Hi Everybody,

I am writing this in 2015, but you won’t see it until the New Year. I hope your holiday season was rejuvenating and a time to ponder and celebrate the past year’s successes.

Things are humming along in the office and on the committees. Momentum keeps building on the 2016 Saskatchewan Libraries conference celebrating 20 years of the Multitype Library Board. Many quality session ideas were submitted from across the country, and the Program Committee is hard at work deciding which ones to choose. Did we mention yet that Joseph Boyden is coming as the keynote?!? It’s going to be amazing! Keep your schedule clear for May 5-7, 2016. You won’t want to miss this!

Judy and Anne in the SLA office continue to diversify what we do, building SLA’s impact on the library community and the people we serve. New ideas are being worked on to enrich summer programming, and fundraising is underway. Have you purchased your raffle tickets yet for the Apple Watch? With that simple accessory, you could take your tremendous library skills and transform into a walking ‘iBrary’!

We just got the great news that SLA (Judy) got a $5000.00 grant from Price Waterhouse Cooper for board development in diversity and serving diverse communities. Thanks to Price Waterhouse Cooper for this support, and congratulations Judy on this grant-writing success on our behalf. Judy has now turned her attention to the development of SLA’s three-year Annual Global Funding (AGF) application to SaskCulture. We are very thankful to have had many years of funding support from SaskCulture for the work that SLA and libraries do in Saskatchewan communities.

A number of months ago, I think I mentioned that SLA has ‘bracket creep’ going on with its membership categories. Michael Shires has been working away at a solution to this, and at the 2016 AGM you will see a proposal related to our fees and fee structures. I think that you will find it reasonable, and a way to ensure that our association remains accessible to new library staff and inclusive.

It has been the year for surveys. Thank you to everyone who participated recently in the SLA-specific survey about the proposed new national federation. Here are some statistics:

* 37 SLA members filled out the survey, as well as five non-members
* of the 42 respondents:
  + 90% support the purpose of the proposed federation
  + 64% support the governance (board structure) of the proposed federation
  + 90% support SLA participating in advocacy and policy development at the national/international level as part of this new federation
  + 90% support SLA investing in the new federation financially
  + 33% are interested in bringing their volunteer energy to projects and initiatives at the national level
  + 59% expect to feel more connected to the national advocacy and policy efforts

Related to the proposed governance structure of the national federation, some Saskatchewan folks, and some Manitoba ones too, are not sure about the idea of sharing a single representative for our two provinces. I am part of the Working Group that is negotiating this federation, and we had a number of reasons for this choice.

Both Saskatchewan and Manitoba have small populations, and both associations (SLA and MLA) have small memberships; sharing a representative means that we can avoid tapping out our local volunteer bases further. Also, the national federation will have limited funding in its first years and lots of ground-work to lay; keeping the national board small and nimble and low-cost will help it stay on track. Thirdly, the work that the national federation will be doing will be national in focus, not provincial - it should matter little how we align ourselves. The Atlantic Provinces will also be sharing a representative, to keep costs low, to keep the federation board small, and to avoid volunteer burnout. The Working Group has recommended that a governance review be done a few years after the founding of the federation. SLA hopes to work closely with the Manitoba Library Association to set up a representative structure that works for both provinces and our members.

In January, you will see a call for nominations for the SLA Board for the 2016-2017 year. Please look seriously at the positions that will be available. We have great momentum going, an amazing group of folks on the board, and energy in our association. If you can give of your time in the next few years, to help us keep things moving and growing, that would be just tremendous.

It is a pleasure to work with all of you, on the board and on committees. I learn new things every day from this experience. Thank you for that.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Schmidt

2014-2016 President