SLTA BRIEF TO THE HONOURABLE RON OSIKA
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR LIBRARIES

July 11, 2001

INTRODUCTION

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association (SLTA) is a voluntary association of library trustees from across the province who have joined together in their dedication to help provide library services that will meet the needs of Saskatchewan people and thereby improve their quality of life. SLTA was established in 1967, made its first annual brief to the Minister in 1968, and was incorporated under provincial law in 1969. A brief chronological account of public library development in Saskatchewan is attached as Appendix A.

SLTA represents 2,800 trustees representing libraries throughout Saskatchewan, in northern hamlets, rural communities, as well as towns and cities. All persons in Saskatchewan may access the information in these libraries, in whatever media they are provided, without a user fee. Resource-sharing and co-operation are the fundamental strengths of what is called Saskatchewan's "one province" library system – a system that is the envy of the country.

Municipal public libraries exist in Regina and Saskatoon. The seven regional library systems in southern Saskatchewan are Chinook, Lakeland, Palliser, Parkland, Southeast, Wapiti and Wheatland. The northern part of the province is served by the Pahksimon Nuye₂áh Library.

To date, funding for libraries is provided largely by the municipalities they serve. Provincial funding for libraries is based on the concept of resource-sharing. The advent of the information age and the crucial role libraries play, and the continuing need for libraries to find new ways of resource sharing, emphasize the need for funding for libraries from senior governments.

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY

The SLTA again wishes to compliment the work of the Provincial Library, and recognizes the province's support of the Provincial Library as an additional investment in Saskatchewan Libraries that provides key expertise, advice, support and co-ordination of many of the co-operative initiatives in which libraries are involved. In particular, the Provincial Library is critical to the success of the Multitype Library Board.

Less dramatic, but also of critical importance, is the support the Provincial Library provides to the SLTA, through the provision of office space for its records, meeting materials, and accommodations for meetings.

Provincial Library provides a valuable link in the chain of public libraries in Saskatchewan along with a number of highly effective services. The cataloguing and interlibrary loans departments are key to the operation of the public library system, especially at the regional level. Provincial Library's co-ordination of co-operative ventures to share the cost of on-line information sources, providing the public with a single access to all library services through an information gateway and co-ordination of the co-operative remote electronic reference services are examples of the contributions made to public libraries in Saskatchewan by Provincial Library.

While these large projects and many smaller ones have been made financially possible with funding from federal, provincial and local governments and library boards, the hard work of Provincial Library staff was needed to provide leadership and co-ordinate the effort. This work and dedication by Provincial Library staff is recognized and greatly appreciated by the library trustees of Saskatchewan.

CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARIES

While a great deal of extremely good work has been done, of course it must continue; not only to provide continuing support for necessary programs and services, but also to meet the new challenges that arise. Libraries face many important issues in the year ahead. The most significant of these is delivery of "E-Library" services.

E-Library

E-library services are the library resources and services that are provided electronically to patrons, frequently over the Internet. Resources provided in this manner include: access to library catalogues, magazine databases, web resources, and library materials in digital form such as e-books. Services that can be provided electronically include: e-mail, on-line reference, interlibrary loan requests, and circulation services that will include remote parton authentication. The critical elements of the provision of e-library services are hardware, software, telecommunications, technological support and staff training.

The E-Library is a tangible reality in Saskatchewan. Libraries were among the very first institutions to recognize and take advantage of the benefits of what in the 1970s and 1980s was called "automation". Automation started humbly with the simple conversion of library card-catalogues into electronic databases. Once that step was accomplished, many more amazing things became possible that simply could not be done without the computer. In the last decade, the explosion of the Internet has increased those amazing possibilities geometrically. This is particularly true in rural and remote libraries, which are now able to access reliable information electronically.

The Gateway, just launched this year, allows anyone in Saskatchewan to find any library resource anywhere in the province in a matter of moments, with one electronic search. Province-wide database

licences provide access to almost 2000 magazines and journals that would otherwise be unaffordable by any one library system. We have truly created a virtual one-province library system.

Community Net, linking communities all over Saskatchewan via the Internet, will provide an effective mechanism by which citizens of the province in smaller communities can receive e-library services directly in their communities. This initiative on the part of the federal and provincial governments deserves great applause. For libraries, the greatly increased line speeds will enhance their capacity as information providers and it will realize savings at the local level – an important benefit for rural and remote communities in the province that are struggling with declining tax bases and increasing costs.

The cost of the development and implementation of e-library services has been borne to this point, in the main, from local municipalities and internal savings. Public libraries are a critical institution in a democratic society, and their role is even more significant in the information age. This is especially true in a province like Saskatchewan, where climate and geography have always been the most important forces shaping our provincial character and also the most difficult barriers that we must struggle around in all our endeavours. E-library services are an effective means by which to overcome those barriers in the provision of library services, and to keep Saskatchewan as an integral and knowledgeable participant in the world economy.

Unfortunately, however, the costs of e-library service continue to rise. While the actual cost of hardware has plummeted over the three decades since libraries in Saskatchewan first embarked on the automation adventure, the growth in the technology that has accompanied that drop in cost means that computer hardware and software is a capital investment that must be made over and over again. The life of a computer system now is only three years – and that is an optimistic expectation. And the changing technology brings with it a continuing need for staff training and technological support.

At the same time, libraries have been cutting costs through the savings realized from automation and centralized e-library initiatives such as the Gateway and virtual reference services, and implementing efficiencies at every level of their operations. Public libraries are lean institutions. And municipal governments just don't have the depth or range of financial resources to draw on.

All of these factors lead to the conclusion that the provincial contribution to library resource sharing – the principled basis on which the province has provided funding to libraries in municipalities – must now take into account the key resource that libraries share, and that is the province wide network.

The various systems in the province wide public library network have estimated their investment in e-library services using the following factors:

>*hardware/software* - the number of computers to be replaced each year based on a three-year lifespan and an adequate number of computers for the population served

>*network infrastructure* - replacement cost over four years of web server, mail server, internal file server, firewall, uninterrupted power supply, domain name server, routers and hubs, CD tower, etc.

library software - maintenance agreements

electronic information - access to periodical and other information databases. Creation of library digital resources, such as databases for local community information, digitized local histories

e-library services - Gateway to all library catalogues, interlibrary loans through the Gateway, remote patron authentication, AskUs! Electronic reference service, universal library card, circulation services, etc.

staffing costs - trainer resource requirements, technical support resource requirements, travel costs, headquarters staff training, public education and training

telecommunications costs - without CommunityNet: headquarters, main branch/resource libraries, dial-up access, etc.; with CommunityNet: headquarters, main branch/resource libraries and approximately one-half of the branch libraries will be free, costs remain the same for the remaining 160 dial-up locations.

Using these factors, the public library systems estimate they will need to spend almost $5 million in support of e-library and e-library services.

Libraries understand that their funding is a co-operative effort and responsibility. Increased costs are met from internal efficiencies and savings, municipal grants and levies, provincial and federal governments.

Libraries require a provincial government commitment of at least $1 million in anticipation of future costs to enable all libraries in Saskatchewan to continue to share this most significant of resources, the province wide network. The library systems agree that such funds should be allocated to the regional, municipal, and northern funding pools, in approximate proportion to population, with special consideration being provide to the north.

CommunityNet

The SLTA supports the efforts of the province's Information Technology Office in the development of CommunityNet and looks forward to the participation of libraries in this important provincial initiative. The Government of Saskatchewan should be applauded for its efforts in making CommunityNet a reality. While CommunityNet will assist and enhance the provision of e-library services, the savings it generates will not generally be to the library systems; those savings will be realized at the local level, as local communities currently support the internet access costs of their local branch libraries. It should also be noted that high speed lines for 160 rural branch libraries would otherwise be totally unaffordable.

Capital Funding to Continue and Expand Service

While the provision of e-library services is certainly an important funding requirement for libraries in the 21st century, there is also an urgent need to preserve existing materials and information so that it remains in a useful state for sharing. Several public libraries and system headquarters are in a crisis caused by aging or structurally unsound buildings. In order to protect and maintain library collections to preserve this inheritance for future generations in Saskatchewan, these inadequate physical structures must be repaired or replaced. This will be an on-going need. It is a need that is expanding as libraries have automated to get connected. Computers become obsolete and unrepairable much more quickly than buildings and adds a substantial burden to the capital funding needs of all libraries.

SLTA acknowledges the existence of various infrastructure programs that have been designed to address these types of funding needs. However, as designed, these programs have been a problem for regional library headquarters, because these funds cannot appropriately be applied for from a single municipality. On the other hand, the kind of regional co-operation that municipalities display in the provision of library services should be encouraged and supported through the design of infrastructure programs that can provide funds accessible for these joint municipal purposes. The SLTA urges the Government to provide this type of incentive in its infrastructure programs.

At the same time, Saskatchewan Libraries are working togther to develop a province wide capital plan to identify and priorize these more traditional infrastructure needs and will present a comprehensive proposal for funding those needs to the government when the plan is complete.

Increased Pool of Library Funding

Changes in funding formulas phased-in respecting grants to regional libraries over the last three years have now resulted in some systems receiving a decrease in funding. For all of the reasons that have already been described, these decreases are devastating to the libraries in those systems. The funding pool must be increased to a level sufficient to restore the funding levels of these systems, while at the same time respecting the allocation of resources among the systems as recognized in the new grant structure.

Municipal Employee Pensions

The SLTA supports the concerns that library systems have raised about changes in the legislation relating to pension contributions for all municipal employees. The changes as originally provided for would have resulted in significant hardship to some regional libraries while not significantly affecting the pension benefits provided to the library employees. SLTA applauds the Minister and the Government for their efforts in endeavouring to resolve this issue to everyone's satisfaction and finding the difficult balance between avoiding the closure of small rural libraries and ensuring that all employees receive pension benefits.

However, libraries emphasize that they must be consulted in matters such as this that affect them directly and which can have a significant impact on them.

Minister's Advisory Committee on Library Services to Aboriginal Peoples

The SLTA supports the Minister's initiative in appointing an Advisory Committee to examine the issue of access to library services by Aboriginal peoples in the province. We know that all too often and for a variety of reasons, library services do not reach Aboriginal peoples, whether they reside in reserve communities or in urban areas. We look forward to the Committee's recommendations on this matter, which we are certain will provide a foundation for co-operative actions by libraries to reach a large and growing proportion of Saskatchewan's population.

CONCLUSION

Progress for libraries has been possible because of the vision, support and encouragement of the Provincial Library, the Minister and the Department. The Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association requests the Minister's continuing and renewed support in including funds in future annual budgets to support:

- province wide sharing of the provincial network that makes e-library and e-library services possible

- increases to the library funding pool

- the library community's capital funding requirements for buildings when the plan is completed

- on-going funding for municipal employee pension increases, and

- the public library's presence in the development of Community Net.

The Library Trustees of Saskatchewan are committed to maintaining and enhancing the one-province library system of which Saskatchewan is so justifiably proud, and look forward to the Minister's support of a venture that is truly the backbone of the Saskatchewan community.

Appendix A

History of Public Library Development in Saskatchewan

Historical Development

Saskatchewan, over the years, has developed a province-wide system of public libraries for the benefit of all its citizens. Today the provincial public library system consists of seven regions, two municipal libraries in Saskatoon and Regina, a northern system and the Saskatchewan Provincial Library.

Following is a chronology of developments.

Chronology of Library Development

1900   Mechanics and Literary Institute Ordinance Territorial (Legislative) Library established.

1906   *The Public Libraries Act*.

1909   Regina Public Library established.

1912   At the request of the Women Grain Growers, the Open Shelf Service was initiated to provide books of literary and educational value and was the responsibility of the Legislative Library.

1913   Saskatoon Public Library established.

1914   A system of travelling libraries was developed in Saskatchewan. These travelling libraries consisted of large wooden boxes of 60 to 80 books that were loaned to a group or a community for a period of one year. In the beginning, books from the Legislative Library were used, but as the demand for materials increased, a separate collection was established.

1922-
1944   The travelling libraries were placed under the supervision of the Bureau of Publications. The Open Shelf mailed materials upon request to individual borrowers and placed an emphasis on providing reference materials.

1945   The Open Shelf Service was reorganized and became the Public Information Library.

1946   As a result of the recommendations of the Saskatchewan Library Advisory Council, *The Regional Libraries Act* was enacted to provide for the appointment of a Supervisor of Regional Libraries with responsibility for promoting the development of such libraries. By this time, it was recognized that libraries in rural Saskatchewan could not exist except in larger units of service or regions.

1950   The first regional library, North Central Saskatchewan Regional Library, was formed. (This region is now the Wapiti Regional Library)

1951   A Provincial Librarian (Mary Donaldson) was appointed.

1953   The Provincial Library was officially created with responsibility for library extension work in the province. There were 851 travelling libraries in Saskatchewan, containing slightly more then 38,000 books.

1958   Centralized cataloguing service was added to the Provincial Library's responsibilities. This involved cataloguing all books acquired by municipal and regional libraries, and allowed the creation of a union catalogue of books which facilitated resource sharing and interlibrary loan.

        The Saskatchewan Library Advisory Council was formally established in legislation. The first members, some of whom served on the Council previously, included: Dr. Carlyle King (Chairman), Gustave Baudais, Mrs. J.B. Harrington, Mrs. Kathleen McDonald, Mrs. Henry Nelson, Wilson Parker, and Dr. J.W. Tait.

1965   Southeast Regional Library was formed.

        The Library Inquiry Committee was appointed by the government to study development of library service in the province. Included in the Report were recommendations that the Provincial Library act as a clearing house for interlibrary loan and provide in-depth information services. Committee members were: Judge John H. Maher (Chairperson), Dr. W.A. Riddell, and Rusty H. Macdonald.

1967-
1973   The remaining five regional libraries were formed. Zealous promotion and concerted activity on the part of the Provincial Library, as well as devoted work on the part of local volunteers, had established an effective co-operative network of libraries. Two regions, Wheatland and Parkland, were formed in 1967, while Chinook, Lakeland and Palliser were formed in 1971, 1972 and 1973 respectively.

1968-

1981   In 1969, the Library Development Board replaced the Library Advisory Council. The new members of the Development Board were: Rusty H. Macdonald, Mrs. E. N. Davis, Miss Marion Graham, Wilfred L. Harvey, Willard Kallio, James S. Porter, Mrs. P.J. Sherman, and Mrs. A.B. Van Cleave.

The Public Information Library Division was changed to Readers' Services Division and greater emphasis was placed on reference services. Fewer than 5,000 reference requests were answered in 1968; 21,000 were answered in 1981. Automated information retrieval expanded the capability of providing specialized research information.

The collection of books in the resource collection expanded from about 100,000 volumes in 1968 to 180,000 in 1981, while circulation increased from 189,000 to 344,000.

1968-
1981   Bibliographic Services Division was formed in 1969 to provide expanded interlibrary loan service. Five thousand interlibrary loan requests were received in 1968; 10,600 in 1969; and 87,000 in 1981. Services Division handled 17,000 requests for cataloguing in 1961; 86,000 in 1979; and 46,000 in 1981. The cataloguing system was automated and partially decentralized in 1980.

1981   The Bureau of Management Improvement evaluated the automated cataloguing project and the organizational structure of the Provincial Library. Several of the recommendations were implemented in June, 1981.

1981   The Committee to Review Library Legislation was appointed by the Minister-in-Charge of Libraries in April, 1981. The committee held public hearings throughout the summer of 1981. Members of the Committee included: Merry Harbottle (Chairperson), Allan Quigley (Vice-Chairperson), George Bothwell, Vic W. Hay, Rowena Lunn, Rusty H. Macdonald, Charles Phelps, and Marion Sherman.

1982   A new funding formula was introduced in the spring of 1982.

The Development Branch was disbanded in July, 1982.

Provincial Library policies were formulated, discussed widely with interest groups, and implemented. These clarified the services of the Library, and, in effect, decanted some services to the local level.

Reference and Research Services Division replaced Readers' Services Division.

1983   A Design Team prepared a Discussion Paper on Library Legislation. Feedback and responses were presented to the Minister in June, 1983.

A Joint Venture Agreement between Regina Public Library, Saskatoon Public Library and Provincial Library was signed in February, 1983, to convert the pre-1980 holdings of the three libraries to the automated database.

A Request for Proposal to research a provincial automated database was approved by the Minister and Treasury Board in February, 1983. An Automation Task Force was established in March, and a consultant with widely recognized expertise was contracted to assist with the analysis.

1984   *The Public Libraries Act, 1984*, a new Act, was passed by the Legislative Assembly.

The Provincial Library was renamed the Saskatchewan Library and the Library Development Board was renamed the Saskatchewan Library Board. The new Act updated the mandate of the Saskatchewan Library by strengthening its research, coordination and leadership role. The role of the Minister's Advisory Board was strengthened and expanded. The autonomy and development of the regional libraries was given greater recognition. Members of the reconstituted board included: Nick Gabruch (Chairperson), Leola Moore, Vi Spencer, George Hyde, Isabelle Butters, Peter Foga, Don Burton, Beverly Tansley, Edith Kerr, Val Kononoff, George Cook, Claude Cauthier, George Bothwell, and Rolland Pinsonneault.

1987   The Saskatchewan Library became a part of Saskatchewan Education in a reorganization of provincial government departments and agencies. Saskatchewan Library took on the new name of Saskatchewan Provincial Library.

1988   The Northern Library Services Section of Provincial Library moved to La Ronge in preparation for a new northern library system governed by an autonomous board and responsible for co-ordinating library services in the north.

1989   Provincial Library automated with the installation of the Dynix Library System. Provincial Library Collection Policy released.

1990   Legislation to enable the formulation of the northern library system was passed in August; first northern board meeting was held in December.

1991   Provincial Library became part of the newly formed Saskatchewan Community Services and subsequently changed to Saskatchewan Municipal Government.

1992   SLA and SLTA published "Independent But Together", recommending a multitype advisory committee as part of a modern conceptual framework for developing library co-operatives.

The Northern library office received the official name of Pahkisimon Nuye-áh Library System.

1994   The Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee was appointed by the Honourable Carol Carson, Minister of Municipal Government.

1995   The Saskatchewan online union catalogue at Provincial Library was made accessible through the Province-wide Library Electronic Information System (PLEIS).

1996   *The Public Libraries Act, 1996* and *The Libraries Co-operation Act* passed.

The Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee published its report: *Think Globally...Search Locally: A strategic Plan for the Implementation of a Multitype Library System in Saskatchewan.*

Review of regional library funding and services in Saskatchewan.

1998-
1999   "Every Library Connected Project" with funds from the Provincial and Federal Government.

1998-
2000   Appointment of first Multitype Library Board for the Province. Chaired by Merrilee Rasmussen, Q.C. representing SLTA; other members are: Colleen Warren and Darlene Fichter representing academic libraries, Jeffrey Barber representing SLA, Michael Keaschuk representing public libraries, Valerie Laliberte representing northern Saskatchewan, Helene Stewart and Beverley Scarrow representing special libraries and Ernie Pappas and Janet Merkowsky representing school libraries.

2001   The Library Gateway is launched, which permits an electronic search of all library catalogues in the province at one time.

AskUs!, a province wide electronic reference service, moves from pilot project to on-going service.

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