Adults feel comfortable and welcome in the school and are accustomed to using it for public functions

☐ ☐ The mixing of preschoolers, children, teenagers and young and older adults is not seen as threatening or uncomfortable by any of the potential users or the library's partners

☐ ☐ All security and duty of care issues have been considered and reconciled

There are several items in the above checklist on which, in the light of experience, comment is required.

Planning

- The preliminary feasibility study should be facilitated by a library consultant. At minimum it should be someone with no vested interest in the outcome.

- At the earliest stage possible, a communication strategy to anticipate and address possible concerns of all client groups about the new facility should be developed. Few joint-use libraries worldwide have been implemented without concern from one or more groups of clients about its impact on them. These concerns may range from seniors reluctant to travel to the school or contest space with students, teachers and students apprehensive about 'their' resources being used by the public, to parents and teachers concerned about unrestricted access by the general public to a facility on school property.

Access to information and resources

Internet access can be problematic as schools may use filters, which is generally contrary to public library philosophy and practice

The physical facility

- The location, visibility and ambience of the library is critical to its acceptance by the public. Deficiencies in these were a major factor in the failure of some libraries in Canada—the public refused to use them. Public schools tend not to be located on prime real estate or adjacent to those busy retail, business or community centers which are the best locations for public libraries. A special effort therefore has to be made with stand-out signage indicating the location of the library, and that it is a public facility. The lack of this stand-out signage is a failing in many communities, not only with joint-use libraries but also with public libraries. The funding, permission for, and erection of directional signage may appear to be a minor issue. In reality it is often an afterthought which falls at bureaucratic fences, or takes a professional lifetime to achieve. Those school community libraries in outback South Australia with good directional signage find this is particularly appreciated by many international tourists pleased that they provide free internet and email access. Good directional and site signage should be built into the initial budget for the

new library, and a useful engagement with the new library would be for students in the school to audit their community to identify signage locations.

Terminology also needs careful consideration. For example, the most common usage in Australian and New Zealand is 'school community library' or just 'community library'. There have been instances of this being interpreted by the general public as for the 'school community', not the 'school and general community'. To overcome this, directional signage to some school community libraries in Australia now unequivocally states 'Public library at high school'. The lesson is, assume nothing, take nothing and no-one for granted.

- Many joint-use libraries, to accommodate the needs of students, teachers and the public and to minimise congestion, have something which is operationally anathema to many libraries—two entrances. From a security viewpoint, in smaller rural communities this is not usually a problem—one rural school community library in South Australia which can be approached from four directions has four entrances. However, it may result in costly duplication of electronic or RFID (Radio Frequency ID) security systems, which should be allowed for in planning the library.

- Public parking for a joint-use library is at least as important as it is for a public library. Not everyone will behave well about parking. If spaces for the public are usurped by teachers and students, or visitors to the school, it will deter public use and be a source of never-ending complaint.

- Relatively few joint-use libraries are initially provided with new, purpose-designed accommodation—most are a public library grafted onto a school library, sometimes without additional space. Lack of space, driven often by the needs of technology, is a challenge for many school and public libraries. Such a lack in a joint-use library is particularly detrimental to its acceptance and use as a public library, and can be detrimental to library-based student programs. However it is the needs of the modern public library which tend to create most pressure for additional space in joint-use libraries. The assessment of whether an existing school or community college library building can become a satisfactory joint-use library really does need professional judgement. Space standards for school, community college, university, and public libraries exist in various forms and jurisdictions. They may be used in combination, and with allowance for common-use areas, for a joint-use library. However, there are no space standards for joint-use libraries and they are unlikely to be developed given the individuality of every joint-use library.

- The majority of joint-use libraries are high or middle school and public library combinations, but in some places such as New Brunswick in Canada the combination is that of an elementary school library with a public library. In the South Australian scheme of rural joint-use libraries, elementary schools were initially not eligible, but eventually the approval committee did include a small number. These have been less successful than high school based libraries. The reasons have been the size of the elementary school libraries and their furniture, lack of school resources of interest to the public, limited technology and limited professional and other staffing. An elementary school-public library combination requires especially careful consideration.

Attitudinal factors

In the first flush of enthusiasm for what may seem to be an innovative, ground-breaking, concept decision-makers tend to overstate the advantages and minimise the challenges of a joint-use library. On the other hand, there will always be those, including librarians, who see

the challenges and none of the advantages. Open minds and critical faculties are needed. Nothing is as useful as investment in the time and travel, email or phone costs to communicate with a range of existing joint-use libraries. Relying on the literature alone to validate or invalidate the concept for local application can be misleading.

CONCLUSIONS

There are several realities about joint-use libraries

1 Suggestions and proposals for them will continue to arise from politicians, local decision-makers, school boards and community members to whom a library, is a library, is a library. They may too readily assume that a joint-use library will easily meet the needs of all client groups and will save operational, resource and construction costs. Experience shows that this may well *not* be the outcome.

2 Worldwide the number of such libraries, and experimentation with them, is growing. Forty per cent of public libraries in Sweden are joint-use, 40 per cent in South Australia, 9 per cent in Australia, 8 per cent in Canada, and less than 2 per cent in the USA.

3 Given the choice of a mobile library visiting infrequently or a static joint-use library open for longer and regular hours, most people in rural areas are likely to choose the joint-use library.

4 There is now enough experience in their development to identify factors in their failure rate and poor professional press from the 1960s onwards.

5 There is also now enough experience in their development to optimise their chance of success.

6 The concept remains most likely to succeed in rural areas of about 3,500 people, and where a school library has a professional librarian in charge of it.

7 It may also work well in urban areas.

8 The combination community college-public library often works well, and with more ease than the school housed public library because of the relative maturity of the student population, the design and technology of the modern community college library, and the utility of its collection to the public.

9 The concept has considerable potential in developing countries with rural populations served currently by neither a school library nor a public library. Despite the increasing urbanisation of the world's population, a large proportion continues to live in rural areas. Many of these areas, particularly in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South America do not yet have local provision of static, or even mobile, libraries—but they do generally have schools. They do, therefore, offer the potential for a joint-use facility of two complementary, but different, educational agencies, the school library and the public library.

At their worst joint-use libraries fail completely or are dysfunctional, do not attract the public, do not advantage a school in its community profile or access to resources, and result in very stressed library staff. The recorded experience available about joint-use libraries means that there is now no excuse for decision-makers who persist in an inappropriate joint-use library development.

Many joint-use libraries, however, are a very popular, exciting and reinforcing manifestation of community vision and professional commitment. This is because, ultimately, what makes good joint-use libraries is the library staff who rise to their challenges and opportunities.

At the beginning of this chapter it was observed that joint-use libraries rarely eventuate from advocacy for them by the library profession. Most are an outcome of professional reaction to political and community suggestions. The time has perhaps come when more professional proaction about joint-use libraries—in the right circumstances—would be a better approach.

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Dr Alan Bundy is the University Librarian of the University of South Australia, 2001/2 President of the Australian Library and Information Association, editor and publisher of the journal *Australasian public libraries and information services* and the *Directory of Australian public libraries*. Joint-use libraries were the focus of his doctoral research and he has visited many joint-use libraries in several countries. Dr Bundy's other professional interests include information literacy, public libraries and library publishing. He is interested in being contacted by joint-use librarians about their experiences.

Address: University of South Australia Library Holbrooks Road Underdale South Australia 5032 telephone (08) 8302 6260 fax (08) 8302 6362 email alan.bundy@unida.edu.au