



Plan of Service

2005 – 2007

Approved by the Shortgrass Library System Board of Trustees – September 29, 2004

SHORTGRASS LIBRARY SYSTEM

Plan of Service

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Background

The genesis of the Shortgrass Library System occurred during the later 1970's and early 1980's. Interested people in southern Alberta started meeting together to consider an association to further the development and services of our libraries. The Shortgrass Library Project was commenced and a Steering committee developed a Plan of Service proposal.

In 1988 the Shortgrass Library System became a corporate entity with the prime function of providing services and support to autonomous member libraries which would assist them in the provision of comprehensive and efficient library service.

Plan of Service

The development and approval of a Plan of Service is the most important task of the Board of Trustees. In the Plan of Service, the Board details the directions, the priorities, and the general strategies that the CEO and staff will implement during the term of the Plan. Assessment of progress will occur periodically to ensure that the desired results are being achieved. Also the Alberta Libraries Act requires that the Board file a Plan of Service with the appropriate Minister every three years.

The last Plan of Service was developed and approved in September 2001, for the term 2001 – 2003. During 2002, minor revisions to the strategies for plan implementation were made and the resulting plan was designated for the term 2002 – 2004.

Next Steps

In order to assess the environment and needs for the future, the Board of Trustees decided to engage the System in a Preferred Futuring process. A consultant facilitated a full day of guided activities for a representative group of system stakeholders.

The history of SLS was developed prior to the session and shared with the group. An environment scan was completed to identify the pressures and forces that surround our regional library system. The things that we are proud of and those that we are sorry or regretful about were identified. A review of this work led us to identifying the key underlying beliefs that guide and support SLS. Based on these activities, the group then outlined what they would like to see SLS look like in ten years (2015).

A committee then reviewed all the information and developed a Vision Statement which is a 2015 present tense description of how SLS will be at that time. The Plan of Service will force our attention on ensuring that SLS is creating the future as defined in the Vision Statement. The Plan will be for a three year term, with a detailed assessment at the end of three years.

The assessment will determine whether or not we are on the right track regarding Vision achievement. If necessary, modifications will be made and the resulting next three year plan will be documented and implemented. The changing environment will also continue to impact SLS, and this will necessitate modifications to the Plan.

The Preferred Futuring session results, and the resulting Vision Statement, have provided a strong message to the Board of Trustees and staff that SLS is on the right track and should stay-the-course in its present Key Directions with some changes in emphasis, especially with respect to the Advocacy direction.

Our Preferred Future A Vision of 2015

The Shortgrass Library System has devoted the past ten years to three broad inter-related strategic priorities

- sharing of resources,*
- advocacy and*
- service to member libraries.*

Taking a closer look at each of these will reveal the progress that has been made since 2005.

Sharing of Resources

- *The Shortgrass Library System now encompasses all municipalities, counties, the Medicine Hat College, school systems, and special libraries within its mandated area.*
- *All members appreciate the value of the partnership, with its associated collaboration, sharing, networking and teamwork.*
- *Resources flow freely as needed among all of the libraries within the Shortgrass Library System and beyond.*
- *More online databases with associated searching and linking tools are acquired and integrated into the public access website meaning all library resources are equally available.*

Advocacy

- *Carefully planned and effective lobbying by all stakeholders in the Shortgrass Library System (and by the library community at large) has resulted in the recognition by all levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) that public libraries provide a core service to all citizens.*
- *The Alberta Government views each library as a focal point in its community, and as such, is a valuable resource in the dissemination of information regarding agriculture, health, education, tourism, home-based businesses and other services.*
- *Provincial and municipal governments respond accordingly to the need for ongoing sustainable funding for libraries to provide these services.*
- *Our libraries are using SuperNet connectivity, as supplied by the Alberta Government, to provide patrons access from their homes to extensive information and resources, plus to provide video-conferencing capabilities among the libraries and other sites.*

- *Membership fees are no longer required by any of the member libraries in the Shortgrass Library System.*
- *The increased funding for libraries is such that even the smaller rural libraries are open to the public most days of the week, and staff salaries are at competitive levels.*
- *Advocacy is directed towards increasing the awareness and knowledge of the general public regarding the services provided by the Shortgrass Library System. As a result the Shortgrass Library System now serves an "informed" public.*
- *There is a significant increase in the number of registered patrons who know how to use the online catalogue and databases from their home and business computers, and a similar increase in the number of people who use the libraries as a resource for research, entertainment, relaxation, education, etc.*
- *Public opinion polls rate libraries as a highly valued service.*

Service to Member Libraries

- *Member library boards, staff and patrons express a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the Shortgrass Library System.*
- *The Integrated Library System (ILS) software is kept current to ensure maximum sharing.*
- *Deliveries of shared resources are made on a timely and frequent basis.*
- *Technical services are provided as needed to the member libraries, enabling them to keep up with rapid changes in technology.*
- *Trained headquarters staff are properly balanced with the workload associated with increased membership.*
- *Training workshops are provided by Shortgrass to help the member library staff keep up with new technology, and to enable them to train their patrons.*
- *The Shortgrass Library System remains committed to a standard of excellence for the service it provides to its member libraries and the communities they serve.*
- *The Shortgrass Library System leads member libraries into new understandings about library services and partnerships in their community.*

Mission Statement and System Beliefs

Any plan of action must be built upon a bedrock or foundation of a well-considered Mission (what we are here for) and a defined set of beliefs (what we base our decisions upon). The Shortgrass Library System has these in place, and while they serve the System well, they have been modified in light of the results of the Preferred Futuring session.

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.

Belief Statements

We believe that libraries are vital contributors to the quality of life.

We believe in universal public library service and equal and open access to library collections.

We believe in the principles expressed in the Canadian Library Association's Statement on Intellectual Freedom (www.cla.ca/about/intfreed.htm).

We believe that the province-wide SuperNet will result in a unified, provincial network among Alberta libraries.

We believe that a library system fosters collaboration, sharing, networking and teamwork.

We believe that a library system enhances member libraries' programs and services without sacrificing local autonomy.

We believe that membership in a library system will enable member libraries to devote more time to developing creative and responsive public programs and services.

We believe that a library system results in more efficient and economical use of all available library resources: people, funds, materials.

We believe that a library system must advocate the benefits of system membership to non-member municipalities.

Core Business Activities of Shortgrass Library System

Our core business is to provide high-quality support services to our member libraries and contracted groups. Our specific activities include:

➤ ***Acquisitions***

Libraries select their own resources. By bulking the ordering for all of its member libraries, Shortgrass is able to obtain discounts not available to smaller libraries. Through automation of this service, staff and time efficiencies are also achieved.

➤ ***Cataloguing***

Trained professional and technical staff are responsible for cataloguing the resources for the member libraries into a single database, thereby achieving high quality of standardized information on the collection.

➤ ***Automation Support***

Shortgrass maintains the database on a “state-of-the-art” computer hardware and software system that provides circulation services to member libraries. The wide area network connects member libraries together and patrons see only one large library when they search for items. Also there are other databases for community information, events calendar, quick facts, etc.

Technical training and support is provided for member library staffs re: using library software and other online databases subscribed to through the internet.

➤ ***Processing***

Shortgrass processes the library resources with appropriate labels and cover protection for each of the member libraries.

➤ ***Internet Delivery of Services***

Shortgrass builds enhanced virtual library services for member libraries – online catalogue and other online resources.

➤ ***Delivery***

Newly processed resources and resources being shared from one library to another are moved by the Shortgrass delivery van on a weekly schedule. Shortgrass also provides special format resources- large print, videos, and talking books, which are routed around the member libraries.

➤ ***Patron Access***

Our patrons have access to a large collection of books and other materials outside their home library. They also have access to our electronic databases and the TAL card which enables them to borrow items as they travel to other libraries.

➤ ***Reference***

Information support services are available through an agreement with the Medicine Hat Public Library Reference Department. This service provides professional assistance in locating requested information and connects the members to the wider world of information outside the Shortgrass Library System through international inter-library loan network.

➤ ***Programs***

Shortgrass sponsors a Summer Reading Program, complete with a children's performer, who focuses on the program theme.

➤ ***Provincial Liaison***

Shortgrass has several liaison functions. It connects the member libraries to the Alberta Public Library Electronic Network (APLEN), thus making the provincial network accessible to all public libraries in the system. Along with Medicine Hat Public Library, it is also a member of The Alberta Library and facilitates the provision of TAL services for its member libraries. The Shortgrass Library System Board is a member of the Library Association of Alberta and the Alberta Library Trustees Association, and participates in initiatives as an individual association member. Shortgrass member libraries are also individual members of LAA and ALTA.

As well, the provincial library systems cooperate to share special programs resources among the libraries; Shortgrass manages the talking books collection for the visually and physically challenged, Parkland manages an international collection of books in other languages, Marigold manages a paperbacks-by-mail program, and Peace manages an audio book collection.

Supplemental Business Activities of the Shortgrass Library System

➤ *Contract Services*

Under separate contracts, Shortgrass is able to provide support services to other libraries such as schools, community, private, or corporate libraries. The purpose is to improve access to information and provide professional, cost-effective services to those libraries. This also benefits the member libraries by improved cost efficiencies in the total SLS.

Key Directions for the Shortgrass Library System

Key Directions describe the most important actions that the Shortgrass Library System must accomplish in order to be successful in fulfilling its Mission.

Key Directions focus the resources of the Shortgrass Library System on *doing the right things, at the right time, and doing them well.*

➤ **GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

Ensure that the Shortgrass Library System governance, leadership, and management structures take assertive roles in fulfilling the Mission Statement by proactive planning and implementation of the Plan of Service.

➤ **ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Ensure that through an emphasized advocacy and public relations program, there is a significant increase in member/public awareness, understanding and support of the Shortgrass Library System, and further, that there is committed support from the three levels of government for library services.

➤ **MEMBER SERVICES**

Ensure high quality, cost-effective services to our member libraries and contracted groups.

➤ **STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

Ensure that a collaboratively planned program be implemented to maintain and enhance staff development within the Shortgrass office and the member libraries.

➤ **SERVICE EXPANSION**

Ensure that carefully planned efforts are directed towards expanding membership and contract services in the Shortgrass Library System.

Key Results and Strategies for the Shortgrass Library System

Key Results will describe what will have happened or been accomplished when the Key Directions are implemented. The Strategies for the Shortgrass Library System, and the associated description of responsibility, resource allocation and timeline, will direct the organization as to how the Key Results will be accomplished during the allocated time frame.

KEY DIRECTION:**GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

Ensure that the Shortgrass Library System governance, leadership, and management structures take assertive roles in fulfilling the Mission Statement by proactive planning and implementation of the Plan of Service.

Key Result

A.1: Strong and proactive leadership by the Board, CEO and staff will be driven by and aligned with the Preferred Future, Mission Statement, System Beliefs, and the Plan of Service. The Shortgrass Library System will demonstrate this commitment and alignment in all its work.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
A.1.1 Review, refine, and communicate roles and responsibilities of the Board, Board Chair, CEO, and other key leadership positions in relation to overall SLS operation and key directions to ensure alignment.	Resp: Board Chair, CEO Res: In Budget Time: Annually in Jan/Feb
A.1.2 Monitor the work of the SLS to ensure alignment.	Resp: Board Chair, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
A.1.3 Ensure that SLS is represented at provincial level activities and meetings.	Resp: CEO, Board Res: In Budget Time: On-going
A.1.4 Keep knowledgeable about what is happening in other regional library systems and other potential beneficial partnerships.	Resp: Board Chair, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going

Key Result

A.2: New and continuing Board members will understand and commit themselves to the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, System Beliefs and Plan of Service.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
A.2.1 Hold workshop after fall elections/appointments for total Board with focus on Mission, Beliefs, Plan of Service and SLS operations.	Resp: Board, CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going
A.2.2 When new Board members are appointed at various times, orientation re: A.2.1 will be held with them.	Resp: Board Chair, CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: When Appropriate

Key Result

A.3: The member libraries, municipalities and contract partners will be satisfied with the level and process of consultation, and the overall direction and services of the Shortgrass Library System.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
A.3.1 Implement a process for monitoring and evaluating the satisfaction level our partners have with the direction and services of the Shortgrass Library System.	Resp: Board, CEO Res: In Budget Time: Monitoring is ongoing with periodic formal assessment
A.3.2 Use the results of the monitoring and evaluation process to improve services and shape the modifications to the next Plan of Service.	Resp: Board, CEO Res: In Budget Time: Following formal assessment and at least every three years.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
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| A.3.3 Review and revise where necessary the Policy Manual. | Resp: Board, CEO
Res: In Budget
Time: 2005 |
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Key Result

- A.4: Shortgrass Library System will attract and retain skilled and competent staff.**

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
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| A.4.1 Proactively engage in succession planning for key positions in the organization. | Resp: CEO, Board
Res: In Budget
Time: On-going |
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| A.4.2 Explore alternative employment relationships to facilitate high quality services. | Resp: CEO
Res: In Budget
Time: On-going |
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Key Result

- A.5: Shortgrass Library System management and staff will be organized to provide the most effective and efficient service possible.**

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
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| A.5.1 Continue to review the organizational structure to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. | Resp: CEO
Res: In Budget
Time: On-going |
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| A.5.2 Review and revise all role descriptions to meet results of A.5.1. | Resp: CEO
Res: In Budget
Time: 2005 |
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KEY DIRECTION:**ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Ensure that through an emphasized advocacy and public relations program, there is a significant increase in member/public awareness, understanding and support of the Shortgrass Library System, and further, that there is committed support from the three levels of government for library services.

Key Result

B.1: The Shortgrass Library System will have a positive, well-known public profile as a leader and advocate for public access to information and the sharing of all information contained in our libraries and other sources.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
<p>B.1.1 Continue to refine and implement a public advocacy/relations program that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advocate for improved library services ➤ Reach out to the public in a variety of ways to increase public awareness of the SLS and its services ➤ Promote the Mission of the SLS ➤ Increase the visibility of the SLS in the media and at community events ➤ Utilize the SLS website ➤ Participate in other regional groups whose goals benefit from library oriented partnerships 	<p>Resp: CEO, Board, Staff Res: In Budget plus some additional funds Time: On-going</p>
<p>B.1.2 Inform our current members about the SLS Mission and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Library boards ➤ SLS Board/staff ➤ Library staffs ➤ Municipal councils 	<p>Resp: CEO, Board Chair, Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going</p>

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
B.1.3 Focus regular attention on providing information and having direct meetings with the political representatives to foster understanding and financial support for public libraries as a core public service to all citizens.	Resp: Board, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
B.1.4 Maintain attitudes and actions by SLS staff of being available, supportive, positive, and service-oriented.	Resp: Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going
Key Result	
B.2: With the support of the Shortgrass Library System and the services it provides, the member public libraries will be recognized as vital sources of information for all people in southeastern Alberta.	
Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
B.2.1 Implement this Plan of Service.	Resp: All parties Res: As per Budget Time: On-going
B.2.2 Ensure that the Core Business Activities are successfully implemented.	Resp: Staff, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
B.2.3 Ensure that the SLS technology services are leading edge (within fiscal reality), reliable, and user friendly.	Resp: Asst. Director, Library Managers Res: Need for Budget increase Time: On-going
B.2.4 Ensure that the provision of our vital services are such that our member libraries can more effectively serve their patrons as a result of our services.	Resp: Board, CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going

KEY DIRECTION:**MEMBER SERVICES**

Ensure high quality, cost-effective services to our member libraries and contracted groups.

Key Result

C.1: The Shortgrass Library System will provide services that are desired and needed by our member and contract libraries, within the available resource base. Shortgrass Library System will help the member libraries to work together through its leadership roles of communicator, facilitator, and cooperation encourager.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
C.1.1 Implement fully the Core Business Activities.	Resp: CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going
C.1.2 Focus the Library Managers' meetings on development of shared goals and professional training opportunities to enable us to work together more productively.	Resp: Library Managers, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
C.1.3 Provide more technical services support and backup for Dynix, web based services, and other computer hardware/software support.	Resp: CEO, Asst. Director Res: Additional cost to be included in budget Time: Jan 2005

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
C.1.4 Maintain clear responsibility roles for Shortgrass and the local libraries re areas of independent responsibility and areas of cooperation.	Resp: CEO, Asst. Director, Library Managers Res: In Budget Time: On-going
C.1.5 Provide or assist in providing workshops for staff and patrons in a variety of areas: ➤ Computer training/upgrading ➤ Collection development ➤ Library management ➤ Electronic databases ➤ ILS training ➤ Other areas as appropriate	Resp: Asst. Director, CEO, Library Managers Res: In Budget plus additional funds Time: On-going
C.1.6 Enhance communications systems to ensure that the local library boards and librarians are informed of Shortgrass Library System Board decisions and other appropriate information. ➤ Newsletters ➤ Website ➤ Other forms ➤ Visits to Library Boards ➤ Social functions	Resp: CEO, Board Chair Res: In Budget Time: On-going
C.1.7 Maintain and raise standards where possible to ensure high quality service. ➤ Anticipate problem areas ➤ Conduct customer service surveys ➤ Use problem-solving methods ➤ Develop a code of ethics ➤ Develop a work process timeline	Resp: Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
C.1.8 ➤ Additional online databases with associated searching and linking tools are acquired and integrated into the public access website.	Resp: Asst. Director, Library Managers Res: In Budget Time: On-going
C.1.9 SLS will support our member libraries as SuperNet is implemented.	Resp: Asst. Director, CEO Res: In Budget Time: 2005
C.1.10 Search for ways that SuperNet and other new technology will assist us in providing improved services for libraries and patrons. ➤ Video-conferencing between SLS libraries and other areas	Resp: Asst. Director, CEO Res: Additional Funding Time: 2005-2006
C.1.11 Shared Integrated Library Systems (ILS) will continue to be investigated as a possible means of further efficiency and opportunity for increased sharing of resources.	Resp: Asst. Director Res: Additional Funds as necessary Time: Ongoing

KEY DIRECTION:**STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

Ensure that a collaboratively planned program be implemented to maintain and enhance staff development within the Shortgrass office and the member libraries.

Key Result

D.1: The Shortgrass Library System staff will engage in staff development programs, both individually and on a group basis, which will result in an increase in knowledge and ability to provide greater service to the Shortgrass Library System.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
D.1.1 Update and implement a staff development program for the total staff.	Resp: CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: Annually
D.1.2 Ensure that each staff member, as a part of their performance evaluation, has a personal development program created jointly by the staff member and their supervisor.	Resp: CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: Annually & informal review sessions

Key Result

D.2: Member library staff will be competent in providing the full range of library services to their patrons.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
D.2.1 The Shortgrass Library System staff will assist in the training of member library staff in order that they will be able to provide strong library services to their patrons.	Resp: Asst. Director, CEO, Library Managers Res: In Budget Time: As needed.

Key Result

D.3: The Shortgrass Library Staff have pride in the Shortgrass Library System and in working for the Shortgrass Library System, plus the level of staff satisfaction and morale will be high.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
D.3.1 Ensure that each staff member is appreciated and recognized for their personal value and contributions to SLS.	Resp: CEO, Supervisors, Board Res: In Budget Time: On-going
D.3.2 Ensure consistent and regular communication methods to ensure all staff members know what is going on in SLS.	Resp: CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
D.3.3 Continue the practice of teamwork where all staff members are included in planning activities and are valued members of the team.	Resp: CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going
D.3.4 Foster positive attitudes and a cheerful manner by each staff member as they work with their colleagues at Shortgrass and in their relationships with all other people associated with Shortgrass.	Resp: Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going
D.3.5 Develop a System Operational Procedures Manual by gathering procedure guidelines for all staff positions.	Resp: CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: 2006
D.3.6 Plan and hold staff social activities and special events.	Resp: Staff Res: N/A Time: On-going

KEY DIRECTION:**SERVICE EXPANSION**

Ensure that carefully planned efforts are directed towards expanding membership and contract services in the Shortgrass Library System.

Key Result

E.1: Additional municipalities, public libraries and other libraries will become members of the Shortgrass Library System.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
<p>E.1.1 Continue current initiatives to offer services to non-member municipalities :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Informal approaches from Board members and CEO ➤ Formal presentations ➤ Member municipal assistance ➤ Support citizens' groups who take this issue to their municipal councils 	<p>Resp: Board, CEO Res: In Budget Time: On-going until completed</p>
<p>E.1.2 Conduct a review of our non-resident fees to ensure they reflect the cost of providing library services.</p>	<p>Resp: CEO, Board Res: In Budget Time: Spring 2005</p>

Key Result

E.2: Shortgrass Library System services will be expanded to other school systems and to other appropriate organizations/groups.

Strategies	Responsibilities/ Resources/Timelines
<p>E.2.1 Develop a potential list of new markets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Other school systems ➤ Health services ➤ Senior citizens ➤ Government services ➤ Other areas 	<p>Resp: CEO, Board members, Staff Res: In Budget Time: On-going</p>
<p>E.2.2 Determine interest, then develop and present service proposals to school systems, community, private and corporate libraries.</p>	<p>Resp: CEO, Staff Res: In Budget Time: As interest is expressed</p>
<p>E.2.3 Develop fee for service schedules based upon cost recovery.</p>	<p>Resp: CEO, Office Manager, Other staff Res: In Budget Time: As necessary</p>