
McNICOL, Sarah. Joint-Use Libraries: Libraries for the Future. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. 2008.

230 pages. Paperback Edition. ISBN: 978 1 84334 384 4. £37.95.

This well organised book draws together a wealth of knowledge and information regarding joint use libraries. It deals with the history and current issues with an international perspective and is useful for those with little knowledge of joint use libraries and those with more expertise.

The author, Sarah McNicol is an experienced researcher in the library and information research field. She works at Birmingham City University within their research and evaluation unit and organised the first international conference on joint use libraries in 2007.

The book is divided into 9 chapters and explains in very clear language what comprises a joint use library. This is an ideal text for those who have little or no experience. McNicol includes useful data regarding the number of joint use libraries on an international scale which is very helpful and gives detail regarding the different models such as: The Lodger, Flatmates and The Marriage. She uses these metaphors in a very effective way and it allows the reader a clear understanding of the options available. Throughout the book 27 case studies of joint use libraries are used to illustrate the range of projects that have been initiated and the level of success each project has experienced. Many of these case studies are UK based but there are some from the USA, Australia, Europe and Africa which gives the book an international feel.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with how this type of library operates and the information would be very useful for anyone embarking on such a project. It supplies excellent detail regarding governance, management, budgets and staffing. McNicol also devotes a chapter to partnership working and gives a realistic view on the pros and cons of such an approach.

The book explores other topical themes that may impinge on joint use libraries. In Chapter 6 community involvement is unpicked; social inclusion and community cohesion are strong threads. It draws on observations such as the role of joint use libraries in rural communities, outreach services for disabled users as well as their importance in developing countries. Case studies are used here to illustrate important areas and any issues that may affect such services.

The final theme explored in Chapter 7 is 'Expanding Horizons' and discusses lifelong learning, literacy skills and intergenerational learning. It seems that as joint use libraries are often physically situated within a community they are ideally placed to promote such projects and provide support to their members who participate in these initiatives.

The book draws to a close by assessing whether joint use libraries are effective mechanisms and looks at the models used to evaluate the provision. McNicol also addresses the future of such libraries particularly their role in the delivery of libraries services in the developing world.

In summary, this book is very informative. It is ideal for those who have no experience or understanding of joint use libraries, it would be interesting for those

who may be embarking on a joint use library project and would be very helpful for those working in joint use libraries as it includes many real life case studies.

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