

It Takes a Village: Cooperating with Community Agencies to Serve Special Populations

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Thanasi Metropoulis's grandfather fought in the Korean War but never wanted to talk about it. This isn't strange. Many war veterans are reluctant to share their war experiences, often because they think no one who was not in the war will understand or because they have not yet come to terms themselves with what happened in the war or because they simply were never asked. Because he wanted to know more about what his grandfather and other veterans had experienced in WWII and the Korean War, Thanasi, a student at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, USA, decided to conduct interviews in the Veterans Home and in other places in cities around Bristol. It wanted to gather the memories and stories of these veterans. Working with the Rogers Public Library, Mr. Metropoulis video recorded stories of 15 veterans and presented them to the Rogers Public Library. In its efforts to serve the special population of seniors, particularly those in nursing homes, the Library was thrilled to receive them and plan a program for the general public on the memories of these veterans.

This project was cooperation between the Rogers Public Library, the Roger Williams University, and the Veterans Home to serve veterans of the Korean War and WWII. This type of cooperation is the subject of this paper.

Introduction

The Mission of the IFLA Section, Library Services to People with Special Needs is to provide:

an international forum for the discussion of ideas, sharing of experiences and development of tools designed to promote and improve the effectiveness of library and information services to special needs groups, and the promotion of national and international cooperation at all levels.

The Section focuses on those persons who because of their living conditions and/or physical, mental or cognitive disabilities are unable to access current library services. These groups can include, but are not necessarily limited to, people in hospitals and prisons, homeless persons, persons in nursing homes and other care facilities, the deaf and people with dyslexia and dementia."

Libraries serve these populations in many ways. In thinking about serving these populations, I wondered if they worked with any community agencies in providing the service. I also wondered if guidelines on serving special populations suggested ways for libraries to determine needs of special populations and encouraged libraries to cooperate with community agencies to serve people with special needs.

To gather this information I examined five sets of guidelines for people with special needs published by IFLA. The guidelines are listed in Appendix A of this paper. There are guidelines for library service for all of the special needs covered in our Section's Mission Statement except library services to the homeless. Another problem I encountered was the age of the guidelines. Two guidelines, for the deaf and for people in hospitals and long term care facilities, were published in 2000. Guidelines for people in prisons were published in 2005; for persons with dementia, in 2007. The most recent guidelines were for persons with dyslexia, published in 2013.

In reviewing the guidelines, I was looking for advice on working with community agencies to serve people with special needs. Despite the age of the guidelines, I was able to identify suggestions for different way libraries should cooperate with other organizations to serve people with special needs.

In researching this presentation, I also tried to identify libraries actually providing service to people with special needs in cooperation with another agency. There were many examples of libraries providing service in cooperation with outside groups or people. The type of cooperation fell into three categories:

- Working specifically with an agency that houses a specific population (hospitals, prisons, nursing homes)
- Working with advocacy groups or community agencies that provide information or services related to the population being served
- Working with community volunteers that assist in providing the service

Analysis of Guidelines

Guidelines for Library Services to Prisons, 2005

These guidelines had the least recommendations on cooperation outside the library. The guidelines do suggest that the library reach out to other prison departments and that there be a Prison Library Advisory Committee from a "broad spectrum of prison departments, as well as inmate groups." The guidelines also recommend that the library become a "central distribution center for community social service publications and acting as a referral center to outside support organizations."

Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dementia, 2007

These guidelines also have minimal suggestions for cooperation outside the library. They do suggest that the library involve facility staff and relatives and friends of residents in planning library services and gathering input about resident needs. These guidelines also cite a Swedish program called "Las Ombud" or Reading Representatives. These are volunteers who try to stimulate interest in people with dementia by reading aloud from books that are easy to read and understand. Guidelines for Library

Services to Deaf People, 2000

These guidelines suggest significant cooperation with advocacy groups and agencies serving people with hearing impairment. These guidelines emphasize the importance of library staff understanding the special needs of deaf people, including their various communication needs, cultural, special resource and equipment needs, and communication techniques. They suggest that local groups serving deaf people provide training to library staff.

The guidelines recommend that members of the library's deaf community be involved in the design and development of library services to deaf people. The guidelines also recommend that the library establish advisory committees that include deaf people, service organizations, and networks.

In a commentary section, the guidelines offered this advice:

The success of any service depends upon its content and quality and upon the acceptance of the service by the clientele for whom it is designed. Until such time as a program of services has been established and is proven popular and successful within the library's deaf clientele, it may be necessary for the individual who is responsible for program design to go out into the community and to actively solicit interest and assistance from deaf individuals. After such relationships are established, the continued success of the service will depend on the continued success of this network between the library and the deaf community.

The guidelines also suggest that the library provide information on local literacy programs and any library sponsored literacy programs should meet the needs of deaf clientele. They suggest that the library deal with professionals knowledgeable about methods used to educate deaf students.

Finally, the guidelines for library services to deaf people emphasize that services for the deaf be included in any community information and referral services with special consideration for electronic delivery of the information as "electronic communication and the world wide web have proven to be extraordinarily effective for deaf people."

Guidelines for Libraries Serving Hospital Patients and the Elderly and Disabled in Long Term Care Facilities, 2000

These guidelines had the most suggestions for cooperation outside the library. These guidelines assume that if the library is within a hospital or care facility, there will be a strong relationship with the public library to supplement the care facility's collection. If there is no library within the facility, they urge arrangements be made with the local public library to provide materials, services, and programs on site at the care facility to serve the residents.

The guidelines also list multiple organizational structures for the library including libraries jointly supported by a parent institution and an external agency with the parent institution providing the physical space and collection and the external agency providing the staff and services. They suggest

that an outside voluntary group could maintain the library or a public library might open a branch in a care facility.

The guidelines strongly recommend that a contract or memorandum of understanding be prepared that outlines the responsibilities for funding and service delivery of the care facility and any outside library or organization providing a service in the care facility.

The guidelines also recommend that the library “take advantage of the external resources available to them,” because “their work encompasses so many areas of specialization, it seems wise to make use of organizations that can help with state-of-the-art information, materials, and support services.” The guidelines urge cooperation with local public libraries, library consortia, national libraries, professional library associations, and professional medical and allied health sciences associations.

Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dyslexia, 2013

These were the most current guidelines examined, published in 2013, and included multiple recommendations for cooperation with external groups. The guidelines state early on that “cooperation between the library and educational institutes and partners in the local municipality are important.” They suggest cooperation with parents, labor unions, dyslexia associations, employment centers, reading consultants, and other libraries serving the same population. They emphasized “working with partners also gives you access to information about the needs and knowledge of the user group, and opens possibilities of involving the users in the service.”

The guidelines give special attention to service to children with dyslexia. They recommend that library staff cooperate with special needs teachers at local schools and local dyslexia organizations which can be “helpful to obtain knowledge and keep it state of the art.” The guidelines also emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge between colleagues such as special needs teachers, school librarians, school psychologists, speech therapists, and dyslexia organizations. “Library services will benefit enormously from working together and creating partnership models with relevant organizations and stakeholders.”

Examples of Library Cooperation with External Groups to Serve People with Special Needs

To gather examples of library services delivered in cooperation with other agencies, I sent a survey to state library associations in Colorado and Iowa and to the list serve of the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) which has international members. Librarians were generous in sharing their stories and the rest of this paper will focus on the description of some of those services, delivered cooperatively, to people with special needs.

Services to the Homeless

As a homeless teen, David Bondarchuck came to the Denver, Colorado, Public Library all day, every day, not only to 'feel safe' but to pore over cookbooks, including those by one of his idols, Martha Stewart, an American decorator and chef. Ron Miller, the Director of Homeless Services at the library, recalls the teen came and went from our premises without anyone ever knowing the gritty details of his life. He wanted it that way because he didn't want to draw attention to himself.

"Those were some tough times," David recalls. David says he didn't learn his craft in culinary school, but at the Library.

Today, David owns Scratch Catering Services, a business he founded. And if that isn't enough of a happy ending, David applied to decorate the President Obama's White House for the holidays and was accepted in December 2011. Someone on Martha Stewart's staff heard his story and asked him to appear on her TV show, which he did.

To this day, David comes to Central, and says he has no idea where he would be if not for the Library. "The Library," he adds, "changed the direction of my life."

The Denver Public Library's downtown Central Library is a home for the homeless. Hundreds use it every week. In 2011, the city of Denver formed the Homeless Service Action Committee. Many local businesses and agencies main approach to the homeless is to keep them away. The Denver Public Library was very willing to work with the Homeless Service Action Committee to assist the homeless and help them find services and assistance. Ron Miller said that one main goal was to "help change the attitude of library staff and make them more sensitive, for the homeless to be treated more as customers."

DPL now works closely with the Denver Social Service Agency. For four hours every week, a social worker comes to the library to meet with the homeless and assist them to get food, counseling, job and housing information, and other possible services. Mental Health Services of Denver also offer regular hours at the library to help those with mental health issues. Staff are also trained in how to handle library users that demonstrate erratic behavior.

Jefferson County Public Library, in the Denver Metro Area, is also working to develop services for the homeless. They are meeting with several community agencies and discuss with them the needs of the homeless. With this information they plan to develop a program that can best support the homeless and partner with agencies who serve the same clientele. Library staff member Tricia Lee is serving on a county committee to plan a one stop public place to connect the homeless with services and assistance.

The library is also changing policies that make it difficult for the homeless to use the library. For example, the library no longer requires proof of address to get a library card. Ms. Lee reports that "the day we changed this policy, a homeless family came in and got library cards so their children could have computer access for their homework." The library also participated in a County survey to identify the number of homeless people in the area. One homeless woman turned in her completed form and said "I never knew anyone cared." The library is also looking at becoming a safe place during the day for the homeless, developing programs to keep the homeless occupied while they are in the library, conducting

special story times and literacy programs for homeless youth, and taking the bookmobile to agencies who serve the homeless.

Library Service to the Homebound and Nursing Homes

Mary is wheelchair bound and has arthritis, making it difficult for her to use her hands. She lives in a nursing home in Wapello, Iowa. It is increasingly difficult for her to read a print book and turn the pages. Luckily, the Keck Memorial Library in Wapello has an ongoing program in cooperation with the nursing home to serve the residents. Llewann Bryant, the Library Director, showed Mary how to use her laptop to download a book. At the next visit, Mary met Llewann at the door, excited that she had learned to download books on her own. The library chooses books specifically for the residents – audio books for a woman losing his sight; books with lots of pictures for a man who cannot read; new best sellers. In cooperation with the local television station and the nursing home, the library asked the residents to review books for broadcast on the TV station. They took gaming equipment that allows the residents who are mobile to play a virtual bowling game. Llewann concludes her description of the services they offer by saying “hopefully we have given some of the residents a sense they are not forgotten and still a part of life.”

Kate Baker, Director of the Piscataway Library, provides services to senior citizens in cooperation with a local nursing home. They deliver materials and leave them for a month for people to read. The nursing home asked for the library to conduct a book discussion group, however, the library could not provide multiple copies of the same book in print. The library provided an audio book and the nursing home attempted to bring together the seniors who were interested in the topic to listen to the book so they could discuss it. However, only one senior was able to listen to the book. The library has decided it can better deliver book talks about large print books they have loaned to the nursing home. This is a good example of how a library must be flexible in working with agencies to deliver services.

The Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin, Illinois worked with the Dominican University Library School to develop a special program for people with Alzheimers or other dementias. The program, *Tales and Travel Memories*, focuses on travel. The website on the program describes it as:

Tales and Travel Memories is an innovative project that provides library services directly to the people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease, not just to their caregivers. It has received positive reception by nursing homes and their residents, demonstrating a real need for serving this special population.

The website describes the project in depth and provides links to programs in five countries. A link to the website is in Appendix A.

Library Services to the Deaf

A Jewish Synagogue in Piscataway, New Jersey has some senior citizens who can no longer hear the Rabbi at the Friday services. The Synagogue went to the Kennedy Public Library in Piscataway and

borrowed special equipment that allows the Rabbi to broadcast and the people to hear. The Library receives the equipment through its cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Human Services. The equipment is provided free to the library and the library loans it to users for as long as they need it. The Synagogue is trying to determine if they should purchase such a system and in the meantime, the library's support, in cooperation with the Department of Human services, allows them to test its benefit.

The deaf populations are often difficult to attract to libraries, probably because libraries have not been assertive in developing programs to meet the unique needs. The Jefferson County Public Library, in addition to serving the homeless (as described above) is also developing services for the deaf. Deborah Dauenheimer, herself deaf, is the manager of these programs. The library worked with the Rocky Mountain School for the Deaf, the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind and Gallaudet University to offer a workshop for library staff called *The 15 Principles of Reading to Deaf Children*. The target audience was parents who attended the workshop while the children attended a story hour. The cooperation among the agencies is resulting in better knowledge of the needs of deaf children and plans for future cooperation.

Alison McCombe, a consultant on library services for the deaf has prepared a paper specifically on providing story hours for young children who are deaf. This is listed in Appendix A.

Service to Incarcerated Youth and Adults

The Institutional Library Development (ILD) Program at the Colorado State Library works with Colorado institutions that incarcerate youth and adults. One of their most population programs is the *Read to Children* program developed in cooperation with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the ILD staff to help incarcerated parents maintain contact with their children. Prison inmates are given the opportunity to record a book on CD or DVD and send the book and recording to their child. ILD Director Diane Walden comments that the program "provides an opportunity for the offender to participate in their child's life, promotes a love of reading, improves literacy, strengthens family relationships, eases the stress of reunification, and increases the chance of a successful reentry process."

ILD staff provide procedures for DOC staff to follow to ensure consistency among the 16 and growing libraries that offer the program. Staff also provide "best practice" advice to help offenders choose appropriate books. The program has been so successful that the DOC Director reported on it to the Governor and Legislature, the Colorado state governing body. ILD obtains donated children's books and keeps them constantly flowing to the prison libraries. Books in Spanish and books that appeal to specific ethnic groups are also made available. DOC library staff work with the offenders, help them navigate the world of children's literature; assist in the recording process; obtain additional donations; work with security staff and ensure participants comply with the security rules; provide funding to purchase recording equipment, media and shipping envelopes; provide all the data.

The library program, in cooperation with Denver University and the DOC, created the "Colorado Correctional Libraries Vocational Resource Guide" that contains a section on every active DOC Career & Technical Education program. The dual purposes are to help DOC inmates working in DOL-approved apprenticeship programs to complete their independent study requirements and help library staff to

collect material to support the apprentices and vocational education programs and teachers. The guide includes descriptions of and links to professional organizations and trade associations, provides bibliographies of periodicals and core books for about 30 professions, and provides instructions on interlibrary loan.

Serving Multiple Special Populations

One of the respondents to my request for examples was from the Netherlands. Helen Boelens described “Care Farms,” places where people with various kinds of disabilities can spend their time during the day. The Care Farms allow the client-visitors to keep occupied, share a lunch, and interact with other people in similar situations. The service is offered in cooperation with social workers and educators. The visitors to the Care Farm include people with mental disabilities (severe - manic depression, refugees with mental problems etc.), people from prisons that have "day leave under supervision", lonely elderly (usually single, sometimes unemployed) people, etc.

The Care Farm is located in a large greenhouse which was formally a working greenhouse growing flowers. It now has a very large garden where vegetables, fruit and herbs are grown. Vegetables from the garden are sold at a local market (one day each week – client-visitors help at the market) and to local bio supermarkets and shops. The farm also has a simple restaurant and kitchen. During the day, client-visitors work in the garden, help in the restaurant, help to cook lunch and clean up afterwards. In the afternoon some of them work on various types of handcrafts (which get sold at open days and at the market). Some of the funds which are received from the sales are spent on the library. Also, there are classes for children and teenagers, where they learn more about biological farming and food.

The library at the Care Farm contains books, magazines, and information about farming, herbs and their uses, cooking, handicrafts and hobbies, nature, and a children’s section. It supports the work of the farm.

Finally, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has developed multiple resources to be used by local libraries. This type of cooperation is prominent in the United States, where a government agency, in this case the state library, develops programs to be delivered at the local level, using resources and consulting services available at the state level. It has guidelines and videos for serving the homeless; people in residential, detention, or treatment facilities; and people with disabilities.

One of the most useful pages on this site is advice for collaboration. It includes:

Effective Strategies

- Allocate staff time to identify and to work with community groups, agencies, organizations, and networks that serve special populations.
- Partner with community agencies in joint ventures, including sharing resources and co-sponsoring programs.

Possible activities:

- Provide library space for agency meetings and activities.
- Encourage groups to set up displays in the library.
- Provide library brochures, bookmarks, and bibliographies to agencies.
- Seek agency suggestions regarding library resources for their clients.
- Partner in grant applications.
- Invite agency staff to library workshops.
- Offer library tours for agency staff and clients.
- Contribute articles to agency newsletters.
- Public libraries are a source for information about agencies and services available in the community.
- Maintain a public bulletin board for community notices.
- Maintain a website that provides links to community resources for special populations.
- Publicize agency events.
- Libraries and systems gather and share with their members' information on regional and county agencies serving special populations.
- Libraries and systems gather and share with their members information on residential facilities for special populations; e.g., nursing homes, correctional facilities, and group homes for adults with developmental disabilities.
- Libraries and systems inform area agencies that work with special populations about library services for them.
- Libraries and systems provide continuing education opportunities that bring together libraries and community agencies that serve special populations, including library staff in residential facilities and institutions.
- Libraries and systems work with area agencies to determine priorities and needs.

APPENDIX A

- Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-professional-reports-92>
- Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dementia
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-professional-reports-92>
- Guidelines for Library Services to Deaf People, 2nd Edition
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/guidelines-for-library-services-to-deaf-people-2nd-edition>
- Guidelines for Libraries Serving Hospital Patients and the Elderly and Disabled in Long-Term Care Facilities www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-professional-reports-61
- Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dyslexia
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-professional-reports-70>
- Power point on library services to autistic children prepared by Suzanne McGowan
http://www.clicweb.org/images/stories/Training/CLiCWorkshops/SpringWorkshops2012/presentations/Sensory_Storytime.pdf
- Power point on story times for deaf children prepared by Alison McCombe
<http://www.clicweb.org/images/stories/Training/CLiCWorkshops/SpringWorkshops2012/presentations/ConnectingtoDeafFamiliesthroughStoryTime.pdf>
- Tales and Travel Memories from the Gale Public Library in Elgin, Illinois.-
<http://public.gslis.dom.edu/about/tales-and-travel-memories>
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Serving Special Populations
http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld_ssp