

Starting Points for Collaboration: Libraries in Scott County, Iowa

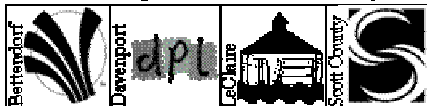
Libraries Together in Scott County



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Libraries Together in Scott County
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Introduction

In March of 2005, the four public libraries in Scott County began the *Libraries Together* project to explore ways they could work together to reduce costs, free up resources and increase efficiency. Already, library staff, trustees, and public officials are seeing the possibilities for collaboration. They have made a number of suggestions for collaboration, which will be discussed in detail in this report.

The first steps for successful collaborations come from assessing the current situation, and beginning to look at ways to make collaboration more effective in the future. Through the *Libraries Together* process, this initial assessment has begun. Libraries are starting to see that the decisions they make now, whether about new computer systems or databases or grant writing, can help pave the way for a more collaborative future.

As we see from looking at collaborative efforts across the county, once libraries start to communicate on a regular basis, they naturally begin to find ways to work together. If those initial collaborative efforts are successful, the collaborations often become deeper and more substantial.

Now as never before, the libraries in Scott County have an incentive to develop a collaborative structure that fits their particular needs. The governor has outlined a proposal to separate local governments into 15 or 16 regional groups, which would receive state funds to encourage the sharing of services, including library service. The libraries in Scott County have taken the lead in preparing for 2008, when shared services proposals may begin to appear on local ballots.

To make any collaborative activities work for the long run, three ingredients are critical:

- a willingness to collaborate on the part of all library directors and staff,
- recognition that one or the other library may need to take the lead in providing the collaborative activity to the others to make it work, and
- mutual agreement on the method of calculating and sharing any related costs.

The best way to implement collaborative activities may be to choose several and have each library take the lead role in the staff and resources needed to make one project happen. On the other hand, some activities lend themselves to brokering by a larger library to others, such as technical processing. In either case, calculations of the cost for the providing library to coordinate or run the effort must be calculated in a mutually agreeable method so that all parties are pleased with the outcome as well as the costs.

What will *Libraries Together* include?

The four public libraries of Scott County created *Libraries Together* as a means to be proactive in responding to shifts in how Iowa and local governments provide services. The libraries hired a Kansas City-based nonprofit organization, Consensus, to provide an objective outsider's look at options for improving library services.

The first phase of *Libraries Together* will end in December 2005 with the release of the final report. The report will include a range of options, from simple operational efficiencies to consideration of complete change for all four libraries, and the likely staff, board and public response to each. Consensus will not recommend one action or another. Instead, it will be up to the library directors, boards, local and state government and, of course, local citizens to decide what comes next.

From March through December of 2005, *Libraries Together* will accomplish six "steps." The first step was completed in April, with the release of "The Past and Present: Libraries in Scott County, Iowa," which provided the broad picture of the current situation for libraries in Scott County and the rest of the state. The second step was completed in July, with the release of "An Inside Look: Libraries in Scott County, Iowa." That report looked inside each library to determine where its work could be done more efficiently and included the results of a customer satisfaction survey sent to library patrons. This report marks the completion of the third step, a look at opportunities for collaboration.

Between now and December, Consensus will complete the last three steps of this phase of *Libraries Together*:

- **Step Four: Unification.** An analysis of the potential impact of shared governance and funding for the four libraries.
- **Step Five: Public Judgment.** Using a survey and public meetings, local citizens will consider various options for action.
- **Step Six: Final Report.** The options for action and the likely stakeholder response to each.

Models of collaboration

Most of the opportunities for collaboration require changes in the communication and decision making among the libraries. Some present short-term opportunities as well as longer-term options. Most of the specific proposals for collaboration discussed in this report rely upon one of the models of collaboration listed below.

Collaborative opportunities can be seen as existing on a continuum. At one end are relatively uncomplicated opportunities such as cross-library committees and increased involvement in consortia. At the other end are more complex solutions that would call for a change in governance and a realignment of library services and policies.

This report focuses on the opportunities for collaboration, through cross-library committees and participation in or the forming of new consortia. The next report will focus on new types of systems that allow libraries to unify funding and governance.

Collaborative Opportunities	
Selling services to other libraries	
In terms of decision-making, one of the easiest options is for one of the libraries in Scott County to sell services to one or more of the other libraries. For example, Davenport could contract with the other libraries to provide IT assistance.	Challenges - Widely ranging pay scales across the libraries could cause problems. It may be difficult to find the proper staffing level to meet the needs of both the parent library and the contracting libraries.
Cross-library committees	
Advantages – Another relatively simple and inexpensive way to increase collaboration is to set up cross-library committees to share information and coordinate services.	Challenges - Committees take substantial time away from already busy staff. There may be some fear that individual libraries will be required to lower their standards in order to work across library boundaries.
Consortia	
Advantages – The libraries in Scott County are already members of consortia, and there are numerous opportunities for new and expanded cooperative agreements for purchasing, staffing, and setting standards.	Challenges – Can be time consuming and slow moving. Libraries may give up some individual control. Consortia can be difficult to sustain.

New types of systems

Advantages – Current Iowa law provides only for city libraries and county libraries. Although the Iowa legislature recently approved the formation of multi-jurisdictional libraries, the law does not include a funding mechanism. Some of the models across the country include:

Joint City/County System – a combination of city and county libraries which work together as a system.

Consolidated system – a group of libraries with a single board of trustees; each library serves as a branch.

Cooperative System – A system created by the boards of several libraries that retain their autonomy. Cooperative systems may include joint interlibrary loan, centralized book processing, joint training and other services.

Federated system – A system allowed by some states (not including Iowa) in which individual libraries retain their independence, but with a "headquarters" set up for the system.

Challenges – changing to a new library structure could involve local and state legislative battles. They often require substantial fundraising in order to win public support. Libraries may feel they lose local control by joining a larger system.

What are the advantages of library consortia?

In *Information Age* in October 2003, Scott Carlson writes, “banding together has become the way to save money by making deals with publishers, but rising competition threatens cooperation.” He said consortia are the main tool for dealing with publishers, since publishers sell products to consortia for less than they sell them to individual libraries. However, Carlson finds that consortia are increasingly competing with one another, and most libraries belong to a variety of consortia both big and small. There is also a good deal of consolidation going on, making the consortia larger and sometimes causing them to move more slowly.

Carlson reports that Ilona Middleton, the library director at Medaille College in Buffalo, N.Y., helped start a consortium for small libraries in her state in the mid-1990s. Not only did members save money in buying databases and journals, but they started working cooperatively. “It got us on the path to regionalism,” she says. “Instead of developing collections to compete with each other, we started to think that this information should be a

shared resource.”

Library consultants Himmel & Wilson conducted web and telephone research to identify what multi-type cooperative library systems look like today. They found the systems are likely to provide the following types of services to their members:

Continuing education	44%
Consulting	39%
Group purchasing	37%
Delivery	33%
Interlibrary loan	33%
Reference	25%
Shared automation/shared technology	24%
Public relations	22%
Other	34%

Source: Himmel & Wilson, library consultants

Other services provided by consortia	
Advocacy	Joint bookmobile service
Bulk loan collections	Loan of collections
Cataloguing services	Joint children and pre-school programming
Access to or purchase of databases	Joint programs for homebound/nursing homes
Web site/page development	Graphics and printing
Grant writing	Joint task force on standards
Facilitating networking	Joint monthly newsletter
Loan of equipment such as Ellison die cutting equipment	Video store
	Web development and maintenance

The report said the Internet is changing the nature of library systems. It also pointed out that state library agency services are being reduced in response to budget cuts, so new systems are being developed to take the place of diminished services. It said that consortia are now the vehicle for providing continuing education and professional networking, a role that professional associations played in the past.

What are the opportunities and pitfalls in expanded consortia?

There are a great number of possibilities for setting up consortia for purchasing, sharing services, seeking grants, and other purposes. Libraries are trying new forms of consortia and finding that some are successful while others are not.

One force pushing collaboration in libraries is automation, such as the rise of the integrated library system. According to library expert Marshall Breeding, writing in *Computers in Libraries*, “Over time, the total number of library automation implementations will decrease, with each system supporting a larger number of libraries.” For instance, he cites the Georgia Pines system, which automates more than 250 libraries with a Sirsi Unicorn system.

Breeding says large centralized systems save libraries money on hardware, facilities, software licenses, technical support and administrative overhead. Joining an integrated library system consortium may allow smaller libraries to get a more full-featured system than they could afford alone.

He says joining a consortium does not always mean having one centralized system. Some allow each library to customize its system while still showing the holdings of all the participants.

Finally, Breeding points out that some libraries, especially larger ones, have found consortia do not fit their needs. “While the prevailing trend is for libraries to join consortia, it’s not unusual to see a library pull out of a consortium to implement its own system. The Rockford Public Library, for example, recently exited the shared catalog of the Northern Illinois Library System to implement its own standalone system. Among other factors, the librarians felt that the interests of their large, urban library did not meld well with those of the consortium of mostly small libraries,” Breeding wrote.

There are other problems with consortia. As Thomas Peters writes in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, consortia have a high failure rate because the busy professionals involved in them need to provide interest, energy and momentum.

One of the system directors interviewed for the Himmel & Wilson report said some cooperatives have folded because they were too small. They face competition from both state libraries and technology networks. Sometimes cooperatives struggle to find the proper balance of services for larger libraries versus smaller ones.

What are the stages of coalition building?

Libraries rarely jump immediately into collaborative efforts like consortia. Instead, they build gradually from less-intensive means of working together. Feinberg and Feldman, 1996, describe the continuum of coalition building as:

- Networking – beginning to build relationships by sharing information.
- Coordination – working together on projects of common interest; may try pilot projects.
- Partnership – A more formal arrangement often requiring each agency to have some financial responsibility.
- Collaboration – requires a formal relationship of shared activities and commitment to a common goal that none of the agencies could achieve alone.

What are examples of successful partnerships?

Simple consortium – Writing in *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, Susan Curtis and Barbara Mann describe various types of cooperative reference relationships. Most use geographic proximity as a criterion for membership, but others are organized by type of library. They range in administration from having no formal administration to more complex structures with librarians, administrators and ad hoc appointees. Most use e-mail for communication. The consortium keeps an “experts list” of staff with specific subject knowledge, and forwards relevant questions to the list.

Broad collaborative partnership – The Gwinnett County Public Library and the Gwinnett University Center Library wanted to work collaboratively, but did not want to merge the two libraries. According to the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, they developed a collaborative partnership which included, in the short term: the ability of patrons of both libraries to borrow from each; joint reference, joint staff development and cross-training of reference staff; quarterly joint meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern; and joint public education about the resources available and how to use libraries efficiently.

The two library directors also worked out a memorandum of understanding “that will establish protocols for universal borrowing, accessing online library systems, sharing facilities and resources, and unifying staff development. The systems will also seek shared acquisitions and cooperatively apply for grant opportunities.”

Progressive stages of collaboration – The University of California’s library system, spread across nine campuses, faced a number of problems in 2003 – reduced budgets, a proliferation of information, lack of unifying technology, patrons’ desire for increased speed and ease of use, and rapid change in information technology.

The libraries began by increasing collaboration across libraries. As they came together regularly to put together an overall strategy, they found increasing opportunities “for collaboration, sharing and system-wide leverage into new domains of library service, including expedited intercampus lending, a shared online library catalogue, regional library facilities, a shared digital collection, and more,” according to a system-wide library report.

Now, the libraries are going to a new level of collaboration, including: developing a plan for shared collections; beginning long-range planning for shared facilities; developing and testing pilot programs for shared services; and coordinating digital information.

What tools do libraries use to collaborate?

Library consortia and library systems use a number of tools to enhance collaboration. Writing in the July/August 2005 issue of *Online*, Darlene Fichter says all collaboration tools offer the same basic services: a way to communicate; a mechanism to share documents, and a means to discover other members of the community. The most basic tools include email,

blogs, wikis, portals, groupware, discussion boards and instant messaging.

She says optional services include integrated online calendaring; extensive user profiles and expertise finders; recommender systems; shared whiteboard, instant messaging and Web and/or phone conferencing services.

Failures usually result from “unusable software with overly complex routines, organizational readiness, governance and communicating values to individuals.”

Quad-LINC, PALS and the America Library Association all provide tools for collaboration available to the four public library of Scott County.

Of staff members from the four Scott County libraries we spoke with, some said that electronic communication doesn’t always enhance collaboration. Some said they were more likely to read newsletters from other libraries when they received paper rather than email versions. They also said that library list serves can contain so much information that it was difficult to make time to read them, and that face-to-face communication was still important.

What consortia already include the libraries in Scott County?

The libraries in Scott County rely on consortia based in Illinois, which provides far more state funding for its libraries than does Iowa. Scott County is one of only three Iowa counties – the others are Clinton and Muscatine – to be included in either Quad-LINC or the Prairie Area Library System [PALS]. Libraries throughout the rest of Iowa must provide their own circulation systems and automation platforms, and must rely upon the chronically underfunded library service areas for training and support.

Prairie Area Library System and Quad-LINC

The Prairie Area Library System, called PALS, is an Illinois-based consortium that includes 26 counties (three in Iowa) and 390 member libraries of a variety of types, including public libraries. The PALS vision statement says, in part, that PALS will “save individual libraries money and create service solutions simply unattainable by individual activity.”

Saving money and improving service was the catalyst back in 1966, when Illinois passed the Library System Act that created 18 regional library systems. At the time, Illinois had some 550 independent public libraries serving about 76 percent of the state’s population, according to Bob McKay, director of PALS. Now Illinois has more than 650 public libraries serving 91 percent of the state’s population.

Over the last 20 years, funding for the Illinois library systems has been relatively flat, McKay said, although still higher than funding for the Iowa library service areas. The Illinois systems chose to initiate mergers as a means to keep service intact and be responsive to new demands. Mergers have shrunk the eighteen systems to eight.

Before the mergers, the four public libraries in Scott County were affiliate members of the River Bend Library System. River Bend included libraries in three Iowa counties: Scott, Clinton and Muscatine. Since River Bend merged with two other Illinois library

systems in July 2004, the Iowa counties are considered contracting members of the new PALS system.

With the merger, the three Iowa counties went from being equal partners in a bi-state consortium to being a much smaller part of a 26-county system that covers 11,088 square miles. “In either case, PALS or River Bend worked to provide Iowa members with services on a reimbursement basis or to provide services that have little or no incremental cost,” McKay said.

The chief services that Iowa libraries receive from PALS are daily van delivery to support library resource sharing, continuing education, communications, and committee activities. Each participating library also contracts through the library system for access to Quad-LINC, an automated circulation system. Delivery, Quad-LINC and continuing education and training services are all provided to libraries on a cost-reimbursement basis, McKay said. Iowa libraries are not billed for services like committees or communications that have little or no incremental cost.

Having the Iowa libraries included in the old River Bend system was important to give the system the economic muscle to allow it to achieve economies of scale. The Iowa libraries continue to be important to PALS, McKay said. “We can’t provide library services well without including both sides of the river, because if we don’t, my customers in Moline don’t do as well as when they can go to the Scott County libraries to get resources.”

The Iowa libraries have been especially vital to Quad-LINC, a consortium formed to provide a common automated circulation system to member libraries. Quad-LINC operates somewhat separately from PALS in that it has its own governance structure, a library can belong to Quad-LINC without belonging to PALS, and Quad-LINC has right of survivorship, McKay said. Quad-LINC’s boundaries are those of the old River Bend system; the other two systems that formed PALS also had their own automation consortia. Like the library systems, the three automation consortia plan to merge into one, which has a working name of PALSGROUP. The merger is expected to occur in 2006 or 2007, McKay said.

In the 1980s, when Quad-LINC formed, the River Bend library system and its member libraries developed a fee structure that they believed would be fair to libraries in both Illinois and Iowa. Everyone understood that it wouldn’t work if Illinois tax dollars were seen as providing services for Iowa libraries. At the same time, the Illinois side was unlikely to be able to achieve economies of scale without involving Iowa counties. So libraries agreed to fund Quad-LINC through reimbursements that would cover all the costs of operation. From 1984-2004, Iowa libraries contributed about half of the revenue used to operate Quad-LINC. “The participation of the Iowa libraries helped give Quad-LINC operating statistics and service quality that area librarians believed rivaled any similar project statewide or nationally,” McKay said.

The merger of Quad-LINC into PALSGROUP will bring with it a new governance structure. Quad-LINC governance was vested in the Committee of the Whole, with each library having a vote on matters like the budget, new policies and purchases. Representa-

tives of the three automated circulation systems are designing the new governance structure for PALSGROUP, McKay said. The current proposal calls for a Delegates Assembly that will meet twice a year, with every participating library having one vote on the budget, strategic plan, and new policies. Governance would also include an Administrative Council that would meet monthly to develop the plans and policies that would go before the Delegates Assembly for approval. McKay said there was a strong probability that the Iowa libraries could fill two of the twelve seats on the Administrative Council.

Quad-LINC members could see cost savings with PALSGROUP because costs will be shared by many more libraries. When those costs drop, McKay said, Iowa libraries may be asked to pay more for delivery service, for which they currently pay marginal costs. In addition, some cost savings may be applied towards hiring additional Quad-LINC staff, according to one library director. Libraries in the Quad-LINC system are in the process of deciding whether to take that step.

Emily Navarre is administrator of Iowa's Southeastern Library Services, which serves 54 libraries in a region that includes Scott County. The library service areas were formed to provide consultation, training and technology, and to facilitate cooperation among libraries. Navarre said that the libraries in Scott County have benefited from the Illinois consortia, both PALS and Quad-LINC, and that Iowa's library service areas were not able to provide the same sorts of collaborative programs.

For example, she said, PALS could focus on providing more sophisticated training. In Iowa, though, there are so many small, independent libraries that the resources of the library service areas are stretched thin. "We have to do training over and over again because we work with independent libraries," Navarre said. "When 80 percent or more of our libraries are run by people who have no library science training, you need to (provide training) one on one."

The service areas don't have the budget to provide automation and databases or financial incentives for libraries to increase quality. "I tell librarians from other states that we have 545 independent public libraries, and their jaws drop to the floor," Navarre said. "We can't continue on with the independent libraries with the changes that are coming for libraries. We're kidding ourselves if we think we can."

What is the role of the state of Iowa in encouraging collaboration?

Mary Wegner, Iowa's state librarian, told Consensus that "[t]here's a lot of middle ground between independent municipal libraries and the much larger units of service that are consolidated libraries." She believes that it's that middle ground that holds the most promise for changes in the short-term, as "to move from the beginning and go right to the far end (of the continuum) would be a difficult step."

Wegner believes the state library should help lead the charge toward more collaboration. The challenge she faces is that state funds for libraries in general and for staff and collaborative programs are inadequate to make a strong difference.

Wegner says that the state’s long history of local control plays out with libraries as it does with public schools, which the state is also encouraging to restructure. The difference is that the state provides a much smaller percentage of funding for libraries – less than 5 percent of the budgets of local libraries, on average. “The role of the state in terms of providing a carrot or a stick is diminished. It means our state library role regarding library governmental structures almost has to be an encouraging, consultative kind of role because we do not have the financial ability (that would allow the state to) require governmental changes in libraries.”

The agencies and programs that could help encourage collaboration don’t have the funding that would allow them to do so. The state library lost 34 percent of its funding a few years ago and has regained none of it since. The library service areas took a similar hit. Both would be in a position to provide leadership, research and consultation, and services needed to encourage collaboration.

The National Center for Education Statistics collects data each year from state libraries nationwide. Through 2003, its reports on state libraries included state-by-state breakdowns on revenue, expenditures, staffing, etc. The 2004 report provides only summary information grouped by the size of the state’s population. According to the 2003 report, based on data for FY 2002, Iowa receives less state funding and spends far less per capita than the national average. We include data for Illinois to provide a comparison.

Total income of state library agencies, by source of income and state: FY 2002

State	Total	Federal	State	Other
In thousands of dollars				
50 states & DC	\$1,153,413	\$150,045	\$971,135	\$32,233
Iowa	\$4,958	\$1,782	\$4,175	\$0
Illinois	\$75,381	5,151	64,210	6,019

Percentage distribution of income of state library agencies: FY 2002

State	Federal %	State %	Other %
Avg., 50 states & DC	13.0	84.2	2.8
Iowa	36.0	64.0	0.0
Illinois	6.8	85.2	8.0

Total expenditures per capita of state library agencies, FY 2002

State	Total expenditure per capita
Avg., 50 states & DC	\$3.99
Iowa	\$1.67
Illinois	\$5.72

Of all state libraries, only one – Texas, at \$1.65 – spent less per capita than the State Library of Iowa in FY 2002.

State programs and state funds can be a catalyst for increased quality of service and for changes in how libraries are structured and funded. Technology, in particular, has changed the role of state libraries according to a study by Steve Schaefer that was published in *Public Libraries*. Prior to 1990, state libraries rarely provided public library service directly. With technology, though, most now are using state and federal funds to buy databases and offer public access over the Internet.

When the Iowa state library's budget was cut 34 percent, the library chose to shift its federal funds to allow it to continue to provide statewide database subscriptions. "If the state would support the statewide databases," Wegner said, "then we would have available to use federal money to provide support and seed money to various collaborative projects around the state."

The Iowa state library does offer a program, Open Access, to help reimburse libraries that loan materials to residents from other libraries. While Wegner said it costs between \$1-2 per loaned item (others place the total closer to \$3.50 or \$4), the program can only afford to reimburse libraries at about \$.27 per loan; the reimbursement rate used to be much higher. Open Access began as a means to equalize resources statewide, so that "everybody pays because everybody shares," Wegner said. Alternatives would be for libraries to refuse to loan to non-residents or for non-residents to pay the cost of borrowing an item.

Wegner said that Scott County is different from almost every other Iowa county in that it has a county library system. In 96 other counties, rural residents pay a library tax and the funds are divided among nearby libraries. The rural contribution is typically much lower than the contribution of people living in cities and town with municipal libraries. (In Scott County, taxpayers in the Scott County Library System pay significantly less than those of the other three libraries, but not as much less as they might in another county.)

"This whole issue of payment for services at dramatically different levels is an issue of longstanding in this state," Wegner said. "Larger or richer towns were...expected to give away their services. Libraries that have not done a good job of talking about the cost of those services have continued the fantasy that public libraries are free. Now that there really isn't enough money, it's confusing to the public to start to see what those unequal funding levels are."

The irony, Wegner says, is that the state is pushing local governments to collaborate in ways that are old hat for libraries which, she says, "have not been sufficiently recognized for their farsighted and efficient use of the tax dollar." She points out that in FY 2003, through Open Access, Iowans checked out more than 3.2 million items across jurisdictional boundaries. "3.2 million times, one Iowan went from one governmental unit to another and receive a service from them," she said. "I talk to the legislature and I say, you don't think anything about it when one library checks out books for free to another library. But you'd never expect one city to provide free snow removal services to another. You think it's unremarkable that libraries have been doing this kind of sharing for years."

The Collaboration Dialogues

Relationships drive collaboration, but they take time to develop. It has only been relatively recently that the directors of the four libraries in Scott County have begun meeting together. As one director said, “When we first started (meeting), it felt very threatening. People who felt threatened had to verbalize that. We had to always be open and honest and not hold back.”

The directors have begun building strong working relationships but, with the exception of children’s librarians, most staff members have not met with their counterparts at other libraries.

At the board level, it had been years since the last meeting that involved board presidents, and that meeting didn’t include the new LeClaire library. Although the actions of each library affects all the other libraries, trustees had not had the chance to get to know one another and work through complicated and potentially contentious issues.

Because of that, the Consensus team knew that the two days we spent with staff members and trustees in July would be important in setting the tone for how the libraries worked together in the future.

Working with the directors, we designed a series of meetings over the two days that included board members and staff members responsible for communications, programming for children and teens, programming for adults and seniors, technical services/processing, purchasing, and staffing.

As noted in the previous report, many staff members have expressed concerns that changes made as a result of *Libraries Together* could cost them or their co-workers their jobs. If the library directors had felt threatened when they first started meeting together, it was likely that staff members, who have less control over change, would struggle even more. We designed a meeting process, therefore, to give staff members maximum control of the outcome.

Staff members had the option of building on ideas generated during previous site visits and through our research, or of coming up with a new slate of possibilities. Over two hours, they worked together to identify opportunities, brainstorm the benefits and barriers to collaboration, set ground rules, and vote on the opportunities that would have either the greatest impact or be easiest to implement. After that, they selected one opportunity and developed an action plan for implementation.

The first session with staff members identified the pattern we would see, to one degree or another, in all subsequent meetings. People were initially reluctant to participate. Body language was closed off and sometimes mildly hostile. The enthusiasm level was running a deficit. We braced ourselves for a rugged couple of hours.

Then, as staff members talked about how they might collaborate and the benefits that collaboration might bring, they began to loosen up. The enthusiasm level pulled out of the red and into the black. As one staff member said, “Our tone, when we initially came in, was ‘I don’t want anyone on my turf.’ Now as we’re leaving I’m excited because of the things this will allow me to do in my job.”

As expected, staff members were more likely to identify changes that would require new resources than they were to look for opportunities to eliminate staff positions. When asked, though, groups were able to provide thoughtful justifications for the new resources in terms of improved efficiency, better results, and benefits to patrons.

The meeting with trustees used a somewhat different design, recognizing that even the most engaged trustees have limited time to think through library issues. Board members were asked to consider three issues – planning, board training and development, and fund development – which were most aligned with the role of board members. We offered a variety of options, asked trustees to generate additional options, and asked them to consider their benefits and challenges. Board members also created ground rules that they believed should govern how they worked together.

The first step, though, was to ask trustees why they had said yes when they were invited to serve on the library board. Their responses showed a clear understanding of and commitment to the role of libraries in a democracy, a life-long love of reading and learning, and deeply rooted enthusiasm for their own libraries. The level of engagement and eloquence was impressive.

Where enthusiasm flagged was when trustees considered the logistics of collaboration. While trustees supported the concept of collaboration among the boards, they were daunted by the thought of adding one more meeting to their already-crowded schedules. Despite those concerns, trustees agreed to create a joint task force that would prepare to take action after the final *Libraries Together* report is released.

What are the ground rules for collaboration?

During the two days of meetings, staff members and trustees began to develop a set of ground rules that they would use to manage their future collaboration. These ground rules stress the principles that the libraries agree are key to a successful collaboration.

The patron comes first

In any option for collaboration, the libraries said they want to consider the impact upon patrons above all. Collaboration should make life easier for patrons and should not be a burden. The libraries should not change their policies and procedures unless the change improves their service to patrons.

The Principle of Uniformity

In general, patrons are best served when libraries do things the same way. The more that

libraries can align their policies and procedures, from where they put bar codes on materials to how long patrons can borrow a book, the better patrons are served. It also makes it easier for staff members at one library to answer questions about another library's policies. In general, the more detail-oriented the procedure or the more a procedure needs to follow professional benchmarks and guidelines, the more important it is for it to be done uniformly.

The Principle of Individual Identity

Creativity and individuality are important values to library staff members. The *Libraries Together* project began by describing the individual personality of each of the four libraries, and the libraries want to build upon their distinct strengths. This principle of individual identity should be considered in each option for collaboration, to ensure that each library can continue to do the types of programming and special events and build the kind of collection that makes it unique. Also, the libraries should keep in mind that staff members value the creative parts of their jobs, and every effort should be made to retain that creativity.

Size doesn't matter

Collaboration should benefit every library, no matter its size. The libraries want to seek out opportunities for collaboration that will benefit all four, rather than just two or three. Smaller libraries may not be able to participate at the same financial level as larger ones, but should be allowed to offer in-kind services to bridge the gap.

Some staff members, however, suggested that any library should be able to opt out of any collaborative project if the project does not fit its needs. This seems to contradict the principal that every collaboration should benefit every library. This may be an area that requires more discussion about what will result in the most effective collaboration.

Speaking up and standing up

Collaboration will involve developing trust and understanding of other libraries. In the past, libraries have made assumptions about the others, without talking to them to find out why they had developed a new policy or made a particular decision. The staff members agree that, in order to build trust to a level where collaboration is easy, they need to meet regularly and be willing to explain themselves to the other libraries. At the same time, staff members need to stand up for themselves on issues that they feel are important.

Commitment to collaboration

Collaboration will, at least initially, take more time than business as usual. Those involved at every level need to make the commitment to attend meetings, continue their involvement, and actively participate in collaboration.

What are specific options for collaboration?

Trustees, directors and staff members discussed a variety of options for collaboration. A complete list of all the options discussed or recommended by the consulting team is listed in Appendix A. During meetings with different groups of staff members, the groups developed options for collaboration and rated those options. Each option was rated in terms of its impact and its ease of implementation.

Favored options: Favored options are defined in two ways. First, each working staff group chose one highly-rated option to discuss in detail. These are considered favored options because the groups chose them. Secondly, all options which received more than three votes for either their effectiveness or their ease of implementation were also considered favored options.

Most-favored options overall

Four types of activities – shared calendar, enhanced communication and coordinated operating hours – were mentioned by several groups as opportunities for collaboration.

Develop a shared calendar

As an initial step in collaboration, place programming, library hours, staff in-service, and other relevant information on a calendar on the Libraries Together website.

Staff members cited the problem of several libraries being closed on the same day. They felt that having a joint calendar, where each library would record its hours of operation and planned holidays, would be helpful. They suggested that the calendar could be posted on the *Libraries Together* website.

Some staff members have suggested an additional step – encouraging all four libraries to post all programming and special activities on the shared calendar, so that the other libraries' staff could avoid competing programs such as two children's programs on the same day.

Some involved in this study suggest going even further, making the shared calendar available to the public to encourage all residents of Scott County to attend library functions and to know which libraries are open at different times. Several of the groups said that this simple sharing of information could be a useful starting point for greater collaboration.

The libraries do not currently have compatible software for placing items on a calendar. Some staff may feel that promoting a shared calendar increases competition for program attendance. They all like the library calendar program made by Evanced, which

would allow them to show patrons upcoming programming for some or all libraries, as well as to send out reminder emails.

As one librarian said, “It’s the one thing we’ve talked about that has the opportunity to lead to doing more things together. It would bring us together to talk about how to do it. We’d all be involved and learning and it could grow into something else.”

Opportunities for collaboration

The library staff members believe they would save money in the long run by jointly buying and maintaining a shared calendar. They say a shared calendar would allow them to better use their time and money by avoiding redundant programming. In addition, they like the idea of being able to refer patrons who ask about a particular type of program to another library. One said, “Patrons would like it that we’re not duplicating services.” Another said, “There would be less of a feeling of ‘us versus them,’ which some people have now.”

Barriers to collaboration

The library staff members fear funding for the joint calendar could be an issue and worry there might be too much information to fit onto a shared calendar. They also discussed the different types of communities they serve, and whether those differences would be a barrier in encouraging patrons to participate in programming outside of their home library.

Enhanced communication:

Use the *Libraries Together* website as a tool for collaboration

The *Libraries Together* website was created for this project and contains information about the project. It is housed on the Bettendorf server and is updated by the LeClaire director.

Staff members had a number of suggestions for using the website to do more than just house a shared calendar. They said library calendar software would allow them to create joint mailing lists and automatically send out emails about upcoming programs. They discussed the option of posting materials created by one library but relevant to all.

In addition, staff members see the opportunity to use the website as a tool for developing online programming, and they are interested in learning together how to make this new kind of programming effective.

The website, they said, would have areas for the public, as well as password protected areas for library staff only.

The public would be able to view a joint calendar of events and programs at all libraries, or look at the individual calendar of each library. Staff would be able to see in-service days and days the other libraries would be closed.

Enhanced communication:

Bring staff and board members together regularly

Every group of staff members said they would like to meet quarterly to keep informed

about what other libraries are doing and to explore ways to collaborate. While they cite a shortage of time as an obstacle, they also see value in developing this channel of information.

The trustees also said they would like to meet on occasion, and have agreed to start a steering committee which will meet until the end of the *Libraries Together* project's first phase. The steering committee will prepare to take action on options presented in the final report.

Another idea was to hold a regular "collaboration day," where directors of all four libraries would be available all day, and groups such as tech managers, children's librarians, and marketing people could meet.

Coordinate operating hours

Staff members cited the problem of several libraries being closed on the same day. Three years ago, for example, all libraries cut Sunday hours. In the future, the libraries plan to work together to coordinate hours. They want to make sure one library is open on Sunday and every evening. They have also suggested that they look at usage hour by hour and talk about how hours could change across the county. The directors agreed to discuss hours on a monthly basis, and informally agree upon changes when they seem appropriate.

Area of collaboration: Joint planning

The July meeting convened by *Libraries Together* marked the first time members of all four boards of trustees had met jointly. They introduced themselves, explained their experience and discussed why they were drawn to library board service. The board members praised the four directors for beginning the process of collaboration by meeting regularly and raising the funds for the *Libraries Together* project.

The trustees said that they saw advantages to board collaboration, but they felt it would take awhile to develop relationships among the boards. They felt it would take "considerable time" to get to the point where they understand the goals, objectives and unique aspects of the other libraries.

One trustee said, "I would be hard pressed at this time to say A or B or C would be an important new idea to develop. I can see a lot of possibilities, but I don't know where everyone is at this point."

Opportunities for collaboration

The board members said the strongest reason to initiate joint planning would be to achieve a goal that the individual libraries could not achieve on their own. One suggestion was a major countywide children's reading program, done as a partnership among the four libraries and other organizations.

Board members said collaboration could lead to expanded services and expanded opportunities for funding. In fact, they said funders had told them they did not want to see

competing proposals from different libraries.

The trustees also see a great deal of opportunity for joint discussions on the locations of libraries in Scott County. As one said, the boards need to discuss “how we affect each other.”

Barriers to collaboration

The trustees saw several barriers to collaboration. They discussed the time lag in making decisions, especially since each decision would have to go back to the individual boards for approval, and the boards all meet on different schedules. They also agreed it might be hard to get over turf issues or to think about the good of the four libraries together instead of their own library alone. In addition, each library falls under a different governmental structure with its own set of regulations.

Timing of collaborative efforts

The librarians briefed the trustees on the changes in PALS, which may affect all four libraries in the near future. They also mentioned the pressure from the state and the Blue Ribbon Committee for agencies to collaborate. The trustees felt that collaboration has begun with the *Libraries Together* project, and that they will need a system for making joint decisions in the coming months and years.

Favored Option

Joint board steering committee for Libraries Together project

Begin joint board steering committee meetings immediately to prepare for decision-making when the Libraries Together report is complete.

Based upon their discussion of the opportunities, barriers and timing issues, the trustees decided to immediately form a steering committee composed of trustees from each board. The immediate goal of this steering committee is to develop trust and mutual understanding, so that the trustees will be prepared to make choices when the final *Libraries Together* report is presented in late 2005. Since the report will offer options for collaboration or changes in governance, the trustees feel they have some groundwork to lay before they are ready to begin the decision-making process.

The trustees agreed that a joint committee of all the trustees of the four boards would be unwieldy. However, they said they favored a joint kick-off where all trustees could be exposed to the goals and opportunities in collaboration.

Following the kickoff, the group felt that a smaller group would be more productive. They agreed that those who participated in the steering committee needed to be committed to attending meetings and to communication via email and phone. The trustees said their goal was to reach the same level of collaboration that the library directors currently share by the end of the year.

Option

Joint trustees meetings

The trustees have expressed interest in developing a structure for joint board meetings. They plan to use the steering committee as a starting point, and may do a kick-off event for all trustees in late 2005.

Option

Countywide strategic planning

Work together to hold a major strategic planning session and produce a formal report every three to five years. The county-wide strategic plan would include the individual strategic plans of the four libraries as constituent parts.

Several of the libraries are participating in Planning for Results, so they are already engaged in strategic planning. Bettendorf has just finalized its long-range plan. The Scott County Library System is in need of a long-range strategic plan, which could fundamentally restructure how it does business.

Cross-library discussion has already begun with the *Libraries Together* project. Most of the models for collaboration call for trustees sharing their individual strategic plans and looking for areas where collaboration could be more effective.

The trustees who came together in July said that joint strategic planning may be a good option in the future, but they would like to start slowly and build relationships first. They decided to begin with the steering committee, which will prepare for the end of the first phase of *Libraries Together*.

Option

Joint standards

Work together to develop internal benchmark measures for reference, inter-library loan response time, turnaround on getting books on the shelf, circulation output per assigned staff member, etc.

Benchmarking would allow the libraries to improve internal efficiencies and better measure output. It could also help to overcome the fears that some have that collaboration will require them to lower their standards.

Option

Standardized policies and procedures

Compare policies and procedures at the four libraries and identify those that should be used if collaboration is going to work. Convene a joint team to suggest revised policies and procedures.

Many collaborative models start with an initial assessment of the status quo, which allows libraries to see the easy areas of cooperation and where they might hit major obstacles.

Area of collaboration: Staffing and training

The staff members said sharing of staff and joint training would both be easy areas for collaboration. In fact, they said they saw opportunities for collaboration in pretty much every area.

No idea caused more excitement than the option of creating a shared “temp pool” of skilled library workers, to simplify the process of hiring temporary staff.

Favored Option

Develop a temporary staffing pool

All of the libraries face challenges in having exactly the right staff on any given day. They are very interested in the opportunity to create a temporary workers pool, similar to the pool of substitute teachers available to schools. They see opportunities to share substitute staff, as well as cover sick leave and vacations. They would like to have a pool of skilled workers at all levels. They recognize that they would have to work out the details of local pay rates with the unions.

Examples:

- Five Chicago metropolitan library systems collaborate on **Career Central**, a cooperative that solicits and distributes resumes. Most jobs require a MLS degree, but the cooperative also collects resumes of applicants with an LTA or college degree. There are also opportunities for people with no library experience. The cooperative forwards the resumes to its member libraries, and keeps them on file for six months.
- The Central Massachusetts Regional Library System in Shrewsbury launched **Biblio-Temps**, a temporary staffing agency for members of its 250 public, academic, school and special libraries. The database has about 75 temps listed. A consortium of libraries chipped in on the initial funding, and temporary workers who are hired full-time pay a placement fee. The consortium expected to break even in three months and earn \$50,000 the first year.

Favored Option

Shared staff training

One easy area for collaboration is through shared in-service training. The staff said they would not want to duplicate the training that is available through PALS, but they could train smaller subsets of staff. For example, they could hold a joint training on writing news releases. They thought that a half-day training module would work well. If the training rotated to different libraries, staff could also tour the other facilities and learn more about

their procedures.

Staff members discussed the pros and cons of enlarging the training pool. The four libraries in Scott County could bring in a trainer and offer staff members from other libraries in the region the opportunity to attend for a fee. However, there is some concern that this would work against building relationships among the staff members of libraries in Scott County. They also discussed the possibility of bringing in a speaker on a general topic, such as customer service, which other nonprofits might want to share. Again, they felt that expanding the pool of participants would be a barrier to the intended outcome of improved relationships among library staff members. They were interested, though, in cost savings available through inviting other groups the chance to hire the same speaker during that person's trip to the Quad Cities.

They want to provide training that is useful to everyone. The goal in joint training would be to save money or allow the libraries to have a larger budget for training.

Finally, if the libraries were to jointly purchase databases and all used the same databases, they could collaborate on database-related staff training.

Opportunities from collaboration

Joint training would be an opportunity for frequent contact between the staffs of all the libraries. It would help to create uniformity across the board. The pool of temporary workers could be offered the opportunity to attend training.

Barriers to collaboration

The library staff members enjoy the chance to get together with their own co-workers for in-service training. Joint training might reduce the opportunities for each library to build its own sense of team.

Favored Option

Job shadowing

There are opportunities for job shadowing both within the individual libraries and across libraries. Staff members who interface with the public say they would like to understand the resources of other libraries. They would also like to know how other libraries do things, so that they would be able to help patrons more efficiently.

Favored Option

Shared staff members among the libraries

Several of the groups discussed the opportunities in sharing staff members across the libraries. One opportunity lies in hiring staff members to either develop or oversee collaborative programming or projects, such as a proposed children's programming coordinator.

While there might be some opportunities in shared IT staff, this seems to be a more problematic area. Bettendorf gets its IT services from the city and is very happy with what

it has. LeClaire and the Scott County Library System use outside consultants, and Davenport has its own IT department separate from the city. Although it is not technically collaboration, LeClaire and Scott County might consider purchasing IT services from Davenport.

Other positions the libraries identified as having the potential to be shared include:

- A shared marketing and development person
- A shared children's librarian
- A shared grant writing consultant
- A shared homebound services coordinator
- A shared day care outreach person
- A shared half-time reference person
- A shared volunteer coordinator

Library directors felt shared staffing might be a good option, but should be eased in and not done abruptly.

Setting up shared staffing will require paying attention to union regulations, state laws, and best practices for personnel management. Most likely, one library would need to be the employer of record, although it may be possible to hire a shared staff person on a contract basis if the position is not an ongoing relationship. Some skills, such as storytelling or computer tech, would lend themselves to being purchased on an hourly basis. Others, such as public relations and marketing, would be more suitable for a per-capita or library budget assessment.

For shared staffing to work, it is critical that the libraries agree upon who sets the priorities and job duties for the position, and that they agree upon the method of evaluating performance. The employee's contract should be severable only upon reasonable (three to six months) notice. If the program is discontinued, the parties would need to agree upon how to cover unemployment compensation if the individual is a direct employee of one of the other libraries, as opposed to a contract consultant.

Option

New staff person to convene collaboration

The trustees group said that many of the suggestions for collaboration would require more staff and more time than is currently available. They suggested looking for a full-time, shared staff person to facilitate the early stages of collaboration.

Option

Jointly funded training for trustees

The trustees discussed the option of holding collaborative board training. They said that Southeastern Libraries Services currently provides good training for board members, and

PALS also provides some training. Some of the trustees have read the state manual written for trustees. The trustees said that, while they would be interested in joint training, there are other options for collaboration that would be higher priorities.

As one trustee said, “We already have the state providing some training. It’s not like we have nothing. I’ve attended state and local training. I think they’re both pretty good.”

Opportunities for collaboration

The trustees felt there were opportunities for grant funding for joint training. They also said that shared training would help them develop relationships.

Barriers to collaboration

Board members are busy and do not attend most of the training that is currently available to them.

Example:

- The **California Associations of Library Associations and Commissioners** (CAL-TAC) formed in 1978 to educate individual trustees and library boards, so that they would be better informed and more effective advocates for California libraries. CAL-TAC sponsors an annual legislative day, allowing trustees to visit legislators and remind them that libraries are important. The group holds an annual meeting and regional workshops to keep trustees updated on library practices and issues. CALTAC also does board trainings at individual libraries.

Option

Board mentoring

Pair experienced board members with new board members from any of the four boards, to provide the new board members with a source of advice.

A mentoring program could help to reduce the amount of time staff members spend in board training and orientation, would help build relationships among boards, and would give new trustees an ongoing source of advice.

Area of collaboration: Programming for adults, seniors, children and teens

Several staff groups discussed the opportunities for collaboration in programming. In general, they saw the potential for sharing information, doing joint programming, and hiring joint programming staff. On the other hand, those responsible for programming said it was the most creative part of their jobs and one that they did not want to lose.

“No one is happy with their programming now,” one library director said. Most say that in the past, ideas for programming came from staff members, but were not usually tied into any sort of overall strategic plan or programming goals.

There is already collaboration across the four libraries. For example, staff members take turns staffing booths at events like Bald Eagle Days. There also are collaborative program groups for children’s librarians and for young adult librarians through PALS. The libraries also participate in the summer reading program each year.

But there are many areas of overlap in programming. For example, all of the libraries provide programming for children and want to continue to do so. However, they discussed the option of sharing a children’s librarian between libraries, or creating a “children’s coordinator” position in order to free up staff time and pull in additional resources.

The two ideas that programming people felt had the most merit were developing shared calendars and using the *Libraries Together* website to stimulate collaboration.

Opportunities from collaboration

The staff members think there is an opportunity to save money through collaborative programming. They think they could make “smarter use” of their time and money by working together. They also said that a more collaborative (less “us versus them”) attitude could pay off in better public relations for the libraries and more opportunities for grant funding.

Barriers to collaboration

As mentioned above, staff members do not want to give up the creativity that programming offers because they feel it is one of the biggest perks of their jobs. They also have concerns that disparity in the salaries at various libraries could be a roadblock. In addition, the state, and to some extent the library’s boards and city/county administrators, judge their success by the numbers of people who attend their programs. Joint programming might be a barrier to each library making its numbers.

Finally, “programming is where you build community and get press,” one director said. “I’m not sure I want to give that up.”

Favored option

Shared coordinator of children’s and youth programming

Children and teen programming staff members proposed creating a new position, a coordinator of children’s and teens programming, who would report to the programming directors at each library. The coordinator would be a central resource for information on children’s services at each library.

The staff members say that all the libraries have the same message in children’s programming. They believe that services to young children and their parents are among their most important services, and libraries should be devoting significant resources to this area. “Libraries are supposed to be about promoting literacy, but we don’t put the money there,” said one children’s staff person.

The staff felt that a coordinator of children’s services could help individual libraries provide better programming, and help the four libraries collaborate on joint programming. The coordinator could also assist in public speaking and grant writing, as well as step in when a library was short-staffed.

Staff members said the coordinator would help to overcome the fears programming people had about collaboration costing them the opportunity to be creative. Instead, the coordinator would allow them more time for creativity.

Opportunities from collaboration

Staff members said the coordinator position would be cost effective. They also said it would “even the playing field,” and eliminate competition among libraries.

Barriers to collaboration

Children become very attached to children’s librarians, the programming people said, and libraries should strive to maintain a consistent storytime person.

Option

Joint catalog of local programming

Jointly develop a catalog of external resources for programming, such as speakers offered by local nonprofit and government agencies.

PALS has an online database of programs for Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. It tells how much a performer or speaker will cost and how far they’ll travel. It might be more efficient to also have a Scott County or Quad Cities database. This could be housed on the *Libraries Together* website. Programmers also could share information about how successful the programs have been.

Option

Cross-promotion of programming

Staff members said they could easily work together to publicize key programs at other libraries, such as a visit by a noted author. They also discussed running a list of programs the other libraries are doing in their newsletters.

Option

Share programming

One option is to have a person who has developed a program for one library present that program at other libraries. For example, the libraries put a lot of resources into book discussion groups, creating discussion guides and buying multiple copies of the books. The discussion groups could then be offered at more than one library. Another option would be for each library to specialize in certain types of book discussions, such as Davenport in science fiction, Bettendorf in mysteries, etc.

Area of collaboration: Joint marketing and communications

This is the area where the “principal of uniformity” knocks heads with the “principal of individual identity.” While the libraries see cost saving advantages of joint marketing and communications, they fear the loss of their own identities. They know it is easier for patrons if they all share a consistent message, but admit they feel competition with other libraries.

As staff members discussed ways to collaborate, they saw the most promise in creating highly-visible programming that would reinforce their key message about the role of libraries in literacy. They also liked the idea that, while all the libraries would share one large event, each would do its own creative pieces relevant to its own community.

PALS provides monthly articles the libraries can customize for their newsletters. Davenport currently uses this content; the others do not. The libraries said it would be easy for them to exchange content that is not specific to one library, freeing each up to develop more unique content and providing readers with more information.

The staff members saw joint marketing and communications beginning slowly and building as the libraries develop relationships. They said it would make sense to begin with a joint strategic plan and then develop a joint marketing plan.

They suggested several short-term starting points. One was to collaborate by taking national messages provided by the American Library Association and building a marketing campaign around them. This could use either the summer reading program or public service announcements. Another idea was to name a “Scott County Library Family of the Year,” and use the award to feature library services and reward patrons.

The libraries also said they could immediately post the newsletters of other libraries on each library's website, to increase knowledge of activities at other libraries and show collaboration.

Opportunities from collaboration

Collaboration would reinforce the libraries' mission of improving literacy, and would be a very visible sign that the libraries are collaborating. Staff members think they would get better media coverage for larger programs that attract more people.

Barriers to collaboration:

A large joint event might be too time-consuming for the libraries to take on without a coordinator.

Favored option

Joint festival of early childhood learning

As they discussed the options, the library staff members talked about joining together to present a national speaker such as Henry Winkler, who provided the keynote at a recent American Library Association conference. They said the joint event would be an opportunity to use publicity to reach library non-users. The group then went on to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a "Festival of the Book" type of event built around early childhood issues. They felt such an event would have high impact, and that if they planned several years in advance, they might attract grant money to hire a coordinator to handle the event logistics. Early childhood was chosen as a topic because it offered the greatest opportunity to develop partnerships that could be valuable beyond the event itself.

As staff members envisioned it, the collaboration would begin with a small steering committee that would help to identify potential partners. The committee would develop a joint logo and message. Gradually, the committee would add new members. The libraries would hold separate board meetings to explain the project and get agreement. The committee would look for grant funding to develop the program and hire a coordinator.

In effect, the purpose of the collaboration would be to foster more collaboration in the future, among libraries, with schools and community groups, and potential new patrons. "This opens all kinds of doors," said one director.

Examples:

- Libraries in Shawnee, Oklahoma, Toledo and Chicago, among other cities, are putting on popular **literacy festivals**, which connect readers with writers. According to Beth Dempsey, writing in the February edition of *Library Journal*, the festivals may be several weeks long, with author appearances, stage acts, writing workshops, music and storytelling. Cultural institutions may set up booths. Sometimes authors go into the schools. Most programs are free.

Some festivals are more specialized – Omaha and Lincoln do a mystery festival, while Missoula focuses on Western writers.

Fundraising opportunities abound. Sometimes local bookstores sell books at these events and pay a small fee to the festival. Library funders may pay up to \$150 a ticket to mix with authors at an elegant cocktail party. Some of the most important connections come from relationships with publishers. The libraries may be able to coordinate with national book tours so they can bring in big-name authors for free. Festival organizers say these relationships pay off all year, with publishers who are looking for venues for author events.

Option

Joint marketing plan

Staff members said that once the libraries have created a joint strategic plan, they should develop a joint marketing plan, which would outline the goals and objectives of joint marketing. The plan would include branding, press releases, media kits, focus group development of projects and other issues.

Option

Hire joint fund development/marketing person for all libraries

The participants said that hiring a joint development person, who raised funds for the group collectively and helped each library individually, could help them attract more grant funding.

On the other hand, the Bettendorf Public Library faced some challenges when it tried joint fundraising with the family museum next door. The director said individual donors want their money to go “where their heart is, which was either the library OR the museum.” Unlike philanthropic funders, individual donors may prefer to give to one of the four independent libraries.

Option

Joint public relations

Work together to publicize key programs at other libraries, such as a visit by a noted author.

The libraries said they would like to use the *Libraries Together* website to work together on public relations to reinforce the value of libraries and to get the four staffs working together. They discussed keeping a shared database of reporters and information about their experiences with each, as well as working together to build long-term relationships with the media.

Example:

- Karen Bersche, formerly of the **Savanna, Illinois, Public Library**, became known as “the pig lady of Illinois.” “PIGS” stood for “Partners in a Great Library System.” When a survey of patrons showed they didn’t know that the system provide interlibrary loans, Bersche had the idea to give them a very visual message. She formed an alliance with the Illinois Pig Producers and had them produce hundreds of 4-foot-tall fiberglass pigs. She then got 18 volunteers to drive them around central Illinois, to distribute them to each library. In addition to garnering 3000 column inches in 45 newspapers, the pigs were later sold at auction.

Option**Joint speakers’ bureau**

Develop a shared speakers’ bureau and work together to get speakers in front of key groups, especially those who do not traditionally use library services.

Option**Unified political marketing**

Boards work together to report to the county board of supervisors and the city councils of all three municipalities on a regular basis.

Option**Joint quarterly or annual newsletter**

The library communication staff members like the idea of doing a quarterly or yearly mailing to all the residents of Scott County. The goal would be to highlight collaboration among the librarians and the advantages to patrons, as well as to increase awareness of library services among non-users.

Option**Jointly pitch feature stories to local media**

Each of the libraries send out a lot of news releases, but few get picked up except for calendar listings. Staff members believe reporters would be more interested in writing about the collaboration between libraries, especially since collaboration is such a hot political issue right now.

Option**Shared email and mail distribution lists**

The libraries agreed they could send information to their patrons about programming and events at the other libraries. Most have policies of not sharing their mailing lists, but they could send an email on behalf of the other libraries.

Option

Shared newsletter content

PALS provides monthly articles the libraries can customize for their newsletters. Davenport currently uses this content; the others do not. The libraries said it would be easy for them to exchange content that is not specific to one library, freeing each up to develop more unique content and providing readers with more information.

Area of collaboration: Joint processing

The libraries have either full- or part-time technical services people who handle or oversee the ordering, purchasing, receiving, accounting, physical processing, interlibrary loan, repair, and cataloging of all items. Cataloging is the process used to describe each item so it can be found in a search of subject matter, call number, author, or title. The cataloging staff members enter the descriptions into the library's database of materials.

The libraries already cooperate in processing through their connection with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the world's largest database of bibliographic records. They can use "copy cataloging" to download records other libraries have entered into OCLC. They can also copy records that other libraries have entered into Quad-LINC. LeClaire contracts with PALS to enter records that are not available on Quad-LINC.

The libraries have differing views on how useful joint processing would be. The Scott County Library System would be interested in contracting out all processing, while Davenport wants to continue doing its own but might be willing to do some for other libraries. Staff members said that the best reason to collaborate in processing was to make things uniform for the patrons.

Opportunities for collaboration

There are only subtle differences in the way things are done at the four libraries, so there would not be many changes necessary to implement joint processing. The libraries noted that the more they can move toward shared standards for processing, the more opportunities they have for collaboration.

Barriers to collaboration

The libraries would need to study how much cost saving could be achieved through central processing and they would have to agree upon standards for processing.

The staff members said that they would like to try some smaller collaborative steps before trying a central processing center. Their ideas for small steps are reflected in the options listed below.

Favored Option

Create a central processing center

The libraries said they would start by looking at best practice options from other libraries. They would then need to review how each library handles processing now, and do a cost analysis of combining their processing efforts. This might be done at a “shared information” day or as part of the efforts of a cross-library committee.

The libraries then would need to work out the details and reach agreements on standards and workload. It might be necessary to create a new governance structure.

In the meantime, the staff said the libraries might start on one collaborative project such as making placement of bar codes the same at each library.

Example:

- In 2001, the **Denver Public Library** began planning ways to make multiple copies of best-sellers available at the library as quickly as at bookstores. According to Jo Sarling writing in *Library Journal*, the library developed a new department called “access services,” with a director responsible for technical services, collection development, circulation and interlibrary loan.

The library pushed its vendors to “incorporate more standards and processing options to increase efficiency and cut turnaround time,” Sarling wrote. By using outside vendors to process popular new materials, the library can make the materials available on their publication date, just like they are available in bookstores. The library uses Ingram’s online collection development product to download a record of the order, a receipt and a public access catalog record in one process.

Option

Interlibrary loan

Several proposals deal with centralizing technical services across the libraries.

SILO, the State of Iowa Libraries Online interlibrary loan system, is available to all Iowa libraries with Internet access, although some say that SILO has problems with reliability. Larger libraries have their own in-house interlibrary loan departments, which go to OCLC to make requests. Southeastern Library Services also provides interlibrary loan services to 61 libraries in its service area. The only library in Scott County to use Southeastern Library Services to administer its interlibrary loan is the LeClaire Community Library.

Interlibrary loan also is part of the Quad-LINC agreement; every library in Quad-LINC must agree to loan materials to other libraries. Unlike other systems, though, Quad-LINC members don’t have to go to an outside party to request items because they share the catalog that places the holds.

The opportunity for collaboration comes in the clerical process of getting the materials ready to be sent to the library where the patron has requested them.

Example:

- In Idaho, **Libraries Linking Idaho** has linked every library in the state in an electronic catalogue and interlibrary loan system. According to the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, the project will include every interested public and school library in the state by 2008. Idaho's 105 libraries already had smaller regional interlibrary loans and electronic catalogues. The new system is a subset of WorldCat that can search for titles outside the state or country. The \$2.4 million, four-year project is funded by federal grant money from Library Services and Technology grants, state money and a match from local libraries. Montana has a similar program; Illinois is starting one, and other states are considering statewide linking.

Option**Standardize bar codes**

All of the libraries use slightly different systems for bar coding materials. While they all have reasons for the system they use, staff members agreed that it would be easier on patrons if they agreed upon a common method.

Option**Share processing staff**

Develop a "floating clerk" position that delivers services to all four libraries.

Option**Collaborate on special projects**

Sometimes, the four libraries all need to do the same type of processing update, such as renumbering part of their collections. The staff said it might be more efficient for one person to travel to each library for the special project. They said another opportunity for collaboration would be removing items from the databases.

Option**Develop processing specialties**

Staff members saw opportunities for creating specialty areas in processing, such as mending of books. Other opportunities lie in inventory, cleaning CDs and DVDs, and managing serials.

Area of collaboration: Purchasing, collection development and databases

This is a rich area for collaboration among the libraries in Scott County. Collaborating in the area of online databases was voted the second most important option in terms of effectiveness. Joint collection development also received high marks from the staff.

One of the most important roles of library consortia today is to facilitate joint purchasing of online databases and other materials. The libraries in Scott County belong to Quad-LINC and the state library system, which offer some joint database purchasing options. LeClaire currently offers one database and the other libraries would like to expand what they offer, but don't believe they can afford to do so. They think there is an opportunity to try to negotiate a better deal if they form a collaborative purchasing group.

The four libraries already are committed to reciprocal borrowing through their participation in Quad-LINC and the Iowa Open Access program. That means a patron of any Iowa or Quad-LINC library can get free access to material from another Iowa or Quad-LINC library. All Quad-LINC libraries also participate in WorldCat, which describes itself as a "worldwide union catalog created and maintained collectively by more than 9000 member institutions. With millions of online records built from the bibliographic and ownership information of contributing libraries, it is the largest and most comprehensive database of its kind."

Since reciprocal borrowing is in place and library patrons can see the holdings of all Quad-LINC libraries, the next logical step is for each library to consider the holdings of other libraries when developing its collection. Any WorldCat member can use its services to analyze its collection and compare it to others. Libraries across the country are collaborating to build collections and to avoid overlap on expensive or rarely-used items. Joint analysis also allows libraries to decide together which materials to discard and which library should maintain one copy for the future.

As the libraries begin to collaborate, they are beginning to discuss the opportunities to analyze their collections and to continue to build their own individual niches. For example, Davenport is the recognized leader in reference materials, and so the other libraries place less emphasis on collecting reference materials. Others might specialize in collecting cookbooks, gardening books or business reference, for example.

The staff also began to discuss developing joint policies on audio services, as audio books become a more important service.

Favored Option

Collaborative purchase of databases

Explore cooperative purchasing of full-text databases to reduce costs and allow every county resident access to the same major databases from home or from each library.

The patrons of all four libraries have the most to gain from the collective purchase of databases, according to library staff. If all four libraries had access to the same online databases, any Scott County resident with a library card would have access to the same resources. Library staff members would all be trained on the same databases, so they could help patrons of other libraries. The four libraries could also collaborate on both patron and staff training on the databases.

Additionally, it is likely the libraries would be able to afford to provide more databases if they purchased them collaboratively than if they purchased them separately.

Staff members believe collaborative purchasing also would save time, as they would not each have to negotiate a price for each database. Instead, the job of researching and negotiating a price could be divided among the four libraries.

The libraries would begin by deciding what libraries should be included in the consortium. They would then decide which databases they wished to purchase jointly and see what vendors would negotiate with them. One big issue would be deciding how much each library would pay for the jointly-purchased service. They said that, while LeClaire might not be able to contribute financially as a full partner, the library would be offered other ways to make up the difference, such as by contributing in-kind services.

Opportunities from collaboration

There would be opportunities to save money by jointly training staff and patrons. Staff members see some public relations value in collaborative purchasing. They could also jointly promote the new databases. The collaboration could also lead to further collaboration, such as sharing an access page on the libraries' websites. Staff members were concerned, however, that the library boards might not support joint purchasing because they see themselves as answering only to their own patrons.

Barriers to collaboration

The differing demographics of the different libraries could be an issue. Bettendorf patrons are thought to demand a wide range of databases, which patrons of other libraries may not value as much. Some worry that joint purchasing could cause bad relations with Quad-LINC. There is also no administrative structure for joint purchasing, so one might have to be created. And some say it is hard to break off a long-term relationship with a vendor, which might be necessary.

Favored Option

Seek grant funding for collaborative collection development and weeding

Collection development experts see promise in beginning to collaborate. Informally, they sometimes check now to see if another library in Scott County has a book or other material before they purchase it. They see opportunities in discussing potential purchases and attempting to coordinate services. They all agree it's important for each library to have a core

collection of popular materials, but collaboration could avoid duplication and free up funds to be spent on broadening the collections. They believe they might have a good opportunity to get grant funding to build a collaborative core collection.

They also suggested they could create a pool of very popular materials that would travel to each library. Since these materials would never enter the permanent collection, they could be bought pre-processed. Letting them circulate would allow patrons at each library to browse a popular set of materials.

Option

Joint access to OCLC

Consider centralizing access to the OCLC bibliographic database for cataloging and inter-library loan.

When a library purchases new material, it needs to be entered into the WorldCat database. A recent study shows one of the weaknesses of WorldCat is the backlog libraries face in cataloging the material. The libraries think there might be some options in centralizing the OCLC entry process. They said it would be important to figure out what share each library would pay.

Example:

- The **Jefferson County Public Library in Colorado** is trying a novel approach to collection development. *Library Journal* in 2004 reported on the use of “**floating collections**,” which has reduced the total volume of materials moving among its libraries by 67 percent. Under a traditional inter-library loan system, the borrowed materials are returned to their “owner.” In a floating system, the books are returned to the location where the patron asked for them. The advantage to patrons is that there is a constant supply of new materials on the shelves. Library managers estimate the floating system saved them 20 hours a week of circulation staff time. Using floating collections required substantial changes to the existing system.
- **Show-Me the World**, a consortium of Missouri public libraries, was formed both “to obtain expanded access to an integrated set of electronic services, and to bring better, and more equitable, library service to the citizens of Missouri.” Through a grant from the state library, libraries have access to WorldCat through FirstSearch, a database that shows all holdings of any WorldCat member. The state library has also contracted with the Missouri Library Network Corporation, a consortium of more than 30 libraries, to begin the process of loading public library records into WorldCat, with the goal of getting all Missouri library materials into the system over a period of three years.

Option

Form or join a purchasing consortium

Consider collaborating within Scott County or in the Quad Cities to obtain discounts and value purchasing for other materials, such as supplies and computers.

The libraries considered this option, but discussed the fact they already get purchasing discounts through their various city or county purchasing agreements. They said the greatest area for savings would be in the purchase of items, such as book jackets, which are only used by libraries and would not be included in city or county purchasing discounts.

Appendix A

Staff voting on top options

Easiest to implement	Most effective	Overall	Option for Collaboration	Which group suggested
1	5	6	Shared calendar	Children and youth services
4	2	6	Shares ideas for and reviews of programming	Children and youth services
3	3	6	Shared calendar	Adult and senior programming
1	5	6	Joint purchasing of online databases	Purchasing
2	3	5	Put all bar codes in the same place	Technical services
2	3	5	Interlibrary loan	Technical services
	5	5	Centralized processing center	Technical services
5		5	Group gets together quarterly	Adult and senior programming
	5	5	Temporary fill-in pool, all levels	Staffing
4	1	5	Divide responsibility for research on pricing	Purchasing
3	1	4	Joint catalog of local program resources	Children and youth services
4		4	Bring in in-service training	Staffing
4		4	Share staff training	Staffing
4		4	Job shadowing	Staffing
	4	4	Grant for developing core collections	Purchasing
3		3	Cross promote other libraries in each newsletter	Marketing and communications
	3	3	Make <i>Libraries Together</i> a web resource	Adult and senior programming
2	1	3	Joint programs, share cost of speakers	Adult and senior programming
	3	3	Share professional staff	Staffing
3		3	WorldCat collection analysis	Purchasing
	2	2	Quarterly or annual newsletter	Marketing and communications

	2	2	Joint programming	Marketing and communications
2		2	Email distributions lists	Marketing and communications
2		2	Take national message as starting point	Marketing and communications
	2	2	Scott County Library "Family of the Year/arts program	Marketing and communications
2		2	Inventory (selectors do in some places)	Technical services
1	1	2	Ordering, not duplicating, seeing samples from sales people	Children and youth services
1	1	2	Barter skills	Children and youth services
1	1	2	Have one person be contact for children's programming in 4 libraries	Children and youth services
	2	2	Coordinate book discussions groups and share books	Adult and senior programming
	2	2	Joint marketing, development	Staffing
	2	2	Homebound services, one coordinator, all departments eligible	Staffing
2		2	Standardize services or learn about other library services	Purchasing
	1	1	Jointly pitch media for local features	Marketing and communications
1		1	Share mailing lists	Marketing and communications
	1	1	Floating clerk to mend, discard, etc.	Technical services
	1	1	Substitute staffing	Children and youth services
	1	1	PALS, program catalog but mainly or Illinois and children	Adult and senior programming
	1	1	4 libraries agree on what they will purchase	Purchasing
			Floating staff fill-in person – professional	Technical services
5			Scott could buy services from Dav or Bet	Technical services

Rank	Easiest to Implement Options for Collaboration
1	Group gets together quarterly
2	Scott Co. Library System could buy services from Dav or Bett
3	Shared ideas for and reviews of programming
4	Divide responsibility for research on pricing
5	Sponsor shared in-service training
6	Share staff training
7	Job shadowing
8	Shared calendar
9	Joint catalog of local program resources
10	Cross-promote other libraries in each news-letter
11	WorldCat collection analysis

Votes	Most Effective Options for Collaboration
5	Shared calendar
5	Joint purchasing of online databases
5	Centralized processing center
5	Temporary fill-in pool, all levels
4	Grant for developing core collections
3	Shared calendar
3	Put all bar codes in the same place
3	Interlibrary loan
3	Make <i>Libraries Together</i> a web resource
3	Share professional staff

Appendix B

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Appendix C:

About Consensus & the team

Consensus, a nonprofit organization based in Kansas City, Missouri, has more than 20 years of experience in conducting public policy research and in engaging citizens in finding solutions to public policy problems. Consensus conducts grants-funded work in metro Kansas City to fulfill its mission of putting the *public* in public policy. It is also a leader among nonprofit organizations in taking on entrepreneurial projects that fit within its mission.

Since its founding in 1984, Consensus has led a variety of projects that engaged citizens and improved its community. In April of 2004, Consensus released its most recent policy white paper, “Making Book: Gambling on the Future of Our Libraries,” a study of the structure and funding system for metro Kansas City libraries. The paper has drawn praise from library leaders around the country.

The Consensus team working on Libraries Together combines expertise in civic engagement, communications and survey research with expertise in library operations.

Jennifer Wilding, project director

Jennifer Wilding was the author of *Making Book: Gambling on the Future of Our Libraries*, a Consensus white paper about the structure and funding of libraries in metro Kansas City. Her work, released in April 2004, has been praised by library directors across the country and was included in an OCLC recommended reading list.

Wilding combines an understanding of library structure and funding with broad knowledge of public policy and 20 years of experience writing for the public. In addition, she is a recognized leader in civic engagement. She directs KC Forums for Consensus, which uses the National Issues Forums process to engage citizens on local issues.

Thomas J. Hennen, Jr.

Hennen has been a practicing librarian for almost 30 years. He is presently the director of Waukesha County Federated Library System in Wisconsin, and previously directed library systems elsewhere in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The Waukesha County Federated Library System has won five National Association of Counties Achievement Awards in the last two years, for innovative programs and long-range planning efforts.

Hennen is the author of Hennens’ American Public Library ratings (HAPLR), which uses data provided by 9,000 public libraries to create comparative rankings. The rankings have gained media notices in hundreds of communities since their first publication in *American Libraries* maga-

zine in January of 1999. Hennen has published more than 40 articles on a wide range of topics, including library futures, standards and accounting. His book for Neal-Schuman, *Hennen's Public Library Planner*, was published in April 2004.

Mary Jo Draper

Draper is principal of Mary Jo Draper Communications (WBE). She founded Draper Communications after 25 years as a print newspaper reporters and public radio talk show host and news director. Draper has worked with nonprofit groups, foundations and governmental clients on a variety of communication and planning projects.

Draper Communications was a principle contractor on the KC Safe City Initiative, which involved more than 200 citizens and public safety professionals in a year-long planning process. At KCUR Radio, the metro Kansas City NPR affiliate, Draper served as director of a year-long project on health care for children, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.