

JOINT-USE LIBRARIES: A PLANNING CHECKLIST

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PURPOSE

This document provides a list of important issues for consideration in the planning and operation of joint-use libraries.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

A joint-use library is a library where services are provided from a single physical facility to two or more distinct groups of clients. Services are usually delivered under a cooperative arrangement and are jointly funded. In Australia, joint-use libraries are most typically developed between local governments and educational institutions such as schools, universities or TAFE institutes. Joint-use library arrangements occur infrequently in Queensland, most often in small rural areas where it is not possible to support separate facilities.

A co-located library is a library that shares a single site with another service provider. Examples of co-location may include public libraries sharing sites with galleries, museums, community centres, tourist information centres or council service points. The number of co-located libraries has increased in Queensland in recent years, most often in conjunction with tourist information or council service centres.

While references are made to co-located libraries and shared facilities, this document focuses on planning and management of joint-use libraries.

APPLICATION

“The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) supports the establishment of joint-use libraries if they equal or better the level of service which would be given in separate facilities.” (ALIA Statement on Joint-use Libraries, 2002).
<http://alia.org.au/policies/joint-use.html>.

Joint use library services should recognise the different mandates of the respective parties while benefiting each of them. They should combine mutual strengths and, if well planned, managed and resourced, may offer better access to a wider range of resources and services. The following guidelines discuss the various benefits and disadvantages of these libraries and offer a checklist of issues which must be considered in their planning.

BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF JOINT-USE LIBRARIES

Benefits:

- Joint-use arrangements can result in sharing of costs and effective use of public resources.
- Duplication of some resources can be reduced or eliminated.
- A broader range of library resources and formats can be offered for all clients.
- Longer opening hours may be possible.
- More and sometimes better qualified staff may be available, utilising a greater pool of expertise.

- A joint-use facility may offer a cultural focus point which reaches a wider sector of the community, enhances social capital and the potential for intergenerational interaction. .
- Programs and services such as literacy programs, support for migrant groups, and homework help which draw on resources and expertise of multiple agencies can be strengthened.
- Students who use joint-use libraries may be more likely to develop positive information literacy and lifelong learning habits.

Disadvantages:

- There are inherent difficulties in meeting the library needs of varied client groups and in effectively promoting the library to each of them.
- Ensuring equitable financial contributions by all parties can be problematic.
- Differing accountability requirements and industry standards for respective parties may be complex.
- Where the library has multiple staff, different salaries and industrial conditions and procedures may be difficult to accommodate.
- Different Library Management Systems and catalogues will need to be rationalised and resolved.
- If sited in a school, adults may be reluctant to use the library, and it may not be located in a convenient location for the general community.
- Community access may conflict with school safety policies.
- Ease of access to the library may be hindered at peak times such as school pick-up times.
- There may be difficulties in providing wide access to suitable resources for adults while ensuring resources are not inappropriate for young people.
- School internet filtering practices may conflict with public library open access policies.
- It may be difficult to guarantee staffing and access when the school is closed, especially during school holidays.

JOINT-USE LIBRARIES – CHECKLIST

The following checklist will assist in ensuring effective planning and management of joint-use libraries, and may help to address some of the inherent difficulties in these services.

Planning and Management:

- There must be shared vision and clear agreement on the planning and operation of the joint-use library, based on full consultation with all parties and their unequivocal commitment.
- The *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines* (<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>) should be consulted in the planning of the library, particularly in regard to staffing and the development of policies and procedures.
- It is vital to have a formal written agreement, signed by all parties, which has clear statements on the following:
 - Aims and objectives
 - Funding arrangements and budgetary commitments
 - Staffing
 - Management policies and practices
 - Facility, ICT and equipment management
 - Access and security
 - Library resources
 - Review of the service

- There must be adequate funding for an effective library service, with contributions of respective parties formally agreed and budgetary responsibilities clearly defined.
- Operational policies such as opening hours, borrowing entitlements, fee charging and internet use should be jointly agreed and well communicated to clients.
- If appropriate, consideration should be given to establishment of a committee or board representing all parties to oversee the joint management of the library.
- Wherever possible, the library should actively participate in wider networks to receive benefits such as shared resources, professional advice and support.
- There should be a regular evaluation of the library service which considers data obtained by community consultation.

Facility:

- The library should be located in a site that is as convenient as possible for all clients and prominent signage should be provided. Consideration should be given to issues such as the possible negative impact (for adults) of a location well within school grounds, and the advantages of locations close to other facilities such as shopping centres, sporting venues etc.
- Appropriate access for all clients across opening hours must be provided and supported by suitable security arrangements. This can mean consideration of more than one entry point if, for example, a school needs to remain inaccessible after hours. Any policies regarding adult access to school premises should also be considered in the planning of the facility and specific issues resolved.
- The facility should be large enough to meet the needs of all client groups. While collections for different clients should be integrated, the building should ideally offer areas for different uses e.g. quiet study and group activity areas.
- Adequate parking or easy access to public transport facilities should be available.
- Ongoing management of the facility including division of responsibilities and Workplace Health and Safety procedures should be jointly established and clearly documented and communicated.

Staffing:

- Responsibilities and reporting relationships should be clearly articulated, including a structure which indicates who is in charge.
- All staff should have the skills required and a willingness to serve all client groups. Regular staff development should be offered to ensure currency of skills and knowledge.
- If children are a client group, all requirements for staff to obtain Blue Cards where relevant should be met.
- Staffing levels and rosters, especially at peak opening times, should be well planned and effectively monitored. Clear procedures should be in place for replacement of staff when on leave.
- All salary/contractual obligations and other industrial requirements of different employers must be met.

Library resources:

- The library resources should meet the needs of all the clients.
- Collection development and management policies should be in place and regularly reviewed.

- Ideally, the stock should be integrated rather than shelved separately in the library.
- Care needs to be taken to balance any concerns about children having access to inappropriate resources against the need for adults to have access to a wide range of resources. Rather than introducing restrictions on borrowing, reader assistance and guidance should help to ensure appropriate access. Where issues occur, they need to be discussed fully and resolved for the benefit of all clients.
- Similarly, appropriate access to online resources needs to be ensured for each client group. Where, for example, school policy requires restrictions to be in place for children's internet access, a separate internet line for public access may need to be installed.
- Any differences in cataloguing or classification systems need to be jointly considered and resolved.
- Additional services such as interlibrary loans should be offered to supplement the library's own collection.

RELEVANT STANDARDS AND KEY DOCUMENTS:

Australian Library and Information Association. *Statement on joint-use libraries*. 2002. <http://alia.org.au/policies/joint-use.html>

Bundy, Alan and Amey, Larry. *Libraries like no others: evaluating the performance and progress of joint-use libraries*. Library Trends. Spring 2006. http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/library_trends/v054/54.4bundy.html

Dalton, Pete. *Joint use libraries as successful strategic alliances*. Library Trends. Spring 2006. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1387/is_4_54/ai_n26915948/?tag=content;col1

Haycock, Ken. *Dual use libraries: guidelines for success*. Library Trends. Spring 2006. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1387/is_4_54/ai_n26915945/

Joint use libraries: an international conference. Manchester. June 2007. <http://www.ebase.bcu.ac.uk/events/joint-use-conference.htm>

Library Board of Queensland. *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines. Shared Facilities Standard*. 2008. <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines> .

McNicol, Sarah. *What makes a joint use library a community library?* Library Trends. Spring 2006. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1387/is_4_54/ai_n26915947/?tag=content;col1

Queensland Department of Education. *Guidelines for the development of joint-use school/communitylibraries*. 1996. <http://www.libraryservices.eq.edu.au/liberty3/gateway/gateway.exe>.

School Libraries Association (UK). *Dual use libraries*. <http://www.sla.org.uk/pol-dual-use-libraries.php>