

# Frameworking the future:

## Guiding principles for cross-sectoral co-operation

**Anne Spelman**

Consultant, young people's services, State Library of Queensland

People in a learning society need libraries throughout their lives. Public libraries serve the entire community from birth onwards by providing a bridge from babyhood into formal learning with access to resources that meet young people's educational, information, recreational and personal needs as they grow into self-determining adult learners. School libraries support the school curriculum as their first priority and also provide for the personal, recreational, and informal learning needs of many young people. Virginia Matthews, in her article 'Kids need libraries: School and public libraries preparing the youth of today for the world of tomorrow' [Mathews, et al.

1990. *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 3:197-207] states:

*When both types of libraries are well supported, they can team up to provide a seamless information and enjoyment resource...*

Over the years, significant effort has been made by people working in the education and information sectors to develop partnerships that achieve better outcomes for young people's learning. However, reliance on individual rather than institutional relationships has resulted in many worthy and innovative projects — including the history and inspiration that gave them form — vanishing with something as basic as a change of staff. In these times of expanding library service development, the time has come to formalise and provide a framework for co-operation between the education and information sectors. This will ensure the survival and evolution of a co-operative and comprehensive library service for young people.

The mission and driving principle of ALIA Children's and Youth Services in Queensland is to develop library services for young people by promoting interaction between library and information specialists who work with young people. ALIA Children's and Youth Services Queensland comprises a broad group of information professionals from school, public and tertiary sectors.

In partnership with the State Library of Queensland, the ALIA Children's and Youth Services Queensland group has held an annual seminar for the last three years. These seminars promote interaction and information sharing between the education and information sectors.

The idea behind the first seminar, *Profusion*, held in 2001, was for public and teacher-librarians to join forces to share their knowledge and expertise. Speakers presented sessions on: visual literacy; reading groups and public libraries; displays; booktalking; conference debriefs; and story-telling workshop and demonstration.

The seminar demonstrated how much public and teacher-librarians have to share with each other and how much they had in common.

The 2002 seminar, *Essential connections: connecting school and public library professionals*, went on to explore the relationship between public and school librarians and what facilitates and prevents co-operative practice.

### Guiding principles for cross-sectoral co-operation

To support an environment where learners can seamlessly access the widest choice of materials to support their information, leisure, cultural and social needs the education and information sectors together need to:

#### **Partner**

- Encourage and support the development of formal partnerships between related agencies.
- Interact and communicate consistently with each other to establish and maintain open and mutually beneficial relationships.

#### **Plan**

- Identify tasks, responsibilities, time frames, funding and outcomes when planning co-operative ventures.
- Plan, implement and evaluate co-operative activities in consultation with key stakeholders.

#### **Information and resource share**

- Initiate, develop and maintain a connectedness that maximises information and resource sharing between young people and their information agencies within and between local, national and global communities.
- Promote and foster the sharing of ideas, resources, skills and space.

#### **Professional development**

- Commit time and personnel to support ongoing skill sharing, professional development and information exchange.

#### **Advocate**

- Advocate the value of all libraries and librarians for young people, to their peers, the community and the government.
- Actively promote at all levels each other's skills and resources.

#### **Program**

- Create dynamic and interactive programs that engage library staff, young people, parents and carers in meaningful learning experiences that develop their information literacy skills, expand their love of reading and stimulate their imagination.

Alan Bundy's paper, *Essential connections: school and public libraries for lifelong learning*, provided both the inspiration and content for the seminar. His paper identified and explored key areas of concern based on the results of a survey about public and secondary school libraries' level of interaction.

The key areas of concern include:

- specialist skills and knowledge sharing
- homework and assignment support
- working collaboratively to maximise resources
- cross-sectoral communication
- formal support for cross-sectoral co-operation.

It is from this last area of concern (formal support for cross-sectoral co-operation) that the idea for the 2003 seminar *Frameworking the future: guiding principles for cross-sectoral collaboration* evolved. It was identified in the *Essential connections* seminar that the lack of a framework for cross-sectoral co-operation impacted significantly on the sectors' ability to:

- maintain networks
- maximise resources, and
- share skills and knowledge.

During the *Frameworking the future* seminar, participants from the voluntary, school, tertiary and public library sectors produced a set of guidelines that demonstrated ways in which they could maintain networks, maximise resources and share knowledge and skills. The guidelines were developed around six focus areas: partnering; planning; advocacy; professional development; information and resource sharing; and programming.

Participants worked in small groups to produce statements of purpose around the focus areas. After the workshop the principles were further developed by the ALIA Children's and Youth Services executive committee and distributed for comment via an e-list to seminar participants. See the breakout box for the revised principles.

It is hoped that public, school and tertiary institutions will adopt these guidelines. Where appropriate, the guidelines could be incorporated into policy documents, and ideally into long-term strategic planning. It is further suggested that peak bodies in Queensland such as ALIA, the School Library Association of Queensland, Queensland's Public Library Association and the State Library of Queensland be approached to support these guiding principles and their implementation.

In 2004, Queensland ALIA Children's and Youth Services activities will focus on implementing the strategies for partnerships that the three seminars have developed.

*This article is based on edited extracts from the paper 'In visible light: illuminating partnerships across libraries to facilitate lifelong learning for young people' by Anne Spelman and Paula Kelly, presented at the Joint Conference of the Children's Book Council and Australian School Library Association, 2-5th October 2003 Hobart Tasmania.*

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