



**SASKATCHEWAN  
LIBRARY  
TRUSTEES'  
ASSOCIATION**

**BRIEF  
TO  
HONOURABLE RUSS MARCHUK  
2012**

**LIBRARIES DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association (SLTA) is a voluntary association of public library trustees. The SLTA advocates for the Saskatchewan library community. Libraries have a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship with the government. We hope to continue to solidify this relationship in the months and years to come.

SLTA represents 300 public libraries, more than 2,500 trustees, and thousands of volunteers throughout Saskatchewan. All Saskatchewan residents have access to all services from public libraries without a user fee. Resource-sharing and cooperation are the fundamental strengths of Saskatchewan's province-wide library system. This library system is the envy of other library systems across Canada.

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association thanks the Minister and his government for the support received last year. The opportunity to share and consult with the Minister on a yearly basis is very much appreciated. This communication greatly enhances the library system in Saskatchewan.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **NEED FOR LIBRARIES**

From the dawn of history libraries have been the hallmark of an enlightened and prosperous society. When the great library of Alexandria was destroyed the prosperity and the society were also destroyed. Chaos and poverty followed.

We are in the age of innovation. Libraries are an essential service. In an ever more competitive and constantly changing world those who have access to information, knowledge, and the other components of innovation will prosper.

There are many innovators in Saskatchewan waiting to be discovered. Our libraries can inspire our people to be the innovators of tomorrow.

Libraries throughout history have gone through a metamorphosis. They have changed and will continue to change. They are always in the vanguard of information and knowledge, and a source of hope for every citizen. Our Saskatchewan libraries have the potential for advancement. They require the resources to allow them to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and carry our people forward.

### **VALUE OF LIBRARIES**

The primary value of libraries in Saskatchewan is they cover the whole province. Even in the farthest corner, or smallest community, it is now possible to connect every citizen, not only with each other, but with the whole world.

Couple this resource with the power of the library to inspire, to motivate, and to ignite the imagination of those from the very young to the elderly and you create a dynamic engine of creativity in Saskatchewan.

Libraries have the potential to bring Saskatchewan's population to the well of technology. They serve the function of a community center, early learning center, English as an additional language center, literacy center, and provide many more services.

Libraries are working closely with our schools throughout Saskatchewan. Our libraries complement and support literacy and early learning initiatives. The SLTA has as its goal literacy for all Saskatchewan children. First Nation children have been targeted by the SLTA as a priority for literacy programs. Having trained staff in libraries throughout the day is a great resource for Saskatchewan educators.

The SLTA has instant access to thousands of bright, well educated, devoted, energetic volunteers and trained staff. Using the SLTA website ([www.slta.ca](http://www.slta.ca)) and social media, libraries are now communicating and sharing ideas, materials, and resources in real time.

People are the prime resource of Saskatchewan, and our libraries are their base resource. This combination if properly funded, supplied, and nurtured has the potential to produce an economic engine of momentous potential.

#### **ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LIBRARIES**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century library is a combination of the old coupled with the new power of technology. The new library combines the power of information and communication with the assistance of staff that can teach and mentor patrons.

The task may be filling out a tax return, applying for a job or a scholarship, or any of the tasks our patrons find confusing or impossible, our trained staff allow them to become an independent member of the new and progressive Saskatchewan. We have included an addendum to this brief highlighting examples of the value of libraries for citizens in Saskatchewan.

We cannot assume that even half of our population has the literacy and technical prowess to compete in the new world of electronic knowledge and communication. We can bring people from every corner of the globe, but that does not mean they are prepared to be productive and an asset in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment.

New people to our Province are constantly in our libraries getting help from staff so that they can move on and achieve independence.

Our libraries are an essential resource - willing, ready and available to our government to achieve the goal of advancing every corner of this great Province. The good news is this can all be achieved with a very small increase in the investment to bring our libraries to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards.

#### **PROPOSAL**

We ask our government to make a paradigm shift and consider libraries not as a line item expense but as an investment - an investment that will pay dividends by helping our people throughout Saskatchewan to lead a more productive and independent life.

The vital components of literacy and ability to use technology are essential if Saskatchewan people hope to catch up and surpass the rest of the world.

The aim of SLTA members is to move our libraries to the 21<sup>st</sup> century level as quickly as is possible.

## **REQUEST**

**The SLTA respectfully requests that in this budget year our Government allocate a substantive increase in funding which will be applied to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century library services in every corner of Saskatchewan. Further, we suggest this be called the Premier's Saskatchewan Plan for Growth Library Innovation Grant.**

## **WITH GRATITUDE**

The SLTA, its members, volunteers and supporters throughout Saskatchewan thank the Minister for his time, attention, and his support.

We are always available to discuss how we may assist the Minister in reaching his goals and objectives.

In advance, we congratulate him for his efforts to move Saskatchewan libraries into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Appendix A

### Saskatchewan Library Success Stories

There is a woman here who is taking courses through SIAST. She has two young children and her husband was recently laid off. Further education will help her find employment. Instead of having the expense of traveling to Regina for her exams, she is able to write them there (online) with me supervising. I think this is an important service for rural patrons.

Randi  
Avonlea Library

Last spring, a mother came to the library and thanked me for helping her daughter to read better. I did not know her daughter was having difficulty with reading and that her parents were taking her once a week to Regina for tutoring. By hanging out at the library and giving me a hand with the younger kids by reading stories to them and helping with crafts, her interest in books grew and her reading skills vastly improved.

Randi  
Avonlea Library

I know our Moms and Tots Coffee Break has been a stepping stone for many new moms in our community. Our past Board member, Jodie Molsberry was a perfect example of that, and would always give credit to the library for providing her and her children a place to meet people and make friends.

Giselle  
Coronach Library

Swift Current Branch did a program recently funded by a Community Connections grant. The program, called Cooking Cultures, involved immigrants from several countries preparing favorite foods from their home countries, and sharing both the food and stories telling why they food was special in their home communities with long-established Swift Current residents. The two groups worked together on producing a cookbook featuring all the recipes and stories. In the course of the project many new friendships were formed and both groups gained a greater understanding of the each other's cultures and customs - both similarities and differences. The project has given new immigrants valuable contacts in the community, new friends, and more of a sense of being at home in the community.

Staff  
Swift Current Library

“I do not believe the level of service I receive. I order in all kinds of materials. They arrive promptly and my local librarian [Judy] really understands my needs as a reader. Living in this remote area, the library is literally a lifeline for me. It is an extraordinary system...I don't pay a thing for this service and I borrow a lot of books. I gladly pay my fines (and tax dollars) as this service is just so incredibly good. I feel like I am getting away with something – I just find it hard to believe that I can order in books like I do and no one blinks an eye. They just provide me with service.”

Patron  
Val Marie Library

“I got a job, I'm finally somebody!”

RPL Adult Learner

“I tutor because every time I go home from tutoring I feel so good and so fulfilled.”

RPL Volunteer Tutor

“It is so much fun to see my Learner's eyes light up when she “gets it”!”

RPL Volunteer Tutor

“Literacy is a required skill that you need to function every day. It's like breathing.”

RPL Adult Learner

“Tutoring has given me a sense of purpose.”

Kevin  
RPL Volunteer Tutor

“This program extends my sight.”

RPL ESL Learner in a Family Literacy Program

“I met a lot of friends over there, not matter what color and what countries we were, we're sharing and discussing different stories with each other.”

RPL Adult Learner

“If you imagine how life is hard and difficult without being able to communicate. The program’s very helpful for me because I learn how to speak English and how to understand the language from the Canadian mouth. Even I learn a lot of things about how to take care of my two babies, what kind of food is helpful for them, how to do shopping from Canadian very very big stores, how to choose clothes, how to read tags on clothes, lots and lots of things I would never be able to learn alone.”

RPL ESL Adult Learner

Books were always part of my life. When I was small my father brought home books for me and we would share them during the evening.

We had our favourite stories, which he read to me, some of them over and over. He was also a gifted storyteller.

I loved the time with my father and those times remain some of my most cherished memories. He nurtured my love of books.

I don’t remember know much about the library until I got to Grade 7 and the Ottawa Public Library Bookmobile began coming to the school.

It was really the first time I had the opportunity to go into a place with so many books and choose for myself from so many.

I would take home books and my Dad and I would explore. But, I didn’t read myself.

I don’t remember being disturbed about not being able to read.

But the summer I was 14, I discovered the Main Branch of the Public Library. It was a wonderful old building with creaky floors and it was just packed full of books.

I started to take out books on my own and I read all summer long. I read biographies of people I was interested in and travel books of places I thought might be interesting.

My academics the next year excelled and I was top of my class. I didn’t understand it because the message that I couldn’t read was clear to me.

It is not too many years ago, I would still tell you I couldn’t read.

The first thing I always did when I moved to a new place was get a library card at the local public library. Since I moved west, I have always lived close to a public library.

The Saskatchewan Public Library system impressed me from the beginning. I moved to a small hamlet and the Bookmobile came to town every two or three weeks. I read and read the first while I lived there.

Later, when I travelled around the province for different reasons I learned I could take books out of any library and return them at another branch. It’s the only province I’ve experienced that kind of commitment to public libraries.

I didn't really write much until I got connected to a wonderful program through the Public Library a few years ago – a Writer in Residence program. Someone encouraged me to inquire about it and I ended up participating in a short program, which led me to participation in a writer's group.

I spend a couple of days at the Northern Library Conference last week and this week is Library Week.

I found my early passion for the library engaged and I found myself remembering my earlier experiences with the Public Library and the importance it played in my life.

I also appreciate the opportunities people who work in the library system in our area offer.

We have our beautiful new library in La Ronge and we have so many people who dedicate so much time and energy to ensuring people across the north have access to the most up-to-date Public Library services.

Valerie G. Barnes-Connell  
"Celebrating the Public Library"  
The Northerner  
La Ronge, Saskatchewan  
October 18, 2012

Rosetown has three Hutterite Colonies that use our services. During the last year we have made an exceptional effort with these patrons to welcome them to our library and assist them with their needs. This fall we felt it was time to recognize the ladies in particular. The question was how to incorporate the use of the library with this recognition and Saskatchewan Libraries Week gave us the timing and opportunity to do this. We spoke to a few of the ladies asking if they would be able to come in for an event and the answer was yes. Through our prior experience and knowledgeable of the materials that they like we brought in a large number of Christian Fiction books and created a Patron Appreciation Day around them. We made a personalized invitation that we delivered to each colony to be displayed in the kitchen as all members of the colony pass through this area. For the day we rearranged an area in the library to display the books with chairs and tables where the ladies could sit to look through their books, visit with friends from the other colonies and enjoy the punch and dainties. The dainties were store bought as we understood that they would be a real treat for them which it seemed to be. We also had 12 door prizes that were drawn for during the afternoon which really made the day for the ladies. All three colonies were represented by the 30 ladies in attendance and they borrowed over 200 books that afternoon. We had phone calls from some of the ladies that were unable to attend saying that they were sorry that they had to miss the day. We have been asked if the books could remain with us for a time so that they could come in again to browse and borrow, which has already happened. We are very pleased that the event was so well accepted and the smiles and hugs that we received made our day.

Rosetown Branch

I always take the time to "chat" with the kids that come into the library and so I am somewhat of a celebrity in town with them when I am out and about. It is very uplifting to have a little one so excited to see you in the grocery store or at the post office. It really hit home recently at church, though. One of

the 4 year olds that comes to the library often with his mom and now every other week with his preschool teacher as well, helped his grandma collect “change for change” at the end of the service one Sunday. When they came to the back (We tend to sit in the back for a quick getaway!) with the basket, he was so excited to see me there. As loud as he could, he yelled, “She’s here! The library lady is here! There, Grandma! There she is! The library lady!” It was great fun to have him be so excited to see the “lady from the library”! It feels good.

Vera  
Eston library

Dear Judy,

Many thanks for the great work you do at Mildew Wheatland Library! You are always so helpful in choosing books that match us. Also we enjoy the movies you order in on request. We really appreciate the up to date variety of materials you offer. Have a great winter and we look forward to seeing you in the spring.

Olive and Rod