



Joint-use libraries

ALIA Constitution Objects addressed:

- To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy, environment and democracy.
- To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies.

Principle

The Australian library and information profession is committed to excellence in the provision of services to best meet client needs.

Statement

The Australian Library and Information Association supports the establishment of joint-use libraries if they equal or better the level of service which would be given in separate facilities, or where such a service provides access to some who would otherwise not have a library.

Joint-use libraries may be established in a variety of locations and with a variety of partners but are most frequently combinations of a school and public library in rural areas. Other combinations involve institutes of technical and further education, and universities.

Experience in Australia and overseas has shown that joint-use libraries are complex to manage and operate, can be particularly demanding of staff, and can be vulnerable to operational difficulties or failure. However, where these issues are well understood and managed, the complexity of a joint-use library can provide better outcomes for funders and the library users.

Successful joint-use library development requires that those involved:

- ensure unequivocal commitment of all interested parties
- undertake full consultation of all parties involved prior to any decisions on establishment
- seek professional advice, in the initial stages of consideration of a joint-use library
- establish an agreed governance structure that ensures that the interests of the funding parties and the library's staff are adequately represented
- give careful consideration to the site, its position, visibility and size, including its accessibility for all potential users



- confirm in the initial stages a plan to provide ongoing assessment of what constitutes adequate access times for all users
- sign off on a formal agreement, by all parties, that cover all areas relating to the development, funding and continued maintenance of the library
- establish mechanisms for the development and evaluation of annual plans, thereby ensuring transparency in both the funding and achievements of the library
- obtain formal agreement on the process to be followed for a new building or extensions if, after a period of operation, the size of the library proves to be inadequate
- employ an integrated staffing structure that begins with a single library manager who is responsible for appropriately qualified and experienced staff members to meet the diverse needs of all potential users
- decide on appropriate skills required to meet the needs of the potential users and determine staff numbers accordingly
- articulate clearly the shared and separate collections of each organisation, especially around licensed resources; and respect the contractual arrangements each organisation has with its content providers
- provide a plan for the relevant, ongoing and suitable structure for staff learning and professional development
- prepare a plan that enables regular, feedback and evaluation of the library and its services; preferably externally facilitated.

Adopted 1986. Amended 1996, 2002. Reviewed 2009. Amended 2019