Preface

PARTNERSHIPS DEFINED

A partnership or collaboration as described in these chapters has two important aspects. One party has a need, and another can help fill that need while likewise seeing some benefit. A true partnership has to be two-sided. Both parties have to put forth some sort of effort or expertise, or else it is merely outreach. Now, public libraries are very experienced at outreach, selflessly venturing out providing all the work and asking no assistance outside of their own institution. While valiant, this is no longer viable. This book contains many examples of library work beyond traditional roles and services, opening the front door to new collaborations as well as enhancing old stand-bys. Partnerships cannot be judged by duration, as some illustrated here are quite specific and temporary. Long term collaborations are marked by changing parameters and flexibility on behalf of the partners. While many of the creative and innovative collaborations are dependent upon the opportunity for the right partners, there are many lessons illustrated as to what might or might not work for another library.

An article on youth programming between the Denver Public Schools and the City of Denver Parks & Recreation Department (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007) postulated a list of needed factors for a successful collaboration between different partners:

• Shared priorities
• Combined resources
• Institutional support and political will
• Shared clarity of expectations

The benefits included added value to each partner, via the attraction of the public to added services or programs. Also, each partner can enjoy improved reputation in public opinion, and better branding or recognition for the partner. As each partnership is a learning experience, it allows each organization to further build on the skills and knowledge needed to go forth and explore other partnerships or merely to strengthen existing relationships.

Of course, there are also harsher lessons learned as well. Partners are not always compatible, either through organizational imperatives or simply at the staff level. Each collaboration must be manageable by all involved—if not, this resulting poor experience will have long term impact on any future aspirations between the partners. While not everyone “plays well with others,” it could also just be a matter of different points of view between management. Or maybe it’s just bad timing. It is worth re-approaching past partners who fall into this definition in the future, as climate and personalities may have changed.
Make no mistake—all partnerships or collaborations will have some problems. This is pointed out in the following case studies. The first hint of a problem is not a reason to stop by any means. However, there are some times when partnerships need to dissolve. Part of knowing when to call it quits is as important as all other aspects of a partnership (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007, p. 82).

**Why do Public Libraries Need Partners?**

In this era of economic downturn, both the public and the publicly supported libraries feel the pinch. In such challenging times, the public has gone back to the library—to use the computers or wireless access, to seek assistance in finding a job, enjoying entertainment such as popular literature, programming, or movies. And public libraries, great service institutions that they are, attempt to rise to the need. Libraries struggle to give instruction to those who are just now returning to a changed workplace. Many of these individuals don’t know how to use online applications or how to register to use jobsites, let alone how to sign up for an e-mail account. People can no longer afford to pay for their internet access or fix their broken printer and come to use free Wi-Fi and low rate printing fees at their community library. Summer vacations are conducted at home rather than more exotic locations, so more sign up for summer programs and other library events. Checking out books and movies newly released to DVD are within restricted family entertainment budgets.

Public libraries and their staff are friendly, welcoming, and helpful. It doesn’t matter that the patrons need help with computers, or need to hit the how-to books rather than paying a service company, or come to get free assistance when taxes are due. All these great services are free, without an upfront fee or billing. Sadly, very few library patrons actually know how the library is funded (De Rosa & Johnson, 2008). That funding is not increasing, though the demand and need for these library services have dramatically grown. Budgets for public institutions have been relatively flat, if not reduced. The local governing agencies for these public libraries, be they cities, districts, counties, et cetera, face budgeting restrictions of their own. Likewise, state and federal budgets fail to meet these needs as well.

Of course, public libraries are not the only tax funded local service—police, fire, and infrastructure are hard competitors for these reduced tax dollars. When it comes to a levy or tax or bond issue, how can the voters really decide between books or firefighters, librarians, or cops? Governmental decision makers, too, are forced to make hard decisions between what services to fund and which to cut or reduce. And yet government leaders are also required to look towards the future needs of the community, and which investments to make to encourage economic growth.

The public library needs money. Sorry, those new computers and nifty programs aren’t free. Staff doesn’t just volunteer their time, and the power bill isn’t waived by the provider. Librarians have always been very inventive in finding funding. While not trained grant writers, plenty of librarians have written numerous grant applications. The funding sources—private foundations, businesses, or government grants—all have more competition. The basic grant application for more children’s books may pale when compared to a complex project with sophisticated planning and measurable outcomes. So, libraries have to look around, see commonalities, and find potential partners. Maybe a partner has access to funding not otherwise available to a library alone. The public library has to be flexible in provision of services. This translates into both traditional and nontraditional partners. A public library must also stay vital to a changing population. In order to fund a directional change in programming and services, a library needs partners.
**Why do Potential Partners Need Public Libraries?**

Public libraries have a long reputation as a helpful and loved institution. Everyone has a fond library memory, about the library as a place or an interaction with staff. The library is a refuge from the world, an escape from personal woes, and inspiration for future achievements. Because of the mission of public libraries and their abilities to be inclusive and adventurous in services and programs, this is a platform for positional partners to use as well. The library can offer a comfortable locale for other services, and can include the mission of similar service institutions. Other governmental social services, assistance organizations, can be more approachable via the local community library. New and different educational opportunities are likewise more appealing when offered in the neutral environment of the library.

The public library has much to offer its community. With a mission of continuing education, self-enrichment, and improvement, public libraries are integral, providing services that no one else does as well. Frequently, libraries are on the cutting edge of technology. Family friendly library programming and materials are often a draw for potential residences and businesses alike. This is all about quality of life, meeting specific needs for citizens and industry.

The Urban Libraries Council’s report *Partners for the Future* urges local governments to take advantage of the public library’s programming and services that contribute to community sustainability and growth. (p. 7) Not only that, but the report asserts that public libraries are well positioned to attract corporate partners to further sustainability goals, as in the case of insurance provider Aflac and Columbus, Georgia. (p. 8). Aflac was a strong supporter of Chattahoochee Valley Libraries’ summer reading program, allowing the library to reach a much larger audience (p. 13). The goals of the community library and community government often mesh.

Somewhat astonishing for many public librarians is the public’s conception that their library is somehow intertwined with many governmental agencies and social organizations. While this is also tied to the misunderstanding of how the library is funded, it is also tied to the encompassing services and programs offered by the library. The public assumes that the library is connected—why not actually make those connections and make them work for the library?

Educational institutions and public libraries share a mission and often the same clientele. This has often resulted in collaboration with programming and facilities. Librarians often venture into area schools, but some schools remain insular, missing out on potential partnerships. As schools are increasingly accountable to state and federal agencies through standardized testing, the public library can be an untapped resource to enhance curriculum or reinforce student skills. Likewise, colleges and universities need to connect with potential students and paying parents, and collaboration with a community library can be a gateway.

Libraries provide literacy skills from early childhood to senior, with pre-literacy, sustained reading, to English as a second language, to digital and technology literacy. (ULC, p. 12). Businesses and industries can invest in their current and future workforce by partnering with libraries. Programming that focuses on the skill sets these potential employers need is an excellent avenue for both the library and the industry to see benefit. Such training initiatives may be a long term investment, but there are additional, more immediate benefits. Whether a world-wide corporation or local corner shop, every business needs a good public perception. Supporting a community via support for programming or collaboration with a community library has the potential to cultivate public good will or make the business more recognizable.
OBJECTIVES AND MISSION

The purpose of this collection of case studies is not to give a “how-to” on forming partnerships, but to give a series of examples of actual partnerships. The commonality is that all of these are based on public libraries coming into partnership with a community entity, educational institution, business, or other organization. Some of these examples are large and complex, others are smaller and simpler. These case studies have been grouped into some very general categories, but they are by no means exhaustive. The partnerships between public libraries and other institutions can be established in myriad ways and through varying levels of commitment.

Perhaps someone will see a project that matches their needs and requirements explicitly. Maybe there are elements of an illustrated partnership that can be borrowed or recreated by another. There may even be cautionary tales or a red flag for someone investigating a potential collaboration. Library administrators can discover possible partnerships that could push forward their institution’s mission or services. On the other hand, businesses, schools, and service organizations can see the potential benefits of partnering with a library, and realize the rewards that such successful partnerships can bring. Library students can clearly see the pros and cons of these example partnerships and be better prepared to apply these to their professional career.

These examples of library partnerships are carefully examined for benefits and/or drawbacks. It is much less painful to learn from the mistakes of others. It is too easy to paint a rosy picture of partnerships, and harder to reveal the less desirable examples. Part of what the contributors were asked to point out was an honest examination of the partnerships or collaborations. The aim is to analyze how libraries can best partner with other institutions in their communities with beneficial results. While especially relevant and useful to current library managers, the book may also prove useful to new librarians entering the profession and interested in aggressively reaching out to their communities.

Government and Social Services Agencies

In the first section of chapters, partnerships and collaborations illustrate community partnerships utilizing government and social service agencies.

Sol M. Hirsch, retired director of the Alachua County Library District in Florida, USA, has provided a good example of a more complex partnership and collaboration. Alachua County Library District, located in north central Florida, has provided traditional library services to its quarter of a million citizens. However, the library’s focus has shifted to improving the community it serves. Indeed, to remain vital in this economy, the focus on what citizens need to make their lives better is a key mission. This shift in philosophy allowed for the opportunity for new partnerships with organizations or agencies that shared that goal. A coincidence of needs for new facilities, both with the library district planning for a branch, and the social service agencies looking for a location in an at risk neighborhood, led to a match. Both library and agencies had much to learn from each other before they could truly complement each other. Clients found coming to a library that just happened to house other social services they might need much more approachable. This unique meld of missions and facility is a great example of what is possible between a public library and social service agencies.

While there are several examples in this book of large projects, collaborations with big educational institutions, state and county agencies, et cetera, this is not the only way to approach partnerships. Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, of the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System, Warren, Ohio, relays some
these smaller successes. Cleveland Heights–University Heights Library in Ohio instead took a more narrow focus. The library instead saw great success with smaller business partnerships in the community. This also took a reexamination of the library’s role in the community. The library felt that support of all aspects of the community would make the library more vital to their users. This included partnerships with grocery stores, restaurants, caterers, camera and toy shops, food vendors, art groups, as well as literacy and parenting groups. The library reinvented itself as a real cultural and social gathering location and opened up their meeting room to all manner of meetings, parties, and the like. Too many times public libraries shy away from commercial partners such as small and local business. Cleveland Heights–University Heights Library chose to embrace these partners and realized that the business’ success was the library’s success.

With another example of collaborating with social services and agencies to advance a shared mission, Carolyn Brooks of the El Dorado Hills Branch Library in California, offers this case study. To the east of Sacramento, California, is El Dorado County. This county library system has the challenge of providing services to a diverse population of 181,058—from suburban to small rural communities. Funding cuts did not lessen the need to address early childhood literacy. A natural partnership evolved between El Dorado County Library and First 5 of El Dorado. In 1998, through passage of a state tax on cigarettes, the First 5 of California was created to address the needs of the state’s youth, from newborn to age five. Funding is then disseminated to the counties to address issues early childhood health, education, and childcare. Tied to this initiative are a multitude of state, county, and other local groups. The El Dorado County Library partnered with some of these organizations and institutions, including the national store chain, Target, to implement several programs to address early childhood literacy, as well as some parental education on the side. This chapter represents a collection of smaller projects all tied into the mission of the First 5 program. This assortment can be taken as a whole, or as individual projects that could replicated elsewhere. Flexibility is the key when working with such a variety of partners, but finding common ground within the initiative of betterment of young children allowed for some creative solutions.

Such partnerships and collaborations to achieve a shared goal are also illustrated by Nkem Ekene Osuigwe of the Onisha Public Library in the Nigerian State of Anambra. In this African state, there are quite a few hurdles to advance literacy. Local students would stop going to school and instead apprentice at the big area markets. With this high student drop-out rate, the Anambra State Library Board crafted some clever programs to attract these students to learning and reading. The Onitsha Public Library worked with area schools to incorporate reading into the local schools by way of a spelling competition. The teachers were involved, and the students were keen to compete. The public library in Anambra also re-established bookmobile services as a way to continually provide books to these students. The library staff also recognized the power of the church ladies—mothers, grandmothers, and other relatives of these potential drop-out students. Pulling all these partners together, and including the state television station, the spelling competitions led to great publicity and generated excitement about the library and learning. There were some hard lessons learned, but the Anambra State Library Board has established connections, partners and programs that will enable them to continue to lure at-risk students back to reading and education.
Targeted Programming and Populations

Partnerships can be very specific, with either a certain population or program in mind. This can encompass teaching needed skills to a specific population, focusing on a unique program, and further enhancing the library’s community in new ways. This section features such case studies.

Sometimes a successful partnership is all about location. Barbara Brattin, Director of the Wilkinson Public Library in Telluride, Colorado, was able to meet the needs of local film festivals as well as enhancing programming to the community. Telluride, Colorado, besides its fantastic ski resorts and vacation destination, also has two film festivals that see national acclaim, hosting Hollywood directors and movie stars. So, this small historic mining town swells to double its population during festivals and ski season with more affluent seasonal visitors. The library’s district serves almost 6,000 residents, a mix of service industry employees and more affluent people who were drawn to the location and could afford the high cost of housing. Seasonal visitors and tourists may have little inclination to use the library, with assumptions that it won’t meet high expectations. So, Wilkinson Public Library has the challenge of serving two very different populations, but with the healthy tax base could provide a wide variety of services to all its patrons. So, when the Telluride Film Festival sought to find a good location to expand its screen of free films, they approached the Wilkinson Public Library. With details, exceptions, and other issues hammered out between the festival organizers and library administration, the effort was successful and much appreciated by festival goers and local community members. A second film festival, Mountainfilm, was at first not as smooth. Library policies were revised, and the Mountainfilm management funded a third of the costs to renovate the library’s meeting room into a film-friendly space. Successes with the two film festivals led to additional partnerships enhancing the library’s other programming and also becoming a more flexible venue for other community events.

A 2006 study produced by the National Science Board (NSB, 2006) indicated a strong need for improvement in student science and math, showing a downward trend for achievement since 1995. One way to bring the United States back into international standing is to address science and math education in young students. Erica Seagraves of the Mamie Doud Eisenhower Public Library illustrates a very successful example of a targeted partnership. The Mamie Doud Eisenhower Public Library, located in Broomfield, Colorado was built with emphasis on science education, using a grant from Sandoz US Foundation to create a science center in the library. Sandoz is an international pharmaceutical company with a manufacturing and product development facility in Broomfield, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. Science programming was the basis for a strong partnership between Sandoz and Mamie Doud Eisenhower Public Library. The construction of the Sandoz Science and Education Center in the library was the first step to addressing science education for youth. A Science Task Force at the library was created, and efforts led to further grants to fund science programming. This also led to programming supported by Sandoz, with their chemists providing several hands-on chemistry workshops for youth. More community experts volunteered their time and expertise to other science related programs, from genetics to botany. The library’s dedication to science education made them open to big and smaller collaborations and partnerships, some that could be easily replicated by other libraries who may not have a large pharmaceutical company in town.

Can teenagers and seniors get along at the library? They can if they are both embarked on education. Susan Lovatt of Malahide Library, Fingal County Libraries in Ireland, provides a study of a specific partnership utilizing local teenage students. This chapter introduces American readers to the Irish school system, were there is a break in the middle of secondary education called Transition Year, with an em-
phasis on personal development, learning life skills and social responsibility. The Malahide Library is seeing growing demand in community use, especially for those needing to return to the workforce or those needing to learn new technology. These tend to be a population over 55 years old, who did not need such skills when they first entered the workforce. And while Malahide Library does offer computer courses, the demand far outstrips the availability. This is a very familiar issue. However, Malahide Library partnered up with the local community school to use those Transitional Year (TY) students and their more savvy technology skills. By volunteering as teachers for technology classes, the TY students were indeed meeting some of the requirements for school. But there were challenges, due to different learning styles and maturity of the student teachers. The challenges overcome still serve as an example of what might be possible at any location, using high school age students as class instructors, particularly pertaining to computers and current technology.

Orange County Library System in Central Florida serves almost a million citizens and growing. The Hispanic population makes up more than a quarter of that figure, and is equally fast growing. Paolo Melillo of the Orange County Library System and staff saw the need for specific programming and needed a partner to provide programming. Many of this Hispanic population are more comfortable with Spanish than with English, a fact that the Orange County Library System recognized as a barrier to existing programming. Language also created an impediment to financial skills, such as banking, budgeting, investing, and related matters. The library was able to obtain a Smart Investing @ Your Library grant from the American Library Association and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation in 2007. The library saw the need to customize financial education for their Hispanic population and found a partner in the Crummer Graduate School of Business at Rollins College, just north of Orlando. The nationally renowned business school certainly had the expertise and Hispanic Spanish-speaking MBA students. The library coordinated, the MBA students taught, and everyone benefited. This potentially opened the door for more targeting programming with other partners. In many US communities, minority populations are growing. Concerns and planning presented in this chapter are translatable to elsewhere to help local libraries engage these new community members.

Can a public library train the community to live more green? Peggy Thrasher, now of the Dover Public Library, Dover, New Hampshire, presents this unique collaboration. Being environmentally responsible is a growing priority for many people. When the staff at Hampstead Public Library in New Hampshire brainstormed ideas for revitalizing the library and addressing current issues of interest to their adult patrons, saving the planet through green choices and responsible use of resources was a priority. The library partnered with staff of the University of New Hampshire to promote the New Hampshire Carbon Challenge. The Challenge, now the New England Carbon Challenge, was the impetus for a series of programs on reducing a person’s carbon footprint. This also led to recruiting other community partners for assistance with programming and the theme. The Hampstead Public Library also set an example, undergoing an energy audit, incorporating additional programs such as battery recycling. Even library staff took the challenge and personally engaged in discussion with patrons to encourage more participation. This program can certainly replicated, in part or in whole, especially with the online tools set up by the New England Carbon Challenge.
Incarcerated Populations

For some libraries, their service population extends into detention centers and correctional facilities. Eventually, these incarcerated individuals will return to the community. There is certainly value in serving these individuals before they are released and giving them skills and training to make their transition back to the community a little better.

Teenagers are a challenging audience, let alone teenagers who are in detention or incarcerated for committing a crime. Establishing library services in collaboration with the detention centers and the assigned school teachers was not a program for the timid. Convincing library administration and the Travis County Juvenile Board that programming for the detention center youth was a worthy cause during economic shortfalls was challenging. Kathleen Houlihan, Austin Public Library, Texas, presents this case study. This is a venture into a service model that is not well explored—how to address the needs of these detained youth. The Gardner Betts Juvenile Justice Center had two facilities—one for short term detention of youth awaiting trial, and another for long-term housing unit called the Leadership Academy. The Austin Public Library established two satellite libraries in both the short term and long term facilities at Gardner Betts. Working with facility staff, teachers from the Austin Independent School District assigned to the facility, and assistance from publishers, the satellite libraries shaped up to be collections of interest to this underserved population of youth. There were many issues that had to be addressed, from coordination to staff training. From scandals about youth correctional centers in Texas to more budget cuts and commitment issues from partners, this eye opening chapter lays out this complex project.

Also addressing the need of incarcerated youth, the New York Public Library has long standing initiative of providing services to inmates, as described by Lindsy D. Serrano of the New York Public Library, New York. While earlier focus for the library’s programming had traditionally been on adult inmates, detained or incarcerated youth had been long overlooked. The prison system had adult librarians and facilities, but was unable to sustain services to the youth facilities due to funding cuts. New York City’s Board of Education worked with the Department of Juvenile Justice to create a regular educational program within the youth system called Passages Academy. This was a great advance, but more could be done. The Passages Academy called upon the NYPL librarians, and they collaborated with Passages staff to encourage love of reading among the young inmates. There were many successful programs and equally as many challenges. NYPL librarians worked with two different agencies—the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Board of Education. This population cannot be ignored, as they will eventually return to their communities. The efforts of Passages Academy teachers and NYPL librarians serve as a positive influence on this population.

Educational Partners

Public libraries and schools are common partners; though a good relationship must first be established, a myriad of collaborations and partnerships are possible, from small and specific, to larger and ongoing. Whether or not a partnership appears logical and potentially rich with possibilities, nothing will work if your partner doesn’t want to play. While some chapters in this collection are working off a great partnership due to common goals, great short term or long term relationships or other motivations, how do you woo a partner who is uninterested or even antagonistic? This was the dilemma described by Hillary Dodge and Erica Rose of the Clearview Library District in Colorado. Of course, it made perfect sense to establish collaborative programs with the local school district, but past partnering between the library
and the schools had a checkered past. With some fresh enthusiasm from newer library staff, and with the purpose of becoming more proactive in the relationship, Clearview Library District had to rebuild a foundation for a partnership. A foothold in this process was meeting with school officials and securing the support for library/school collaborations. This also progressed into some flexibility with library policy and procedures. With the goal of getting the public library to the schools and the schools to the public library, it took steady effort to establish the partnership. The dedicated staff of the Clearview Library District is an excellent example of how to approach and reestablish a good partner in their community, something that any other public library could tailor to meet their own needs. Collaborative projects with community partners are important, but first you must either find or mold a willing partner.

You may have heard about using therapy dogs to encourage children to read. And what an endearing program, to have child reading to nonjudgmental dog. Is it worth the effort to set up such a program? And where would you ever begin? How would you make such a program work? Reading with a therapy dog has been recognized in the past decade as having more than just health benefits. Some therapy dogs have made the transition to reading coaches at Bedford Public Library, in Bedford, Indiana, USA. The point of view in this chapter is unique in that the author, Mary Hall, the Adult Services and Circulation Manager, is also a service dog trainer. With good preexisting working relationship between Bedford Public Library and the local school district, grounds for a focused partnership program were already laid. Indiana state standardized tests revealed poor reading comprehension in 4th graders, and an improvement plan was drawn up by the Indiana Department of Education. To focus on third grade students at most risk, the school and the library worked together through the reading therapy dog program. Not just an outreach program, the school teachers and administrators are fully invested in the reading dog program, and with that cooperation, the program was extended into the summer. An additional partner joined the reading dog program, funding the purchase of books given to participating students.

Education is the common ground that brings schools and public libraries together. The two examples of school collaborations or partnerships in this chapter are quite specific, as described by Karen Ellis, Library Director of the Taylor Public Library, Taylor, Texas. The Taylor Public Library partnered with the local school district for facility use when the public library lost its building due to an accumulation of water damage. Until a new public library could be built, the library was squeezed into a much smaller space at the city hall. That proposed a problem for summer reading events that were very well attended. The local school district, with whom the library had an excellent and well established relationship, assisted with this need for programming space, and the school students got treated to programming not otherwise available to them. The second example involved the local junior college campus in town and their need for library space. The public library offered shelving for college materials, and became a site for library instruction and services. In turn, the college supplied the library what they most needed: a free worker. These two school partnerships saw gains on both sides of the relationships, which is what really makes a partnership work.

Karen Ellis
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REFERENCES


