

# What's Yours is Mine and Mine is Yours

## Synergy in Joint-Use Libraries

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### **Abstract**

*New Zealand's first joint-use urban community and secondary school library opened in Christchurch on 23 January 2006. The Upper Riccarton Community and School Library was purpose built by the Christchurch City Council in partnership with Riccarton High School, to serve a multi-cultural local community of 30,000 and the 1,000 strong school population as an integrated learning, information and leisure facility.*

*Together, the partnership has created an integrated library providing the two communities access to resources, learning facilities and expertise that support the needs of both groups while promoting life long learning to all. The library has a collection of 65,000 items (20,000 of which are brand new) and boasts a state-of-the-art 240 m<sup>2</sup> learning centre, a café with indoor/outdoor seating, and is furnished with bright funky lounge furniture throughout.*

*This paper looks behind-the-scenes at a working joint-use library and at the processes that created the reality. It discusses what needs to be thought out prior to the building foundations being laid, with communication a key to a successful outcome in a project of this nature. Highlights, statistics, pitfalls for the unwary which can be avoided, and critical success factors will be revealed. Customer feedback will be used to demonstrate the success of this facility and the exciting future possibilities.*

*The presentation will focus on how the needs of both the school and community are met, from the perspective of a School Library Manager with a public library background, and a Community Librarian with an education background. We will conclude with time for discussion and questions from the floor, to ensure as much myth busting concerning Joint-Use Libraries as possible.*

# **Upper Riccarton Community and School Library**

## **Nga Kete Wānanga o Putaringmuto**

The Upper Riccarton Community and School library opened in Christchurch on 23 January 2006. The building and services offered are the end result of four years of consultation, planning and building to combine the services of a Christchurch City Council community library and the library of Riccarton High School. What we have achieved is a joint use library - shared and enjoyed by Riccarton High School community, other students in the area and a wider community of 30,000.

We hope that our story of how we became a joint use library will motivate and inspire others. It contains common threads many of us can relate to – making discoveries, overcoming barriers, dealing with set backs, seeking support from others – all of which can be readily applied to any library situation.

This presentation is not designed to be a recipe for the creation of a joint use library, but a look at what we think has made our project work.

### **Why did the Christchurch City Libraries (CCL) build a library on Ministry of Education land which is leased rather than owned?**

### **Why did Riccarton High School (RHS) think that paying an annual fee for the services of a community library would be better for their students and staff, rather than building their own brand new library?**

Because

Both parties are innovative and have a history of trying new ideas, taking opportunities to work in different ways, to use and adapt technology to their advantage.

This culture is highlighted in the vision for Christchurch City Libraries:

“Our purpose is to inform, educate, entertain, involve and inspire. The outcome is improved personal, social, cultural and economic well-being for the people of Christchurch”<sup>1</sup>. Through the building programme over the past 10 years CCL have provided new libraries which give customers a different experience.

In Public Libraries of New Zealand: A Strategic Framework 2006 to 2016<sup>2</sup> Lesley McTurk, the Chief Executive of Christchurch City Council summarised how the Council valued its libraries:

“In Christchurch city we believe libraries are about more than books and buildings. Libraries are at the hub of our communities. No longer places where everyone has to be quiet, today’s libraries are busy information centres focusing on customers and offering a place to meet friends for coffee, surf the net and, of course, find the latest thriller. The benefits to our communities are well worth the ongoing significant investment. In the future

we anticipate even more innovation in the way libraries help create inclusive communities, and are centres for lifelong learning, fun and creativity.”

In 1999 Riccarton High School was gifted \$1.5m from a private benefactor in order to upgrade the technology infrastructure of the school. The money funded extensive staff professional development, a new information technology teaching block and laptops for many staff. As a result of this Riccarton High School is recognised as a leading ICT school in Canterbury.

Although efforts were continually made to inform the public of the positive happenings at the school, the principal at the time Gary Coburn felt that secondary schools were somewhat isolated from their communities and that can create barriers to interaction. Gary thought that the library would provide “an increased opportunity for our neighbours to be part of the School and to see just how talented our students are and how keen they are to contribute to their community and environment. The library will provide a place to break down social barriers and encourage positive interaction between all community groups.”<sup>3</sup> Gary Coburn resigned as Principal in December 2005.

## The Vision

Before we talk about the lengthy process which we went through prior to the opening day, we wanted to share with you the vision which was written back in 2002. Both parties were trying to get commitment to the project from the Council and the School’s Board of Trustees. As we read the summary of the vision statement we will be showing you some photos of the library. You will be able to see for yourselves whether we have come close to realising the vision. When the vision was written the document suggested an opening time of December 2005. The fact that the library actually opened in January 2006 highlights the total commitment by all involved once the decision to go ahead with the project was made.

## Summary of the Vision Statement<sup>4</sup>



Main South Road view of library



### Young Adults area

The Community Library will be an important community focal point for a population of about 30,000 residents from the Riccarton, Avonhead, Ilam, Sockburn, Wharenui and Wigram communities.

The library will also be the Learning Information and Communication Centre for the school population of approximately 1,100 students and staff.

- The library will be sited not only to allow for integration with other school activities but so that it will be recognised as a community facility, which can be easily and safely accessed by the community as a whole.
- The library will house a book and audio-visual collection of 50,000 items, and provide facilities for residents and students to study, access information, acquire information and communication technology and information literacy skills.
- The library will include spaces for reading, socialising, listening, learning, participating and relaxing.
- The design will include a café, comfortable furniture and spaces for community artwork, notices and city information.
- The library will include four flexibly designed learning spaces, including a computer room, which will be available for community learning programmes outside of school hours.

## Riccarton High School

Riccarton High School is a co-ed, state funded secondary school, with close to 950 students and 100 teachers and support staff. The school has a decile rating of 7, although in recent years it is achieving academic results above the national average for decile 7 schools.

It is a vibrant, energetic, multicultural school community comprising of over 40 different cultures and the school borders communities at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum.

Underpinning the outstanding school culture is a philosophy called “The Riccarton Way” - commitment, honesty, respect and excellence. These are a set of common and shared values which realistically and easily translate in to day-to-day life in school, but also have relevance outside the school gate. Commitment, honesty, respect and excellence are a basic framework for creating good citizens from good students.

Riccarton High School offers in addition to the traditional secondary education experience, a supported learning team for those with learning difficulties, a dedicated special needs unit for moderately intellectually handicapped students up to 21 years of age and a contextual learning class at year 9, offering an integrated learning approach.

Prior to this project being thought of RHS had a well established, strong library culture engrained throughout the school.

Well respected and regarded by staff and students the library had a proven track record of meeting the recreational reading and research needs of the school community. Many subject areas had well established habits of liaising with the library prior to starting a new unit of teaching. Books, web pages and other appropriate resources were normal preparation undertaken by the school library team.

It should be noted that the status of Head of Department held by the School Library Manager is fairly unique in most secondary schools. This support and professional respect from the school management and Board of Trustees has been a key component in ensuring there is as little disparity between the two library managers as this project developed.

## **Christchurch City Libraries**

After the opening of the Upper Riccarton Library and the amalgamation with Banks Peninsula in July 2006, Christchurch City Libraries now has a large network of 19 libraries and one mobile unit.

CCL is nationally recognised as an innovative environment, willing to trial new initiatives and to request designs of their architects that engage the community and are great places to work.

CCL have very clear strategic goals<sup>5</sup> and to achieve these they:

- develop services to suit lifestyles and different needs in the community.
- raise the libraries' profile to build community awareness about what is on offer.
- make it easier for customers to use library services and access information electronically.
- work with Maori to achieve more relevance and take up of services.
- develop relationships and partnerships with other agencies to strengthen services and support community development.
- continually improve library processes and services.

Also the libraries' Lifelong Learning Strategy supported a vision of inclusive education and learning opportunities in formal and informal settings. CCL libraries provide opportunities for getting information, communicating, and working collaboratively with others. In the planning of the library spaces they have considered the development of learning spaces; the electronic opportunities for learning and providing environments where people can read in comfort.

## **Values**

It is obvious from working together that both parties share the goal of offering life long learning opportunities to library users. Giving more than is expected and having a "yes we can" attitude was the norm in both organisations prior to this project.

## **Trust and Respect**

Prior to the concept of a joint use Library being considered, trust between CCL and RHS had already been established because the parties had successfully worked together on the following projects:

- Filtered internet access for the school via CCL's proxy (2000)
- Five computers within the library had a front page hosted by CCL – students were able to browse CCL catalogue and databases as well as the school library catalogue (2000)
- Enrolment campaign for CCL membership – resulting in a number of school librarians being able to directly enrol students as CCL members via a remote login.
- RHS staff extensively promoted CCL resources.

In hindsight the above initiatives built the foundation for the idea of a joint use library to grow.

## **The Idea**

There had been a new community library planned for the Avonhead / Upper Riccarton suburbs for more than 10 years. CCL undertook considerable research before deciding on the exact suburb where the library should be built.<sup>6</sup> Finding land in that suburb was proving difficult. Knowing that CCL had not secured a suitable site for its planned library, Gary Coburn, approached Sue Sutherland, CCL's Manager, to discuss his idea of sharing a library. Gary was wanting to involve his school more in the community and Christchurch City Libraries were keen to make a stronger connection within the education environment. In brief the idea appealed to both parties and the idea progressed.

After the project was approved Dr Alan Bundy, who is well known for his research on joint use libraries, made himself available along with Prof Larry Amey to spend a few days working with both partners. During this time both parties were able to express their expectations and this laid the foundation for the future joint community and school library relationship.

The report prepared by Dr Bundy and Prof Amey encouraged both parties to address the following points<sup>7</sup>. We have noted underneath each point how it was addressed by us.

*Location – ensuring a high profile from the street which ensures community ownership.*

The location of this community and school library is on a main road, on the edge of the school playing fields. The library connects well to both the community and the school and it has a strong profile from the road. Essentially it is a long building, slightly raised in height to increase its presence in the community, with a shared entrance way at the south end, and an outdoor café / study / seating area to the north - with views over the school playing fields.

*Very good signage is necessary.*

Signage for this library is large and bold and similar to the style we use throughout the library network. The high take up from the community in the first month of opening suggests the visibility is high. As well as the static signage, four newsletters were sent to 30,000 households between October 2005 and February 2006,<sup>8</sup> In order to promote the opening to the local community a massive bill board at Christchurch's largest mall was used for several weeks.

*Opening hours reflecting the needs of the community.*

The Upper Riccarton Library is open from 9am until 8pm each weekday, and from 10am until 4pm on Saturday and Sunday. Groups have access to the community room outside of these hours.

*Physical facilities should be appropriate to the profile community.*

There is a 100m<sup>2</sup> community meeting room which is free to use by non profit making groups. Two Pre-school Storytimes and a Babytimes session are offered each week in this room. The area in front of the community meeting room is also proving to be a good gathering point. Many people sit and chat both in and outside of the library. The building has a privately owned café, comfortable lounge spaces, quality furniture and equipment, and excellent public conveniences including baby changing facilities. Rain water from the roof is filtered and collected for use in the public toilets. This is one way the building supports the Council's sustainable future policies.

The school has access to the three teaching rooms from 8.30am – 4pm Monday – Friday during the school term. The rooms are slightly larger than a standard classroom and a dividing bi-fold door between two of the rooms allows for up to 100 people to be seated. The libraries' learning centre network manages the use of these spaces outside of school hours.

*Programmes to meet the needs of the profile community.*

This library has a Learning Centre, networked to the South and Waitikiri Learning Centres (two other libraries within the CCL network). Programmes are run through this centre for all ages. For example Online Buying and Selling, Family Internet Tuesdays, Workshop Club, Girls Zone. Special holiday programmes have included: Game Makers, Digital Art, Be a movie star and Animated Musical. All of the sessions use the high tech computer equipment along with the imagination of the participants.

Local businesses and customers are using the café as a place to visit - sometimes in conjunction with issuing items from the library and some times they may have no interaction with the library staff or resources.

*The library should be as integrated as possible.*

Both the school's original collection and the new community library collection are integrated into one. Christchurch City Libraries acquires and processes all of the collection

and provides all of the IT equipment. CCL charge the school an annual fee based on a formula which takes into account the space the school occupies and the number of hours the school uses these spaces out of the total opening hours. Over a full year, the school's percentage of the total occupation is quite small – given that Christchurch City Libraries manages the use of the teaching spaces outside of school hours. The use of these particular areas is great for the community and keeps Riccarton High School's costs down at a manageable rate. CCL have assumed responsibility for running the building. At this stage the Community Librarian and the School Library Manager are working in partnership. A Management Group has been established to mediate between the two parties if any issues arise that a solution is not obvious for.

In the report "Proposed Library in Upper Riccarton Feb/March 2002" Nicki Moen wrote that the key benefits, of a combined community library and school library on the Riccarton High School grounds, were seen as:

**Community Benefit** – the library would be located in the heart of the community, in close proximity to shopping facilities, primary and secondary schools, rest homes, tertiary institutions.

**Council Benefit** – the land would be available at no cost to the Council and then the school would contribute to the cost of the building and its ongoing operational costs

**Library Benefit** – the location and size of the site will meet community library requirements and CCL will benefit from working in partnership with education providers to enhance community learning and information literacy programmes.

**School Benefit** – this project would enable Riccarton High School to get a better and extended services for their students.

**Environmental Benefit** – one building would be built instead of two.

## **Decision to Proceed**

Both parties had to achieve buy in from their communities and respective governance. The Council passed a resolution in March 2002 to support in principle the partnership. Consultation meetings took place with all stakeholders and a decision to proceed was eventually made in July 2002.

A Project Control Group was formed. Although membership of this group changed as the project progressed it always had at least 3 RHS staff and 3 CCL staff on it. This group prepared the terms of reference for the project which outlined the 'must haves' for both parties. This group continued to meet monthly until just after the library opened in 2006.

The Project Control Group managed the process of appointing the architects, Warren and Mahoney. Eventually approving the design and accepting the tenders for construction from Mainzeal. Construction began in February 2005.

As mentioned Dr Alan Bundy and Prof Larry Amey were brought to Christchurch. Following the presentation of their report; "Best Investment – An assessment of the potential of a joint use high school and public library at Upper Riccarton, Christchurch – July 2003" both parties separately visited joint use libraries in Australia to learn from their experiences.

From 2004 changes were made to the school's processing systems so that stock was shelf ready for the new library. An audit of the existing school collection was completed by CCL staff in conjunction with the school. The purpose of this was to weed the collection and identify subject areas which needed development during 2005 in order to meet the collection criteria of CCL.

Throughout this project there have been significant staffing changes. This was identified as a risk to be managed and highlighted the importance of sharing the project knowledge within each organisation.

During the recruitment process it was important to appoint staff who were open to the concept of a joint use library as working amongst a community of hundreds of teenagers every day has its own challenges. CCL appointed 13.48 FTE which is 7 full time staff and 10 part time. RHS employs a full time Library Manager and a library assistant (0.7) term time only.

Following the hand over and blessing of the building in November 2005, the process of fitting out the building and stocking it began. CCL had been purchasing stock for the previous 18 months. The collection profile which they were buying to included areas identified by school staff as significant academic areas to build. The collection we opened with included 20,000 new items. Approximately 20,000 items, all published after 2000, were taken from CCL's existing libraries. RHS contributed 7,000 items to the library. We plan to hold stock numbers at 65,000 items.

The library opened on 23 January two weeks before the school year started. This helped promote the library as a community resource. Two weeks after the school year started we held an official opening ceremony and gala day. The gala opening was a combined effort between the school and the Christchurch City Council. Community groups were encouraged to perform or showcase their organisations and cultures. RHS students provided much of the labour for the day.

## **How are doing?**

The environment encourages students to come in giving them a chance to be in public and behave in an appropriate way without a lot of guidance. Students know they are on show and they have raised the bar.

Students are also in the library by choice. There has been a noticeable change in the student groups which use the library. The stereo-typical student who used the library last year is now sharing the space with non traditional library users. Another change noticed from the beginning of the year is that students are using the library resources and not just being in the space for social interaction.

Some staff were concerned about the open access of resources. With three other high schools within a two kilometre radius it was thought that few resources would be left on some topics. As the academic year has progressed those concerns have diminished. Teachers have been impressed by the wide range of resources available. They have a collection six times the size of what was available last year. Staff say that never before have we been so well resourced.

As a consequence of most NCEA subjects having a research component, we have noticed a domino effect with teachers and their planning for future research units. Each successful

experience using the library's resources generates better planning and consultation for the next time.

RHS management has shown their commitment to the library by providing timetabled duty staff during every break and lunchtime. This ensures that their students are supervised and managed appropriately. Having this level of support means that the CCL staff, in general, are not required to moderate student behaviour.

It feels totally normal for this library to be a shared resource. Apart from the three classrooms, which RHS use exclusively until 4 pm each day, the students and public share the library space successfully. We have received many positive comments from customers about how the students use the library and interact while in there.

The high use of the self issue machines (41%) indicates that customers – including the RHS students – are self sufficient. Leaving staff more time to assist with enquiries.

The learning centre programmes which use the teaching rooms out of school hours offer technology based programmes for the community, aiming mainly at the youth. They are given the opportunity to use and experience the latest computer software within a supportive learning environment at minimal cost to participants.

As this project has evolved we are realising that both parties have respect for each others organisation. We both have a "think yes" attitude and we share and celebrate our achievements. With this culture to support us we have been able to work through the unforeseen to date.

## **Bonuses**

The library provides the opportunity to see RHS students as individuals rather than just pupils at school. It's been a great opportunity to really engage with them.

There has been a noticeable increase in the use of the resources and services by the teaching staff who made use of the library in 2005. In addition to this, the new environment including the high quality of stock, has encouraged reluctant teaching staff to use the library. Their visits have increased their awareness of the library's relevance to their subject area.

Year 13 students are permitted to use the café during the school day. The rest of the students are able to use the café out of school hours.

The Principal, Phil Holstein and the school's management team showcases the library regularly to school visitors and enjoys the informal sitting of the café for some meetings.

The School Library Manager is able to provide improved professional development for teachers and better access to new and relevant materials in their subject areas.

Some non English speaking customers have benefited by RHS student's knowledge of their first language, with the student translating between customer and staff. As the schools international community begin to take ownership of their library, we are seeing them bring in their families, helping to translate at membership and demonstrating how to use the library and the resources.

There is an increased awareness by CCL staff, throughout the network, of the academic requirements of young adults. This is assisting in the preparation of a relevant youth outreach programme.

### **Impact of library**

To date, we are not able to measure the impact of the new library on RHS students. We will be trying to come up with a research project in order to establish the actual benefit of such a large library on a school site. It will be good to measure if the library has continued to have a presence in their lives after students leave school?

### **Future opportunities**

New and creative ways to use the library resources in teaching programmes.

Provide more opportunities for community groups to interact with the school and each other.

The development of learning centre programmes.

Through further consultation establish what the community want to use the facilities for.

### **Conclusion**

The dynamics of any library are dependent on many different factors. Achieving buy in from all stakeholders and users of the library is essential. We recommend you don't underestimate the importance of this.

If you are thinking about forming a partnership for a new building project or a change of service we would suggest you work together on smaller initiatives first. Find out if you have a respect for each others organisational values, build the bridges and establish relationships. Think about what you can offer each other which is attractive to and manageable by, both parties.

Our joint use library has only been open nine months, but it appears to be working, fulfilling the vision. Both parties are enjoying the success of this project. We are receiving much praise for managing to establish something different and unique which benefits both school and community.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.lianza.org.nz/library/files/store\\_011/StrategicFramework2006.pdf](http://www.lianza.org.nz/library/files/store_011/StrategicFramework2006.pdf) page 21

<sup>3</sup> Gary Coburn, Principal Riccarton High School (resigned Dec 2005), Upper Riccarton Newsletter no 2,

<sup>4</sup> <http://library.christchurch.org.nz/UpperRiccanton/Planning/Vision11-06-03.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Plan – The Strategic Directions for Christchurch City Libraries 2002-2007

<sup>6</sup> <http://library.christchurch.org.nz/UpperRiccanton/Planning/>  
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<sup>7</sup> Bundy, A & Amey, L, 2003, Best investment – An assessment of the potential of a joint use high school and public library at Upper Riccarton, Christchurch, New Zealand

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