Chapter 43
Marriage After Divorce:
The Challenges and Opportunities of a Shared Library After Institutions Separate

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ABSTRACT

The Jane Bancroft Cook Library is shared by New College of Florida, a small liberal arts college and the University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM), a regional campus within a research university system. It has served both institutions since they were merged on the same campus in 1975. The institutions were formally separated in 2001, and USFSM moved to its own campus in 2006. A number of fundamental issues challenge the partnership, including longstanding cultural differences that have impeded communication and planning. Both partners have agreed to develop a new library management agreement and identify new partnerships in student services and other areas. Although the future of this shared library is still uncertain, there is reason for optimism with the possibility that the partnering institutions can set aside past differences and develop a vital shared library while unearthing new collaborations in the process.

INTRODUCTION

Shared or joint-use libraries are characterized as the ultimate form of collaboration. (Bundy, 2003) They have existed for decades but became popular during the 1990's with the advent of networked electronic information and a growing sense that economies of scale in sharing library resources could benefit the institutions engaged in such partnerships. With the emergence of the internet and the rapid development of networked computing, the feasibility of providing discrete services to users from different institutions at the same location became a reality.

Kifer and Light (2009) state that

The impetus for the development of a shared-use library often comes from policy makers that perceive it as a way to address several goals and problems. Commonly, two different levels of government publicly

fund such libraries. Sharing the costs of building, staffing, maintaining, and developing collections can be more cost effective than building and operating separate library facilities. In addition, the resources included in these buildings, including the collections, technology, staff, and facilities such as group study rooms and meeting rooms are readily available to more of the taxpayers who are the primary funders. Private, philanthropic funders may be more willing to contribute to a joint-use library. Policy makers are well aware that the access to information available today via the Internet makes it increasingly difficult to justify the barriers to access that exist when libraries serve more limited communities of users (p. 4741).

For the purposes of this chapter, the term joint-use library will be used to refer to a library cohabitated by two or more different types of organizations, such as a public library and a community college library. Shared library is the term that will be used for a library cohabitated by two or more similar organizations such as two 4-year colleges or universities. The library featured in this chapter is a shared library. Public libraries often partner with other local entities, including K-12 schools, historical institutions and community colleges, to provide services to multiple audiences. Public and school joint-use libraries are the most common type of these partnerships, although community college and public joint-use libraries exist in fair numbers. Government and public advocacy for these partnerships have resulted in their increasing numbers, particularly in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (Kifer and Light, 2009).

There are relatively few examples of 4-year colleges and universities partnering with each other to share a library. The most notable examples of these types of shared libraries in the United States include the Claremont Colleges Consortium Library, the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, and the Loyola/Notre Dame Library in Maryland. A few larger university libraries have teamed with public libraries. Notable are the Alvin Sherman Library, Research, and Technology Center shared by Nova Southeastern University and the residents of Broward County, Florida, and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library serving San Jose State University and the city of San Jose.

An unusual example of a shared library exists in Sarasota, Florida partnering a small public liberal arts college and a regional campus of a public research university. Unlike most shared libraries, this collaboration was not formed through an intentional strategy devised by the institutions themselves. Rather, the partnership was created after the two institutions were formally separated by state legislative mandate – a marriage after a divorce. The history of the two institutions is complex, and the shared library that emerged after their separation has come with challenging financial, organizational and cultural attributes. The problems inherent in this situation are not totally unique. Gunnels, Green, and Butler (2012) identify many of the threats that face shared libraries that were created without a purposeful process. Lack of shared vision and mission, goals that reflect the priorities of all partners, and cultural discord between the two institutions formed during their long and tenuous history together are a few of the challenges facing this shared library.

This chapter will examine the Jane Bancroft Cook Library on the campus of New College of Florida, a public 4-year residential liberal arts college. The library serves New College and the University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM), a regional branch campus of the University of South Florida (USF) system. This shared library is an intriguing example of a partnership that began in 1975 when the two institutions were merged by legislative action and continued after the institutions were separated in 2001. The history of this partnership will illuminate the many political and cultural obstacles inherent in the formation and sustainability of a shared library serving two institutions after a "divorce." This chapter will appraise the circumstances that led up to the current state of this library and the complex relationships and attitudes that drive the partnership. Cook Library will be analyzed based on characteristics of

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