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on the  
Future  
Direction  
of MHLA

Spring,  
1993

# I INTRODUCTION

The attached report presents the results of the deliberations of the Task Force on the Future Direction of the Manitoba Health Libraries Association. It has been a difficult year in which to undertake the preparation of such a document, but in many ways this makes its publication even more imperative.

It has been clear from discussions with many members of the Association that the organizations in which they work are changing dramatically - many health facilities face program cuts, some face a complete change in focus; budgets are being scrutinized closely and professional development funds and activities are often prime targets; revamped administrative structures may lead to changes in position descriptions, reporting lines and mandates. The Manitoba Health Libraries Association's longstanding role in facilitating resource sharing and mutual support is becoming more difficult to maintain and develop. We are battling not only a continuing erosion of our provincial resource base, but the insularity that cannot help but develop as our members attempt to meet the increasing demands within their institutions with decreasing budgets and staff. This, coupled with the tendency for less and less institutional support for any activities outside of the facility, often makes it difficult for us to look beyond the problems of the day and our own four walls.

When we initially began work on this document, MHLA's focus for the future seemed relatively clear - to continue to support the expansion and enhancement of resource sharing tools and activities with a particular emphasis on the acquisition and effective utilization of the appropriate technologies to do so. As the year unfolded however, it became evident that there are more important and immediate roles for the organization in lobbying, marketing and advocacy, and in ensuring that the membership has access to the professional development opportunities that they will require to continue to develop and provide responsive, dynamic and viable information services.

Please review the recommendations contained in this report carefully and be prepared to discuss it in detail at the Annual General Meeting at the end of this month. If the MHLA is to continue to be an active and useful association, it is extremely important that this document accurately reflect your needs and concerns.

Respectfully submitted

Judy Inglis and Laurie Blanchard

# P

## ROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*As health libraries staff work to identify, evaluate and implement appropriate technologies, stay abreast of new resources, and develop innovative and responsive programs and services, continuing education is increasingly essential. However, as health care facilities provide less and less support for continuing education, it is becoming more and more difficult for many MHLA members to participate in conferences and courses, particularly those outside the province of Manitoba. Within the province, both the quantity and quality of professional development opportunities is limited.*

### *General Recommendations*

- i) That the MHLA initiate and support joint programming with other Manitoba library associations and other regional health libraries associations.
- ii) That fundraising activities and annual budgets be developed with a view to supporting high quality continuing education opportunities for MHLA members.
- iii) That the responsibilities for the Vice-President/President Elect position on the MHLA executive be defined primarily as program development and coordination. This will ensure that there will always be an individual committed to assuming these responsibilities each year.
- iv) That the programme coordinators from each provincial/regional library association formalize policies and procedures for liason and cooperation.

### *Items for Immediate Consideration*

- MHLA representative to Spring Conference raise these issues at post-conference meeting

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## OBBYING/MARKETING

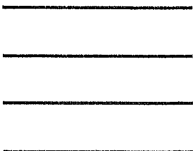
*We are witnessing radical changes and reorganization in the health care community in Manitoba. Services dedicated to providing timely information resources to all health professionals in Manitoba including in underserved areas are at risk. The MHLA must ensure that health professionals in Manitoba continue to have access to high quality library resources.*

### *General Recommendations*

- i) That MHLA identify services at risk and lobby the bodies responsible for funding these services.
- ii) That MHLA actively market and promote awareness of the importance of health libraries in the provision of quality health care to the broader health community.
- iii) That MHLA prepare promotional materials and provide opportunities for continuing education to health information professionals in Manitoba.

### *Items for Immediate Consideration*

- That the MHLA play an important role in contributing to the development of CCHFA standards for Health Libraries.



# *R*ESOURCE SHARING

*The MHLA has historically been committed to the spirit of resource sharing among its members, recognizing that for small libraries with limited staffing and resources this is the key to their continued viability. All libraries in Manitoba face the economic reality of shrinking budgets and high prices and the increasing demands of technological sophistication. Cooperation and resource sharing can only benefit both small and large libraries, recognizing the unique and significant contribution all can make.*

## *General Recommendations*

- i) That MHLA work to promote the awareness that although health libraries in Manitoba are often small with specialized resources, they have an important role to play in the library community.
- ii) That local resources sharing initiatives are inclusive and recognize the range and diversity of Manitoba libraries.
- iii) That we support in principle the activities of the Manitoba Library Consortium. However, until it is clear they recognize the above statements, it is difficult to recommend that MHLA members participate.

## *Items for Immediate Consideration*

- That MHLA approach other library organizations i. e. CASLIS, CALL, to explore the role of special libraries in local consortia and networks. (MHLA representative to the Manitoba Consortium)

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# A

## UTOMATION/NETWORKING

*In small special libraries where a single staff member is often responsible for all aspects of library operation, an automated library management system can be particularly useful in improving service provision. However, the same constraints that create this need often make it very difficult for library staff to acquire the expertise to effectively evaluate, select and implement these systems. In many cases participation in a larger multi-user system may represent an optimal solution.*

*It is also increasingly important to ensure that catalogues and union lists are accessible on local networks in order to facilitate information dissemination and optimize access to regional resources. While the MHLA in principle, should actively encourage its members to participate in a local network for cataloguing, as well as other functions, it is extremely important that the terms and conditions of network participation are not prohibitive to small specialized libraries.*

### **General Recommendations**

i) That the MHLA ensure that the Union List of Selected Serials is successfully mounted on the Bridge system.

ii) That a study be undertaken to explore the feasibility of mounting the Union Book Catalogue on Bridge as part of an overall review of the utility and cost-effectiveness of the UBC.

iii) That the MHLA explore the possibility of working with the University of Manitoba to develop a detailed proposal for network participation that would be accessible to all Manitoba Health Libraries Association members.

iv) That the MHLA support local initiatives that encourage the development of accessible and comprehensive library networks.

v) Where individual libraries are considering stand alone systems, consideration should be given to ensuring that record format will be standardized and compatible with uploading to and downloading from existing networks. An information sheet providing guidelines in this regard should be developed.

vi) That MHLA work cooperatively with other library associations in the province to maintain a current inventory of systems currently in use in Manitoba libraries.

vii) That MHLA investigate the feasibility of group purchase of computer hardware and software.

### **Items for Immediate Consideration**

- Establish committee to review UBC (MHINET Librarian & Task Force rep)

- Develop draft proposal for Bridge participation for review by MHLA membership (U of M rep, St. Boniface rep, Task Force rep)

