Title:
Library Partnerships and Organizational Culture: A case study

Abstract:
Uncovered in the course of a 2011 study looking at partnerships between academic and public libraries in Canada was a unique series of partnerships among a college library, public library, regional library system, and school district library system in Medicine Hat, Alberta. With little or no additional funding, these libraries have partnered to deliver library services beneficial to both their primary clients and the broader community. Through a case study of the libraries, it is possible to determine the value and the challenges of partnerships and the elements of organizational culture necessary for successful partnerships.

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Library Partnerships and Organizational Culture

In times of budget cuts and belt-tightening across campuses and communities, when the demand for fiscal conservatism abounds, publicly funded entities experience increased pressure to demonstrate value and effective use of resources. There is greater scrutiny of programs, services, and collections; questions are asked about efficiency, economy, and necessity. Cooperating with other libraries through the development of formal or informal partnerships is one way for libraries to maintain and enhance services and demonstrate financial stewardship and lack of duplication to funding bodies.

A mixed-methods study of academic libraries conducted in 2011 examined partnerships between academic and public libraries in Canada[1]. That study brought to light the unique nature of the multiple partnerships between four types of libraries in the city of Medicine Hat, Alberta. With little or no additional funding, these libraries have partnered to deliver library services beneficial both to their primary clients and to the broader community[2]. Through a case study of the Medicine Hat libraries, it is possible to determine the value and the challenges of partnerships and the elements of organizational culture necessary for successful cooperative ventures.

Literature Review

Cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships are becoming increasingly important in libraries (Nutefall, 2001). Van Den Hoogen and Parrott (2012) state that enhancing library services through partnerships is a cost-effective means of meeting library client needs. They go on to say: "Partnerships and collaborations among libraries are proven to enhance collective resources…to provide the best possible service to their community members" (Van Den Hoogen & Parrott, 2012, p. 321). Borek, Bell, Richardson, and Lewis (2006) add that "partnerships maximize funding opportunities and streamline

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[1] Information on this study is published in Sarjeant-Jenkins, R. & Walker, K. (2014). Working together: Joint use Canadian academic and public libraries. *Collaborative Librarianship, 6*(1).
[2] Information on these partnership initiatives can be found in Appendix C.

information resources by linking technology and are often excellent vehicles for political lobbying" (p. 448). Partnerships can lead to improved productivity through sharing workloads and can result in increased funding opportunities (Borek et al., 2006, p. 448). Libraries of different types have been able to form successful partnerships, and by working together on a common goal can "harness human resources, creativity, and the unique value of local collections" (Borek et al., 2006, p. 456).

Successful partnerships require trust, vision, goodwill, respect, and a belief in the value and wisdom of cooperation and collaboration (Damaren, 1997). According to Giesecke (2012) "the focus of the partnership is on shared objectives and not just shared power" (p. 39). In addition, there is the concept of mutual benefit (Giesecke, 2012), or what Borek and colleagues (2006) describe as "'selfish' but positive reasons: to leverage shrinking budgets, to learn from each other, to build better tools together and, most importantly, to serve their common users better by taking advantage of one another's collections" (p. 456). The Gallup Corporation has outlined seven key factors for successful partnerships: common mission, fairness, trust, acceptance, forgiveness, communication, and unselfishness (as outlined in Giesecke, 2012). Kanter (1994) speaks of other requirements for successful partnerships such as the creation and maintenance of personal relationships between the senior leaders in an organization. She also mentions that successful partnerships involve "collaboration (creating new value together) rather than mere exchange (getting something back for what you put in). Partners value the skills each brings to the alliance" (Kanter, 1994, p. 97).

Not all partnership arrangements are completely successful, and there may be challenges with the development, implementation, and management of library partnership arrangements. If librarians aren't convinced of the need for partnering or are hesitant to collaborate, then the partnership initiative may end before it gets off the ground (Ghosh, 2009). Obstacles can arise through the limitations of the

partnership initiative itself or through implementation of the partnership in areas such as staff training

(Van den Hoogen and Parrott, 2012). However, challenges should not always be viewed negatively as "it

is through the process of reconciling differences…that the collaborators will become true partners"

(Bauer, 2006, p. 593).

Organizational culture – the beliefs, values, and assumptions that inform and shape an

organization (Jackson, 2009) – sets the stage for the relationship that develops between partnering

libraries. Organizational culture emanates from the whole organization but especially from the leaders

and is passed on through common stories, rituals, and language (Calvert, 2010). Staff pride and

engagement in their organization is reflected in their loyalty to the organization's mission, goals, and

objectives, and they will "adapt, adjust and reinforce their role in response to clues given by their

colleagues and their customers" (Calvert, 2010, p. 134). Successful partnering requires the examination

of the partner's expectations and "a commitment to bridge differences in cultures between partner

organizations" (Bosma et al., 2010, p. 502).

Methodology

The objective of the case study was to investigate four library systems in Medicine Hat, Alberta –

the Medicine Hat College Libraries, the Medicine Hat Public Library, the Shortgrass Library System (the

regional public library system for the area), and the libraries of Medicine Hat School District #76 – to

determine:

- The value of partnerships in enhancing and expanding library services,

- The challenges inherent in developing and sustaining partnerships, and

- Organizational cultural traits of partnering organizations.

The goal was to help libraries interested in using partnerships to expand services in times of fiscal constraint by outlining both the value and challenges of partnerships and the organizational cultural traits needed for an organization to be "partnership-ready."

A qualitative methodology was chosen using semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A) with participants and key stakeholders from all four libraries. In the spring of 2013, individual interviews were held with:

- the president of the Medicine Hat College (MHC);

- the directors of the Medicine Hat College Library, the Shortgrass Library System (SLS), and the Medicine Hat Public Library (MHPL);

- the intern librarian; and,

- the chair of the Shortgrass Library System Board.

Small group interviews were held with:

- MHPL employees,

- MHC library employees,

- the vice-presidents of MHC,

- the MHPL Board,

- SLS employees, and

- teacher-librarians.

Following the interviews, notes were written up and all participants were provided the opportunity to review the notes and clarify, remove, add, or change their comments.

Limitations

Due to the group nature of many of the interviews, the investigators chose not to record the interviews but for both investigators to take handwritten notes. This may have resulted in a minor loss of data or inaccurate transcription of concepts or ideas. This problem was mitigated by participant review of interview notes within 2 weeks of the interview.

There is the potential that participants felt unable to express themselves fully due to their current working relationship with the co-investigator. To mitigate this, the principal investigator was the sole interviewer for all individuals reporting directly to the co-investigator. In addition, the principal investigator solicited the feedback on the interview notes, allowing for additional comments or changes in comments to be provided.

Findings

Value of Partnerships

All the interview participants believe that partnering with other libraries adds value to their organizations and to the services provided to library clients. How that value is expressed and experienced can be found by exploring the reasons why the Medicine Hat libraries partner.

Financial benefits were raised in interviews from all four libraries. Partnerships are perceived to stretch limited resources (Interviews #5, #11, #13, #14) and perhaps even save money (Interview #10), allowing the organization to then reinvest those funds elsewhere (Interview #1). The public library sector also experiences a benefit when applying for external grants. Partnerships are viewed favourably in grant applications, appealing to funders by demonstrating that the library is not duplicating services, as well as showing community support for the organization or program (Interviews #10, #12, #13).

Another partnership benefit is the sharing of expertise, knowledge, and ideas (Interviews #5, #8, #10, #12, #14). Partnerships "bring more brain power," allowing for serendipitous happenings to occur (Interviews #8, #13).

> We are also involved [in partnerships] because it's good practice beyond fulfilling community need, government or community expectation. It is good to connect with other institutional or service providers to improve each service based on others' perceptions, ideas or feedback (Interview #4).

Partnerships are seen as a service enhancement for clients because they extend services and remove barriers, and within the libraries, through greater understanding and streamlined workflows (Interviews #1, #8).

Partnerships are also valuable for raising awareness of the libraries and their programs and services, leading to increased membership, increased use, and larger audiences for programs (Interview #11). For the MHC, partnerships help the college meet its mandate of connecting with the community and its broad role as an educational institution for the city (Interview #4).

Partnership Challenges

> One possible danger of partnerships is that if you make something happen in a convenient and inexpensive way, then it may help to grow the expectation that growth of services should always be able to be done that way. – Petra Mauerhoff, CEO, Shortgrass Library System (personal communication, 12 March 2013)

Partnerships take time resources for meetings and finding compromise or consensus, in communication, and in personnel (Interviews #2, #3, #4, #10). Sometimes partners wonder if the end result is worth the effort, particularly when there are internal or external competing demands for

resources. In order to justify the time expended, the level of enthusiasm and support for the partnership must be sustained, adding to the cost in energy (Interview #5).

Although participants saw a financial value to partnerships, they recognized that funding can also be a challenge. Organizational budget constraints can force a partner to look inward at their internal activities instead of having the flexibility to try new things (Interview #5). Alternatively, potential partners may look at the partnership solely from the financial perspective to determine whether it is worth investing in the partnership; this focus on money can stop people from working together (Interview #3). In the case of an established partnership, what was initiated as a way to enhance service or reduce duplication may turn into a question of who pays for the partnership, particularly when an organization is experiencing funding challenges (Interviews #1, #3, #9).

When partnerships are between organizations with multiple employees, there is a need to develop a shared vision of the partnership and the partnership's benefit to each organization (Interviews #2, #5, #9). Staff must feel that the partnership activity fits into their work and reflects their overall sense of what the library should be doing (Interview #4, #13). Leaders and employees need to realize that the partnership will not necessarily generate positive results immediately, but that benefits are often experienced in the longer term and the partnership is a good way to share resources (Interviews #10, #11).

Sometimes members of partnerships feel a loss of control of time, resources, or public perception, leading to a reluctance to commit fully to the partnership (Interview #14). There can be a desire for autonomy or territoriality among the partners or even internally within a partnering organization (Interviews #1, #3, #14). Compounding that challenge is individual ego (Interviews #1, #14).

All participants spoke of the individual leader in each organization and his or her role in establishing and maintaining the partnership (Interview #3). Partnerships are often built on personal connections (Interview #1); sustaining the relationship and the partnership vision when individuals leave their job, therefore, can be particularly challenging (Interviews #4, #9, #11). Although partnerships are often initiated by one of the partners (Interview #12), there is a need for leadership from all organizations involved in the partnership. If one side is less eager to pursue the partnership, it is difficult to make it successful (Interview #2). Sometimes the person who wants the partnership might assume that it is desired by and beneficial to other organizations and push others into participating. Without a commitment to the partnership concept, however, the partnership will fail as the work of sustaining the partnership requires the commitment of resources (Interview #12). A similar situation can occur when one partner is less active and interested in the partnership than other partners. When a partner is seen as a silent partner, particularly in a long-term partnership, this can become a serious issue (Interview #8). Additionally, when a partnership is coasting, lacking review and assessment, or taken for granted, the partnership will either become unsustainable or simply fade away (Interviews #3, #4).

Organizational Culture

Schein's (1992) definition of organizational culture provides a framework in which to consider the Medicine Hat libraries:

> [Organizational culture is] a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 12).

Schein (1992) proposes that organizational culture can be explained and understood by viewing it at three levels:

- Artifacts: The visible elements in a culture such as language, published values[3], products, rituals, and physical environment;

- Espoused values: Values normally espoused by leading figures that are still very much at the conscious level and predict much of the behaviour observed at the artifactual level. These values can predict what people will say in a variety of situations, but not necessarily what people will do, unless they are reasonably congruent with the culture's assumptions; and

- Assumptions: Values that have become so taken for granted that behaviour based on any other premise is inconceivable. These values are neither confronted nor debated, making them extremely difficult to change.

The essence of culture, therefore, is a pattern of "taken-for-granted" assumptions that will be manifested at "the levels of observable artifacts and shared espoused values, norms, and rules of behaviour" (Schein, 1992, p. 26). Through the Medicine Hat interviews, aspects of organizational culture are apparent and can be allocated to Schein's three levels.

Artifacts: The participants spoke of a willingness on the part of employees and their managers to set aside time or "sacrifice work time" to the partnership; people need to "make it fit into your work" (Interview #3). This was related to staff commitment. One group said that the leaders initiate the partnership but it is the staff who do the work in making the partnership happen and who find solutions to partnership challenges (Interview #2).

The importance of the leader – his or her perspective and relationships – was mentioned multiple times. All participants recognized that good working relationships between leaders was often the impetus for partnerships and was critical in partnership success. In one interview, it was stated that

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[3] For the published vision, mission, and values of the Medicine Hat libraries, please see Appendix B

if the directors don't have a strong working relationship then the partnership will not work; it might not even start in the first place (Interview #12). The importance of a leader's willingness to take ideas from all levels and areas of the organization was also expressed, as well as the need for a leader to be progressive and seek out opportunities (Interviews #1, #5, #10). The leader's perspective on partnering is critical. One group mentioned that although partnering is strong between libraries currently, if a new leader has a different philosophy toward partnering it might all change (Interview #10).

A "just do it" approach was mentioned in a number of interviews, with comments such as "don't be nitpicky about the details" (Interview #9), "less talk, more action" and worry about the details later (Interview #7), "where there's a will there's a way" (Interview #11), "something sounds cool and we just run with it" (Interview #10), or in the unforgettable words of the Chair of the MHPL Board: "Just git 'er dun!" (D. Kirkham, personal communication, 13 March 2013) There was a feeling that partnerships among the libraries currently have a good balance of organization and creativity, but that any partnership could get bogged down with too much detail, too many parameters, or too great a focus on measurement (Interviews #1, #13).

Espoused values: Trust came through in the interviews as a value in all the organizations, but was particularly mentioned in the interviews at the senior administration level – vice-presidents, boards, and directors. There were comments about trust between leaders, about leaders trusting their staff, and the staff trusting their leaders (Interviews #2, #4, #7, #9, #13).

Respect for what each partner brings to the partnership was another value, as was respect for the strengths both of individuals and of each partnering organization. Participants spoke of mutual respect, understanding, and empathy of the other partner's context, rather than mutual benefit, as

being critical to partnership success (Interviews #4, #9). In one interview it was stated: "If you expect everyone to bring equal amounts to each partnership then you will be disappointed; over time, however, the contributions balance out" (Interview #2).

Thirdly, there needs to be a willingness to take risks and risk failure (Interviews #9, #11, #12, #13). Leaders need to be willing "to let people try and to support them if the partnership fails" (Interview #5).

There were some differences in the interview responses from MHC library employees, teacher-librarians, and public and regional library employees, particularly in the areas of risk management and the importance of sharing. This could reflect the libraries' different primary clients, funding structures, and reporting structures. What is notable, however, is that these differences were not impediments to partnerships as the underlying assumptions are consistent through all the interviews.

Assumptions:

"in an ideal world we'd purchase provincial licenses for everything, once, and share."
(Interview #13)

From the interviews, it was clear that while the cultures of the various libraries are different, the fundamental values are the same (Interviews #6, #8). Every interview elicited phrases like service orientation, patron-centred, and the desire to help people (Interviews #2, #3, #11). There is a common goal of enriching the community and the clients, a belief that the partnerships are "good for the users" (Interview #5, #7). This focus on the client lessens or eliminates any jockeying for position. "It all comes down to helping clients, not territoriality," stated the director of the Shortgrass Library System (P. Mauerhoff, personal communication, 12 March 2013). Others spoke of the importance of being

likeminded and not having competing goals (Interview #3); as one group said "it wouldn't work as well if one person was out for the glory" (Interview #14).

> Belief in the value of libraries and the value of partnerships was also apparent in the interviews.
>
> One can believe so strongly that partnerships have high value that you don't give in whether that means finding the right partner, finding a new partner, or working your butt off to ensure that both partners find mutual satisfaction. (Interview #4)

This appears to be a critical component of the culture as employees stated that staff buy-in was very important to the success of a partnership (Interview #2). Employees stated that "staff can make a partnership work or not" (Interview #10); this is supported by administration: "the more people you have on side that support the development of partnerships, the more likely they will happen" (Interview #12). In addition, there were a number of comments about the history of sharing in the region (Interviews #1, #9, #12 #13). "We are pretty good at partnering because we are practiced at it," the president of MHC said. "There's a dance, there's a rhythm to it, and we like to go to the dance." (R. Weeks, personal communication, 11 March 2013)

Conclusion

Participants thought the relative isolation of Medicine Hat and its small size made it easier for people to come together as a group and possibly resulted in increased pressure to work together and support each other; however, they were quick to state that it was not size and location alone that led to partnerships. There are other communities in Alberta of similar size and similarly isolated that do not have the same level of partnership (Interview #3). Although these aspects of the Medicine Hat case study are a part of the Medicine Hat context, they do not determine whether or not any single library successfully participates in a partnership.

Through interviews with representatives from a college library, a public library, a regional library system, and school libraries, the Medicine Hat case study shows the value in partnering, partnership challenges, and the cultural characteristics of an organization that is "partnership-ready."

For libraries wishing to maintain or enhance services in an environment demanding fiscal responsibility, the Medicine Hat Libraries case study shows that partnering with other libraries may be a solution. Partnerships demonstrate a library's desire to reduce duplication and maximize resources as well as highlighting broader community support for library initiatives. Partnerships lead to a sharing of expertise and knowledge. Partnerships increase community awareness of programs and services and often result in enhanced services.

While recognizing the value of partnerships, the Medicine Hat case study also highlights potential challenges of partnerships. It is important for organizations interested in partnering to be aware of these challenges and determine ways to mitigate them. Partnerships can be resource intensive, particularly in time and personnel, and can be seen as taking money away from other priorities. Partnerships require a shared vision which can be challenging particularly in organizations with many employees. The challenge of a shared vision is exacerbated by the risk that a change in personnel, particularly the leader, will lead to a change in priorities and organizational focus. Finally, there is a loss of control in partnerships which can be difficult for some individuals and/or organizations.

Once an organization has chosen to progress in developing partnerships, looking inward at the culture of the organization will help in determining the partnership's potential success. Based on the Medicine Hat study, characteristics of a partnering organization's culture are:

- Belief in the value of the partnership, at all levels of the organization

- Service orientation; a focus on the clients

- Belief in the value of libraries and how they benefit clients

- A willingness to take risk and risk failure

- Trust and respect for the partners and for individuals within the partnering organization(s)

- Willingness to set aside time, energy, and resources to the partnership

- A "let's just do it" approach which stops the partners from getting mired in details

- Supportive leadership

- Willingness to take ideas from all levels and areas of the organization

An understanding of the value of partnerships and their inherent challenges will help an organization determine if it is interested in developing partnerships. Recognizing and nurturing the characteristics of a partnership-ready organization will then allow organizations to begin shaping cultures that support the development and sustenance of partnerships.

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Appendix A – Semi-structured Interview Questions

These initial questions will be used in the interviews in order to stimulate conversation and discussion. It is anticipated that follow-up questions will vary depending on the information provided by the participant.

Senior library management
1.   Please tell me about the partnerships your library is involved in.
   o   Which of these partnerships are with other libraries/library systems in Medicine Hat?
2.   Please describe the background to the Medicine Hat library partnership(s) you are involved in.
   o   What led to its establishment?
   o   Who were the key players?
3.   How has this partnership(s) benefited you/your library?
   o   Initially?
   o   Currently?
4.   What have been the challenges in the partnership(s)?
   o   In establishing the partnership?
   o   In sustaining the partnership?
5.   What key factors have led to the success of the partnership(s)?
   o   In your/your library's relationship with the partnering library?
   o   In the attitude/response of the library employees?
   o   In the response from your library board/organization's senior administration?
6.   From your experience, what are some fundamental requirements for successful partnerships?
7.   Does organizational culture impact the success of a partnership?
8.   What collaborative/partnership opportunities do you see in the future?

Front-line library employees
1.   Please tell me about the partnerships your library is involved in.
   o   Which of these partnerships are with other libraries/library systems in Medicine Hat?
2.   Has the partnership(s) with _____ library impacted you in your work? How?
3.   What has been successful about the partnership?
4.   What are the challenges?
5.   [if the partnership is deemed successful] What makes the partnership(s) successful? What about your workplace/work environment/organizational culture has made the partnership a success?

Senior College and School District representatives, Library Board members
1.   What do you see as the value of establishing and maintaining partnerships for your library?
2.   What do you see as the challenges of establishing and maintaining partnerships?
3.   From your experience, what are some fundamental requirements for successful partnerships?
4.   Does organizational culture impact the success of a partnership?
5.   Would you support the further development of the library partnerships in which your library is currently involved? Why or why not?

Appendix B – Vision, Mission, and Values of the Medicine Hat Libraries

Medicine Hat Public Library

Vision: The Medicine Hat Public Library is a valued resource, fostering life-long learning and enhancing the vitality of the community.

Mission: The Medicine Hat Public Library serves as a community hub, providing equitable and convenient access to books, media, information and programs that help to educate, enrich, entertain and inform.

Values: The Medicine Hat Library Board supports and endorses the values of The Alberta Library.
1. Universal Access: All citizens of Medicine Hat will have equitable access to library and information.
2. Freedom of Information: The Medicine Hat Library Board is committed to the concept of public access to information while respecting individual privacy.
3. Lifelong Learning: Each individual has the right to access the information and ideas required to be a self-reliant, responsible, caring, and contributing member of society.
4. Intellectual Freedom: The Medicine Hat Public Library has a responsibility to promote, develop, and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge, opinion, and intellectual activity for all citizens of Medicine Hat. The Board also supports the Canadian Library Association's Statement on Intellectual Freedom.
5. Innovation: The Medicine Hat Public Library will take a leading role in providing the citizens of Medicine Hat with the information and ideas they need to meet the demands of the future by employing traditional and innovative means and resources, co-operating and cost-sharing with stakeholders, and being willing to embrace change and provide new direction.

Medicine Hat College Libraries
Vision: The library is the academic heart of the college, fostering excitement in the process of discovery by challenging lifelong learners to think critically, practice social responsibility, improve their lives, and change the world.

Mission: The knowledgeable and dedicated library staff provide the college students, faculty, staff, and community members with service above and beyond by:
- Creating a welcoming physical and digital learning environment
- Providing effective information services to encourage academic success and to inspire lifelong learning
- Teaching information literacy and critical thinking skills, and promoting the ethical use of information
- Incorporating new and innovative technologies which enhance access to high quality information resources and services
- Building relationships and partnerships through collaboration within the college and with external groups

Medicine Hat School District #76
Vision: Developing tomorrow's citizens through improved learning, living and relationships

Mission: As a partner in the community, Medicine Hat School District No. 76 will create inclusive and innovative learning environments.

Values:

- Excellence through
    - achieving the greatest result of individual's potential
    - developing attitude and appreciation to quality in things, performance, emotions
    - fostering superior expectations
    - meeting needs of students
    - creating happy and well rounded students achieving to their ability
    - accepting students for who they are and appreciating and welcoming their differences and supporting their need to achieve to a high level
    - achieving high expectations; high supports; much celebration
- Respect
    - mutual cooperation and acceptance of each individual
    - living out the "service" model
    - appreciating an environment where kids are happy and would want to come back tomorrow
    - listening with understanding
    - self-motivated courtesy
    - embracing all diversities
    - respecting ideas
    - honouring others' feelings as if feeling were directed to oneself
    - acknowledging high expectations; high supports; much celebration
- Caring and Compassion
    - showing concern and helping one another
    - eliminating all harassment in the district
    - sharing, mutual acceptance and understanding of others' situation
    - extending benevolent, but genuine, emotions toward others
    - showing concern for others
    - creating an atmosphere of understanding & building strong relationships
    - creating an atmosphere of kindness for no reason
    - making time for people
- Learning
    - a life-long process of individuals obtaining information that will enhance their well-being within society
    - using all available resources to foster one's growth
    - a life-long growth

- o in an atmosphere where listening occurs
- o where everyone in school is excited about education
- o engaging students
- o an atmosphere "full of excitement"
- o engaging activities with enthusiastic students
- Integrity
  - o the practice of the absolute enduring truth
  - o honesty
  - o truthfulness
  - o communicating beliefs and practices
  - o consistently acting on beliefs and practices
  - o treating others in the same manner as they wish to be treated
  - o principled
  - o demonstrating acceptable behaviour
- Innovation
  - o challenging students
  - o showing enthusiasm for new ideas
  - o being responsive and flexible
  - o creating a safe environment that fosters measured risk-taking
  - o creatively displaying a common goal
  - o encouraging and supporting new ideas and practices
  - o embracing/inventing new ideas, processes, things
  - o creating excitement and passion

Shortgrass Library System

Mission: The Shortgrass Library System provides quality library support services to member municipalities and partners.

Belief statement:
- We believe that libraries are vital contributors to the quality of life.
- We believe in universal public library service and equal and open access to library collections.
- We believe in the principles expressed in the Canadian Library Association's Statement on Intellectual Freedom (*www.cla.ca/about/intfreed.htm*).
- We believe that the province-wide SuperNet will result in a unified, provincial network among Alberta libraries.
- We believe that a library system fosters collaboration, sharing, networking and teamwork.
- We believe that a library system enhances member libraries' programs and services without sacrificing local autonomy.
- We believe that membership in a library system will enable member libraries to devote more time to developing creative and responsive public programs and services.

- We believe that a library system results in more efficient and economical use of all available library resources: people, funds, materials.
- We believe that a library system must advocate the benefits of system membership to non member municipalities.

Appendix C – Partnership initiatives among libraries in Medicine Hat

One Community One Card is a simple program where MHC student, staff, and faculty identification cards can be used as the membership card at any one of the fourteen public libraries within the SLS region (including MHPL) and SLS public library cards can be used as a membership card at the college library. The MHC library and all of the public libraries can be used as pick-up and drop-off locations for any library materials. This program cost no additional money and resulted in very positive attention for the libraries and their partnerships.

 Human Library was launched in January 2013 by the MHC library and MHPL. It is the only program in Canada whereby human "books" are recruited by both libraries and made available through the catalogues of both libraries on a long-term, rather than one shot, basis. Through the Human Library libraries connect users to people from various backgrounds so that they can meet together in the libraries and discuss their specific subject expertise – another way of connecting people to information.

Leisure Collection: On a regular basis the public library provides group loans of popular books and DVDs to the college library. These are displayed and made available for loan at the libraries on the college's Medicine Hat and Brooks campuses.

In an associated partnership, popular paperbacks discarded by the college or public libraries are included in a display of paperbacks for use by people who are flying out of the city at the airport or using the campground.

Intern Librarian program is a partnership between the Shortgrass Library System, MHPL, and MHC library. The internship is for one year and is open to a new graduate of a Masters in Library and Information Science program. The intern works at all three libraries, gaining experience in the different library sectors and undertakes professional librarian responsibilities

One Book One Community is an annual city-wide book club where a committee comprised of community representatives, a representative from MHPL, and a representative from MHC library chooses a Canadian book and then organizes a weekend of activities based on the theme in the book; often the author is in attendance.

Top Hat Teen Reads is a literacy promotion program involving the high school libraries in the Medicine Hat School District #76, the MHC library, and MHPL. The program includes prizes and opportunities for young people to write for the local newspaper.

Addition programs with the school district libraries include:
- The college and public library working with teacher-librarians to bring well-known authors to the city
- College librarians working with the high school teacher/librarians to develop a post-secondary section on the information literacy website for use by school students and teachers and some initial information literacy instruction classes for Grade 12 students.

- The public library working with the schools on summer reading lists and shared programming