A Study on the Relationships between public libraries and Cities and the Delivery of Technology-driven services

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Background

Cities are looking for efficiencies

It is efficient, financially, to merge IT-related services when there is clear duplication

There is perceived duplication when cities and libraries each operate IT departments

While merging IT services may have a financial benefit, do merged services continue to meet the **Strategic** needs of public libraries?
Process

Literature Search

Two Surveys (Library IT managers and Library CEOs)

Follow-up questions on issues arising from the surveys

Case Studies of representative library systems

Cross checks (e.g. Presentation/Functionality/Usability of websites)

Conclusions
Local government agencies seek collaborative agreements:

- to make better use of resources,
- to satisfy norms and values,
- to obtain political advantage,
- to solve problems,
- to reduce uncertainty, and
- to obey legal mandates (Weiss, 1987).

Little documentation exists, but theories of power and influence provide insight into successful collaborations (Stenström & Haycock, 2013; Bryson et al, 2012)

The weaker partner in the relationship usually defers to the stronger partner’s priorities and needs (Bryson et al, 2012).
Questionnaire #1: Library IT Managers

35 responses (89% of those eligible to participate)

Identification of libraries where the City manages:

- Bandwidth
- Who Sets bandwidth
- Wifi
- Servers (virtualization and hosting)
- RFP for computers
- Refresh Cycle for computers

There are six libraries where the City manages at least four of these key services
Six library systems where the City manages at least four of these infrastructure components
Library Managers

1. Public Library systems that control their own websites are more likely to have a site that scores well when evaluated for Presentation, Functionality and Usability.

2. Public Libraries that control their own bandwidth appear more likely to have implemented wifi services earlier and are more likely to be satisfied with their bandwidth.

3. Public Library systems that control their own core IT infrastructure are more likely to have installed RFID technology.
Additional Findings

The data seem to suggest that when a municipality manages most aspects of a library system’s IT infrastructure, there is little or no impact on that library system’s ability to implement third-party services that require little or no technical support for implementation or for operation.

Libraries where the City makes such decisions are as likely to have virtualized their servers as libraries which manage these processes.

No difference in re-fresh cycle for computers or for software licenses.

Cities receive high praise for managing email and Telecom.
Questionnaire #2: Chief Executive Officers

How satisfied are you with the IT services that outside/City agencies provide?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Figure 3: CEO satisfaction with IT services provided by the city/outside agencies

Compliments and Criticisms
Questionnaire #2: Chief Executive Officers

How satisfied are you with the IT services library staff provide?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

*Figure 4: CEO satisfaction rates with IT services provided by library staff*

Compliments and Criticisms
Questionnaire #2: Chief Executive Officers

How satisfied are you with the ability of your library to advance its technology plans?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Figure 5: CEO satisfaction rates with the library’s ability to advance its technology plans
### Case Studies – Site Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Integration</th>
<th>Site A: Highly integrated with the city and not confident about the library's ability to meet future goals</th>
<th>Site B: Highly integrated with the city and confident about the library's ability to meet future goals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site C: Not integrated with the city and not confident about the library's ability to meet future goals</td>
<td>Site D: Not integrated with the city and confident about the library's ability to meet future goals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Level of confidence →*
Case Study #1: High Integration/Low Confidence

IT-related services moved to City over ten years ago
As service needs changed, service did not
Library’s unique needs are not understood
Bandwidth and wifi needs are good examples
Work-around processes
Some signs of possible improvement . . .
Case Study #2: High Integration/High Confidence

City has managed most library IT services for decades
City does not manage the library’s web presence
Dedicated City IT staff person has library as the sole client
Strong IT Culture at the City
CEO of the Library is a member of the City’s SMT
Case Study #3: Low Integration/Low Confidence

Very little City integration (not even email or telecom)
Small group of dedicated library IT staff
Lack of confidence is focused on Public Service staff
Concerns that PS staff do not accept implications of tech change
Wants City to take more support IT functions
Case Study #4: Low Integration/High Confidence

Library system is high performing
Successful and in-control does not mean complaisant
Looking to re-invent internal services
Wondering if some services might be more effective if they were operated by a third party - still controlled through library system
Case Findings

Difficulties and successes exist across the models

No concerns about the quality of work being performed

Dissatisfaction linked to lengthy response times and staff willingness; lack of understanding about audience

Where a foundation of trust has been created, libraries tend to have greater success
Other Considerations

CANARIE/ORION (In Canada/Ontario)

Computer specifications

Educational Discounts

Financial Savings/ Moore’s Law

Unique needs of libraries. Have to be understood
Findings Summary

Libraries with low integration are more likely to have:
- installed RFID technology
- renewed their web presence
- have a website that scores well when evaluated for PUF
- implemented wifi services earlier
- found financial efficiencies to be used for other services

Services provided by library staff are more highly rated

Libraries with strong IT services have good relationships with City
But...

Having City IT departments provide some infrastructure support (e.g. email and telecom) may give library staff more flexibility.

Working with the City on IT projects with shared priorities may be beneficial to the library.

Relationships are critical.
Additional Study

How are the public using library computers?

How might the public want to use library computers?

Do City IT managers want to manage unique, library services?
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