

**Public Libraries:
Contributing to the Economic,
Social Well-Being and Lifelong Learning
of Saskatchewan People**

DRAFT

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**Saskatchewan Learning
Provincial Library**

Do you know that:

Libraries serve more people's information and learning needs than any other Saskatchewan public institution – over 50% of Saskatchewan adults, children and students hold public library cards.

Canadian public library visits in 2003 totalled 127,400,000 (Online Computer Library Centre Canada [OCLC], 2004).

In 2003, over 56,000 people attended over 2,500 programs at Saskatoon Public Library (Saskatoon Public Library 2004).

Introduction

Public Libraries Contribute To The Public Good

Throughout rural and northern Saskatchewan, as well as in Saskatchewan cities and towns, 320 public libraries provide information centers, public meeting places and resources that offer economic and social benefits and lifelong learning opportunities at the local level.

The Government of Saskatchewan supports public libraries and requires that all municipalities participate in the public library systems to ensure universal access to library resources and information for all Saskatchewan people in a knowledge economy.

Libraries contribute to the goals of a thriving citizenry, a prosperous economy, lifelong learning, labour market attachment, and provincial youth strategies. Over 50% of Saskatchewan people hold a valid library card. Libraries offer service to their communities by recognizing and respecting the needs of residents of all ages, regardless of their economic status.

Premier Calvert has announced goals and strategies for Saskatchewan to strengthen the economic and social well-being of Saskatchewan people: through labour market development that opens doors to all young people; research and innovation; building on the traditional strengths of the province, as well as, the new high-tech economy and the “green economy”; and, a high quality of life that includes health care, education and recreational opportunities. In the Premier’s words to Saskatchewan people: “our future is wide open and your future is here.”

Libraries are positioned to contribute to this vision and strategies by supporting:

- equitable access to quality electronic information on jobs, business, markets, healthcare and tourism through library web sites and databases so contributing to the local and provincial economy;
- employment opportunities throughout Saskatchewan;
- resources and programs that benefit children and families;

Saskatchewan public libraries circulated over 10 million items in 2002 to a population of approximately one million people. A major percentage of these circulating items represent materials to support children and students in their formal learning needs for educational resources.

10 million circulating items represents over 200 million dollars (\$20 per item) of investment in materials used by Saskatchewan people in one year.

Public libraries expended over \$5M on materials in 2003 for public benefit.

- literacy skills and computer literacy training;
- opportunities for individual lifelong learning;
- services and programs that reflect local community needs, including outreach services and special equipment for people with special needs, resources for learning English as a second language, programming that responds to the recreational or information needs of seniors, teenagers and children;
- recreational reading for pleasure and improving literacy skills;
- resources for formal learning;
- cultural development and knowledge of our past by partnering with Saskatchewan provincial and local culture, recreation and heritage organizations;
- the values of an informed citizenry inherent in a democratic society.

Investment in Saskatchewan libraries over the last century has resulted in highly developed collections of print and electronic materials. Libraries also participate in a sophisticated worldwide network that enables them to access library resources around the globe.

Vision for Public Libraries

Public libraries' vision for library services in Saskatchewan can be summarized as follows:

- **One Stop Access** – Access and retrieval of library resources (magazines, newspapers, library databases, library catalogues, web resources, and e-books) and library services (online answers to questions, interlibrary loans, authentication and cataloguing) will be achieved by developing online services that create the virtual public library accessible from anywhere – home, school or work.
- **Equitable Access for All Citizens** – Universal access to libraries is ensured by *The Public Libraries Act, 1996*, that requires municipalities to participate in the provincial public library system and public libraries to serve all residents within their boundaries. As of 2003, First Nations are included as residents of Saskatchewan for purposes of obtaining off-reserve library services.

“By helping to attract new businesses and residents, modern library facilities can have a direct impact on increased tax-dollars and local economic renewal ... since 1990, analysis conducted on site selection factors for new or relocated businesses showed the quality of life, including good schools and cultural and recreational facilities (i.e. libraries), ranked as the most important factor” (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995).

Canadian libraries purchase an estimated \$2.7 billion dollars in goods and services annually exceeding Canadian spending on automobile tires, spectator sports or cosmetics and fragrances (OCLC, 2004).

Wapiti Regional Library System reports its circulation for 2003 as 950,135 items The average cost per new item is \$20 providing an economic benefit of \$19,002,700. Wapiti has 67,536 active library users. If there are two users per household, this represents approximately 33,768 households each receiving an economic benefit per household of \$562. The total economic benefit of

- **Cooperation Among Libraries To Enhance Public Access to Information** – Implementation of *The Libraries Co-operation Act* is creating the information infrastructure that enables resource sharing among all libraries and formalizes cooperative agreements.

Contributing to Economic Well-Being in Saskatchewan

Well-informed and educated students and citizens provide the key for Saskatchewan’s economic well-being in a knowledge economy.

- Libraries contribute to the market value of their community through promoting their communities to the world on their web pages. For example, in Estevan, the public library initiated the city’s web page.
- Libraries return local tax dollars to the community for local expenditure and offer skilled employment in an automated environment in urban, rural and northern Saskatchewan.
- Libraries support the economic well-being of local publishers and local businesses, through the purchase of computer hardware/software, office equipment, etc.
- Libraries attract tourists by offering free access to the Internet to travelers throughout Saskatchewan.
- There are over 800 public access computers in public libraries throughout Saskatchewan.
- Library websites, online question and answer services, and electronic collections give rural and northern residents quality information at their fingertips from the library or their home computer. They inform farmers, business people, community leaders and parents so that they can create a better response to the situations and decisions they face in building their lives and communities. Libraries offer business development services; for example, Regina Public Library has a business librarian who develops resources for small businesses, answers questions and communicates directly with business people.

circulation (\$19,002,700) in the Wapiti Regional Library System is 7.8 times the funds provided from the Province and municipalities (\$2,432,139) in 2003 for all library services. (Wapiti Regional Library, 2004).

Minister Thomson recently reported that more than 9 million people have accessed information and services through the Government of Saskatchewan central web portal since its launch in 2000 (Information Technology Office 2004).

In 2001, Premier Lorne Calvert stated that "...all our citizens need to communicate and compete in this wired world. That's why we want to increase the number of businesses and families connected to the Internet, ensuring that Saskatchewan people have the skills and access to connect... And Saskatchewan libraries are taking the lead, by developing new computer and Internet training modules and devising ways to ensure training reaches all people of the province"(Multitype Library Board, 2002).

Yann Martel, recipient of the 2002 Man Booker Prize, was writer in residence at

Libraries Provide Public Internet Access to a World of Information and E-services.

Libraries support access to the increasing number of services available online for the public.

- Libraries offer public access terminals across Saskatchewan and training for the public so breaching the digital divide and providing equitable access to information and resources.
- Federal, provincial and municipal governments are all developing online services.

Contributing to Social Well-Being in Saskatchewan

Libraries provide the information to enhance and facilitate individual learning.

- Libraries provide the seeds and nourish lifelong learning opportunities and resources for all.
- Libraries contribute to computer literacy by providing training on how to access the wealth of information available through the Internet. Residents, particularly people with low incomes, can learn about new opportunities and begin to equip themselves with the skills required to participate in the Information Age and contribute to their community
- Households can choose to extend their income by borrowing materials from their library.
- Libraries provide learning opportunities for traditional literacy skills through reading programs.
- Libraries provide economic opportunities for Saskatchewan artists/writers/crafts people to display and share their creative expertise and sell innovative and original products in local communities. This ensures that Saskatchewan and Canadian culture thrives and develops, not only in large metropolitan areas, but in small centers as well.

Saskatoon Public Library in 2003-04 sharing his creativity with the public of Saskatoon and Saskatoon school children and post secondary students (Saskatoon Public Library 2004).

North Battleford Public Library hosted a book signing and reception for Allen Sapp Governor-General Award in 2003 for the illustration of English-language children's literature (Lakeland Regional Library 2004).

Students and the public enjoyed visits from authors such as, Jean Fahlman, Gerry Hill, Gail Bowen, Ed Willett and Margaret Blackwood Duke (Southeast Regional Library 2004).

Yann Martel suggested that "[a] library is a beacon of civilization. If you have a place with no libraries you don't have a place" ("Authors Upset" 2003).

Saskatoon Public Library (SPL) has a total of 83 public computers throughout its system. The computers offer access to the Internet, the SPL's web-based catalogue, reference databases, as well as special services at Frances Morrison Library for visually impaired patrons (Saskatoon Public Library 2004).

- Libraries provide opportunities to promote and celebrate Canadian culture and art.
- Libraries provide information for personal development, recreation and hobbies, cultural knowledge, formal education, careers, and health research for people of all ages.
- Libraries provide a gathering place and community centre as well as a safe environment to learn and receive answers to questions.
- Libraries support the education of children, students and adults by providing varied resources and programs that stimulate and enrich formal, informal, recreational and cultural learning.
- Libraries offer programming based on local community needs from preschool story time to individual tutoring programs to foster computer literacy or English language skills; from crafts programs to preparing wills; from health programs to First Nations Elders story telling.
- Libraries help people with disabilities by providing specific equipment so that their information, learning and recreation needs are facilitated.
- Libraries offer free access to the Internet and are prepared to help people to understand the technology required thus helping to narrow the digital divide.
- Libraries contribute to healthcare by providing access to reliable health information through access to the Cochrane Library that informs health care professionals and is the best single source of reliable evidence about the effects of healthcare. Saskatchewan was the first province to provide residents with free access to the Cochrane library database.
- Libraries support a democratic society and provide access for everyone to federal, provincial and municipal government information and services online.

In the Chinook Regional Library System: Cabri Public Library Branch provided 448 Internet sessions. Cadillac corner library held 244 Internet sessions (Chinook Annual Report 2003).

Pahkisimon Nuyeyáh Library System (PNLS) works in partnership with the school divisions, the band schools, Northlands College program areas, NORTEP/NORPAC and local public libraries to bring the northern reading program to the over 35,000 northern residents. The reading challenge alone registers approximately 11,000 people from preschool to Adult Education and community members who together accumulated over 1,310,138 points of reading time (Pahkisimon Nuyeyáh Library System(PNLS) 2004).

Family Literacy Grant enabled Parkland Regional Library System to host a Come Read With Me workshop at Dr Brass Public School, host two parent education workshops, create 1,325 Books for Babies Plus Kits, and start an Adopt –a-Library Literacy program at Yorkton Public Library. The library system was also involved in the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program to promote literacy and library programs (Parkland Regional Library 2004).

Contributing to Formal Education

Libraries are part of Saskatchewan Learning's core business to support formal and informal education opportunities. Public libraries support the K-12 formal education system and post secondary students of all ages throughout Saskatchewan. Thirty public libraries share facilities with schools in Saskatchewan.

- Public libraries circulate millions of books to students, answer tens of thousands of reference questions, and borrow thousands of items from other libraries on behalf of students.
- Local branch staff, trustees or volunteers respond to local community needs for programming and resources. Almost every local library board has at least one member to represent the school.
- At the regional library system level, there are agreements in place with schools. For example Chinook has a partnership with the Golden Plains School division, the RM of Waverly and the Glentworth Library Board. The library is located in the Glentworth K-12 school and is accessible to the public.
- Pahkisimon Nuyeyáh Library System (PNLS) has 2,547 books in class sets and 2,433 items in their teacher collection for northern school libraries and provides training for school and community library staff. PNLS also provides space for the Northern Saskatchewan Archives - a collection of a large number of photos and documents relating to the history of Northern Saskatchewan, including 10,000 slides taken by Lois Dalby for use in school curriculum resources, many of which record the traditional Aboriginal lifestyle.

Libraries Support Adult and Family Literacy and Early Childhood Reading Readiness.

- Public Libraries offer a delivery stream for lifelong learning needs before kindergarten and after the age when schools can no longer answer to learning needs and provide a safe place for learning.
- Public libraries offer programs that are student or literacy oriented – pre-school story hours, family literacy, summer reading programs, homework help, computer

Regina Public Library's literacy program has been recognized nationally and provincially (i.e., Movement for Canadian Literacy, the Canadian Library Trustees Association, the International Reading Association and the Saskatchewan Literacy Foundation) for its distinctive literacy program model and learning resources. Regina Public Library was the recipient of Canada Post's 1998 Flight for Freedom Literacy Award (Canada Post, n.d.).

Over 1,800 children in the Southeast Regional Library System registered for the summer reading program and read over 16,000 books. 1,200 volunteer hours were contributed to make the summer reading program a success (Southeast Regional Library 2004).

Southeast Regional Library reports that over 50% of its public Internet access users in 2003 were children and youths (Southeast Regional Library 2004).

literacy, literacy kits for tutors.

- Regina Public Library's (RPL) literacy program is renowned throughout Canada's library system and has served as a model for other Canadian libraries. Their program has provided one-on-one literacy tutoring to thousands of Regina residents since October 1973.
- In the summer of 2003, Saskatoon Public Library programs included: Stories in the Park and Family Story Hours with book bags available for loan. Programs were also offered at Saskatoon Tribal Council Urban Children's Centre. Saskatoon Public Library also provided an after school story hours series held at White Buffalo Youth Lodge.
- Libraries reinforce reading skills for children by providing juvenile non fiction materials that stimulate and enrich children's learning through interesting materials that children want to read, for example, the EyeWitness series.
- Krashen (1993) found that free voluntary reading resulted in better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development.
- Libraries make learning fun for children by acquiring juvenile fiction materials that reinforce reading skills, especially important in the summer vacation period to continue to develop their reading skills.

Libraries Support Home Schooling, Private and Public Instructors

Libraries respond to information requests by answering reference questions and locating needed instructional materials for children and parents providing home schooling.

- Like other libraries, Chinook Regional Library provides blocks of books for local Hutterite teachers and other individual instructors. Palliser Regional Library System provides book depositories and interlibrary loans for University and SIAST students taking courses in their home community.

Mike, a summer student used a public access computer to create community heritage web content and, at the same time, develop his virtual portfolio for future employers and post secondary institutions to which he has successfully applied (Saskatchewan Provincial Library, 2002).

A mounting body of research evidence [is] showing a strong and compelling link between student achievement and the presence of well-stocked, properly funded and professional-developed school library programs and services (Haycock, 2003).

Libraries Provide Online Resources and Training for Students and Educators

Saskatchewan students of all ages and educators can take advantage of an explosion of authenticated full text articles in educational journals available online wherever they live in Saskatchewan.

- All types of libraries – school, public, special and post-secondary and the Department of Learning – have joined together to fund province-wide licenses to over 7,000 online full-text magazines, newspapers and journals.
- Educators and public library staff have worked together to share training sessions to learn about the province-wide licenses for magazines, newspapers and other reference resources online.
- Many schools and public libraries cooperated to develop community access sites for public access to the Internet and to share Internet access costs. Many continue to share technical expertise.
- Public libraries have offered access to their Z-gateway to the public library catalogues as a source for cataloguing records that has proved to be a time-saving, useful tool to school libraries. It is also providing multilingual catalogue records for Ukrainian school-based language programs and for other heritage language instructors.

Libraries Provide Information for Career Choice and Employment for Students and Adults

Libraries provide students and adults with up to date information on career choice and location/availability of training programs and access to online employment opportunities, as well as to apply for unemployment insurance. With the increasing use of online job applications, they also provide for e-mails to potential employers. Libraries often provide resume writing programs or individual help for job applicants.

Sally came into our computer lab class which was an hour of literacy on the computer and an hour of instruction. It was a class of 8. Sally improved her literacy skills and passed the GED. She came back and said, "I have a job. I'm finally somebody! I told her she was always somebody, but she had never felt that way as an unemployed person" (Regina Public Library 2004).

In 2003, Moose Jaw library staff worked with Prince Arthur Community school and Elder Betty McKenna to improve First Nations collection (Palliser Regional Library 2004).

In the Parkland Regional Library System in 2003, 790 Books for Babies Plus Kits were delivered to Headstart program participants who live on reserves in the region. Aboriginal story sacks were created for the public to borrow (Parkland Regional Library 2004).

Libraries have content. Librarians create access. They organize content for anticipated use. They select and manage collections, real and virtual and they acquire access to alternative collections around the world (Canadian Library Association Political Action Task Force, 2004).

Engaging Aboriginal People

Libraries Support Aboriginal Economic, Educational and Socio-Cultural Initiatives

Library systems are working with Aboriginal people, organizations and schools to improve services for Aboriginal people in their communities, adding Aboriginal materials to their collections, inviting their participation in library programs and providing cultural awareness and sensitivity training for library staff and board members. In 2003, an Aboriginal Storytelling week was established in many library systems.

- Elders participate in story telling in libraries. In Northern Saskatchewan, libraries hold story hours in Cree, Dene and English.
- In the summer of 2003, Saskatoon Public Library programs included: Stories in the Park; Family Day parties held at 3 libraries; and, Family Story Hours with book bags available for loan. Programs were also offered at Saskatoon Tribal Council Urban Children's Centre.
- Saskatoon Public Library also provided after school story hours series was held at White Buffalo Youth Lodge.
- Regina Public Library – Albert Branch has a formal agreement with the local Community Association that engages the advice of the Association on programs and services to meet the needs of the Aboriginal users. Programming at this branch has also included Cree classes, pow wow dancing, beadwork, and other programs directed toward cultural awareness.

Provincial Library's Role

Facilitating Equitable Access to Library Services and Information

Under *The Public Libraries Act, 1996*, Provincial Library develops the legislative and policy framework for the Saskatchewan provincial public library system and ensures resource sharing through the provision of grants to the ten public library systems.

Provincial Library also acts as a coordinating agency for the system by maximising the cooperative use of information

The cooperative purchase of province-wide licenses to commercial databases provides access to over 7,000 online magazines, newspapers and other resources that are accessible to every library patron and to every resident from home. In 2004, Saskatchewan people accessed these databases over 450,000 times – an increase in use of 8% over the last year and performed over one million searches in the databases.

Tawowikamik Public Library on the Peter Ballantyne reserve in Pelican Narrows subscribed to an average of 48 magazines annually between 1992 – 2000.

Now, Tawowikamik Public Library offers over 7,000 full text magazines and journals via desktop computer by participating in the Database Licensing Program.

Most rural public library branches would have had as few as 10 magazine subscriptions annually; they also now have access to over 7,000 periodical titles online (Multitype Library Board 2002).

technologies. This includes building and maintaining a province-wide electronic information data network that connects all libraries in Saskatchewan. In addition, in partnership with Saskatchewan libraries, Provincial Library develops information content and services for delivery on the network, based on a cooperative and shared vision.

The development of e-library services has been supported through a variety of funding programs since 1997. In addition, Provincial Library staff provides expertise for developmental projects and supports the province-wide electronic network.

Under *The Libraries Co-operation Act*, Provincial Library facilitates the development of cooperative initiatives among all types of libraries, school, public, post secondary and special libraries. The Multitype Library Board actively pursues cooperative e-library services, such as the coordination of the Database Licensing Program, and exploring possibilities for cooperative digitization projects. The Multitype Database Licensing Program brings together partner libraries (public, education, post-secondary and special libraries) to pool funds for acquiring access to commercial databases. The idea is to cooperate to pay once and coordinate distribution and access so everybody can use the databases, in this way greatly expanding the public's access to resources without increasing costs and providing a service to all.

In 2001, Provincial Library coordinated additional federal funding of 1.3 M for public libraries with public Internet sites without matching dollars in 2003/04, \$1.2M, and in 2004-05, \$480,000 was provided through a federal/provincial agreement, again without matching dollars from the province. Funding from the Government Online (GOL) fund has been secured to support the province-wide public library system's goal of seamless access to library resources: \$170,000 in 2001/02; \$180,000 in 2002/03 and \$100,000 in 2003/04.

In addition, \$1M in funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was gained for 105 public libraries in low-income communities to support public access to the Internet.

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association has identified the following issues facing libraries in its 2004 Brief to the Minister of Learning:

- *delivering e-library services;*
- *addressing the digital divide;*
- *infrastructure/capital needs;*
- *recruiting and retaining library staff;*
- *pay equity;*
- *developing a universal library card; and*
- *improving library services for Aboriginal people.*

There is a growing pay equity concern among library staff that exacerbates the attraction and retention of qualified librarians and technicians. For example, there is a wage discrepancy between municipal employees and library staff in some cases that is up to 60%.

Challenges Facing Libraries Future Directions for Public Libraries

Libraries have a long tradition of cooperative resource sharing that facilitates cost sharing for service provision to Saskatchewan people, for example, the interlibrary loan system. Libraries also have a history of entering into many and diverse partnerships to respond to their users and communities needs. Libraries are well positioned to provide outreach services through partnering with different organizations and sectors whether through specific programs to other organizations or offering electronic information in the “library without walls”. Libraries offer a delivery stream for lifelong learning needs before kindergarten and after the age when schools can no longer answer to learning needs, as well as a safe community place for learning.

Recent advances in technology are enhancing and changing local service provision by enabling access to province-wide e-library services, such as online question and answer services. Libraries are embracing technological advances that result in improved informational services for users.

However, Saskatchewan libraries face the following challenges if they are to continue to provide the social and economic benefits to the communities they serve and contribute to the economic, social and learning goals of the province.

- Increasing costs to support e-library services and technology that library users expect to be available to answer their informational needs as well as continuing to be responsive to local/individual programming and traditional materials format needs.
- Responding to information and literacy needs for people of all ages.
- Maintaining/increasing local funding revenues in view of rural/urban shifts, decreasing population, and municipal fiscal challenges.
- Attracting and retaining professional librarians in Saskatchewan and addressing pay equity concerns. Engaging all stakeholders in the shared ownership of pay equity will be needed to gradually resolve this issue.
- Providing digitized content relating to Saskatchewan.
- Integrating the traditions of Aboriginal people into library programs and preserving/collecting Aboriginal materials

Dividends from the investment in Canadian public libraries are outstanding. Public libraries provide their communities with many benefits, from traditional social and cultural values to strong economic values. ... Public libraries provide the services and support that assist in the development of literate, informed and enriched citizens (Fitch & Warner and the Library Action Committee of the Book & Periodical Council, 1997).

- to increase their participation in library services.
- Meeting the growing expectations of the public to offer a wide array of programs, services and resources and the ability to partner with many organizations.
- Promoting public awareness of library resources, services, programs available to citizens.
- Ensuring that people in rural and remote communities have access to basic library services.
- Building innovative capital partnerships so that libraries continue to provide a focus and a safe place in their communities for people of all ages.

Conclusion

Now, as in the past, public libraries have helped to transform and improve the quality of people's lives. Libraries continue to play an important role in assisting people to participate fully and contribute to their community's social and economic well-being and to learning opportunities for children, students and adults.

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