

**RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE MINISTER OF SASKATCHEWAN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT
FROM THE SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARY TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION
AS PROPOSED BY
THE COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY COOPERATION**

**April 9, 1995
Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**

COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY COOPERATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association expresses gratitude to the Saskatchewan Library Association for the secondment and financial support of S.L.A. members and to Saskatchewan Municipal Government for the provision of funding for the work of the committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARY TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION FROM THE COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY COOPERATION

Introduction

A free-standing independent public library is the preferred choice of the Committee. However, when this is impossible, the Committee on School/public Library Cooperation recommends that LOCAL community choice, based on the following recommendations, must be the deciding factor.

Recommendation #1 - Cooperation

That S.L.T.A. encourage full cooperation between public and school libraries in order to provide the best library service in an efficient and cost effective manner to the residents of Saskatchewan.

Recommendation #2 - Facilities

In communities where municipal facilities or services are not available to serve the community's need for library services, S.L.T.A. recommends the use of the best possible facilities, staffing and financing that can be obtained through cooperation and collaboration as outlined in a written agreement. The physical amalgamation of school and public libraries is not the primary option.

Recommendation #3 - Needs Assessment

A written needs assessment of the entire community should be the basis for the contemplation of a public library that is housed in a school or jointly with another facility.

Recommendation #4 - Agreements

That any agreement between constituents must be formalized and documents signed by all parties involved. These agreements should include:

- the rights, privileges and duties financially and otherwise of all constituents;
- a time limit outlining the life of the contract before re-negotiation;
- a mediation clause;
- a method of dissolution clause.

Secure funding must be in place before any agreement is finalized. The agreement must be accompanied by a written community needs assessment and letters, motions and/or bylaws of support.

Recommendation #5 - All Cooperative Projects

In all instances of co-operation between public libraries and any other institutions, the following criteria should be met:

- a written agreement;
- guarantees of financial support;
- motions or bylaws of support;
- written policies and procedures.

Recommendation #6 - Committee

That a Committee be established to prepare a planning document that the communities may use when considering a combined School/Public Library.

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COOPERATION**

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Introduction

A school-housed public library as a venue for public library service has been a controversial issue for over half a century. One of the earliest reports discussing the issue was a 1911 article by J. C. Dana entitled "Branch Libraries in School Houses".¹ However, according to L.J. Amey:

It was Ruth White's 1963 survey of 154 American school-housed public libraries that set the tone for all subsequent discussions of the issue. White's report begins with the fundamental question: Should a public library or its branches be located in the public school? Although White herself made no recommendations, the librarians [sic] comments in response to her questionnaire were "very nearly unanimous against locating the public library or a branch of the public library in a public school",²

Rationale for Study

Why, then, after years of research, discussion and multiple position papers, are we reviewing this issue yet again?

¹J. C. Dana, "Branch Libraries in School Houses", American Library Institute Committee on School Library Cooperation, pp. 16-20, 1911

²L.J. Amey, ed., The Canadian School-Housed Public Library (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1979), p.1.

In 1988, a conference on library futures was held at the Echo Valley Conference Centre. A wide range of representatives with a variety of interests gathered to discuss directions for libraries in the province. This Echo Valley Library Forum reaffirmed the idea, first stated by the Library Inquiry Committee, of expanding the one-province public library system to include cooperation among all types of libraries.³

The goals and objectives resulting from this meeting and articulated in the report Independent but Together promoted the concept of a multitype library system, with a variety of institutions cooperating to provide it.

In this atmosphere of cooperation, public organizations have had several tough years financially, as governments at all levels cope with the demon of "deficits". Cutbacks have caused government officials and managers of public institutions to search for ways to effectively use the limited resources at their disposal.

Nine factors causing the renewal of this debate were identified by the Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation struck by the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association in 1994:

- 1) The duplication of service and cost between school libraries and public libraries as perceived by some tax-payers.
- 2) The hope that a school-housed public library would prevent school closure in rural school divisions.
- 3) The belief that such an amalgamation will save a rural community from dying.
- 4) The acknowledgement that school libraries are inadequate and that all resource centres are threatened by depleted school tax dollars.
- 5) The acknowledgement that public libraries are threatened by depleted tax dollars.

³Independent School Together (Regina: Saskatchewan Library Association and Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association, 1992), p.1.

- 6) The desire by some school boards to "off-load" costs of materials and staff onto public library boards.
- 7) The desire by some municipalities to "off-load" costs of library services onto school boards.
- 8) The School Facilities Funding Guidelines prepared by Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment in July 1994 gives greater weight to school projects that include joint facilities.
- 9) A direct request from Carol Carson, Minister of Saskatchewan Municipal Government, to the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association.

I am asking that you work with the Provincial Librarian to develop a position which responds to community questions about cooperation between school and public libraries. There are ways, other than joint facilities, that school and public libraries could work together to save tax dollars. It will be important that the committee assigned to this issue remember that public and school libraries each fulfil a designated role. I am confident a full discussion of this issue would yield useful recommendations. I urge you to take this opportunity to review this matter and give me your best thoughts.⁴

⁴Carol Carson, Minister of the Provincial Government, General Meeting of the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association, Moose Jaw, SK., 7 November 1993.

Committee Review

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association struck a committee, to respond to the Minister's request, in early 1994. This committee was composed of the Chairperson from Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association, two representatives from the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association, two representatives from Saskatchewan Library Association and the Provincial Librarian. Over the year of meetings, the personnel changed, but the representation remained intact.

The Committee studied outside research, discussed operations with administrators of existing Saskatchewan school-based public library facilities, reviewed roles, and outlined pros and cons.⁵ By focusing on the amalgamation issue, issues relating to any cooperative effort were revealed. In the end, the Committee agreed to six recommendations that suggested a philosophical stance and actions to be taken on future cooperative efforts.

Recommendations

A free-standing independent public library is the preferred choice of the Committee. However, when this is impossible, the Committee on School/public Library Cooperation recommends that ~~QIRUPHG~~ community choice, based on the following recommendations, must be the deciding factor.

(Introduction to Recommendations)

Many combinations have been tried, as reported in the literature and experienced by Saskatchewan library people, and most have been found wanting. Both public library and school authorities agree that the combination has not successfully met the criteria for service expected by the institutions with their two distinctly different set of goals and roles.

Any one interested in accessing material on this topic can request bibliographies and information from Saskatchewan Provincial Library through their local public library branch.

Under the *Public Library Act and Regulations* of Saskatchewan, the responsibility for the provision of public library service rests with:

- 1) regional library boards, local library boards and local councils;
- 2) municipal library boards;

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System.

The public library serves the cultural, educational, informational and recreational needs of the entire community from preschoolers to senior citizens. Its staffing, collections and services are designed to meet the needs of a widely diversified clientele whose participation and use are entirely voluntary. School populations are just one part of the total group of public library patrons.

School libraries are administered under the *Education Act* and *Regulations of Saskatchewan* with the Board of Education of the School Division responsible for their operation. The primary responsibility of the school library is to the educational program of the school, the curriculum, the teachers, and the students. It is intended to be an integral part of the instructional system to teach students how to learn. The principal, teachers and the teacher-librarian share the responsibility for designing and implementing an effective program which integrates the library's resources and services with the curricular needs of the school.

In addition to responding to teacher and student demands, it must also be in the forefront of educational change and innovation. Its staffing, collection and program are geared to serving a specific group of patrons engaged in specialized tasks, in a time schedule, and on a compulsory basis. Following advice from the local Board of Trustees, the Board of Education may enter into an agreement with another board, person or a municipality.

The list of pros and cons relating to combined school and public libraries is heavily weighted on the cons side of the list (see attached Appendix A). This and the literature indicate that two independent libraries provide the most effective service to their clientele.

However, attitude and desire can make a program successful despite overwhelming

odds against it. If the desire is there, an amalgamation of public and school library will be attempted. Consequently, the Committee suggested that an "informed" community choice be the deciding factor. We emphasize informed because frequently the decision is made at a political level to justify cost-cutting and to save tax money. "Their potential for cost savings has made them politically popular even though, in many instances, a basic understanding of what is involved in their operation has been lacking".⁶

Unfortunately, many of the decisions to create joint use libraries and the operational agreements that accompany them are being made at high levels of administration with little or no input from experienced library professionals who will ultimately be responsible for running these potential ulcer mills. The opportunity for excellence in terms of library services and facilities can be and often is equal to the potential for causing a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction for the staff.⁷

However, not only do library staff have to be involved in the decision, the whole community should be contacted and presented with the potential gains and the potential problems. "In some cases, there's a grassroots cry from a community for library service. In other cases, the library may identify the need. Either way, it's important to conduct a survey to make sure that the neighbourhood welcomes the library and is ready to use it."⁸

Educating the community, before the choice is made, includes identifying the potential operational issues. This issue becomes most important when considering housing a regional branch public library in a school that serves communities that are not participating in the regional library. What may be a cost savings on paper, could turn into an operational nightmare, devastating public relations (e.g. "The library turns away children") and a political

⁶I.S. "Bud" Call "Joint-use Libraries: Just How Good Are They?", C & RL News (Nov. 1993), p. 551.

⁷Ibid., pp. 551-552.

⁸Sally Koseoff and Sharon Todd Barton "Joint-use Libraries: More Bang for Your Bucks", Wilson Library Bulletin (November 1994), p. 38.

hot potato.

The Committee recommends:

That S.L.T.A. encourage full cooperation between public and school libraries in order to provide the best library service in an efficient and cost effective manner to the residents of Saskatchewan.

(Recommendation #1 - Cooperation)

Cooperation between jurisdictions is important. Beyond physical amalgamation, new technologies, programming and staff training opportunities give multiple opportunities to share costs and personnel. The number of ways to cooperate are limited only by imagination and attitude. While cooperation amongst libraries of all kinds is important, it is imperative that participants recognize each type of library mandate. Anything that impedes fulfilling each mandate results in failure to meet client needs and results in ineffective use of tax dollars.

All citizens, no matter what the age, are better served when different types of library are well established in a community, with both formal and informal cooperative arrangements between them. The development of library networks including regional library systems, will best provide the resources required to serve all sectors of the public."⁹

In communities where municipal facilities or services are not available to serve the community's need for library services, S.L.T.A. recommends the use of the best possible facilities, staffing and financing that can be obtained through cooperation and collaboration as outlined in a written agreement. The physical amalgamation of school and public libraries is not the primary option.

(Recommendation #2 - Facilities)

Public Libraries are not opposed to participation in joint facilities. Many public libraries, perhaps 30-40%, currently share facilities with other organizations. Examples include: Perdue is in a bowling alley and dance hall; Biggar shares a building with the Rural Municipality office and museum; La Ronge is in the town office; Paynton shares with a seniors'

9. *Interdepartmental Liaison Cooperation Library Development Statement on the School-Housed Public Library* (Edmonton): Alberta Culture and Alberta Education, 1986), p.8.

centre; Unity is in a health district, and town office complex; Moose Jaw shares with an art gallery and museum; Saskatoon has branches in recreational complexes; and the town of Tisdale is contemplating a multitype library under the name of a community library. The main difference between these situations

and school-housed public libraries is that in the latter case, more than just a building is shared.

Collections, staff, programs and policies are combined, but mandates differ.

Decisions and policies can no longer reflect only the needs of one or the other, but must be made in accordance with the combined needs of both. A joint-use library is totally unique unto itself and must always be treated as such.¹⁰

Some libraries, such as the Wisewood Library in Buffalo Narrows, have reflected this uniqueness by creating a joint board with representatives from all political and educational participants and the community at large.

The continued success of this and other cooperative projects rests on the foundation of documentation. "Handshake Agreements" last only as long as the people with the hands are living in the community and are willing to shake hands. Documentation provides a reference point for future staff and boards, although they do have to read it.

The documentation begins with the community needs assessment.

A written needs assessment of the entire community should be the basis for the contemplation of a public library that is housed in a school or jointly with another facility.

(Recommendation #3 - Needs Assessment)

Although this needs assessment is focused on the issue of housing the public library in the school, it must be written in an unbiased way. As well, the sample of the community must be broad enough to reflect the whole spectrum of community people. Single people and senior citizens in the community will not be included if a questionnaire is sent home with school children. The "entire community" does not mean everyone in town must participate, but the sample should be representative.

¹⁰Call, p. 551.

One of the most essential documents is a written agreement which lays out the roles and responsibilities of the partners to the cooperative program or joint-use facility. The Committee recommends:

That any agreement between constituents must be formalized and documents signed by all parties involved. These agreements should include:

- ***The rights, privileges and duties financially and otherwise of all constituents;***
- ***A time limit outlining the life of the contract before re-negotiation;***
- ***A mediation clause;***
- ***A method of dissolution clause.***

Secure funding must be in place before any agreement is finalized. The agreement must be accompanied by a written community needs assessment and letters, motions and/or bylaws of support. (Recommendation #4 - Agreements)

It is critical to have a clear articulation of the mandates, roles, responsibility, financial commitments and authorities of all parties involved. This will be used to resolve future conflicts and to express the basic philosophy of the joint venture. Any agency that is contemplating a joint facility with a public library is responsible for approaching the public library authorities:

- 1) In the case of regional libraries and their branches, the authorities are the regional library board, the local library board, and any councils that contribute financially to the local facility. Signers of an agreement must include the regional library board (as the primary authority), the local library board and may include municipal councils.
- 2) In the case of municipal library boards, the municipal library board is the sole authority. The Library board, being autonomous under the Public Library Act, would make the decision with consultation of the local municipal council. The signer of an agreement would be the municipal library board.
- 3) In the case of northern public libraries, the local library board is the sole authority.

The local library board is autonomous and may enter into agreements with other agencies. However, the local library should consult with municipal authorities and the P.N.L.S. headquarters.

It is also important to have the partner organizations agree to the document by passing supporting motions or bylaws and including a copy with the agreement records. These supporting documents are important when personnel change and a confusion about commitment arises. Each member organization will have to make a conscientious effort to review these documents on a regular basis.

Although written documents do not guarantee the success of a school-housed public library, they provide a reminder of intentions and an orientation tool when personnel changes.

For these reasons, the Committee also recommends:

In all instances of co-operation between public libraries and any other institutions, the following criteria should be met:

- a written agreement;***
- guarantees of financial support;***
- motions or bylaws of support;***
- written policies and procedures.***

(Recommendation #5 - All Cooperative Projects)

This may seem like common sense, nevertheless, particularly in small towns where personalities are well known, agreements on small projects, such as access to library databases, are sometimes put into place based on an "understanding" between participants.

In the "Vision" document, Independent but Together, it states:

Pockets of excellence in collections, staff, and technology exist throughout the province. We need to develop ways of sharing and providing equitable access to this excellence so that citizens throughout the province can use any library as the entry point to

a comprehensive information network.¹¹

Whether this is done through a school-housed public library or other cooperative projects, the goal of best serving clients' needs remains the focus.

Conclusion

In doing our research, the Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation found enough examples of written agreements and policies on the issue of joint-use facilities to provide guidelines for those considering such an arrangement. However, the feasibility process for developing such an arrangement is not clear. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

That a Committee be established to prepare a planning document that the communities may use when considering a combined School/Public Library.
(Recommendation #6 - Committee)

The school representatives are necessary to determine who should be asked what type of question at which political level in the education system. This input will provide the relevancy and support necessary to produce a useful and balanced document.

¹¹Independent but Together, p.5.

Finally, "it is also worth mentioning one other prominent characteristic of the literature [on school-housed public libraries]: it reads like the story of Job. It resembles an endless chronicle of righteous endeavours undone by anticipated and undeserved calamities."¹² Nevertheless, "combined libraries have enormous potential where planning with some expertise has preceded decision-making."¹³ We hope these recommendations will assist communities to develop that planning.

Lori Isinger
Chairperson
Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation

¹²L.J. Amey, ed., Combining Libraries: The Canadian and Australian Experience (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1987), p. vii.
¹³Walter Haycock, Prologue to The Canadian School-Housed Public Library, edited by L.J. Amey (Halifax: Dalhousie University Libraries, 1979), p. 10.

APPENDIX A

PRO'S AND CON'S OF SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY AMALGAMATION

PRO

§ A small community may not have an appropriate space in which to house the public library except for the school.

§ Lifelong education is a focus of many communities which means that the public library and school collections are both of interest to adults and children in the community.

§ In communities where the school serves as a community centre, combining the school and public library can help develop the community centre as a focal point where, together, adults and children can learn and enrich themselves.

§ Patrons may feel more comfortable in this atmosphere and therefore will utilize the library more.

§ Because of fiscal restraints, government departments are encouraging cooperative projects that will benefit more than one sector of society, so funding possibilities for a joint operation may be more readily available.

§ Collections, equipment, services (such as Internet and interlibrary loan) are more fully used by allowing longer hours of access and larger audiences.

§ If the public library is in the school, then it may reduce the likelihood of the municipality withdrawing from the Region or may convince a municipality to join.

§ Duplication of collection titles can be avoided (particularly high priced items such as encyclopedias, books-in-print, videos with public viewing rights), thereby allowing

PRO

collection money to be allocated to a wider

CON

§ Public library collections, since they cover the entire spectrum of the reading public--from pre-school to senior adults--are much broader in scope than a children's school-age collection.

This may lead to censorship issues when adult books, with adult language, are found in the school library.

§ Adults, particularly those who do not have school age children, may not think of the school as the location of the public library or may be uncomfortable entering the school for that purpose.

§ On the other hand, some parents and teachers may be uncomfortable with adults wandering around the school with the younger children.

§ Security of school children from adults with ulterior motives, e.g. drug dealing, harassment, poses problems for library staff.

§ When a school closes in a community, that has housed the public library, the community could lose its public library as well.

§ When school boards begin cutting back on expenditures, one of the first areas to be cut back is the library. This puts an unfair burden on the public library budget. [Note: The opposite may also happen if the council decides to cut back on expenditures.]

§ Public libraries which are members of regions circulate books from branch to branch, with new books being added and old or noncirculating books being withdrawn from the system. School libraries do not usually circulate their collections.

CON

variety of items.

§ School buildings are usually barrier free because they are on one level with ramps and often have ample parking.

§ The combination may lead to larger budgets and possible staff sharing for the libraries.

§ More adult users may become exposed to the library through their children.

§ Use of the school library may be extended after school hours by programming.

§ The hours of opening to the public might be higher in a joint facility than in separate facilities.

§ Increased access for the students themselves will lead to better services for students and teachers.

§ Increase in patronage will in turn increase community involvement and community funding.

§ Schools close for Christmas, for Easter holidays, and for 2 months every summer. Who will pay the extra staff and occupancy costs during these periods?

§ Schools, for safety reasons, should be located as far away as possible from the main business and traffic areas of a town. Public libraries need the high accessibility of being on the main street.

§ The misperception that one library staff member can do both the school library and public library work usually means that not enough staff are hired to provide adequate service for the whole community.

§ The library may not have an outside entrance for the public to use during and after school hours resulting in allowing unsupervised travel through the halls of the school and discouraging walk in traffic.

§ Outside signage to identify the facility as a public library is often neglected because a library sign is already available in the school.

§ Staff have problems sorting out who has supervisory authority over them and which policies or guidelines are in place--those of the public library board, the principal, or those of the school board. Jurisdiction, authority, and supervisory issues tend to be resolved in the school's favour as the owner of the facility.

§ Schools often limit the loan of materials required for class use while public libraries provide materials to all patrons on a first come, first serve basis.

§ If school enrolment increases, and the space used by the public library is required for school activities, the public library may be required to move.

§ Overlapping hours may make it difficult to provide public programs during school hours.

CON

§ Teachers may sign out blocks of books which limits what materials are available to the public.

§ If the joint school/public library serves a community where there is a non-participating municipality whose children attend the school, public library service may have to be denied to the those children. This could cause potential conflict between the delivery of public and school library services.

§ If both groups are served equally as well as in separate facilities, there may be no cost savings.

§ It may be difficult for the local library board to negotiate on equal terms with the Board of Education of the School Division.

§ School and public libraries are governed by two separate pieces of legislation.

APPENDIX B

ROLES OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public Libraries

Under the Public Library Act and Regulations of Saskatchewan, the responsibility for the provision of public library service rests with:

- 1) regional library boards, local library boards and local councils;
- 2) municipal library boards;

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north.

Any agency that is contemplating a joint facility with a public library is responsible for approaching the public library authorities:

1) In the case of regional libraries and their branches, the authorities are the regional library board, the local library board, and any councils that contribute financially to the local facility. Signers of an agreement must include the regional library board (as the primary authority), the local library board and may include municipal councils.

2) In the case of municipal library boards, the municipal library board is the sole authority. The Library board being autonomous under the Public Library Act would make the decision with consultation of the local municipal council. The signer of an agreement would be the municipal library board.

3) In the case of northern libraries, the local library board is the sole authority. The local library board is autonomous and may enter into agreements with other agencies. However, the local library should consult with municipal authorities and the P.N.L.S. headquarters.

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School Libraries

School libraries are administered under the *Education Act* and *Regulations* of Saskatchewan with the Board of Education of the School Division responsible for their operation. The primary responsibility of the school library is to the educational program of the school, the curriculum, the teachers, and the students. It is intended to be an integral part of the instructional system to teach students how to learn. The principal, teachers and the teacher-librarian share the responsibility for designing the implementing an effective program which integrates the library's resources and services with the curricular needs of the school.

In addition to responding to teacher and student demands, it must also be in the forefront of educational change and innovation. Its staffing, collection and program are geared to serving a specific group of patrons engaged in specialized tasks, in a time schedule, and on a compulsory basis. Following advice from the local Board of Trustees, the Board of Education may enter into an agreement with another board, person or a municipality.

[Adapted from Statement on the school-housed public library / prepared by the Interdepartmental Liaison Group on Library Development. -- Edmonton : Alberta Culture ; Alberta Education, 1986.]