Collaborative Leadership in School Library Learning Commons:
New Canadian Standards and New Possibilities
IASL 2015: The School Library Rocks

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We have a brand new school library standards document in Canada to assist schools with transitioning to futures oriented teaching and learning. *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* was officially released to the world in June 2014 and is now finding its way into strategic planning around the country. The publication of *Leading Learning* is an event of true historic significance. As the document says, "Learners have a right to expect good school libraries in every school in Canada." Standards can indeed help measure practice, but *Leading Learning* does much more. By focusing on the needs of the learner, *Leading Learning* provides a framework for growth. Every school, no matter the status of its library program, can find itself in this framework and decide on tangible steps for improvement. The development of *Leading Learning* brought together input from every province and territory in the country, and successfully developed standards for growth that are meaningful within this very disparate context. This is a remarkable achievement.

Vision Meets Reality

The release of *Leading Learning* could not have been more timely. While learning commons thinking has captured the imagination of educators across the country, the reality is that its implementation remains somewhat elusive. Seminal and visionary documents such as the Ontario School Library Association's *Together for Learning: School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons* (2010) have inspired a wave of innovation, action research, and deeper professional learning; this is within a highly fragmented policy landscape across the country. Policy-makers in jurisdictions with library programs compromised by years of funding cuts need to understand the vision, but they also need to know that it is not out of reach.

While some education authorities have gone so far as to formulate policy about school library learning commons (i.e., Alberta Education, n.d., *Learning Commons/School Libraries*) and certainly the larger goals of education in Canadian schools focus on shifts in learning culture (Fullan, 2013); at the time of this project few provinces acknowledged the potential for leveraging the new school library learning commons for school success.

> Shifts in education driven by global realities open up opportunities for school libraries to play a significant role in school improvement through the learning commons transformation. This capacity is growing in some schools across Canada and the standards will help all schools advance. The role and potential of the school library learning commons is rarely covered in teacher pre-service programs or principal preparation training. There are few universities in Canada offering education degrees that have school library related research capabilities. This situation has been documented in a research report ***The crisis in school libraries in Canada*** (Haycock, 2003). Over twenty years of research shows that student achievement and literacy scores advance where professionally staffed and resourced school libraries are thriving. **School libraries make a difference in student achievement** (International Association of School Librarianship, 2008). (CLA, 2014)

From Measuring Outputs to Measuring Outcomes and Impact

The whole notion of standards for Canada's school libraries has been transformed with this document. It is not the first set of standards published by the Canadian Library Association. *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Libraries in Canada* was published in 2003 and updated in 2006. A

landmark document in its time, *Achieving Information Literacy* provided measures for collections, budgets, staffing, facilities, etc., and included associated rubrics that have been useful in assessing these concrete aspects of school libraries. The publication of *Achieving Information Literacy* was an accomplishment in school library advocacy at the time, providing standards to which school library champions could point in their efforts to mitigate against the emerging trend in K-12 education towards marginalization of the program.

Problems with the kinds of output measures that *Achieving Information Literacy* represented have gradually emerged. A large body of international research into the efficacy of school library programs demonstrates that while collections, hours of operation, facilities etc. do influence the quality of the library, the impact of school library programs on student success is derived from the actions of the teacher-librarian. After all, a great collection alone does not mean that learning is taking place. Teacher-librarians who teach information literacy skills, collaboratively plan with their teaching colleagues and facilitate professional learning have a direct impact on student success (LRS, 2013). New Canadian research also corroborated these findings, as summarized by the Ontario Library Association (OLA, 2015). Assessment practices in education were in a period of radical change. Research and practice in education demanded that clearer connections be made between actual instructional practices and student achievement (Marzano, 2003). Dr. Ross Todd was imploring practitioners to use evidence-based practice to gather information on the school library program's impact on student learning (Todd, 2008). Certainly his call to action, "If school librarians can't prove they make a difference, they may cease to exist" had a profound and rather jolting impact on school library leaders in Canada, and thus were planted the seeds for a shift in focus.

Add to this shift the realities of school libraries in Canada. Education is a provincial jurisdiction, which means that there are ten provincial education systems, plus the schools administered by the federal government in Canada's three territories, Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The place of the library in schools has always varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and of course the general decline in funding has fragmented the situation even further.

Standards as a Framework for Growth

The importance of establishing new national standards in this context was very clear, however many challenges remained in getting there. Reorganization of the Canadian Library Association which dissolved the divisions meant that there was no national body to lead the process. The broad range of program and staffing models across the country and even within single jurisdictions made it seemingly impossible to set standards that everyone could identify with and use.

The challenge was huge. How could we express standards in today's evolving educational context? How do we deal with the broad range of understandings of the school library across the country, and even within provincial jurisdictions? How do we use the standards to unite rather than divide in this context?

The answers to these questions emerged from a series of research symposia, Treasure Mountain Canada (TMC). Modeled on Dr. David Loertscher's Treasure Mountain symposia in the United States, and with Dr. Loertscher's support, Canadian school library leaders have organized three TMC symposia so far, in 2010, 2012 and 2014. Part of the TMC objectives was to collaboratively move forward to reinvent school libraries and ignite interest from the education community in the potential of the learning commons model. Planning for new standards emerged from the 2012 symposium. *Voices for School Libraries*, an informal network of the CLA, along with the CLA's School Library Issues Advisory Committee helped organize committees from every province and territory. This was an extraordinary process, with local input from educators and education leaders, teacher-librarians and other school library practitioners, parents and community members, often organized by local school library or teachers' associations. Online collaboration was essential in this process, especially considering Canada's vast geography. The online collaborative space remains available (Voices for

School Libraries, n.d.) and provides a window into this process. The project focus group and national steering committee worked to refine themes, address concerns and build consensus.

The *Leading Learning* project builds on several important precedents of collaboration, with a history of important guidelines and resources for school libraries. As early as 1982 Canada was receiving international attention with the publication of *Partners in Action: The Library Resource Centre in the School Curriculum* by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1982). The document set partnership and collaboration as foundations of resource-based learning. More recently *Together for Learning: School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons* was published by the Ontario School Library Association (2010), with funding and support from the Ministry of Education. Envisioned as a living document, the *Together for Learning* project continues to collect ideas for implementation, shared on its website. Important projects have emerged from other jurisdictions, most notably the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association's *Points of Inquiry: Inquiry-based Learning for Classroom and School Libraries* (2011), and the Saskatchewan School Library Association's *Teacher-librarians Constructing Understanding through Inquiry* (n.d.), better known as the Inquiry Project, which was created in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. *Leading Learning* also draws on exemplars from other jurisdictions, particularly the American Association of School Librarians' *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007) and associated publications.

There is no question that Canada's community of teacher-librarians has taken considerable inspiration from the work of Dr. David Loertscher and Carol Koechlin, writing coordinator for the *Leading Learning* project and co-author of this paper. Their vision for conceptualizing the school library program as the catalyst for transforming learning for the 21st century inspired Together for Learning and other landmark documents, and has captured the imagination of the wider education community.

> Thus, we have proposed that the learning commons serve a unique purpose in the school as a bridge between educational philosophy being practiced and the real world. As such, the learning commons serves school curriculum but also is known as a place for experimenting, playing, making, doing, thinking, collaborating, and growing. For example, it may be the only place in the school where the networks are open; it may be the place where clients are experimenting with the latest 3-D printer; it may be the virtual hub of school activities. Although the learning commons will look and feel different in every school, it must be the center of inquiry, digital citizenship, project-based learning, collaborative intelligence, advanced literacy as well as the center of creating, performing, and sharing. It will sometimes take on a role as "third space," neither home nor school. It is the place young people love—their space. (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2014)

As a standards document, *Leading Learning* sets itself apart. The strong conviction that emerged from the massive collaborative process was that an arbitrary and inflexible set of standards, no matter if they were based on the latest thinking and best research, would not be useful in the Canadian context. Expectations of seemingly unattainable program and staffing models would disenfranchise many dedicated people who were nevertheless devoted library employees or volunteers. Standards that did not acknowledge and build on the compelling international research that indicates that the value of the school library is derived from the teacher-librarian (LRC, 2013) would, on the other hand, disenfranchise this dedicated profession and defeat the overall purpose.

Rather than setting an arbitrary assessment rubric, then, *Leading Learning* focuses on growth and a culture of learning and continuous improvement. The standards themselves are expressions of the core actions that effective school library learning commons programs take to have an impact on student learning. Progress in achieving effectiveness for each standard is expressed in terms of growth. The growth indicators help schools to identify strengths and areas of need, and steps that they can take to address those needs. Every school can find its place, and be empowered to move forward.

Evaluation of practice is an essential aspect of implementing the new Standards of Practice for School Libraries in Canada. School libraries and school librarians are rarely evaluated in a consistent and systematic way, but evaluations help to ensure that the library's programs and services are 'relentlessly focused on learning.' Evaluations can indicate the extent to which students and teachers perceive that they benefit from those programs and services, but they can also help to shape those programs and services and enhance the understanding of and commitment to those programs and services for both library staff and library users. Evaluations can enhance both accountability and transformation, addressing decision-making or problem solving concerns (accountability) and also influencing people's thinking about and developing support for the school library (transformation). (Oberg, 2014)

The document models formative assessment, and the indicators are expressed as impacts on learning, not as arbitrary outputs that are not expressly connected to student learning.

Overview of Standards

The learning commons concepts for school libraries have roots in many districts in Canada and this approach to reinvention is cast in the document as a solution for developing a new culture of learning and leading us into designing for the future.

A learning commons is a whole school approach to building a participatory learning community. The library learning commons is the physical and virtual collaborative learning hub of the school. It is designed to engineer and drive future-oriented learning and teaching throughout the entire school. Inquiry, project/problem-based learning experiences are designed as catalysts for intellectual engagement with information, ideas, thinking, and dialogue. Reading thrives, learning literacies and technology competencies evolve, and critical thinking, creativity, innovation and playing to learn are nourished. Everyone is a learner; everyone is a teacher working collaboratively toward excellence. (CLA, 2014)

The framework for school library transitions consists of five bold standards of practice broken down into specific themes. The work of an effective School Library Learning Commons (SLLC) is most powerful when the core standards of practice weave together to generate dynamic learning.

The five core standards of practice from *Leading Learning: Standards Of Practice For School Library Learning Commons In Canada.* (CLA 2014)

Facilitating Collaborative Engagement to Cultivate/Empower a Community of Learners: Local, regional and global connections are a vital part of the 21st Century learning environment. The learning commons plays a key role in cultivating and facilitating collaboration to provide rich experiential learning opportunities. It provides not only a physical space to develop skills and engage learners, but also is a portal to virtual connections, both local and global. It is important to acknowledge the diverse needs of all stakeholders within the school learning commons community, both in terms of resource formats and access to information and collaboration opportunities.

Leading the Learning Community to Achieve School Goals: Strong leadership for the learning commons is vital to ensure sustainability and attainment of school, jurisdiction and provincial student learning goals and outcomes. Forming a team to lead the learning commons is an effective way to intentionally plan for and assess the success of the goals of this learning space. The ultimate goal is improved student achievement and the refining of essential literacy, information management and communication skills. As such, it is also key to build in opportunities for student learning and innovation to be demonstrated, shared and showcased.

Cultivating Effective Instructional Design to Co-plan, Teach and Assess Learning: Knowledge-building, creativity and innovation, and honing of information management and literacy skills are key goals of the learning commons. The intentional teaching of these skills, as well as opportunities to utilize a variety of resources, technologies and spaces to support learning require collaboration and planning and thoughtful instructional design, as does the effective assessment of learning. Learners also need to 'learn how to learn' though deliberate design of opportunities to build metacognition of learning skills, process and content. It is essential to support both student and teacher growth and success in these areas.

Fostering Literacy to Empower Life-Long Learners: With the explosion of new technologies and methods of communication come expanding understandings of literacy which have made the refinement and demonstration of strong literacy skills ever more important for learners. Exploring and connecting various ways of knowing and learning is part of the process of personalizing learning and involves embracing new ideas and skills. The School Library Learning Commons has a leading role in assisting learners to hone and apply an expanded notion of literacy.

Designing Learning Environments to Support Participatory Learning: Active and knowledgeable involvement in participatory learning is a necessary skill for today's learners. Learners are moving from being only consumers of information to active producers and participants. Recent advances in technology have enabled individuals to actively and quickly comment on the work of others, as well as produce and share their own work. Inherent in these activities is the importance of security, privacy and good citizenship practices as well as effective collaboration skills and ensuring accessibility for all. Working together in groups, both virtually and in person is the new norm. A learning commons can provide both the physical and virtual learning environments as well as support necessary to be an active participatory learner. Learning commons spaces, collections and tools are changing in response to this paradigm shift.

A Catalyst for Igniting Change

"Learners have a right to expect good school libraries in every school in Canada." (CLA, 2014). The new standards call for a reinvestment in school library facilities, programs and staffing based on learner needs and the future of learning. With a deliberate focus on inclusion of every school regardless of the state of their school library this document provides points of entry for everyone and a framework for growth.
Leading Learning has the potential to transform school libraries in many ways. As a catalyst for igniting the design of futures oriented learning the document also can be viewed as an approach to building a new culture of learning (Thomas & Seely Brown, 2011) in a school. The standards are designed to foster teaching partnerships and build a community of learners. To be successful and sustainable these

transformations need to grow from collaborative leadership. Administration, teachers, specialist, support staff, students and parents are all partners and leaders in this quest to provide the best learning environments and programs possible. *Leading Learning* calls for thoughtful action grounded in success indicators and based on best practice over a continuum of experience levels. Consequently the document can be used in many ways to meet the needs of each school community: as an implementation guide for transition to a school library learning commons, as a measurement tool and framework for growth, as professional development for teacher-librarians, administrators and school library learning commons teams and as a support for teacher action research.

Implementation Guide

The document is deliberately designed to provide many points of entry for schools planning on transitioning the school library to better address the teaching and learning needs of the school. The standards are not aligned hierarchically because they are very dependent on one another and overlap to drive synergy and sustainability of this approach. Consequently trying to start with implementation as a step-by-step process through each standard is not recommended.

Key steps for implementation are provided in the Moving Forward section. The first key understanding is to establish right from the start that this is a whole school approach not just a library upgrade. The second concept to establish is that this is not the isolated work of the teacher-librarian or library support staff. A team effort is required if any lasting transformation is to be achieved. Implementation of the standards is more than changing the appearance of the library, although that may be a needed outcome to enable desired program. The standards of practice are designed to transition teaching and learning in concert with building collaborative physical and virtual learning environments. Best results will be achieved when the learning commons work is woven into addressing school goals through school improvement plans.

Renowned researcher and champion of the work of teacher- librarians and school libraries, Dr. Ross Todd, supports pedagogical function as the future of effective and sustainable school libraries. He outlines key principles that mirror the potential and possibilities overarching *Leading Learning.* "These principles center on the school library as a center for pedagogical development, innovation, and experimentation; the pervasive visibility of the school librarian as a teacher and coteacher; an inquiry-centered pedagogy; a content knowledge–outcomes orientation; and the advancement of social justice and learning for life capabilities." (Todd, 2013)

Seven steps to success are outlined and expanded upon in the document and supported by worksheets and strategies and tips for achieving needed physical changes as well as building a virtual learning commons to provide support and learning spaces for students and teachers from any place any time they need it. The very first step is to establish a Learning Commons Leadership team committed to the long-term transition and implementation. This team should be as representative as possible of the school community and not appointed, but invited to lead. Then the team moves forward with study, analysis and action oriented stages of progress interwoven with constant review and evidence based growth. The final reminder is to know that there is no definitive destination point other than providing the best learning environment and program possible for learners. The learning commons is always in a state of beta, constantly evolving to address shifting needs. This is the strength and the promise for sustainable school improvement.

The writing team also recognized that support and inspiration is not limited to the school community. Indicators for needed actions by central support staff, consultants and administration are woven into the standards growth continuums. With commitment from regional and provincial leaders to futures oriented learning commons the potential of the standards can be recognized. Key recommendations are outlined with examples to support continued growth at the local, regional and provincial and territorial level.

Measurement / Growth Tool

The standards are broken down into themes and then indicators of progress across a continuum of levels. Each level builds on the next from early 'Exploration' and progressing to 'Leading into the Future.'

Leading Learning **Growth Stages** (CLA, 2014)

Each indicator is then illustrated with a 'See it in Action' experience from schools all over Canada. These real examples of library learning commons standards in practice will make it easy for schools to assess where they are in terms of each standard and theme. They will discover that they may be 'Established' in their practice in some indicators but 'Exploring' in others. This framework will help schools establish where their strengths are and also assist them to set goals for growth. With the focus on the learner the assessments schools and district will conduct will not be about the number of resources or technology tools available to students but how those resources and technologies enable learning and knowledge building. The indicators will help measure how the library learning commons program and facilities meet school goals by supporting inquiry, building reading capacity, enabling collaborations, igniting creativity, and so much more. The bottom line and the real strength of the standards framework is to invite and encourage continued growth for students, teachers and the entire school community.

Professional Learning

The introduction of *Leading Learning* gives a good overview of the vision of a library learning commons and goals of the document. The entire document is rich with live links to illustrations of the document in action from almost every corner of Canada. These illustrations provide hundreds of authentic learning opportunities for administrators, teachers and parents new to the learning commons approach as well as extended learning for those already seasoned in this movement. In the Moving Forward section a page of illustrated suggestions for professional growth, reflection and renewal provide a practical entry point for professional learning. A glossary of terms and an extensive bibliography provide in depth support for further study. Training programs for teacher librarians and school library support personnel welcome a national set of standards to provide continuity of training from district to district. The online PDF and embedded links ensure that course instructors can easily embed elements of the standards into course work. The document itself is structured in such a way as to make it easy for professional learning communities in districts and schools to embark on studies of the learning commons approach.

Teacher Action Research

Implementation and sustainability of the learning commons model like any pedagogical movement depends on continuous gathering of evidence and research to support growth. "Teacher-librarians can study issues pertinent to their own professional growth and the school's student learning goals through action research as a professional development tool in order to take action that facilitates a desired change or answers significant questions related to learning, teaching, and professional growth." (Sykes, 2013). Teacher-led action research is key to moving forward the Canadian standards of practice for the school library learning commons within the context of each school. Principals, teacher-librarians, library support personnel and classroom teachers will approach the research from their respective perspectives and all are needed to ensure desired results. Collaborative teacher inquiry is another approach and fits so well with the co-teaching and collaboration goals of the learning commons.
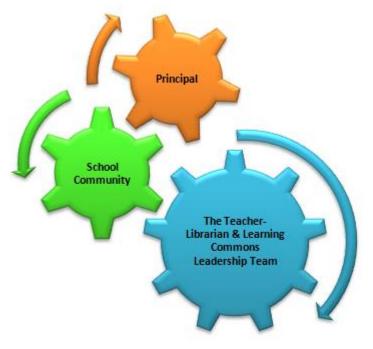
Engaging in inquiry by oneself does not have the same impact as collaborative inquiry. Research suggests that teachers make and sustain valued changes to their practice when they collaboratively construct, monitor and adapt context-specific approaches to address their goals. In collaborative inquiry teachers work together to define problems, co-plan, co-teach, co-monitor and interpret outcomes, and then consider together "what's next." When teachers collaboratively develop and test their own conceptions, they can better grapple with new theories and practices. (Schnellert, 2015).

Researchers can target specific indicators from the standards to focus their research. What's working well? What needs to change? What would you like to experiment with? What are you doing now that you can stop? How will you know you are making progress? These and many more questions will guide each inquiry in order to improve pedagogy and practice in the school library. The challenge remains to aggregate and share learning with the broader education community and for the benefit of overall program growth. This has been and remains at the core of Treasure Mountain Canada's vision, the incubator for *Leading Learning*.

Collaborative Leadership Opportunities

A successful school library learning commons has an impact across the school community and its learning culture. It is critical then, that the entire school community collaborate in building success. "It is to be emphasized that the transformation from school library to the learning commons perspective is a 'whole school' transformation. Thus this integral work around learning and teaching should not be viewed as 'extra work' or needing 'extra time' but inherent and vital to the support and growth of the whole school development plan." (CLA, 2014)

Collaboration can exist on many levels, and indeed successful growth depends on the extent of that collaboration, and the extent to which it is perceived as being essential to overall school improvement planning.

Moving Forward (CLA, 2014)

Leading Learning describes opportunities for collaborative leadership on multiple levels:

Learning Commons Leadership Team: Collaborative teams leading whole school ownership of learning commons development and responsibilities will propel transitions, implementation, experimentation and sustainability. Everyone needs to be welcomed to the process and do their part - principals and other school administrators, teachers, teacher-librarians, library technicians, community librarians, parents and students. Transitioning to effective learning commons practice is a continuous journey that will take different amounts of time for schools. It is a whole school effort with a team approach and varied roles and responsibilities. The important part is to begin, set goals, achieve, celebrate and keep getting better!

Principal and Teacher-Librarian: Working together toward school goals the principal and teacher-librarian can develop action plans, align budget needs, plan for professional learning, foster dispositions and create learning environments to enable collaborations in the learning commons. "At the school level, the principal is key in establishing and encouraging working partnerships among staff and students. The principal must provide the climate for cooperation, experimentation and growth. The Learning Commons has great potential, but only when everyone participates." (OSLA 2010)

Teacher-Librarian and Teachers: Teachers and teacher-librarians work together in many ways to implement curriculum enabled by literacies instruction and best technologies for learning. They not only co-plan, teach and assess learning experiences but they also partner on literacy initiatives and cultural events.

Teacher-Librarians and Specialists: Other specialists in the school such as technology and reading coaches, guidance teachers and special needs teachers can all benefit from the opportunities to partner with the teacher-librarian and other teachers in the learning commons. The learning commons provides common spaces and resources both physical and virtual to make working together more efficient and productive.

Teacher-Librarian and Students: Students experience the library learning commons in many ways, as part of a whole class visit, individually as they pursue their own learning or explore their reading options, through participation in events and clubs, in every aspect of their development as learners and as responsible and caring citizens. Teacher-librarians cultivate relationships with students built on a culture of learning. Including student voice in program renewal keeps the focus on their needs.

Students and Students: Collaborative learning is at the heart of the learning commons vision. "The library learning commons plays a key role in cultivating and facilitating collaboration to provide rich experiential learning opportunities. It provides not only a physical space to develop skills and engage learners, but is also a portal to virtual connections, both local and global." (CLA, 2014). Most importantly, the instructional approach should intentionally help students realize the power of collaborative knowledge building, where "the smartest person in the room is the room itself." (Weinberger, 2012)

Teacher-Librarian / Learning Commons Team with Parents and Community: As the learning commons team builds capacity and connections, outreach to the broader community through the learning program and in school initiatives will build understanding of the school library at the core of the school and student success.

District Level: Schools can accomplish significant improvement, but efforts may be significantly compromised if the value of the school library learning commons is not understood at the district level. At the most basic level, district administration provide efficient and effective technological infrastructure for library systems and networks. School districts where administration and program consultants work collaboratively with teacher-librarians for professional learning, and facilitating teacher research and experimentation with new technologies and learning strategies and support collaboration between

teacher-librarians and teachers across the district build greater capacity for system and for school improvement.

If the transition to a learning commons is understood as only being the teacher-librarian's responsibility, then it is doomed to failure. Collaborative leadership on multiple levels is essential for realizing the strength of the collaborative learning culture of a true learning commons approach. When the goals and strategies for improving the school library are an integral part of school improvement planning.

Making a Difference

Barely a year old, the new standards have received recognition nationally and internationally. Provincial library associations and regional school districts have embraced *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* as a framework for school libraries to move forward with pedagogical shifts and information and technology realities. Conferences, workshops, webinars and professional articles and blogs feature implementation of *Leading Learning* and the learning commons approach. Work to implement the Alberta Ministry of Education Learning Commons Policy turns to *Leading Learning* for robust standards and indicators of success in a webinar series developed by Judith Sykes and Linda Shantz-Kerestezes (2015).

CLA Executive Council representative Jane Schmidt cuts the ribbon, held by project steering committee members Linda Shantz-Kerestezes and Judith Sykes at the release of Leading Learning at the CLA National Conference 2014 in Victoria, British Columbia.

Ellen Goldfinch from the Quebec Ministry of Education (MELS) has been hired for a special project funded by the Canada Quebec Entente for Minority Language Education. Part of her role is to help school libraries implement the national school library standards within the English sector in Quebec. The Quebec School Librarians Network (QSLiN) has developed a digital badging learning incentive program (QSLiN, 2015) based on the five CLA national standards to lead transition of English school libraries in Quebec.

School library leaders from the four school districts in Winnipeg, Manitoba organized a full day of professional learning for their teacher-librarians centred around the implementation of *Leading Learning* (Brooks Kirkland, 2014). Jo-Anne Gibson, teacher-librarian at Acadia Junior High reports that the school administration included this statement in this year's school plan. "21st Century Learning: Library team will be evaluating where Acadia is currently on the library learning commons continuum as articulated in the document, *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* (2014). Administration and the learning commons leadership team will meet to develop a 3-5 year plan to move Acadia forward along the continuum towards the highest level, *Leading into the Future*, as identified in the standards document" (Gibson, 2014).

In British Columbia the learning commons approach is gaining solid momentum. A group of dedicated elementary and secondary teacher-librarians conducted teacher inquiry on their transitions and have prepared a report of their findings transformed into action ideas and extensive narratives from each teacher-librarian project, in a document called *From Library to Learning Commons: A Proactive Model*

for Educational Change, published by the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association (Ekdahl & Zubke, 2014).

Chris Kennedy, Superintendent of Schools / CIO at the West Vancouver School District has embraced the learning commons approach for West Vancouver schools. "I walk into almost all of our schools in West Vancouver and very often the first thing people want to show me or talk to me about is the changes happening around the library. Or more specifically, schools are taking great pride in their learning commons spaces that are developing. While the physical spaces are exciting, the changes to our mindsets are far more powerful. We are not destined for new schools in West Vancouver anytime soon but the rethink of the library has been both a symbolic and concrete shift in how we think about space and how we think about learning. The school library – a centre piece in schools – is now the modern hub for learning.*" (Kennedy, 2015)

The Royal Society of Canada's recently released expert panel report on the status and future of Canada's libraries and archives (Demers, Beaudry et al, 2014) made recommendations for improving standards for school library programs across the country. It cited *Leading Learning* and the Ontario guideline document *Together for Learning* as models for moving forward, and called for a national policy consensus on the most appropriate model for school library learning commons "to maximize their contribution to the K-12 experience and its learning outcomes". The Ontario Library Association awarded *Leading Learning* the very prestigious President's Award for Exceptional Achievement at OLA Super Conference in January 2015.

Internationally the standards document has been well received as a fresh approach. Lynn Hay, Head of Professional Learning at Syba Academy, Adjunct Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Faculty of Education Charles Sturt University and a noted champion of school libraries in Australia proclaims, "This is an important and timely document for teacher librarians worldwide. This document presents a vision-building blueprint for school communities to transform their school library into a 21C learning centre. Strengths of this document include the standards framework for building a vision, and the transitional growth continuum of indicators of success from Exploring through to Leading – this is brilliant! This is a must read for all school library professionals and principals." (Hay, 2014). Dianne Oberg shared *Leading Learning* at IASL Regional Conference this spring in Austin Texas. Judith Sykes and Carol Koechlin have co-authored a chapter on the development of the Canadian standards for a new IFLA publication, *Global Action on School Library Guidelines*.

We celebrate this opportunity to further the vision and goals of our Canadian standards document with this international audience. One of the goals of this conference is to "arouse bustle and an atmosphere of 'revitalisation' of the school library." (IASL, 2015). We hope readers of this paper are indeed excited by the possibilities we have shared. We are cognizant that not only every nation but every school will have different wants and needs for school libraries so no set model will work for everyone and so it should be. The very essence of a learning commons is responsiveness to evolving needs. Regardless of difference every school has a common desire to provide the best education possible for students and empower them with skills, dispositions and attitudes that prepare them for a lifetime of work, play and learning in our complex world. Nations invest in education because it matters. School libraries matter. *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for school Library Learning Commons* offers a timely path for learning and growing today and into the future. It is time to reinvest in school libraries as learning commons.

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