Provincial Resource Sharing Network Policy

for

Alberta Public Library Boards

January 2009
(updated Apr 2010)

Alberta
Municipal Affairs

The PROVINCIAL RESOURCE SHARING NETWORK POLICY for Public Libraries

Goal: The goal of resource sharing is access to information for all Albertans.

BACKGROUND

One of the goals of Alberta Municipal Affairs, Public Library Services Branch, continues to be to assist in securing for all Albertans, regardless of place of residence, social or economic circumstances, equitable access to public library services which will meet informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs. Libraries engage in resource sharing because no single library can meet all of the needs of its community nor can it make available all of the resources and information required by its customers. Libraries need access to the larger range of information available through networks. All public libraries in Alberta participate in a provincial resource sharing network, which decentralizes provision of resources and information.

The public libraries of Alberta cooperate and participate in this provincial resource sharing network comprised of the:

- **Principles of Resource Sharing:** developed by the library community and the province. The newly revised *Principles of Resource Sharing* is further along in this document.
- **Alberta Public Libraries Electronic Network (APLEN):** is a structured network based on these principles. The Alberta Public Libraries Network (APLEN) is funded by Alberta Municipal Affairs and administered by The Alberta Library (TAL). This structure gives public libraries a way to deal with the information demands of the 21st century, identifies their role as access points into the information continuum, and allows for participation in multi-type library networks, such as The Alberta Library (TAL).
- **Alberta Resource Sharing Agreement:** The seven regional library systems, plus Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Strathcona County, St. Albert, RM of Wood Buffalo and Red Deer Public Library Boards, along with the Public Library Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs are parties to a formal resource sharing agreement, and as such, are partners in coordinating resource sharing activities and providing resources and information to other public libraries in the province.

- **Interlibrary Loan Contract**: Alberta Municipal Affairs contracts with the Chinook Arch Regional Library System to administer the interlibrary loan network.

The seven regional library systems, plus Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, County of Strathcona, St.Albert, RM of Wood Buffalo and Red Deer Public Libraries, along with the Libraries Branch of Alberta Community Development are parties to a formal resource sharing agreement, and as such, are partners in coordinating resource sharing activities and providing resources and information to other public libraries in the province.

Access to information by all libraries is strengthened through sharing information and resources within this organized system in which the roles and responsibilities of all participants and the fundamentals upon which sharing takes place are common and understood.

Public libraries in Alberta operate in a constantly changing environment. Since 1973, a formal mechanism existed in Alberta to expedite and encourage resource sharing services. Current system configurations, funding policies, the existence of a multi-type cluster of networks necessitate that resource sharing guidelines be continually reviewed and revised.

The fundamentals, upon which resource sharing in Alberta, are founded, are:

1. Interdependence - with the global information explosion and limited resources of local libraries, no library can meet all customer needs. Libraries must, of necessity, share their resources through some kind of organized system to assist every public library in Alberta to meet the needs of its clientele.

2. Equity of Access - resource sharing in Alberta is based on the belief that every Albertan, should have equitable access to public library resources that will enable him/her to meet his/her informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs.

3. Decentralization - the guidelines are based on the premise of decentralized and distributed responsibility, whereby the diversity of network participants are accommodated and all libraries are an integral part of the network.

4. Local Responsibility for self-sufficiency - the local public library is primarily responsible for providing library services to its customers

and should develop its collection to meet as many of the community's needs as possible. The interlibrary loan service is a supplementary service and is not meant to be a substitute for local services.

5. <u>Reciprocity</u> - the key to current resource sharing is the exchange of resources and services for the mutual benefit of all participants in the resource sharing network. It implies a negotiated agreement whereby resource sharing partners are obligated to lend those kinds of resources they wish to borrow. It also implies that all public libraries that participate in the resource sharing process abide by the guidelines as developed from time to time.

This policy forms the basis for future resource sharing agreements and procedures developed by the Libraries Branch, the library nodes and public libraries of Alberta. Detailed protocols and procedures will be determined by the APLEN steering committee. The **Principles** emphasize the philosophy behind resource sharing and provide a rationalized basis for the service.

RESOURCE SHARING Definition

Definition of resource sharing in the *Libraries Regulation*: "means making available to other libraries the library resources owned by a board, the information contained in those resources and the staff expertise required to locate and make available the information or the library resources".

In its broadest sense, resource sharing is the common use by two or more libraries of each other's assets, whether they are, equipment, staff knowledge and expertise, materials, facilities, and/or information resources. Although the majority of resource sharing has been the sharing of bibliographic information and document exchange through interlibrary loan, it also includes the staff, expertise, technology, and services that enable this to happen. The public library network, whatever its configuration, is an organized system of sharing resources based on a set of shared values and formalized operational agreements.

The following principles articulate the philosophical framework for the provincial network. They provide the basis for developing partnerships, guidelines, protocols and procedures. They lay the foundation for future resource sharing agreements.

Alberta Municipal Affairs

PRINCIPLES of RESOURCE SHARING

1. All Albertans, regardless of location, economic or social circumstances, have access to information, materials, and library services.

2. Albertans have access to services and materials provided by Alberta libraries through the Alberta resource sharing network at no direct charge.

3. The local public library is responsible for providing library services to its customers and developing its collection to meet the community's needs.

4. Resource sharing supplements local services and resources and is not a substitute for local development.

5. Public libraries share their resources through an organized system to assist them in meeting the needs of their customers. The resource sharing network allows for a diversity of participants with all libraries considered an integral part of the network.

6. Resource sharing among public libraries in Alberta includes sharing of materials, information, and staff expertise, and allows for other cooperative arrangements.

7. Resource sharing is based on the recognition that libraries exist within a larger information continuum, occurs within a multi-type library environment and is not limited geographically.

Roles and Responsibilities of Partners

The roles and responsibilities of resource sharing partners in the Alberta public library network reflect changes in the resource sharing environment in Alberta and form the basis for a renewed commitment to resource sharing based on reciprocity and equity of access.

Resource Sharing Partners:

Alberta Government: Alberta Municipal Affairs: assists in securing for all Albertans, regardless of place of residence, social or economic circumstances, equitable access to public library services which will meet informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs. The Department contracts with Chinook Arch Library System to facilitate the inter-library loan network. It coordinates an agreement of services with the major resource sharing nodes in the province and provides ongoing funding to The Alberta Library (TAL) to facilitate and administer APLEN.

Public Libraries: delivers quality public library service to all Albertans. The libraries provide front line service to Albertans either through public service points or through online communication.

Alberta Public Library Network (APLEN): facilitates and coordinates the delivery of network and resource sharing services to the public libraries of Alberta. APLEN provides a province-wide, sustainable electronic network connecting Alberta's libraries. It connects hundreds of libraries through the Internet to other libraries and online educational and information resources. It enables libraries to strengthen their position as free public access ramps to the information highway and it enhances the traditional commitment libraries have toward promoting public access to information and ideas by providing new electronic information options. Originally established and funded by Alberta Community Development, Industry Canada and WEPA and now supported by Alberta Municipal Affairs through contract with The Alberta Library consortium to administer APLEN.

The Alberta Library (TAL): is a province-wide library consortium that works collaboratively with its members to promote universal, barrier-free access to the materials and resources in Alberta's diverse libraries. Its membership includes public, university, college, technical institute, and special libraries that promote and facilitate resource sharing, continuing education and learning, and library advocacy. TAL coordinates a distributed provincial catalogue, TALOnline, a province-wide reciprocal borrowing card, the TAL Card, and a core suite of commercial online/electronic information resources.

Guidelines

As partners in the delivery of the Provincial Resource Sharing network the following process and guideline is being brought forward for your approval.

- The Provincial Resource Sharing Policy outlines a working network of partners who have committed to a level of service that now is almost complete and defines what a basic level of resource sharing service must be. It includes both provision of municipal and system level of service to facilitate the reciprocal and participatory collaboration of partners in the delivery of the resource sharing service.

- For many years the systems and/or nodes have offered access through their participating network to all libraries in Alberta including those boards/municipalities that have not been a part of a system or a participating node.

- Participation in the network and reciprocity are fundamental to the shared collaborative network. Library Boards that are not part of a system or a provincial node **do not provide access to their materials to Albertans through the network established for that purpose and thus are not partners in reciprocity or collaboration.**

- The Partners now are activating and enforcing the agreed upon policy.

Guideline(s): Effective February 1, 2009
The library boards that do not belong to a system or share with a node will have to borrow materials directly from other libraries. They will not have access to the Virtual Private Network (VPN) for the Interlibrary Loan Application.
Lending libraries may respond at their discretion.

There are 10 non-participating boards in Alberta at Oct 2009.
- Andrew
- Banff
- Crossfield
- Duchess
- Lamont
- Lamont County
- MacKenzie County (LaCrete and Zama) ** (Ft. Vermilion is participating)
- Saddle Hills County (no service points)
- Veteran
- Willingdon

** Ft. Vermilion is participating with a node so are participating

Anomaly:

Lloydminster belongs to Lakeland Regional Library System in Saskatchewan and requests are handled by Saskatchewan.