

Government and Public Libraries Forum: One Year Later

Background:

On October 19 and 20, 2009, the Provincial Library and Literacy Office of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education hosted the first-ever Government and Public Libraries Forum to encourage senior provincial government officials and public library leaders to establish strategic relationships by exploring common goals. Approximately 130 participants gathered together to begin a dialogue on shared leadership and engagement in a planning process.

The Forum provided an opportunity to establish mutual understanding and identify commonalities between the Saskatchewan Public Library System Strategic Plan, Saskatchewan Government's Direction and Plan and the ongoing work of the public library systems. Public library leaders and government ministry representatives discussed where government and public library priorities and programming intersect and explored opportunities to collaborate in providing improved services to the people of Saskatchewan.

The Forum created considerable enthusiasm among participants and a willingness to contribute to building a successful future with Saskatchewan public libraries. This report summarizes the areas under thematic headings where broad progress is being achieved as part of the follow up process.

Theme areas: Post-event projects and initiatives

a. Literacy

Participants: A Government and Public Libraries Forum Early Learning Committee was formed including representatives from:

- Provincial Library and Literacy Office, Ministry of Education
- Early Learning and Childcare Branch, Ministry of Education
- Parkland Regional Library
- Regina Public Library
- Saskatoon Public Library
- Wheatland Regional Library

Current status: The committee has been meeting regularly since April 2010 including a full day strategic planning session using goals identified as important for public libraries in supporting early childhood literacy and language development. The committee continues work on a strategy to introduce best practices in early literacy programming to public libraries in rural and urban settings, and expand the infrastructure to support enriched programs and services for children, families and caregivers. Over the fall, the committee intends to work on some of the actions they have identified.

Moving forward: The committee has identified several objectives that they will be working towards in the coming months:

- Enhance the literacy and language development of young children through initiatives that promote the love of reading;
- Provide training to library staff and individuals working with young children to enhance delivery of early literacy programs in public libraries; and,
- Create a network of connections among Saskatchewan public libraries and other provincial groups and organizations to share knowledge and expertise that will support better early literacy opportunities for young children.

Some specific action items that will commence in the next year may include:

- Develop a public awareness campaign aimed at parents and caregivers that promotes the importance of early childhood literacy and language development and the key role that public libraries play;
- Pilot a family space in both a municipal and regional public library;
- Create and promote an early literacy accessible website for parents;
- Organize training for library staff and provide in selected centres; and,
- Plan and pilot meetings or events in the province to encourage collaboration between public libraries and other groups working with young children and their parents.

For more information, contact Michelle Dalidowicz, Literacy and Learning Partnerships Coordinator, at (306) 787-9144 or michelle.dalidowicz@gov.sk.ca.

b. First Nations and Métis Success

Participants: A committee and/or working group has yet to be formed to take on the First Nations and Métis Success Action Ideas gathered at the Forum.

Current status: Library Directors met on December 11, 2009, and concluded that the scope of the Action Ideas need to include levels of service and service to First Nations and that this work be referred to the Committee on Aboriginal Library Services (CALs), which has representation from each library system. The Provincial Library and Literacy Office has identified appropriate ministries to further the First Nation and Métis Success Action Ideas and will extend invitations to participate in a discussion and establish a working group for specific project ideas.

Moving forward: CALs will meet in October 2010 to discuss ways to advance ideas collected at the Forum.

For more information, contact Lonette Pelletier, Aboriginal Library Services Coordinator, at (306) 787-4472 or lonette.pelletier@gov.sk.ca.

c. Services to New Immigrants

Participants: A Multilingual Library Services Committee was formed with representation from:

- Provincial Library and Literacy Office, Ministry of Education
- Early Learning and Childcare Branch, Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
- Lakeland Library Region
- Chinook Regional Library
- Regina Public Library
- Saskatoon Public Library
- Southeast Regional Library
- Dr. John Archer Library, University of Regina
- Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages (SOHL)
- Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MoS)

New members may be recommended to this committee.

Current status: The Provincial Library and Literacy Office's Multilingual Library Services 2008 Strategic Plan first outlined the concept of a multilingual library services committee. Discussions at the Government and Public Libraries Forum confirmed a need to have government and public libraries working together on library services for new immigrants.

The Multilingual Library Services Committee (MLSC) first met in March 2010 and developed the *Multilingual Library Services Committee Terms of Reference*. Committee members expressed a strong interest in working together to deliver services to new immigrants and build capacity through collaborative programs and information sharing.

Highlights of government and public library collaboration since the Forum:

- The Provincial Library and Literacy Office promoted multilingual library services at the SOHL Heritage Language Day, University of Regina New Student Orientation, and the Heritage Saskatchewan 2010 Conference. Provincial Library and Literacy Office and Regina Public Library participated in the SOHL Connections radio program to promote services to multilingual library users.
- The Provincial Library and Literacy Office presented "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Multilingual Library Services in Saskatchewan" at the Saskatchewan Library Association 2010 Conference, highlighting Ogema Public Library (Southeast Regional Library) as a model of integrating and serving new immigrants in a small rural community.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration promoted public library services through the new online Saskatchewan Immigration Portal, an authoritative source of information for new immigrants.
- Information has been exchanged on the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration's Regional Gateway Service Centres and Saskatoon Public Library's "Children of the World" booklist (a list of stories of children and their experiences in a new culture).
- The Southeast Regional Library and Palliser Regional Library received funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration's Community Connections program to develop services for new immigrants.

Moving Forward: The committee plans to meet three times a year and work together to:

- Share knowledge on library and information needs of multilingual and multicultural communities in Saskatchewan;
- Advise on multilingual collection development and library services;
- Share information on government policy and programs relevant to services to new immigrants;
- Promote library resources and services in multilingual and multicultural communities;
- Share expertise in multilingual collections and services; and,
- Develop collaborative programs and services, based on mutual interest and capacities, for multilingual library users.

For more information, contact Jian Wang, Multilingual Library Services Coordinator, at (306) 787-0984 or jian.wang@gov.sk.ca.

d. Community Economic Development

Participants: A Community Economic Development Committee was formed with representation from:

- Provincial Library and Literacy Office, Ministry of Education
- Palliser Regional Library
- Southeast Regional Library
- Lakeland Library Region
- Parkland Regional Library
- Regina Public Library
- Economic Development Office for the Community of Coronach

Current status: A meeting with Enterprise Saskatchewan in June 2010 has led to a refining of efforts and new expanded partnerships with the Saskatchewan Economic Development Association (SEDA). Libraries are taking the opportunity offered by SEDA to link with the *Grow Your Region* portal project. Public libraries will be featured as economic information providers, with reciprocal web links between SEDA and public libraries that will connect the public with library services such as reference, the catalogue and databases. More meetings of the committee are planned in the immediate future.

Moving Forward: The committee brainstormed the following areas for development:

- Invite Members of the Legislative Assembly to public libraries as a way to increase familiarity with the public library infrastructure in respective constituencies and to improve communications between library stakeholders (this approach has been successful in Alberta, and some Saskatchewan library systems have adopted this strategy).
- Allow each public library system to become a paid member of its respective local regional economic development authority in order to participate more fully in local economic activities;
- Develop an interactive Enterprise Saskatchewan map for libraries;
- Create reciprocal web links between Saskatchewan public libraries and the Canada – Saskatchewan Business Centre, current employment services, regional offices and BizPaL;

- Produce community asset mapping with the Municipal Capacity Development Program to identify Saskatchewan public library assets for various markets;
- Generate a 'Service Saskatchewan' concept with public libraries as recognized access points for government information and services; and,
- Train library staff using a Train-the-Trainer approach for the provision of business information.
- Public libraries as economic information centres that:
 - Provide regional economic development offices with a web link to the new Encore library catalogue for business resources and to business information databases.
 - Identify human capital, such as a directory of business plan writers for entrepreneurs in rural communities.
 - Offer business information and services through decentralized library systems, and support business librarians as part of regular services offered in major centres.
 - Develop brochures listing business resources such as magazines and databases.

For more information, contact Phil Jeffreys, Public Library Coordinator, at (306) 787-2959 or phil.jeffreys@gov.sk.ca.

Challenges

The challenges identified for the participation of the government and public libraries in meeting the Forum's goals include:

Capacity: There are 306 full service branches across the provinces, which operate over 6,000 hours per week. In 2008, over 9.5 million items were borrowed, over 700,000 information questions asked and over 7,000 public library programs were hosted for about 250,000 people that fostered literacy and provided lifelong learning opportunities for all ages. Saskatchewan public libraries face significant fiscal and capacity pressures, which effect contributions and participation to initiatives that are external to its regular operations.

A priority of the Provincial Library and Literacy Office, as well as government as a whole, is to achieve the Saskatchewan Government Direction for 2010-11 - a *Balanced, Forward-Looking and Responsible* government. Ministries are committed to the implementation of the Workforce Adjustment Strategy and the renewal and reform of programs and service delivery to foster innovation and reduce government's footprint.

Implementation of a New Provincial Infrastructure: The Single Integrated Library System (SILS), the foundation for a universal library card, has been a significant priority in 2010 for the Provincial Library and Literacy Office and public libraries across Saskatchewan. All ten public library systems and boards have participated in intensive processes to review policies and develop new services to meet the needs of Saskatchewan residents, and redefine public library services in the spirit and reality of a single system.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified between government and public libraries that support further progress include:

New Strategic Directions: The Saskatchewan Public Library System has incorporated several of the Action Ideas and recommendations that were gathered at the Forum into its strategic plan for 2010-11.

The Provincial Library and Literacy Office also integrated a number of the Action Ideas and recommendations into its 2010 work plans.

New Infrastructure for Collaboration: SILS and the SILS Consortia have connected the province's ten public library systems and can offer a framework for working collaboratively across the provincial public library sector.

Overall Outcomes:

The range of actions outlined in this report demonstrates the commitment of both the Government of Saskatchewan and the Provincial Public Library System in advancing the outcomes of the Government and Public Libraries Forum. Progress across the theme areas is at different stages. For some, the Forum reinforced strategic plans and facilitated concrete actions, and for others, new directions were discovered and action plans developed. For all, a broader understanding and new relationships provide an opportunity to engage in collaborative forward movement across the province.