Toward a New National School Library Association in Canada:
The Case, Considerations, and Potential Models

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Over the past decade, there have been ever increasing challenges in sustaining a cohesive school library network across Canada. We arrive in 2016 at a point where what remains may cease to exist entirely, with the proposed and indeed probable dissolution of the Canadian Library Association (CLA). Informal discussions amongst school library leaders from across Canada demonstrate considerable interest in establishing a new national school library association.

The dissolution of the CLA poses an immediate and real threat to the continued publication of its online journal, *School Libraries in Canada*. It presents at the very least a weakened base of support for initiatives related to *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* (CLA, 2014). *Voices for School Libraries*, a network that exists under the auspices of the CLA will lose its home base, and a national home base for our research symposium, *Treasure Mountain Canada*, ceases to be a possibility. While the proposed new Federation of Canadian Library Associations, which will most likely replace CLA, will have advocacy as its focus, the voice of the school library sector may be weakened even further as a consequence of the new association's proposed structure.

While the risks of *not* establishing a new national school library association are huge, the risks inherent in creating a new association are very real, too. It is one thing to have compelling reasons for moving forward, but without careful consideration of the practicalities involved, any attempt may be doomed to failure.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the goals that might frame the creation of a new association, explore philosophical and practical considerations, and suggest an action plan for moving forward. This is an "eyes wide open" approach. Good will and enthusiasm can take us so far, but it is extremely important to explore the strengths and weaknesses of various organizational approaches. The opportunities for advancing school libraries that might be realized by a new national association may be significant, but the external factors that might put those opportunities at risk also need to be clearly understood.

A Recent History of Canada's National School Library Associations

With education being a provincial jurisdiction in the Canadian context, it is logical that provincial school library associations are most active in serving their constituent communities. Indeed there are successful school library associations in jurisdictions across the country. The direct relevance of provincial associations to their respective K-12 education sectors provides excellent value for their members in terms of professional learning opportunities and services. The advocacy voice of each association can focus on locally-relevant concerns. There has always been an awareness of the unique value of a national association, nevertheless. Despite our disparate contexts, we share common concerns. A national association can help develop a national voice and represent the sector to relevant

national organizations that influence education practice, such as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Canadian Education Association (CEA).

At one time there were two such national organizations, the independent Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC) and the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA), a division of the Canadian Library Association. The two associations were amalgamated in 2004. Marlene Asselin, the 2004 CSLA president, described the move as part of the revitalization of the school library community. The unification was proposed to reduce membership fees and facilitate conference planning. The move also confirmed the new unified association as a full division of CLA, with all of the inherent benefits to the voice of school libraries.

> *I am confident that CLA fully understands the critical place of school libraries in the larger library and information community; in the nation's educational goals; and in the country's social, political, and personal future. The active commitment by CLA executive to facilitating the joining of Canada's two school library associations, and the voice of teacher librarians in CLA heralds a new era. Both associations are pleased with the prospect of working together as part of a dynamically reconceptualized CLA. The promise of a new future has generated optimism and energy amongst the provincial and national leaders.* (Asselin, 2004)

The new, amalgamated association was the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL), which remained a division of the CLA. There is little doubt that the unification of these two associations was the right move at the time. Its strengths clearly outweighed any perceived risks. However, the external threat to CASL's continued existence quickly became apparent with the emerging financial constraints under which CLA found itself. An early attempt to address this led to the dissolution of all CLA divisions in 2010. The high hopes that characterized the creation of CASL a mere six years previously were dashed with this move.

The CLA retained its School Libraries Advisory Committee, and under its new structure supported the informal network, Voices for School Libraries. As with all CLA networks, Voices for School Libraries has no formal role in, nor influence on the work the overall association.

The dissolution of the divisions of CLA was a major blow to the school library sector, which, unlike other library sectors, had no other sector-specific national association, and considerable variances in the structure of provincial associations. The School Libraries Advisory Committee continued to liaise as best as possible with the CLA council and administration. The first ever Treasure Mountain Canada (TMC), a research symposium into school library learning commons practice, took place the same year as the dissolution of the divisions. TMC symposia held then and since have energized the school library community, and this momentum has been largely responsible for the successful publication of *Leading Learning*. The *Leading Learning* project re-invigorated the leadership role of the advisory committee and Voices for School Libraries, who helped to coordinate input into the new standards from the school library and broader education community from every province and territory in Canada.

The same core leadership group who saw *Leading Learning* through to publication has continued to take leadership with promoting the new standards and encouraging their implementation in school districts across the country. Despite mounting organizational and fiscal challenges, the CLA invested in the publication of *Leading Learning* in 2014. These same constraints have inhibited the CLA's ability to

support the desired web interface for the document. Nevertheless, CLA has entered into an advantageous agreement with the Ontario Library Association for marketing and selling the print version of the standards through the OLA Marketplace (formerly the OLA Store). Most recently the CLA has uncovered a funding line dedicated to school libraries, and is using it to finance the translation of *Leading Learning* into French. School library leaders are quite elated by this move, as it makes the standards a truly national document.

CLA Dissolution: Specific Concerns

Some very significant loose ends remain, however, and it is uncertain that these can be resolved satisfactorily through the CLA dissolution process.

Leading Learning: The CLA's investment in this document has been truly appreciated. The Future Federation Working Group revised proposal of October 2015 suggested that a potential deliverable of the new federation of Canadian library associations might be the curation of existing CLA competencies, standards and statements. It is unclear what is meant by curation in the case of *Leading Learning*. These standards require further development, including the creation of web platform, continuous renewal of the exemplars attached to standards and growth indicators, active advocacy for implementation, and active support for provincial associations, ministries of education and school districts as they implement the standards within their discreet contexts.

Leading Learning has received significant recognition nationally and internationally. These standards can be a "catalyst for igniting change" in schools across the country (Brooks Kirkland & Koechlin, 2015), but there is much work yet to be done to fully realize this potential. The dissolution of the CLA and the uncertain future of the *Leading Learning* project is a huge concern.

School Libraries in Canada (SLiC): This indexed journal has a long and honourable history as the only national publication for the school library sector. Once a print journal, it is now fully online and hosted by the CLA. That SLiC survived the dissolution of the CLA divisions is further evidence of the tenacity of the school sector, and most particularly the journal's editor, Derrick Grose. SLiC is now run on a shoestring. The interface is outdated. There is no editorial board. Yet loss of this publication would constitute a huge blow to school librarianship in Canada. Despite the huge constraints under which it continues to exist, SLiC publishes editions rich in articles relevant to research and practice, and because it is indexed this work is widely available internationally. In the absence of a web-based interface for *Leading Learning*, SLiC has also provided a means for linking the standard's abstracts and exemplars via the PDF version. Innovation in the face of constraints, to be sure.

Voices for School Libraries: Voices currently exists as a loose and informal network of concerned school library leaders and practitioners who communicate through email, and who reach out to the broader community through its Twitter feed (@CdnSchoolLibrar) and a Facebook group. The fact that Voices was a CLA network was a factor in the success of the *Leading Learning* project. With no home base, this network will inevitably become more difficult to sustain. The name of the network has inspired some thinking about the vision, mission, membership and structure of a new national association, as will be discussed further in this paper.

Treasure Mountain Canada: Treasure Mountain Canada (TMC) is an extension of a research retreat project in the United States called Treasure Mountain. Treasure Mountain was developed by Dr. David Loertscher in 1989, and Dr. Loertscher has worked with Canadian planners Carol Koechlin and Liz Kerr to bring this construct to Canada. TMC retreats in 2010, 2012 and 2014 were aligned with CLA conferences in Edmonton, Ottawa and Victoria respectively, and the TMC planners received some organizational assistance from CLA. Alignment with the CLA conference encouraged national participation, and helped give it a national profile. TMC has been a resounding success in fostering Canadian research into school librarianship, and particularly encouraging teacher-librarians to incorporate action research into their own practice. It was out of TMC that the need for new national standards was identified, and from which the massive collaborative effort that built the new document evolved.

As an understanding emerged that aligning with a CLA conference was ceasing to be an option, the TMC organizing committee pursued the idea of partnering with provincial associations for forthcoming symposia. The first such partnership is with the Ontario Library Association (OLA) Super Conference 2016. The OLA has provided outstanding support in every aspect of event planning and promotion. It is hoped that the committee can negotiate a partnership with another provincial association for the next symposium in 2018, and OLA has offered to share its experience with future hosts.

Despite the successful partnership between the OLA Super Conference and Treasure Mountain Canada, TMC faces an uncertain future. The two lead Canadian organizers have long and distinguished careers, and are looking to "pass the torch" onto others. With no formal sponsorship for TMC, its future continues to be in the hands of dedicated volunteers, unsupported by a home organization.

Advocacy: The role of a national association in school library advocacy is perhaps not intuitive. Education is a provincial jurisdiction, and decisions with a direct impact on policy, curriculum and staffing are made at the provincial, district and school level. Nevertheless, we deal with issues of common concern. Advocacy that is local and provincial only can be fragmented, and there is no doubt that this fragmentation contributes to general lack of awareness of school library issues. Advocacy at the national level can also be directed at national organizations with significant influence on education policy. The Royal Society of Canada's (RSC) expert panel report on

> **THE PANEL RECOMMENDS THAT:**
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> 52. The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) commission a pan-Canadian assessment engaging the full range of stakeholders, to bring forward a clear and prescriptive set of directives to frame a national policy consensus on the most appropriate model for school libraries/learning commons to maximize their contribution to the K-12 experience and its learning outcomes.
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> 53. Ministries of Education work with Boards of Education and their respective schools to provide the sustainable funding necessary to realize the development of school libraries/learning commons.
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> 54. Faculties of Education in universities with teacher-librarian programs or library and information studies (LIS) programs be funded to increase the number of graduates who would have the proper competencies to manage the new school library/learning commons.
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> 55. Provincial and territorial ministers responsible for public libraries and ministers of education join together to develop provincial standards that would direct the development of a school-house public library model drawing inspiration from the best practices and successes of those currently in operation.
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> Royal Society of Canada (2014).
> *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory.*

the future of Canada's libraries and archives recommended that the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) frame a national policy consensus on school library learning commons (Demers, Beaudry et al, 2014). The power of this report is that it comes from a respected national institution from outside of libraries and K-12 education. This report presented a national advocacy opportunity that has largely been lost. Local or provincial organizations may express their concerns to their own provincial minister of education, but representation from a national library organization might have bourn some weight with the CMEC. It was unrealistic to expect that CLA take up this cause considering its own recent organizational concerns. This only emphasizes the vacuum that exists in a cohesive, national approach to school library advocacy.

The proposal for a new federation of library associations (Future Federation Working Group, 2015) identifies advocacy as the primary function of the new federation. "*We need a single organization that can speak with authority and confidence to the significant national and international issues and events that impact the provision of library services, Canadians' access to information, and the ability of Canadians to engage with knowledge and information. These are not activities that can be undertaken or coordinated in an ad-hoc manner: we need to be dedicated, agile, and strategic. And we must be unified*." Clearly libraries from all sectors, including K-12 education will benefit from this strategic priority. There remains a high level of concern, however, that significant issues of national relevance to the school sector may remain unrecognized by the new federation. Only two of the multi-sector provincial associations who are probable members of the new federation have school library divisions, and unlike other sectors, school libraries have no national association comparable to the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) or the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) who are likely to join the federation.

Moving Forward with Eyes Wide Open

The impending dissolution of the Canadian Library Association leaves the school library sector in a particularly disadvantaged situation. A mere twelve years ago we had two national associations. Their decision to amalgamate was very wise, unifying their voices and reducing duplication of efforts. That the new association was also a division of the CLA was a further advantage, strengthening ties with other sectors to work together on issues of common concern. That CLA was an established national association also meant that it had a stable administrative and technological infrastructure. In 2004 the association leadership had good reason to herald a new era in CLA, and be so optimistic about the consequent promise of a strengthened voice of teacher-librarians (Asselin, 2004). It is fair to say that the risks of unification seemed minimal at the time, yet a mere six years later, with the dissolution of CLA's divisions, the amalgamated school library association ceased to exist entirely.

There are very compelling reasons for creating a new association, and a great opportunity for a new and fresh approach. Since the demise of CASL and despite significant odds school library leaders have continued to strengthen the national glue of common concerns through innovation, most notably with the work of Treasure Mountain Canada and the *Leading Learning* project. Formalizing these efforts with a new national association is the logical next step.

It is extremely important to consider this possibility with our eyes wide open, not only considering how this move might strengthen our community and provide new opportunities, but also the risks inherent

in creating an effective organization, and the potential for unanticipated external threats to undermine our efforts. To this end, we continue by making the case for a new national school library association and then considering variety of organizational and strategic factors for their advantages and disadvantages to long-term health of such an organization.

The Case for a New National School Library Association

A new national school library association might, then, include amongst its primary goals and deliverables:

Leading Learning
- Ongoing curation of the document, particularly continuous updating of the exemplars
- Creation of a web interface
- Maintaining strategic partnerships for marketing and dissemination of the print document, including the new French version
- Collaborating with provincial associations to match *Leading Learning* standards to provincial goals and facilitate the implementation of existing support documents
- Seeking out opportunities to work with provincial and local associations and The Partnership's Education Institute for professional learning opportunities related to the implementation of the standards

School Libraries in Canada
- Refresh the publication as the journal of the new national association
- Invest in the technologies necessary to update the journal's interface and functionality
- Invest in the editorial structure of the journal, including the creation of an editorial board
- Raise the profile of the journal nationally and internationally, and its visibility in the broader education literature

Voices for School Libraries
- Formalize and strengthen the network of school library leaders from all jurisdictions in Canada
- Broaden opportunities for membership and participation to all school library practitioners, organizations, supporters and advocates
- Build a robust communication infrastructure, including a website, email newsletter, and social network for connecting members and the broader community to the resources of the association, and to each other

Treasure Mountain Canada
- Provide a home base and infrastructure for the continued work of the TMC planning committee
- Seek out opportunities to collaborate with other associations in developing future symposia, following the 2016 model partnership with the Ontario Library Association
- Provide a robust and polished web interface for the work of the symposium
- Seek out opportunities to publish, disseminate and promote research and action research papers that constitute the work of past, current and future symposia

- Cultivate opportunities to reach the primary goals of TMC, namely to foster research and incubate new thinking about the role of the school library learning commons in student learning

Advocacy
- Unite associations and voices from across the country on issues of common concern
- Be a cohesive national advocacy voice on issues of common concern to school library practitioners across the country. Build relationships with organizations such as the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), the Canadian Education Association (CEA), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) to advance understanding of the role of the school library learning commons in educational improvement.
- Work with the new federation of library associations in their coordinated advocacy on issues of common concern to the broader library community

It is extremely important that the new association finds its unique role and develop a clear mission. Focusing on unique deliverables, cultivating networks, collaborating with other organizations and avoiding duplication of efforts should ground the philosophy of the new association.

New Association, New Opportunities

A new association presents new opportunities. Fresh thinking about the membership and governance structure may create opportunities to:
- Raise awareness and talk about the possibilities of the new school library learning commons beyond the constraints of local organizational structures: Associations closely affiliated with ministries of education and/or teachers' federations may have some internal influence, but may also have to deal with constraints inherent in complying with expectations of their principal affiliated organization.
- Be inclusive of all who work in school libraries, seeking out ways to vest professional and support staff in a common cause.
- Broaden the membership base to include those with an interest in promoting the role of the school library learning commons, such as authors, vendors, publishers, teachers and education administrators, and librarians from other sectors.
- Participate as a full member of the new federation of library associations as a single sector national association.
- Represent the school library sector in Canada with international organizations such as the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) and the school libraries section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the latter potentially as part of membership in the new Canadian federated library association.

Considerations: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

It is easy to get caught up in the enthusiasm of possibilities considered, but in the spirit of entering this venture with eyes wide open, there are many considerations to help clarify issues, understand risks, and make informed decisions.

The World of Associations

The proposal to create a new national school library association is in part the product of the proposed dissolution of the Canadian Library Association and the creation of a new federation of library associations. Many of the proposed goals of the new school library association may involve transfer of ownership of CLA assets and services, and clearly this must be properly negotiated. It is also very important to clarify understandings about the school library sector alluded to in the Future Federation Working Group's revised proposal (October 2015).

Clearly the working group expresses its understanding that the concerns of school libraries need to inform the advocacy efforts of the new federation. That good will is certainly appreciated, but there is genuine concern about the federation's ability to follow through on this promise. With no national school library association at the table, and with only two provincial multi-sector associations having school library divisions, it may be difficult for the new federation to hear and consider the voice of school libraries.

The working group's proposal described school libraries as a "difficult sector to engage". This statement is far from reality when it comes to passion about the profession, but definitely true when speaking in the context of the world of associations. School library associations exist in most jurisdictions in the country, but their organizational frameworks and particularly their principal affiliations vary by jurisdiction. In Ontario, being part of the Ontario Library Association has been a definite asset for the school library sector, and helped the sector realize perhaps otherwise unachievable goals. It has also promoted understanding of common purpose with other library sectors.

Jurisdiction	School Library Association		Principal Affiliation
British Columbia	BCTLA	British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association	BC Teachers Federation
Alberta	ASLC	Alberta School Library Council	Alberta Teachers' Association
Saskatchewan	SSLA	Saskatchewan School Library Association	Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
Manitoba	MSLA	Manitoba School Library Association	Manitoba Teachers' Society
Ontario	OSLA	Ontario School Library Association	Ontario Library Association
Ontario	TALCO	The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario	School Districts as represented by TALCO members
Québec	ABQLA	ABQLA School Libraries Section	L'Association des bibliotécaire du Québec / Quebec Library Association
Québec	APSDS	Association pour la Promotion des Services Documentaires Scolaires	No formal affiliation.
New Brunswick	–	No association. *Leading Learning* contacts from the Ministry of Education.	
Nova Scotia	–	No association. *Leading Learning* project contact from Mount St. Vincent University.	
Prince Edward	PEITLA	Prince Edward Island Teacher-Librarians'	–

Island		Association	
Newfoundland	–	Teacher-Librarians Newfoundland & Labrador Special Interest Council	Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
Yukon	YTLSA	Yukon Teacher-Librarians' Subject Association	Yukon Teachers' Association
Northwest Territories	–	No association. *Leading Learning* project contact from the Yellowknife Catholic School Board.	
Nunavut	–	No association. *Leading Learning* project contact from the Curriculum Services department of the Nunavut territorial government.	

There has been some suggestion that getting all provincial school library associations to negotiate becoming divisions of their provincial multi-sector library associations would strengthen the overall voice of the sector in the new federation. This is indeed emerging as a potential reality in Manitoba, where discussions are underway for a merger of several associations under the umbrella of the Manitoba Library Association (Stefanko, 2015). Similar mergers may be desirable and attainable in some jurisdictions, but it is improbable that this would be universally accepted, and in any case would take years to accomplish. The case for doing this would have to be significantly stronger than providing higher profile in the new federation. In some jurisdictions, moving from an affiliation with a teachers' federation to a provincial library association might involve losing representation of the sector's interests at the collective bargaining table, for example. The working group made a strong case for speaking with one voice. "*These are not activities that can be undertaken or coordinated in an ad-hoc manner: we need to be dedicated, agile, and strategic. And we must be unified.*" (Future Federation Working Group, 2015). Including school librarians in that unified voice may be impossible without some hope of similar coordination within the school sector.

Another concern of the working group is the proliferation of library associations. We may, therefore, receive some pushback to the idea of creating yet another association. "*The astounding number of associations dedicated to the library and information sector are all competing for membership and, although each association is clearly working to represent their constituents, the overall effect is a dilution of advocacy efforts in promoting library values and the value of libraries in Canada.*" (Future Federation Working Group, 2015). The proposal to create a new national school library association arguably fills a void rather than duplicating efforts, and goes some way to ensuring that advocacy for the common interests of all libraries includes the school sector.

Competing for membership and membership fees is a very significant and serious issue, however, and one that could make or break any effort to create a new school library association. Some associations are concerned that if a federated model is preferred for a school library association that they could be hit twice, by the school sector and with the federation of associations. If the new school library association chooses an individual membership model then there is an understandable concern about competing for members in a very limited market. It is important then, that the proposed new association clearly articulate its goals and deliverables, assuring the wider community of its unique value proposition, and avoiding duplication of services. The new national school library association's primary purpose should be to foster collaboration amongst associations to advance our common goals. It is hoped that partnership rather than competition will characterize the activities of the new association.

The Future Federation Working Group recognized the challenges of engaging the school sector financially in the proposed federation of library associations. "*Informal networks like the CLA school network or Treasure Mountain Canada will help galvanize the community. However, school library funding is often determined by individual boards or even individual schools. While the Task Group believes the willingness to contribute exists, managing the actual receipt of funds may be difficult.*"

The report goes on to suggest a "direct approach" for financial contributions from the school sector. This suggestion has created some significant confusion amongst school library leaders. TALCO was given as an example of an organization that might be approached. As a network of school district consultants and coordinators in Ontario, TALCO has a very small budget derived exclusively from modest membership fees and designated almost exclusively to meeting expenses. Other provincial library associations who are not part of multi-sector provincial library associations might be willing to contribute, but surely would have concerns about an ask that does not include membership in the federation. A direct ask to individual school boards or schools may predictably be ineffectual. Contributing to an advocacy organization may even be perceived as disrespecting the leadership and priorities of school districts with compromised library program, support and staffing models, and/or provincial policies that allow these conditions to exist.

A new national school library association's ability to contribute financially may be quite limited during its first years, but clearly that association needs to make full contribution in the new federation a priority, including contributing its fair share financially. Making this a strategic priority and working without the constraints of other organizations in the sector may eventually increase the school sector's ability to share responsibility for the new federation's success.

Membership Model and Fee Structure

There are many potential models for building membership in a new association. These models need to be considered through the lens of building capacity and profile, adding value and not entering into direct competition for membership with other organizations. A few models to consider might be:

Federation of Associations: This is the model proposed for new Federation of Canadian Library Associations. Members are qualifying associations. There are no individual members. Individuals participate as volunteers through their respective member association. Fees are paid by member associations, and are calculated as percentage of annual budget. Governance is based on region and size of participating associations.

Within the complex school library association world, a federated model stands a good chance of failure. The fee structure is a big deterrent to small associations with a limited membership base. Associations that are already part of multi-sector provincial organizations would already be contributing to the new federation, and may be concerned about being hit twice for federation participation on top of yet more fees for another national organization. Aside from membership and financial concerns, such a model does not leverage the passion of individuals who have dedicated themselves to some level of national cohesion in the school library world.

Individual Membership: Another option is to offer individual memberships only. Of course, a big question is who would qualify for membership. Would such membership be restricted to school library

practitioners or open for everyone? Would there be different categories of membership, and how would they be defined?

There are some significant problems with pursuing an individual membership model. It puts the new association in potential competition for membership with existing organizations. This belies the spirit of forming a new association, and on a practical level the new national association is likely to lose in the competition for membership. As compelling as its mission might be, that mission may be less tangible for practitioners looking for practical learning and support in their daily work, and advocacy more specific to needs in their own jurisdictions. Quite frankly, the competition for individual memberships was one of the problems that compromised the CLA's sustainability.

One potential advantage of the individual membership model is using it to broaden the horizons of the association by actively seeking out friends and supporters as members, and not restricting it to practitioners. The membership might then include those with an interest in promoting the role of the school library learning commons, such as authors, vendors, publishers, teachers and education administrators, and librarians from other sectors.

Individual & Group Memberships: A new association may choose to offer membership options for individuals and groups such as other associations or organizations. Eligible groups might include provincial or territorial associations at the larger end of the scale and local school board teacher-librarians' associations at the other. Groups from outside the sector might also choose to join. L'Association pour la Promotion des Services Documentaires Scolaires (APSDS) in Québec uses a blended membership model, with categories for anyone, individually or as part of a group, interested in promoting school libraries and media resource centres (APSDS, n.d.).

While a blended individual/group membership model appears to broaden horizons, it has the potential to complicate matters. Would individuals bother joining if their local association had also joined? How would a governance structure work? Would member group/associations dominate the board? How would the fee structure work? A blended model has the same challenges for member groups and associations as does the federated model in terms of cost.

No Membership – Donation-Based: This model is drastically different from all of the other possibilities, and presents a very fresh approach to addressing associated concerns. The new association could be completely donation-based, with no membership offer. One of the most successful education research and advocacy voices in Canada, People for Education, uses this funding model (People for Education, 2016). People for Education's mission statement focuses on leading the conversation about public education, leading an alliance to broaden the public's definition of school success and engaging a broader constituency of advocates (People for Education, 2016). This mission translated to the school library program context bears some similarity to the goals for a new school library association. The work of People for Education is also similar to the proposed goals for our new association, fostering research, disseminating information and liaising with decision-makers.

A donation-based model releases us from the concern of competing for membership. Indeed it opens up huge potential for engaging people from a much broader base, including that previously-stated body of people interested in broadening support for school libraries. This model captures the spirit and brand of our existing network, Voices for School Libraries, and indeed inspires a potential name for the

new association: *Voices for School Libraries* or *Canadian Voices for School Libraries* or *Voices for School Libraries in Canada* or some variation thereof.

Because this model varies from any precedence in Canada's school library associations further research into governance and administrative models is clearly called for, and would constitute part of the mandate of any working group should this be the preferred model. Another question that arises is whether this donation-based association would qualify for membership in the new Canadian Federation of Library Associations. This is a crucial question and should be clarified as early as possible, in consultation with the Future Federation Working Group.

Member and/or Donation Partnerships: Competition for membership or member dollars is a persistent concern, no matter the model that is proposed. Whether a member or a donation model is preferred, the possibility of working with existing associations to build complementary membership options or opportunities to donate should be explored. Members of a provincial association might be offered a discounted membership fee in the national association, for example. That provincial association might agree to offer this option on their membership form in lieu of paying an organizational membership fee. If a donation-based model is preferred, a provincial association might show similar goodwill by offering a donation option that includes some contribution to the national association.

Non-Profit and Charitable Status

The new association would need to incorporate as a non-profit organization. The Future Federation Working Group has recommended that that new association choose not to register for charitable status, arguing that the primary mission of the new federation is advocacy. Registered charities face significant constraints to how much budget can be dedicated to advocacy. Since the primary goal of the new federation is advocacy, not registering as a charity is a wise choice.

Because the work of the new school library association as proposed in this paper would be broader than advocacy, it is advisable to register as a charitable organization. In the donation-based model as proposed, this would be critical to the organization's success.

Financial Sustainability

Membership fees alone do not sustain the work of an association, and relying on fees alone promotes the vision of members as a resource to be drawn on rather than an audience to serve. If a member-based model is chosen that should not preclude consideration of other funding options, such as donations, pursuing grants for specific projects, and revenue from publications and events, etcetera.

There are bound to be significant start-up costs, including fees for a name search and incorporation, and obtaining charitable status. Because these costs will be incurred before charitable status has been approved, this may require some initial investment from individuals or organizations, without a tax benefit should that be in the form of a donation.

Ongoing costs that need to be considered include setting up administrative services, a technological infrastructure, meetings, and membership fees in other national or international organizations. The old

Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL) had the benefit of being a division of the larger CLA, using their infrastructure and staff support. A new association today would mean starting from scratch and creating that infrastructure.

Governance and Administration

The governance and administrative structure of a new association must be sympathetic to the chosen model and be considered most effective for fulfilling the goals of the organization. It is also very important to conform to all of the requirements of the Not for Profit Act and to qualify as registered charity, if that is the chosen option. Links to useful information from the relevant government agencies are included as additional resources to this paper.

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) offers excellent advice for starting an association through its Center for Association Leadership (ASAE, 2006). They present several management options for associations in their infancy, including management by all volunteers, volunteers with a skeletal staff, or using an association management company. While start-up organizations frequently choose the all-volunteer route because it is clearly the least expensive, the Center advises against this route, suggesting that volunteers working with a skeletal staff, usually drawn from the profession or retired members of the profession is preferable for consistency, continuity and accountability. Choosing the best management option for start-up depends entirely on available resources, but the default need not be all-volunteer purely because other options had not been considered.

> When starting an association, the first step is to identify a core group of leaders to serve as the organizing committee. These men and women should be chosen with care because they will probably become the new association's first officers and board members. It is particularly important that you identify recognized community leaders, because an effort spearheaded by such luminaries will gain immediate notice and credibility, and help to ensure an immediate following during this important start-up period.
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> It is also wise, however, to see that the core group represents all factions of the constituency the new organization will serve, not just a few leaders or a well-established clique. You'll need broad support to get the new group off the ground, and you won't get it unless all facets feel they have representation among the decision-makers.
>
> ASAE Center for Leadership (2006). *Starting an Association.*

Moving Forward

The notion of a new national school library association has clearly engaged the group of leaders who have worked so hard to leverage the gains achieved with the publication of *Leading Learning* and the success of Treasure Mountain Canada. The notion can only morph into a fully-fledged proposal through broader consultation, and with support from the broader community of potential supporters or members.

To this end, this paper will ground a stakeholder discussion to take place during and following the Treasure Mountain Canada symposium, taking place at the end of January 2016. Stakeholders from across the country will participate in preliminary discussions, which will test the waters for the idea. If the consensus is to move forward with investigating the proposal the hope is that a working group will emerge from this discussion to refine a proposal and lead broader consultations.

If a decision is indeed made to develop a formal proposal for a new association, it will be absolutely necessary for the working group to work closely with CLA and with the Future Federation Working Group, as many of the goals of the new association would involve some transfer of responsibility for projects previously spearheaded by the CLA. Clearly the CLA and the working group are already considering the future of these projects, but may not have fully considered the involvement of a new school library association.

It is hoped that the new association, should it indeed emerge, will value collaboration above all else, within the school library association world and the broader world of multi-sector library associations. Discussions with The Partnership may reveal opportunities for this broader collaboration.

Finally, the working group needs to consult with the provincial and territorial school library associations upon whose support a new association will depend. With a clear and purposeful mission and assurance of cooperation, it is hoped that the best possible solution will emerge to advance the voice of school libraries in Canada.

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Additional Resources

Canada Revenue Agency: Charities and Giving
http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html

Provides information about applying for charitable registration and associated procedures and requirements.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada: Corporations Canada – Not-for-Profit Corporations
http://corporationscanada.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/h_cs03925.html

A guide for not-for-profit corporations, including instructions and requirements for creating such a corporation.

About the Author

As a writer, presenter and consultant, Anita Brooks Kirkland specializes in the areas of information and digital literacy and the role of the school library learning commons. She draws on her extensive experience as a teacher educator, both as an instructor in school librarianship for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, and in her previous role as the Consultant for K-12 Libraries at the Waterloo Region District School Board. Anita is very active in professional organizations, having served as the 2005 president of the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) and co-chair of The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario (TALCO) from 2011 to 2013. Most recently, Anita served as the 2014 president of the Ontario Library Association (OLA).