

Shortgrass Library Project: Early days of Shortgrass

Discussion of a library system in southeast Alberta began in 1977. A meeting of library staff and trustees from the southeast area was held at the Jasper Conference in 1981. As a result, an organizational meeting was held on June 13, 1981 in Redcliff. The group applied for assistance from the Alberta Library Trustees Association (A.L.T.A.) and obtained \$5,000.00 seed money.

Two more meetings were held in 1981 and representatives from Brooks, Bassano, and Burdett attended. Three meetings were held in 1982 and representatives came from Duchess. At the final meeting of 1982, the name "Shortgrass" was chosen and the boundaries of the area (Area 6) were approved. In 1983, the Committee was restructured. This provided for representation from boards and from councils which did not have boards, and also for improved communication. Three full committee meetings were held in 1983 and there were area meetings in Newell County, Forty Mile County and in the Medicine Hat area to discuss service priorities.



**First Staff hired with new SLS Van
Toni Gross, Colleen Swift, Pat Evans, Cliff Dacre**

As well, there were several executive meetings. The Committee obtained letters of support from boards and councils representing 89% of the area's population and applied for a grant of \$5,000.00 from Alberta Culture in November 1983.



First Building on First Street Medicine Hat



**Bonnie Gray from Alberta
Community Development**

During this time, Cliff Dacre was the Project Coordinator, and together with Bonnie Gray from Alberta Community Development, provided leadership to this Project. Through his long involvement with SLS, he has been given the title "father" of SLS.

In 1984 there were three full committee meetings, including a board development workshop, monthly executive meetings or conference calls and visits to all supporting libraries. Two libraries which had not yet endorsed the system concept were also visited.

A logo was approved and the executive agreed that a proposal for service be prepared and promoted to all boards and ultimately to all councils by early 1986. A communications sub-committee was also named. In March 1988, the Province announced Shortgrass Library System as the fifth regional library system established in Alberta.



Chronological History of Shortgrass 1977-2006

Shortgrass Library Project

- ⇒ **1977** Exploratory and informal meetings were held to get input from library board trustees, municipal councilors and library staff. Meetings were held in Bow Island, Brooks, Medicine Hat and Redcliff.
- ⇒ **Early 1980's** Rough system boundaries were in place. First Steering Committee looked into creating a Project. This Project was in effect until the System was incorporated.
- ⇒ **July 12, 1985** Certificate of Incorporation.
- ⇒ **Feb 1988** The municipalities of the County of Forty Mile, Bow Island, Brooks, Foremost, Medicine Hat and Redcliff signed the SLS Agreement.
- ⇒ **1988** Medicine Hat Public Library was designated as the resource center for SLS with responsibility for coordinating interlibrary services and providing reference services.



**Sod turning for SLS Headquarters
(Nanko Dubbelboer, John Vandernburg,
Daisy Congdon, Bea Peterson, Wanda
White, Colleen Swift, Margaret Dutton,
Alyce Butterwick, Marguerite Seitz)**



Unpacking the boxes at the SLS HQ



**Eileen Davis and Phyllis Worrall at
SLS HQ**



Façade at the front of the SLS HQ

Shortgrass Library System

- ⇒ **March 1988** Shortgrass Library System's birth was announced.
- ⇒ **1988** Colleen Swift is hired as SLS Director.
- ⇒ **1988** Municipalities were invited to bid on the location for the headquarters building. After much discussion Medicine Hat was selected.
- ⇒ **1989** Land for the SLS HQ building was acquired.
- ⇒ **1989** The first book was ordered, catalogued, processed and delivered by SLS.
- ⇒ **1990** Shortgrass decided to use the Dynix automation system.
- ⇒ **1995** Ray Lusty was appointed Director at SLS.
- ⇒ **1997** Medicine Hat School District Contract was signed.
- ⇒ **2000** Graham Community Library in Ralston entered into a contract with SLS.
- ⇒ **2001** Dr. Harold Storlien became Director of SLS, and Bob Batchelder was appointed Assistant Director.
- ⇒ **2003** Town of Bassano and County of Newell (Div 1,4,5,6,10, Rolling Hills and Rainier) join as SLS municipal members.
- ⇒ **2004** Prairie Rose School Division signs contract.
- ⇒ **2004** Rosemary and County of Newell Div 7 joins SLS.
- ⇒ **2005** Cypress County and Tilley joins SLS. Graham Community Library became full member of SLS.
- ⇒ **2006** Formulation of Southern Alberta Integrated Library System (SAILS) with Chinook Arch Regional Library System



Brick Sculpture on SLS HQ



Bow Island, a member library of SLS



**Peggy Curthoys, Jackie Hope-Hammel,
Phyllis Worrall and Bob Batchelder
1995**



Parade days 2004



Parade Day with the SLS staff
2003

Board of Trustees:
Keith Bender, Dwight Nagel, Ann Kanig, Martin Shields, Julie Friesen, Anne Marie Philipsen, Larry Jaspersen, Dave Bahnmler, Kathi Herman, Joyce Baerg, Sherry Steinbach, Rosalie Stromsmoe, and Gordon Reynolds (absent). Year 2006



Mission Statement

To provide services and support to member municipalities in the provision of comprehensive and cost effective library service through their autonomous local libraries. The provision of services will include resource sharing with other libraries of the province, the country, and the world.



Larry Dye, Bob Townsend, Bob Batchelder, Sean Sietz, Val Ogden, Peggy Curthoys, Carrie Timmermans, Jackie Hope-Hammel, Eileen Davis, Linda, Kozakewich, Gloria, Luthe, Harold Storlien, Mary Wirth, Phyllis Worrall, Julia Reinhart and Cindy Bohnet
Absent John Barrie and Jerry Smith
Staff Photo Christmas 2006