
Dual Use Libraries: Guidelines for Success

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ABSTRACT

Combined school and public libraries have been studied extensively for more than thirty years. Common advantages and disadvantages, together with typical problems, have been identified. From the work of researchers in three countries, predictors of success can be articulated: the population served is less than 10,000; a formal planning process involving the stakeholders was undertaken; a written legal agreement for governance, administration, finances, and operations includes guidelines for evaluation and dissolution; a decision-making board or management committee develops policies and procedures and engages and evaluates the director; an integrated facility is conveniently and visibly located, accommodating a variety of groups and resources with a separate area for adults and designated parking; the library is connected with a larger network, regional system, or consortium; the principal has a strong desire for success and teachers support the concept; one highly motivated professional librarian is in charge; there is regular communication and planned cooperation between public library and school staffs; and there are no restrictions on access to resources or on the circulation of materials.

INTRODUCTION

Dual use libraries (note: dual not duel!) are not new. The language changes over time but the essential elements remain the same. Whether discussing dual use libraries, the school-housed public library, the joint-use, combined, or community library, or co-located libraries, the basic principle is consistent: a common physical facility from which library services are provided to two ostensibly different communities of users.

It is important to distinguish dual use libraries from other levels of cooperation. Generally, libraries and systems may cooperate at least informally in sharing resources, services, and expertise. These levels of cooperation may range from simple courtesy (class visits), to specific services for a related group (homework centers), to more formal cooperation (joint programs for promotion of reading); much less common is collaboration, in which two equal partners solve common community problems together (for example, an outcomes-based joint family literacy initiative).

Although terms are often used interchangeably, this article distinguishes between cooperation between two agencies and actual co-location of staff, collections, and services. There are many examples of successful cooperation (see, for example, Haycock, 1989, for a succinct summary of possibilities). There are fewer examples of successful co-location viewed through the lens of rigorous assessment.

The most common dual libraries are combined public (that is, secular, fully tax-supported) school (more commonly high school than elementary school) libraries and public libraries, usually in smaller communities. Less common are dual academic and public libraries; where these occur they are typically college and public libraries, less commonly large universities. The most recent notable exception is the San Jose State University Library and the San Jose Public Library in California. This has been variously described as a consummated courtship, a mutually beneficial relationship, a marriage of convenience, a planned or arranged marriage, and a shotgun marriage, no doubt depending on one's philosophical position and perspective rather than a particular set of key success factors.

Regrettably, the possibility of dual use libraries not only inflames passion but also seems to release all reason. One need only peruse the professional literature to realize that research is less commonly reported, where it even exists, than the experiences of both zealots and nonbelievers. Titles and subtitles include "A success story!" "Together at last," "The long over due partnership," "A call to action!" as well as "A case against combination," "Don't do it!" and "A blueprint for disaster." The many, many examples profiled are based on assumed or presumed successes and the experiences of unmitigated catastrophe. The focus of this article is specifically on school and public library combinations and the research that informs predictors of success.

Given certain conditions, mergers of school and public libraries may benefit both the community and the school. Where at least minimum separate service is not provided, combined facilities might be better, but they have not proven to be more economical when compared to an equivalent level of independent service; and they are usually initiated by school administrators and school boards due to their own lack of staff or funds. Indeed, one criterion for determining whether to proceed is whether the level of service will be at least equal to, or better than, two separate entities.

Articulation of general advantages and disadvantages, positive aspects and negative aspects, have developed from early reports of public librarians' unease with the "school-housed public library" (White, 1963). These have been extended by more recent examples reported in the literature.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

To start with the upside, possible advantages or positive aspects of integrated services can include an improved collection, extended or better service, less duplication of effort and resources, more electronic and media services, and better use of funds. This can translate into professional staff where none existed previously, longer hours, and a broader range of information sources and literacy programs for the community. The bottom line is that there may be no viable alternative for a reasonable level of school or public library service in a small community. A joint library can become a community focal point.

Possible disadvantages or negative components include the possibility that fewer adults are willing to use the school library, especially during school hours, rather than a separate facility, sometimes due to a location that is not central and sometimes due to a perceived intimidation by an overwhelming student/teen population and presence. Similarly, some out-of-area students may choose not to use an alternative or rival school's library. Other reluctant users have been young mothers and school dropouts.

Occasionally, school staff experience a frustrating disturbance of school activities, for example, through the unexpected arrival of a group of preschoolers or use by surrounding small independent and parochial schools with no library facilities. More limited facilities can then become problematic due to increased crowding. The overwhelming school context may result in competition for attention between children and adults, to the neglect of the public library component. An inability of limited staff to deal with a range of students and adults or a single program of limited service can result. There is also the perennial concern about restricted circulation of materials and possible censorship of material, even prior to purchase, due to the school's role of acting legally *in locus parentis*.

COMMON PROBLEMS

In addition to common advantages and disadvantages, there are several problems inherent in many dual use facilities. There are often, for example, basic differences in purpose, resulting in role conflict (see Jeffus, 1996, for a useful comparison in chart form). Thus, there is the possibility of undue stress being placed on the one librarian who now serves two supervising bodies, each with its own values, mission, vision, goals, and priorities.

The school exists to educate children. The focus of the school librarian, therefore, is on formal instruction. Research suggests that impact on student achievement is greatest when the school librarian and teachers

collaborate to plan units of study that integrate information literacy strategies and skills in the curriculum. It follows, then, that the school librarian will be an experienced teacher (the norm in Australia, Canada, and the United States) with additional qualifications as a teacher-librarian. From this starting point, the role of the teacher-librarian, the nature of the collection, and policies and procedures regarding access and use all support the mission of the school's program. Even when a public library adopts a role of support for formal education, as distinct from informal lifelong learning, the structure and systems are not so closely aligned with the school. The public library, on the other hand, as the marketplace of information and ideas—the people's university—focuses on the individual and his or her self-defined pursuit of knowledge.

Due to location (the school is rarely in high traffic areas such as business and retail centers and shopping centers), school context (all those kids and programs), and crowded daytime facilities, public usage can be projected to be lower than similar independent facilities. There are also several problems cited around governance and management issues. The school district boundaries and city or village boundaries are often not contiguous, raising questions about who are acceptable clients and funding sources. Ill-defined areas of responsibility make performance assessment difficult. With different boards and employers, salary and work schedule expectations can vary significantly for what appear to be similar roles and responsibilities. Security problems concern parents and teachers when adults and children intermingle in school facilities.

PREDICTING SUCCESS

Predictors of success have been identified in the work of the primary researchers and writers in this area. These have not been limited to a single site or a single set of circumstances. The criteria provided here represent a synthesis, and in some cases an expansion, of the work of national researchers and assessors: Shirley Aaron (1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1980, 1981; Aaron & Smith, 1977), who studied combined services in Canada and the United States; Larry Amey (1974, 1976, 1979, 1987, 1989; Amey & Smith, 1976), who has evaluated school-housed public libraries in Canada and Australia; Alan Bundy (1998, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2003), who has assessed joint use facilities in Australia and New Zealand; and Wilma Woolard (1977, 1978, 1980a, 1980b), who examined combined school-public libraries in the United States. In addition, the following writers reviewed developments in individual states: Jim Dwyer (1987, 1989a, 1989b) in South Australia; Allen Grunau (1965) in Kansas; and Lawrence Jaffe (1982) in Pennsylvania. There have also been many studies of single operations, including those by Patricia Bauer (1995), Daniel Heinold (1993), Sally Kinsey and Sharon Honig-Bear (1994), and James Kitchens (1974). Many researchers and writers have summarized and synthesized the literature, leading to predictors

of success, including George Burns (1988), Marianne K. Cassell (1985), Shirley Fitzgibbons (1999, 2000, 2001), Ken Haycock (1974, 1975, 1979, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1994), Jay Heath (1997), Don Sager (1999), and Jack Stack (1997).

Specific factors have been identified as important for potential success. These might be considered predictors, based on research and evaluation studies involving hundreds of combined school and public libraries. Could there be exceptions? Of course. However, any agency would be foolish not to consider these criteria and systematically address each one, whether that means implementing it or planning to overcome it.

Criteria for Potential Success

The following ten criteria appear consistently and continually in studies that investigate and assess the quality of services in dual use libraries. As stated earlier, given the many problems and possible disadvantages inherent in combined school and public libraries, the joint use community library needs to provide demonstrably equal or better than equal service than two independent services operating in the same budgetary framework.

In order to provide a solid basis for success, a community will need to commit to the principles listed below. These are unique to dual use libraries. They do not include the necessary professional elements also common to separate facilities and services, such as form-follows-function design principles; effective management of people, resources, and services; customer service factors; and outreach. The ten criteria are as follows:

1. The population of the community to be served is less than 10,000.
2. A formal planning process involving the significant stakeholders will be undertaken. Community involvement and support will be evident.
3. There will be a written legal agreement for governance, administration, finances, and operations. Guidelines for evaluation and dissolution will be included.
4. A single, independent, representative decision-making board or management committee will develop policies and procedures and engage and evaluate the director.
5. An integrated facility (not two libraries sharing one facility) is preferred; the facility will be conveniently and visibly located and large enough to accommodate a variety of groups and resources. A separate area for adults and designated parking will be provided.
6. The library will be connected with a larger network, regional system, or consortium.
7. The principal of the school should have a strong desire for success, and teachers should support the concept; support for the integrated service will be a specific factor in hiring and transfer decisions.
8. One highly motivated professional librarian will be in charge and report to a single governance board.

9. There will be regular discussion of effective communication at all levels and planned cooperation between public library staff and school staff.
10. There will be no restrictions on access to print, audio/video, or electronic resources or on the circulation of materials.

Predictors of Success

The population of the community to be served is less than 10,000 While the numbers vary, most researchers find that successful operations exist in smaller communities. Woolard, for example, suggests communities under 10,000. Heath found most successful dual libraries in communities under 5,000. Bundy suggested 3,500, while Dwyer found success in communities of fewer than 3,000. Aaron, in testing Woolard's findings, located a few combinations that appeared successful in serving a catchment area beyond 10,000, but the other criteria noted here still applied.

In isolated rural areas where finances are a problem, combined facilities may be the only alternative for any type of library service. Indeed, the work of Amey, Bundy, and Dwyer, focusing on the state of South Australia, not only identifies benefits but also criteria for assessment. Further, in recognition of both the challenges and opportunities, the state has provided consultative assistance specifically for communities engaging in planning and developing these "community-based" libraries.

A formal planning process involving the significant stakeholders will be undertaken. Community involvement and support will be evident Successful ventures begin with an inclusive planning process that places library services formally in a comprehensive community services context. Needs assessments will be undertaken and profiles developed. Joint planning and role setting is complex and complicated work. So, who is in charge? What are the responsibilities of the committee? Who will fund planning activities? Who will contribute what? Who will plan and oversee facility design? Issues need to be identified and roles and responsibilities articulated. Ground rules should ensure that adequate time and funds are provided for planning, that all issues are placed on the table, that all choices and options are pursued. Many communities have found that initial enthusiasm for a combined library waned when faced with both insurmountable challenges and reasonable alternatives.

The process of formal planning should result in a shared vision for the service with common goals, recognizing the duality of function, and the adoption of preliminary policies and procedures. Given that there is little evidence of savings in operational costs, the planning team will want to consider key success factors for the combined library. Everyone should be clear about why they are pursuing this avenue and what will be required to make it work. As with any strategic planning process, an environmental scan will be useful, including the strengths and weaknesses of the cur-

rent system and the opportunities and threats in the community at large. Strategic directions and comprehensive planning must ensure community involvement and support as a foundation for a successful venture.

There will be a written legal agreement for governance, administration, finances, and operations. Guidelines for evaluation and dissolution will be included Contractual arrangements will cover roles and responsibilities of each party; management; security issues; hours of operation; ownership of the site, facility, furnishings, equipment, and materials; staffing; collection development and management (policies on selection of materials, appropriate use of technology, access to the collection, multiple copies for the curriculum vs. a balanced collection); library technical services (combined ordering and common organizational principles); user rights and responsibilities; circulation periods and extended use fees (fines); how services will be provided; responsibility for facility operations; financial responsibilities and obligations; sources and uses of funding; objective criteria for expected performance levels; procedures for evaluation, with regular monitoring and assessment, including benchmarking against standards; and reports for specified audiences on a regularly scheduled basis.

Clearly the school superintendent or designate and library director or designate as well as the board chairs will need to be involved in the development of such an agreement. This legal contract will include provisions for termination with criteria for dissolution and the distribution of assets.

A single, independent, representative decision-making board or management committee will develop policies and procedures and engage and evaluate the director Roles and responsibilities, and reporting structures, are essential to a successful operation. To whom does the director report? For effective public library services it will not be to the school principal. Neither can it be to a remote board dealing with all libraries or schools; the demands and issues are unique. The director will have different responsibilities and expectations and should work with a separate board, or committee with authority, that will, nevertheless, still operate within the overall framework of state legislation and larger systems. The exact form of administration, the nature of the governing board, and the need for a citizen advisory committee are less clear from the research.

An integrated facility (not two libraries sharing one facility) is preferred; the facility will be conveniently and visibly located and large enough to accommodate a variety of groups and resources. A separate area for adults and designated parking will be provided An integrated facility in this context means that the service does not simply comprise two libraries sharing one facility. It will be open to all during all open hours, with separate entrances for the community and the school, comprising exterior public access and interior school access. There will be a street presence.

There are many different models of two libraries sharing one facility. Target groups might be by level (elementary or secondary school) or by

focus (children only, teens only, entire community). Models for facilities include a secondary school library on one level and the public library on another, separated by a flight of stairs (used primarily by staff); a single facility with a shared collection but different entrances, user space, and administrative services; completely separate hours with, for example, school use from 8 to 3 and public access from 3 to 9 and weekends; in the school; connected to the school; independently sited on the school grounds. These issues will be determined by local interests and conditions.

Access at grade level for the community, proximity to classrooms, and external access to a meeting room have all proven useful. However, when one increases access for adults to schools, security concerns for children increase and must be addressed.

Secure and restricted parking for adults will be necessary. Few schools, especially secondary schools, have sufficient parking for teachers and students. Customers unable to find parking near the entrance will not return.

A public library located in a school, by whatever name, will have more young people in it, whether engaged in productive use or not, than one that is not. Some adults find this intimidating or at least overwhelming. A separate area for adults, with comfortable furniture and current newspapers and magazines, can re-create the oasis that the public library represents for many community members. A well-planned and well-designed marketing plan and public awareness strategy will be necessary to encourage public use of the building.

The library will be connected with a larger network, regional system, or consortium No library can operate on its own any longer. Regional systems, federations, networks, and multitype consortia are all more common as resources and systems become more sophisticated. A larger system can provide professional advice and support, professional development and training, access to programs and resources, and improved electronic capacity. A combined library board and staff should view connections with systems as an important investment of time and money.

The school principal should have a strong desire for success, and teachers should support the concept; support for the integrated service will be a specific factor in hiring and transfer decisions The principal's commitment is a critical factor. It is often present at the beginning but not considered in administrative transfers and assignments. The initial level of commitment needs to be maintained as personnel changes. Similarly, the principal will encourage teacher support and use over time.

One highly motivated professional librarian will be in charge and report to a single governance board A significant advantage to combined services in smaller communities is the ability to engage a professional librarian. Working with both the school and the public library components, however, will challenge even the best trained and experienced director. The challenges

and disadvantages are well-known, the common problems readily identifiable, and barriers to success well documented. The single professional, or director of staff, will ideally be certified as both a school and public librarian; will be flexible, adaptable, and committed to the success of the operation; and will be able to translate that enthusiasm and commitment as a skilled networker into effective advocacy and marketing programs.

There will be regular discussion of effective communication at all levels and planned cooperation between public library staff and school staff Communication through meetings needs to be frequent and regularly scheduled. Site staff need both pressure and support to collaborate, or it will not happen in a busy work environment.

Consistent with the operating agreement, annual evaluations will be conducted against identified key success factors and benchmarked libraries. Annual reports will include connections between strategic plans, goals and measurable results, statistics on users and use, and recommendations for improvement.

There will be no restrictions on access to print, audio/video, or electronic resources or the circulation of materials The management board will have policies on the selection of materials and the appropriate use of technology, recognizing the library's commitment to intellectual freedom as a marketplace of information and ideas. In order to leverage the expanded collection it is preferable that all materials be shelved together, with no restrictions on borrowing. Reading guidance and student assistance will be more important than restrictions on rights to read, listen, and view materials. Clearly specified and well-understood options to Internet filtering will also be required, at worst providing opportunities for disabling filters when necessary for students.

Most single "success" stories, even as descriptive reports, appear to meet these research-based criteria.

TRENDS AND ISSUES

In spite of the rhetoric around dual use libraries, including some professional association policy statements, there is a sufficient research base to enable considered and effective analysis and planning. Researchers have developed checklists for feasibility studies (see, for example, Aaron, 1980) as have state agencies. Readers would do well to consult those of the California State Library (2000), the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning (2000), the Ohio State Library (1996), and the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction (1998), among others.

These guidelines and checklists need to be adapted to focus on community development roles for school and public libraries and options for co-location of public and academic libraries and school and community college libraries. There is an increasing number of examples of opportunities for public and private agencies to work together for better library and

information service provision, and the research into combined school and public library facilities and services can inform this development.

There are also ample studies and resource lists of cooperative endeavors (Haycock, 1989) but fewer studies exist on true collaborative efforts between school districts and public libraries. Douglas (1990) provides the elements of one of the few formal policy statements of mutual expectations between a public library system and a school system. Within this framework greater collaboration can occur. One might look to current areas of service that could be enhanced by interagency collaboration between two equal partners. An increasing number of public library systems are providing homework centers, for example, as an identifiable service to clients. Few have constructed these services through joint problem identification, analysis, and solving with the school district, however. The difference could be striking, moving from a drop-in service operated by well-meaning laypeople, to the same space and staffing as the public library but appropriate resources and training provided by the school system, with referral of students in need and tracking of results.

This same level of collaboration might be applied to early and family literacy programs, too often operated with "mindful ignorance" of the work of other agencies. Other recent examples include career counseling and job information and reference services, intergenerational programs, support for immigrant families, and information technology training. Common Web sites and efforts for young people could have greater effect.

Libraries of all types have moved beyond four walls in providing access to resources, and some are now looking more at formal partnerships that enable programming by other agencies on a regular basis in their physical space. Early literacy programs by community agencies might be regularly scheduled in public library space as a co-sponsored program.

Electronic and technological advances, together with increased focus on community development and outcome-based assessment, have led to more statewide licenses for access to specialized databases for all residents, including schools. This has led to school representatives at the tables of consortia. It would be unfortunate if the opportunities presented by conversations among a wider variety of information professionals did not lead to improved collaboration for the benefit of our communities, whether dual use physical space was a component or not.

The research on dual use school/public community libraries points to critical factors that can predict success. The supporting documentation, checklists, and guidelines can also inform dual purpose library projects based on collaboration between public and private agencies. If one were to view cooperative efforts on a continuum from courtesy to cooperation to collaboration to co-location, our efforts are more commonly providing services through informal cooperation and courtesy or full co-location. The potential exists through collaboration for improved community services

with a focus on outcomes and impact. Collaborative efforts enable us to leverage our resources for greater effect and see possibilities that may include co-location after full exploration of all of the alternatives and options.

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