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Enriching Communities -- A Shared Interest for Academic and Public Libraries

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Enriching Communities – A Shared Interest for Academic and Public Libraries

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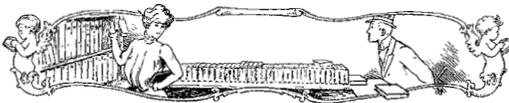
Building Bridges

The City of Edmonton is the capital of the Province of Alberta (Canada), and boasts a growing population of over one million people. Designated the 2007 Cultural Capital of Canada, Edmonton is home to a world-class University and a vibrant public library system. Edmonton is also a city of bridges, as the city is physically bisected by the majestic North Saskatchewan River. On the south bank of the River sits the **University of Alberta**, one of Canada's foremost universities and home of the second largest academic research library in Canada. Almost directly across the river, on the north side, is found the **Stanley A. Milner (Main) Library of the Edmonton Public Library** (a large urban library system with 16 service locations). While separated by the river, the two institutions are building bridges of their own in terms of collaborative initiatives to serve the entire city and to enrich the broader community.

A Shared Interest in Community

Public libraries are grounded in the cornerstone belief that they are central to the quality of life in their communities, working within a framework of community partnerships. The *Edmonton Public Library's Strategic Directions*, for instance, commit the Library to being a "participant and an active initiator in community dialogue and development" (Edmonton Public Library 9)

This community focus is echoed at the **University of Alberta**. U of A President, **Indira Samarasekara**, articulates a vision for a university with a mandate to "include the entire community in our learning enterprise" (Samarasekara qtd. in "The Other Home City"). She points to



the fact that, in the ongoing evolution of the academy, attention is being paid to "break[ing] down the classic stereotype of the university as an 'ivory tower' — a refuge from the concerns of the real world" (Samarasekara qtd. in "Bailey"). **Richard Florida**, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, emphasizes the central role that universities play in establishing cities as creative centers: "[U]niversities help to establish the broader quality of place of the communities in which they are located" (Florida 292).

This shared interest in enriching community, and the strong conviction of both institutions — the **Edmonton Public Library** and the **University of Alberta Libraries** — represent a challenge to explore creative opportunities in which a university library system and a public library system can collaborate as agents for addressing community challenges and building a better community.

Provincial and Local Collaboration

In Alberta the provincial library climate contributes to this collaboration. The **Alberta Library (TAL)**, a province-wide consortium, enables initiatives that bring academic and public libraries together to enhance service to Albertans. Academic and public libraries welcome each others' clients with walk-in access to their collections through **The Alberta Library Card**, a provincial reciprocal borrowing program established in 1999 and now involving over 300 libraries. Albertans can find materials at all Alberta libraries via **TAL Online**, which enables combined searching of most library catalogues in Alberta. Another TAL initiative, **The Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library (LHCADL)**, requires participating academic libraries to provide access to

these digital collections to community members. This initiative, named for a beloved Lieutenant Governor, brings a rich array of licensed digital resources and digitization initiatives to the community. The **LHCADL** was funded by the provincial government, as a result of concerted advocacy efforts by university library and public library leaders.

In Edmonton the university and public libraries enjoy a particularly close relationship, involving shared servers for their integrated library systems established as part of a joint migration to **Sirsi Unicorn** in 2002. This sharing of hardware provides a robust technology infrastructure which ensures access to the catalogue and ILS functions if one server is unavailable.

Staff expertise is readily shared between the two libraries, most notably at staff learning and development events. **Edmonton Public Library's** first **Professional Development Day** (2006) included an address on disaster planning, by **University of Alberta Libraries** Associate Director, **Merrill Distad**. **Edmonton Public Library's** Chief Executive Officer, **Linda C. Cook**, was recently the keynote speaker at the annual conference of **NEOS**, a library consortium spearheaded by the **University of Alberta**.

The latest collaborative initiative between the two libraries is a proposed public library service venue in the university library and public library cards for students.

This community focus, supported by the culture of our organizations, enriches (and challenges) our library service. Our libraries open their doors to each others' clients, who indeed may be the same individuals at different stages in their lives. There are certainly issues that arise for an academic library, such as sharing limited technology resources among students and community members, and dealing with the entire range of individuals in the community. However the contribution of the academy to the learning needs of the community is crucial to the development of an information-rich society. Ideally we would like to see our clients move seamlessly between our institutions throughout their lives, as each library plays to its strengths in connecting people with information and building community.

For more information:

www.epl.ca
www.library.ualberta.ca
www.lhcadl.ca
www.thealbertalibrary.ca
www.talonline.ca
www.neoslibraries.ca

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About the Authors

Anne Carr-Wiggin and **Louise Reimer** are librarians who have led peripatetic careers in public, academic, special and consortial libraries. **Anne** first thought of working in libraries while sheltering from the cold in the local library soon after moving to Canada from England. She has worked in public, college and university libraries, as well as for two library consortia. After a childhood spent haunting her local public library branch, **Louise** decided to spend her adult years as well in libraries, and has worked in virtually every facet of library operations — cataloguing, children's services, reference services, and management — with careers at the **Toronto Public Library**, the **Edmonton Public Library**, and the **University of Alberta Libraries**. **Anne** and **Louise** share an interest in exploring new avenues to foster quality service, and have most recently collaborated on the development of an integrated, single service desk in the **Humanities and Social Sciences Library** at the **University of Alberta**. They share a belief that public and academic libraries have more commonalities than differences. They also share ideas on living with teenagers. Both authors have **Facebook** pages.

A Recipe for Success: Two Cups of Collaboration, Two Cups of Hard Work, and a Cup of Good Timing

Facilitating the 2007 Pennsylvania Library Association Conference

by **Lisa German** (Assistant Dean, Technical and Collections Services, University Libraries, Penn State University Libraries; Phone: 814-865-0401) <lb10@psu.edu>

I've lived in Centre County in Pennsylvania for twenty-six months and one of the first things I noticed was the collaborative relationship between the **Penn State University Libraries** and **Schlow Centre Region Library**. I've worked at libraries in two other states and have never seen any collaborative effort quite like this between the public and the university research library.

Fostered by Library Leadership

This collaboration is fostered by the leadership of both libraries and permeates both organizations. The two Associate Deans at **Penn State University Libraries**, both longtime residents of State College, have been champions of **Schlow** in roles of board member and fundraiser. The Administration and other librarians at the **Schlow Library** are very active, as are many **Penn State Librarians**, in the **Pennsylvania Library Association**. It was the collaboration and enthusiasm of these leaders that served as the catalyst for an academic/public library partnership to assume the responsibility for facilitating the **2007 Pennsylvania Library Association Conference** to be held in State College.

The planning for this conference began back in 2004/2005. The timing was perfect for a suggestion to hold the conference in State College to move forward. The President of the **Pennsylvania Library Association** was the parent of two Penn State students — and so followed events at **Penn State** more closely than might be expected. Librarians from both **Schlow** and **Penn State University Libraries** were on the **Pennsylvania Library Associa-**

tion Board. Agreeing to work together, they jointly made the motion for the 2007 conference to be held in State College. The motion was passed by the Board.

Electing a Conference Chair

In 2006, a librarian from **Schlow** and a librarian from **Penn State** were the two candidates for 2nd Vice President Conference Chair of the **Pennsylvania Library Association**. They agreed to work together on the conference, regardless of the election outcome

Betsy Allen, the Director **Schlow Centre Region Library**, was elected. She and **Jack Sulzer**, one of the Associate Deans at **Penn State** and her opponent, became the leadership for planning the conference. The planning committee was composed of a good mix of public and academic librarians in the region and began meeting in the winter of 2006/2007 to plan and organize the conference. It was an extremely collegial working group, with enthusiastic people who were excited about hosting the conference. Fundraising, program planning, local events, publicity and other committees began working in earnest to plan the conference. Each subcommittee worked on its tasks through the spring and summer of 2007. The subcommittee chairs met with the conference chairs each month to make sure the planning was moving forward. The conference was held on October 14-17, 2007 at the **Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel**.

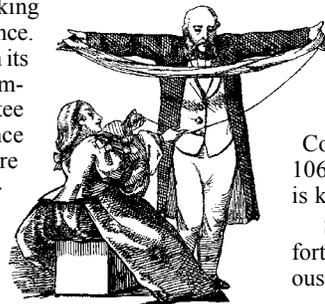
Why did this collaboration between the public and the university research library surprise me? Because, I have not seen it elsewhere, though I've worked in libraries in two other states.

Why did this work so well? I believe it worked well for several reasons. First, there was tremendous administrative support from both the Dean of University Libraries and Scholarly Communication, **Nancy Eaton**, and from **Betsy Allen**, the Director at **Schlow**. Second, the librarians at both libraries assumed leadership roles on committees and wherever else they were needed. The commitment to host a successful conference was shared by employees of both libraries. Many other librarians both from the region and outside the area were integral partners in areas such as fundraising and program planning. And finally there was a great deal of support by the **Association** headquarters staff.

Preliminary reports indicate that the conference was a success and that people would

like to add State College to the regular rotation of conference sites. Though it took 106 years for the **Pennsylvania Library Association** to be held in State College, it will not take another 106 years before it returns to what is known as "Happy Valley."

State College residents are very fortunate to have two such marvelous libraries in their town. 🍷



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Endnotes

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Public Libraries for College Students!

by **Gretchen L. Freeman** (Associate Director for Technology, Salt Lake County Library Services, 2197 E. Fort Union Boulevard, Salt Lake City, UT 84121; Phone: 801-944-7527) <gfreesan@slco.lib.ut.us>

Dual Citizenship

In the larger community beyond ivy-covered campus walls, college students are identified both as students and residents. This unique dual citizenship means they have access not only to the college library, but also to a public library serving the community where the student lives. While the public library does not serve specific curriculum or research needs, it offers a number of resources for college students. With a mission to serve community information and recreation needs, public libraries offer college students collections, facilities

and services that complement those available to students on campus.

For academic and public libraries to form an effective partnership, each should understand the resources and strengths of the other. And librarians need to be aware of the resources their customers are able to access both inside and outside libraries on campus or in the community. Furthermore, students who are public and school library users during their school years are more likely to be successful in their academic endeavors. Librarians of all stripes

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