



Factsheet #8

Literacy and Libraries

Every Canadian a reader. (vision statement for Canadian libraries, 1996)

-  **Libraries are for access to information.** Libraries have long been a place of free access to the printed word. Nowadays they also connect people to the internet, distance education and a wide variety of audio-visual materials. Libraries have a history of responding to community needs, and are part of Canada's investment towards a fully literate society. Libraries are based on the democratic right of all citizens to have equal access to recorded knowledge and expressions of creativity.

-  **Libraries are for life-long reading and lifelong learning.** Libraries work to build positive reading experiences for adults and children knowing that *reading because you like it*, is the most powerful tool for literacy development. Current research confirms strong relationships between the quality of school libraries and reading test scores and improved literacy. Libraries are key places to learn and practice 'information literacy' skills such as finding and using information.

-  **What can be done?** Libraries recognize that they have a role to play in bridging the literacy gap since literacy is the key to bringing information to life. Research has shown that access to resources is a crucial factor in literacy achievement. Here are some of the things that libraries can do to support literacy development.
 - **Library and information services for all citizens** Libraries research, develop and deliver innovative and appropriate library and information services to their communities and/or students. Libraries help individuals meet both their formal and informal learning needs.
 - **Special literacy learning materials** Many libraries have collections of print and audiovisual resources for literacy learners, tutors, and instructors. They also provide community access to computers and basic skills software.
 - **Literacy programs** Some libraries offer literacy programs that train volunteer tutors to work with adult learners.
 - **Literacy support services** Libraries often develop partnerships with local literacy and social service agencies. They publicize local literacy services, make referrals to programs, provide space for learning sessions, and they highlight literacy issues

- in the community. Libraries may also offer special tours and easy-to-read materials to demystify the library and its services for learners in literacy programs.
- **Special reading and story-time programs** Many libraries offer parent-child story times, homework clubs, reading groups and special interest workshops to encourage people to make use of the library and find out more about what a library offers.

Suggested *Literacy and Libraries* Resources

For more information, contact the Canadian Library Association, 328 Frank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0X8, tel: 613-232-9625, fax: 613-563-9895, website: www.cla.ca or look up the library association in your region by clicking on the index at the National Library of Canada's website at: <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/8/8/index-e.html>. Also check out the following:

- ✓ Birckmayer, Jennifer. "The Role of Public Libraries in Emergent and Family Literacy," *Zero to Three*, Volume 21, No. 3 (Dec. 2000/Jan. 2001) See it online at: www.zerotothree.org/vol21-3s.pdf
- ✓ Centre for Research on Literacy. *The Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research in English*, University of Alberta. See the website at: www.nald.ca/crd/
- ✓ Comings, John T. and Sondra Cuban. *So I Made Up my Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2000.
- ✓ Ives, Suzanne. *Come to the Library Series* (An introduction to public libraries for adult new readers) Burnaby: British Columbia Library Association, 1996. See their website at: www.ola.bc.ca
- ✓ National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) full range of online resources and links on all aspects of adult literacy in Canada. See the website at: www.nald.ca
- ✓ National Library of Canada, *Fulfilling the Promise: The Report of the Task Force on Access to Information for Print-Disabled Canadians*, Ottawa, 2000. See it online at: www.nlc-bnc.ca/accessinfo/tfpd-e.htm
- ✓ Office for Literacy and Outreach Services. American Library Association, Chicago, Illinois. See it online at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/olos/literacyoutreach.htm>
- ✓ Quigley, Thomas. *Public Libraries and Literacy: Toward a National Front Line Strategy*. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1995.
- ✓ Singh, Sandra. "Literacy Planning, Evaluation and Programming: A Bibliography", in *Feliciter*, Vol. 43, No. 9 (Sept. 1997).
- ✓ Spangenberg, Gail. *Even Anchors Need Lifelines: Public Libraries in Adult Literacy: a Study*. New York City: Spangenberg Learning Resources, 1996. Available from the Library of Congress' Center for the Book at: www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/

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