Chapter 1
Better Together:
The Successful Public/ Academic Joint Use Library

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ABSTRACT

The Library and Learning Center at Metropolitan State University is a shared space between the Metropolitan State University Library and a branch of the Saint Paul Public Library system. This chapter reviews the literature on joint use libraries and provides a history of the planning and development of the Library and Learning Center. In detailing the history of both organizations and the current state of collaboration ten years after the building opened, this chapter will describe how the experience at Metropolitan State aligns with that of similar joint use libraries. Furthermore, by highlighting collaborative services and programming, the chapter will be instructive for libraries that wish to form collaborative relationships outside of a joint use model. It will also describe the strengths of the joint use model in meeting the shared goals of community engagement and lifelong learning, while remaining cognizant of the challenges that are inherent in any joint use library initiative.

INTRODUCTION

The number of collaborative relationships between different types of libraries - in the form of joint use libraries - is increasing worldwide, including in the United States. However, the overall number of joint use libraries remains quite low; as of 2003, Bundy put the number at less than two percent in the United States (p. 146). The most common type involves partnerships between primary and secondary school libraries and public libraries. There are fewer joint use examples involving public libraries and academic libraries.

Regarding partnerships involving a four year university, Jordan (2005) noted that, "The best chance to create one exists where there is a university in an urban or fast-growing area, focused more on teaching than research, and interested in civic engagement" (Rare in America section, para. 2). A focus on teaching and an interest in civic engagement can serve to bring the mission of a university more into alignment with the typical goals and mission of a public library, and make a partnership between the two entities more viable.

Rabe described different levels of integration evident in joint use libraries, from a single merged library, to a shared physical space and nothing else (as cited in Dalton, et al., 2006, p. 541). A joint use library located in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood of Saint Paul, Minnesota falls somewhere between these two levels of integration. The Metropolitan State University Library and the Saint Paul Public Library share a building, the Library and Learning Center, within which the Saint Paul Public Library leases space for their Dayton's Bluff Branch location. Each library has its own collections, staff, and service desks, thus remaining independent. However, the libraries partner to provide shared services and joint programming, such as book clubs and special events.

This chapter will serve to highlight a unique partnership between a university library and a public library in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The authors will review the relevant literature, provide background information, describe shared services and programming, identify the strengths and challenges of this type of collaboration, and consider possible future directions for the partnership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section the authors will review the literature on:

- Joint use libraries in a broad sense, and the major types of joint use libraries;
- Trends related to joint use libraries and partnerships;
- Other university library-public library joint use examples;
- Planning and staff considerations for joint use libraries; and
- Engagement and community partnerships.

Joint use libraries are collaborations between different kinds of libraries, most commonly between primary and secondary school-public, community college-public, university-public, university-community college, and community-university-public libraries (Collins & Duncan, 2006). In his 2003 book chapter "Joint-use libraries – The ultimate form of cooperation," Bundy noted that while the number of joint use libraries is increasing, the number of joint use libraries in the United States is relatively small. "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" (p. 146). Many joint use libraries involve primary and secondary school-public library partnerships, particularly in rural areas, and several case studies have been written about joint use endeavors, including a study of Canadian academic-public partnerships (Sarjeant-Jenkins & Walker, 2014), Worcester, UK (Dalton, Elkin, & Hannaford, 2006), Loudon County, Virginia (Zolnik, Minde, Das Gupta, & Turner, 2010) and Stillman Valley, Illinois (Kluever & Finley, 2012).

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