Dual use school community libraries: expedient compromise or imaginative solution?

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The paper describes a case study of a group of six dual use school community libraries in one remote region of South Africa. The recent government sponsored LIS Transformation Charter has placed a spotlight on the backlogs in school library provision. The study, conducted in April 2009, investigates if shared libraries might help fill gaps and, if so, under what conditions. The background, research questions, methodology and site are described but only an outline of possible findings are provided here. A fuller picture will be ready for the IASL conference in September.

South Africa; dual use libraries; case study

Introduction

The paper reports on a research project in a group of six dual use school community libraries in a rural region of South Africa1. The six dual use libraries were established with donor funding in 2001 as part of a larger project of their province's public library service. In 2009, the donor no longer funds the libraries and they operate under the provincial public library authorities. The case study, conducted in April 2009, investigates the value of dual or shared use libraries in the context of drastic shortages of both school and public libraries and the calls in government circles for the sharing of resources.

In the South African situation where millions are out of reach of LIS, the sharing of resources among schools and their local communities certainly is an attractive option. But Haycock warns that the mention of dual use in library circles "not only inflames passion but also seems to release all reason" (2006: 489). The fear, apparently, is that the temptation to cut costs might outweigh needs on the ground. An editorial in the School Library Journal Online in 2000, in response to government endorsement of "joint-use" in California, quotes the Californian School Library Association's warning that shared school and public libraries are "a politician's dream solution, because it doesn't take any thought, and you're not actually talking to public and school librarians" (Glick, 2000).

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1 Place names are withheld to ensure participants' anonymity. Participants are given pseudonyms .

The author herself has encountered reservations about the efficacy of the dual use model, specifically among people working within the school library sector. Her research has, moreover, uncovered doubts among public librarians over their capacity to work with school learners (Hart, 2006). As Haycock says, the way to negotiate emotive reactions is to look for research evidence. The project reported on in this paper takes into account the mixed views. As indicated in the title, the purpose is to identify the possibilities and the pitfalls by means of a close study of one site. Informed by benchmarks from the existing international research, the case study hopes to provide information useful for the South African context. The angle of vision of the paper for the IASL conference in 2009 is perhaps more on the libraries as school libraries than community libraries, although comment on their dual nature is inevitable. A future publication will use a different angle to view them as public or community libraries.

An understanding of the governance structures of school and public libraries in South Africa is necessary to make sense of the research problem and the account that follows. South Africa has a three tier system of government: national, provincial and local. Policy is built at national level and the nine provinces and the local authorities or municipalities are responsible for its implementation. The 1996 South African Constitution defines public libraries as a provincial responsibility yet the status quo, dating from pre-1994 provincial ordinances, is that their staffing and building costs are shared by municipalities. Public libraries across the country fall under the provincial Departments of Arts and Culture which in their turn report to the national Department of Arts and Culture. School libraries fall under the wing of the provincial Education Departments, which report to the national Department of Education. Some provincial education departments – but not all - have school library support services. The SA Schools Act grants a fair amount of autonomy to schools' governing bodies. Significant for school libraries is that the governing bodies have control over the budget allocations from government and thus decide whether to fund a school library - or not.

It has to be stated upfront that, at the time of writing, the data gathered in the course of the project are still being processed. Hopefully, by the time of the IASL conference in September the analysis and interpretation will be completed and a full picture will be visible. As it is, this paper might be regarded as a report on "work in progress". It covers the background, rationale and theoretical frame for the project and describes the methodology and research site. The findings will be presented more fully at the IASL conference in September.

Background

The decision to investigate dual use models came out of the author's work on the technical team of the Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter, a project commissioned in 2007 by the National Council of Library & Information Services (NCLIS) and

the South African Department of Arts & Culture (DAC). The Charter is a component in the revitalisation of South African public libraries to which DAC has allocated a grant of R1.3 billion and which involved a nationwide investigation over several months. The LIS Transformation Charter follows others in fields like mining, ICTs and the heritage sector – all motivated by the post-apartheid constitutional principles of redress and equity. The LIS Charter, however, does more than investigate the unfair legacies of apartheid as it articulates a vision for new developmental kinds of library and information services (LIS) for the developing society that South Africa is. The vision spells out the role of LIS in building an inclusive knowledge society and learning democracy. Its original focus soon broadened to include all kinds of libraries and issues such as the cross-cutting challenges confronting all LIS, education and training, reading, conservation, indigenous knowledge and policy. Of special interest for this paper for IASL is the separate long chapter on school libraries. The decision to give special attention to school libraries came soon into the investigation as time and again participants in the Charter's consultative workshops across South Africa brought up the plight of school libraries.

In 2007 the Department of Education provided the following table which confirmed the deteriorating position of school libraries.

Table 1: School library figures by province[2]

| Province | Number of "Operational" ordinary public schools | | | |
	"Operational" ordinary public schools assessed Sum (1-3)	Schools with no library space (1)	Schools with library space that are reportedly not stocked (2)	Schools with library space that are reportedly stocked (3)
E Cape	5,724	5,179	378	167
F State	1,717	1,290	275	152
Gauteng	1,972	828	781	363
KZN	5,822	4,633	833	356
Limpopo	4,037	3,742	199	96
Mpumalanga	1,981	1,668	191	122
N Cape	620	438	109	73
N West	1,796	1,453	228	115
W Cape	1,476	709	394	373
Total 2006	25,145	19,940	3,388	1,817
% 2006	100.00%	79.30%	13.47%	7.23%
Total 2000	27,209	22,101	5,108	
% 2000	100.00%	81.23%	18.77%	
% change since 2000	N/A	-1.93%	1.93%	
Total 1996	26,673	21,907	4,766	
% 1996	100.00%	82.13%	17.87%	
% change since 1996	N/A	-2.83%	2.83%	

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[2] *National Education Infrastructure Management System* (NEIMS) report in the Department's *National Assessment Report* 2007

The provincial breakdown points to the connection between socio-economics and school libraries. The two provinces with the highest number of school libraries, Gauteng and the Western Cape, are the two richest and most urbanised provinces (Butler, 2004: 38). The Charter's investigation confirmed that South African school libraries are to be found in middle-class usually suburban schools, which are able to charge fees to supplement their budget allocations from government. The vast majority of South African school libraries – staff and materials – are funded from these fees. It might well be argued therefore that class has replaced race in terms of the indicators for school libraries.

The fundamental premise of the Charter's chapter on school LIS is that good school libraries are essential to the transformation of the South African education system, which aims to provide quality schools for all South African learners. Apartheid's Bantu Education calculatedly under-resourced the schools designated for black learners. In 1994, per capita expenditure varied between R5,403 on "white" schools and R1,053 on schools in the Transkei "Bantustan" or "homeland". The provision of basic facilities and school libraries across the 19 racially-based education departments reflected this inequality, which persists today. If school libraries are essential to quality learning, then the principles of redress and equity in the South African Constitution and our educational legislation mean that ways must be found to provide them. However, school library advocates have to confront the reality that our social and educational context is very different from countries with well-developed school library systems such as Australia and the United States.

The implications of the socio-economic and educational backlogs are twofold:
- The advocacy for school libraries has to convince that quality education *demands* access to a wide range of learning and information resources. There is consensus that gaps between the new resource-based curriculum and the lack of resources in schools have hindered the transformation of South Africa's education system (Hart & Zinn, 2007). However, the argument that libraries are necessities rather than luxuries must confront the reality that millions of South Africans still lack decent housing and sanitation. And indeed, there are still many schools without basic infrastructure. For example, 1097 schools have no sanitation facilities, 2568 have no water, and 3759 have no electricity.
- Given this context, it is clear that innovative models of service must be found. It will be impossible to provide all 30,000 schools with their own well-equipped central library in the short term. In any case, evidence from the past shows that the mere provision of resources will not improve the quality of our schooling. Overduin and De Wit's major study of South African school libraries in the 1980s (1987) for example concluded that school libraries, in those schools that had them, were underused – probably because the teaching methods in the curriculum at that time did not require them.

The need to be open to different models of school library explains the study reported on in this paper. South Africa has a fairly well-established public library infrastructure with almost all municipalities running a library service serviced by the large provincial library services. But the library buildings are in the towns and their adjacent so-called townships. There are hardly any in the rural but densely populated areas of the apartheid era "homelands". Overall, South Africa lags far behind UNESCO standards for public library access. KwaZuluNatal's provincial library service for example reports that it needs another 100 libraries; Mpumalanga Province needs

another 96. Setting up community libraries in schools might be an attractive option to public library services.

School library policy post 1994

From the early 1990s, South African education has been undergoing reform and transformation. The advent of democracy in 1994 brought the needs to merge the 19 education departments of the fragmented racially-based apartheid system and to redress the inequities in the provision of education. The changes in the curriculum also reflect international trends, which aim to develop school leavers who are lifelong learners, able to compete in the information or knowledge society, where new workplace competencies are called for. The shifts in education on both fronts seemed to promise a favourable climate for school libraries (for example Zinn, 1999). It was believed that fairer provisioning might redress the unequal distribution of school libraries across advantaged and disadvantaged sectors. And the recognition of the need for lifelong learners, able to compete in the information society, seemed to indicate recognition of the need for information literacy education – the mission of school librarians. In 1996, the unit responsible for school library policy within the national Department of Education initiated a process of building national policy for school libraries. A national policy statement, it was believed, would act as an impetus for provincial education departments to recognise and act on the need for libraries. It would also persuade schools' Governing Bodies that schools should develop their own library policies and that expenditure on school libraries was legitimate, if not mandatory. Sadly, the author has to report that since 1996 there have been five school library policy drafts – as I write none of them approved by the central Department of Education. The first two drafts, in 1997 and 1998, offered a range of seven school library models – one a dual use school/public library. However the third draft in 2001 betrays a perception of shared models as a perpetuation of apartheid discrimination and drops all mention of this model. The most recent draft in 2005 provides only two models of school library, the one school one library and the one cluster one school library; but, at the same time, it "recognises" the existence of the other five models in the 1997 document.

The LIS Transformation Charter has highlighted the urgent need for the national Department of Education to return to the policy-building processes. However, its investigation provides sobering evidence of huge backlogs and lack of capacity within the provincial education departments. Flexibility and pragmatism are required. Chapter Five of the Charter endorses dual use models thus:

> In some communities, education and public LIS authorities might together establish dual use school community LIS, available to the school in the school day and open to the community after school hours. Memoranda of understanding and policy will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the governance structures.

But elsewhere in the chapter, a significant proviso is added - levels of service for both school and public communities should not be compromised:

> A fundamental criterion is that the service in a dual use LIS must equal that of two separate LIS. …The principles for an effective school LIS … cannot be ignored. Research is needed to assess whether South African dual use LIS conform to these fundamental principles.

The case study responds to the above recommendation for more "research". It asks the question: Could dual use libraries help fill some of the gaps in the provision of school and public libraries? It sets out to answer this question by means of a case study of a group of dual use libraries in a rural region – a former apartheid "homeland".

Dual use libraries

Haycock's definition of dual use is "a common facility from which library services are provided to two ostensibly different communities of users" (2006: 488). Staff, collections and services are "co-located". The six libraries in the case study are based in schools and serve the surrounding communities.

The discussion of joint-use libraries in South Africa goes back to the think-tanks of the early 1990s that aimed at transforming the library landscape – which foreshadow perhaps today's LIS Transformation Charter. Multi-purpose libraries were seen as a way to optimise resources (National Education Policy Investigation. Library and Information Services Research Group, 1992: 61). In 1999 UNESCO hosted a consultative workshop in Pretoria and established a committee to investigate library cooperation. The result was a report, the main focus of which was dual use public/school libraries (National Committee for Library Cooperation, 2000). Although today there are examples of dual use libraries scattered across South Africa, the UNESCO project faded perhaps because it assumed a relationship between two fairly equal partners. One of the success factors in collaboration is that all parties must have something to bring to the prospective "deal". The relative weakness of the school library sector might well militate against the kind of cooperation promoted by the UNESCO committee. And indeed, in 2008, some years later, the Charter's investigation uncovered widespread reservations about dual use libraries among people in the school library support services of the provincial education departments, who are struggling to find a foothold even in their parent education bureaucracies. The fear of being swallowed up by the more powerful public library authorities is understandable.

Sophia le Roux's Masters thesis comprises a thorough survey of dual use school/public libraries throughout the world, and of the preconditions for success (2001). Despite her finding that internationally the school-based model is preferred, she recommends that, in South Africa, services be based in public libraries because in rural areas there just are no school library facilities. She suggests that joint-use public/school libraries be established within community centres and that they circulate book boxes to their schools. Perhaps, a gap in Le Roux's analysis is an explanation of how such services might be intertwined with the learning programme of the school – found to be essential to effective information literacy education which is after all the central mission of school librarianship.

As mentioned in the previous section, at central government level and across all the nine South African provinces, school and public libraries fall under different government departments – the national and provincial Departments of Education and Departments of Arts and Culture respectively. This clearly presents challenges to dual use which are evident in two rare cases of dual use in the South African literature. Both report on ostensibly dual use libraries based in public libraries. At the IASL conference in Durban in 2003, Le Roux and the Director of the

provincial public library services of Mpumalanga presented a plan for a community library - to be built by the Province in a village in a "rural tribal area" in Mpumalanga (Le Roux & Hendrikz, 2003: 258). The presenters presented it as a prototype for the kind of joint-use community/school library recommended in Le Roux's Masters dissertation, which was referred to above. It was designed as a joint-use school/community library with a classroom leading off the library. The library was completed by the Province in the following year. However, on visiting it in April 2004, one year later, the author found it locked up just a few days after its ceremonial opening because the local municipality had not allocated a staffing budget (Hart, 2005: 82). (Happily the crisis was resolved some months later and, at the time of writing, the library is up and running.)

The second example of political or bureaucratic obstacles to dual use lies in a report by the Library Practice for Young Learners project (Naiker & Mbokazi, 2002: 17-23). The report provides a rare empirical case study of a joint-use community/school library, Makhuva Information Centre, in Limpopo Province. The focus in the case study is on the mechanics of setting up the centre rather than its role in the schools' learning programmes and it talks more of its services to the community than those to its surrounding schools. The main insight of the study is the effect of divisions between government departments. In the course of the project, Limpopo Province placed its school library division within its Department of Education and its public libraries in the provincial Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. This halted progress as each had different policies and approaches.

The problems encountered in these two cases confirm the importance of clear and formal agreements on governance, administration and financing, which is a strong thread in the international literature on dual use libraries.

Study's theoretical frame

As mentioned earlier, mention of dual use models often provokes a quick negative reaction among school librarians. Fear that fundamental differences between school and public librarianship will be ignored perhaps explains the negativity. School librarians know that learners need close and easy access to a resource collection if they are to integrate information skills into their learning. School librarians would claim to be educators as much as information providers. Other reservations perhaps emanate from concerns that the larger better established public library services will swallow up the school library support services who are struggling to survive.

To allay such concerns, research in dual use models of service has to show its reference points in theory and previous research. The case study has two theoretical lenses: Haycock's guidelines for the success of dual use libraries (2006) and Loertscher's taxonomy of school libraries (2000). Haycock deals specifically with principles of dual use and Loerstcher provides a useful frame to assess the libraries as school libraries. The study has to be mindful, however, that both theorists are North American; their theorising might well not apply in the South African context.

Haycock synthesises research in dual use school community libraries in the Unites States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to come up with 10 predictors of success:
- user communities of a manageable size – less than 10,000

- a formal planning process involving the stakeholders
- written legal agreements on governance, administration, finances, assessment and termination including guidelines for evaluation and dissolution
- a single decision-making committee representing all stakeholders which develops polices and procedures and engages the director
- visible and convenient location, accommodating a variety of groups and a separate area for adults
- connections to a larger network or regional system
- a strong desire for success and support among the principal and teachers
- one highly motivated professional librarian in charge, preferably qualified in both education and librarianship, who reports to one governance board
- regular discussion and communication between public library staff and school staff
- no restrictions on access to resources or on the circulation of materials.

At first sight, these factors provide a checklist to benchmark the case study libraries, which could imply a questionnaire survey approach. However, how would one assess from a distance "desire for success", "motivation", "communication" or even "convenience"?
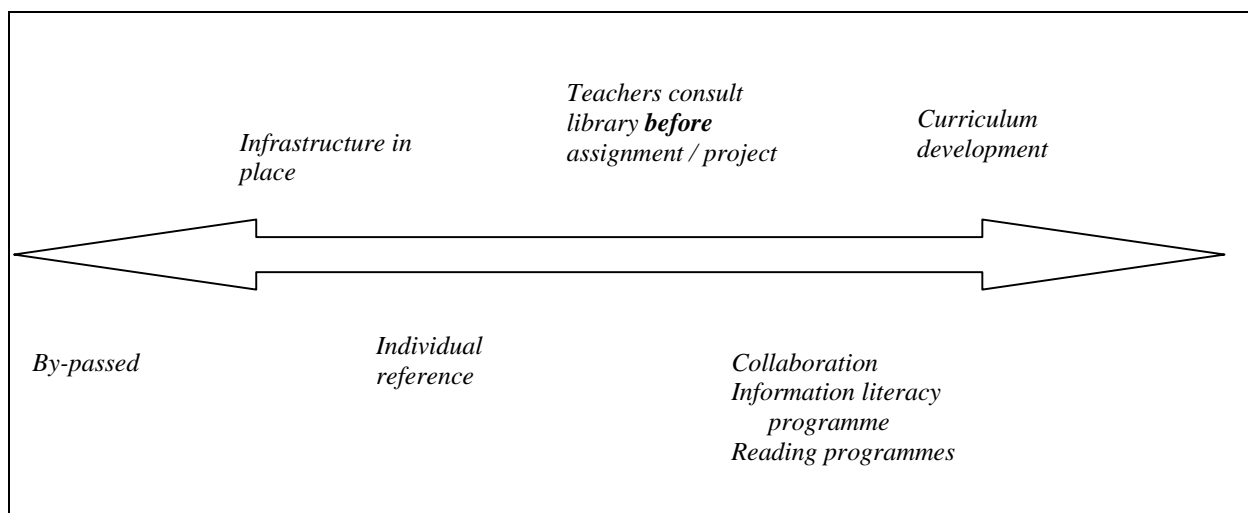
A fundamental criterion mentioned frequently in the international literature is that for long-term sustainability the service in a dual use library must equal that of two separate libraries. The mere provision of a library in a school will not create quality schooling. To reassure school librarians, the measures of quality in school library programmes have to be considered. These measures include quantitative measures such as infrastructure, resources, budget; but they also include more complex measures outside the immediate library. For example, research has identified attributes of "library-friendly climates" in schools, such as:
- recognition by principals and teachers that the library is the hub of the school's teaching and learning and that it has multiple roles in the life of the school community
- allocation of adequate resources
- a shared learner-centred philosophy of education among a school's principal and its educators
- use of formative assessment tools like students' portfolios and preliminary drafts
- explicit mention of information skills in school policy statements
- the flexible scheduling of information skills instruction so that the skills are encountered "just in time", as students engage in real-life learning
- collaborative partnerships between teacher and librarian – in planning and running lessons
- recognition of the librarian as a teacher (Kuhlthau, 1997; Henri, 1999; Asselin, 2001; Hartzell, 2002; Klinger et al, 2009).

The author's research in schools and libraries in South Africa has highlighted the importance for library programmes of affective factors such as teachers' and librarians' beliefs about learning, information and libraries (Hart 2006a; 2006b). Moreover, her work in school librarian education at the University of the Western Cape also highlights the risks in relying on a simplistic checklist of measures. She knows of school library programmes that might well perform quite well in terms of the more qualitative measures listed just above but that are operating on tiny budgets and with totally inadequate facilities.

Loertscher's so-called taxonomy of school library programmes (1999) provides a flexible tool to bring together the above kinds of benchmarks and to assess the case study sites as school libraries. It identifies eight different levels of school library operation - ranging from the library that plays no meaningful role in the life of the school to the library that is crucial to the school's existence. He claims that the most evolved school library programmes are those that are involved in curriculum development. According to Loertscher, the school library only begins to fulfil its potential when it is actively collaborating with educators, teaching information skills and running dynamic reading programmes. He points out that many schools have libraries but the educational programme in fact bypasses them. Only when teachers begin to consult the librarian before they embark on their projects and assignments will the library begin to gain real value in the school. The figure below depicts the taxonomy as a continuum.

Figure 1: Loertscher's taxonomy (1999) (adapted by author)

The taxonomy assumes that to contribute to the educational programme, there has to be infrastructure in place. Surely this basic infrastructure has to include a collection of relevant learning resources, a place for them to be used, and a teacher-librarian with enough time devoted to their management & exploitation. But in the short term it is unrealistic to expect schools in South Africa to have the infrastructure that Loertscher and other international writers in the field assume. This does not mean that we deny the international experience. Rather we have to analyse what other more affordable models might provide the kind of access to learning & reading resources and information literacy education found to be necessary for quality education in the international research.

The discussion in this section has hopefully shown why a qualitative case study approach was chosen to explore the research problem. Only observation of the day to day life of the libraries could provide the data required to answer the research questions coming from the review of literature and theory – and to assess the applications of the international experience to the South African context.

Case study

Research questions and methodology

The fundamental research question of the IASL paper asks whether dual use school community libraries might provide a useful model for South African schools – and if so, under what conditions?

One set of subsidiary research questions comes from the international research in indicators of success mentioned above. These require data on the formal relationships between the two government departments responsible for school libraries and public libraries, management and governance, the sharing of responsibilities and, so on. However there are other more complex questions on the principles for effective school libraries also mentioned above. These questions involve a deeper analysis of the role of the library in the school's educational programme. For example:
- Does the library have adequate infrastructure? What are its facilities, materials budget etc?
- What programmes does the library run?
- Does the library staff have adequate knowledge of the curriculum? And of teaching information literacy?
- How is the library used in the course of the school day? Who uses it.? For what?
- What are the relations between the teachers and the library staff?

The two sets of questions call for a mix of data-gathering methods:
- interviews - of library staff, managers, and educators
- analysis of documents such as policies and memoranda of agreement
- visits to the school community libraries to document conditions and interview their staff
- observation in one dual use library over a week. Short visits could not gather the rich data required. It was important that the workings of the library in the school day and afterwards over at least a week were documented. Participation in the life of the library hopefully unpeeled the realities as experienced by key roleplayers in the school and community.

Overall, the study is qualitative as its heart is an intensive study of a one site which aims at unpeeling layers of meaning rather than gathering statistical data. It is generally agreed that the key factor in the success of school libraries is beliefs and attitudes – about learning, assessment, teaching styles, outcomes-based-education, the role of learning resources and libraries. A qualitative study has the potential to unco ver these beliefs.

The author spent two weeks in the schools in April 2009. Six days were spent in one school - chosen on the recommendation of the provincial education department's school library advisor. The second week comprised visits to all the dual use libraries, interviews with their management and gathering of relevant documents.

Research site

The study's site is six school community libraries in a remote mountainous area, which were established in 2001 by the provincial public library service with funding from an international donor. The donor support came to an end in 2004 and at present the six libraries are staffed and maintained by the provincial public library service. The parties to the original service level agreement in 2001 were the provincial Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, the provincial Department of Education and the Schools' Governing Bodies. Two criteria were used in the choice of schools: their remoteness and the existence of a library space. As shown in the table provided in an earlier section, one of the huge problems confronting school librarianship in South Africa is the lack of space in schools. Many libraries have been taken over for classroom teaching. However, in the case study region, the more rural schools have decreasing pupil numbers as families move into the government housing schemes nearer the business centre, which have electricity and sanitation.

The region has about 255 schools. The district office of the provincial Education Department has two Media Learning Facilitators whose job is to develop and support school libraries. The Facilitator, under whom the six schools fall, has 155 schools under her wing, hardly any with functional libraries.

The socio-economic conditions in the area – established in 1974 as a "Bantustan" or "homeland" - are deemed to be probably fairly representative of other former apartheid era homelands. The doctrine of separate development meant that every South African was assigned to an ethnic group and that each group be given a site of self government. Millions of South Africans were forced to move to their so-called "homelands". The homelands never came close to economic self-sufficiency or political legitimacy. The Surplus People Project (SPP) documented the impact of the "dumping" on the populations, land and economics of the designated homelands. Paradoxically, although the case site in many ways might be described as rural, it in fact teems with people. As the political scientist Butler (2004: 135) points out, many of the former homelands are not "rural" at all but rather immense and densely peopled townships placed far from economic opportunities. By the early1980s, the population of the case study region had grown tenfold – leading the SPP to label it a "peri-urban slum in the middle of nowhere". The former homelands are characterised by high unemployment, poor health care, limited public serves, high levels of child mortality and HIV/Aids. The case study region, now integrated into one of South Africa's nine provinces, is the poorest region in the Province. The researcher's photographs, to be shown at the IASL conference, attest to the beauty of the region as well as the degradation of the land and the prevailing poverty. However, a stay in the area also provides much evidence of a growing state bureaucracy and commercial and industrial development.

It is now divided between two municipalities and its 910 square kilometres (565 sq miles) is home to about 1.3 million people. The District Municipality's office and the district office of the provincial Department of Education now occupy the grandiose but run-down homelands parliament that overlooks the whole region. The central business district, down town, beneath the old parliament is crammed with shops, banks, street stalls, taxi ranks and municipal buildings. There is a hospital, an old age home, an orphanage and two vocational colleges. Just outside the central business district, two new huge shopping malls have just been completed where the main

South African retailers and banks have set up shop. In the central business district, there are two libraries – a large down town building and a smaller children's library. Both were beneficiaries in 2001 of the same donor that established the school community libraries.

Once out of the busy downtown streets, street names disappear and the roads revert to rough stone, sand and mud. Because of the poor transport infrastructure and the wide scattering of the population, access to the central library is difficult. This is why in 2001 the provincial public library service approached the international donor for help in setting up six community libraries in remote schools. The six schools under the research lens are about 50 minutes drive away from the business and commercial hub. Kombi taxis are the main means of transport – and the fare from the schools to the downtown library is R15.00.

The school community library project

The above description hopefully gives insight into the context of the school community libraries which are the focus of the case study research. The motivating document for the school community library project in 2001 shows awareness of the socio-economic context and the potential role of LIS in community development. Its introduction describes its aims as:
- increasing numbers of libraries and bringing them closer to the people
- providing electronic access to information
- improving study facilities
- broadening the scope of services offered and
- teaching people how to use information to their benefit, this creating an environment supportive of sustained economic, social and civic development.

This list is of course admirable but shows no specific awareness of the role of a school library, apart from the mention of "study facilities". A perusal of the rest of the 20 page document finds only two other mentions of the libraries as school libraries when there is mention of the libraries being "available for formal education purposes in the mornings and for the general public in the afternoons and evenings" and the desire to "improve student performance with a number of programmes". There is no attempt to elaborate the nature of "formal education purposes" or what programmes might improve performance.

Evidence of the success of the six libraries as community libraries might lie in the award they won in 2007 as a collective as their province's community library of the year. However, the document's lack of attention to the mission of school libraries highlights the research problem and questions of the case study in terms of the libraries' learning and teaching roles. The document and others will be scrutinised more closely in the data analysis processes.

Preliminary findings

As stated at the beginning of this paper, at the time of writing the research data are still being analysed. Only a rough idea of possible answers to the research questions is formed at the time of writing.

Some of the findings that are emerging and that will be explored in the author's presentation at the IASL conference might be:

- the puzzling nature of the relationship between the public library authorities and the Education Department and the schools' managements
- the lack of capacity of the Education Department's school library support services to play a meaningful role in the life of the school community libraries
- the ambivalent relationship of the project schools with other schools without libraries in the surrounding area
- the impact of beliefs among the library staff about the role of a school library on the effectiveness of the libraries as school libraries
- the under-use of the library by school learners and educators in their learning and teaching
- the ambiguous position of the librarian in the school structures and life
- the apparently low use of the libraries by the surrounding communities – raising questions of interest to the LIS Transformation Charter on how to convince ordinary South Africans that libraries are of use to them
- questions over the sustainability of the model which will have to be confronted.

In keeping with the aims of qualitative research, the case study uncovers the ambiguities and denseness of the social life of the dual use libraries. It promises to provide information useful for a wide range of interests.

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