

**SLTA BRIEF TO THE HONOURABLE KEN KRAWETZ
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

November 2008

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 2,500 trustees, themselves representing libraries throughout Saskatchewan, in northern hamlets, rural communities, as well as in 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 Pahkisiimon Nuyeyáh Library.

To date, funding for libraries has been a partnership between the province and municipalities. Over the last two decades the province's share has been declining. Provincial funding for libraries is based on the concept of resource-sharing. The advent of the information age and the crucial role libraries play in a democratic society, 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 Provincial Library is a vital component in the one-province library system. The SLTA 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. The SLTA recognizes, in particular, the contribution of the Provincial Library to the success of the Multitype Library Board, which has assisted all Saskatchewan libraries, not just public libraries, to share resources and expertise.

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, co-ordinate effort, and lever federal and other funding. Because of the critical role that Provincial Library plays in Saskatchewan's one-province public library system, it is important to appreciate that any improvements or enhancements in funding to the library systems cannot occur at the expense of Provincial Library.

Single Integrated Library System

The Single Integrated Library System is a cost effective solution to the problems libraries across the province are facing due to outdated and unsupported software. Through SILS, every library system in Saskatchewan will be completely integrated into a single resource sharing system. With one easily searchable catalogue to search for materials in all library systems at once and one patron database, forming the foundation for a universal library card. SILS will enhance and improve public access to library resources. It will greatly simplify administration and allow library staff to focus on delivering greater services to the public.

The SLTA applauds the Government of Saskatchewan on providing \$5.2 million in funding for SILS. The funding announced during Saskatchewan Library Week will go a long way towards implementing SILS. The SLTA looks forward to the province's continued support on this important and constructive project.

Capital Funding

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 this adds a substantial burden to the capital

funding needs of all libraries. **The SLTA applauds the Government on announcing \$1.3 million in funding to update computers in branch libraries so that they are able to participate in SILS.**

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 library. Services should be encouraged and supported through the design of infrastructure programs that can provide funds accessible for these municipal purposes. The SLTA urges the Government to provide this type of incentive in its infrastructure programs.

Human Resources, Recruitment, and Retention in the Public Library

Libraries are facing a large real and potential loss of staff over the next several years. It is already difficult to recruit persons to work in the rural and remote areas of Saskatchewan. This difficulty is already increasing. It is made more challenging by the fact that there is a lack of qualified persons across the country, not just in Saskatchewan. All libraries are competing for an ever-decreasing pool of qualified persons.

Trustees recognize and applaud the significant contribution made to the growth and development of public library service in Saskatchewan by library workers. Trustees are aware that library workers are paid significantly less than the wages paid to workers performing other similar jobs. In many areas of the province, new jobs in the booming oil industry are taking away some of the lower paid library employees. The province-wide network of library resource-sharing requires a greater investment from the province and from municipalities, and this is particularly necessary in relation to the improvement of wages and benefits to library workers.

Libraries have had to absorb the increased costs in books and other materials, increased wages, increases to minimum wages, and the application of the municipal employees pension legislation to an increased number of library workers. Libraries do not object to these improvements for library workers, but all of these increased benefits have been provided almost entirely from increases in local municipal grants.

There is a continuing pressure to increase the level of pay and benefits for library workers, and the SLTA supports these improvements. Libraries are constantly under pressure to continue to cut expenses, if necessary through the elimination of key programs in support of literacy, such as summer reading programs, or reducing branch opening hours even further. Provincial funding for libraries is a small investment in dollars that yields phenomenal returns, both financially and in the quality of life that people enjoy in Saskatchewan. As well as filling the role of community centre, libraries are a key support to people in an ever more complex world. The funding pool for libraries must be increased to a level sufficient to enable public libraries to continue to be the lifeblood of their communities.

CommunityNet

The SLTA supports the efforts of the Ministry of Education in the development of CommunityNet and is proud of the participation of libraries in this important provincial initiative. CommunityNet provides a significant infrastructure to provide patrons with greater access to resources and provides the backbone for SILS.

We applaud the Government for the recently announced funding to update existing CommunityNet connections and to connect all public libraries across the province of Saskatchewan.

Library Book Rate

The Library Book Rate, introduced in 1939, is essentially a subsidy from the Government of Canada, through the Department of Canadian Heritage, to Canada Post. This program allows Canada Post to provide a lower rate for the delivery of books by libraries to rural and remote areas via the mail. The agreement between Canada Post and the Department of Canadian Heritage expired on March 31, 2006. While the program has been extended until at least January 2009, there is as yet no renewed agreement between Canada Post and the Department of Canadian Heritage. Without this valuable program libraries would be unable to deliver books by mail thereby seriously undermining resource sharing, one of the fundamental components of the public library system in Saskatchewan. Although this issue is not one controlled by the province, libraries look forward to the support of the province in dealing with the federal government on this important issue.

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:

- ◆ the library community's capital funding requirements for buildings
- ◆ recruitment and retention of library workers

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 than 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, 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 Library Automation Review Committee was appointed by the Provincial Government to review the options for library automation and make recommendations to guide the automating of libraries across the province laying the foundation for the Single Integrated Library System.
- 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.

The Library Development Board was disbanded in the belief that library “development” was now complete.

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

The Provincial Library was renamed the Saskatchewan Library and a new provincial board constituted, called 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 Saskatchewan Library 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 Gauthier, 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 Nuyeyáh 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.

2002 CommunityNet is launched to bring high-speed internet access to 162 rural and remote library locations.

2003 By December, 2003, the cooperative pooling of funds by libraries known as the Multitype Database Licensing Program brought 6,500 online magazines and newspapers to all Saskatchewan residents. Public usage increased a whopping 46 percent in 2003!

2004 The Multitype Library Board held Digitization Forums in Regina and Saskatoon to bring together libraries, archives, museums and other community organizations to create a province-wide strategy for digitization.