



National Library of Canada  
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

# **NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA: EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION**

Brief on the Government of Canada's Innovation Strategy

Submitted by

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Library of Canada (NLC) supports the Innovation Strategy outlined by the Government in its paper *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*. First-class information resources are as essential to a productive national infrastructure as are a robust computer network, a well-equipped laboratory and highly qualified personnel. As managers of the country's information resources, 21,000 Canadian libraries have long been important partners in the innovation process. Their role has become even more critical with the advent of new technologies. While continuing to ensure that physical collections are preserved and accessible, libraries must also develop policies and methods to manage the new challenges arising from rapidly growing collections of digital resources. As technology becomes a larger part of our daily lives, libraries have broadened their participation in the innovation process by working to educate Canadians in the use of the Internet, and providing important Portals to other resources beyond their own collections.

In a knowledge-based economy, the role of the National Library of Canada (NLC) is particularly important. The National Library is one of Canada's foremost content providers. Its collections are used by students, professors, private and public sector researchers alike. It is one of the nation's foremost centres for research in Canadian Studies and is a showcase for Canadian literature, history and music. But that is not all, the National Library is also responsible for developing national strategies for the management of Canada's information resources. Its systems and services are the backbone of the nation's knowledge and information network and a node in international collaborative efforts. The National Library is also involved in the provision of services, networking, best practices, standards, policies and trends in areas such as virtual reference services in Canada and elsewhere. The use of innovative and collaborative service models and technology in support of digital services in Canada includes the development of knowledge bases and chat networks. As well, the NLC serves as a gateway to other national and international sources of information. From April 2001 to March 2002, the National Library website received some 170 million hits from over 7.4 million visitors. These numbers are continuing to grow significantly. The National Library is involved in many innovative projects to provide Canadians with access to a wealth of knowledge resources in Canada and beyond. The National Library is an important player and stakeholder in the existing Canadian knowledge infrastructure and has a significant role to play in its development.

## **CHALLENGE 1: THE KNOWLEDGE PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE**

### ***The National Library's Innovation Vision***

The National Library of Canada strongly supports the Government's priority of vastly increasing investments in Canada's knowledge infrastructure. Information resources are an important part of Canada's knowledge infrastructure. Access to first-class information resources is critical for the production of leading edge research and libraries should be recognized as a critical part of the indirect costs of research. An innovative environment would include a wealth of information resources housed in Canadian collections in all formats, and available to Canadians through a variety of channels.

Resources for research in science and technology are important. However, leading-edge research in Canada is conducted in many diverse fields, including the humanities and social sciences. Economic growth has strong links to advances in scientific and technical knowledge, but it is also determined by social advances that improve the quality of life and create a resourceful work force. A sound social environment is a precondition for creative individuals to build a more innovative Canadian economy for jobs and growth. Canada must nurture research in many fields and support a knowledge infrastructure that supports all areas of research.

Canada's collections of digital resources are growing and will continue to grow in the future. Digital projects require an immense amount of organization, research, personnel, technological development, creativity and infrastructure and the management of electronic resources poses some very different challenges from those of traditional print resources. The National Library has taken the lead role in formulating policy and standards for the access and preservation of digital resources. Canada must continue to provide the resources to support the transition from managing traditional information resources to managing increasingly diversified and growing collections.

### ***The National Library's Commitments and Actions***

The National Library of Canada is committed to improving and strengthening the existing knowledge infrastructure in Canada through the development of its collections, services, and technologies. It has been actively building on its electronic collection in support of the development of a digital knowledge infrastructure for Canada and is one of the richest resources of Canadian information published in electronic format. The National Library is a leader in the application of digital technologies to library services and has taken a lead role in enabling Canadians to access information in the digital environment. Similarly, the National Library will continue to coordinate the development of policies governing digital resources, ensuring national interoperability and long-term access to Canada's digital collections. Through its many diverse projects, the National Library of Canada is developing policies, enriching collections and

creating innovative services in order to offer a wealth of resources to Canadian researchers and, indeed, all Canadians.

In collaboration with libraries and other public institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector, the National Library is involved in documenting, preserving and promoting Canada's digital knowledge resources, while at the same time, continuing to maintain and preserve Canada's print heritage. It is an active participant at the international level in advancing the use of digital technologies in libraries and has been involved in the development and implementation of innovative methods to ensure their long-term preservation and access. Similarly, the National Library is developing innovative services in order to provide greater access to the knowledge resources that are held at the Library. Canada's National Library plays a lead role in many initiatives aimed at providing greater and seamless access to a rich body of information resources emanating from the network of libraries, universities and other information producers throughout the country.

### **Government On-Line (GOL)**

The aim of the Government On-Line (<http://www.connect.gc.ca/en/600-e.htm>) initiative is to have all programs and services available electronically to Canadians by 2005 and the National Library of Canada has been an active participant in the GOL project since its inception. The NLC contributes to the GOL initiative by working collaboratively and horizontally within the library and with partners in order to ensure that Canadians have easier access to government web resources and content. In this role, the NLC works with government departments to develop online strategies, metadata standards and subject and controlled vocabularies. In collaboration with Depository Services Program, Communication Canada, the Library has recently completed an in depth study on the use of persistent locators (URLs) to ensure online access to electronic publications. As well, in partnership with Depository Services Program of Communication Canada, the NLC has developed the Federal Government Publications Locator Service which will provide Canadians with enhanced access to both print and electronic federal government publications held or catalogued by the National Library of Canada. Through this service, Canadians will also be able to access the list of Canadian libraries that have these items in their collections. The service is currently being tested and will be available to the public in 2002/03.

### **Electronic Publications**

The National Library of Canada continues to build on its national collection of digital resources, (<http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/e-coll-e/index-e.htm>) which includes more than 7,070 titles published by both the commercial publishing sector and the government publishing sector. This growing source of full-text information is the largest collection of Canada's published digital knowledge resources and consists of Canadian books and periodicals published online and archived in a variety of formats. These publications are archived online and available through the National Library catalogue in the same manner as printed publications.

### **Digital Library of Canada**

The Digital Library of Canada ([www.nlc-bnc.ca](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca)) will ensure the production of a rich, national multimedia resource documenting Canadian heritage and culture by digitizing content in both official languages, as well as in the other languages spoken by Canadians. This program is supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage through its Cultural Content Online Program

(CCOP). It is building on the national collection of print Canadiana and has been able to add many new innovative digital collections, educational sites and exhibitions as well as provide enhancement to many of its existing sites. As part of this program, the Library has initiated a collaborative project with other Canadian cultural institutions called ImagesCanada.ca (<http://ImagesCanada.ca/>), which provides a gateway to online collections of Canadian visual images. The National Library collaborates on digitization work with Canadian libraries, the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions and the National Archives to produce educational products on broad curricula-based themes such as the immigrant experience in Canada, as well as cultural and historical exhibitions relating to Canadian events, people, places and themes.

### **Canadian Initiative on Digital Libraries (CIDL)**

The Canadian Initiative on Digital Libraries (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/cidl/>) promotes, coordinates and facilitates the development of Canadian digital collections and services in order to optimize national interoperability and long-term access to Canadian digital library resources. The National Library, acting as its Secretariat, provides leadership to this alliance, whose membership has reached 60 libraries and related institutions. With the assistance of the Cultural Content Online Program of Canadian Heritage, CIDL was instrumental in establishing "Our Roots/Nos Racines" a national project that aims to digitize all published local histories throughout Canada and is organized under a national advisory committee. The work has a scholarly base and is made available under the imprimatur of the lead universities but is of interest to Canadians of all ages. It is led by CIDL members University of Calgary and Université Laval and in the second year over 15 additional partners and nodes will be added. A third year of the project will concentrate on developing learning modules that teachers can use in their classrooms to have their students interact with the site in a structured way. CIDL also sponsors other projects which bring together producers, users and information providers of both traditional and electronic materials.

### **Canadian E-Theses**

As an outcome of a national consultation, the National Library has developed an E-Theses project ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/4/index-e.html](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/4/index-e.html)), which supports the digital publication of Canadian theses. This project is aimed at providing digital access to Canadian Master and PhD. Theses. To this end, the National Library established an Electronic Theses Advisory Board that has been examining the various models for electronic theses currently being implemented and providing insight into best practices, issues and problems which have arisen during the development and implementation of e-theses programs at various academic institutions across Canada. The project serves as a forum for discussion of issues such as interoperability and training and Canada's place in the international arena and the development of a national full text theses portal for access to Canadian e-theses from Canada's universities is being investigated. The idea of offering a separate view through the National Library database, AMICUS, is being pursued as a first step to improving access to Canadian theses.

### **Council of Federal Libraries (CFL)**

The Council of Federal Libraries (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/37/index-e.html>) was established in 1976 as a means of coordinating library services in departments, branches and agencies of the Government of Canada. The Council coordinates joint ventures with the guidance and support of the National Library and also serves as a forum for discussion of federal library, information and

information technology policies, programs and procedures to inform the Government of Canada. Using its co-operative networks and state-of-the-art technology, the CFL provides quality information services to its member libraries. As part of the CFL, the Consortium e-Book partnership now provides desktop access to 667 titles for over 100,000 public servants in 44 departments and agencies. The CFL and four departmental libraries have also taken advantage of this platform to deliver e-books in targeted subject areas to their own users while also generously making them available to the users of all of the other participating libraries. The Council has increased its visibility with central agencies and the rest of the federal Information Management and Knowledge Management communities through participation in joint projects.

### **Standards**

The National Library continues to work on the development of standards and metadata, at the national and international level, to enhance access of information resources in Canada and to ensure the interoperability of information resources across Canada and internationally. As an example, agreement was recently reached on a new version of the Bath Profile (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/bath/>). This Profile defines searching across multiple servers to improve international and extranational search and retrieval among library catalogues, union catalogues, and other electronic resources worldwide. It also describes and specifies a subset to allow basic cross-domain search and retrieval of networked resources including library catalogues, government information, museum systems, and archives. This new version of the Bath Profile will result in significantly better retrieval of information in the future. As well, the Library has built an OAI Metadata harvester and is beginning to investigate metadata for specific digital projects. A focus for expertise and coordination of various metadata initiatives within the National Library has been established. The Library is assuming a metadata leadership role within the federal government, providing project management support for the provision of subject access to the Department of Canadian Heritage's Web-based Cultural Portal, and registering controlled subject vocabularies in use in federal departments' websites.

### **AMICUS**

AMICUS ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/amicus/](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/amicus/)) is Canada's national database that contains over 25 million records. AMICUS is a one stop resource providing free access for all Canadians to a wealth of information in National Library collections and those of 1300 other Canadian libraries. This database has also become a national resource for digital resources in Canada. Since the inauguration in June 2001 of free access via a Web service, usage has skyrocketed and is broadening. Not only have libraries increased their volume of searches but over 1600 personal accounts have been set up. In order to better respond to the needs of Canadians, the Library has been analyzing needs of different audiences, disabled, multicultural, aboriginal, youth, and seniors and is proposing a database analysis to uncover the strengths of the AMICUS database. This analysis will enrich our understanding of the NL collections and its usage by Canadians. In 2003, the Web service will undergo a usability review followed by a revamping to remove barriers and to enable more Canadians to use the service more effectively.

## *National Issues*

The priorities outlined by the Government of Canada are a good first step towards achieving the goal of creating and getting new knowledge to the market more quickly, and an efficient Canadian knowledge infrastructure will be needed to support these processes. In this digital age, electronic channels are becoming the preferred means of creating, using and managing information. The National Library strongly advocates the development of a national infrastructure to sustain these digital initiatives. There is a need for investment in R&D into digital technologies. As well, Canada must develop a comprehensive national strategy to address the challenges that arise from managing digital resources, such as interoperability, long-term preservation and access; as well as the development and application of appropriate standards; copyright issues; technology; and staff and user training. Such investments are negligible compared to the resources invested in creating the information initially and insignificant compared to the cost if Canada were to lose this information.

However, the development of a digital resource strategy must not mean that Canada ignores the maintenance of its physical research resources. The National Library of Canada houses a huge and unique collection of primary and secondary source research material--books, periodicals, newspapers, sound recordings, rare books, manuscripts, etc. This material, used by Canadians as well as international researchers, needs to be preserved and stored in facilities where it is protected and preserved. At the present time, an emergency situation exists. More than 20% of the collection is stored off-site, in inadequate facilities that fail to protect the materials from water damage and extremes of humidity and temperature that cause rapid deterioration in the integrity and usability of items. There are also ongoing problems with water leaks and other damage in the National Library's 35-year-old headquarters building, which threaten the collections stored there. Storage in appropriate environments of temperature and humidity is the most significant preservation measure to ensure that collections can continue to be accessed over the long term. The National Library is in dire need of a single, permanent off-site facility to unite its remote collections and to locate its Preservation Collection of Canadian publications in a secure environment that will ensure the ongoing availability of Canada's published heritage. The National Library encourages the Government to support the preservation of these materials through appropriate resource levels and facilities.

Another issue of national concern is ensuring the equitable access to information resources by all Canadians. Canadians have experienced the burgeoning growth of the Internet over the past few years. However, the levels of use of these new technologies and services are highly polarized along social class and generational lines, creating a digital divide. According to a study conducted from 1997 through 1999 by the Office of Learning Technologies (The Dual Digital Divide: The Information Highway in Canada - HRDC) ([http://olt-bta.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/resources/reports\\_e.pdf](http://olt-bta.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/resources/reports_e.pdf)), higher-income households were three times more likely than lower-income households to have home access. By 1999, about two-thirds of upper-income households had access from home, as compared to about one in four low-income Canadians. Contrary to the widespread enthusiasm about the Internet, a significant number of Canadians will remain unconnected for many years to come.

Similarly, the Task Force on Access to Information for Print-Disabled Canadians ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/accessinfo/](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/accessinfo/)) found that three million Canadians are print-disabled. Print disabilities prevent people from reading standard print due to a visual, perceptual or physical disability. Thus they need print material in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, audio, large print) and accessible electronic resources to meet their information needs. The National Library recommends a Government increase in funding for materials for the print disabled that would substantially increase access to information and strengthen Canada's competitive position in a knowledge-based economy. The National Library also recommends that the Government address some of the recognized barriers to the use of the Internet, using its public policy role to facilitate access and technological literacy as well as the development of relevant and diverse content resources.



## **CHALLENGE 2: DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR THE NEW ECONOMY**

### ***The National Library's Innovation Vision***

The National Library supports the Government's statement that to succeed in the global, knowledge-based economy, a country must be capable of producing, attracting and retaining a critical mass of well-educated and appropriately trained people. However, skills development begins long before adulthood and the graduate level of university. It is important that Canada has strong and effective educational resources for Canadians at all educational levels and ages.

Libraries of all types contribute to the education process and e-learning in Canada. The school library is central to the fulfillment of the instructional goals and objectives of the school. It supports education through the acquisition and organization of information, through technology and through dissemination of materials to expand the learning environment of all students and provides a wide range of resources, both print and non-print, including electronic media. Public libraries also support the education of children and students. Public libraries in Canada offer students and children a wide array of resources including print, audiovisual and electronic materials; access to technology; and reading and preschool programs that serve to complement the resources made available to students in formal academic environments. As well, public libraries are a lifelong learning resource for all Canadians—the relationship between the formal education system in Canada and the informal lifelong-learning resources provided by public libraries has been well established ([www.cla.ca/divisions/CAPL/caplcover.htm](http://www.cla.ca/divisions/CAPL/caplcover.htm)). In fact, the links between library use (regardless of library type), access to good libraries and the development of skills has long since been clearly established ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). Developing and maintaining library excellence throughout Canada's libraries would significantly improve on the quality of education in Canada.

Another important issue that requires serious attention is that of literacy. Literacy is a core competency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, according to the National Literacy Secretariat (<http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm>), 42 percent of Canadians aged 16-65 do not have the literacy skills required for full participation in the knowledge economy. Canada must work towards reducing this number by promoting literacy as an essential component of a learning society and to make Canada's social, economic and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills.

### ***The National Library's Commitments and Actions***

The National Library of Canada is a key content provider of education material for students, professors, researchers, business people, and public servants. The Library's in-house collections are available for use by all Canadians. It houses national collections in Canadian literature, literary manuscripts, newspapers, government publications, theses, music, and much more. Its Digital Library of Canada program ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/)) develops, on a regular basis, new web content documenting Canadian heritage and culture to support the life-long learning of

Canadians of all ages. The program digitizes material from the collections of the National Library of Canada and its partners and provides interpretive information aimed toward school-age children, teachers and the general public. One example of such content is the “Canadian Prime Ministers: Their Lives and Their Politics” website. Developed in partnership with the National Archives of Canada, this Web site, dedicated to our leaders past and present, explores the lives and contributions of individual prime ministers and features biographies, anecdotes and speeches, some in audio format. [www.nlc-bnc.ca/primeministers](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/primeministers). There are a number of other projects which promote and support a learning society including the possibility of a national repository of educational metadata for learning materials.

### ***Read Up On It***

Libraries have always played an important role in supporting literacy in Canada, and continue to do so. Library training and instructional programs address the literacy issues faced by different groups of Canadians. The National Library is working to foster higher levels of literacy in Canada through advocacy and promotion, and by recognizing and celebrating the front-line work carried out in literacy programs by local libraries across the country. “Read Up On It” (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/read-up-on-it/>) promotes Canadian children’s literature and reading. It highlights notable books on a variety of themes, and features award winning Canadian children’s books in all categories. The program is in its tenth year. The program underscores the importance of making reading a part of family routine, gives tips for reading with children, offers ideas on how to use the kit in a family setting, and provides a list of suggested readings on literacy.

### **The Fun of Reading: International Forum on Canadian Children’s Literature**

This major initiative (<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/forum/index-e.html>) will take place in Ottawa June 26-29, 2003 as part of the National Library’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The purpose of the International Forum is to promote Canadian children’s literature in its full cultural, linguistic and regional diversity, and strengthen its presence in Canada and abroad. The Forum will include an international conference on Canadian children’s literature, as well as a host of literary and artistic activities for young people in the National Capital Region and across Canada. The conference will bring together, for the first time, writers, illustrators, storytellers, translators, publishers, teachers, librarians, booksellers, Canadian literature specialists from Canada and abroad, literacy groups, policy-makers and the media whose efforts support Canadian literature for young people in both official languages.

### **School Library Information Portal (SLIP)**

The School Library Information Portal ([www.cla.ca/slip](http://www.cla.ca/slip)) is a resource portal for teacher-librarians and others involved in education provided by the Canadian Library Association with support from the National Library of Canada, the Canadian School Library Association, and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship of Canada. This portal acts as a gateway to documents for school libraries originating in Canada and not widely available in published form. SLIP also contains a directory to links in provincial and territorial schools, boards and districts as well as national school library organizations.

## *National Issues*

At the national level, the National Library advocates the need for continued resources to support the development of educational materials and programs for all Canadians, whether they be children, recent immigrants, adult learners, or university students and researchers. In order to meet this challenge, Canada needs a collaborative, national learning and skills development strategy. This strategy would ensure the development of information and media literate children and youth, and provide for a wide range of adult and family literacy programs that would be delivered at the local level across the country. It would also support post-secondary and post-graduate education and research.

School libraries have an important role to play in our future competitiveness in the global economy. Libraries, in concert with learning institutions and other partners, have an essential role in the advancement of knowledge, and at a more fundamental level, even literacy. School libraries in Canada are suffering from declines in the public funding and the professional staffing required to meet the needs of the nation's children. School libraries, in most jurisdictions in Canada, have felt the impact of cutbacks in education spending. Schools across Canada, except for Alberta, appear to be hiring increased numbers of part-time staff rather than hiring full-time educators in the schools. In addition, there are fewer full-time librarians and teacher-librarians being employed in Canada; this would be reflected in the elementary and secondary school systems. The impact of this move to part-time staff will be felt even more so in the coming years given the aging of the librarian and educator populations in Canada. ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/9/14/index-e.html](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/9/14/index-e.html)) School libraries should be recognized as an important resource in Canada's education system and funded accordingly. Raising awareness of this issue across the country is a special priority for the National Librarian.

## **CHALLENGE 3: SETTING THE RIGHT BUSINESS AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

### *National Library's Innovation Vision*

The Library supports the Government's goal of ensuring that Canada's stewardship regimes and marketplace framework policies are first class. It agrees that the regulatory environment is critical to Canada's success at being recognized as a leading innovative country. Copyright is a critical part of this regulatory environment. The challenge in a period of copyright review and revision will be ensure that the Copyright Act maintains an appropriate balance between the rights of creators to benefit from the use of their works and the needs of users to access and use those works on reasonable terms. The National Library advocates a strong public domain where knowledge is accessible and widely disseminated, while at the same time, encouraging and upholding the rights of the creators. The Library's role as digital repository and the need for a regulatory environment that will allow the capture of the Canadian webspace for long-term archiving and controlled access are other element's of the Library's vision. The National Library supports the position taken by the Task Force on Access to Information for Print-disabled Canadians that there is a need to avoid impeding access for print-disabled users through the use of technological protection measures.

### *National Library's Commitments and Actions*

#### **Legal Deposit**

Legal Deposit ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/25/index-e.html](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/6/25/index-e.html)) is the means by which a comprehensive national collection is gathered together as a record of the nation's published heritage and development. Canadian publishers are required to send two copies of books, pamphlets, serial publications, microforms, spoken word sound recordings, video-recordings, electronic publications issued in physical formats, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, computer diskettes, etc, and one copy of musical sound recordings and multi-media kits they publish, to the National Library of Canada. As new media for publishing have emerged, deposit provisions have been extended. The Library has been building its national collection of on-line electronic publications by means of a voluntary selective deposit. As with the comprehensive collecting of other types of publishing, it is now an appropriate time to consider the building of a more comprehensive collection of online electronic publications.

#### **Copyright**

The Library works with other libraries, library associations, archives, museums, educational institutions and other stakeholders to assess and work through digital copyright issues. The Library views copyright as a major tool to further education, learning, research, and social, cultural and economic development in Canada. A balanced public access to Canada's cultural and heritage resources is critical. The needs of print disabled Canadians for equitable access to information have also been examined through a national consultative process.

## *National Issues*

Unlike other publishing formats (book, video, CD-ROM), online electronic publications do not fall under the current *National Library Act's* legal deposit legislation and publishers are not required to submit these publications to the National Library. There is a dramatic growth in online electronic publishing in Canada. At the same time, however, the short life span of these publications has resulted in much of this material already having disappeared from public record. In view of the potential gap in the capture of published heritage and the complexity of the electronic publishing environment, the National Library recognizes the need to increase discussion with publishers and creators and to move forward to amend the *National Library Act*. A consultation with publishers took place in January 2000. Additional consultations are planned in the near future on newspapers in the digital environment and more broadly with publishers and publisher associations on legal deposit of online electronic publications.

The National Library advocates amendments to the *Copyright Act* that serve the public interest by providing a reasonable balance between the rights of copyright owners and the rights of citizens to reasonable access to copyrighted works. In particular, the non-profit public lending of legally obtained copyright content is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society and must be permitted to continue irrespective of the format of the content. The NLC would also like to see in the amendments that exemptions from the legislation be made for closed captioning of cinematographic works and large print materials.

## **CHALLENGE 4: COMMUNITY-BASED INNOVATIVE CHALLENGES**

### ***The National Library's Innovation Vision***

The National Library supports the Government's aim to stimulate the creation of more clusters of innovation at the community level. Strengthening and nurturing cooperative agreements amongst libraries and other stakeholders in a national network is one important way by which Canada can support and encourage greater innovation in its communities. It is through co-operative and collaborative activities, based on resource-sharing principles and a strengthened national information infrastructure, that Canada has one of the best library systems in the world, which ensures equitable and universal access to information for all its citizens. The National Library supports the government goal of connecting Canadian communities with the Internet as a very important one for strengthening Canadian communities.

### ***The National Library's Commitments and Actions***

Canadian libraries are key content providers and provide access to the information resources necessary for Canada to become a pre-eminent participant in the new knowledge economy. The National Library has worked in partnership with the Canadian library community for many years to develop and implement a technical, service and policy infrastructure for the sharing of their collections, services and expertise on a national level. The Library also works at the community level in large and small communities across Canada for the benefit of all Canadians. In its role as a national library, the NLC has developed strong ties with the publishing and library communities in the country. These relationships include the areas of government publishing – including both Communication Canada and publishing departments. The Library also has a long and outstanding tradition of partnership and collaboration with the libraries and library associations in Canada: these include federal, public, academic, provincial/territorial and special libraries and resource centres across the country. The Library represents these communities and Canada at international events and on international initiatives.

### **Virtual Reference Canada (VRC)**

Virtual Reference Canada ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/vrc-rvc](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/vrc-rvc)) is a free, bilingual and innovative network of libraries, information centres and research institutions that delivers professional reference services to all Canadians. The VRC is a uniquely Canadian service and was developed to fill a void in the Canadian virtual reference environment by building upon established services and tailoring them to better meet the needs of institutions throughout the country. The Library has begun a trial of reference software that will enable National Library patrons to chat with a reference librarian and receive web pages and other content in real time through the browser. The Library, with the support of Canadian Heritage and the Depository Services Program of Communication Canada, continues to develop the Virtual Reference Canada network that will be the Canadian node within the international collaborative digital reference network. VRC will allow Canadian libraries to work collaboratively to leverage their skills and expertise to meet

the information and reference needs of their clients locally while participating in a global initiative. It will deliver a 24/7 access service to the homes of Canadians.

### **Sm@rtLibrary**

The Library is a participant in one of Industry Canada's community-based Smart Community projects ([www.smartcommunities.ca/](http://www.smartcommunities.ca/)). In partnership with the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), the University of Ottawa Library, Carleton University Library, and the Ottawa Public Library, the National Library is a member of the Smart Capital Project ([www.smartcapital.ca/](http://www.smartcapital.ca/)). coordinated by the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, and funded as the Ontario demonstration project within Smart Communities by Industry Canada. The goal of [Sm@rtLibrary](#) is to provide the citizens of Ottawa with a gateway to the catalogues and services of libraries within the National Capital Region and to provide a global access to these libraries.

### **CANARIE**

Canada's advanced Internet development organization ([www.canarie.ca](http://www.canarie.ca)) is a not-for-profit corporation supported by its members, project partners and the Federal Government. As one of its members, the National Library supports CANARIE's mission to accelerate Canada's advanced Internet development and use by facilitating the widespread adoption of faster, more efficient networks and by enabling the next generation of advanced products and applications.

### **Canadian Site Licence for the use of materials from Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic**

The Library is investigating the value of a national site licence to enable community-based organizations such as public libraries to facilitate access to additional alternate format materials for print-disabled users.

### **Canada's Strategic Library Plan for Information Resource Sharing, 2000-2003**

Along with other partners, the National Library is a key participant in Canada's Strategic Plan for Information Resource Sharing ([www.nlc-bnc.ca/8/3/index-e.html](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/8/3/index-e.html)). This plan aims to create a network of Canadian libraries through which any individual can access the information he needs and have it delivered to him in a timely manner wherever he is located. This plan outlines three main resource-sharing goals to be accomplished over the next three years: To provide seamless access to information for all Canadians; to create an attractive comprehensive listing of all materials held by Canadian libraries; and to develop resource-sharing policies and leadership to support universal access to information for all Canadians.

### ***National Issues***

The National Library of Canada is committed to putting knowledge within reach of all Canadians and to playing a vital role in developing community based specific initiatives. However, there is a need for a strategy at the national level, developed and shaped with the input of all stakeholders. A strategy that outlines concrete, practical actions and cooperative initiatives that address the needs of Canadians for access to information. Only with free and unfettered access to information and knowledge will Canadians be able to continue to play an active role in the global knowledge economy.

Inadequate bandwidth is a large barrier for many community-based clusters in Canada, in particular for rural and remote communities. Implementation of adequate bandwidth will have a tremendous impact on these communities, making it possible for children and youth to have better access to information, making distance learning a reality for adults and providing real opportunities to attract investment, create new businesses and generate wealth. The Library supports the Government's initiative to take immediate action to further deploy the broadband, particularly to these rural and remote areas to address issues of regional inequities and digital divide.



## **CONCLUSION**

Canadian libraries have an important part to play in Canada's innovation agenda. Their major role is to provide access to information resources to Canadians. Canadian libraries have been adapting and innovating to ensure the provision of a wealth of information resources in a changing technological environment. But Canada's libraries also support innovation in many other ways. Over the past decade, Canadian libraries have proven to be effective partners with the federal government in community development, through the delivery and support of a broad range of programs such as youth employment, connecting Canadians, and delivery of services to rural and remote areas as well as new initiatives that put government programs and services and Canadian content online.

The National Library plays an important role in fostering a knowledge-based society in Canada. As the federal cultural agency responsible for collecting and preserving Canada's published heritage, the National Library is dedicated to building a world-class national resource and developing innovative services to fulfill the information needs of all Canadians. The National Library nurtures cooperative relationships with the government, libraries, publishers and other public and private institutions to strengthen the performance of Canada's information infrastructure. And it has an important international role in contributing to the development of standards, policies and practices supporting universal and equitable access as well as the most efficient and effective exchange of information. All of these activities significantly contribute to the advancement of innovation in Canada, now and in the future.