

LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Submission to

Government of Ontario's \$15M Investment in Libraries

Submitted by: Susanna Hubbard Krimmer, CEO & Chief Librarian
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London Public Library (LPL), along with other public libraries, has been invited to participate in the consultation process with OLS North and SOLS regarding the \$15 million provincial investment in libraries. Listed below are priorities suggested by LPL in three key areas:

1. Bridging the digital divide by supporting the implementation of new technology;
2. Investment in library collection development in strategic areas; and
3. Strengthening library professionals' capacity to keep pace with digital information needs of their communities.

Listed below are suggestions for OLS-North and SOLS to consider. Some ideas relate to more than one category.

1) Bridging the Digital Divide

Investments to improve services and access by supporting the implementation of new technology, in particular for small, rural and remote public libraries

i. Coordination of Website Development

Access to library services can be greatly enhanced by engaging and innovative websites. Some library systems do not have the resources to be continually developing and supporting websites. There is great duplication of effort in website development across the Province.

Recommendations:

Provide support for website development for all libraries and strengthen library professionals' capacity by funding coordinated efforts to develop templates, website training modules, etc. Identify leaders in the field to function as trainers and consultants and to provide technical support.

ii. Customer Training

Many Ontario residents have little or no opportunity to use electronic information technology, although others are fully engaged in the digital environment. Some do not yet have access to technology in their homes; others have purchased technology but do not have the resources to learn its use. Many elderly and homebound residents lack basic knowledge in the use of particular electronic services (e.g. downloadable resources).

Recommendation:

- Fund the development of customer training modules for self-instruction, in-class and distance learning, in a number of key languages.
- Fund an online training resource such as *Atomic Learning* for public access.

iii. Smart Board Interactive Whiteboards

Touch-sensitive display whiteboards connect to a computer and digital projector to show the computer image. Computer applications are controlled directly from the display. These whiteboards could be used to support programming, staff and customer training, professional development, outreach activities, presentations, and long distance collaboration.

Recommendations:

Purchase Smart Board interactive whiteboards for all Ontario library systems. Develop and fund training sessions for library staff.

iv. Access to New Technology

Although electronic devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, digital cameras, video cameras, webcams, etc. may now seem commonplace to many, not all citizens of Ontario have access to technology.

Recommendations:

Supply library systems with examples of current electronic devices, with training materials, to be used for teaching and/or lending to the public.

2) Collections

Enhance access to community collections through investment in library collection development in strategic areas, such as French language, multicultural, health and literacy, and digitization

i. **Southern Ontario Multilingual Pool**

SOMP is badly in need of an infusion of funds to provide access to and enhance and update its collection in order to respond to the needs and expectations of new immigrants. Materials are especially needed in the area of audiovisual collections.

Recommendations:

- Fund the replacement of SOMP's VHS collection with DVDs. Expand this collection greatly in quantity of materials and in the range of languages offered.
- Develop a promotion package for the service aimed at newcomer populations, book clubs, etc.
- Fund the creation of MARC catalogue records for SOMP materials in order to make this collection truly accessible.

ii. **Translation Services**

To provide access to library collections and services for newcomers, LPL has been able to use volunteers to translate some resource/service brochures into non English languages. While this has been highly beneficial it is a piecemeal approach which does not meet the needs of our newcomer communities. Translation services are costly. Smaller communities may find it difficult to provide access and promotion in languages other than English/French. (Some communities may also have challenges serving French language users due to lack of staff knowledge and/or resources).

Recommendation:

- Fund the systematic translation of service and how-to information material throughout the province.
- Develop generic promotional material.
- Fund visual formats for world language and low literacy customers.
- Fund other programs such as such as online storytimes in French language and world languages other than English.

iii. **Electronic resources in languages other than English**

Expand access to knowledge and learning by investing in new electronic resources in languages other than English.

Recommendations:

- Fund *World Book* online in French (all) and Spanish (as relevant) across Province.
- Source and acquire access to additional web-based resources in various key World Languages, such as Chinese periodical databases; and digitized international newspapers.

iv. **Language Learning**

There is an ongoing heavy demand for language-learning materials, both English/French language learning resources and for other languages. *Rosetta Stone*, an excellent language-learning resource, is only available to libraries in CD ROM format, although it is available to other organizations as an online resource.

Recommendations:

- Negotiate a multi-year online contract for Ontario libraries with Fairfield Technologies, the creator of *Rosetta Stone*.
- Fund acquisition of dual-language language learning materials (books, multimedia kits).

v. **Downloadable Resources**

Demand for expensive downloadable resources is growing, including audio books, video, and music. Setup and hosting costs are high; as well some libraries may require technical infrastructure support.

Recommendation:

Identify sources for downloadable audio books, music and film; negotiate contracts; and fund both initial setup costs and substantial core collections.

vi. **Access to Health Information**

Libraries are a key access point for current and reliable health information. Increasingly, customers turn to less-than-reliable websites for their health information needs.

Recommendation:

- Provide "Red Phone"/info kiosk access to Telehealth in all libraries. Provide Telehealth service in multiple languages.

3) Professional Development & Capacity Building

Strengthen public library professionals' capacity to meet and keep pace with the library service and digital information needs of their communities.

Recommendations

- Develop strategies for mentoring, knowledge sharing, increased consultation within the profession
- Develop library leaders of the future by providing training/development in areas such as: leading, inspiring and developing others; public administration; strategic planning; critical thinking and decision-making; financial management; metrics; etc.:
 - provide bursary style funding to participants so that current and future leaders can participate in SOLS Advancing Public Library Leadership (APLL);
 - seek opportunity to work in partnership with business schools at University of Western Ontario, UWO, Wilfrid Laurier, Queens, Windsor, etc. to develop and offer courses complementary to SOLS courses with relevant case studies
- Develop strategies for training new, young technicians, paraprofessionals and professionals
- Create intern positions in library systems across the province; try incubator concept
- Look at the big picture and promote the profession; right now not enough young professionals seeking careers in public librarianship
- Need for advocacy, new recruitment approach
- Develop website and other e-learning strategies/tools with teaching materials on various technologies; libraries could contribute lesson plans and online workshops
- Provide educational funding to send individuals to tech training; use train-the-trainer approach to share knowledge and skills.

Guiding Principles for SOLS & OLSN

- 3rd bullet is critical; should also include concept of working with other organizations and Ministries
- Add final bullet, "Measure success and share best practices."