

LIFELONG LEARNING For ALL MANITOBANS



**Manitoba
Library Association**

**2025–2026
ANNUAL REPORT**



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Land Acknowledgement

The Manitoba Library Association is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples. MLA acknowledges that Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis and that northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. MLA is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

Thank You to Our Funders

We are grateful for the support of our funders and partners, whose contributions make our work possible and help strengthen libraries across Manitoba:

- Public Library Services Branch
- Volunteer Manitoba
- Goethe Institut
- Membership
- Public donors

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to present this message as part of the Manitoba Library Association's 2025–2026 Annual Report.

This past year has been one of reflection, transition, and forward planning for the Association. While we have continued to navigate ongoing challenges—particularly in maintaining a full and active Board—this has also been a year of important progress that will help shape MLA's future.

A key focus of this work has been the development of MLA's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. This plan reflects a shared vision for the future of libraries and library workers across Manitoba and provides clear direction for the Association over the next four years. It speaks directly to the priorities identified by our members, including the need for stronger connections across the sector, meaningful professional development opportunities, clear and consistent communication, and continued advocacy for libraries and library workers.

Continued advocacy for libraries and library workers

Built around four core priority areas—Networking and Professional Development, Membership Value, Communication, and Advocacy—the Strategic Plan will guide MLA's work and decision-making moving forward. More importantly, it represents a commitment to ensuring that MLA remains responsive, relevant, and impactful within Manitoba's library community.

This year also marked an important step forward in strengthening MLA's capacity with the addition of an Executive Director and a Communications and Marketing Coordinator. These roles support the Association's ability to carry forward its strategic priorities and better serve its members.

Alongside this, the Board has undertaken a review of MLA's membership structure. The membership tiers are being simplified while also ensuring they remain accessible. MLA membership continues to offer opportunities for professional development, networking, advocacy, and leadership.

Members play a vital role in shaping the direction of the Association

Members play a vital role in shaping the direction of the Association, and strengthening engagement across the province will remain a key priority in the years ahead. Despite ongoing capacity challenges, MLA has continued to support and connect the library community across Manitoba. These efforts reflect MLA's ongoing commitment to fostering connection, supporting professional growth, and strengthening the library sector across the province.

As we look ahead, our focus will be on bringing the Strategic Plan to life, strengthening engagement with members, and continuing to build a strong and sustainable foundation for MLA. While there is important work ahead, I am confident in the direction we are taking and in the strength of our community.

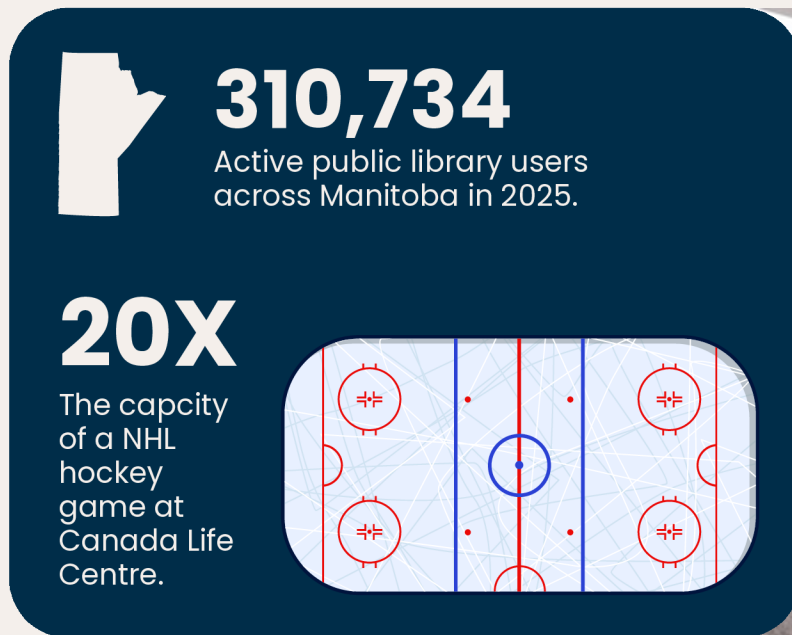
I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the members of the Board for their time, flexibility, and commitment over the past year. Thank you as well to our members, partners, and supporters for your continued support of MLA and of libraries across Manitoba.

KC Bateman

A LIBRARY IS A CENTRAL COMMUNITY HUB.

LIBRARIES ARE FACING CHALLENGES ACROSS CANADA.
MLA KEEPS LIBRARIES STRONG IN MANITOBA.

Libraries and library workers provide Manitobans with equitable access to information, education, and technology, fostering literacy and bridging the digital divide.



310,734
Active public library users
across Manitoba in 2025.

20X
The capacity
of a NHL
hockey
game at
Canada Life
Centre.



Manitoba Public Library Statistics: Ready Reports, 2025

Carberry/North Cypress Library

823 LIBRARY WORKERS

Library workers carry out unique work required to deliver library services to Manitobans, ensuring that every community has access to information, programs, and support.

In 2025, 823 staff were employed across Manitoba's public libraries. The Manitoba Library Association supports library workers and the communities they serve by creating opportunities for collaboration, promoting inclusive and welcoming library spaces, and building connections that strengthen the library community.



STRONG, INCLUSIVE, WELL-SUPPORTED LIBRARIES

This year, we saw incredible engagement from library workers and communities, reflecting a shared interest in strengthening library services province-wide. This momentum has laid a strong foundation for the work ahead. The Association is excited to build on these achievements in the coming year.

3 PROFESSIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOPS DELIVERED



200+

PARTICIPANTS AT THE MANITOBA LIBRARY CONFERENCE

80

ATTENDEES AT LIBRARY CONNECTIONS EVENT IN MANITOU

16

PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEW MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

65

RURAL LOCATIONS REACHED THROUGH VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

281

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTED TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

50

VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED THROUGH THE PRISON LIBRARIES COMMITTEE

STRENGTHENING THE ASSOCIATION

This year, work began to transition MLA from a working Board model toward a governance-focused approach. This included clarifying roles, developing policies, and strengthening internal processes to support long-term sustainability.

Planning is also underway for a website refresh to improve accessibility, streamline membership processes, and better support communication with members.

Over the past year, MLA has been working closely with the Manitoba Library Consortium Inc. (MLCI) in preparation for its planned dissolution in June 2026. This transition is an opportunity to strengthen coordination across Manitoba's library sector, with a focus on maintaining and advancing cross-sector collaboration, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange. As part of this work, MLA is exploring the evolution of institutional membership and creating space for stronger participation across all library sectors, while continuing to act as a convener that brings partners together around shared priorities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DIRECTION



A major focus this year was the development of MLA's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. The process was grounded in strong member engagement, with 281 survey responses helping to identify priorities and needs across the sector.

The plan is built around four key areas:

- Networking & Professional Development
- Membership Value
- Communication
- Advocacy

This work provides a clear and practical framework to guide MLA's decisions and ensure the Association continues to meet the needs of its members.



PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Manitoba Library Conference 2025

The Manitoba Library Conference brought together over 200 participants from across the province. With memorable keynotes from **Niigaan Sinclair** and **Chimwemwe Undi** and more than **30 sessions and workshops**, the conference created space to explore emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, sustainable development goals (SDGs), prison library advocacy and empathy-based leadership.

Library Connections

The third annual Library Connections welcomed approximately 80 participants, making it the largest to date. The event was held at the Manitoba Opera House in Manitou, Manitoba. The event continues to provide space for practical exchanges, peer learning, and discussion on shared challenges such as programming, safety, and funding.

Thank you to the South Central Regional Library for this partnership and for being wonderful hosts.

Film Screening – The Librarians

MLA hosted a film screening and discussion of *The Librarians*, with an attendance of almost 100 participants. The panel discussion and Q&A was very impactful.

Thank you to the Université de Saint-Boniface for hosting.



TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY-BUILDING EFFORT THAT FOSTERS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND MUTUAL SUPPORT.

Three training workshops were delivered in response to member-identified needs:

1. Social Media Basics - Facilitated by Volunteer Manitoba
2. Introduction to Fundraising - Facilitated by Volunteer Manitoba
3. De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations Workshop - Facilitated by the Crisis and Trauma Resources Institute

MLA also participated in pilot training opportunities, including the new St John's Ambulance Emotional First Aid program, now available for free to all Manitoba libraries.



NEW Mentorship Program

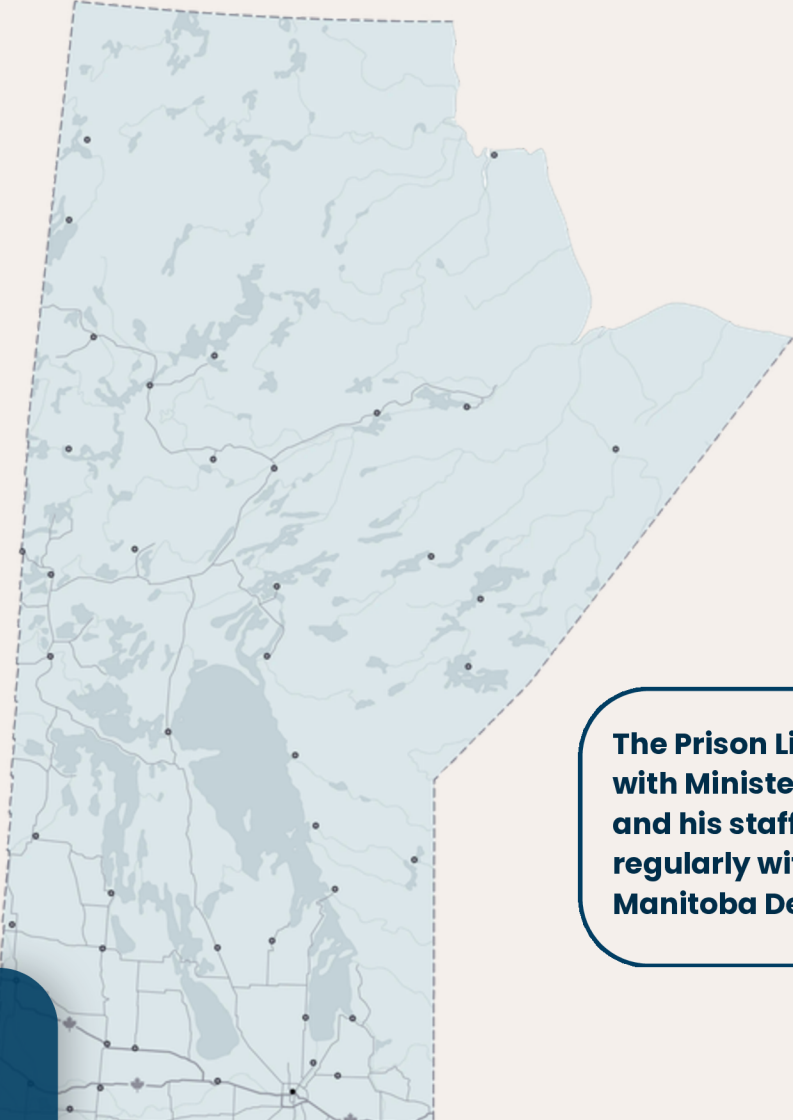
A new peer-to-peer mentorship program was launched, pairing 16 participants. Impact: Strengthened connections between members and supported professional growth.

ADVOCACY AND SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

MLA engaged in advocacy and sector-wide conversations throughout the year. This included contributing to discussions on **media literacy, access to information, and broader policy issues** affecting libraries, while strengthening relationships with government, community partners and other stakeholders.

Notably, MLA actively prepared and shared advocacy materials in response to **Bill C-15** and its potential impacts on the Library Book Rate and the free mailing of materials for individuals who are blind or have print disabilities.

During Canadian Library Month, MLA also led a social media campaign, **Get Loud for Manitoba Libraries**, to highlight the importance of libraries and their impact on communities across the province.



MLA offered tools for libraries and library workers to use to send their own letters to voice concerns around Bill C-15



The Prison Libraries Committee met with Minister of Justice, Matt Wiebe and his staff, and continued to meet regularly with managers at the Manitoba Department of Corrections.



SPOTLIGHT: PRISON LIBRARIES COMMITTEE

The Prison Libraries Committee (PLC), the largest and most active committee of the Manitoba Library Association, continued to expand its work in 2025–2026, with growing volunteer engagement, programming, and service locations.

This work reflects PLC’s ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous individuals within the correctional system, where Indigenous peoples remain disproportionately represented.

PLC maintained **regular book deliveries** to the Winnipeg Remand Centre, Manitoba Youth Centre (MYC), Women’s Correctional Centre (WCC), The Pas Correctional Centre (in partnership with The Pas Regional Library), and Headingley Correctional Centre (HCC), where visits also included ongoing collection organization. Collaboration with Brandon Public Library continued through access to weeded materials, supporting collections at Brandon Correctional Centre (BCC), alongside additional funding to respond to reader requests, including Indigenous materials. New relationships were also established with Eagle Women’s and North Star Healing Lodges, where PLC now supports small on-site libraries serving Indigenous women.

PLC continued to expand specialized collections available across adult provincial facilities, including the Joe Big George Indigenous Collection and the Legal Information for Incarcerated Manitobans Collection. This work reflects PLC’s ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous individuals within the correctional system, where Indigenous peoples remain disproportionately represented.

Programming remained a key focus, with **monthly Book Exchanges** at WCC and a **Pop-Up Library** at MYC. During the year, PLC delivered a series of **poetry workshops** with Chimwemwe Undi, as well as **poetry and art workshops** at Eagle Women’s and North Star Healing Lodges with El Jones. PLC also partnered with the Prison Law and Rights Clinics at the University of Manitoba to deliver **legal information sessions** at HCC and BCC.

PLC participated in community events including Truth and Reconciliation Day at MYC, resource fairs at HCC and WCC, and its annual Prisoner Justice Day activities. The annual Book & Bake Sale fundraiser continued to support PLC initiatives and partner programs. Throughout the year, PLC also delivered presentations locally and internationally and engaged with media to raise awareness of prison library services.

The committee continued its advocacy work with government representatives and corrections leadership, including efforts related to recent changes affecting library services in federal institutions.

PLC extends its appreciation to MLA for its continued support and to its volunteers for their ongoing commitment to increasing access to books, information, and programming for incarcerated individuals across Manitoba.

2025 MLA AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year, the Manitoba Library Association recognizes outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to libraries and library services across the province. These awards highlight excellence in service, leadership, innovation, and commitment to community.

The inaugural **Lifetime Library Service Award** recognizes an individual whose long-standing career has had a profound and lasting impact on library services in Manitoba. The 2025 recipient, **Heather Graham**, was honoured for her lifetime of dedication and significant contributions to the Winnipeg Public Library and the broader library community.

The **Library Service Award** honours library workers, supporters, or volunteers who have made significant contributions to the operation and development of library services in Manitoba. **Michelle Boudreau**, Branch Supervisor at Western Manitoba Regional Library (Brandon), was recognized for her leadership, creativity, and community-focused programming that has strengthened connections and enriched the cultural life of her community.

The **Library Technician of the Year Award** recognizes a library technician who has demonstrated outstanding professional achievement or leadership. **Michelle Rondeau**, Cataloguing and Systems Technician with the Winnipeg School Division, was honoured for her leadership, technical expertise, and commitment to training and mentoring colleagues across the division.

The **Library Trustee of Distinction Award** recognizes outstanding contributions to public library governance and trusteeship in Manitoba. **Sharon Fehr**, Treasurer of the South Central Regional Library Board, was recognized for her leadership, financial expertise, and dedication to strengthening library services and supporting innovation at the board level.

The **Human Rights Award**, sponsored by the Association of Manitoba Book Publishers, recognizes efforts to uphold intellectual freedom and foster inclusive and diverse library spaces. **Ebony Novakowski**, Copyright Officer at Red River College Polytechnic, was honoured for her leadership and commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion within the library community.



BEHIND EVERY
GREAT LIBRARY IS A
TEAM OF DEDICATED
LIBRARY WORKERS

2025 MLA SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year, the Manitoba Library Association supports the next generation of library professionals through its scholarship program. These scholarships provide financial assistance to Manitoba students pursuing graduate studies in Library and Information Studies, helping to strengthen the future of the library sector in the province.

MLA offers three primary scholarships. The **John Edwin Bissett Scholarship** supports University of Manitoba graduates continuing into library and information studies.

The **Jean Thorunn Law Scholarship** supports individuals with recent experience working in Manitoba libraries who are pursuing further education in the field.

The **Marilyn J. Hernandez Scholarship** supports Manitoba residents pursuing graduate-level education in library and information studies.

In 2025, MLA was pleased to award scholarships to the following recipients:

- The John Edwin Bissett Scholarship was awarded to Arvin Bernardo, Sarah Gilleshammer, Aleksandra Matsuz, Mae Pinniger, Claire Settee, and Rachel Scramstad.
- The Jean Thorunn Law Scholarship was awarded to Arvin Bernardo, Rachel Scramstad, and Claire Settee.
- The Marilyn J. Hernandez Scholarship was awarded to Li Yao.

These recipients were selected based on their academic achievement, commitment to the profession, and potential to contribute to the evolving library landscape in Manitoba. Through this program, MLA continues to invest in the development of skilled, knowledgeable, and community-focused library professionals.

INVESTING IN THE
NEXT GENERATION
OF LIBRARY LEADERS



LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, MLA will focus on:

- Implementing the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan
- Strengthening membership engagement
- Advancing communications and digital tools
- Continuing to deliver relevant programming and advocacy
- Enhancing partnerships
- Expanding sector-wide collaboration to strengthen alignment, share resources, and amplify the collective impact of libraries across Manitoba

This includes building stronger relationships across library systems, organizations, and partners to support coordinated responses to shared challenges and opportunities.

BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

KC Bateman, President

Troy Luke, Vice-President

Kathleen Williams, Secretary

Elise Agniel, Director at large – Professional Development

Dylan MacDougall, Director at large – Membership

Shannon Barill, Director at large

Ben McGillivray, Trustees Division Chair

Brigitte L'Heureux, Executive Director

Kirsten Wurmman, Program coordinator

Jen Kendall, Bookkeeping & Memberships

Maddy Nowosad, Communications & Marketing

Thank you to the following as well for your contributions: Nadine McCaughan, Graeme Tennant, Abimbola Bello, Lindy Fontaine.

MLA's work continues to be driven by the commitment of its members, volunteers, Board, and partners. Together, we are strengthening libraries as essential community spaces across Manitoba.

Talk Sing
Read
Write Play



**Manitoba
Library Association**