Objective:

Increase the use of business partnerships within the US by examining libraries across the globe. These partnerships are in large national libraries as well as small rural libraries. The commonality between the two is increased business participation yields increased user library participation and lessens financial strain on libraries. The intersection of business services, especially city services with libraries is a new paradigm in the 21st century.

Executive Summary:

While business and city services partnerships exist within the US, they are not the norm within US libraries. By studying global libraries as models of business partnerships, there are key takeaways for US libraries. Libraries in Australia, Finland, and Moldova offer successful partnerships with city services and local businesses. Partnerships not only increase user satisfaction but also increase library revenues. Reexamining the American Library Association (ALA) partnership guidelines is a place to begin. Maintaining library integrity and neutrality is imperative; however, forming partnerships with current vendors can lead to increased library revenue to benefit library patrons.

Introduction:

Casey and Savastinuk (2007) paraphrased Business 2.0 magazine in the beginning chapter of Library 2.0. Business 2.0 according to Casey and Savastinuk (2007) is “about a growing marketplace that demands greater efficiency and value while operating in a world that is less affected by time and space…due to growing interconnectivity of the market itself” (pp. 2-3). They argue the underlying business 2.0 model is the core of the “participatory web” which they in turn apply to libraries (Casey and Savastinuk, 2007, p. 3). However, even Casey and Savastinuk (2007) in their description of the library lagging behind competing sources of “commercial and nonprofit services” (p. 4) fail to heed their own advice. Participatory, user driven services can step outside of the traditional librarian’s milieu. Examples from across the globe show an increased use of partnerships combining business stakeholders and public
libraries. No longer is the global public library competing with commercial services, they are holding their collective arms open for all users.

Librarians are innovators and are re-imagining what the library is and where it is going. If we think like a startup as Mathews advocates, should we begin with “breakthrough, paradigm shifting, transformative and disruptive ideas” (Mathews, 2012, para. 2). As we look how “libraries can support 21st century learners” (Mathews, 2012, para 3), should we also look how libraries are financially supported in the 21st century. By examining three global libraries whose sizes, financial balance sheets, and locations could not be more varied. Their experiences and patrons are more dissimilar than similar; however, they share a commonality of business partnerships with city services as well as with local businesses.

Australia - The National Library of Australia

Australia’s National Library Act of 1960 established the National Library of Australia (NLA) in Canberra and is the largest collection of Australia collections of the Australian nation and its people in the world (“Who we are,” n.d.). Similar in scope to the Library of Congress, the NLA is also a repository for non-Australian collections. A quick search of it’s website, however shows some not subtle differences between the NLA and the LC. When searching for partnerships, the first entry is “partnerships with the NLA” and the goal to “share in our missions to support learning, creative and intellectual endeavour” (“Partnerships”, n.d., para. 1). The NLA actively promotes itself to businesses - marketing what NLA can do, “With over 500,000 visitors walking
through our doors and over 34 million users visiting the Library’s website each year, there is the potential for you to reach an average 11,000 people who connect with us daily. With the voice and integrity of a nationally recognised institution, we can help you to grow your community presence at local, regional, national and international levels” (“Partnerships”, n.d., para. 2).

Performing a similar search on the Library of Congress’s website yields Kluge Center partnerships - educational fellowships such as the Fulbright or Mellon (Library of Congress, n.d.). There are no business partnerships here or if there are, they are not easily found. Mathews advocates in “Think Like a Startup”, librarians and information professionals should “get beyond what is familiar” (Mathews, 2012, para. 1). Considering advertising placement or business partnerships while not “familiar” to the LC seems to be working and bringing in much needed revenue to Australia’s NLA.

**Finland - Helsinki Central Library Oodi**

Opened five months ago on Finland’s Independence Day, the Helsinki Central Library Oodi (Oodi) is a tribute to the Finnish love of reading; libraries - the Finns borrow an average of 16 library items annually; and love of community (Cord, 2018, para. 2). The Oodi is both a “traditional’ library with reading areas as well as media, music, and maker spaces. (Cord, 2018, para. 3). Beyond maker spaces and media rooms, the Oodi also offers a connection to local Helsinki and beyond. The interactive library website gives the viewer a glimpse of what is in store for the Oodi visitor. Oodi partners with the city of Helsinki to offer patrons information on social and health services, housing, the environment, even bus schedules to name just a few (“Services and facilities”, n.d.). Need information on immigrating to Helsinki? Immigration information is available as well. Weinberger argues, “ The real business is the set of connections among people” and nowhere is that more evident than at Oodi (Levine, Locke, Searls, & Weinberger, 2009, para 28). Both the website and the library has a Helsinki centric section. The Oodi moves beyond the local to forge connections outside of Finland - connections that offer value to the library patron.
EU@Oodi

EU@Oodi is a neutral space where patrons can request a variety of information from the Finnish Parliament to the European Union. ("Services and facilities," n.d.). The Oodi places patrons at its center and places within the patrons’ reach, connection to the local community, the nation, and the European Union. These partnerships anticipate patrons need to connect with their environment. Here at Oodi, the librarians are experts at “pointing” patrons as Weinberger (Levine et al., 2009, para 76) states to, “other people and to useful current information.”

Moldova - Novateca Global Libraries

Moldova, a former Eastern bloc nation between Romania and the Ukraine with a recent 30-year history of independence from the former Soviet Union is one of the poorest nations in Europe
with low high school retention according to the *World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). Moldova in coordination with a seven-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation created a network of uniting Moldova’s 1,000 libraries (IREX, n.d.). The network entitled Novateca promotes a variety of library services including digital literacy and 21st century communication skills. Its success is due to community, business, and government partnerships. President of the Librarian Association of Moldova, Mariana Harjevschi states “by creating partnerships, we manage to diversify our library services and offer access to information...thus, our partners extend their activity nationwide” (IREX Moldova, 2017).

Moldova’s library partnerships bring businesses and the community together. Yes, the library provides Wi-Fi access in locations where access is difficult; but it also provides employment training and brings in businesses to work with patrons. Without such partnerships, the Moldovans would be limited in forming connections with their community, and libraries would be in danger of closing.

**Outcomes:**

Loertscher states, “thinking differently and creatively is never easy” (Loertscher, 2008, para. 12). Casey and Savastinuk’s Library 2.0 looks at space and at function - maybe it’s time we looked at library funding. Across the globe, nations from Moldova to Australia are transforming library funding with partnerships with the businesses in their communities. Bringing transformative change within the US begins with “structure following strategy” (Mathews, 2017, para ). So if our strategy it to increase library funding using partnerships, the strategy should begin with the American Library Association (ALA). Beginning with the ALA’s clear and decisive rules on partnerships within libraries, ALA partnerships must align with eight action areas (“Mission and Priorities,” n.d., para 1):

- Advocacy for libraries and the profession
- Diversity
- Education and lifelong learning
- Equitable access to information and library services
- Intellectual freedom
- Literacy
- Organizational excellence
- Transforming libraries

One or more of these action areas must be met in order for the ALA to move forward with a partnership. Additional requirements must also be met, including such requirements as being a “good corporate citizen” (“Partnership Opportunities”, n.d., para. 1). There is no definition provided for a “good corporate citizen.” Is a good corporate citizen a business that pays it taxes;
gives a certain percentage to charity or supports a certain candidate in an election? Juxtapose the ALA with Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) - both organizations share similar goals of advocacy, library transformation, and open access to content. Scanning the ALIA website shows an upcoming ALIA election, Australia’s National Library Week, national reading/literacy day, and an advertisement for Gale Analytics.

The Gale Analytics advertisement on the ALIA website financially benefits the ALIA’s mission while mutually beneficial for Gale (Australian Library and Information Association, n.d.). When Fons (2016) discussed sponsored links and “payment for placement” in Library Journal, he was discussing the library’s use of being a link but let’s re-imagine that. Let’s follow the ALIA’s lead and have vendors that the library uses pay for marketing. Let’s seek out businesses and arrange partnerships that are mutually beneficial for the library, its patrons, and community businesses.

**Conclusion:**

As budgets are tightened and as Casey (2007) noted, times of economic downturn can be difficult for public funded libraries. Casey (2007) discusses the importance of participation - notably community supporters’ participation and letting their voices be heard. He does not mention, partnerships and yet across the globe, libraries look to outside partnerships. Fairbairn (2012, para 3) notes, “public libraries do not have all the skills or financial resources needed to deliver community development services. Therefore, more libraries are entering into partnerships with other organizations.” These partnerships may be traditional such as linking a library’s city or town with city services, but they may also be more revenue driving. Though the Gates Foundation recently completed its study on development and global libraries, the foundation made some interesting assessments including, “pursuing partnerships outside the library field is essential to the future sustainability of public libraries to cement and promote their ongoing relevance and to secure a diverse funding base” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d., para.18). Mathews argues, “Perhaps our future isn’t centered on access to content, but rather the
usage of it. Maybe there is a greater emphasis on community building” (Mathews, 2012, para. 17). I would argue there is a greater emphasis on community building through business partnerships - something that our library colleagues from across the globe have already considered.
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