Library Connections

Brittany Jacks

ld2098xs@metrostate.edu

Anyone who has ever stepped into the Metropolitan State Library knows that it is a little different than most. It’s not that the space is large in size, or has a great aesthetic appeal, but a unique quality very few in the United States share. A concept that Metro had been arranging since they started planning their academic library. Metro would share a space with the Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL), creating a place where two libraries can coexist in one building – as a joint-use library.

These types of libraries are quite rare, and Metro State’s is the only combined public and college academic library in Minnesota. The Dean of Library and Information Services, Chris Schafer, explains the benefits the community and student life can gain from a type of library like ours, “I think it's important that students attending an urban institution gain insight of the diversity of people in that environment… to take advantage of the unique resources of both library types.” Schafer said. “Having community users also allows our students to reap the benefits of interacting and learning from those who live in the community,” she added. An opportunity our diverse students and vast community have right in their back yard.

Schafer describes the partnership with SPPL as a wonderful one. She loves working with the SPPL staff and the uniqueness of this arrangement was what attracted her to applying for the position she currently holds. Programming is done with the public library and their intent is to not only involve the community but also get Metro State students involved. Many activities are focused around families, young children and teens (but aren’t exclusive). These activities include movie nights, Star Wars Parties, and Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation exhibit. They also team up with East Side Freedom Library and hold events with them as well.

Being able to reach out to so many distinctive markets is one of the better characteristics of having a joint-use library. The two businesses working together is a really easy way for a community to come together and gain great experiences. Complications can arise when joining up, including confusion from what rules should be enforced, staffing, library hours, and policies. Concreting these ideas can be a conceptual pain and can also confuse their audience. Which is why we don’t see many joint-use libraries; they seem to do better riding solo. However, Metro State’s Library and SPPL don’t seem to have any issues.

This unique treasure is a perfect example of how two businesses can work together successfully. Not only are these two libraries thriving on their own, but together they create something unique. Together they can reach an audience the other might not have been able to do alone. So, if you haven’t experienced the SPPL side of the Metro Library go and experience the unique collaboration.