

One Plus One Equals Three

Joint-Use Libraries in Urban Areas—The Ultimate Form of Library Cooperation

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Librarians resourcefully adapt to keep libraries thriving despite downsizing, rising material costs, and diminishing funds. One way librarians try to regain lost ground is by forming partnerships, pooling funds, and combining resources to more effectively serve patrons. Formal library-to-library cooperation has taken many forms, mostly in such areas as services, collections, and technology. A newer form of cooperation pushes the limits even farther. Joint-use libraries (also known as dual-use, cooperative, or comanaged libraries) are slowly emerging worldwide in the form of partnerships between academic and public libraries, often in densely populated metropolitan areas. These attractive, spacious facilities can surpass expectations of any single facility and equalize access to all by bringing patrons more innovative programs, vast collections, and current technological resources.

A joint-use library is defined as “a library in which two or more distinct service providers . . . serve their client groups in the same building, based on an agreement that specifies the relationship between the providers.”¹ These partnerships have existed largely between school and public libraries for more than a century. Scattered throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia, small-scale joint facilities proved to be particularly effective in rural communities where neither party could afford a quality facility or collections on its own. By the late 1980s, librarians began considering partnerships between post-secondary trade schools, community colleges, and public libraries. Toward the late 1990s, university/public or tripartite university/public/continuing education combined libraries began to appear in Sweden, England, Australia, and the United States. Library planners involved in developing these libraries discovered that with their combined financial resources, these institutions could provide users with larger, more attractive facilities and more extensive, higher-quality collections than any one could by itself. The stage was thus set for politicians and librarians to take joint-libraries to the next level: the marriage of large university/public libraries.

Booker T. Washington once said success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome. One of the difficulties in creating joint-use facilities, especially of this size, is that there is no model to follow. Benchmarks for establishing and assessing these facilities have been

difficult to create. How does one determine success for something that has never existed, where there are no guidelines by which to measure? The success of these large joint-use projects cannot be measured strictly by whether they fulfilled politicians’ cost-to-value expectations, or increased circulation and usage statistics, but by what they accomplished despite monumental obstacles.

In “A Blueprint for Disaster,” Kleiman likened public library mergers to a mother-in-law moving in, and although he was referring to school/public facilities, this reflects the sentiment initially expressed by many university and public library patrons about sharing “their” resources.² For example, design must provide areas to meet the needs of both preschool children and graduate students. Security considerations and additional costs can be a factor. Conflicts can arise from attempting to combine two classification systems or to integrate sections of two collections. The decision for a unified Web site presentation and maintenance, or two separate sites serving the two library communities, can be a source of contention. Staffing in the comanaged libraries can make hiring a challenge, as disputes can arise over the different salary schedules of public and university library employees. Almost every large joint-use library project encounters these conflicts, as well as problems that are specific to each project.

To overcome these obstacles, planning with assessment goals in mind is vital. Christina Peterson, San Jose State University (SJSU) librarian, and Patricia S. Breivik, former dean of the SJSU University Library, suggested several valid criteria:

Our good planning work will be measured by examining the appropriateness and extent of service outcomes to students, faculty, and community. Are students learning what they need to know of information literacy in order to achieve success in college and beyond? Is the library Website usable, informative, motivating? Are parents finding desired materials for their children and themselves? Is library programming useful to the community?³

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Still, because every joint-use project has different partners, locations, resources, patrons, and funding, the problems must be evaluated with respect to unique benefits and obstacles.

From these combinations of forces and motivations, there are two giants of joint-use academic/public library facilities: Nova Southeastern University (NSU)/Broward County Public Library (BCPL) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and SJSU/San Jose (Calif.) Public Library (SJPL), which opened in 2001 and 2003 respectively. Their formation and continuing experiences provide models for the creation, operation, planning, and management of joint-use facilities, and thus bear further study. The following sections describe the new facilities, discuss the unique challenges each faced during development, and explore the programming, collections, and services that have made each library successful.

NSU/BCPL

NSU, a private university, is a leader in online and distance education, catering to working professionals seeking advanced degrees. Both university enrollment and the Broward County population are sizable; the university has approximately 29,000 students, most of which are graduate-level, and Broward County's population of 1,731,347 (expected to reach almost 2,000,000 by 2010) was the fourteenth largest county in the United States in 2001.⁴ So how does such a highly populated county and private university join forces to build one of the largest joint-use libraries in the world?

NSU was in the process of building a new main library on campus in 1997, when Donald E. Riggs, NSU vice-president for information services and university librarian, and the BCPL director deliberated on combining resources to better serve students and community residents. Harriet MacDougall, now director of the NSU/BCPL joint-use library, the Alvin Sherman Library, Research, and Information Technology Center, was one of the lead planners of this enormous library. Politicians and library officials expected several benefits from the merger, and MacDougall recalled that they enthusiastically embraced the proposal:

Broward county government officials cited longer hours, 100 hours/week vs. 70 for the public libraries. They also said the library would be high tech with more research databases, research materials, and research-oriented staff because the library would be run and owned by the university. They talked about cost savings, how 1+1=3. We could do more and better for patrons by combining forces.⁵

However, "combining forces" was easier in theory than practice. The first obstacles addressed by NSU and BCPL

related to who would pay for what, who would maintain what, who would staff what, and who would own what. MacDougall and Nora J. Quinlan, head of reference and access services at NSU, recalled:

It has also been the practice in most of the agreements in which Broward County has been a partner that the county has administered the agreement and the other partner has had more of a "silent" role. The reverse is true in this agreement. Nova Southeastern University owns and operates the joint-use library. It hires the staff and makes all the administrative decisions.⁶

Two arduous years of planning culminated in the creation of the fifty-four-page, forty-year agreement between the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and NSU to resolve these issues.

Another, and perhaps the most difficult, obstacle was staffing the new library. Previously, the majority of NSU's library patrons were distance learners, so the university library was staffed accordingly. Now, a much larger staff was needed to provide services to an increasing number of patrons over extended library hours. In addition, NSU's academic librarians had no public library experience and needed to tap into the BCPL staff's expertise to create a plan to provide effective services. Together the organizations considered how increased usage would affect circulation, reference, distance services, and administration. More than fifty new employees were recruited, interviewed, hired, and trained in fewer than twelve months. The situation was further complicated by bureaucratic etiquette. If NSU recruited from BCPL's library staff, then the public library system would be shorthanded; however, if current employees wanted to apply for the new academic library positions, it was unfair to turn them away. These were some of the practical, interpersonal consequences of implementing a merger that seemed less complicated on paper.

Today, this 325,000-square-foot super library, complete with café and large parking structure, is open to the public. Construction and move-in expenses came in at the expected budget amount of \$43 million and took only fourteen months to complete. One year after opening, the library received a grant of \$500,000 for the construction of the five-hundred-seat Rose and Alfred Miniaci Performing Art Center, a unique feature distinctive to this library. Equally impressive is the library's collections and resources. The collection size is now 750,000 volumes, with a capacity for 1.4 million. Digital resources include 240 online databases (of which the majority is accessible to users in the library, and many, but not all, are accessible remotely). There are seven hundred computer stations, twenty electronic classrooms, one thousand user seats, a special children's reading room, an art gallery, study rooms, and laptops that can be checked out for use within the library.

According to Kratz, a general and universal effect of operating in joint facilities is that the user interactions foster information literacy skills for everyone, young and old, throughout the communities of these libraries.⁷ Information literacy skills, programming, usage, and services to the community are thus vital. The library staff has done an exceptional job organizing programs that would appeal to all patrons; more than 28,000 patrons attended approximately 1,000 program sessions held between July 2002 and June 2003. Recent events included AIDS Day programs, a scholastic book fair, a college fair, a day for teachers, and an African craft exhibit. NSU/BCPL patrons also receive individualized instruction on how to access the new library Web site and electronic databases. Several services, such as the Talking Book Library and Books-by-Mail, are available to patrons with physical limitations. There are outreach programs in Spanish and Haitian Creole. MacDougall stated that one of the most successful programs is called "Family Literacy University: Enhancing Your Child's Reading Skills," which also has fascinating exhibits surrounding the program events.⁸ Another program that drew an excellent crowd was "Bollywood," for patrons who enjoy Hindi music and films; the event also helped promote the library's new Hindi language collection. There are resources for elementary through high school students as well. Live homework help is available for students in grades four through twelve; and most days it is available in Spanish.

MacDougall and Quinlan account all of these factors in part for increased usage and observe that:

While many academic libraries are seeing a decline in basic statistics . . . the joint-use library statistics are showing marked increases in these areas. Over fifty percent of materials checked out have been by public patrons, and there is an increase in materials checked out to academic users compared with the statistics for the last reporting period. Other noticeable increases include an 82.5 percent increase in the number of reference questions asked and a 24.4 percent increase in the number of interlibrary loan transactions.⁹

MacDougall concluded that, although they still see more material checked out by public library patrons, database statistics clearly show more academic usage, which would be expected, as most students are graduate-level, taking online or distance courses.¹⁰

NSU/BCPL has certainly lived up to its promise. Library awards received by BCPL include the Shining Star Award of Excellence in the category of dedication from the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the ALA H. W. Wilson Library Staff Development Award for the BCPL Leadership Institute. The facility is drawing patrons in record numbers. Increases are being seen in usage, circulation, reference questions, and program atten-

dance. Broward County citizens are undoubtedly positively affected, as more of them are checking out material previously considered academic. MacDougall summarized, "The library building is magnificent, and users give rave reviews of it."¹¹

SJSU/SJPL

SJSU is one of twenty-three California state universities. According to the enrollment snapshot on the university Web site, approximately 28,000 students attend the campus, of which about one-third are graduate level.¹² The university is centrally located in downtown San Jose, which has a population of more than 900,000. The mega-library resulting from the merger of the academic and public library partners has become a model for similarly sized joint-use libraries worldwide.

The proposal for a combined library came from the university president to the city mayor in fall 1994, but it wasn't until almost three years later, when funding deficiencies motivated Mayor Susan Hammer to more seriously investigate the possibility of a library partnership, that a combined library was viewed as a viable option. It quickly gained political support within the community. In an interview, then-president of ACRL, Patricia Breivik, described the situation thus:

These two libraries, like so many publicly supported institutions in troubled California, have faced steady erosion of support, almost since the passage of Proposition 13, the infamous anti-tax measure of 1978. Both university and city needed larger, more technologically up-to-date libraries. Neither one had a ghost of a chance of getting a building anytime soon.¹³

University president Caret sold the idea that this joint-use library would be "an example of our commitment to a continuum of public education that spans kindergarten through college."¹⁴ Caret saw this as a building alternative to "the scramble for bricks-and-mortar money that has become a ritual in the California State University system."¹⁵ James Schmidt, then-university librarian for SJSU, substantiated that the library was indeed running out of room. In an interview for *LA&M*, he indicated that there were only enough seats for about 7 to 8 percent of the students, and that by 2004 they would have no remaining shelf space.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Mayor Hammer assured community members that unifying with the SJSU library would improve upon the library services provided at SJPL's Martin Luther King Jr. Main Library.¹⁷ One of the benefits was that the joint library would have a more generous schedule of hours than either library could sustain separately.

SJSU/SJPL faced far more objections from students, faculty, and residents than did the NSU/BCPL library.

There was even a coalition called "SOUL" (Save Our University Library), whose members demonstrated and petitioned against creating a library in which they feared public library patrons would monopolize the academic materials needed for courses. Dustin DeBrum of the history department agreed that: "The two institutions can't be merged . . . They have two different missions, and it will be bumping heads all the way."¹⁸ Schmidt countered, "The feeling in this camp is that there is considerable overlap among the constituencies. They point to the fact that 20 to 25 percent of the users of the San Jose main library are SJSU students and to the as-yet-uncounted usage of the SJSU libraries by members of the public."¹⁹ In other words, SJSU students were already checking out public library materials with no perceived problems, and the impact of public library patrons to the university was unknown, but it should not be presumed negative. Finally, technology presented another almost insurmountable hurdle: "The one area that almost did us in was trying to get the IT people on both sides to agree that our systems had to work together and talk to each other," said Breivik.²⁰

Another hurdle revolved around the issue central to anyone living in a densely populated city—parking. Citizens were enraged that 270 parking spaces from the city's parking garage were temporarily lost to provide office space for hundreds of library personnel while the new library was being built. Besieged by complaints, Caret battled fiercely, reminding people, "There are university libraries all over the country that are open to the public and allow the public to come in and they don't have any problems," and that this first-of-its-kind library would stand as a model worldwide.²¹ In any event, the construction-related problems were not permanent.

Then, just when things were looking up, state legislative analyst Hill deemed the project too costly, urging city officials to "scrap plans for the joint library."²² City officials were unpersuaded, however, and although debates continued in various arenas for six years, the benefits of the original vision have been amply justified. The eventual success of the SJSU/SJPL consolidation has been referred to as a marriage. Light, SJPL director, explained, "In merger . . . one side or both lose their personality, their identity. In a marriage, they remain two different entities, and each brings different strengths and talents."²³ In July 2004, the library received one of the most esteemed national recognition any library can receive: "Library of the Year," from *Gale/Library Journal*.²⁴

The unique SJSU/SJPL joint facility finally opened to the public in August 2003. The colossal, nine-floor structure is 477,000 square feet (including the basement, which houses bound periodicals). The total cost was about \$177.5 million, which included funds for demolishing the former building and expenses incurred while moving into the new library. The library has 3,600 seats, 39 private study rooms, a teen center, a K-12 educational center, and a café.²⁵ There are four hundred computer stations,

five hundred laptop ports, four instructional labs, and two music-listening rooms. From within the library, students and public library patrons have access to all databases at designated computer stations. Adaptive technology is available for university students with special needs. At the time of opening, the combined collection provided patrons with 1.5 million items, with a capacity for 2 million, and more than 12,000 journals with full-text articles available to patrons.²⁶ Special children's sections include an exploration room, a storytelling area, and an electronic discovery area.

Many of the library's programs revolve around multicultural issues appealing to San Jose's diverse community. For example, the SJPL Web site events page indicates that in August through October 2005 there were programs on Japanese-Chinese relations, a bilingual story time, an exhibit on the "Fabric of Race in America," and display items honoring historic African Americans. Patrons have access to a collection with works in forty languages. This diversity awareness extends to the library Web site as well, which is available in Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

There has been a phenomenal increase in usage; approximately 12,000 patrons visit the library daily.²⁷ Almost immediately after it opened, circulation of academic and public library collections doubled, and library staff received more than 13,000 interlibrary loan requests from students and public library patrons. With regards to student and faculty's earlier fears that all the material for courses would be checked out, statistics reveal that students are checking out as many public library materials as public library patrons are checking out academic items. Among the benefits to students is that they now have access to a much greater selection of newspapers and magazines as well as foreign language materials. Education students have access to extensive children's and young adult collections for courses. Furthermore, whereas previously SJSU students had to go to two libraries, the university's entire collection is now housed in one building. SJSU theses now are easily accessible, and about 1,800 theses had been accessed by users since April 2004.

Breivik spoke about several benefits: "Our focus on information literacy has been expanded. We get strong support from our senate for that focus, and our senate library committee favors it. We're integrating it across several curriculum areas," and "Most of our librarians now have great experience in project management."²⁸ In satisfaction surveys, 71 percent of residents ranked the library as excellent, an improvement of twelve points over a survey of the previous public library.²⁹ In addition, in April 2004 the library received the PG&E "Savings by Design" program award of \$250,000 for its energy-efficient lighting and control systems.³⁰ Perhaps the most significant and intangible benefit of the library partnership is that it healed the sometimes stormy relationship the university had with the city for many years. Today, collaboration has

replaced estrangement between the two parties, and they are discussing future joint ventures.

Conclusion

The pressures of managing urban academic and public libraries during times of declining funds suggest a need for joint libraries. Inarguably, the libraries examined here have been successful when they joined their financial, technological, and collection resources to provide more than they could have individually—the “1+1=3” concept of which MacDougall spoke.

Although the values in this equation are the same, the variables involved in developing and managing large-scale, joint-use libraries are not. For example, the two facilities described here operate uniquely. The NSU/BCPL facility has one reference desk for both the academic and public patrons.³¹ SJSU and SJPL, although under one roof, are two separate entities, with separate collections, reference stations, and budgets. Lorene Sisson, SJSU head of academic services, asserted that the public and academic departments do, however, informally consider each other’s needs when hiring key staff or developing collections.³² There is no simple recipe for the development or success of each facility; each project has its unique needs, partners, and funding considerations.

There is some debate, though, as to whether joint-use libraries actually cost less in the long run. Australia’s joint-use library expert Alan Bundy elaborated:

Nor . . . do they necessarily save money, although that may be the primary motivation of their proposers. This is most vividly illustrated by the experience with the very large library between California’s San Jose State University and the City of San Jose opened in mid 2003 as the largest library to be built at one time west of the Mississippi River. . . . The final cost was US\$177.5 million, including relocation costs, only a minor savings on the projected US\$180,000 cost of two separate libraries. Nonetheless, it has been justified as constructing a facility of much higher quality at a reduced total cost.³³

Opponents of joint-libraries reason that if the facilities are larger, they require more staff and overhead, which translates to more cost. With large increases in usage, materials will wear out sooner and require replacement. Having a greater number of workstations with advanced technology requires more experienced staff with a higher price tag.

Another issue of great concern has to do with these libraries receiving adequate future funding. Sometimes political priorities change, and if new officials are elected that do not support libraries, funds can be redistributed.

Such actions can stress library partnerships, and in an extreme case one partner might withdraw from the arrangement. That is what occurred in the Australian Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and Gully Council joint-use library in 2003.³⁴

In practice, though, these failures have been a rarity, and many librarians at joint-use facilities do recognize cost savings. Jennifer Redding, management services librarian of the University of Southern Queensland’s Hervey Bay joint-use library in Australia, indicated, “I think [the joint library project] has been cost effective in this case.”³⁵ Redding acknowledged that, as population in the area increased, increased usage was inevitable, but establishing a joint-use facility allows for reaping benefits much earlier. The key to experiencing the most benefits from the collaboration seems to rest in careful initial planning, having staff enthusiastically embrace the combined services, and continued funding to provide the staff, collection, and technological resources.

Overcoming adversity builds character in people, and it is building strength in the Broward County and San Jose libraries. Beyond basic facilities management, library administrators inherently understand that only through knowledge can equality be attained, and these information services collaborations overcome societal barriers. Breivik stated, “Moreover, as one who strongly believes in the role that librarians can play in moving ‘have-nots’ into becoming ‘haves,’ I have increasingly become concerned about how traditional funding patterns for academic and public libraries are causing them to steadily lose ground in serving people.”³⁶ The combined resources of both partners cover collection gaps of the academic and public libraries, offer patrons materials in more languages, provide diverse cultural and educational programming, and deliver state-of-the-art access to more electronic databases. In San Jose, the joint-use partnerships dissolved long-standing hostilities between the university students and faculty and citizens of the surrounding community.

Bundy calls joint-use libraries “the ultimate form of cooperation,” elaborating that, “An overriding consideration is that of the synergy of a joint-use service—that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”³⁷ Breivik poignantly noted the impact on children, minorities, and low-income adults who are exposed to the academic environment at the public library:

When you come in from the city side and look through the atrium . . . you see the campus. What that’s saying to families where no one’s gone to college is: You can get a college education that’s only one step beyond your public library.³⁸

That is undoubtedly the greatest measurement of success. Joint-use libraries are not just meeting the expectations of their creators—they are exceeding them, despite all the obstacles that had to be overcome to bring them into

existence. After the unparalleled successes of the Broward County and San Jose models, more joint-use library projects in large urban areas can be expected. One is currently being considered between the University and City of Guadalajara, Mexico. The next large joint-use facility will probably not be the last.

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