



**Manitoba
Library
Association**

2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Manitoba Library Association
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Letter from the President

KC Bateman, President

It is my honour to present the President's Report for the Manitoba Library Association's 2025 Annual General Meeting.

This past year has marked a significant moment for our association as we prepare to host the first in-person Manitoba Libraries Conference since before the COVID-19 pandemic. The return of this event represents not only a long-awaited opportunity to reconnect, but also a meaningful step forward for the MLA and the broader library community in Manitoba to collaborate. The enthusiasm and dedication that have gone into organizing this conference are a testament to the resilience and passion of our members.

At the same time, the past year has brought several challenges. The association has contended with several open board positions, and unforeseen circumstances have resulted in a very lean executive and board. I began the year serving as Vice President and stepped into the role of President earlier than planned. This transition was unexpected, but it has been a privilege to serve in this capacity.

Despite these significant challenges, the Manitoba Library Association and its amazing staff delivered a fall networking event, organized a major conference, stewarded scholarships, bursaries and awards, actively advocated in front of City Councils, maintained online resources at mla.mb.ca and met with the Manitoba Government to advocate for libraries across Manitoba. Reinvigorating the board with new directors will be key to maintaining these core services and to expand the paid staff with the addition of an Executive Director.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the board members who remained engaged and committed throughout the year. Their dedication, flexibility, and hard work have been invaluable in keeping the association moving forward. Despite the obstacles, their collective efforts have ensured the continued vitality of the MLA and its work on behalf of Manitoba's library community.

As we gather again and look ahead, I am optimistic about the future. The return of the Manitoba Libraries Conference is a milestone worth celebrating, and I believe it marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for our association.

KC Bates, MLA President 2024-2025



Reports

Membership Report

Dylan MacDougall, Membership Director

Individual memberships have remained relatively stable. We have less individual members than we did in 2020, but more than we did in 2021–2023.

Between 2020 and 2021 / 2022, there was a noticeable drop in institutional and public library board memberships, likely due to COVID. However, these have started to improve. The conference, in particular, is improving rates for new and renewing institutional and public library board memberships. The technicians division has remained relatively stable over the past few years, while the trustees division has seen a slight reduction.

In summary, there is work to be done but the situation is not dire – especially considering COVID disruptions and in-person conferences being on hiatus until 2025.

Membership Report continued

MLA Membership (Past 6 years)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (As of April)
Individual Membership	86	67	65	65	74	72
Institutional Membership	22	21	15	16	14	16
Public Library Board Membership	20	20	13	14	12	9
Total	128	108	93	95	100	97

Divisional Breakdown (Past 4 years)

	2022	2023	2024	2025 (As of April)
Technicians Division	14	16	13	16
Trustees Division	18	15	9	10

Financial Report

Kathleen Williams, Secretary and Interim Treasurer

Jen Kendall, Office Manager

The Manitoba Library Association remains in good standing as to our financial status. We provide annual filings to the Companies Office of Manitoba and have maintained our charitable status.

Our income is through memberships (individual, institutional, board), and various grants. We are grateful for once again receiving an annual grant from the Province of Manitoba which largely funds our salaried staff (Program Coordinator and Office Manager - and soon, an Executive Director). In early summer 2024, the staff shifted from being contract only to salaried staff with paid benefits. These staff have been critical to the stability of MLA - especially as the Board faced vacancies in 2023-2024 and further in 2024-2025. These challenges paused the planned hiring of the Executive Director. The staff allowed the Board to focus on core operations and planning for the first in-person Manitoba Libraries Conference since COVID. MLA has also received many donations/grants for the Prison Libraries Committee.

Our expenditures are largely the paid staff, spending of grants/donations for the Prison Libraries Committee, and overhead of the association - the annual audit, insurance, website hosting, office needs (QuickBooks, membership software, payroll services, etc.), expenses related to programming (e.g. the new annual fall networking event), and office rent at ArtSpace.

The excess of revenue over expenditure is expected to reduce/equalize in the upcoming year with additional expenditures for the Executive Director position and with the costs associated with the return of the biennial Manitoba Libraries Conference.

The association's fiscal year is September 1 - August 31. Our auditor is Reid & Miller Chartered Professional Accountants Inc. To receive the most recent audited financial statements, please email secretary@mla.mb.ca.

Communications Report

Austin Matheson, Communications Director

The 2025–2026 year continued to be a busy period for MLA’s Communications Standing Committee, consisting of Communications Director Austin Matheson and committee members Kirsten Wurmann, Rustam Dow, and Nina Eleuterio. Creating in-demand and popular content about MLA’s programs and activities on social media and our monthly newsletter continued to be at the top of our to-do list, as well as making opportunities for Manitoba libraries to connect with one-another and contributing to the success of the 2025 Manitoba Libraries Conference.

Our social media content, and especially our Instagram account (@mb_library_assoc), continues to be the primary focus of our communication efforts. Our account currently has over 930 followers, and 61 posts were created since last year’s AGM. Our content was more popular than ever this past year, and received an average of 4500 views per month since the fall. Posts featuring the MLA’s advocacy efforts, the work being done by libraries from across the province, and videos of MLA staff and board members, were some of our highlights this year.

Due to concerns of misinformation and content moderation, MLA migrated their posts from X to Bluesky in January of this year. The new account, @mblibrary.bsky.social, has 86 followers. The Communications team also switched social media management platforms from Hootsuite to Buffer last year in order to continue posting social media content across all of our platforms in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Like our social media efforts, the MLA newsletter continues to be successful. Every month it informs 448 subscribers of the programming and advocacy efforts of the MLA, as well as updates and news from libraries across the province. The newsletter has seen an increase in both average open rate (55%) and click rate (13%) since last year’s AGM.



Communications Report Continued

While much of our online content is about the goings-ons of the MLA, we also aim to create opportunities for libraries to connect and communicate with one another. This year we interviewed four more library workers from across Manitoba about the important work that they do, and we continue to be an active member of the library community on social media, sharing and liking content from our friends across the province and Canada.

Since last year, we have been busy assisting with this May's Manitoba Libraries Conference by creating conference graphics, posts, and web content. We look forward to being on-site during the conference to take photos and provide communications support to the rest of the conference team!



Program Coordinator Report

Kirsten Wurmman, Program Coordinator

As program coordinator for the Manitoba Library Association, there is no shortage of ideas, passion, and potential collaborations. There is only a shortage of time. While I am only part-time at 14 hours per week, I am pleased to report on some of the many highlights from the past year.

Programming

As my job title suggests, my focus is on programming for the MLA members. This year was busy with the main priority being the Manitoba Libraries Conference 2025 conference planning. The community really came together volunteering to present sessions, and participate on planning committees in the months leading up to the big event. I am grateful!



Library Connections 2024, our second annual networking event, was another great success with 40+ attendees all engaging with topics like marketing, fundraising, safety issues, and programming. The Dauphin Library was abuzz with conversations, and laughter throughout the day, with new connections being made and more established relationships strengthened. The event would not have been possible without the help of Alison Moss and her team at the Dauphin Public Library -many thanks!

A new programming partnership was established and a letter of agreement signed with the Canadian Children's Book Centre. MLA will now help in coordinating and promoting the annual Children's Book Week program across Manitoba. Stay tuned for more!

A major MLA programming committee is without a doubt, the Prison Libraries Committee (PLC). The PLC was extremely busy with library services and programming around the province. PLC Chair Ashley Huot provides more details further on in this annual report.



Relationship Building and Advocacy

Advocacy and establishing relationships within the library sector (and beyond) is another major part of what I do as program coordinator. And this past year has been a busy one for that! Meetings with the Minister of Sport Culture Heritage and Tourism, and the Minister of Justice and Commissioner of Corrections is important to keep the goals and priorities of the MLA and our membership at the forefront.

But engaging in community is really the joy of the job. I was able to table at this year's first ever Winnipeg Public Library PDday and look forward to the next one coming up in the fall!



Speaking to the Winnipeg City Council and to the press about the importance of Community Connections as a critical library service and program kept me very busy this year. Anytime we can speak to the media about the fantastic work of Manitoba libraries, the challenges they face, and the impact they make for communities, I love to jump at the chance.

Future Planning

The future looks bright for Manitoba Libraries! We are connecting as never before and I look forward to another Library Connections 2025! Perhaps somewhere in southern Manitoba?

New partnership, programming and professional development opportunities are in our future with a new collaborator, the **Manitoba Arts Network**. Stay tuned for news coming soon!

As well, MLA has made some great strides with RRC Polytechnic in reviving the community advisory committee and exploring opportunities for programming and professional development for library workers and especially library technicians. We will be reaching out soon for engagement with MLA members - keep your eye out.

Reach Out!

This is but a small glimpse into the fun times of the MLA Program Coordinator. Please reach out with ideas, questions, concerns, feedback of any kind! I am here for you and to support you.

Connect with me at kirsten.w@mla.mb.ca



Prison Libraries Committee (PLC) Report

Ashley Huot, Prison Libraries Committee Chair

The Prison Libraries Committee was formed in 2012 and believes that access to books, literacy, and information is a right for all, including our incarcerated community members. Over the past decade, what we have come to realize is that one of the most important things we can do is to create a moment, to facilitate a space, where humanity and perhaps even hope, can exist.

The PLC provides books, programs, and/or services to:

The Winnipeg Remand Centre (books only)
Headingley Correctional Centre for Men (HCC)
Women's Correctional Centre (WCC)
Milner Ridge Correctional Centre
The Pas Correctional Centre
The Manitoba Youth Centre (MYC)

The PLC has also begun engagement with the Brandon Correctional Centre and Westman Libraries to consider how we can facilitate support for books to BCC.

Volunteers

The PLC currently has 35+ volunteers and has onboarded several new volunteers, held volunteer orientations, and recruited a new Volunteer Coordinator, Margaret Banka.

Programs & Services

Book Collection and Delivery: Through purchases and collecting donations, the PLC sent hundreds of boxes of high-quality, well-curated books to prisons. PLC volunteers periodically weeded and organized collections in prisons. Regular deliveries of books went to:

- HCC
- Milner Ridge
- Remand
- WCC
- Manitoba Youth Centre (MYC)
- Book Mates book club at WCC
- Book Club at WCC

- Monthly Book Exchanges at WCC
- In 2024, the PLC launched a new monthly Pop-Up Library Program at MYC for youth
- Email Reference Service: The PLC has offered this service to WCC, HCC, and MYC and is currently working on expanding this service to all provincial prisons. We are partnered with MB Law Library for answering legal questions. This program was temporarily paused due to changes in corrections' approval process, we are working to re-establish it
- Joe Big George Memorial Collection: The first JBG collection was delivered to Milner Ridge, and plans are in progress to expand the collection to each prison. We are engaging in ongoing fundraising and promotion
- Legal Information Initiative: getting a cataloged collection of legal books and resources in Manitoba prisons, in partnership with the Manitoba Law Library and funded by the Manitoba Law Foundation

Events April 2024–Present

Prisoners' Justice Day, August 2024: PLC collaborated with other community organizations to participate in Prisoner's Justice Day. We created a Prisoner's Justice Day Reading list, which we shared with our broader community to support ongoing learning. We also had a presence at a Sacred Fire hosted at Manitou House and helped to make and disperse lunches and books to folks in the North End community.

Perverting Justice: Book Launch, Book Drive, and Social Event, May 2024

PLC spoke at this event and hosted a table with materials to share our work with the community.

Community Resource Fairs, 2024

PLC volunteers attended the resource fair at WCC (May) and HCC (November) to connect with incarcerated folks and correctional staff about literacy, information, and PLC's work.

Workshops April 2024–Present

The PLC hosted workshops facilitated by PLC volunteers and local guest artists, songwriters, and authors. Our ability to provide workshops was paused for 9 months due to corrections implementing a new approval process :

- Law students, part of the Robson Hall Rights and the Prison Law Clinics at the University of Manitoba, facilitated a workshop in April about employment with a criminal record for men at HCC.
- PLC volunteer and author Owen Schalk facilitated a 2-session-long creative writing workshop for men at HCC in April 2025.
- Local rapper, Osani Balkaran, facilitated songwriting workshops for youth at MYC in August 2024.

- Governor General’s Literary Award winner, former Winnipeg Poet Laureate, and Parliamentary Poet Laureate, Chimwemwe Undi has applied to facilitate a series of poetry.

Research

Members of the PLC participated in the Prairie Abolition Research Cluster, funded by the University of Manitoba Institute for the Humanities.

Presentations

PLC continues to speak about our work and projects to members of the public and organizations:

Sawatsky, K. & Wurmann, K. (2024). *PLC and legal information presentation*. Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Baraschuk-Modha, J. & Wurmann, K. (2024). *Prison Libraries Committee: Access to Information is a Human Right*. Canadian Museum for Human Rights “Food for Thought” Lunch & Learn.

Anderson, H., Kilpatrick, A., Otayek, R., Pate, K., Sawatsky, K., Sinclair, A., & Wurmann, K. *Within Bars But Not Without Rights: Legal Information And Library Access for Incarcerated Persons*. (2024). Canadian Association of Law Libraries annual conference. Substantive session.

Educating and Advocating in Manitoba Prisons. Access to Justice week panel (October 29, 2024) <https://mbaccesstojustice.ca/a2j-week-2024-educating-and-advocating-in-manitoba-prisons/>

Fontaine, L., Huot, A., & Sawatsky, K. (2025). *Information Justice Inside and Out of Provincial Prisons*. Manitoba libraries conference, Winnipeg.

Donations, Grants, Fundraisers

- PLC is grateful for the \$500 provided annually to our committee from the MLA board.
- Our annual book sale in coordination with Bar None-Prison Rideshare was held in June 2024, and we raised over \$6000 (\$3000 for each organization).
- The Joe Big George Collection continues to receive donations, and we successfully received a grant of \$2500 from Human Rights Internet to help establish a JBG collection at WCC.
- In February 2024, we received a donation of 500 books from a drive hosted by local independent bookstore Raven’s End Books: The Horror Bookshop

Partnerships and Memberships

PLC has continued to work collaboratively with other organizations serving the justice-involved community, including:

SMAAC

Books2Prisoners Alliance

Manitoba Access to Justice Network – Prison Libraries Working Group

Law Society MB and Manitoba Law Library

John Howard Manitoba

Elizabeth Fry

BarNone- Prison Rideshare

MB Human Rights Commission

CFLA – subcommittee to update and revise the Prisoners' Right to Read Statement (the statement was adopted by the CFLA board of directors)

Significant new partnership highlights include:

- St Paul High School – mentoring and acting as trustee for the youth-led, grant funded 'Inawendiwin' Project to build a Joe Big George collection and Indigenous library spaces at the Manitoba Youth Centre, funded for \$30,000
- In May 2024, PLC members, the MLA president, and a representative from the Manitoba Law Library met with the new Minister of Justice, Matt Wiebe, to advocate for prison libraries' support and recognition from the government. This led to the drafting of a government policy addressing access to education and libraries in prisons.
- A Manitoba Corrections working group was established for Prison Libraries – with Director of Operations: Todd Tischmann, Programming Coordinator: Carlos Clark, and Director of Indigenous Relations, Shannon Buck, and representatives from the PLC and Manitoba Law Library

Media Coverage Spring 2024-2025

- CBC News Manitoba. (2024, May 11). Getting books behind bars: Connecting inmates with books in Manitoba. CBC News Manitoba.
- CBC News Manitoba. (2024, June 19). Radio noon – June 19, 2024 Winnipeg newslive. [23:35-34:12]. CBC News Manitoba.
- Davidson, T. (2024, October 31). Speakers at Manitoba a2j conference call for more prison libraries. LAW 360 Canada.
- Houde, C. (2024, May 15). Books behind bars: How you can help provide books to incarcerated Manitobans. CHVN Radio.
- Woelk, D. (2024, May 29). “Live and exit”: Prison libraries are important for inmates, advocates say. Global News.

Thank you for your continued support!

MLA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President – KC Bateman

Past President – Sarah Lee

Secretary – Kathleen Williams

MLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Communications Director – Austin Matheson

Membership Director – Dylan MacDougall

Director at Large (Website) – Troy Luke

Director at Large (Professional Development) – Rustam Dow

MLA STAFF

Program Coordinator – Kirsten Wurmman

Office Manager – Jen Kendall

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