

# Who Am I This Time: A Shared Library Serving Multiple Clients?

*Darby L. Fanning, Emily A. Dill, and Steven J. Schmidt*

The University Library of Columbus is an abomination in the world of libraries. It is a single, joint use library serving three masters -- IUPUC, which is known more formally as Indiana University Purdue University Columbus, a thirty year old research center of Indiana University's Indianapolis campus offering a limited number of four-year degree programs and a smattering of graduate degrees. We also host the Purdue University College of Technology, which is separate program from the Purdue classes offered under the IUPUI umbrella, and finally we serve the students and faculty of the Ivy Tech Community College, Region 10 which offers two year degree and certificate programs in the south central part of the state.

IUPUC is a small but academically diverse university located in Columbus, Indiana in the south-central part of the state. The campus was founded in 1970 as an extension of IUPUI, which is one of Indiana University's eight statewide campuses. Originally, IUPUC offered classes in various locations throughout Columbus. In 1984, the Purdue College of Technology program began offering classes at IUPUC, allowing the campus to offer degree programs from both Indiana University and Purdue University. When the

campus was first founded, a library was created under the direction of Janet Feldmann in partnership with the IUPUI University Library in Indianapolis. The collection ultimately grew to a size of 50,000 volumes, and since all IUPUC students are considered as IUPUI students, they were able to access whatever online resources that the IUPUI University Library had available.

In 1963, the Indiana Vocational Technical College, popularly known by its nickname—IV Tech, was established to provide technical and vocational education for workforce development for various industries around the state. The Columbus Region was formally commissioned and organized in June of 1967; however, it took a year in order to secure room space and begin offering classes. By 1970, Ivy Tech—Columbus had an enrolment of 76 students and 6 full-time faculty. Today, the campus has nearly 3,000 students and is part of the largest higher education system in the state. In 1978 after using a number of leased spaces, the local community suggested the creation of an educational complex where Ivy Tech and IUPUC would be strategically located within a short walking-distance of each other. Construction began in 1982

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*Darby L. Fanning, Emily A. Dill, and Steven J. Schmidt are all from the University Library of Columbus.*

and classes began to be offered shortly thereafter. This new building accommodated a library that held approx. 5,000 volumes that were intended to serve the vocational and technical needs of the College.

In about 2001, the Columbus Community once again entered the discussion, suggesting the construction of the Columbus Learning Center (CLC) which would house classrooms, computer labs, and support services for the 5,000 students attending these three schools. The Learning Center is the brainchild of the Community Education Coalition, which is a partnership of education, business, and community stakeholders whose mission is focusing on aligning and integrating our community learning system, economic development, and quality of life. Over \$3 million in community funding provided support for expansion of degree and certificate programs at the three post-secondary institutions. The Learning Center also houses the offices of WorkOne, the state unemployment office which includes the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, and River Valley Resources, agencies dedicated to helping worker get retrained for new jobs.

Our library is located in a wing of the CLC, which also houses The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL was created to serve teachers in the three post-secondary institutions, as well as the local county and regional school corporations with a focus on technology integration in teaching & learning.

It is useful at this point to know a little bit about the conditions of our location. Columbus lies in southeast corner of central Indiana, an area that has seen large factories decrease their workforce or close up shop frequently over the past few decades. Such a scenario is not unique to this community. What makes Columbus unique is its dedication to providing innovative opportunities for displaced workers to enhance their educational attainment and find new jobs.

According to 2000 census data, the counties surrounding Columbus rank far below the national average in post-secondary educational attainment. The largest area employers in the area employ mostly unskilled or trade workers, and with the reduction in their workforce it is bringing this portion of the state to a socioeconomic crisis point.

In 2004, an Indiana Commission for Higher Education report cited many ways the state could improve its educational system, including providing more seamless Pre-Kindergarten through grade 16

educational opportunities across the state. IUPUC and Ivy Tech were ahead of some of these recommendations which were calling for easier transition from the community colleges to bachelor's degree granting institutions. It should also be noted that except for IUPUC and Ivy Tech, this southeast portion of the state also lacks a major state supported university.

A 1997 Hudson Institute study commissioned by the Columbus Economic Development Board identified the lack of a linked educational system in the community as a problem. The Community Education Coalition (CEC) was created to address this and other local educational issues. The partners in this project were: IUPUC, the Purdue College of Technology, Ivy Tech Community College, the Bartholomew County Consolidated School Corporation, and the Department of Workforce Development.

*Facilities:* The Columbus Learning Center (CLC) was designed as a shared facility including classrooms and administrative offices used by IUPUC and Ivy Tech. Office space is provided for the Department of Workforce Development, the College and Career Exploration Center, and the Certification and Assessment Center which manages skills and certification testing, as well as the Library and Center for Teaching and Learning. The overall aim of the CLC is to reinforce lifelong learning and link education with work opportunities in the community in order to bolster local economic stability and health.

While Ivy Tech and IUPUC had worked together for years on a variety of initiatives to increase the educational opportunities of the people of Columbus and the region, they were also missing out on many more that would help both institutions meet their goals. One such opportunity was the concept of the joint-use library in order offer increased access and quality of services while eliminating duplication of efforts by housing two adjacent. In cooperation with the CEC, the IUPUC library merged its collection and services with Ivy Tech Community College in 2005 to create the education centerpiece of the Columbus Learning Center, the University Library of Columbus.

*Management and Operations:* University Library of Columbus falls into one of the three management and organization models that the Standing Committee on Joint-Use Libraries by College Center for Library Automation (1996) identifies in their report "Establishing Joint use libraries," as cited by Karen Dorsief. The library is managed by IUPUC, with the director

reporting directly to the IUPUC Vice-Chancellor. In addition to the director, IUPUC provides one tenure-track librarian and two clerical staff members. As part of the agreement, Ivy Tech provides one accredited MLS librarian and one half-time work-study student. Ivy Tech also pays IUPUC an annual fee to cover library services in addition to a small materials budget.

*Technology and Infrastructure:* The library houses the largest computer cluster on the combined campuses, a cluster of nearly eighty machines offering Internet, word processing, spreadsheet and multimedia capabilities. Near the entrance is an integrated service desk to support these computers and our users. As the desk was originally conceived, this desk would be staffed by library assistants, who issue cards, check materials in and out, and manage the course reserves. A computer consultant would be available to help with logging-in, printing, and general computer operation problems. Finally, there was to be an IT Support Technician available to reset passwords and to trouble-shoot network and equipment problems for the building.

The next challenge was to provide tiered on-demand IT support at the information desk. The Information Commons provides up to date hardware, software, and electronic resources to people who previously had limited access to such resources. This means that a lot of our time is spent teaching users how to access and to use the new tools and resources.

Previously, the IT staff had served only the IUPUC clientele, but now it was called upon to support network connectivity for an institution-neutral building with five different secure domains. The network configuration was a difficult task to figure out, but now provides (mostly) seamless access to each patron's institutions' list of resources. The challenge here for the reference staff is that each and every question is predicated with "Are you with IUPUC, Ivy Tech, Purdue or the Community?" and the need for our staff to be conversant with the different resources available to each of these communities.

The Library staff has also been handed some de-facto building management issues, such as managing keys to classrooms and labs, as well as coordinating tech support for entire building. This has resulted in the library staff having less time for managing traditional "library" tasks.

*Collection management and development:* We have also had to learn how to manage the library as a single collection shared between two different organiza-

tions. This included working out collection management processes, as well as sharing and coordinating instruction responsibilities. For example, we have one interfiled print collection with everything cataloged in IUCAT, the Indiana University Library Catalog. This means that when Ivy Tech users check IvyCat, the Ivy Tech statewide catalog, the records they see for Columbus are meaningless and over four years out of date. In our merger agreement, we do have a divorce clause which states that IUPUC and Ivy Tech resources have separate location codes in the catalog, so if we ever break apart, we can identify who owns what.

### Literature Review

The seminal work by Amey (1987) on joint-use libraries tells us first that collaborative efforts between different types of libraries have been established for more than a century in various forms and in different configurations throughout Australia, Canada, the US, and Europe. Historically, the most common joint-use library combination has been between primary and secondary schools and the public library. Resource sharing between these types of institutions seems quite logical as both serve the same patron population; on a world-wide average, 30% of the public library's patronage is from school aged children and youth (Bundy 2003). Other less common combinations are college/public library, university/public library or contracted library services from one institution by another (e.g., Walden U. contracts with IU-Bloomington for use of their physical in-house collection). The least common joint-use ventures, though they seem like an obvious combination due to the populations they serve, are between the community college and university libraries; although, according to Bundy (2003), this specific type of collaboration appears to be gaining in popularity, especially over the last two decades as higher education seeks creative solutions to deliver more products and services with less monetary support.

The stark reality is that as budgets shrink and costs rise for materials and staffing, more academic institutions are exploring different ways to not only deliver quality resources and services, but also increase availability and access to quality resources and services. Despite the fact that only 2% of all libraries in the US are actively engaged in combined library enterprises (compared to 40% in Australia), they have

been growing in popularity since the 1990s due to the ability to streamline services and resources delivered to a common patron base through a desire to offer a larger breath of access and services, as well as trying to achieve a maximum cost and quality benefit to all involved institutions.

However, it appears that the motivating factor behind an institution's administration to combine libraries is a bottom line of anticipated cost savings, which tends to conflict with the library administration's motivation to offer increased access to resources and improved services. This conflict tends to be the root of many struggles that the library faces, as the literature shows and cautions that economics should not be the single driving force for joining forces. Kratz (2003) refers to Bundy's research (2003) and plainly states that, "[joint-use libraries] often do not save on operational, resource and construction costs." There are many factors, both soft and hard, that should be considered, evaluated, and negotiated before a decision is made to combine libraries because these factors will determine the success or failure of the venture.

Amey's research presented a foundation for more and more cooperative possibilities between institutional libraries to form based upon the experiences of the past. Whether he intended it or not, his research presented case studies with their successes and failures as models, in addition to the myriad of potential opportunities, which enabled future collaborative endeavors to form guidelines and considerations for the feasibility of an idealistic yet complicated relationship to grow.

Since more and more organizations and institutions are exploring the concept of joint-use endeavors, the articles that have been written and reviewed basically fall into three basic types of categories. The first type of article details one's personal experience with the process of considering and developing a joint use library. The articles recount inception to final product and offer the reader insights on the opportunities and challenges one encounters during the journey. Most importantly, these articles offer the best guide to common "hard factor" considerations that institutions must address in order to determine whether the collaboration is logistically, financially, and operationally feasible.

The second type of article is philosophical and/or addresses an *impending* plan to join libraries; however, this type of article tends to focus less upon the "guide-

lines" of the process and more upon what a joint-use library can accomplish. The most notable element of these articles is the idealistic vision of what a joint-use library will offer under the assumption of ideal circumstances. Conversely, the final type of article focuses on an individual's personal experience and can be measured according to their attitude toward the experience. The tone expressed in many of these types of articles is diplomatic and the author(s) carefully balances challenges with successes. Few articles extol the joint-use library entirely and a sizable amount lambasts the idea, the experience, or both.

**Type I:** Karen Dorsief is cited by William Miller (2001) and states, "There is no model joint-use library. Each reflects not only the organizational culture, mission, and circumstances of every partner, but the unique combination of these in a shared facility." Even though practitioners have recognized that there is not a single model or "how-to" book on building a joint-use library, the articles written about individual endeavors and their detailed circumstances are the best evaluations for other institutions to judge the feasibility of a the possibility of a combined library. Each article of this type is a case study from which to garner insight into a current or envisioned partnership (Hansson 2006; Oliver and Anderson, 2001; Woods, 2001). These articles offer specific elements for partners to consider before decisions are made to join forces, and they are serious considerations that will be great determining factors to the greater success or failure of the venture. Many common elements must be considered and contractually agreed upon by all involved organizations: leadership and administration, facilities, management, technology infrastructure and management, budgetary responsibilities, automation, collection development, branding and identity, services, and staffing. However, the audience is cautioned that these are *common* considerations and each joint-library plan will have their own unique issues to sort out beyond these basic functions.

**Type II:** The second type of article addresses either the philosophy or theory behind a joint use library, an *impending* plan to join libraries, but often these two elements are combined (Dalton, Elkin, and Hannaford, 2006; McNicol, 2006); however, this type of article tends to focus less upon the "guidelines" of the process and more upon what has been accomplished up to a certain point. The most notable ele-

ment of these articles is the idealistic vision of what a joint-use library will offer under the assumption of ideal circumstances.

**Type III:** Since each joint-use library is unique, collecting thorough quantitative data for combined libraries in the US is very challenging if not nearly impossible. The reports of quantitative success and failures rates are, as far as I have been able to determine, are unreported in the literature. Furthermore, without a *recent, all-inclusive pan-American* survey for each joint-use library in the US, it is relatively impossible to accurately quantify the “combined library” as a failure or success, each to their varying degrees.

Less than a handful of documents survey a selective sample pool of librarians who are currently working, will work or have worked in joint-use libraries. These survey results roughly evaluate “failure” or “success” of a particular joint-use library according to the librarians’ attitude. Though we have little evaluative data, what exists should not that be dismissed simply due to the age of a study, size of the sample pool, or lack of definite quantitative results. What the studies do tell us is that in R.M. White’s 1963 study of 154 libraries in the US, the data indicates that the overwhelming majority of the librarians that responded were not only highly suspect of a combined library’s feasibility, but also overwhelmingly resistant to attempting such a project. S.L. Aaron’s surveys of the literature (1977 with J.F. Davie) and through interviews (1980; 1993) indicated that these attitudes had not changed much over 15 and 30 years.

Analyzing the tone of this type of literature finds that joint-use libraries do oftentimes fail far more than succeed. Furthermore, what is considered a “failure” is not simply that the partners disengage from the joint venture, but one should also recognize an ill-functioning partnership constitutes a failure, as well. What is most apparent is that the attitudes (found in surveys and from professional literature) of library professionals toward joint-use projects are exceedingly negative (Amey 1987; Bundy 2003) and a number of authors are careful to balance challenges and achievements.

Yet, what is interesting is that there seems to be a slight, but noticeably more positive shift in the tone of the literature, beginning the 1990s to the present. This seems to correlate directly to the reality of budgetary concerns, as well as an apparent shift towards collaboration in education. The literature within the past 10-15 years still has a notable amount of naysay-

ers, but the voices in support of shared resources are becoming more frequent as the harsh reality is this: Join forces, if feasible, or suffer reduction or elimination of quality and quantity of service.

Although the survey data we have measures much of the librarian’s personal and professional opinion, it is rather indicative of success for the potential joint-use library in which s/he works. Not only has it been cited in the literature (Imhoff, 2001), but it is also our own experience, that the staff of combined libraries should ensure that their mission and goals are strategically aligned, support flexibility, overall personalities and attitudes toward public service match, and their professional commitment to serve must supersede any personal or political agenda. The true measure of success is absolutely that the organizational and functional structure of the library and its services are invisible to the end user, thereby receiving quality service despite the institutional affiliation of the immediate staff member.

In conclusion, recognizing and realizing that there isn’t a blueprint for a joint-use library, case studies and evaluations of attitudes in present and past joint-use libraries are invaluable for a beginning blueprint in order to assess the collaborative viability for the targeted institutions’ potential success. Nevertheless, Bundy (2003) is correct when he states that, “relying on the literature alone to validate or invalidate the concept for *local application* [his emphasis] can be misleading.” As has been previously stated, are many hard and soft factors for the *individual institutions in question* to consider: facilities; contracts; administration; space; budgets; staffing; programming; automation; organizational culture; attitude, compatibility of vision and mission; patron base, etc. The fact is that if saving a small amount of money is the only benefit to joining forces, it may very well be best to remain separate and maintain the *quality of service*, even if the quantity might suffer a bit.

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