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Introduction
In 2005 the Carnegie Mellon University Libraries received a grant from the Eden Hall Foundation called Information Literacy for the Region. A key aspect of this grant encourages collaboration between Carnegie Mellon University Libraries and local school and public libraries on information literacy initiatives. An Information Literacy Fellow position was created to plan and administer these initiatives. Ideas for collaborative activities spawned from a focus group discussion held at Carnegie Mellon in summer 2006. Western Pennsylvania School Librarians Association members and Carnegie Mellon librarians got together to discuss how to foster interest in local, grass roots information literacy projects. Lack of a formal relationship between school, public, and academic libraries was a recurring theme in the focus group’s discussion. The participants expressed a desire to begin aligning information literacy efforts between the various local library institutions to facilitate students' transition from high school to the "real world" and foster life long learning skills in adult learners.

A Demonstrated a Need
Carnegie Mellon has a vested interest in assisting with these efforts. Twenty percent of its incoming freshmen matriculate from Pennsylvania and fifty one percent come from the Middle States of Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. By supporting local K-12 information literacy initiatives the University increases the chance of getting more information literate applicants.

It was apparent from the focus group and discussions with local school librarians that district administrative support for libraries in the Pittsburgh area varied dramatically. Some school librarians reported roles of little more than study hall monitors while others had in place well developed information literacy plans. The former felt a need to justify themselves to school principals, curriculum supervisors, and teachers, and many saw integrating information literacy competencies into curricula as a mean to many ends. Students would benefit from enhanced learning through information literacy instruction and librarians would become more essential components in the K-12 educational experience. The hope was that collaboration with local higher education institutions would help local school librarians justify a need for information literacy programming to their administrators and teachers.

Method
A few different collaborative models were considered before choosing a one-on-one partnership model. The Information Literacy Fellow was already planning to host workshops targeted at school, academic, and public librarians so a more personal, long-term project was considered a beneficial addition to the group activities. The Sister Libraries Partnership Program was born out of this idea. The initial semester-long run

would be considered a pilot program with the results being used to establish a permanent Western Pa/West Virginia library partnership program.

Participants were recruited from the two local school librarian and academic librarian professional organizations. Emails soliciting participants were sent to the Western Pennsylvania School Librarians' Association email list as well as the Western Pennsylvania/West Virginia Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Nearly all communication between the researcher and participants was done via email.

The participants were required to set up an in person meeting at one or the other’s library. To facilitate this type of in-person interaction the most important factor in matching participants was geographic proximity (though for those of in WV and south of Pittsburgh the distances were still vast).

Because this partnership program was new and expectations varied, the researcher decided to take a hands-off approach to its management. The survey results indicate some participants’ frustrations with regards to approach. Participants were given suggestions on how to conduct their sister library relationship but there were no hard and fast rules. They were only required to set up one in-person meeting. Some discussion ideas for this first meeting were:

- Ask and answer each other's questions about information literacy [environment].
- Share teaching philosophies.
- Visit each other's schools.
- College librarian could give talk to high school students.
- High school librarian could give brown bag to college librarians.
- Arrange for high school students to visit academic library.
- Arrange for collaborative reference services to get better acquainted.
- Short-term internship at academic library for high school student.
- Offer joint training/demo opportunities.
- Invite high school librarian to academic library events and vice versa.
- Share listservs and rss feeds.
Discuss membership and participation in professional organizations.

Invite each other to local professional organization’s meeting.

Share best practices for library instruction.

Share successful information literacy grant writing experiences.

Exchange library instruction statistics.

Exchange accreditation requirements for information literacy. Make sure each librarian understands any information literacy mandates set out by governing bodies.

**Results**
The response from the WPSLA email list was far greater than that from the WPWVC/ACRL email list, but only five pairs of librarians participated because of the low response rate from the academic librarians. In more than one instance the matching of two librarians did not work out. Distance and ability to devote time to such a relationship were the limiting factors. The longest distance traveled to visit another’s library was 35 miles.

A web survey was used to collect data on the librarians’ information literacy experiences and their participation in the pilot program. This data will be used to reshape a more permanent Sister Libraries program with well defined guidelines.

The pilot Sister Libraries Partnership Program was both successful and challenging for its participants and administrator. The program provided a reciprocal learning opportunity for the two librarians, and nearly all of the participants had rewarding interactions. Even though the group was very small and selection was not scientific, the open-ended survey questions provided some very useful feedback about the information literacy environments at various K-12 and college institutions in Western Pennsylvania as well as for setting some guidelines for a permanent Sister Libraries program.

**Conclusions**
How could a mutually beneficial relationship be formed between very different libraries? When related to academic librarians and school librarians the idea is: if we have a better handle on what each group is doing to help students attain solid information literacy skills, we can facilitate the transition from secondary school to college and create more information literate life-long learners. School and academic librarians could also save some effort by pooling resources on future information literacy initiatives. The pilot Sister Libraries Partnership Program was a first step toward these goals.

This program provided an opportunity for two diverse professionals to “talk shop” and learn from each other on an individual, personal level. Though some time has passed since the pilot program ended, the Carnegie Mellon University Libraries and the Information Literacy Fellow continue to believe in opening new lines of communication.
between libraries and plan to continue the Sister Libraries Partnership Program by seeking sponsorship from local academic and school library professional organizations.

Respectfully submitted,

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