



Manitoba Library Association



June 30, 2017

Manitoba Sport, Culture and Heritage
Assistant Deputy Minister's Office
6th floor, 213 Notre Dame Ave.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 1N3

Dear Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage,

RE: Imagine. Creative Manitoba! Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in this important consultation process. The Manitoba Library Association¹ is pleased to offer the following submission in regard to the consultation currently being undertaken towards a new Cultural Policy for Manitoba.

The role and value of public libraries is vital towards a vibrant and healthy Manitoba. Libraries are positioned to bolster a diverse cultural landscape and strong creative economy. Public libraries are destinations which can serve as our largest, most inclusive community hubs. Open to all, libraries offer programs, services, and endless discovery opportunities that shape lives, families, and communities.

Public libraries are unique within the province's cultural landscape in that they are both a cultural entity valuing and promoting equity, diversity, intellectual freedom, innovation and inclusion; and a cultural catalyst, sparking, supporting and helping to spread the cultural expressions of multiple sectors and communities.

As community hubs, libraries provide creative and cultural opportunities for all Manitobans by offering venues to create, showcase, and enlighten citizens. Furthermore, library staff is trained to promote 21st century learning

¹ The [Manitoba Library Association](http://www.mla.mb.ca) provides leadership in the promotion, development and support of library and information services in Manitoba for the benefit of MLA members, the library and information community and the citizens of Manitoba.

skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thought. When citizens exercise and engage with these skills, opportunities are opened and quality of life is improved.

Programs and services offered at public libraries spark ideas and provide a free and open space for learning, understanding and ongoing community dialogue.

The primary focus of our submission is access. When all Manitobans have access to quality library spaces and services, culture within our communities is significantly strengthened. We would like to emphasize the following themes throughout this submission:

- Indigenous Library Services
- First Nations' Libraries
- Rural and Remote Libraries (North)
- Newcomers
- Persons with Disabilities
- Children and Youth
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Community Partnerships and Collaboration
- 21st century Learning Skills

Public libraries in Manitoba are authentic community hubs with a focus on partnerships, creativity, technology, learning, and supporting the cultural development of all citizens. Libraries play an important role in ensuring the economic and social development of our community.

We thank the Ministry of Sport, Culture and Heritage for the opportunity to participate in this important consultation process. We believe that the library community can be a key partner in supporting the development of a new cultural policy and we encourage ongoing consultation throughout its development.

QUESTION ONE

What can be done to maximize the role and contribution of libraries to the well-being of all Manitobans?

The most straightforward way to ensure that libraries can contribute to the well-being of all Manitobans is to ensure that all Manitobans have free access to libraries. As the discussion paper states, approximately 150,000 Manitoba residents remain without access to library services. Access to library services is particularly crucial to our children and youth. Libraries provide a venue for cultural events (e.g. authors and other performances). When children and youth have free access to cultural programs and opportunities, they are being supported for future success. Essentially, investing in public libraries is investing in Manitoba's future towards healthy, vibrant, and well-rounded citizens.

In order to strengthen culture within our communities and province, we recommend that provincial support programs for public libraries are reviewed and updated. Careful consideration for underserved rural, remote, Northern, and Indigenous communities is important. The needs of persons with disabilities must also be addressed as identified in the provincial Access Legislation.

The Manitoba Library Association is an active member within the Canadian Federation of Library Associations / Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB). In a 2017 Pre-Budget submission², CFLA-FCAB called upon the federal government to “improve broadband internet service and access in rural and northern, and Indigenous communities where libraries exist at as critical resources that offer invaluable services and resources.” In June of 2017, the Ontario Government announced³ an increase in access to technology at public libraries. Ensuring improved and equitable access to broadband internet service and access to digital tools will help to support and enhance the cultural capacity of Manitobans throughout the province. The Manitoba Library Association urges the provincial government to work within its capacity towards ensuring equitable access to digital culture and technology for all Manitobans.

Libraries throughout the province, including larger urban settings require dedicated support to facilitate access to all.

Libraries are essential cultural institutions that strive for excellence in the following areas:

Community Hubs

- Offer a place for community members to meet, connect, and share ideas
- Provide a public space for communities or groups that may not otherwise have one
- Supply a positive space where people from various demographics feel comfortable, fostering a sense of belonging for community members
- Provide a 3rd space for people away from work and from home

Space, Programs, Resources

- Reach a broad spectrum of citizens from all age, income, and cultural demographics
- Provide a safe, accessible and welcoming space for all Manitobans
- Offer a learning environment where creativity can be sparked and flourish
- Provide variety in collections and programming, offering something for everyone
- Provide Makerspaces and Maker programs for community members to create and collaborate
- Approachable spaces and collections with wide appeal allow libraries to reach underserved populations
- Allow access to a comfortable environment to the public in times of extreme heat and extreme cold
- Libraries as an important vehicle for governments to disseminate information, services, and programs that impact all Manitobans

Lifelong Learning and Self-Betterment

- Digital literacy and technology skills
- Learning about and engaging with other cultures
- Early literacy programs and services
- Opportunities for children and youth (early literacy skills, lifelong learning, community engagement and volunteerism)
- Critical thinking skills

² <http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CFLA-FCAB-Pre-Budget-Submission.pdf>

³ <https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2017/06/ontario-increasing-access-to-technology-at-public-libraries.html>

Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life.

–Sidney Sheldon

QUESTION TWO

How should the cultural policy address the challenges currently impacting the public library system?

As public libraries are a gathering space for all Canadians we need a cultural policy which prioritizes diversity and inclusion; Indigenous communities; creativity and innovation; and increased partnerships amongst cultural stakeholders, especially Government relations with Indigenous Leadership.

A major step towards increased partnership with Indigenous Leadership would be to adopt a cultural policy that works to support the 10 recommendations listed in the CFLA-FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report⁴. The Manitoba Library Association has endorsed the CFLA-FCAB Truth & Reconciliation Committee Report & Recommendations along with over 24 other organizations from across Canada⁵. There is a need for the Province to engage Indigenous communities along with other public sector participants (such as schools, post-secondary institutions, libraries, museums, archive institutions, et al.) to develop models to support the creation of “cultural memory institutions” in Indigenous communities, thus recognizing that what is already developed shares characteristics of libraries, archives, and museums.

The Cultural Policy needs to recognize and articulate the role that libraries can play in the overall cultural strategy. Libraries are partners, service providers, cultural hubs through the materials and services they provide.

Addressing Challenges

- Ensure that libraries have the physical spaces necessary for equitable access and that they are universally accessible to meet the needs of all Manitobans
- Support the redevelopment and renewal of facilities to ensure they are spaces that people want to go to
- Increase and provide better access to public libraries for rural communities
- Ensure libraries have enough staff/hours to support their communities
- Professional development opportunities for library workers (particularly in the area of digital technology)
- Supports or incentives for building partnerships and collaborations
- Provide support for the promotion and marketing of libraries as community and cultural hubs
- Provide support for the development of partnerships with cultural organizations - e.g. ensuring libraries have funding to bring in authors, performers, and artists
- Ensure that libraries have the resources to support cultural promotion in the province - e.g. adequate programming space, hours of operation, promotional budgets, etc.

⁴ <http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Committee-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf>

⁵ <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/reconciliation/for-national-aboriginal-day-cfla-fcab-acting-on-recommendations-of-the-truth-and-reconciliation-committee-report/>

Tell me and I will forget.

Show me and I will remember.

Involve me and I will understand.

Give me a platform and I will contribute!

-Kurt Koenig

QUESTION THREE

How can libraries play a role in celebrating and promoting culture in your community?

Public libraries celebrate and promote culture as a function. They are great promoters of culture through the collections they purchase for public consumption, through marketing and display of authors, artists, cultural events, as well as through exhibits, programs and services, often in partnership with other organizations.

Within libraries, citizens consume information and knowledge. Additionally, with the integration of makerspaces and maker programs into public library service, citizens have access to a platform where they can create information and knowledge. Makerspaces greatly assist towards building collaborative relationships amongst citizens as well as other organizations and institutions. They offer technology and non-technology learning and engagement opportunities.

Makerspaces and maker programs provide opportunities for people of all ages to create, experiment and collaborate in a self-directed, hands-on learning environment. Through these programs, the library connects the community to expertise, information and resources that foster innovation and life-long learning.

Furthermore, it's important to address the impact that libraries have on the lives of children and youth. When children and their families engage with the library they are introduced to the 5 early literacy practices: (i) talk, (ii) sing, (iii) read, (iv) write, and (v) play. Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Early literacy skills begin to develop right from birth. A child's positive early experiences with books and language lay the foundation for success in learning to read.

Support creativity and facilitate the creation and distribution of Manitoban cultural content

- Act as a source of inspiration through programming and collections, and foster the exchange of ideas
- Provide equitable access to culture & tools used in the creation of cultural content (e.g. makerspaces, digital tools)
- A more representative cultural institution, reaching a wide array of users from various cultural backgrounds
- Local programs such as writer in residence, genealogist in residence, and storyteller in residence helps with employment and development of cultural capacity within the community

Provide a safe space for cultural sharing and engagement

- A place to connect
- A space where people can share ideas/hear the ideas and opinions of others
- Partnerships, collaboration and connections with other cultural institutions and groups
- Libraries role in helping all Manitobans learn about Indigenous culture
- An important learning and creative environment for children and youth

Help stretch the work and funding of cultural industries - and projects big and small - farther

- Assist with promotion and marketing
- Helping organizations reach more diverse audiences.
- Provide a space to display art and local literature, host performances, and more.
- Regularly partner with other cultural institutions

In conclusion, it is evident that public libraries are a gateway to culture and creative collaboration. They provide inclusive services and foster strategic partnerships to promote intergenerational learning and discovery. Libraries are significant contributors towards a thriving community, province, and country. Public libraries of all sizes can meaningfully support literacy and culture. Initiating dialogue and inspiring ideas amongst citizens in the library is vital towards building vibrant and healthy communities in Manitoba.

Respectfully submitted,



Alix-Rae Stefanko
President
Manitoba Library Association

Selected References:

The following documents provide further insight into a number of the concepts explored in this submission.

Cultural Infrastructure: An Integral Component of Canadian Communities

https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/News_5_E.pdf

Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community

<https://novascotia.ca/culture/Culture-Action-Plan--English.pdf>

The Ontario Culture Strategy: Telling our stories, growing our economy

https://files.ontario.ca/ontarios_culture_strategy_en2_aoda_final-s.pdf

Ontario Increasing Access to Technology at Public Libraries

<https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2017/06/ontario-increasing-access-to-technology-at-public-libraries.html>

CFLA-FCAB Truth & Reconciliation Committee Report & Recommendations

<http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Committee-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf>

Libraries and Museums in an Era of Participatory Culture

http://www.culc.ca/cms_lib/Libraries%20and%20Museums%20in%20a%20Participatory%20Culture.pdf

Examples of Gallery, Library, Archive, Museum Partnerships with Canadian Urban Libraries

http://www.culc.ca/cms_lib/CULC%202016%20GLAM%20Survey.pdf

Preschool Early Literacy Programs in Ontario Public Libraries

<http://fopl.ca/media/2013/11/OISE-Report-FINAL-29June2012.pdf>