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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library: a New Model of Library Collaboration

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Abstract: *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose, California, is a joint public and academic library of San Jose Public Library and San Jose State University Library (SJSU). The Library started to serve both the residents of the City of San Jose, and the students and faculty at SJSU in 2003. Since then, the Library has been providing high quality services to the city and campus communities. With its unique partnership and contributions to both public and academic communities, the Library has received a number of awards and recognitions. This presentation will review the initiative of the joint library project, the design and planning process, and the construction of the new library building. It will also report the management and operation of the joint library, the library services for the public and academic communities, and discuss problems and solutions. The presenters will share their learning experiences and make suggestions for future library collaborations.*

Keywords: *Library collaboration; Joint library project*

Introduction

Have you ever thought about library-wide collaboration when your library is in urgent need of expansion, but lacks adequate funding? You may think about collaborating with a library of the same type, but have you thought about collaborating with a library of different kind? If you are at an academic library, have you ever thought of working with a public library, and even integrating the two types of libraries into one? Isn't this idea a little bit crazy? In fact, this crazy idea has become a true model—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, a public/academic library in San Jose, California, which is the only co-managed city-academic library in the United States.

Initiating the joint library

San Jose State University (SJSU) is a four-year comprehensive university with a student

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population of 30,000. Its Clark Library was built in 1980. With the expansion of its collections and services, the university desperately needed a new library building by late 1990. The city of San Jose is the 11th largest city in the U.S., with a population of approximately 1 million. The San Jose Public Library (SJPL) serves the entire city with its ethnically diverse communities. With its ever-increasing diverse population, SJPL is also in desperate need of a new main library building. However, with a limited pool of capital project budgets, neither the city nor the university had the funding to construct separate new libraries to hold expanding collections, provide technology upgrades, and guarantee good services for their growing user communities.

The idea of a joint public/academic library came from brainstorming how the City and the University might work together more effectively. City and University leaders identified a mutual problem-main libraries that were about five blocks apart, which were both too small and technologically inadequate. In 1997, the major of San Jose and the president of SJSU announced that the city and the university would pull together the funds and collaborate to build what became the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, which would serve as the main library for the city and the only library for the university. Following a public announcement, the city and the university held a series of forums to discuss the proposal. Discussions ranged from whether the project should be undertaken, where to build, its architectural design, to how it would be operated. Members from the general community really valued local branch libraries and felt that a new main library would take so many resources that the 18 branch libraries would lose out. University members were concerned that members of the general public would check out all of the academic books needed for research and course assignments. Despite initial controversy, the final agreement was reached to build a new joint public/academic library on the SJSU campus in downtown San Jose.

The planning process

The Operating Agreement was executed in December 1998. It defines the construction parameters, design and legal requirements, funding contributions, and the roles of each partner and the ownership, management, maintenance and operation of the joint library. The Operating Agreement also specified that the joint library was to be co-managed by the Dean of SJSU library and the Director of the SJPL. The SJPL Director and the SJSU Dean have described the joint library as a marriage rather than a merger. In a merger, generally at the end of the process the merged organization assumes one new identity. In a marriage the two partners contribute to a stronger whole by bringing different strengths and talents, but yet retain their individual identities.

After the Operating Agreement was signed, many years of community input and planning were required. Four different entities were involved in the construction—the City of San Jose, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, San Jose State University, and the California State University System. In addition, other bodies very much involved were four labor unions (two representing University employees and two representing City employees), the Academic Senate of the University and the San Jose City Council.

A senior level leadership team was formed with the top management of the city and the university. A core team was formed with the management of SJSU Library and SJPL. The core team reported to the senior leadership team and provided guidance to the six strategic operational teams which were formed with librarians and staff from both SJSU and SJPL. These teams were user services, organizational design and development, collection management, technology and technical services, policies and procedures, and administrative services. Staff received training from consultants in team building and collaboration. These strategic operational teams made recommendations to the core team. The core team was responsible for the final decision-making. An important planning principle was equal access to information for all within the joint library. Another important principle was balancing the work each institution is doing on behalf of the other so that each is contributing a proportionate amount to the partnership.

During the planning process, the design and delivery of reference service in the new joint library raised considerable disagreement. Whether there should be two separate reference service desks with separate reference collections was the point of focus. The team responsible for user services hired a consultant to assist with surveys and a "shadowing" project, in which librarians and staff from the two institutions observed each other at work to identify their similarities and differences. The survey revealed that, although there were differences in how the public and academic librarians assist their patrons, the reference questions themselves were not significantly different. As a result, a combined reference desk and reference collection in the new joint library was approved.

Big challenges were decisions on type of automation system, telephone system, classification system and operational issues related to how to share staffing of combined service desks. Some other major decisions that required considerable negotiation were the location of the King Library, which is built on the Northwest corner of the SJSU campus with land actually owned by the State of California, but the building and furnishings itself is owned jointly by the City and the University. Maintenance and custodial and police services were provided by the University with the City paying a fee according to a complicated formula worked out during the planning process. Utility bills were split with the University paying about two-thirds and the City one-third, roughly the proportion of space each occupied in the King Library. About two-thirds of technology costs are paid by the City because the system supports all 18 public library branches as well as the King Library.

This new model of joint library opened its doors in August 2003. The total project costs of ＄177.5 million were shared by the State of California, the City of San Jose, SJSU, and private fundraising. It occupies 475,000 square feet, has a capacity of 2 million volumes, and has 3,600 seats. Since its opening, it has served over 1 million visitors per year, and received a number of awards.

Design and organization of collections and staff

The design of the building centers on an eight story atrium, which allows natural light in

windows and the atrium skylight. The building rises four floors and then rotates 25 degrees on it own axis, reflecting the unity of the City and the University. Many artworks are scattered throughout the building waiting to be discovered and frequently reflecting themes of nearby collections. The building actually begins underground with a Lower Level, housing staff offices for access and technical services and collections for periodicals, microforms, and government publications.

The ground floor links two important entrance lobbies, one opening on City streets and one opening to the University campus. Members from the community can see the University through the campus entrance—this reinforces a message of continuous life long learning, with a college education being only one step beyond your public library. On the ground floor, the "main street" idea includes popular fiction and videos organized with bookstore appearance, self check out stands, a café and a library bookstore.

Starting with the ground (first) floor, collections and staff known to be most frequently consulted were placed on the lower levels with the upper floors reserved for less frequently used academic collections. Thus, children's collections and staff and popular fiction and media collections plus circulation and information services were on the ground floor, reference services and computer classrooms were on the second floor, and adult and teen public library collections arranged by Dewey classification, on the third floor. Public library collections include materials in 58 different languages.

Current periodicals were originally on the fourth floor with older issues in the lower level. However, the split between current and older periodicals proved to be labor intensive for both library users and staff and the size of the current periodicals collection was quickly reduced as the academic library cancelled current print subscriptions in favor of electronic formats also accessible from off campus. Therefore current and older periodicals were merged on the Lower Level. The fourth floor became primarily a study area.

The fifth floor houses music, cultural heritage collections (African/Asian American/Chicano) and special collections for local history, Steinbeck, and Beethoven. Many of these collections required climate controlled conditions and extra security. The floor is also designed for special events, with a roof-top terrace.

Above the fifth floor, were academic library collections arranged by Library of Congress classification. Most of the group study rooms are also located on these floors.

This arrangement provided separate areas for children, teens, and students wishing quieter study areas and has worked very well in practice. Maps available on the King Library website (http://www.sjlibrary.org/about/locations/king/floors/floor1.htm) provide detailed information on organization of collections and staff on each floor.

Combined and separate services for public and academic library communities

In the joint library, there are some combined services and some separate services. SJPL and SJSU staff work together in technical services, reference, access and information technology

units, which are co-managed by department and division heads from SJSU and SJPL, while staff and collection development budgets remain separate.

One major combined service/function is the Library's homepage (www. sjlibrary. org) and another is the online catalog system. Of the combined units, Access Services, which is responsible for all circulation functions, has the most completely integrated operations. All library materials are accessible to all users. However, most of the collections remain separate and two classification schemes are used. SJSU continues to use the Library of Congress system, while SJPL maintains Dewey cataloging for its circulation collection with the exception of reference collections.

The combined reference service is a 3-tiered service mode. The first tier is at the information desk on the first floor, which is staffed by paraprofessionals from SJSU and SJPL and where many of the directional and non-resource based questions are answered. The second tier is located on the second floor where reference librarians of SJSU and SJPL answer the reference questions. The third tier reference librarians work with individuals on complex/specialized reference questions on one-to-one basis. At the third tier, generally academic librarians are consulting with University users and public librarians with community users.

Since the collection budget remains separate, the acquisitions departments are not merged. Services to children and adults, including reader advisory services, are primarily the public library's function, therefore, are operated by SJPL separately.

Managing and Operating the King Library

In accordance with the Operating Agreement, the SJSU Dean of the Library and the SJPL Director each retain separate and distinct jurisdiction and control over their respective libraries operating within the King Library. And as co-managers they are jointly responsible for conducting the affairs of the King Library in any areas in which the parties have elected to operate in a joint manner. In practice, both the University and City libraries have their own separate and parallel organizations, and new teams were created through which they operate and manage the affairs of the combined library operations. The two primary bodies for managing combined operations are KMT (King Management Team) and KOST (King Operations and Services Team). KMT is responsible for problem-solving; policy-making and review, changes and additions; planning; staff development; monitoring success and external relations; and liaison with Senior Leadership and Joint Library Committees. The SJSU Dean of the Library and the SJPL Director co-chair KMT. Other managers on KMT are the SJSU Associate Dean, SJPL Division Manager for King, SJSU Associate Dean for Digital Futures, SJPL Assistant Library Director, SJSU Manager of Library Resources, and SJPL Administrative Officer. KOST is a cross organizational King Library leadership group responsible for managing, coordinating and implementing decisions that impact the daily operations of King Library as a whole. The KOST consists of two groups—a larger group with representatives from all King Library units and a smaller steering committee that facilitates meetings. Policies and decisions relating to staff and information technology remain challenging in

terms of managing operations. Brief summaries of these two areas are provided below.

SJPL and SJSU each hire their own staff. Four labor contracts must be honored, including selection, retention, advancement, and evaluation processes. City and University staff work side by side performing similar tasks but are on different pay scales, receiving different benefits and holidays. For example, City employees enjoy free parking across from the Library while University employees do not, whereas University employees get tuition waivers at the University while City employees do not. City holidays were scattered throughout the year while University holidays were mostly consolidated into the period between Christmas and New Years. Complex arrangements are negotiated so that each organization provides open hours for the Library when City and University holidays do not coincide.

Information technology people on both sides had to agree to work together and talk to each other and had to learn new systems. University and City purchasing systems were not compatible and initially both City and University insisted that all rules must be followed. Different technology systems had to communicate with each other, while providing network security and restricting public access to proprietary databases. Another issue is high demand for computer access systems. Detailed policies continue to be written, approved and revised to resolve service priorities and practices. Policies include time limitations for general use, and a laptop checkout service funded by the University for students needing longer use times. Because collections are separately funded, many members of the general public are not able to access specialized University databases from off campus and are unhappy about needing to travel to the Library. Although one combined list of databases was initially provided on the Website, separate lists of databases are now provided for the two communities to manage user expectations.

Evaluating strengths and weaknesses of King Library services

Standards for joint use libraries do not exist. Because most joint use libraries are unique, general evaluation and benchmarking are not useful methods (Bundy & Amey, 2006). To evaluate the success of the joint King Library, consultant Thomas Childers worked with staff and designed a survey based upon questions that would profile major services of the individual and combined libraries: Reference/information service, circulation, staff help, staff suitedness, range of materials, materials availability, hours, parking, visits to library, digital access, safety, building appeal, peripherals (printers, computers), uses and users, layout, catalog, signage, building suitability. The most desirable method of assessing success of a combined library operation requires comparing before and after information. The great strength of these surveys is the "before the joint library" data collected in 2002 from the users of the separate SJSU University Library and SJPL Main, and the "after King Library" data collected both in 2004 and 2005. In addition, two other research projects evaluated King Library staff attitudes and perceptions: (1) an assessment of the King Library organizational culture conducted by SJSU Business faculty and librarians; and (2) a study of King Library staff attitudes administered by SJSU graduate psychology students and guided by an SJSU Psychology Faculty member.

Statistics alone tell the story of how greatly the King Library is valued by its communities；

From August 1，2003-June 30，2008：

—11,321,381 items were checked out

—3,533,613 computer bookings-two for each resident of Santa Clara County

—108,112 people attended 4,484 programs

—3,601 adult literary learners received 19,247 tutoring hours

（Dr. Martin Luther King，Jr. Library Fact Sheet，August 7，2008）

Analysis of the results from user surveys of facilities and services in the King Library support these statistics but also identify areas related to staff interaction that need improvement.

Comparing data collected in 2002 with user survey data collected in 2005（almost two years after the King Library opened），the overall perceptions of quality and value to users remain high—approximately 83% provide excellent or good ratings. The most significant changes in the ratings appear in overall building interior appeal，facilities，furnishings，building layout，information technology，signs/printed directions. "Before the joint library ratings"（2002）ranged from 40% to 60% positive whereas 2005 ratings in the King Library ranged from 81% to 90% positive for these same attributes. Circulation also increased substantially. Comparing August 2002 to May 2003（before King）from the two separate SJPL and SJSU libraries with August 2004 to May 2005，circulation increased 48.1% and visitors increased 69.7%.

User perceptions related to staff interaction showed universal decline when contrasting 2002 "before King" data with 2005 data. User ratings remain positive but lower for King Library on staff approachability（75.7% vs. 67.8%），staff interest in question（68.6% vs. 61.5%），staff knowledge about topic（63.5% vs. 56.6%），staff courtesy（79.9% vs. 69.8%），staff providing enough help or explanation（76.7% vs. 66.4%）and clear explanation（76.5% vs. 64.6%），staff providing information in language needed（76.1% vs. 63.7%），and staff understanding what was wanted（82.0% vs. 64.0%）. Although success in finding information or material（80.6% vs. 81.8%）was slightly higher in the King Library，for time in locating information or materials，a smaller percent reported "no time at all" or nearly so（62.8% vs. 55.1%）for the King Library，which is likely related to size and complexity of the King Library as well as user perceptions of staff assistance. Increases in quantity of services were not accompanied by staff increases，which may account at least in part for lower user perceptions of staff effectiveness. In 2006，a shorter version of the user services survey was administered with the conclusion that results were very similar to 2005，with users continuing to rate value and quality of King Library services very highly. And while ratings concerning staff interactions in the King Library are positive，they remain lower relative to ratings of staff interactions prior to the opening of the joint library.

The studies on organizational culture and staff attitudes relied on data collected after the King Library was open. These studies indicate that staff expressed concerns about the length of time decision making takes in the co-managed organization and unclear process for decision making and that employees experience role conflict，in the form of mixed messages from multiple

superiors. Employees are low on commitment to the organization and perceive low support from the organization.

The last joint evaluation of the King Library services was done in 2006. The time is approaching for another assessment. Bundy and Amey（2006）recommend an assessment plan, which outlines goals, establishes critical success factors, develops an action plan, measures of success, and an annual progress report. As part of this process, priority goals for the King Library have been set for 2009/2010, related to Digital Library Initiative, External Collaboration and Community Partnerships, Customer Service and Continuous Improvement. In focusing on regular evaluation and continuous improvement, joint libraries have a method of keeping in touch with their communities of users, their changing needs and requirements, and assessing how library services and priorities must evolve to continue their success.

Conclusion

Should you embark upon a joint library project in your community?

The joint or dual library remains very popular. The King Library with its combination of co-managed operations of a major academic and public library in a large urban area is unusual. Most common are dual libraries with combined public school and public libraries, usually in smaller communities（Haycock, 2006）. In Australia and New Zealand, joint libraries, with existing school libraries providing services for the community, have most often been established in rural areas where lack of funding has made establishing public libraries difficult, if not impossible.（Matthews & Calvert, 2007）.

Matthews and Calvert（2007）summarize the critical success factors：a formal management agreement, library manager with overall responsibility, community support, adequate size with room for expansion, convenient location for all users, good parking and access, convenient opening hours for all users, adequate staffing levels, staff committed to the joint use concept, volunteer staffing, up-to-date information technology and technical support, integrated collection, no restriction on services, resources or access for user groups, belonging to a larger network, support and funding from school, support and funding from council, external and internal evaluation, good will, flexibility, tolerance and communication（p. 15）. Matthews and Calvert also list major reasons for partnership failures：a lack of perceived savings or economic advantage; irreconcilable differences in philosophies between the partners; insufficient growth in funding for collections and information technology; low staffing levels; staff resistance to concept; an inconvenient location and poor car parking facilities; poor marketing and insufficient signage; the reluctance of the public to use a library situated within a school（p. 5－6）.

While the dual use King Library falls short on a few of the critical success factors（for example, library manager with overall responsibility, integrated collection）, evaluation demonstrates that the joint Library is clearly very successful. In addition to reviewing factors most critical for success, considering the advantages and disadvantages of a joint library in your community can be very useful in deciding how much value a joint library might add to your

community.

We have summarized the advantages and disadvantages of the King Library partnership：

Advantages

（1）Enhanced Technology for all—3,600 reader seats, several hundred public access computers, laptop ports, and wireless network connections available for both community and university members. （2）Greater public meeting spaces and programming opportunities. （3）Access to a combined collection of greater depth and breadth. （4）Support for additional cooperative ventures to develop community assets that are mutually beneficial. （5）Significant cost savings, not only in design and construction, but in maintenance and utilities through dual use of meeting rooms, computer technology, seating, restrooms, study areas, shipping and receiving areas, and staff break rooms. （6）Enriched local history and special collections and cultural programming. （7）Major cultural center and meeting space that is a source of pride for both communities and contains more space, resources, and facilities than either separate entity can provide. （8）More flexibility in obtaining resources and developing innovative services—Funders and grant agencies are attracted to the broader mission and services to many constituencies.

Disadvantages

（1）No staffing increases were provided as part of the planning process—during the first year, there were 20% ～30% more visitors than anticipated, requiring more oversight by staff and security officers. （2）No evidence of staff savings in operating costs, given increase in library use. （3）Decision making takes extra time for consultation and compromise. （4）Additional resources required for strengthening communication systems and staff skills in team building and collaboration.

If for your unique community situation, your advantages outweigh the disadvantages, as is the case with the King Library, you might want to consider establishing a joint library in your community！

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