Joint Use Libraries: Implementing a Pilot Community/School Library Project in a Remote Rural Area in South Africa

Sophia le Roux and Francois Hendrikz

Abstract

The research of a postgraduate study into joint use libraries internationally led to the development of a proposed model for a community-school library relevant for South African conditions. This model was proposed to the Provincial Library and Information Service of Mpumalanga. Based on the requirements to successfully implement the model, the rural community of Maphotla was selected as a pilot site. The proposal coincided with the building of a new library. The framework of the research was used as a guide to draft a project plan that was used during implementation. During implementation of the plan, minor changes were required for practical reasons. Although the implementation of the model is in its beginning stages, it already has proved to be successful in relation to factors such as school participation, learners participation in library activities during and after school, and the participation of various other role players. It is envisaged to implement the model in other areas where there is a dearth of public and school libraries to improve access to libraries and information.

Introduction

There are substantial backlogs in the development of public and school library services in South Africa, especially in the remote rural areas. One way of achieving improved provision of public and school library services appears to be through joint use services. This article describes a study that investigated the variants of the school-community library model worldwide with the aim of defining a South African prototype, which would satisfy the

needs of a rural, tribal community (Le Roux, 2001). The article further describes how the prototype proposed in this study is currently being piloted in a remote rural area in Mpumalanga by forging partnerships with various stakeholders.

In the context of this article, a community-school library refers to an integrated public and school library service, operating from a single building according to an agreement between the school and another tax-supported agency or agencies, for example, the provincial or local government authority. It aims to serve learners, educators, and the community (general public) within the particular municipal boundary by means of the facility (Le Roux, 2001, p. 19). Remote rural communities are tribal communities living in dense, planned settlements with populations of over 5,000 people, and they are common in the former homeland areas. These settlements are referred to as "betterment" settlements in local government planning in South Africa (South Africa Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, 1998, p. 13).

Scope of the South African Study

Although several variants of the school-community library model that could be considered for South Africa do exist in other countries, a need was felt to develop models geared to the information needs of the diverse communities in South Africa. As the people living in the remote rural areas in South Africa are particularly disadvantaged as far as access to information to improve their lives is concerned (Le Roux, 2001, p. 254), the study investigated a possible variant of the school-community model that would suit the communities living in these areas. The study examined the variants of the school-community library in their particular geographical, social, and educational contexts in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Australia (South Australia) to determine whether comparable conditions existed that would justify the implementation of this model in the rural, tribal areas of South Africa. The study examined the reasons for the historical development of the school-community library model in the selected countries, as well as the practical application of this model through a critical review of the literature, an analysis of published case studies, and a study of official documentation.

Prerequisites for the successful implementation and operation of the school-community library, as identified in the study of the selected countries, provided a framework for evaluating the possible application of the school-community library model to the rural, tribal communities in South Africa. The suitability of the different variants of the school-community library model for these communities was then considered. After examining all these factors, the school-community library model, housed in a public library building, was proposed in the study. The characteristics and the perceived advantages of this variant of the model were indicated as well as

the conditions needed for the successful implementation of this variant of the model. Finally, a set of guidelines was presented for the establishment and operation of this library model in a South African rural community in the tribal areas (Le Roux, 2001, pp. 275–291, 343–366); the guidelines could be used for piloting this model by provincial and local authorities in South Africa and also by government authorities in other African countries with comparable conditions.

RELEVANCE OF OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE TO SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL AREAS

The factors found to be crucial to the successful establishment of the combined school-community library in the selected countries were determined and examined in the South African context. These factors are set out below.

Political Commitment by the Government to the Idea of School and
Public Library Cooperation

After a review of the relevant legislation governing school and public libraries, it became clear that nothing in South African legislation prohibits government bodies from initiating plans and actions involving cooperation between school libraries or between school and community libraries. Chapter 3 of the new South African Constitution requires all spheres of government, as well as government departments, to conduct their activities in a cooperative way (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). It appeared that South African legislation actually provides an enabling framework for cooperative ventures between various partners (Le Roux, 2001, p. 216).

Commitment of Funding Authorities

A commitment by all the cooperating partners to funding the combined school-community library has proved to be crucial. This would present a problem in the South African context, as the funding of school libraries and community libraries, under the new constitutional dispensation, presents serious problems for provincial as well as for local authorities. The restructuring of local government particularly poses serious financial implications for community libraries in the light of new funding priorities for municipalities. In addition, the establishment of new library models, although cost-effective in the long term, would initially create additional expense (Le Roux, 2001, p. 228).

Provision of Adequate, Suitable, and Compatible Staff

In South Africa, the provision of adequate, suitable, and compatible staff would also create problems. In most schools during the past ten years, teacher-librarians have been retrenched or reassigned to other duties. The government's commitment to reduce personnel spending would impact

negatively on the staffing of the combined library model, on the range of services offered, and on the opening hours of the facility. Furthermore, the *South African School Library Survey 1999* (South Africa Department of Education and Human Sciences Research Council, 2000, p. 26–27) did find that, with the exception of Gauteng, in all the provinces fewer than 20 percent of personnel responsible for the school library were in possession of the appropriate qualification (Le Roux, 2001, p. 231). The appointment of sufficient and appropriately qualified staff in public libraries is also a continuous challenge.

Request from Local Community and Ongoing Community Support

Several factors work against the potential use of public libraries in rural areas. The adult population in the rural, tribal areas is mainly illiterate or semiliterate, and there is an absence of a reading culture (Raseroka, 1997, p. 2), as well as the dominance of an oral tradition (Fairer-Wessels & Machet, 1993, p. 101). Therefore, it is important that, wherever a combined library service is considered, the community must have indicated that there is a need for such a service and that it will indeed be used (Bristow, 1992, p. 79).

Central Support Mechanisms

Central support—such as a cataloging, classification, and processing services; mechanisms for collection development and interlibrary loans; a professional development component; and an advice service—was found to be of the utmost importance (Little, 1996, p. 36). Following the complete restructuring of Library and Information Services (LIS) in South Africa in 1994, the majority of the new provincial LIS as well as the provincial Education Library and Information Services (ELIS) still do not have the necessary resources and staff to provide central support to community libraries and school libraries (Le Roux, 2001, p. 232).

Involvement of All Parties in Planning for a Library Model

All the groups likely to be affected by, or involved in, the implementation of the library have to be represented on the planning body. In the South African context, the leadership in the particular community has to be identified and care has to be taken that all community structures are represented on the planning body so that the library will grow out of the needs of the community and not be imposed from outside (Fairer-Wessels & Machet, 1993, p. 107).

Careful Planning of the Combined Library

The representatives of the community should elect a planning committee during the initial planning stages. Areas that need to be given special consideration by the planning committee are the physical facility, including its location, size, and design; the staff; the decision-making authority; financing; collection development; administration; and marketing the proposed combined services (Le Roux, 2001, p. 235).

A Service Based on the Needs of the Community

When planning a combined library for a South African rural, tribal community, it is necessary to take note of development theories and development research. A "basic needs" approach is called for, which would make the combined library relevant to the life and work of the people in the community and would contribute to improving the quality of their life (Stander, 1993, p. 6). Only then would the community accept it as their major source of information (Ngulube, 2000, p. 2).

Locally Representative, Enthusiastic, and Skilled Library Board of Management

The appointment of a locally representative, enthusiastic, and skilled Library Board of Management has been found to be of critical importance to the success of the combined library. This body should represent all parties involved in accordance with the specifications of the joint use agreement. In the rural, tribal communities, this would call for much initial and ongoing capacity building of the library's governing body members by the relevant provincial education department (PED) and provincial LIS.

Clear and Flexible Guidelines and Procedures

Clear guidelines for the establishment and operation of the combined library model were felt to be essential in clarifying the needs, roles, and responsibilities of all parties and in outlining the outcomes of the cooperative venture (Le Roux, 2001, p. 241).

Proposed Public Library-Based Community-School Library Model

In terms of the crucial factors mentioned above, it was found that the successful implementation of the community-school library model, as found in the selected overseas countries, would not be accomplished easily in South Africa. This would especially be the case in the remote rural, disadvantaged areas of South Africa.

For example, it was apparent from the literature that combining community and school library services in the selected countries was only considered and implemented in cases where there was either a lack of school library services or of community library services, as well as an absence of qualified library personnel. This was mostly the case in small, remote rural communities. In almost all the cases, the combined school-community library was housed in the school. A precondition for this arrangement, however, was a functional and well-resourced school library, making it the obvious place to establish a joint use facility.

According to the findings of the *School Register of Needs Survey,* conducted during 1996 (South Africa Department of Education, 1997, p. 8, fig. 16), primary school libraries in the rural provinces of South Africa are almost nonexistent, with percentages as low as 2 percent. The percentage of secondary schools with school library facilities was also found to be very low

in these provinces. This shortage of on-site school library facilities has been confirmed in the *South African School Library Survey 1999* (South Africa Department of Education and Human Sciences Research Council, 2000, p. 11). In addition, the *School Register of Needs Survey* showed that there was a national shortage of 57,499 classrooms in 1996 (South Africa Department of Education, 1997, p. 9). Therefore, the building of classrooms, rather than libraries, is a priority for the government. Moreover, specialized facilities, such as a library for a secondary school, comprise almost 50 percent of the building cost of the school, while general teaching space usually represents less than 30 percent of the total cost. Maximum shared use should be made, therefore, of these expensive, specialized facilities and space by schools and the communities (Smit & Hennessy, 1995, 45–46).

The use of existing school libraries for a combined school-community library, therefore, appeared not to be a viable proposition for the remote rural areas. The study instead proposes a variant of the school-community library model, one where the combined library is located in a public library facility and is surrounded by a cluster of schools, hence the term "community-school library model." This is a group of schools in close proximity, grouped so that they may share some of the capital-intensive facilities. It is obvious that the proposed model of the community-school library, where different schools and the community use the library facilities, could only be implemented in rural areas where there are already clusters of schools. The *Schools Register of Needs Survey* has indicated, however, that clusters of schools in South Africa are located in either the metropolitan areas or in the former homelands and self-governing states (South Africa Department of Education, 1997, p. 9). Where clusters of schools are found in remote rural areas in South Africa, the establishment of a combined community-school library in an accessible, public library building, if available, would appear to be a more cost-effective and practical solution for serving the community and the cluster of schools in these areas.

Characteristics of Proposed Library Model

Community Traits and Involvement

The target community for the public library-based school-community library is a community living in a rural area, which, in all likelihood, falls under the authority of a traditional leader. This community comprises a relatively small and homogeneous group of people sharing the same culture and language, who live and work together in close, interdependent proximity, and who share close personal relationships, common value systems, and a strong awareness of their distinct group identity.

The adult section of such a community is characterized by a high level of illiteracy, a dominant oral tradition, limited resources, and a need for information for mere survival. The community shows signs of direct involvement

in school matters and social and cultural activities. Bristow refers to this type of community involvement and commitment as "a sense of communality" (1992, p. 79), considering it the greatest resource of rural disadvantaged areas. The acceptance of the idea of a combined library in the community implies a commitment by the community to maintain the operating services of the facility by means of funds and voluntary personnel.

Location, Size, and Design of Facility

The location of the combined facility has to be within a 750-meter radius of participating schools, that is, the schools have to be within ten minutes' walking distance from the library. The facility can be either a new purpose-built library or an existing structure found to be suitable by the provincial LIS for housing a combined library facility (Hendrikz, 2000, p. 8). The nature of the accommodation and of the facilities will be determined by the aims, goals, and objectives of the information service. It is imperative for the facility to have one or two separate activity rooms with external doors for teaching information literacy to the learners of the participating schools during the day, and for adult community activities during the evenings.

Staffing

The library has to be staffed by a qualified public librarian with at least paraprofessional qualifications. The librarian has to be active in interpreting the information needs of the users, who may not be functionally literate, and in providing relevant material. The librarian has to have credibility and standing within the community and has to be a fully committed member of the community.

In addition, the part-time services of teacher-librarians or teachers from the participating schools need to be time-tabled to teach information literacy to each of the schools' classes and to create and sustain a positive reading climate in the schools. They also need, in cooperation with the librarian, to plan for the purchase of curriculum-oriented information resources. Voluntary library workers need to assist with the performing of routine library tasks and the delivery of the various services and outreach programs to the community. The voluntary library workers should assist the librarian with marketing the library and its services to the community and thus will play a proactive role in ensuring its use by the community. Retrenched or retired teachers could be used for conducting literacy and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) classes (Le Roux, 2001, pp. 261–262).

Library Stock

The information resources should include all available media to meet the needs of non- and newly literate users and cover topics of relevance to the community. This information has to be in a simple and accessible written style, and it has to be available in the indigenous language of the

community. Special attention has to be given to the reading needs of the school learners in the community in order to create the habit of using libraries for information, education, and recreation.

Services and Outreach Programs

The community itself should determine the level of services of the combined library. It needs to be a people-oriented information service, combining the oral tradition and the print medium, so that everybody in the community can be reached. An interactive community information service should be provided according to the needs of the community, forming an integral part of the community development process.

One of the pivotal services offered by the combined library should take the form of block loans, circulated regularly to the classrooms of the participating schools, as a resource for both educators and learners. The presence of books in the classroom would ensure that books and book-related learning are integrated into the learners' classroom experience from an early age, promoting an awareness and appreciation of the importance of books and libraries.

The combined library should form part of the existing provincial LIS with all its advantages. The combined library would also forge links with other community-based and nongovernmental organizations to enhance its services to its users. These would include literacy organizations, educational organizations, and initiatives such as telecenters and multipurpose community centers (MPCCs) (Le Roux, 2001, pp. 263–266).

CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

Government Funding and Support

The public library-based community-school library model presupposes the involvement and financial commitment of the local community. However, the financial backing and other support of the provincial and local governments are crucially important to the success of the model.

Location and Size of Facility

The facility should be located within a minimum walking distance of the school: about one kilometer from primary schools and two kilometers from secondary schools. A cluster can consist of five to twelve schools (Smit & Hennessy, 1995, p. 2). The size of the facility may vary significantly from community to community, according to different community dynamics and circumstances.

Pre-Service and In-Service Training

Librarians working in rural, tribal communities should be trained to fulfill "shifting" roles when serving both schools and information-deprived communities (Tötemeyer, as quoted in Radebe, 1997, p. 69). Workshops

for principals and educators on the role of the school library, its value in the new outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, and its central position in learning are essential. The failure of principals to recognize the importance of these factors has been identified as being a major hindrance to the promotion of school libraries (Radebe, 1997, p. 225). The PEDs need to provide educator development programs on the utilization of educational technology and the Internet as a tool to enhance teaching and learning (Le Roux, 2001, pp. 269–271).

Access to and Utilization of Information Communication Technology

The various information communication technology (ICT) initiatives in South Africa have great potential to enhance the public library-based school-community library model in the rural, tribal areas and would add a new dimension to this library model. By utilizing the ICT infrastructure available in South Africa, the combined library has the potential to enable members of remote rural communities "to exploit information to enhance their well-being" (Economic Commission for Africa, 1999, p. 19).

Background of Mpumalanga

The Mpumalanga Provincial Library and Information Service initiated the building of a new library during 2003 in Maphotla, a rural, tribal area in Mpumalanga. The location of this community library and the characteristics of the Maphotla community appeared to be most suitable for developing this variant of the combined school-community library. Therefore, it was decided to pilot this particular school-community library model in this community in partnership with other stakeholders.

Mpumalanga is one of the nine provinces of South Africa. Prior to the first democratic elections of 1994, South Africa consisted of four provinces. Following the election, five new provinces were established, of which Mpumalanga was one. It is mainly a rural province. Mpumalanga inherited a public library infrastructure that was fairly well developed in and around the main towns of the province, but the same cannot be said of the rural areas. Two former homelands were also incorporated into the province. Library services and infrastructure in these areas were either very limited or nonexistent.

Public libraries and school libraries in Mpumalanga are currently the responsibility of two separate government departments, the Department of Culture, Sport, and Recreation and the Department of Education. The lack of public library infrastructure and services in Mpumalanga is one of the biggest challenges facing library authorities. The same scenario is true for school libraries. The lack of various resources has made it difficult for library authorities to establish any appropriate library infrastructure and services. Most schools are without any school libraries and teacher-librarians have been laid off or reassigned. The public library authorities

have recently determined that there is a need for ninety-eight public libraries in the rural areas. It is almost certain that building new libraries alone will never address such a backlog. This assumption is based on the fact that it took almost four years to secure funding to build two new public libraries during the 2002–2003 financial year. The lack of appropriate funding is the single most important factor influencing the establishment of proper library facilities and services. This is also true for school libraries where the focus is on the building of classrooms. Catering to the needs of learners is the priority of the education authorities. Therefore, it is clear that it is in the interest of both school and community library authorities to share resources in order to bring library services to the whole community.

The community-school library model provides an ideal opportunity for library authorities to explore the possibilities of such an endeavor. If the need for both public library services and school library services can be addressed through the innovative use of one facility, both parties could save valuable resources. These savings may in turn be utilized to improve the quality of the library services.

The Maphotla Community

There are various reasons for the decision of the Provincial Library Service to select the Maphotla community area to build a new library building. Firstly, there has been much community enthusiasm for, and involvement in, establishing a library in the community. Secondly, there are well-established community-based organizations and committed and active community leaders all supporting the library.

The demographic profile of this community played a major role in deciding where to locate the library. The only official figures available for the Maphotla community during the planning stages of the building were those of the 1996 census. The total population of Maphotla is 8,558, of which 3,967 are male and 4,591 female. The Maphotla population is very young. Almost half, 49 percent, of the total population is made up of young people up to the age of nineteen. This already gives one indication of the vast potential for libraries in terms of reading and educational needs. In light of the youth of the population and the fact that 54 percent of the total population is female, it has been assumed that there are many mothers in the community. This therefore represents another huge potential market for the library in terms of childcare programs, mother and child reading programs, and book awareness programs. People who are unemployed and those with no income in the community make up a substantial 49 percent. This implies that these people may be hoping to use the library to improve their knowledge, skills, and qualifications in order to obtain a job or to become entrepreneurs contributing to the economy of Maphotla.

The most challenging figure considered during the planning stages was that 73 percent of people have little or no education. This figure indi-

cates that illiteracy is rife, implying an almost nonexistent reading culture. Although the community had started a library on its own initiative, it was safe to assume that there was a limited library culture. It was clear from the beginning that strategies were needed to familiarize the community with the library and to attract and explain the use, role, and function of the library to all community members. The use of library resources by the community and the schools was also carefully considered.

These figures are just a brief overview of the Maphotla community. These and other factors were taken into consideration during the planning phase of the school-community library service. It was also important to keep the dynamics of this community in mind when planning library services. To ensure the relevance of the library in terms of the information and education needs of community members, it was acknowledged that conditions are constantly changing, requiring frequent monitoring and community engagement.

Project Plan

The success of any project depends on the amount of planning that goes into it. This undertaking was no different, and a broad project plan was developed. The project plan is important to clarify what one wants to achieve and to focus one's efforts. The project plan was envisaged as a discussion document to attract the interest of various other role-players. One of the main role-players was the provincial Education Library and Information Services (ELIS), which immediately supported the plan.

The aim of the project was to establish a functional community-school library model as a benchmark to be replicated by other communities lacking sufficient and appropriate library facilities and services in South Africa. Five objectives were identified:

- Building a complete new library facility and furnishing it by April 2003
- Making the community aware of the library and involving community members where applicable
- Signing agreements with relevant authorities for the management and maintenance of the library facility and its contents
- Preparing the library to render a fully functional library service to the community at large
- Developing and rendering comprehensive school and community library services and facilities in support of personal and/or community development initiatives

The project plan listed various broad strategies to achieve each of these objectives, and it also proposed types of services the library could offer and a project schedule for implementation.

Bringing Theory and Practice Together

Following the findings of the research as described above, including the project plan, the Provincial Library Service of Mpumalanga took the responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of the project. After various delays, the new Maphotla library building of 500 square meters was officially opened during April 2004. The following sections indicate some of the practical lessons learned.

Community Awareness of Library Project

Making the community aware of the project to secure its support, acceptance, and involvement was very important in giving the library a relevant role in the community. The existence of a library in Maphotla was not new since the community started one on its own initiative a few years earlier. Therefore, the community was already aware of a library in its midst. What was different was the fact that a new library building, with new services based on the community-school library model, was being planned. Thus, the community had to be informed. This was done most effectively during a community information meeting held during January 2003. At this meeting, the project proposal was introduced to the community. The important role and function of the library as well as reading was re-emphasized by various speakers. Over 200 people from the Maphotla community attended the meeting, including various community leaders, the mayor and councillors of the local municipality, as well as the provincial member of the executive council responsible for the Department of Culture, Sport, and Recreation, that is, the highest political authority in the province. One of the success factors for such projects is the political support available. In this case, the project was fortunate in being well supported by the provincial and local political leaders from the beginning.

The general community meeting was followed during June 2003 with a specific meeting between the provincial LIS, six principals of the surroundings schools, and other officials from the Department of Education. During this meeting, the community-school model concept was explained in more detail, along with the various responsibilities of the stakeholders involved. The principals fully understood the goals and objectives of the new library and the role that their various schools would play. Other issues such as staffing, training, library collections, and classroom libraries were discussed as well. It was determined, for instance, that classroom libraries were not a viable option. One of the reasons for this was the fact that class groups were rotating and each class group did not have its own classroom. It was proposed to consider making available a school collection that could be housed in a book box, a metal box able to contain up to 600 books; it is fully lockable and also movable since the box is set on wheels. It was agreed at the meeting that each school would identify the necessary staff to act as coordinators between their school and the library.

With the necessary support and awareness established, the local librarian continued to establish a representative library committee. This committee mainly consisted of the nominated coordinators from the six surrounding schools, including the staff of the Maphotla library. They communicated with other relevant stakeholders when necessary or when they required guidance from the Provincial Library and Information Service (PLIS), the ELIS, and other bodies. The purpose of this committee was not to manage the library but to guide and assist both schools and the library in matters such as

- collection development (identifying information sources needed; balancing print, visual, and audio formats; language);
- administration (hours of opening, circulation procedures, policies);
- promoting and marketing the library and its services;
- utilization of facilities by community groups, school groups, and individuals;
- consultation with government authorities and any other groups on issues relating to the library;
- this resulted in a practical arrangement between the library and the schools on how they planned to make the community-school library concept work.

The Community-School Library Model in Practice

The committee agreed to bring school children to the library during official school hours. A date and time schedule was devised for this purpose. This schedule is displayed on the notice board of the library for all to see. At first it was decided to focus on the grade 4, 5, and 6 learners, aged 9 to 11. This was mainly done in order to iron out logistical and other practical arrangements. The committee determined that the library would be used for school purposes from 8:00 until 11:00 in the morning, after which it would be open to the public. The public was welcome to use the library during "school hours" with the understanding that certain activities would be taking place in the library that may be distracting.

Each school was allotted one and a half hours to use the library during "school hours." This includes the walking time of the groups to the library. It was agreed that each class would be accompanied by its teacher for monitoring purposes. All teachers were oriented beforehand. At the beginning of the project it was decided to focus on general library orientation only. All of the above arrangements were cleared with the Department of Education, the local provincial authority, and the parents of the community.

After class visits, the teacher nominated five pupils from the class to go back to the library after school closure to do certain assignments. This was done to determine whether the children did learn how to use the library and where to find information. The librarian assisted them in this. In fact,

the librarian had to turn away children in the afternoon after their class visits due to overcrowding.

Service-Level Agreements

Service-level agreements are necessary to clarify the role and function of the relevant authorities for the management and maintenance of the library facility and its contents. There are various structures involved in making the project successful. Agreements have been signed between the municipality and the Provincial Library and Information Service of the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture (DSRAC PLIS). This agreement covers the basic administration of the library, including management, funding, staffing, training, marketing, and library resource ownership and accountability. An agreement is still to be drafted between the PLIS and ELIS, the two main service providers of the library. This agreement will cover aspects such as

- collection management (selection, acquisitions, processing of material, cataloging, ownership of resources);
- budget planning;
- accommodation of shared resources;
- minimum norms of shared services;
- information technology management;
- distribution of material to library and schools;
- human resources (sharing and skills transfer);
- training programs (user education, information accessing skills, literacy skills, reading programs);
- marketing planning and events.

A third type of agreement that may be considered as the project develops is between the municipality on behalf of Maphotla Public Library and any stakeholders interested in providing cooperative services through the library, that is, community-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations. Areas likely to be covered are type of service to be rendered, assignment of responsibility, budget, use of facilities (access, hours), and minimum requirements and nature of services.

It is important that these agreements be drafted and signed to administer and manage relationships and to ensure that each stakeholder understands its roles and responsibilities. This minimizes misunderstanding and ensures that services are provided as agreed.

The library is extensively pursuing partnerships and relationships with external organizations. One example of such cooperation that was in place long before the new library became a reality is with a nongovernmental organization (NGO) called Biblionef. This is an international NGO with an office in South Africa. The main purpose of Biblionef is the distribution of

new children's books, in the community language, to disadvantaged communities. Biblionef donated various nonfiction and reference books and has already indicated that it would be extending its services to include the provision of educational toys and a reference collection for educators, as well as support in reading programs. The librarian also successfully applied for a grant from the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund to purchase additional resources for the library. This type of support and linkages are vital for the continued success of the library, which is very isolated and far removed from well-established service providers. Other external support will be sought depending on the needs of the community and the library.

Adding Value to the Community-School Library Service

Starting a brand new library requires a great deal of preparation. Adding to the mix the establishment of a community-school library model, something that has never been done before, gave the planners even more responsibility. Some of the strategies implemented to prepare the library service are described below.

- It was necessary to select and provide library material to the library in accordance with the diverse needs of the community at large.
- Since this library is serving two distinctive markets—the public at large and the school community—special attention has been given to the selection of material for learners and educators in support of the education function. The experts in the Department of Education performed this task, as the material has to be in line with the National Curriculum.
- Teacher-librarians of the participating schools need to be trained to utilize the learning support material and in teaching information literacy. To strengthen this strategy, the PLIS arranged an Information Literacy Workshop for teachers at the library during March 2005 presented by Professor M. Nassimbeni and Dr. K. de Jager of the University of Cape Town. The aim of the workshop was to introduce teachers to the concept of information literacy in the classroom, showing how it can enhance their teaching and learning. It also addressed the issue of how the library in partnership with the schools can assist learners with school tasks and assignments in order to encourage resource-based and lifelong learning.
- Computer equipment had to be installed and training provided to the library staff. The Provincial Library Service was fortunate to secure a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to computerize all public libraries in the province and provide access to the Internet and the electronic catalog of the province. This three-year project, called *Building Electronic Bridges,* also includes the training of library workers to utilize the equipment, including processing of interlibrary loans.

Service Mix

Developing comprehensive school and community library services and facilities in support of personal and/or community development initiatives is what the library model is all about. Various "service mixes" are possible. Services in place for the typical public/community library part of the model cover the traditional services, such as

- lending of library material;
- interlibrary loans;
- study and reading facilities;
- photocopying, faxing, and use of audio-visual equipment;
- exhibitions; and
- reference service.

Services in place for the educational arm of the model cover

- visits by school classes to the public library;
- rotation of bulk loans from the library to the schools;
- visits by public library workers to class libraries in participating schools;
- coordination of planning of project work between the librarian and the educators of the schools; and
- the development of course materials and the presentation of the workshops for principals, school governing bodies, and educators of participating schools.

A third service mix is also planned and provided, which includes various other initiatives that will benefit the community through the use of the library and its facilities. These services are usually rendered by outside organizations and include

- ABET classes;
- literacy classes;
- information literacy classes;
- workshops and video presentations on relevant and applicable topics, for example, HIV/AIDS by the Department of Health;
- the provision of life-skill assistance, for example, writing letters, filling in forms, utilization of telecommunication facilities;
- other community-specific services, for example, local art or craft exhibitions and classes and career guidance; and
- book talks, storytelling sessions, and reading programs.

With regard to the latter, the library is involved with the Centre of the Book, which is part of the National Library of South Africa, in a project called "First Words in Print." Book packs consisting of four books per pack have been distributed to 2,500 children between the ages of one and five

years. The books are written and illustrated by South Africans and are provided in the language spoken in the Maphotla community.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The project could be evaluated on two levels. One measurement is to compare how closely the implementation of the project followed the findings of the original research into joint use libraries. Another measure is evaluating specific activities and strategies used during the implementation of the project.

Evaluating the implementation success of the model against the initial research findings and guidelines found in the literature, the following conclusions can be made:

- The project received the political commitment on the highest level from the beginning.
- Due to the above commitment, the approval of the required funding for the project was a matter of routine.
- The availability of adequate and suitable staff is one area that needs serious attention. The library has been operating with volunteers since its opening. The main obstacle experienced in this regard is the lack of funding from the local authority responsible for appointing staff. One post has been advertised that will partially address the situation.
- The local community has been involved in the establishment of a library since the late 1990s. Therefore, they supported the establishment of the new library in their community and saw it as fruits of their labor.
- The Department of Culture, Sport, and Recreation is in a position to render a central library support service to the library in terms of book provisioning, marketing material, and general administrative support. Support from the Department of Education still needs attention in terms of educational material. This will be addressed through a formal service-level agreement.
- Many stakeholders have been involved from the beginning and are still involved in planning and making the community-school library concept a success.
- Based on the above involvement, the services rendered by the library are in line with the needs of the community. This aspect will receive continuous attention to ensure the relevancy of the library in the community.
- Research proposed the establishment of a library board to assist with the management of the library. In this environment this was found to be too formal and structured. A more informal library committee has been established and is achieving the same results.
- Clear guidelines and procedures for the establishment of the model assisted those responsible for implementing the model from the beginning of the project. Small adaptations were made where applicable.

- Training is seen as a continuous activity and has been addressed through informal and formal interventions.
- The library building has been developed with the community-school library model as the guiding principle. It is optimally located within walking distance from the six schools serving the Maphotla community. Where distance from the schools has posed a problem, it was addressed through allowing more walking time to reach the library.
- The availability and use of ICT is in its infancy for most of the libraries in Mpumalanga. Establishing online access for a rural library like Maphotla is still a major problem due to insufficient telephone and other networks. Cost is another challenge. The library has access to a computer and a number of CD-ROM encyclopedias.

Based on the above synopsis, it is clear that there is general alignment between the research findings and practical implementation, with minor adaptations where required.

The second method of evaluating specific activities and strategies used during the implementation of the project also resulted in positive feedback about the progress of the project. A formal evaluation meeting was held after implementing the first classroom orientation visits to the library. Some of the items discussed included a proposal to consider extending the duration of the classrooms visits. It was also mentioned that scholars became more aware of what the library has to offer; that they became motivated and self-disciplined readers; that books were not abused, etc. As a result of the program, a huge number of scholars came to the library in the afternoons. On occasion, some of the older scholars read to the younger ones in the library.

Although a schedule was compiled, it was noticed that certain educators and classes did not come to the library as arranged, which created problems. The need for better communication and arrangements between the library and affected schools was reaffirmed. Scholars and teachers suggested a focused approach with topic lessons for the older grades in the library; access to drama books; promotion of writing with a young authors competition; and promotion of reading in general.

It is clear from this first evaluation that the project had made an impact and that schools are enthusiastic. It will require continued support from the PLIS and the Department of Education to establish and sustain the model as part of the daily activities of the schools and the library.

Conclusion

All five objectives of the original project plan have been achieved. A new and modern library was handed over to the community; the community was made aware of, informed about, and involved in library plans and functions where appropriate; agreements have been signed, to ensure

sustainability of the library and the project, between principal stakeholders who were informed of the project and plans for the library through various communication initiatives; the library started to render its services to the public as planned; and the community-school library concept has been actively developed. It is accepted that some of the objectives still need more attention. Agreements with other stakeholders should still be pursued to ensure full commitment and participation of all. Time to implement such a model should not be underestimated. The remoteness, lack of basic communication infrastructure, and number of stakeholders adds to the delay in implementing the model as planned. Although the community-school library model is starting to work in the Maphotla library, it is a developing model that will be flexible and adaptable in its approach to ensure the successful establishment as a model library in every sense.

References

Bristow, A. P. (1992). The role of the rural school library in development. *Mousaion, 10*(2), 71–82.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. (1996, December 18). *Government Gazette,* Act No. 108.

Economic Commission for Africa. (1999). *African Information Society Initiative (AISI): An action framework to build Africa's information and communication infrastructure.* Retrieved October 30, 2000, from http://www.uneca.org/aisi/aisi.htm.

Fairer-Wessels, F., & Machet, M. P. (1993). The development of alternative library and information services for the black community in South Africa. *Mousaion, 11*(1), 100–111.

Hendrikz, F. (2000). *Creating a knowledgeable society and future: White paper of Mpumalanga Provincial Library and Information Service.* Paper presented at the LIASA Conference, Durban.

Le Roux, S. (2001). *School-community libraries: Some guidelines for a possible model for South Africa.* Unpublished M.Bibl. dissertation, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Little, V. (1996). School community libraries in rural South Australia. In J. Karlsson (Ed.), *School learners and libraries* (pp. 31–43). Dalbridge: Education Policy Unit, University of Natal.

Ngulube, P. (2000). *The role of rural libraries in promoting the people's right to information.* Paper presented at the LIASA Conference, Durban.

Radebe, T. (1996). The school library movement in South Africa: Recent policies and development. In S. A. H. Abidi (Ed.), *School libraries in Uganda: Papers and proceedings of a DSE/EASL/MOES Seminar, Kampal, 1995* (pp. 48–76). Bonn: German Foundation for International Development and Education, Science and Documentation Centre.

Radebe, T. (1997). Experience of teacher-librarians in the workplace after completion of the school librarianship programme. *South African Journal of Library and Information Science, 65*(4), 218–226.

Raseroka, H. K. (1997). *Public libraries and lifelong learning–African perspectives.* Paper presented at the 63rd IFLA General Conference. Retrieved September 17, 1998, from http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla63/63rash.htm.

Smit, W., & Hennessy, K. (1995). *Taking South African education out of the ghetto: An urban-planning perspective.* Cape Town: UCT Press and Buchu Books.

South Africa Department of Education. (1997). *School register of needs survey.* Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa Department of Education and Human Sciences Research Council. (2000). *South African school library survey 1999: National report* [Final draft]. Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development. (1998). *The white paper on local government.* Pretoria: The Ministry.

Stander, C. (1993). *Appropriate school libraries in an African context.* Paper delivered at the Info Africa Nova Conference, Pretoria.

Sophia le Roux holds a M Bibl and a Higher Education Diploma and has more than 20 years' experience as a school library practitioner, in the teaching of School Librarianship and as a manager of school library services. Since 1996 she has operated as an independent information consultant under the name of *SOPHOS Information Services.*

François Hendrikz obtained his Master degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Pretoria. He started his professional career in 1985 and since then has worked in various Government libraries. He currently heads the Provincial Library & Information Service of Mpumalanga. He has participated in various library-related task teams eg ICT, library co-operation. He has a keen interest in strategic planning and management initiatives as well as library marketing. He has presented papers at international and national conferences, e.g. the International Association of Technological University Libraries, the International Association for School Libraries and the Library & Information Association of South Africa. He has also published and co-authored articles in various international and national professional journals and publications, i.e. *Alexandria, The Book Chain in Anglophone Africa,* etc.