



**Manitoba Library Trustees Association**

**Association des Commissaires de  
Bibliothèques du Manitoba**

Presentation to the

Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel on  
The Status and Future of Canada's  
Libraries and Archives

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## **Who We Are**

The Manitoba Library Trustees Association (MLTA) seeks to serve the needs of its membership – the trustees appointed to local public library boards throughout the province. Though we are a small organization, typically with about eight members on the MLTA Board of Directors, we aim for representation from the different regions of our province.

### **Mission**

As a voice for Manitoba library Trustees, the Manitoba Library Trustees Association represents the interests of patrons and supporters of public libraries. MLTA promotes and fosters the effectiveness of public library boards. This is done by leadership in communications, advocacy and support of Trustee education. We actively work towards the advancement of public library service throughout the Province.

### **Framework**

MLTA seeks to serve the needs of its membership. Trustees are appointed at the local level to represent the people and speak with the voice of all Manitobans. This unique provincial non-profit volunteer organization is operated by an annually elected Board of Directors. MLTA is committed to the future of Manitoba through effective library policy development.

### **Objectives**

- To promote and foster the development of libraries in Manitoba.
- To foster changes in government policies to libraries in Manitoba.
- To promote library awareness in Manitoba.
- To provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas, experience and challenges amongst library trustees and interested groups in Manitoba.
- To provide for the exchange of ideas and experiences amongst members and interested groups through conferences and library publications.
- To develop channels of communication with other provincial, national and international Library Associations in order to share information and ideas.

## **What We Do to Fulfill our Mission and Objectives**

### **Advocacy**

MLTA makes representation to governments on the key issues affecting the library and information community. MLTA monitors and takes positions on issues such as funding for libraries, the Library Book Rate, and accessibility. As well, we provide resources to assist members' own advocacy efforts

Examples of our advocacy efforts within the past year:

- Continued to support the efforts of MP Merv Tweed (Brandon-Souris) and monitor the progress of Bill C-321 (**Library Book Rate**) and were pleased to note that as of June 2013 it is now law.
- **Equitable library service for Canadians with print disabilities** - We better acquainted ourselves with what is happening nationally and internationally with respect to these rights and placed the info on our website. As well, we wrote letters related to the Diplomatic Conference to conclude a treaty to facilitate access to published works by visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities, June 2013, in Morocco. We indicated that MLTA “believes strongly that the WIPO Copyright Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities must ensure that authorized agencies and perceptually challenged individuals in Canada have the right to create alternate format materials which serve the needs of the perceptually challenged, the means to exercise this right, and the ability to share those materials at both the national and international level.”
- In July 2013 we sent a letter to the Privy Council and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages endorsing the qualifications for the **Librarian and Archivist of Canada**.

### Communication

The MLTA website, quarterly newsletter and occasional email correspondence are the vehicles we use to keep members aware of current issues and events. To better communicate with our members and educate the library community as a whole, we launched our website in November 2012. [www.mlta.ca](http://www.mlta.ca)

The primary areas of focus for our site are:

- About MLTA – information about our organization and its operation
- News – current local, provincial and national issues and events relevant to public library trustees
- Trustee Learning - information to help library Boards and Trustees become more knowledgeable in understanding what their role is, and more competent, confident and effective in exercising their responsibilities.
- Trustee Voice – how to advocate for libraries
- Links – other provincial and national library and trustee associations, provincial regulations and resources.
- English and French versions

### Trustee Education

MLTA has put together a Trustee Handbook and compiled links to resources across Canada for library Board and Trustee development. Our website is the primary way that we provide this information. We are more than willing to attend Library Board meetings to meet and/or work with individual Boards, at their request, in specific areas. In May 2012 we sponsored the “Board Effectiveness” session at the Manitoba Libraries Conference. We will continue to sponsor a session related to Trustee Development at future library conferences in Manitoba.

## **The Future of MLTA**

Our biggest challenge has been a decline in the number of trustees willing to hold office on the MLTA Board of Directors. Other library associations in Manitoba are also experiencing this. While our work this year has been rewarding, it has been very difficult since our Board currently has only six members, with further vacancies expected. Our aim is to have a larger number of Directors, with representation from across the province. We have recently extended a request to each library board to select a member of their board to join us on the MLTA Board of Directors. This was the practice years ago, resulting in ten to twelve directors on the MLTA Board. We will see what happens at our Annual General Meeting on November 26, 2013. Should the number of trustees elected to the 2014 Board of Directors continue to be low, a very frank discussion will have to take place during the coming year on the validity and further existence of the Manitoba Library Trustees Association.

The Manitoba Libraries Working Group has been struck to study the reformation of the various library associations in Manitoba into one Manitoba Library Association, likely based on a confederation model with affiliate associations and divisions. The question will be – should MLTA continue being a separate organization or become a division within the new association. As the only employer group, how can the interests of library Trustees best be met?

## **Issues, Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Public Libraries**

Manitoba provincial goals for library service

- Increase local use
- Innovative Technologies
- Responsive/varied collections
- Accessibility

### **1. Innovative Technologies/Rapid Technological Change**

Trends in publishing, technology and telecommunications are influencing the directions we must engage locally, provincially and nationally to provide responsive public service. Technology, wireless devices and mobile usage are growing. The world is digital and mobile. Tech-savvy kids and teens; not so tech-savvy adults (including some staff) trying to acquire skills.

There is increasing use of (downloading) eBooks through Manitoba Libraries. Digital books won't be going away; more people are getting e-readers. Manitoba Public Library Services (PLS) is developing additional ways of accessing electronic materials/resources. (E.g. Overdrive) Access to electronic content is also important for reaching out to remote areas/users and those with print disabilities.

With the objective of seeding library establishment interest and regional library agreements, Manitoba PLS has recently reformatted its “Open Shelf” service, transitioning from a books-by-mail delivery model to individuals, toward championing service to entire communities, specifically targeting remote and northern locations. It is anticipated that this new focus of PLS “Open Shelf” service will result in greater system and community level cooperation and will achieve improved access to public library services for those residing in neighbouring areas beyond the existing service boundaries as well as reach remote users across the province. At the rural library branch level, it is anticipated that some of the former individual users of “Open Shelf” will become members, and for ease of access, may focus their borrowing to e-reader materials.

**What are we going to be doing in our public libraries when our traditional core service is largely being done on-line?** We need to **adapt**. ALL public libraries will need to prove to the public that they are not static institutions stuck in the glorious past. They need to be seen as embracing technology and not afraid of it. Get the staff on-board and trained. Teach patrons how to use their devices (e.g. downloading eBooks, provide on-line research tools, apps, language lessons) to access the information that used to be found on library book shelves. It’s a time of service and use analysis, evaluation and change. (E.g. single service point, roving reference, mobile library, tech devices petting zoo, user friendly attractive websites, better marketing)

## **2. Financial Sustainability**

Public libraries and the communities they serve will need to **transform** to become sustainable. Complex pressures impact the capacity and service provision of small municipal and library systems.

In Manitoba:

116 rural municipalities plus 80 cities, towns, villages and local government districts

102 public libraries outside the city of Winnipeg, 21 within Winnipeg

13 English-French bilingual public libraries

59 different public library systems

49 rural municipalities are currently NOT providing library service. Some subsidize non-resident user fees.

The province wants all municipalities of a population of less than 1000 to amalgamate with a nearby area by the 2014 fall municipal elections. This expected amalgamation of small RMs will affect library boards.

### **Regional library systems**

Parkland Regional Library system, based out of Dauphin, began in 1970 as a three year (extended to five years) experimental project in regional library service funded through the Provincial Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the study was to test and evaluate ways and means to make a library service efficiently and effectively available to rural Manitobans. Official formation of the PRL was in

January 1976. It currently has branches in twenty communities. No further provincial funding was dispersed as seed money to form regional library systems elsewhere in the province.

In Manitoba, the **provincial funding formula for per capita (matching) operating grant support** to public libraries has remained at the same rate since 2004 (**cap of \$8.50**). After factoring in inflation and set increments for certain costs (e.g. negotiated salaries and benefits), one can therefore say that the “buying power” of what provincial funding formula provides to libraries is actually decreasing. For the 2013 budget year, revised census numbers were used. Some municipalities gained, others lost.

<b>2012 Budgets Sources of Revenue</b>	<b>Border Regional Library</b>	<b>Parkland Regional Library</b>	<b>Portage la Prairie Regional Library</b>	<b>South Central Regional Library</b>	<b>Western Manitoba Regional Library</b>
Federal	0.5 %			0.6 %	0.7 %
Provincial	34.9 %	62.0 %	30.2 %	42.7 %	42.7 %
Municipal	56.9 %	33.4 %	58.7 %	48.1 %	52.7 %
Miscellaneous	8.6 %	4.6 %	11.1 %	8.6 %	3.9 %
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$ 231,519</b>	<b>\$ 782,202</b>	<b>\$ 588,101</b>	<b>\$ 756,577</b>	<b>\$ 1,140,532</b>

**Other provincial grants** that are available for public libraries include Collection Development (\$5500 per branch/bookmobile) with an additional \$1000 provided to bilingual systems for French materials, Rural Library Technology Sustainability (for current library technology), Rural Library Cooperative Technology (innovative partnerships), and Rural Library Establishment.

Over the last 10-15 years, the **federally funded Community Connections Program** covered the connectivity costs for public libraries (\$650 per location), enabling them to provide computer access/internet for their patrons. This program was discontinued beginning in 2013, thereby downloading the connectivity costs to the local levy, impacting all libraries but in particular the small rural ones that depended on this funding. Another federal source of revenue typically applied for by libraries is the **Canada Summer Jobs Grant** that is often used for staffing summer reading programs.

At budget time it’s always a struggle for library Trustees to want to keep the **budget reasonable** without raising the levy too much, especially in rural areas hit with flooding, poor crops/quality of land, or lack of industry. Municipalities tend to put roads, rinks and sewers ahead of library/culture priorities. Generally, if new library service initiatives are undertaken, they need to be within current operating budgets (e.g. creative spending) or through local grants and fundraising (e.g. book sales, donations, adopt-a-magazine, Friends of the Library, community foundations, rental income). Library facilities are the responsibility of the relevant municipalities.

Some strategies for enhancing sustainability:

- Regionalization and system mergers (e.g. Rossburn and Ethelbert seeking to join Parkland Region)
- Self-initiated cooperation for shared service delivery and professional networking
  - Fédération des Bibliothèques des Municipalités Bilingues /Federation of Bilingual Municipal Libraries where its representatives meet to discuss challenges and successes, as well as to exchange a variety of French library materials. [www.fbmb.ca](http://www.fbmb.ca)
  - Eastman regional meetings three times a year for staff from Lac du Bonnet, Pinawa, Beausejour, St. Georges, Beaches, Selkirk, Stonewall, Teulon and Springfield Libraries.
  - Interlake libraries consortium is the first in Manitoba to have a mobile app for accessing the library's catalogue from smart phones or computers (Selkirk, Lac Du Bonnet, Eriksdale and Brokenhead).
  - Border Regional Library, in cooperation with South Interlake Regional Library, applied and received \$20, 327 in 2012 from the Provincial Rural Library Cooperative Technology Grant. This enabled both library systems to join the new Spruce Cooperative using Evergreen software. This grant covered migration, set up, training and the first year's support fees. These libraries no longer need a server; their annual support costs are lower, technical problems are handled by the cooperative, and all operations are backed up automatically. The Spruce Cooperative, piloted in 2009 by South Central Regional Library (Morden, Winkler, Altona, Miami Branches), continues to expand each year as more libraries join the cooperative.

### 3. Accessible services

Libraries, as public service providers, have a responsibility to ensure access to their facilities, services and resources. This obligation is recognized in the UN Declaration of Rights for Persons with Disabilities and in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Public libraries are for everyone. In terms of provincial accessibility legislation, Bill 26, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act received first reading on April 24, 2013. Manitoba's position is based on the principle of "universal design" and the expectation for equitable access.

Accessibility of library services for people with **disabilities in accessing print** – meet needs through technological advances (e.g. accessibility features on iPads – zoom text for large print, colour, Voice-over). There is a move to have digitized materials for this provided through public libraries and not just organizations such as CNIB.

National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)

<http://bc.libraries.coop/products-services/nnels/>

#### 4. Meet Community Needs/ Increase Use

Literacy and learning – take library programs to the people. Don't just rely on patrons coming to the library. **Enhance programming** (e.g. more early/family literacy, teens, adult programming – lots of aging baby boomers!)

Who are the **unserved**? Develop innovative partnerships to the currently underserved. (E.g. aboriginal communities, shelters, correctional institutions, accessibility issues, literacy upgrading, EAL)  
Community/outreach librarian positions are being created in an increasing number of jurisdictions.

#### 5. Developing Library Leaders and Administrators

One of the RSC framing questions is "*What changes, in your judgement, are necessary in the professional education and training of librarians/archivists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*" As public library Trustees, one of our responsibilities is the selection, supervision and evaluation of the CEO or head librarian, depending on the size of the library system. Do the MLS/MLIS programs required of most head/branch librarians, or subsequent continuing education opportunities, prepare them adequately for such leadership and administrative functions as visionary thinking, strategic planning, budgeting, human resource management, marketing/public relations, community outreach, mediation, motivation, change management, and how to measure impact and success? These are all aspects of a library administrator's job.

#### 6. Transforming Libraries

Key planning questions: How do we want to be perceived by our community in the future?  
What do we have to do to get there?

Mission, vision

Patron, community and staff survey and analysis of results

Strategic plan development

Challenge: to keep both current patrons who like things just the way they are, and satisfy new ones, while engaging the present trends and opportunities.

Need to create a much more dynamic, engaged library. Become a community destination for lifelong learning, culture and social issues.

Some key areas for change.

- Services to children and youth – increasing the number and breadth of programming and include art, drama and music as well as reading and storytelling. Expand on special events so that the library becomes a destination whenever the kids are not in school.
- Support of lifelong learning – more sophisticated tutoring programs in literacy, technology, EAL, GED, on-line language training, archives searches genealogical research. Wide range of community programming. Increase cooperation with other community groups (e.g. genealogical society, art club displays)
- Rethink staffing and services (e.g. circulation, reference, programming, community outreach)



- Improve the marketing of the library
- Gather data to show the impact of the new initiatives/changes

## Conclusion

The old-style public library is in crisis and needs to change. It is going through a time of profound and continuous change that is rendering obsolete the very library products on which we have been built on – the printed book, CDs and DVDs. These changes are due to external technological developments which we do not control. It's time to take risks and try new things. See it as more of an opportunity than a problem.

Libraries should be constantly evolving. As formats change, so too must our services and identity. We currently are in a time of transition and libraries across the province and country are all at various stages. Strong programming that is responsive to community needs and demographics, marketing and community outreach are essential. Does the public really know who we are and what we do?

Libraries and the communities they serve will **need to transform to become sustainable in order to face the future and the challenges ahead**. Complex pressures impact the capacity and service provision of small municipal and library systems. In Manitoba, regionalization and system mergers should shape service provision over the foreseeable future.

Library organizations such as the Manitoba Library Trustees Association and the Manitoba Library Association will also need to transform to remain viable, given the decline in the number of volunteers willing to assume executive/board positions.

*“No matter the size of the library, we all aspire to the same goal:  
To ensure that everyone has access to the world’s knowledge.”*  
(Ingrid Parent, former IFLA President)