



Manitoba *Library* Consortium Inc.
Consortium de *bibliothèques* du Manitoba inc.

Final Report

Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment & Future Direction for MLCI

Prepared for: Manitoba Libraries Consortium Inc. (MLCI)

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a sector-wide needs assessment commissioned by the Manitoba Library Consortium Inc. (MLCI). The assessment was initiated to better understand the current state of library services across Manitoba, surface needs and priorities, and clarify MLCI's potential role in addressing them.

The process included a background document review, jurisdictional research, a sector-wide survey, and engagement with library workers and other sector interest-holders. The findings are intended to inform decision-making not only for MLCI's future, but also for wider coordination efforts across the province's diverse library ecosystem.

Organizational Context

MLCI was established to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and shared services among Manitoba's libraries. Over the past five years, the organization has been functionally inactive. This period of dormancy – combined with changes in sector needs, structures, and capacity – prompted the organization's Board of Directors to undertake a reassessment of MLCI's viability, mandate, and potential role through this project.

Throughout the assessment, study participants acknowledged that while awareness of MLCI has diminished, its founding mandate remains relevant. MLCI is the only provincial organization with an explicit cross-sector, institutional focus, which was repeatedly identified as a unique and valuable – if currently unrealized – role. The assessment sought to clarify whether this role should be maintained, renewed, or dissolved, and under what conditions each scenario might be viable.

Overview of the Sector

The sector scan conducted as part of this assessment identified over 280 libraries operating across Manitoba.¹ These include public, school, postsecondary, and special libraries, with notable differences in governance, infrastructure, service scope, and funding. The scan revealed that public libraries account for roughly one-quarter of Manitoba's libraries, while school libraries represent the largest segment. Special libraries, including government, legal, and community-based collections, are fewer in number but serve highly specialized needs.

¹ For details on data considerations and limitations please see Section 1.2 Methodology.



Geographically, Manitoba's library landscape is predominantly rural and remote, with over half of all institutions located outside major urban centres. Service models vary widely, and many libraries operate within multi-branch systems or as part of broader institutions (e.g., school divisions, postsecondary institutions).

The scan also documented the broader ecosystem of library supports and associations operating in Manitoba, including Manitoba Public Library Service, Manitoba Library Association, and Manitoba School Library Association. While these organizations offer valuable services, none currently provide multi-type, institutional coordination or shared infrastructure across all library types.

Needs and Priorities Across the Sector

The needs assessment surfaced a consistent set of internal and external challenges facing libraries across Manitoba, cutting across library types, geographies, and institutional structures. While each type of library has distinct characteristics, many reported shared barriers, service pressures, and emerging priorities that point to broader systemic gaps.

- **Diverse library types, shared constraints:** School (40%) and public libraries (37%) comprised most respondents, with a notable rural service orientation (54%). Despite variations in size and focus, libraries across all types face common barriers including funding constraints, staffing shortages, and outdated infrastructure.
- **Professional capacity and staffing gaps:** Many libraries operate with limited trained personnel – 74% report no MLIS-qualified staff and 43% report no LIT-qualified staff. Training is often inaccessible due to cost, time constraints, and lack of relevance to on-the-ground needs. Engagement findings further emphasize the absence of sector-wide supports for onboarding, mentoring, and professional learning tailored to small, rural, and school libraries.
- **Fragmentation and sector-wide gaps:** Respondents emphasized poor coordination both within and across library types, along with limited access to shared digital resources and infrastructure. A lack of provincial oversight and structural inequities amplify disparities, especially in rural and school libraries. Engagement findings add that the weakening of shared services and underdeveloped infrastructure contributes to silos and duplication of effort.
- **Technology preparedness and emerging pressures:** Most libraries recognize the increasing importance of digital literacy, improved cataloguing, and resource discovery, though also feel unprepared for emerging technologies like AI. Engagement insights highlight a growing disconnect between institutional expectations and on-the-ground capacity, particularly in integrating new tools and technologies into library services.
- **Mixed awareness and engagement with MLCI:** A third of surveyed libraries report no current involvement with MLCI, and nearly half were unfamiliar with the organization prior to the pandemic. Among those who had participated in MLCI, group licensing, resource sharing, and collaboration were identified as the most valuable services. Engagement findings confirm uneven awareness and reinforce the need for clearer communication and value proposition.



- **Mandate seen as relevant but under-resourced:** Despite gaps in awareness and delivery, 76% of respondents view MLCI's mandate to unite library types and improve province-wide access as relevant. Engagement discussions suggest that reactivation would require clarified focus, stronger governance, and tangible services to meet today's needs.
- **Uncertain but cautiously optimistic future:** While 40% of respondents said MLCI's dissolution would have little or no immediate impact, nearly 38% were unsure – suggesting limited communication and potentially latent opportunity. A notable portion (41%) expressed interest in supporting MLCI if it resumes operations, though with caveats related to role clarity, time, and institutional capacity.

Future Direction for MLCI

To build on the findings of the needs assessment and support strategic reflection, three exploratory scenarios were developed and discussed with the MLCI Board:

1. Winding down MLCI as a standalone organization, given current inactivity and limited capacity.
2. Integrating MLCI's functions into another organization, such as MLA or MPLS, to reduce duplication and increase sustainability.
3. Renewing MLCI with a focused mandate and revised governance model, centred on high-value services such as licensing and infrastructure coordination.

Each option carries potential benefits and risks. Following exploring each option with the MLCI Board and based on the findings of the needs assessment as well as analysis of sector conditions, Nordicity recommends dissolving MLCI as a standalone incorporated entity and establishing a new division for institutional collaboration within MLA. This division would retain MLCI's core mandate – fostering cross-sector, institutional collaboration – while leveraging MLA's existing engagement, reach, and infrastructure. A small leadership group would guide early action, with initiatives focused on tangible, high-demand services and a focus on inclusion, clarity, and sustainability.

Consideration for Sector-Wide Issues

The assessment also surfaced broader sector-wide challenges that extend beyond the scope of the present study but impact the sustainability and responsiveness of Manitoba's library ecosystem. These include the exclusion of First Nations-governed libraries from *The Public Libraries Act*, the lack of provincial policy for school libraries, workforce development gaps, disparities in AI readiness, a need for stronger sector advocacy and visibility, digital resource inequities, rising service expectations without corresponding support, and growing concerns around censorship and content challenges. There is also a clear need for deeper understanding of the priorities and realities of Indigenous-led libraries through future research and engagement.



1. Introduction

The Manitoba Library Consortium is established to develop a province-wide multitype library service that connects citizens and information. [...] The concept of barrier-free access to members' resources and agreement that reciprocal access to collections be developed to supplement and complement local library services in order to provide more comprehensive and equitable library services is central to the Consortium's purpose.

— *MLCI Statement of Purpose Preamble*

The Manitoba Library Consortium Inc. (MLCI) has historically played a distinctive role in Manitoba's library ecosystem. Established in 1992, MLCI was created to foster institutional collaboration across library types by supporting shared infrastructure, resource sharing, and cooperative development. Its mandate was to "develop a province-wide multitype library service that connects citizens and information" – recognizing that no single library could meet all the needs of its users alone.

From its inception, MLCI emphasized the importance of supplementing and complementing organizational library services through reciprocal access to collections, cooperative services, and shared solutions. As stated in its founding documents, "barrier-free access to members' resources and agreement that reciprocal access to collections be developed" was central to building "comprehensive and equitable library services" across Manitoba. MLCI's focus on institutional collaboration – spanning all types of libraries – distinguished it from other sector organizations with more targeted or individual-focused mandates.

In recent years, however, MLCI entered a period of prolonged dormancy. The organization's activity declined, and its visibility diminished across the sector. This inactivity coincided with broader shifts: changes in sector structures and needs, rising service pressures, and the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, the MLCI Board initiated a process of strategic reflection to evaluate the organization's current role and determine its future path.

This needs assessment was commissioned to support that process. It seeks to understand current and emerging needs across Manitoba's library sector, assess the relevance and value of MLCI's original mandate, and explore viable scenarios for the organization's future – whether through reactivation, merger, or wind-down. In doing so, it provides a foundation for decision-making rooted in evidence, grounded in sector realities, and informed by the voices of library workers and sector leaders across Manitoba.



1.1. Key Definitions

This needs assessment adopted the following definition of a library:

A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole.²

This inclusive definition was intentionally selected to reflect the diverse realities of library service across sectors and geographies in Manitoba, including public, postsecondary, school, and special libraries.

In the context of this project, each library type is further defined as follows:

- **Public libraries** serve the general population within a municipality or region, offering free access to collections, programs, and services. In Manitoba, they are established and governed *under The Public Libraries Act*, which applies to libraries created by municipal governments.³
- **School libraries** operate within K–12 schools to support student learning, literacy, and curriculum delivery.
- **Postsecondary** libraries serve students, faculty, and researchers at colleges, universities, and technical institutions.
- **Special** libraries support the information needs of specific user groups or mandates (e.g., government, legal, cultural, or health). For this project, government libraries are included in this category due to their small number and some overlapping characteristics.

² This definition is sourced from the American Library Association's [Definition of a Library: General Definition](#), which in turn cites *The Librarian's Book of Lists* (Chicago: ALA, 2010), George Eberhart.

³ *The Public Libraries Act* (C.C.S.M. c. P220) defines a public library as one established by a municipality or group of municipalities and does not make provision for libraries governed by First Nations band councils. As such, First Nations libraries fall outside the legislative framework used to define and support public libraries in Manitoba.



1.2. Methodology

This needs assessment combines institutional analysis, sector-wide engagement, and comparative research, using a multi-method approach grounded in both qualitative and quantitative insights.

Key research activities included:

- **Organizational review:** Assessment of MLCI's history, membership, governance, activities, and current status, drawing on available documentation, financial records, and Board member insights. This step included a review of past service offerings and patterns of activity and inactivity.
- **Sector scan:** Identification and classification of 232 libraries across Manitoba using public directories, internal records, and Board-member knowledge.
- **Comparative review:** A targeted scan of comparable library consortia and service organizations across Canada with the aim of exploring structural models, mandates, and service offerings that could inform future scenarios for MLCI.
- **Sector-wide survey:** The Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey was conducted from April 28 to May 30, 2025. Distributed by MLCI to over 500 contacts, including 240 known libraries and 270 schools with unclear library status, the survey received 69 responses (representing a response rate of 30% based on the sector scan).
- **Focus groups:** Five focus groups were held in late May 2025 with participants representing different library types. Sessions included 9 participants from public libraries, 6 from school libraries, 3 each from postsecondary and special libraries, and 3 from French-language and/or bilingual libraries (representing public, school, and special types).
- **Key informant interviews:** One-on-one interviews were conducted with representatives from the Manitoba Library Association (MLA) and Manitoba Public Library Services (MPLS) to gain insight into current sector supports and opportunities for coordination. Invitations were also extended to the Manitoba School Library Association (MSLA) and the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC); however, interviews could not be scheduled within the project timeframe.

Based on these activities, Nordicity developed a key findings report, which included exploratory future scenarios. The findings and scenarios were reviewed and discussed with the MLCI Board during a facilitated workshop, where Board members provided input on the feasibility and enabling conditions for each potential path. Drawing on that input – and grounded in the full body of evidence gathered through this needs assessment – Nordicity identified a recommended path forward, presented in this report.



A Note on Data Limitations

Sectoral and Organizational Gaps

This assessment was conducted in a context where no centralized or authoritative list of Manitoba libraries exists, and where MLCI has been dormant for several years. MLCI's organizational records may also be incomplete in some cases, limiting the ability to fully reconstruct past activities; the organizational review reflects the best available information. The sector scan drew on public sources, internal records, and Board input; however, some libraries – particularly in the school and special categories – may not be fully captured. Survey and focus group participation was voluntary, with public libraries somewhat overrepresented relative to their share of institutions. These limitations have been taken into account in the analysis, with qualitative engagement insights used to help contextualize findings where appropriate.

Indigenous-Led Libraries

This project did not receive dedicated data from Indigenous-led libraries, including any governed by First Nations. As a result, their perspectives and service needs are not specifically reflected in the findings – a notable gap. Several structural and system-level barriers help to explain this gap. First, *The Public Libraries Act* does not provide a mechanism for libraries established by First Nations band councils to be formally recognized within the provincial public library system. This exclusion affects not only access to provincial supports but also visibility, coordination, and awareness of sector-wide initiatives such as this needs assessment.

Governance structures may also differ, with First Nations libraries functioning as departments of the Nation government rather than as arm's length or standalone institutions. In addition, sector-wide capacity limitations are often more pronounced in Indigenous contexts – whether in public, school, or special library settings. These capacity constraints, alongside differing community priorities, may mean that responding to a general sector-wide needs assessment is not as immediate or relevant as other pressing demands. Repeated requests for Indigenous participation, knowledge, or insight into broader planning and policy processes can also contribute to engagement fatigue.



2. MLCI's Organizational Context

The Manitoba Library Consortium Inc. (MLCI) is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1992 with a mandate to plan and manage projects and activities cooperatively across all library types in order to provide the citizens of Manitoba with faster and more equitable access to the library and information resources of the province. MLCI is an institutional consortium, composed of member libraries (or, where relevant, parent organizations) that have committed to shared objectives. At its core, MLCI was designed to facilitate effective and efficient resource sharing among Manitoba's libraries, contributing to the long-term educational, economic, and social development of communities through a more robust public information network.

Note: While every effort has been made to present a comprehensive picture of MLCI's history and evolution, the absence of a centralized repository of organizational documents presents some limitations. This review is based on the documentation and institutional knowledge available at the time of writing, and it is possible that some activities or decisions through the organization's history may not be fully captured.

2.1. Membership and Governance

MLCI is governed by an institutionally based Board composed of representatives from member libraries and library systems. The organization does not currently employ paid staff.⁴

Board members serve as representatives of their institutions – that is, they are not independent volunteers, but professionals delegated to participate on behalf of member organizations. They hold professional roles across Manitoba's library ecosystem, representing public, postsecondary, school, and special libraries. In principle, Board participation is institutionally sanctioned and supported; in practice, however, the degree to which service on the Board is resourced or recognized as part of formal job responsibilities varies. Executive roles, in particular, may involve significant additional effort that extends beyond core professional duties.

Membership is open to any library or library system in Manitoba that supports the organization's objectives and pays the annual membership fee. Individual library professionals cannot be members.

According to the organization's by-law, the Board is intended to consist of 20 members, including:

⁴ MLCI has engaged staff in the past for administrative coordination and project support. The current absence of staff reflects a period of reduced activity rather than a structural or legal restriction on hiring.



- One permanent representative from each of the following institutions: Brandon University, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg Public Library, Public Library Services, and Université de Saint-Boniface
- The remaining fourteen representatives are elected by representatives of member libraries.

2.2. Past Activities and Initiatives

MLCI has supported a wide range of initiatives across all library types. These have included consortial licensing agreements, shared delivery services, collaborative digitization projects, and training opportunities. Members benefited from access to discounted electronic resources, interlibrary loan coordination, professional development workshops, and participation in province-wide networking initiatives.

Examples of past initiatives include:

- Library Express – coordinated interlibrary loan and delivery system
- ManitoBia.net and Manitoba Local Histories (c. 2000) – digitization of newspapers, letters, diaries, and community histories
- Group licensing agreements (e.g., province-wide EBSCOhost access in 1997–98) – reduced-cost access to digital databases
- Professional development: RDA and copyright workshops (2013), annual Library Innovation Day
- Early networking and access initiatives such as Linking Libraries (telecommunications-based access, c. 2015) and the Manitoba Library (a proposal for universal library service in the province, 1998)

MLCI's early and mid-period activities reflected sector priorities at the time: expanding access through shared infrastructure, building capacity in cataloguing and metadata, and exploring options for universal borrowing. By 2015, the organization's strategic plan prioritized cost savings through group purchasing, partnership development, effective communication, and shared knowledge-building. This direction echoed MLCI's founding principles while responding to evolving member needs.

During this period, the broader library sector was also undergoing change – including shifts in service models, digital access, and institutional mandates. While MLCI's priorities appear to have been responding to these developments in first two decades, organizational activity appears to have declined significantly by the late 2010s. Although financial records are available from 2017 through 2020, there are few programmatic or strategic documents from this period. This suggests that the slowdown in MLCI activity preceded the COVID-19 pandemic and likely reflects a loss of strategic momentum rather than being a direct result of the pandemic – despite some perceptions that 2020 marked the point at which operations ceased.



2.3. Current State

The onset of the pandemic intensified existing challenges across the library sector and added new layers of disruption. For MLCI, this crisis coincided with an already-declining level of organizational activity. Revenues declined sharply – from \$26,214 in 2020 to just \$1,550 in 2021 – and dropped to zero in subsequent years, as MLCI paused membership fee collection until July 1, 2024, allowing existing member organizations to remain in good standing without incurring membership fees for a period of time. Without an active board in place, the organization was unable to sustain its previous activities.

At the same time, the needs of member libraries were shifting. There was growing demand for support with digital tools and remote service delivery, and increased interest in professional development related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and Reconciliation. These trends reflect broader sectoral shifts, which emerged during this period of dormancy and may inform future directions for shared services.

By 2024, MLCI's Board had begun a process of strategic reflection, with the explicit goal of evaluating the organization's future direction. This needs assessment forms part of that process. The current Board operates with fewer members than outlined in the organization's 2011 constitution and bylaws. Several motions were passed to temporarily reduce board size and adjust quorum requirements, enabling governance continuity during a period of transition.

Comparative Insights: Shared Library Services

A review of library consortia and support organizations across Canada reveals a diversity of models, structures, and service offerings. While there is no single blueprint, several consistent features distinguish these organizations from MLCI's current form.

- **Defined and evolving mandates:** Comparator organizations such as the Alberta Library (TAL), Saskatchewan Information and Library Service Consortium (SILS), and the BC Libraries Cooperative (the Co-op) all articulate clear mandates focused on collaboration, shared infrastructure, and cost-efficiency. These mandates are regularly revisited to reflect changing sector needs.
- **Formal structures and staffing:** These organizations are generally supported by permanent staff – ranging from small operational teams (e.g., Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries [COPPUL], SILS) to larger, specialized departments (e.g., Canadian Research Knowledge Network [CRKN]). This model enables sustained service delivery and reduces exclusive reliance on volunteers.
- **Range and scope of services:** Services commonly include licensing, digital access, interlibrary loan, training, shared infrastructure (e.g., ILS platforms), and digital preservation. Some, like the Co-op and CRKN, also offer consulting, hosting, and digitization support. The scope of MLCI's past activities is broadly aligned but was delivered without equivalent infrastructure or staffing.



- **Cross-sector collaboration:** While some comparators primarily serve specific sectors (e.g., COPPUL for postsecondary), others engage a variety of institutional types and emphasize collaboration across sectors. TAL and the Co-op, in particular, support diverse member types through tailored services and governance structures.

In addition to formalized provincial and national consortia, support structures exist to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of shared-service organizations. **Consortia Canada** offers a Canadian forum for resource licensing coordination and professional development, while the **International Coalition of Library Consortia** (ICOLC) provides a global network for peer benchmarking, expertise sharing, and collaborative advocacy. Interest groups like the American Library Association's (ALA) Consortium Management Interest Group foster dialogue around funding, governance, and service delivery challenges. These supports help consortia stay connected, informed, and aligned with sector-wide best practices.

2.4. Key Takeaways

The following points present key insights from the organizational and comparative review of MLCI's context.

- **MLCI's origins and mission:** MLCI was established to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and improve equitable access to library resources across Manitoba. Its early activities reflected strong alignment with sector needs, particularly around resource sharing, digitization, and group licensing.
- **Institutional governance and operational capacity:** MLCI is governed by a Board of representatives from member organizations, elected in an institutional capacity. While the organization has previously engaged paid staff for administrative functions and some project support, it has typically operated without ongoing staffing. In principle, Board governance is institutionally supported; in more recent practice, capacity limitations have constrained governance continuity and service delivery.
- **Decline in activity prior to the pandemic:** Although often associated with the onset of COVID-19, the decline in MLCI's operations began earlier, with diminishing documentation and revenues pointing to a significant slowdown by the late 2010s culminating in a complete hiatus in 2020. While the organization's governance and structure allow for evolution – and have previously supported adaptation – that potential is not currently being realized.
- **Evolving sector needs and expectations:** The Manitoba library sector has seen growing demand for digital tools, inclusive professional development, and responsive service delivery models – all of which place new demands on shared-service structures.
- **Comparative models highlight key gaps:** Peer organizations across Canada operate with formal mandates, dedicated staff, and more sustainable governance models. While MLCI's bylaws provide authority for similar functions, the organization has not maintained the capacity or strategic direction needed to adapt. These gaps reflect missed opportunities, limiting its ability to meet sector expectations and emerging needs.



3. Overview of Manitoba Library Sector

Manitoba libraries of all types play a critical role in supporting learning, access to information, and community well-being, but often operate with very different mandates, funding models, and capacities. This section presents a high-level scan of the sector, followed by an analysis of the supports and services currently available to libraries operating in the province. This overview provides context for understanding sector-wide needs and future opportunities for supporting shared services and collaboration across the Manitoba library sector.

3.1. Sector Scan

To help build a more complete picture of Manitoba's library landscape, a sector scan was conducted to identify the number, types, and distribution of libraries operating across the province. The scan draws on public membership lists from the Manitoba Library Association (MLA) and Manitoba School Library Association (MSLA), MLCI's internal membership list, provincial lists of schools, and additional data and institutional knowledge provided by MLCI Board members familiar with specific parts of the sector.

Institutions are counted once, regardless of the number of branches or locations they operate.⁵ For example, public library systems are counted as a single entity regardless of how many branches they include, and school divisions and postsecondary institutions with multiple libraries are similarly counted once. This approach reflects MLCI's role in serving library institutions rather than individual service points. It also aligns with the needs assessment's focus on understanding institutional needs, priorities, and capacities across the sector.

Best efforts were made to capture as many institutions as possible, but the absence of centralized data – particularly for school and special libraries – means that some may not be reflected here. Approximately 195 schools were excluded from the count due to unverified library presence; while some may have libraries, this could not be confirmed with available information, and they are therefore not included in the total. As such, this scan should be understood as a snapshot of the sector rather than a comprehensive inventory.

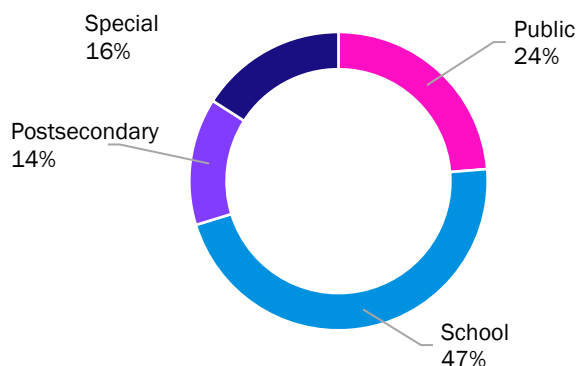
⁵ Facility-level data (e.g., co-location within schools or other community hubs) was not captured as part of this scan. The scan focused on identifying institutional types rather than service site configurations.



Library Types and Locations

Based on this approach, Nordicity estimated a total of **232 libraries** in the province, spanning a diverse range of service types. As shown in Figure 1 below, school libraries make up the largest share (47%), followed by public libraries (24%), special libraries (16%), and postsecondary libraries (14%). This distribution reflects the broad reach of library services across educational, public, and specialized sectors.

Figure 1 Manitoba libraries by type



Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries

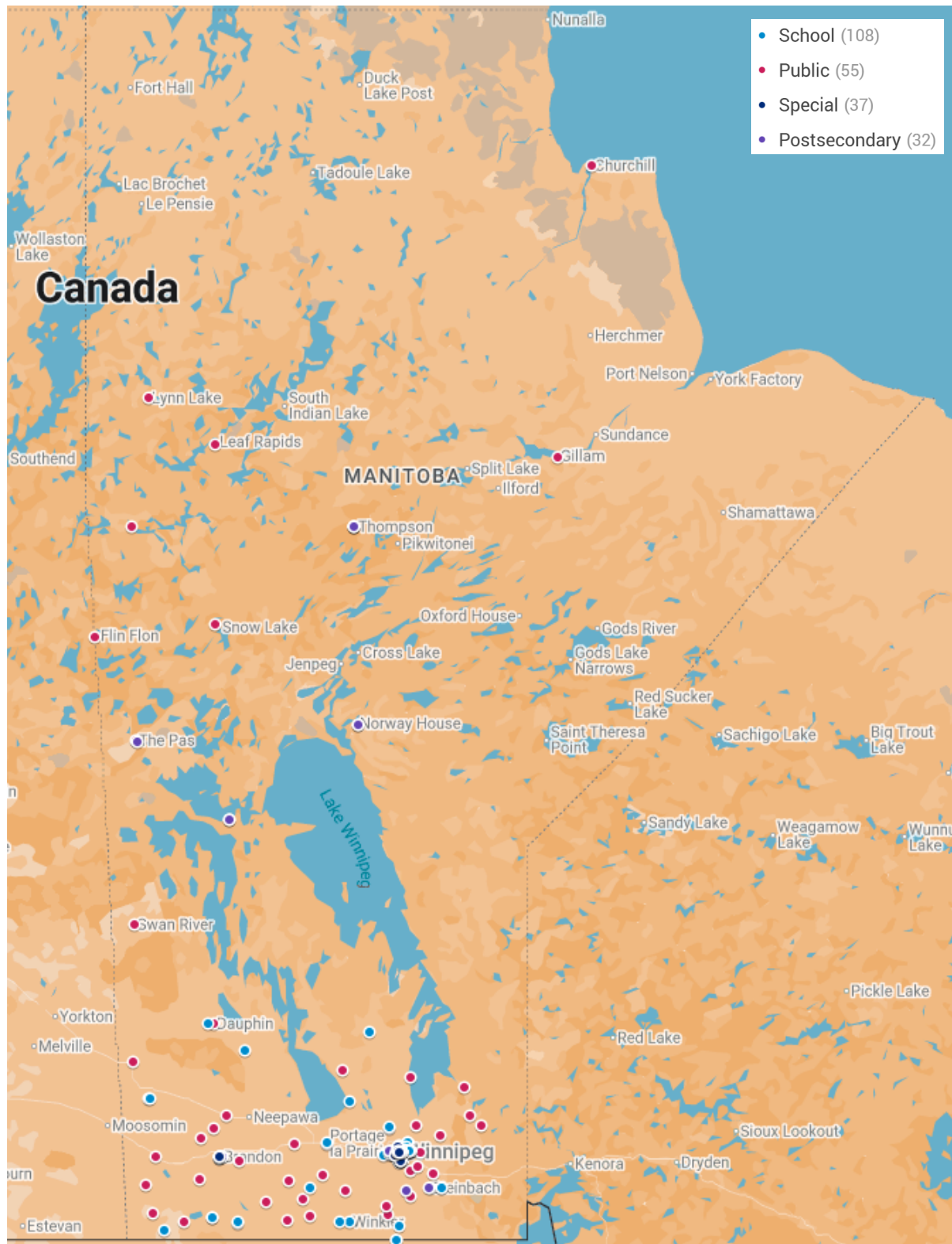
In addition to the overall breakdown by type, the map below (Figure 2) illustrates the geographic distribution of Manitoba's libraries. As expected, most libraries are concentrated in the southern part of the province, reflecting broader population patterns.

Public libraries are the most evenly distributed, with systems reaching as far north as Churchill. Postsecondary libraries also show some geographic spread, including four in northern communities. By contrast, school libraries are largely concentrated in the south – though this may reflect limitations in available data rather than the complete absence of libraries in northern schools, as noted above. Special libraries are the most geographically concentrated, with nearly all located in Winnipeg and one in Brandon.

These patterns point to variation not only in service coverage, but also in the types of infrastructure and institutional presence that shape library access across different parts of the province.



Figure 2 Geographic distribution of Manitoba libraries by type



Source: Manitoba Library Scan. Map generated through Google My Maps.

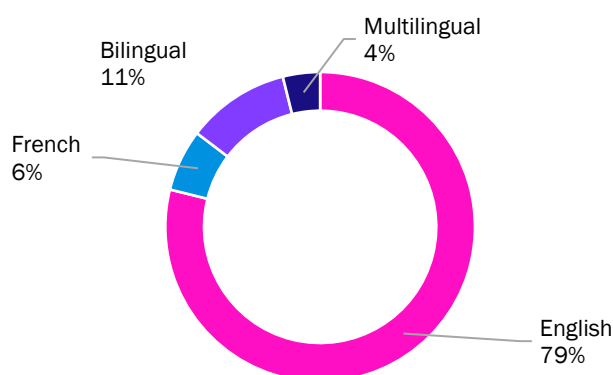


Language of Service

Given Manitoba's unique linguistic context, the scan also considered libraries by primary language(s) of service. It should be noted that a library's primary language of service is often shaped by library type and organizational mandate. In postsecondary and school settings, it may be tied to institutional language streams or specific programs and courses (i.e. full French language schools in the DSFM, single or dual track French immersion, other language programs). In special libraries, it often reflects the user community and language of the parent organization. In public libraries, language of service tends to be guided by community need. While English tends to be the majority-use language, bilingual libraries often exist in current and/or historic French language minority communities. Further, most public libraries offer materials in multiple languages, and offerings are intended to evolve over time in response to changing demographics.

This information is based on publicly available sources and may reflect variation in how libraries self-identify their language offerings – for example, whether language of service is reflected in staff support, collections, and/or programming. As shown in Figure 3, most libraries (79%) in the province provide service in English only. The remainder are bilingual, providing English and French (11%), French-only (6%), or offer multilingual services (4%).

Figure 3 Manitoba libraries by language of service

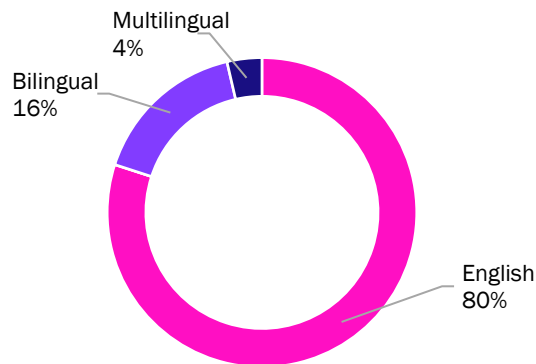


Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries. Note: "Multilingual" includes libraries that provide service in languages other than English or French, including ASL, Cree, German, Hebrew, Icelandic, Michif, Polish, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, and Yiddish.



The following four charts provide a breakdown of language of service within each library type. As seen in Figure 4, public libraries (80%) predominantly provide service in English, with 16% offering bilingual service. None operates exclusively in French, and a small number are classified as multilingual.

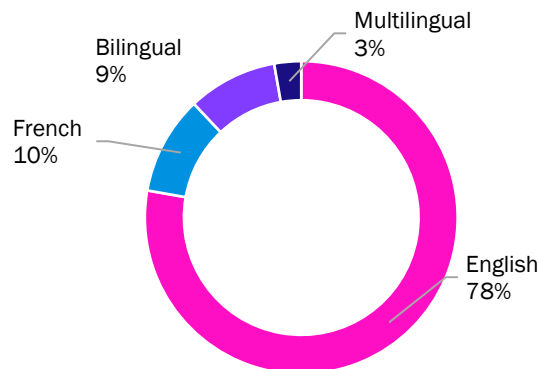
Figure 4 Manitoba public libraries by language of service



Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries

Figure 5 shows that among school libraries, 78% are English, with 10% identified as French, 9% bilingual, and a small number multilingual.

Figure 5 Manitoba school libraries by language of service

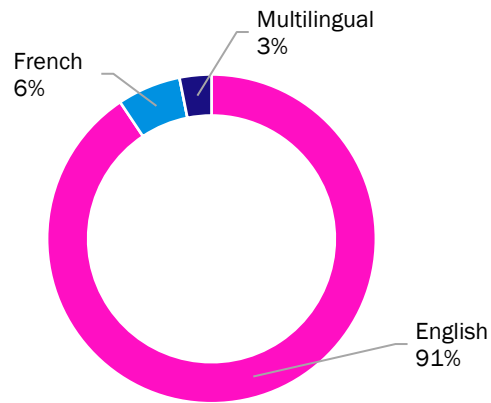


Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries



As illustrated in Figure 6, postsecondary libraries (91%) are almost entirely English, with the remaining libraries identified as French (6%) and multilingual (3%).

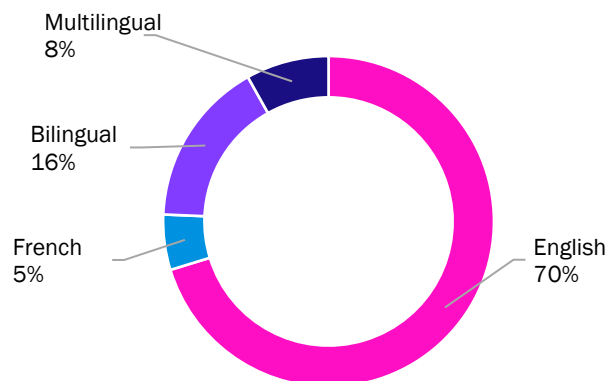
Figure 6 Manitoba postsecondary libraries by language of service



Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries

Special libraries show the greatest linguistic diversity: Figure 7 shows that 70% are English, 16% bilingual, 8% multilingual, and 5% are French.

Figure 7 Manitoba special libraries by language of service



Source: Scan of Manitoba Libraries.

These findings indicate that school libraries are more likely than other types to operate in French, while special libraries are more likely to reflect multilingual community needs. This variation in language of service has implications for sector planning, particularly with respect to resource availability, translation support, and inclusive service delivery.



3.2. Sector Supports and Services

A scan of sector supports and services was undertaken to better understand the current landscape of library-focused organizations operating in Manitoba and the kinds of support they offer. This scan examines the range of services and other support infrastructure available to libraries, helping to situate MLCI's historical and potential role within this broader ecosystem.

The scan focused on the following organizations:

- Manitoba Libraries Consortium Inc. (MLCI)
- Manitoba Public Library Services (MPLS)
- Manitoba Library Association (MLA)
- Manitoba School Library Association (MSLA)
- Federation of Bilingual Municipal Libraries of Manitoba (FBMB)
- Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks (MERLIN)
- BC Libraries Cooperative (the Co-op)
- Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)
- Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL)

For each organization, analysis considered the types of libraries served, the nature of their membership or affiliation model, and the kinds and scope of services offered (e.g., resource sharing, licensing, professional development, consulting and advising). While not necessarily exhaustive, this scan provides a representative picture of the support landscape for libraries in Manitoba today.

Summary of Findings

MLCI is the only Manitoba-based organization that has historically provided coordinated licensing and delivery services across all library types. While some licensing agreements remain in place under MLCI's name – most notably with the Co-op – the organization is not currently administering these services or pursuing new shared initiatives. No other provincial organization has taken over this cross-sector coordination function.⁶ Other Manitoba organizations offer a mix of broad and targeted supports, but most do not provide infrastructure or shared delivery systems for all library types within the sector.

⁶ Some group licensing continues to be available to Manitoba libraries via the BC Libraries Cooperative under legacy agreements developed by MLCI. These are managed directly between participating institutions and the Co-op, with MLCI no longer playing an active administration or coordination role. Manitoba Public Library Services maintains access to the EBSCO Online Reference Centre, originally provided for through MLCI's agreement with the Co-op. MPLS does facilitate interlibrary loan for public libraries in the province, but this service does not extend to school, postsecondary, or special libraries.



- MPLS is a provincial government unit with a legislated mandate to support Manitoba's public library system. It administers *The Public Libraries Act* and associated regulations, oversees provincial library standards, and provides operating funding to 54 public library systems and the Manitoba Library Association. In addition, it offers policy and program guidance, strategic planning support, interlibrary loan coordination, and provides access to (including in some cases by covering costs for) national initiatives and platforms.
- MLA offers advocacy, professional development, and some member benefits. Services are geared toward individual library professionals and library board members and span all library types. While institutional membership is available, it allows staff within a member library to access MLA member benefits but does not provide for organizational representation within the organization.
- MSLA serves school libraries, with a focus on professional development, advocacy, and community-building. It offers no infrastructure, licensing, or resource-sharing supports.
- FBMB was intended to support public libraries in bilingual municipalities, specifically with resource sharing. The organization is currently dormant and does not appear to have been especially active. Its existence points to a past attempt to meet specific sector needs, likely hindered by lack of formal governance or operating structure.
- MERLIN provides technology infrastructure and group licensing for school and postsecondary institutions. It offers reliable backbone services such as internet access and software licensing, but does not engage in interlibrary loan, professional development, or cross-sector collaboration.

The following national organizations have broader service models that also provide service for libraries in Manitoba.

- The Co-op offers a wide range of services to public and postsecondary libraries, including group licensing, digital infrastructure, and professional development.
- CRKN serves degree-granting postsecondary and research institutions. Its services include large-scale licensing, digital preservation, and open access advocacy. It does not support colleges or non-degree institutions.
- COPPUL supports Western Canadian postsecondary institutions through licensing, shared print archiving, digital preservation, and Indigenous knowledge initiatives. It also excludes colleges and diploma-granting institutions.

The following table summarizes primary supports and key service gaps across library types, based on currently active services and infrastructure. It reflects what is operationally available to libraries at the time of this study, rather than what may be possible in principle.



Table 1 Sector supports and gaps by library type

Library Type	Primary Supports	Current Gaps
Public	MPLS (funding, governance); MLA (advocacy, training, conference); Co-op (licensing)	Limited coordinated licensing and shared tech platforms
School	MSLA (PD, advocacy); MERLIN (infrastructure, licensing)	No interlibrary loan, delivery
Postsecondary	MERLIN (infrastructure, licensing); CRKN, COPPUL (licensing, preservation for eligible institutions); Co-op (licensing); MLA (training, advocacy, conference)	Colleges and non-degree institutions not fully served by CRKN or COPPUL; Eligible libraries are well supported at the national level but some gaps in Manitoba-specific coordination
Government & Special	MLA (general training, advocacy, conference)	No Manitoba-based support infrastructure; some national (government) and international (special) supports exist but may lack local specificity
Multi-Type Collaboration	MLCI (historically); no current, active cross-sector provider	No active cross-sector licensing or delivery coordination in Manitoba

3.3. Key Takeaways

The sector scan and support landscape review reveal a complex but uneven ecosystem. While Manitoba's libraries are diverse in type and scope, there are persistent gaps in coordination, infrastructure, and data that limit system-wide planning and service delivery.

- **There is no centralized data source on libraries in the province.** The absence of centralized or standardized data, especially for school and special libraries, limits the sector's ability to assess and plan comprehensively.
- **Library organizations are diverse but unevenly distributed.** Manitoba's 232 identified libraries span public, school, postsecondary, and special libraries, with most located in the southern part of the province. Public libraries show the broadest geographic reach, with postsecondary libraries having some notable northern presence too through University College of the North.
- **English is the dominant service language.** Most libraries (79%) offer service in English. French-language service is most common in school libraries, while special libraries are more likely to offer multilingual services, reflecting the specific needs of their user communities.
- **Sector supports are fragmented and uneven.** While organizations like MLA, MSLA, and MERLIN offer important services, they are limited in scope, typically focused on training, advocacy, or digital



infrastructure for specific sectors. There is currently no Manitoba-based provider of cross-sector infrastructure such as licensing or delivery.

- **MLCI is the only body with a cross-sector service history.** Though currently inactive, MLCI is the only organization in the province that has historically served all library types through shared licensing and delivery. Its inactivity has left a gap in province-wide, institutional-level coordination and infrastructure.
- **Cross-sector collaboration infrastructure is lacking.** No current organization provides coordinated licensing or delivery across library types in Manitoba. National organizations offer broader services to eligible institutions, but not all library types or sizes are covered, leaving key gaps in Manitoba-based, inclusive infrastructure.



4. Needs and Priorities Across the Sector

This section presents findings from the needs assessment survey, supplemented by insights from focus groups and key informant interviews. Building on MLCI's preliminary 2024 member survey, this broader assessment sought a more detailed and representative picture of sector-wide needs – including perspectives from libraries with little or no prior engagement with MLCI. Engagement insights are integrated throughout to highlight areas of alignment, divergence, and emerging priorities across library types and geographic contexts.

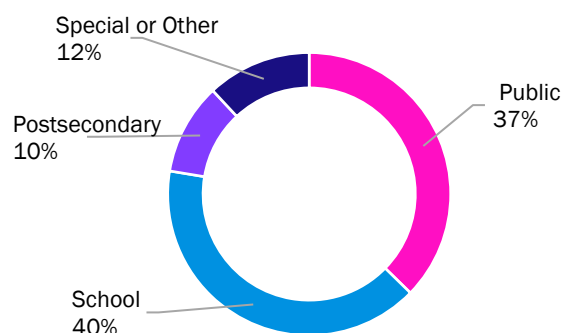
4.1. Survey Respondent Profile

Library Type

As illustrated in Figure 8, the largest share of survey responses (40%) came from school libraries, followed by public libraries (37%). Among those included in Special or Other, there were two government libraries, one legal library, one addictions and mental health library, one museum library, one 2SLGBTQIA+ resource centre community library, and one archival or genealogy reference library.

While this breakdown aligns broadly with the distribution observed in the sector scan, it is not fully representative. Public libraries are overrepresented in the survey sample (37% of responses vs. 24% of institutions in the scan), while school, postsecondary, and special libraries are somewhat underrepresented. This disparity points to long-standing coordination challenges across the sector, which can make it more difficult to engage some library types.

Figure 8. What type of library do you represent? n=67



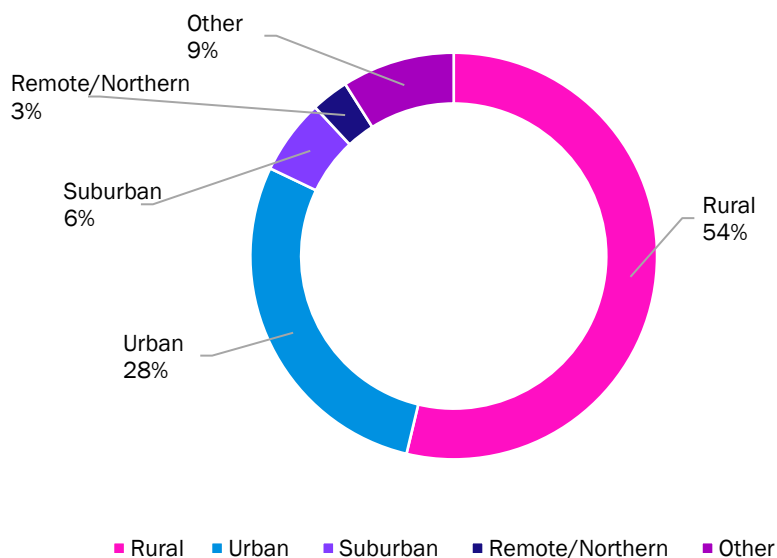
Source: MLCI Survey 2025



Geographic Service Area

Survey respondents were asked to classify their library's geographic service area. Figure 9 depicts roughly half of responding libraries (54%) operate within rural areas, with just over a quarter (28%) in urban areas. Among those that selected Other, respondents indicated operating across multiple geographic areas (i.e., branches in urban, suburban, and/or rural areas).

Figure 9. Which best describes the geographic service area of your library? n=67



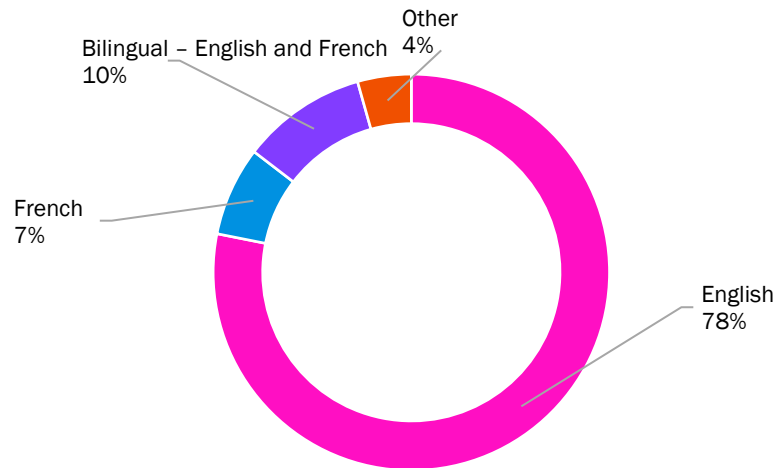
Source: MLCI Survey 2025

Primary Language of Service

Recognizing that some libraries deliver services in multiple languages, respondents were asked to indicate their institution's primary language of service. As shown in Figure 10, most libraries (78%) indicated their primary language of service is English. Among those that selected Other, respondents were school divisions representing a mix of language (including English, French, bilingual, and Michif). This distribution aligns with the sector scan, which found that 79% of libraries have a primary service language of English, with the remainder split across French (6%), bilingual (11%), and multilingual services (4%).



Figure 10. What is the primary language of service at your library? n=67



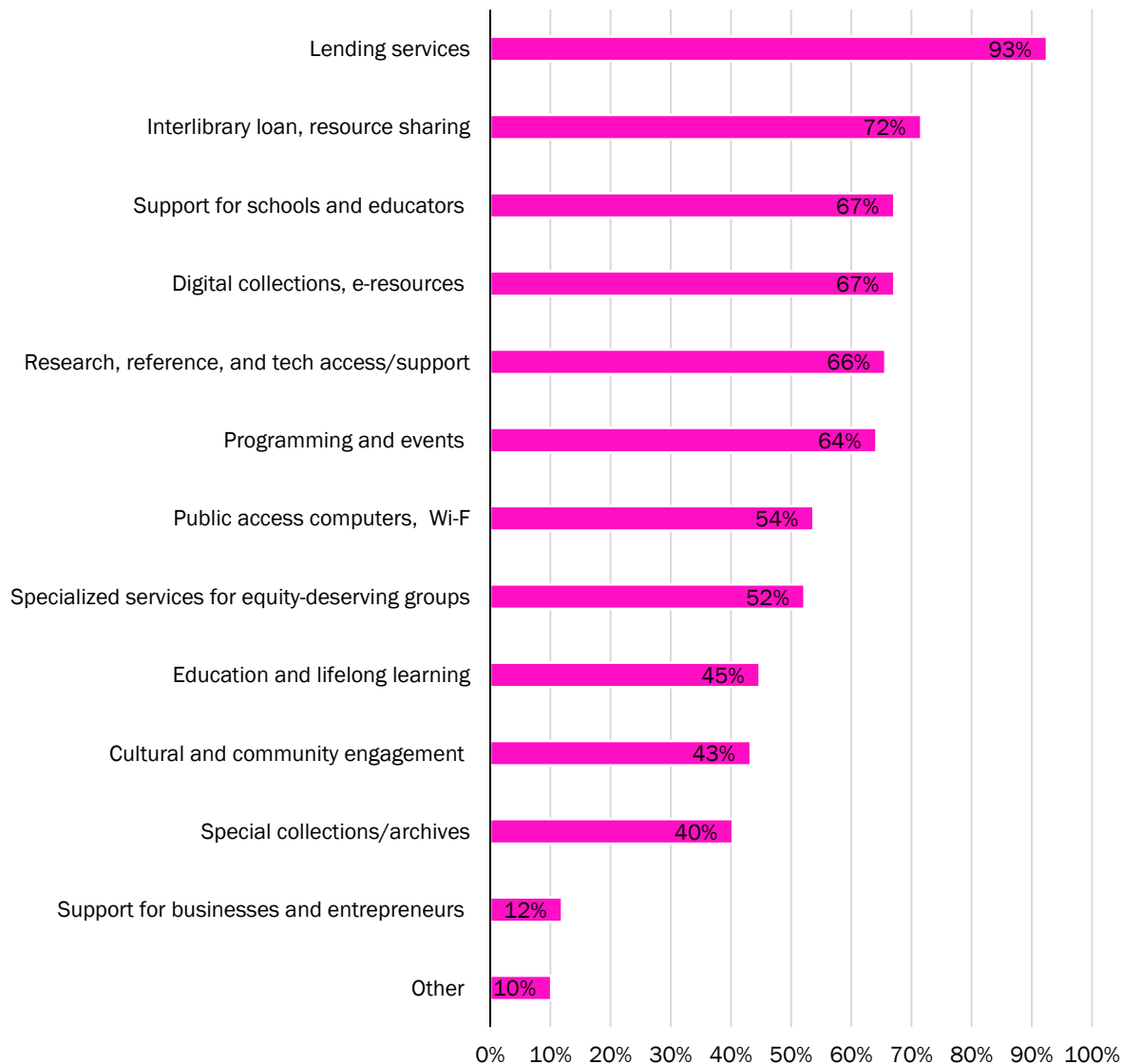
Source: MLCI Survey 2025

Library Services

Respondents were asked to identify the core services provided by their library. As illustrated in Figure 11, top responses were **lending services** (93%); **interlibrary loan and resource sharing** (72%); **support for schools and educators** (67%); **digital collections and e-resources** (67%); **research, reference, and technical access or support** (66%); and **programming and events** (64%). Among those that selected Other, respondents indicated services such as classroom training and co-teaching, providing tourism opportunities, providing community spaces, and providing rental spaces.



Figure 11. What core library services does your library provide? Please identify all that apply. n=69



Source: MLCI Survey 2025

Respondents were able to indicate any **secondary specializations**, if applicable. Among the five who responded to this question, responses included providing a music branch which houses specialized music materials; programming and research support; serving as an outreach location for Service Canada and immigration services; offering support services for parents, caregivers, children and youth; and hosting legislative and government documents of Manitoba.

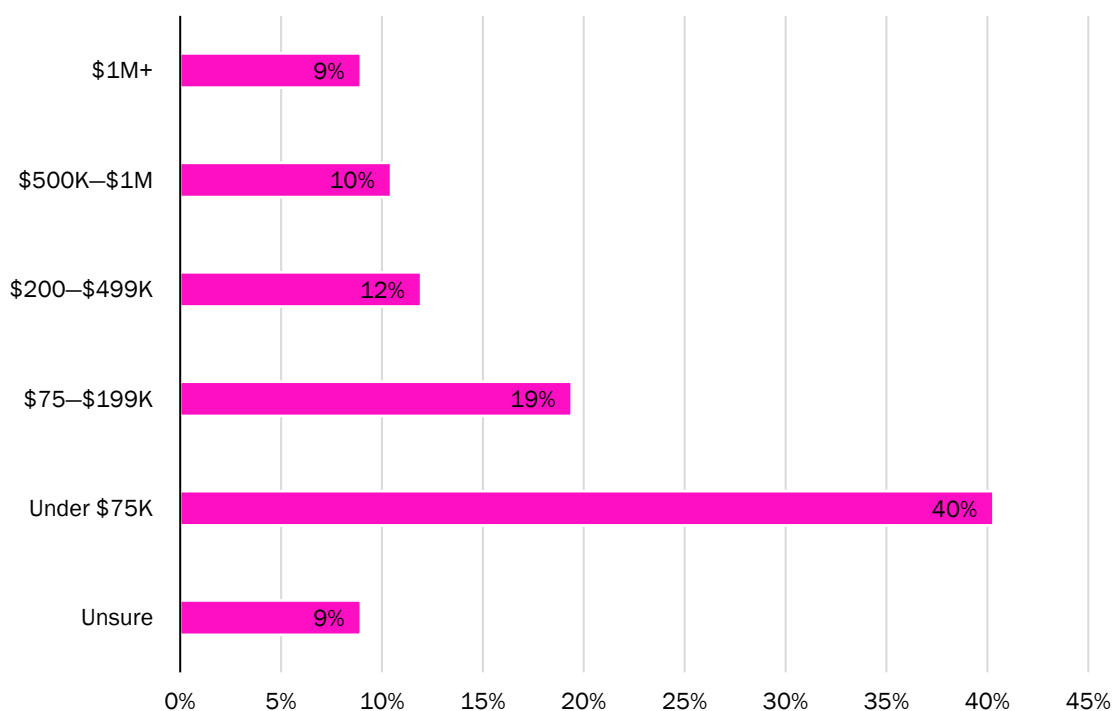


4.2. Operations and Staffing

Budget

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their library's current operating budget. Figure 12 depicts that most respondents' budgets (59%) are below \$200,000, with the largest share (40%) coming in under \$75,000.

Figure 12. What is your library's current operating budget? n=69



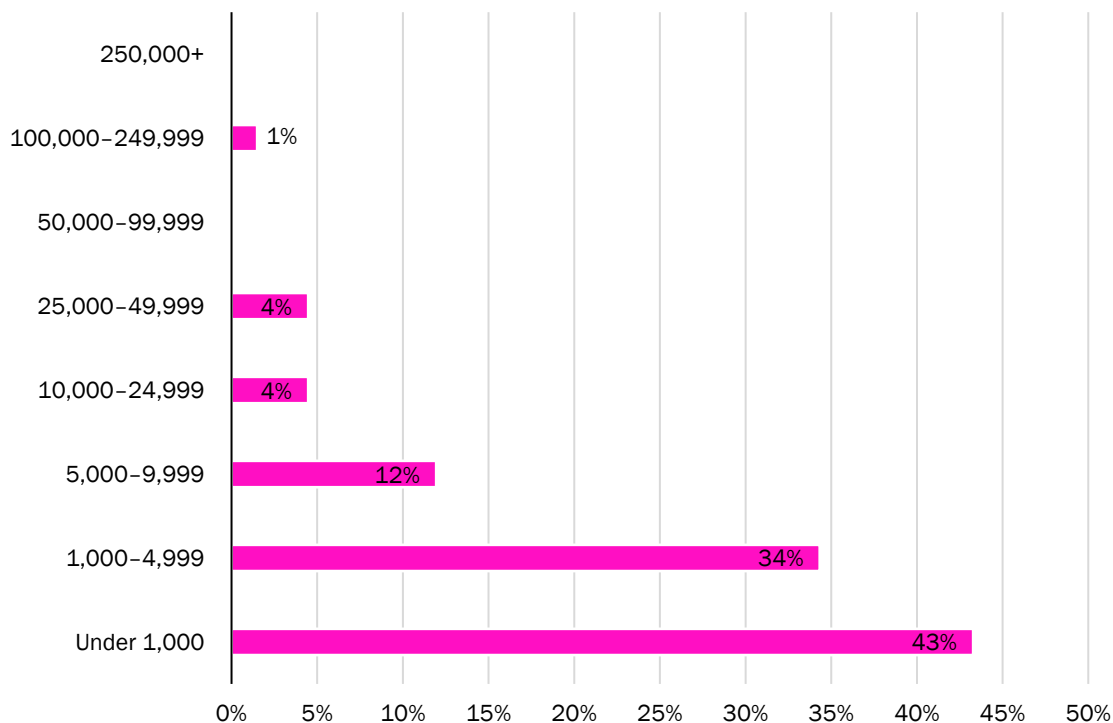
Source: MLCI Survey 2025

Active Users

Survey respondents also identified the approximate number of their library's active users, as shown in Figure 13. The largest share of respondents (43%) indicated less than 1000 users, followed by respondents with between 1000 and 4,999 users (34%). These findings align with respondents' geographic areas and the general makeup of the province. According to the StatsCanada 2021 census, 62% of Manitoba's population is within the Winnipeg metropolitan region and 4% in Brandon, the next largest metropolitan region. Given Manitoba's largely rural and remote context, smaller user bases are to be expected.



Figure 13. Please identify the approximate number of your library's active users. n=69



Source: MLCI Survey 2025

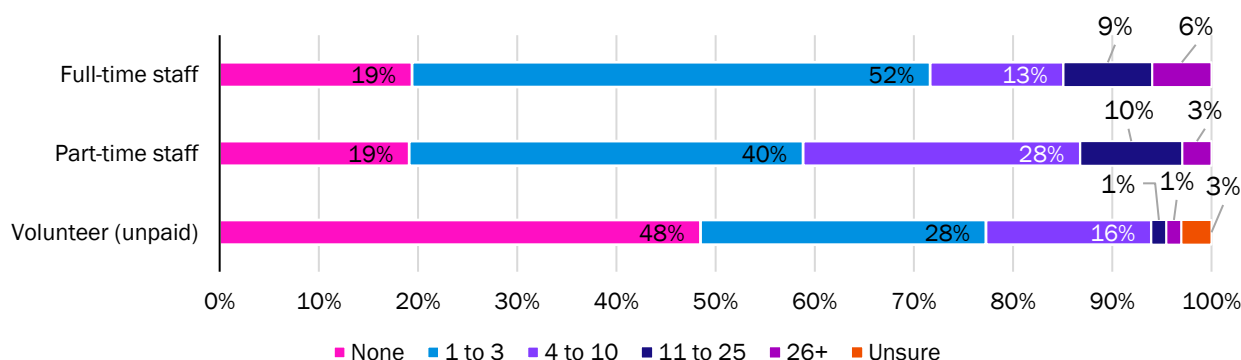
Staff and Volunteers

Respondents were asked to identify the number of staff and volunteers at their organization. Figure 14 suggests the most common staffing structure is 1–3 full-time workers, 1–3 part-time workers, and no volunteers.

Looking at how responses vary within each category by library type, postsecondary respondents reported the highest rates of full-time workers, with all respondents of that type reporting at least one full-time worker. Public, school, and special libraries show a greater mix, with each type noting some organizations with no full-time workers – likely reflective of more limited operating hours compared to postsecondary contexts. Postsecondary and public libraries were more likely to report more part-time workers than school or special libraries. Public library respondents reported the greatest number of volunteers, followed by school and special libraries; postsecondary respondents did not indicate any volunteers.

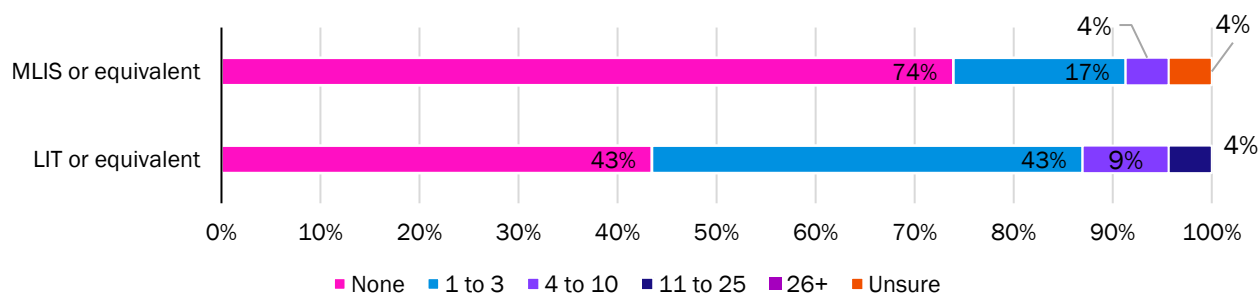


Figure 14. Please identify the number of staff and volunteers at your library across the following categories. n=69



Source: MLCI Survey 2025 Respondents were asked to indicate the number of individuals (staff and volunteers) who hold a **Master of Library and Information Sciences (MLIS) or equivalent degree** as well as those who hold a **Library and Information Technology (LIT) or equivalent diploma**. Figure 15 shows an MLIS is fairly uncommon, with three-quarters of respondents (74%) indicating no individuals with that credential. More than half of respondents (56%) indicated individuals with an LIT. Notably, these findings indicate that some libraries in the province operate without personnel who have a formal library education.

Figure 15. Please identify the number of individuals (staff and volunteers) at your library who hold the following credentials. n=23



Source: MLCI Survey 2025

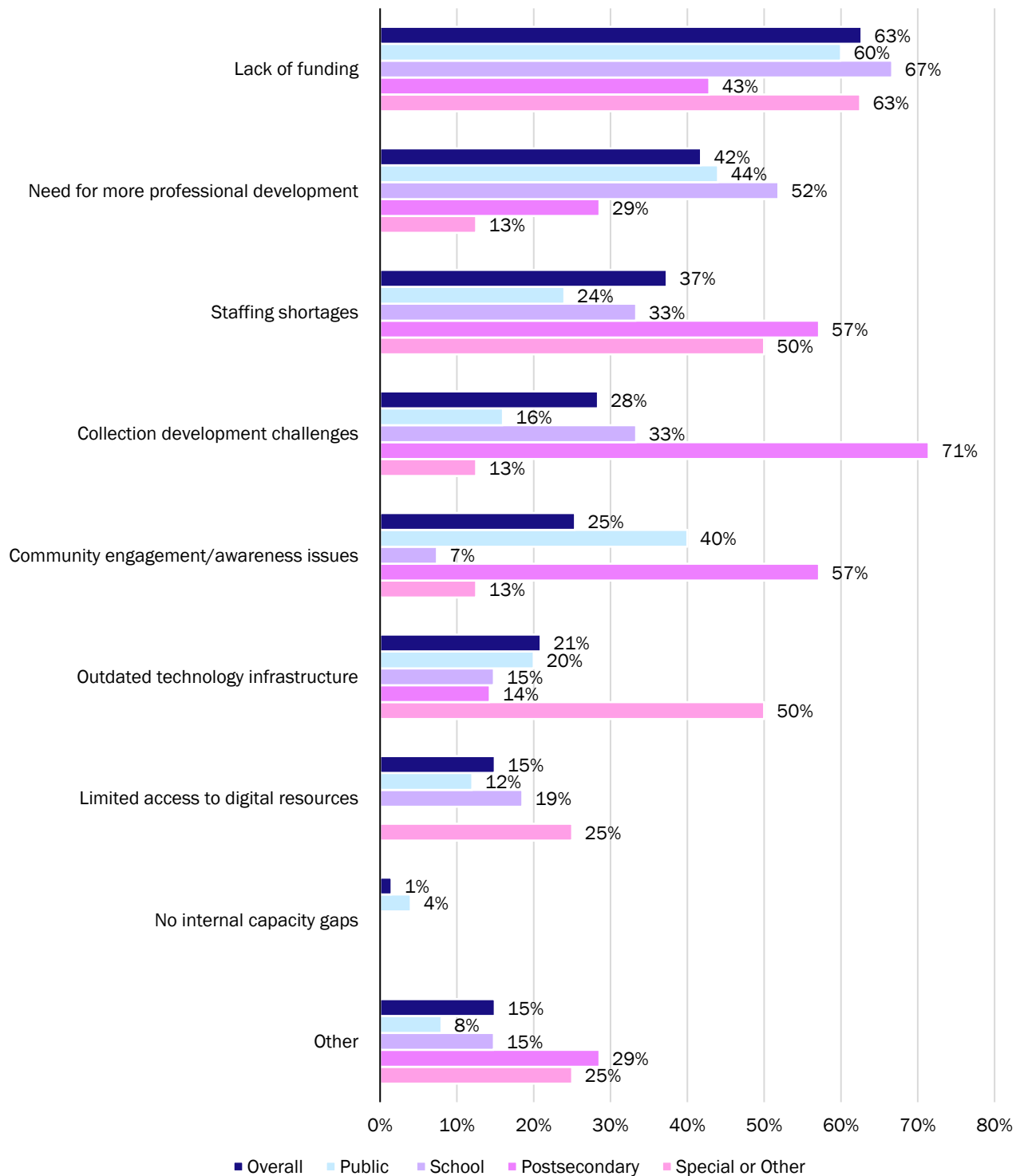
4.3. Service Needs

Internal Capacity Gaps

Respondents were asked to identify the most pressing **internal capacity gaps** their library faces in delivering its core services effectively. As seen in Figure 16, the top three gaps identified overall are **lack of funding** (63%), **need for more professional development** (42%), and **staffing shortages** (37%). This trend is similar for public and school libraries. However, for postsecondary libraries, the top gaps identified are collections development challenges (71%), community engagement and awareness issues (57%), and staffing shortages (57%). Specialized and other libraries also noted outdated technology infrastructure (50%) as a pressing gap.



Figure 16. What are the most pressing internal capacity gaps your library faces in delivering its core services effectively? Please select your top three. n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Among those who indicated other internal capacity gaps, responses include:

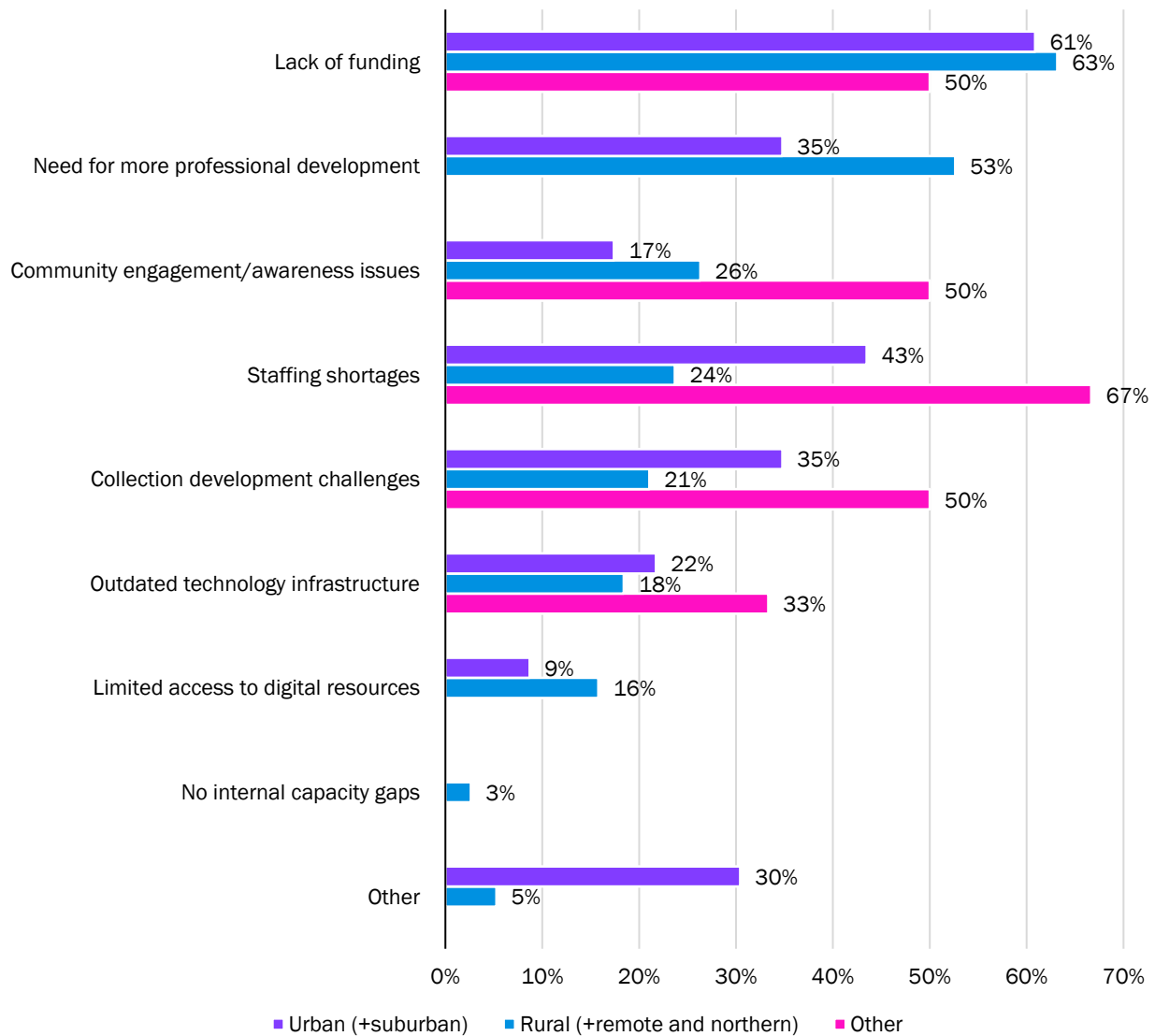
- **Recruitment challenges**, including difficulty finding bilingual staff with appropriate library training, inability to find qualified library technicians or cataloguers, and staff retention issues due to reduced hours and increased workload.
- **Advocacy gaps**, including insufficient provincial-level advocacy for trained library professionals.
- **Space limitations**, including the lack of dedicated space due to remodeling/relocation or shared facilities.

To better understand how **internal needs** differ among libraries in different **geographic contexts**, the analysis grouped respondents into two broad categories: **urban (including suburban)** and **rural (including remote and northern)** (Figure 17).⁷ Libraries in urban areas reported higher staff shortages (43%) and collections development (35%) compared to their rural counterparts (24% and 21%, respectively). Rural libraries expressed more need for professional development (53%), compared to urban libraries (35%).

⁷ Due to the limited number of responses indicating a non-English primary service language, there was no separate analysis of needs by language.



Figure 17. Geographic breakdown of the most pressing internal capacity gaps. n=67.



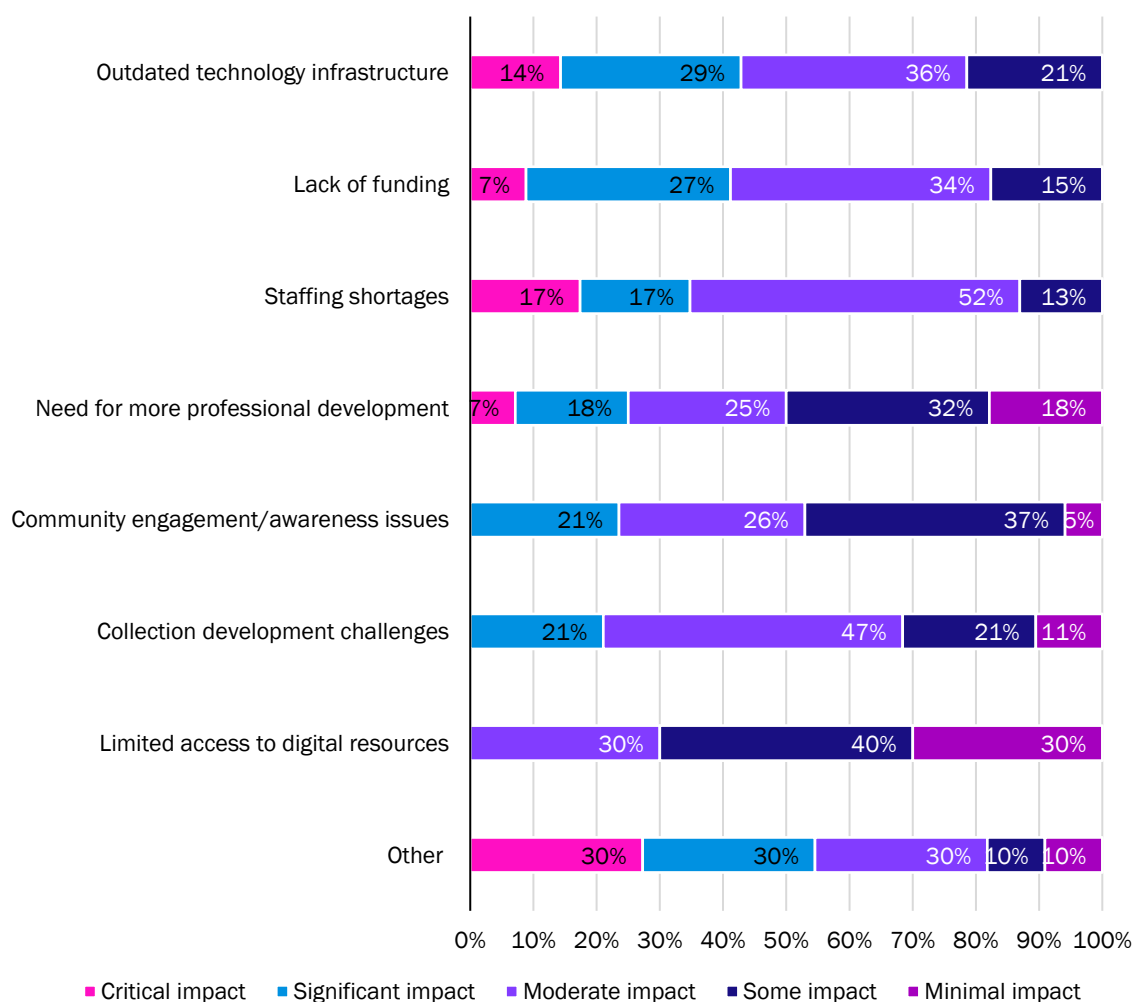
Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Impact & Barriers

Respondents were asked to indicate **how significantly⁸ the internal gaps identified impact their library's ability to serve its users** (Figure 18). The gaps that most impact (i.e., critically and significantly) library services are outdated technology infrastructure (43%), lack of funding (34%), and staffing shortages (34%). Notably, all respondents report at least some level of impact in these three areas.

Figure 18. For the service gap(s) you selected, how significantly does this gap impact your library's ability to serve its users? n=41



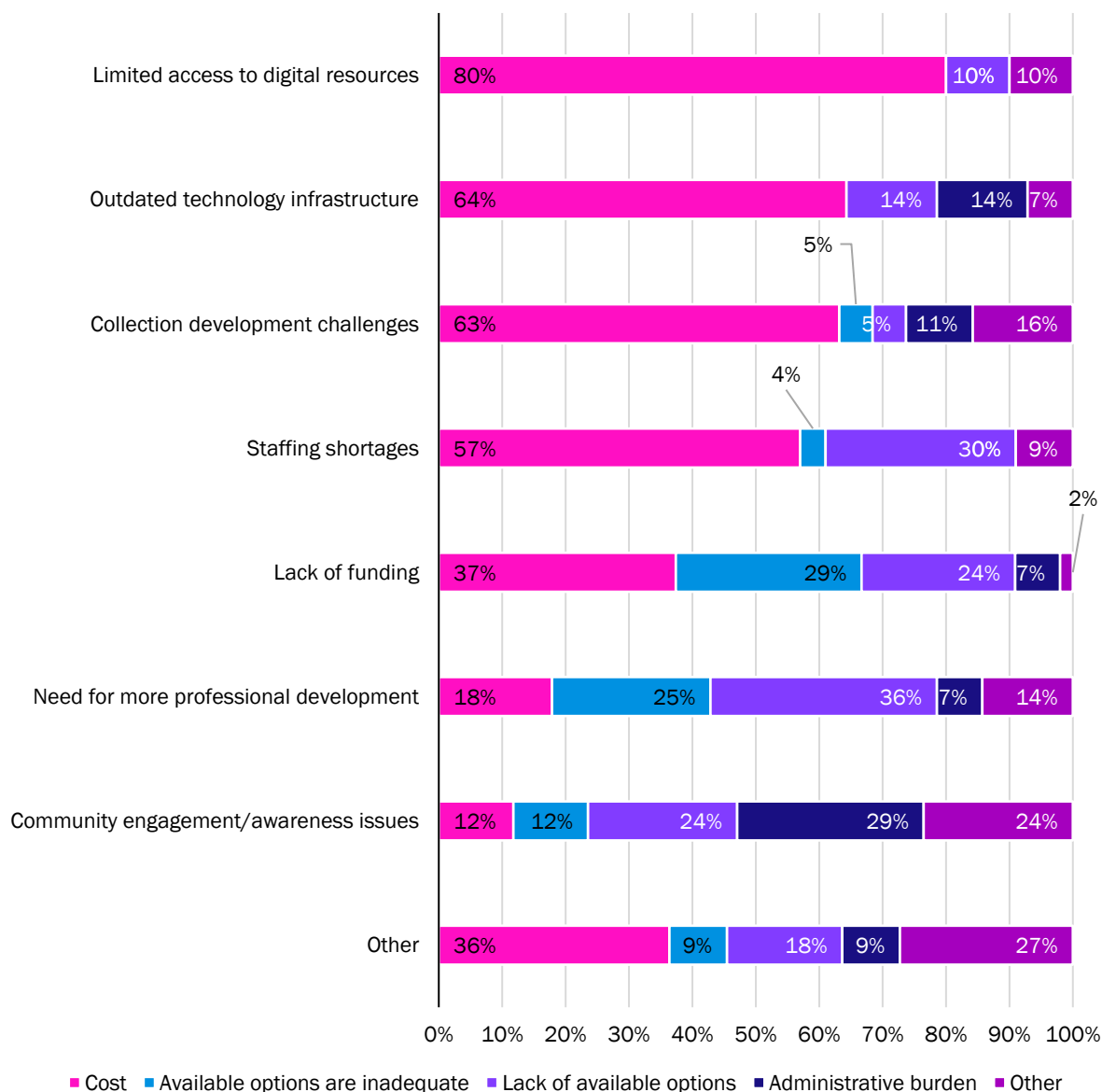
Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

⁸ Impacts are defined as follows: Minimal impact – does not significantly affect operations/service delivery; Some impact – creates occasional challenges but is generally manageable; Moderate impact – limits service delivery in some areas and requires workarounds; Significant impact – Frequently disrupts operations or service delivery; Critical impact – Major barrier that prevents us from meeting key needs.



Respondents were asked to identify the **primary barriers that prevent their library from addressing identified internal gaps** (Figure 19). **Cost** remains a primary barrier for addressing many of the gaps, including limited access to digital resources (80%), outdated technology infrastructure (64%), collection development challenges (63%), and staffing shortages (57%). Inadequate options were identified as a notable barrier to addressing funding (29%) and professional development (25%). Lack of options altogether was identified as a notable barrier to addressing staffing shortages (30%), funding (24%), professional development (36%), and community engagement (24%).

Figure 19. What are the primary barriers preventing your library from addressing the following gaps effectively? n=41



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Among those who identified other barriers to address identified gaps, responses include:

- **Lack of interest and support for professional development**
 - Low staff interest in professional development
 - Lack of investment from school boards and divisions in funding professional development
 - Limited professional development days and reliance on staff to self-fund
- **Infrastructure and technology gaps**
 - Aging buildings with no funding for replacement
 - Lack of website and digital infrastructure to support resources
- **Organizational and systemic barriers**
 - Lack of interest from library associations and provincial government
 - Decentralized technical services requiring advanced staff skills
 - High book losses post-COVID in schools with limited recovery options given school libraries are unable to bill for losses or no returns
- **Community awareness and engagement**
 - Difficulty building community engagement and awareness
 - Competition with external events and activities
 - Lack of visibility of the library within the community
- **Structural inequities**
 - Unequal access to provincial grants and digital resources
 - No centralized database for shared digital library resources



Engagement Insights: Internal Needs & Gaps

Engagement findings strongly support the survey results highlighting internal capacity constraints across the Manitoba library sector. Funding limitations, staffing shortages, and training gaps were among the most commonly cited internal challenges, regardless of library type. Many participants reported that their library lacks the resources and infrastructure needed to operate effectively, let alone plan for future growth. The loss of institutional knowledge (i.e., due to retirement and other staff turnover), limited professional networks, and the absence of formal training or support mechanisms were recurring concerns, especially for libraries outside of major centres. Participants noted that many library workers begin their roles with little to no orientation or sector-specific guidance, particularly in smaller systems. These themes reflect broader workforce development issues across the province, including the absence of a librarian program and reduced access to technician training.

For public libraries, engagement findings echoed survey data pointing to funding and staffing constraints as major barriers. Participants also emphasized the need for updated organizational policies, noting limited internal capacity for policy development. Some reported that existing policies were outdated or incomplete, and that board members or staff were left to navigate governance needs without formal support or even templates to build from. In small libraries, staffing was often minimal or part-time, with staff often expected to “figure it out” without onboarding or sector guidance. Several participants highlighted the isolating nature of the work, especially in rural communities where staff may be the sole employee – a theme echoed later in relation to sector-wide fragmentation and limited peer networks. Bilingual public libraries noted additional pressures related to translation (e.g., of any new policies) and access to French-language resources, which are often costlier and harder to obtain through existing platforms.

School libraries similarly highlighted gaps in funding, staffing, and training – particularly at the individual school level, where divisional or governmental decisions often shape library operations. Recruitment challenges were common, including difficulty finding trained applicants and limitations in current training models (i.e., the shift to remote delivery of RRC Polytech’s Library and Information Technology Diploma). Participants noted that staff often enter their roles with little to no preparation for the school-specific aspects of library work. In particular, they cited the absence of training related to curriculum integration, lesson planning, and navigating the education system as key gaps. Some participants expressed that training available through MSLA tends to target teacher-librarians as opposed to library technicians. Infrastructure needs, such as access to digital systems and MARC records for Canadian materials, were also flagged as challenges. In French-language minority settings, participants pointed to underqualified or untrained staff, small and unstable budgets, and lack of access to appropriate reading materials as persistent issues. One participant also noted that high school students are increasingly reluctant to read for pleasure, making it harder to engage them or support literacy development.

Postsecondary libraries reported capacity pressures primarily related to staffing and budget, with a particular focus on the escalating cost of digital postsecondary resources. These resource constraints affect both day-to-day service delivery and the ability to plan for the future. There was also strong interest in deeper integration with institutional decision-making, especially around program planning and curriculum development. Participants described these integration efforts as important not just for



visibility, but also to ensure library services are aligned with institutional priorities and teaching needs. Concerns about succession planning and the loss of institutional knowledge were also noted in this context.

Among special libraries, internal needs included staffing and human resources, particularly where bilingual qualifications are required or reliance on volunteers is high. Funding was again a limiting factor, particularly for essential technology upgrades such as databases and integrated systems. Participants also noted that many special libraries are managed by individuals or organizations with limited prior library experience, creating gaps in cataloguing, systems management, and overall operations.

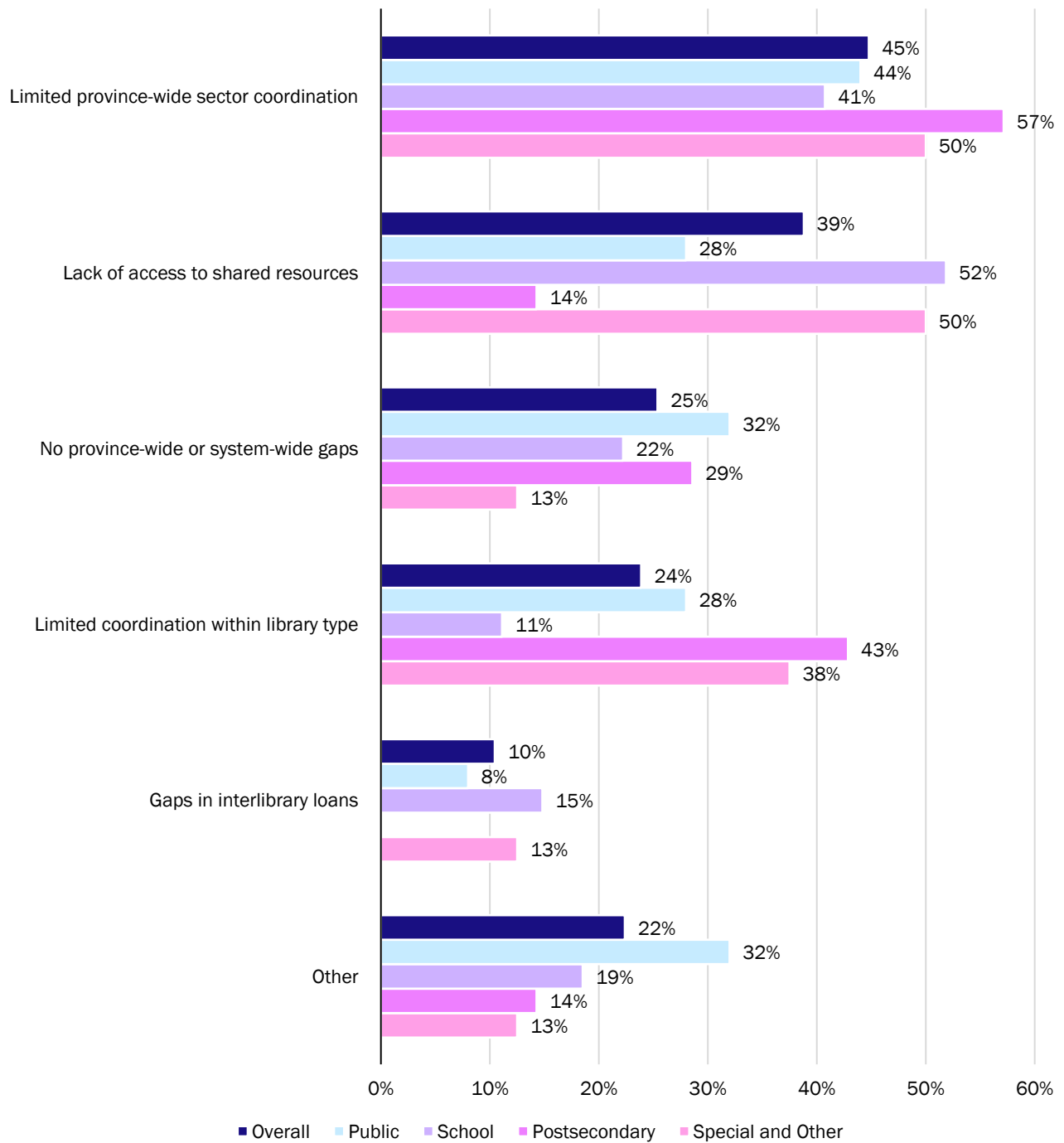
Taken together, the engagement insights highlight that while specific needs may differ by library type, the sector as a whole is grappling with underinvestment in staffing, training, and infrastructure. These issues are especially acute in smaller or rural systems, where capacity is stretched and access to sector-level supports is limited. There is a shared concern that without targeted support and workforce development efforts, these internal gaps will continue to limit the sector's ability to serve communities effectively.

Sector-Wide Gaps

Survey respondents were asked to identify the **most pressing external province- or sector-wide gaps** their library faces in delivering its core services effectively (Figure 20). Overall, the top three gaps identified are **limited province-wide sector coordination** (45%), **lack of access to shared resources** (38%), and **limited coordination within library type** (25%).



Figure 20. What are the most pressing external province- or sector-wide gaps your library faces in delivering its core services effectively? Please select your top three. n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Among those who identified other external gaps, responses include:

- **Inadequate and uneven funding**

- Insufficient provincial and divisional funding limits staffing, book purchases, and program delivery
- Funding disparities between school divisions creates service inequities
- Concerns about the potential negative effects of the new MPLS funding formula on non-regionalized libraries

- **Lack of provincial coordination and policy**

- No provincial mandate or oversight for school libraries, resulting in inconsistent staffing models and service levels
- Absence of centralized data on school library staffing and existence makes it difficult to address inequities
- Limited coordination between different types of libraries (public, school, postsecondary)

- **Limited access to shared resources**

- Larger libraries not sharing digital collections (e.g., OverDrive) with smaller or consortium libraries
- Loss of previous supports like centralized couriers and resource libraries (e.g., Manitoba Teachers Society Library)

- **Shortage of trained personnel**

- Lack of trained library technicians and professional education opportunities, especially in rural areas
- Training gaps lead to inconsistencies in service quality and capacity

- **Resource and time constraints**

- Limited hours allocated to library staff
- Staff lacking sufficient time and budgets to maintain or expand services.

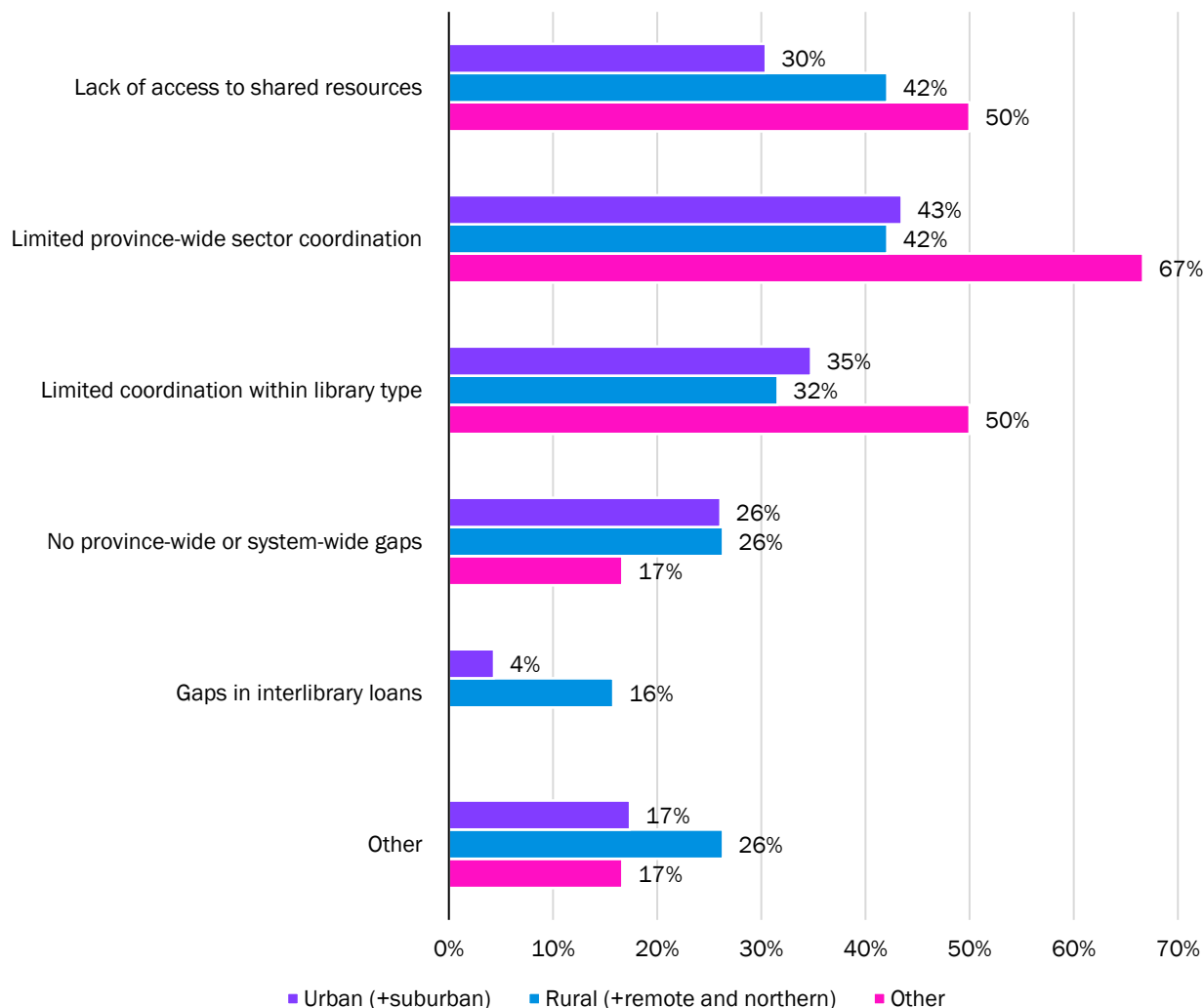
- **Infrastructure and logistical barriers**

- Discontinued interlibrary loan systems in school divisions due to cuts (e.g., courier services)
- Loss of centralized educational support libraries further limits access to valuable materials

To better understand how **external needs** differ among libraries in different **geographic contexts**, the analysis again grouped respondents into two broad categories: **urban** (including suburban) and **rural** (including remote and northern) (Figure 21). While many of the needs are nearly similar across geographic contexts, more rural libraries (42%) noted the lack of access to shared resources compared to urban libraries (30%).



Figure 21. Geographic breakdown of the most pressing external province- or sector-wide gaps. n=67



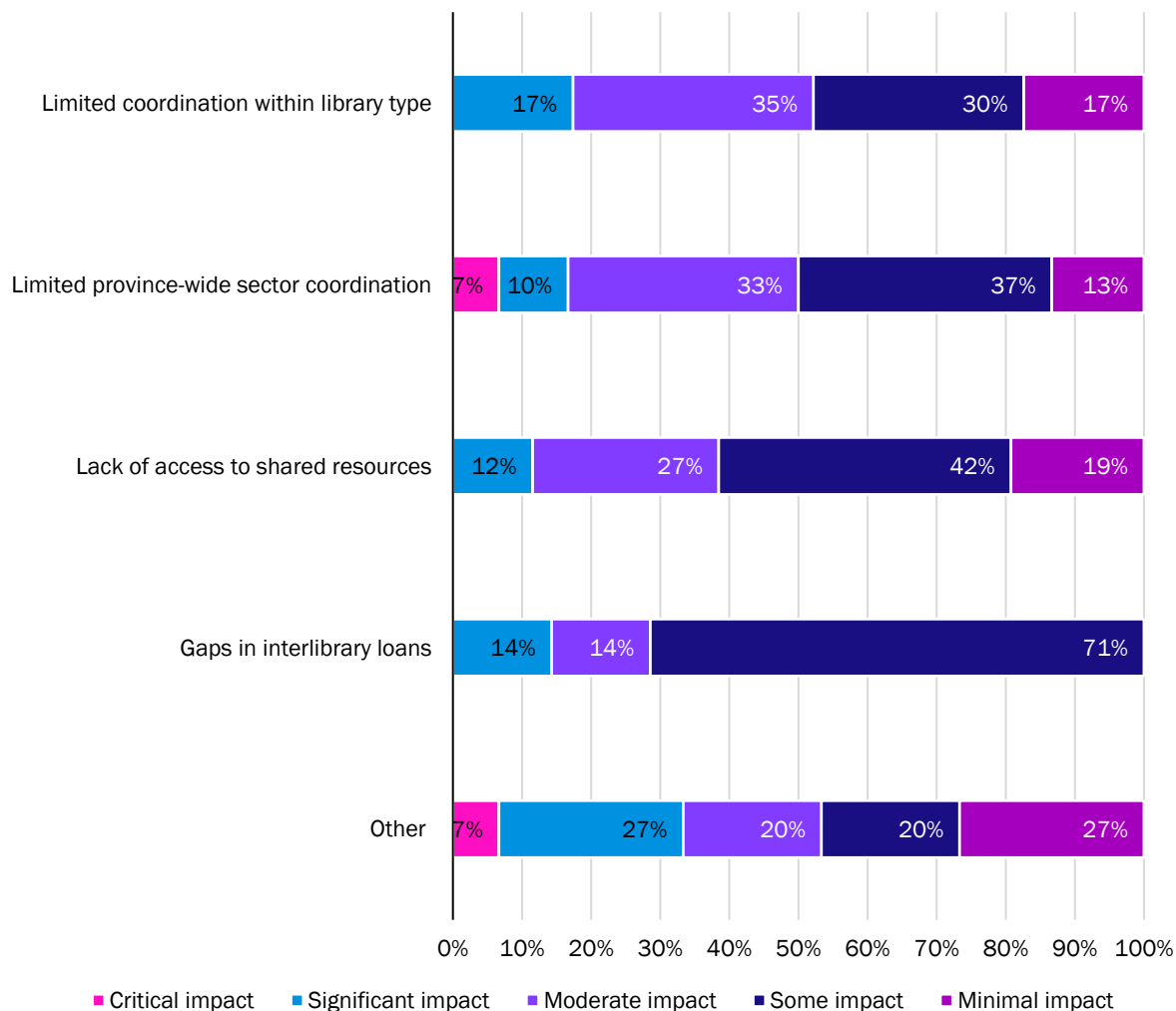
Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Impact & Barriers

For **external and sector-wide gaps** identified, participants were asked to indicate how significantly these gaps impact their service delivery (Figure 22). In general, external and sector-wide gaps are reported to have a lower impact on service delivery than internal capacity gaps. Respondents are most impacted by limited coordination – both within library type and across the provincial sector. Notably, all respondents indicate some level of impact from gaps in interlibrary loans.



Figure 22. For the service gap(s) you selected, how significantly does this gap impact your library's ability to serve its users? n=30

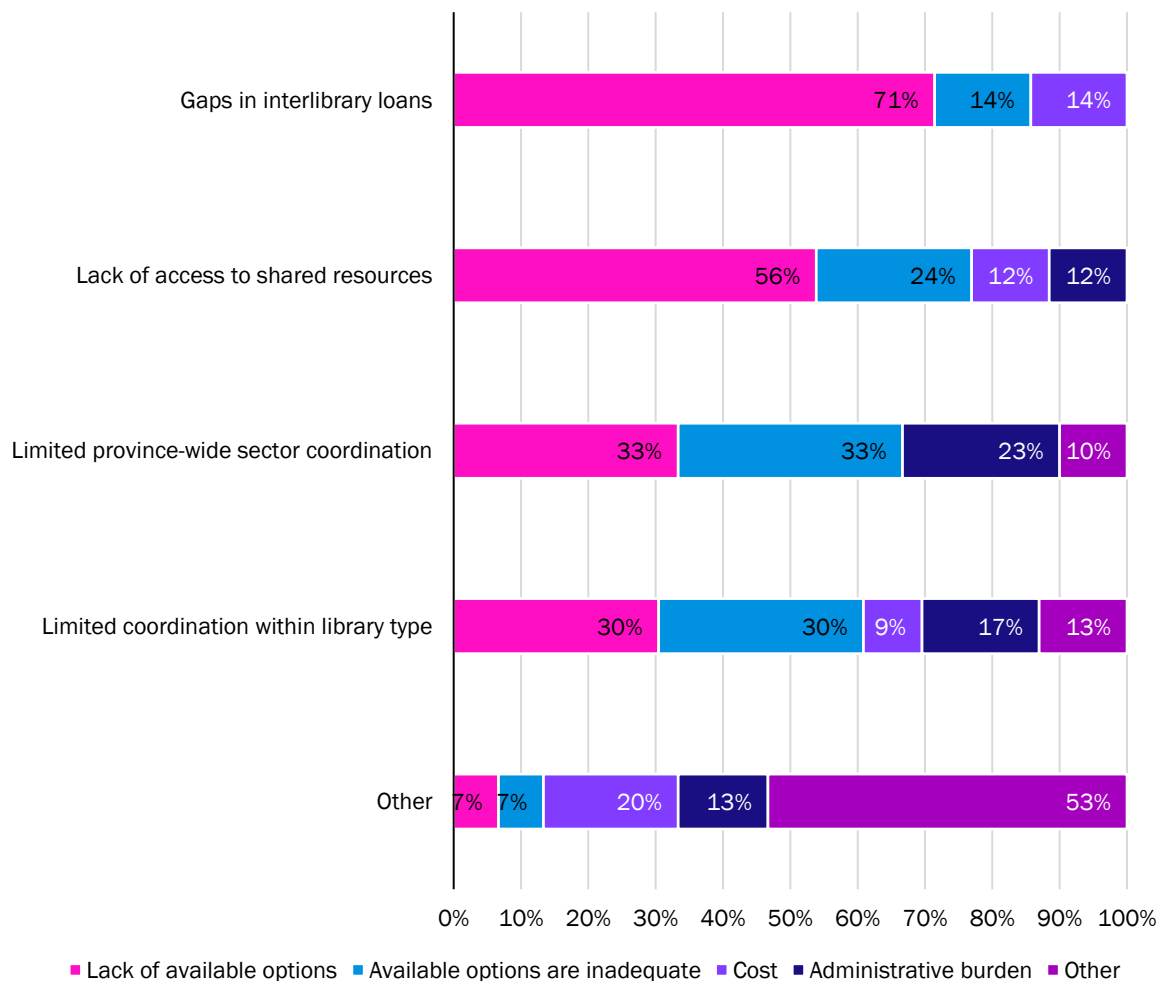


Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Respondents were asked to identify the **primary barriers that prevent their library from addressing identified external gaps** (Figure 23). Lack of available options and inadequate options are identified as the top barriers – seen most strongly in the areas of gaps in interlibrary loans (71% and 14%, respectively) and lack of access to shared resources (56% and 24%). Barriers to addressing limited coordination among libraries is also impacted by administrative burden (33% for province-wide coordinator and 30% within library type).



Figure 23. What are the primary barriers preventing your library from addressing the following gaps effectively? n=30



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Among those who identified other barriers to addressing identified gaps, responses include:

- **Siloed institutional culture**
 - School divisions operate in isolation with little collaboration across libraries
 - Inconsistent staffing models reduce opportunities for coordination and shared strategies
- **Limited access to professional development and training**
 - No full-time, in-province postsecondary library technician program
 - Training gaps in essential skills like cataloguing are emerging
- **Unclear policy changes and funding impact**
 - Lack of understanding around changes to MPLS grant application process and its intended outcomes



- **Lack of time and institutional support**
 - Staff are expected to work independently, with little support for team-building or collaboration
 - Time constraints limit the ability to address coordination gaps
- **Limited awareness and networking**
 - Libraries unaware of or disconnected from similar institutions with whom they could collaborate
- **Perceived low priority due to size or location**
 - Smaller or more remote libraries feel excluded or deprioritized in larger coordination efforts.

Engagement Insights: Sector-Wide Needs & Gaps

Engagement findings underscore the persistent gap in province-wide coordination and the limitations this gap places on resource sharing, professional development, and consistent service delivery. Participants across the sector cited a fragmented and under-resourced system, with few mechanisms for collective action or shared infrastructure. This fragmentation is most acutely felt in areas where centralized services once existed more robustly – such as interlibrary loan, coordinated delivery, and shared digital platforms – and have since been reduced or discontinued. Many participants described a sense of siloed operation and disconnection from potential collaborators, with limited capacity to rebuild sector infrastructure or respond to emerging needs.

Public library participants expressed particular concern over the weakening of MPLS's central role and the resulting lack of clear communication and coordination across the sector. There was widespread frustration with perceived inequities in resource sharing – such as larger libraries not sharing digital resources like OverDrive – and limited understanding of whether this is a requirement of provincial funding. Uncertainty around changes to the MPLS grant application process also contributed to concerns about shifting expectations and unclear funding parameters. Board turnover and volunteer fatigue were identified as governance-related challenges that further complicate long-term planning and consistent engagement in sector-wide initiatives.

Postsecondary libraries emphasized the uneven ability of institutions to keep pace with emerging technologies and changing user expectations, particularly around AI and the rising cost of digital academic resources. The financial pressure of unsustainable subscription models was a recurring concern. Participants also reflected on the challenges of declining visibility and relevance, particularly as new cohorts of students – including those whose learning was disrupted by COVID-19 – enter postsecondary education with increased literacy support needs and a preference for resources in diverse formats.



School libraries pointed to a persistent lack of sector-wide recognition and understanding of their roles, both within the school system and the broader library sector. Participants described inconsistent staffing models and professional development access, especially in smaller or rural divisions. They also emphasized the growing complexity of student needs, including multilingual learners and those requiring accessible or multiple-format resources (e.g., audiobooks paired with physical texts). Participants noted a general disconnect between school libraries and other parts of the library sector, with limited integration into collaborative planning or shared advocacy efforts.

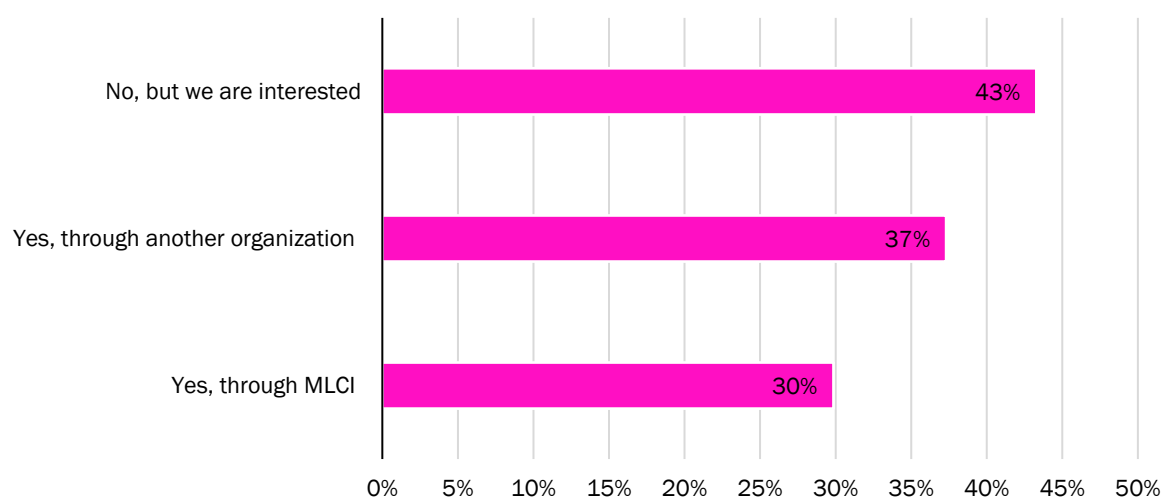
Special libraries reflected broader concerns around structural precarity and limited capacity. Many operate with minimal funding, rely on volunteers, or have difficulty filling designated bilingual positions. Participants highlighted challenges related to technology and access to digital resources, as well as a lack of dedicated networks for libraries serving specific communities or mandates. The vulnerability of these libraries in tight fiscal contexts was also raised as a risk, particularly where library services may be seen as non-essential.

Additional Needs and Priorities

Group Licensing

Respondents were asked if their library participates in **group licensing for digital resources or shared technology infrastructure** (Figure 24). The largest share of respondents (43%) indicate they do not participate in group licensing, followed by those that participate through an organization other than MLCI (37%) and those that participate through MLCI (30%).

Figure 24. Does your library participate in group licensing for digital resources or shared technology infrastructure? n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Among those respondents that indicate participating through another organization, those organization include the BC Libraries Cooperative (the Co-op), Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL), *Le Partenariat des bibliothèques universitaires du Québec* (PBUQ), Manitoba Research Network (MRNet), Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Network (MERLIN), Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), the Spruce consortium (shared Evergreen ILS infrastructure), the Federal Science Library Network, the Manitoba Public Library Services (MPLS), the Manitoba Department of Education, and the Pembina Trails School Division.

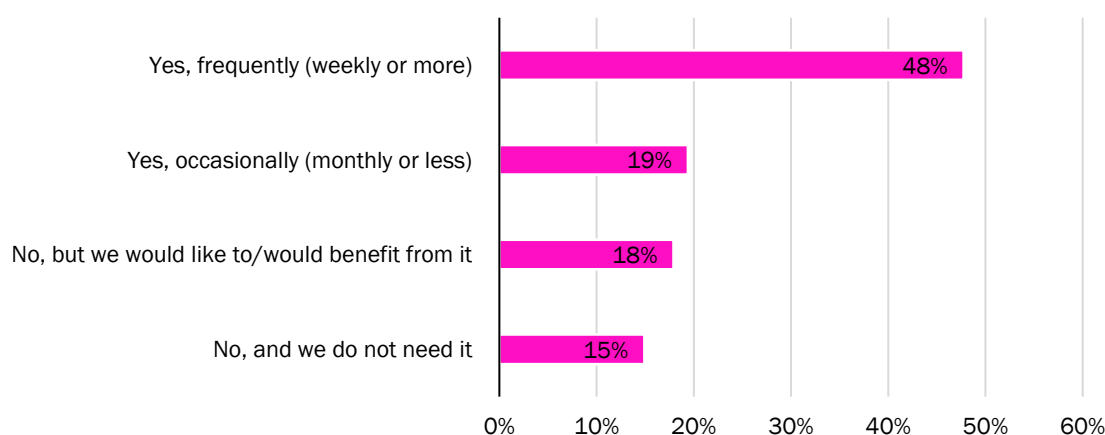
Engagement Insights: Purchasing Power & Infrastructure

Participants across sectors reinforced the survey finding that many libraries are not currently involved – or not aware of their involvement – in group licensing through MLCI. However, there was strong interest in more coordinated purchasing, particularly for digital collections and platforms. Postsecondary and special library participants highlighted the value of consortial pricing and shared services, while public and school libraries identified clear opportunities for pooled resource access. Many noted that existing group-buy systems prioritize larger or urban libraries, leaving smaller and rural libraries with less negotiating power. Some also flagged a lack of transparency around pricing and licensing terms, which hampers strategic decision-making. These insights suggest significant potential for MLCI or another entity to play a stronger coordinating role in identifying needs, negotiating access, and facilitating knowledge exchange around shared licensing options.

Interlibrary Loans and Resource Sharing

Respondents were asked if their library uses **interlibrary loan/resource sharing networks** (Figure 25). Two thirds (67%) indicated they use interlibrary loan resources in some capacity. Among those who indicated they do not need it; responses represent a mix of school and special libraries.

Figure 25. Does your library use interlibrary loan/resource sharing networks? n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



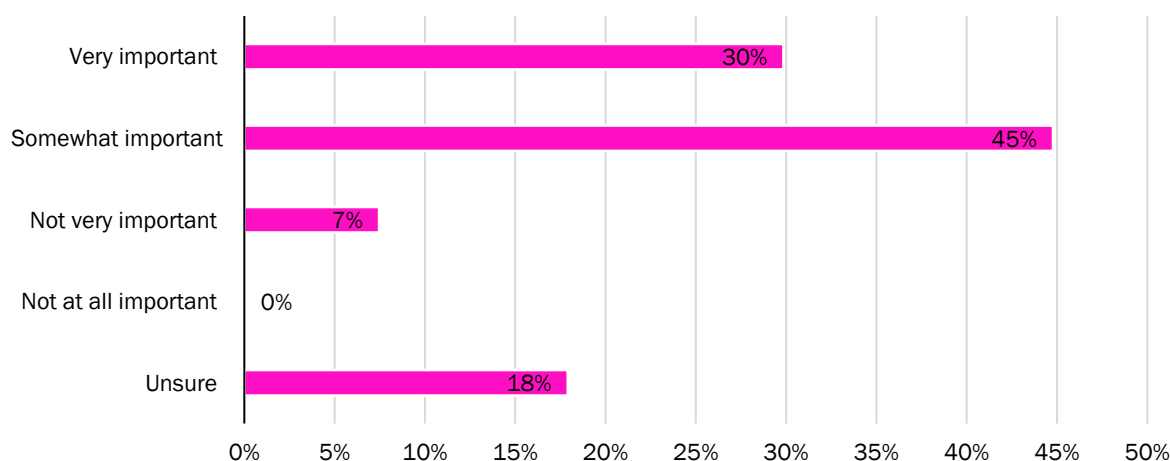
Engagement Insights: Physical Resource-Sharing

Survey data around interlibrary loan usage was further contextualized by engagement findings that pointed to logistical and equity-related barriers in the current system. Many participants described a patchwork of resource-sharing practices, with some libraries maintaining informal or formal partnerships to compensate for gaps in wider infrastructure. The continued reliance on Canada Post – especially in rural areas – was noted as a major constraint. Suggestions for alternatives, such as a shared delivery system, reflect the desire for more robust physical resource sharing. Participants also emphasized that while digital sharing has expanded, physical access remains essential for many users, particularly children, newcomers, and communities without reliable internet access.

Bibliographic Records

Respondents were asked **how important it is for Manitoba libraries to access improved bibliographic records for resource discovery and sharing** (Figure 26). Most respondents (75%) indicated this access is somewhat or very important. Respondents indicating this access is not very important were from a mix of public, school, and postsecondary libraries.

Figure 26. How important is it for Manitoba libraries to access improved bibliographic records for resource discovery and sharing? n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Respondents were provided with the option to elaborate on the need for access to improved bibliographic records – for example, identifying **specific gaps or challenges they have observed regarding how users currently** find and access materials across library systems. Responses included:



- **Inconsistent or poor bibliographic records:** Inaccurate or incomplete records, especially in schools without dedicated library technicians are reducing the effectiveness of library catalogs. Many respondents specifically noted that unqualified staff had entered poor-quality records into systems, making it difficult for users to find resources.
- **System limitations and fragmentation:** Platforms like LibraryWorld were cited as restrictive, and the loss of AMICUS as a Z-source has made it harder to access Canadian MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging) records. Additionally, differences in software platforms and limited interoperability across libraries (e.g., public vs. postsecondary vs. school) hinder resource discovery.
- **Cost barriers:** Subscription tools (e.g., OCLC for MARC records) are expensive, limiting access for smaller libraries.
- **Need for shared infrastructure and improved discovery:** Respondents expressed a strong desire for a provincial union catalogue or MARC record-sharing system to reduce duplication of cataloguing efforts and improve consistency. It was noted that libraries would benefit from enhanced search tools and provincial-level resource sharing for more seamless user access.
- **Lack of access to Indigenous language metadata:** There is a recognized gap in the inclusion of Indigenous languages in bibliographic records and metadata.
- **Lack of user awareness and/or engagement:** Some school library respondents report that students and staff do not know how to use library systems, with the library lead often being the sole user.
- **Emerging technology opportunities:** A few respondents pointed to the potential of AI to improve cataloging and access, though this opportunity remains underexplored.

Engagement Insights: Gaps in Record-Keeping & Sharing

Engagement findings reinforce the survey's emphasis on the importance of high-quality bibliographic records, particularly for discovery, access, and system interoperability. Building on earlier discussion of internal gaps, participants noted that fragmented platforms, inconsistent metadata, and a lack of qualified cataloguing staff are ongoing challenges, especially in school and rural libraries. Poor-quality records – often entered by untrained staff – were seen to undermine both user experience and the effectiveness of catalogues.

School library participants, in particular, emphasized the administrative burden of duplicative cataloguing and the absence of centralized infrastructure to support efficient metadata sharing. The lack of access to MARC records tailored to Canadian or Indigenous materials was also flagged, along with licensing costs that put subscription tools out of reach for many smaller libraries. These findings suggest strong interest in a coordinated provincial approach to record-sharing, infrastructure, and cataloguing support – particularly one that improves efficiency without increasing staff workload.

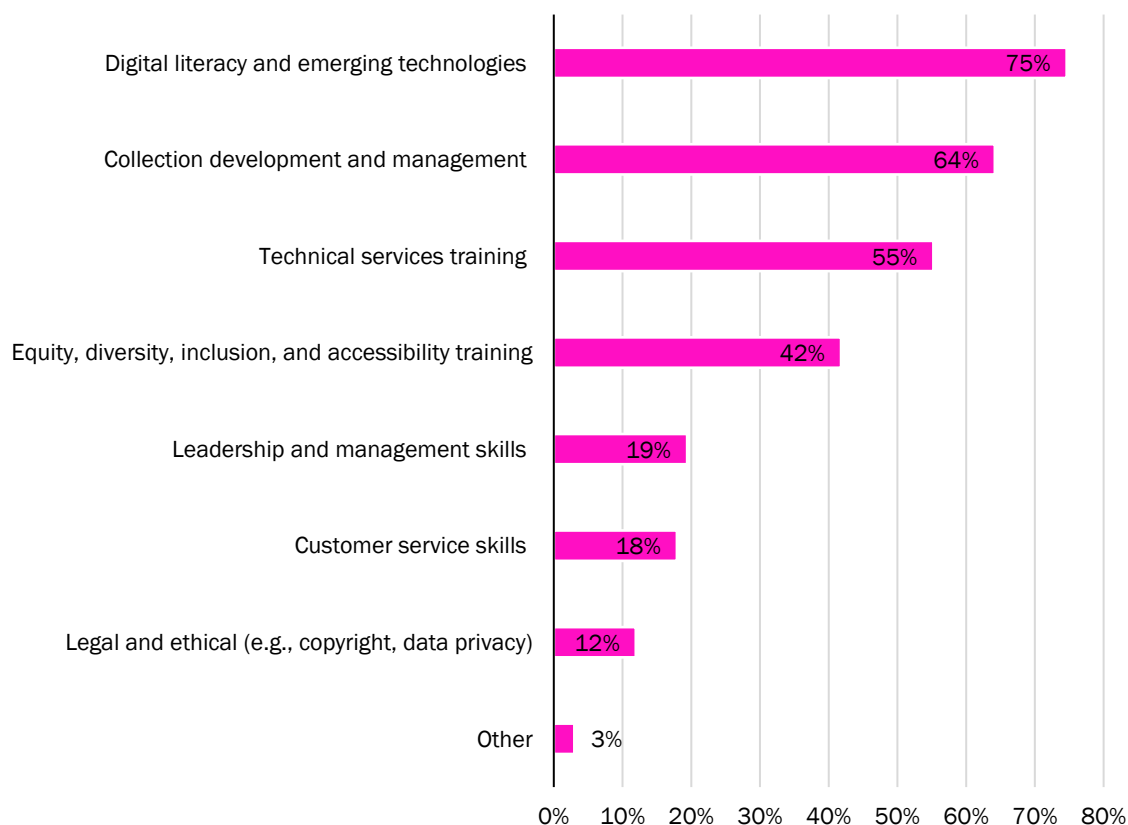
Overall, these insights build directly on the training and staffing gaps described earlier in Internal Needs, pointing to a critical intersection between workforce capacity and digital infrastructure.



Professional Development

Respondents were asked to identify their library's **top professional development priorities** (Figure 27). Most respondents identified digital literacy and emerging technologies (75%), collection development and management (64%), and technical services training (55%) as the top priorities. Training in equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility was also highly ranked (42%).

Figure 27. What are your library's top professional development priorities? Please select your top three. n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

When asked to identify the **professional development and training formats** that work best for their libraries, most respondents selected webinars (72%) and in-person workshops (60%) as preferred formats (Figure 28). Notably, only 7% of respondents indicated their library does not participate in professional development – these responses were received from school and special libraries.



Figure 28. Which formats work best for your library to access professional development and training opportunities? Please select your top three. n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Engagement Insights: Training & Peer Connections

Survey findings around professional development priorities and delivery formats were echoed across all engagement activities, with particular emphasis on the accessibility and relevance of training for rural, school, and small public libraries. While digital literacy and technical services remain priority content areas, participants also called for professional development that supports library-specific challenges such as cataloguing, curriculum integration (in schools), and managing community-facing roles (in public libraries).

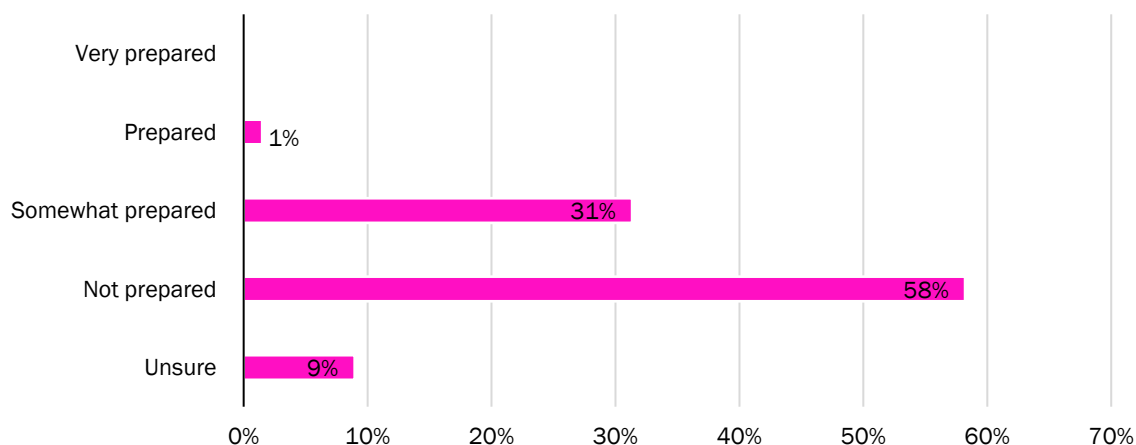
Across sectors, there was a call for more practical, applied formats – such as hybrid or asynchronous sessions – as well as stronger peer learning and mentoring networks. Participants noted that professional development through MLA and other sector bodies is often targeted to MLIS-qualified workers and excludes library technicians, other workers, and volunteers. Opportunities to connect staff across institutions – whether for shared learning, troubleshooting, or moral support – were framed as equally valuable to formal training sessions. These insights suggest that future training initiatives should be designed not only around topical needs but also around delivery formats that reflect capacity constraints and staffing realities.



AI Readiness

Respondents were asked **how prepared they feel their library is to integrate AI or other emerging technologies** (Figure 29). Most respondents (58%) noted they feel their library is not prepared, while a third (31%) indicated their library is somewhat prepared. Responses are mixed across library types.

Figure 29. How prepared do you feel your library is to integrate AI or other emerging technologies? n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Engagement Insights: AI & Technological Change

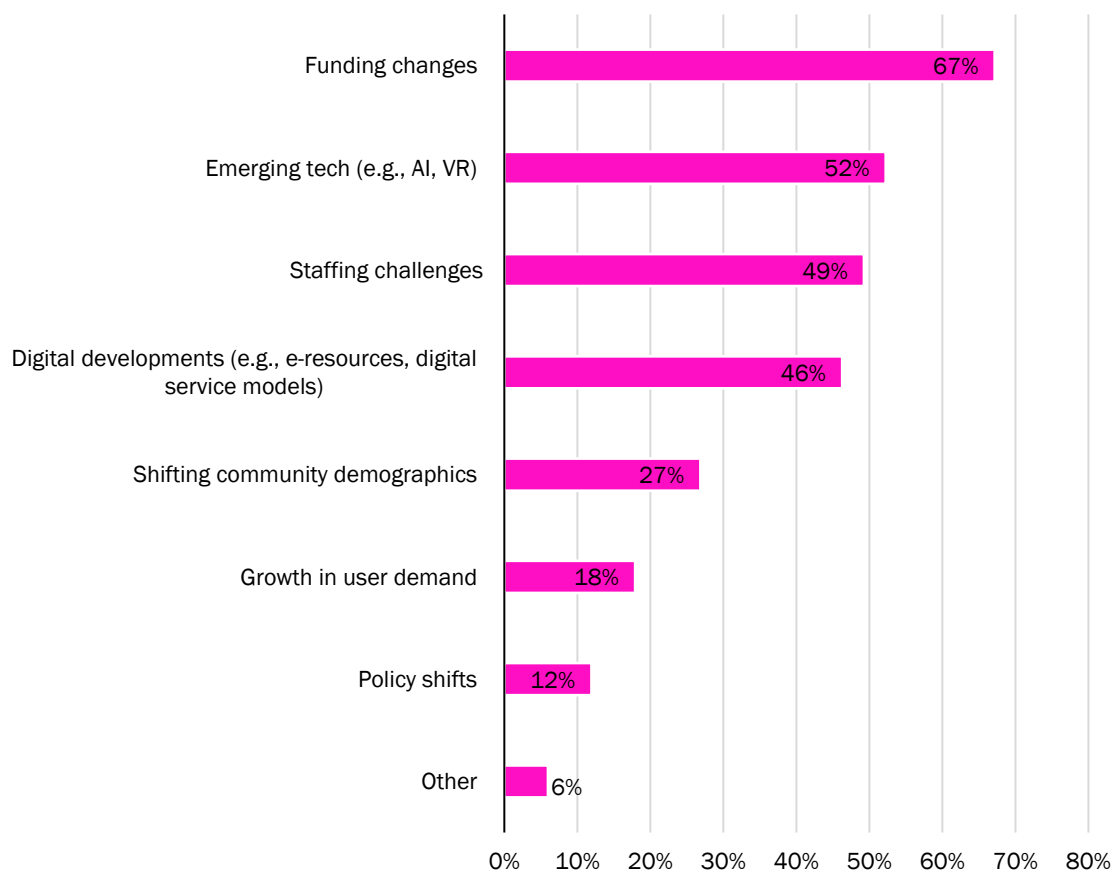
Survey findings on AI readiness were echoed across all engagement streams, with many participants describing uncertainty, limited training, and uneven expectations. School and postsecondary library staff noted that AI, VR, and AR are increasingly shaping institutional priorities, yet integration within libraries remains uneven and under-supported. In some cases, faculty or administrators are leading AI initiatives without involving libraries, creating gaps in skill-building and relevance. Public and special libraries voiced concern about the pace of technological change and the difficulty of meeting user expectations without corresponding investment in tools or training. At the same time, participants expressed interest in accessible, hands-on learning opportunities and peer exchange to build confidence in this space.

Future Needs and Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify what **factors are most important in shaping their library's needs and priorities in the next 3 to 5 years** (Figure 30). The top three responses – all selected by at least half of respondents – were funding challenges (67%), emerging technologies (52%), and staffing challenges (49%). Other responses, noted institutional priorities and mandate as an important factor for postsecondary libraries.



Figure 30. Looking ahead 3 to 5 years, what factors are most important in shaping your library's needs and priorities? Select up to three. n=67



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Respondents were provided the option to elaborate on the preceding question, specifying what they see as the **biggest challenge** facing Manitoba libraries today and **potential solutions** they would like to see from sector support organizations. Responses include:

Key Challenges for Manitoba Libraries

▪ Funding constraints:

- Inadequate and inconsistent funding models across school divisions and postsecondary institutions
- Staffing shortages due to lack of funds for recruitment and training
- Rising costs of books and materials without proportional budget increases



- **Staffing and training gaps:**
 - Shortage of trained library professionals, especially in rural and school libraries
 - Limited access to library technician education programs (i.e., no full-time in-province options)
 - Need for mentoring and professional development for new and existing staff
- **Emerging technology and digital literacy:**
 - Difficulty keeping up with rapid technological advancements (AI, VR, etc.)
 - Lack of time, training, and technical capacity to adopt and integrate new tools
 - Need for clear guidance and hands-on professional development sessions on emerging technologies
- **Demographic and social shifts:**
 - Growing populations of newcomers requiring multilingual resources
 - Aging populations needing accessible materials (e.g., large print, digital)
 - Rising community needs related to poverty, mental health, and literacy rates
- **Lack of provincial coordination and collaboration:**
 - Unequal access to programs and support – in particular, rural and smaller libraries feel overlooked
 - Siloed divisions and inconsistent policies across schools and libraries
 - Limited resource sharing and inadequate collaborative practices

Suggested Solutions from Sector Support Organizations

Overall, respondents want sector support organizations to play a stronger, more coordinated leadership role in ensuring libraries can adapt to demographic, technological, and fiscal pressures. Suggestions include:

- Increase and stabilize funding for staffing, collections, and emerging priorities
- Support and expand access to library tech training and formal education programs
- Provide practical, accessible professional development on AI, VR, and other emerging technologies
- Foster stronger collaboration between library types
- Create province-wide forums to address community needs, share strategies, and tackle social challenges collectively
- Improve access to shared resources and infrastructure to enhance efficiency and equity



Engagement Insights: Future Readiness

Engagement findings provide critical nuance to concerns identified in the survey, expanding on internal and sector-wide gaps by emphasizing the cumulative pressures shaping future preparedness. Across all sectors, participants emphasized that budgets are not keeping pace with inflation or rising costs – particularly for digital resources – leading to what some described as “silent cuts” that erode service levels without formal budget reductions. Staffing challenges are expected to intensify due to anticipated retirements, limited training pipelines, and de-professionalization trends, especially in postsecondary and school libraries where librarian positions are increasingly replaced by lower-paid roles or left vacant.

Public and school libraries highlighted growing expectations to address social service needs – including mental health supports and services for newcomers – without adequate training or structural support. In rural and northern areas, this challenge is compounded by limited infrastructure, such as lack of broadband or sufficient library spaces. As noted above, technological change is also reshaping service expectations, with generative AI especially creating both pressure and opportunity.

Across all engagement activities, there was a sense that community needs are becoming more complex and diverse, while the sector’s internal systems and external support structures have not evolved to keep pace. These findings suggest an urgent need for coordinated workforce development, targeted infrastructure investment, and strategic leadership to support sector-wide resilience and adaptability.

4.4. MLCI’s Role in the Sector

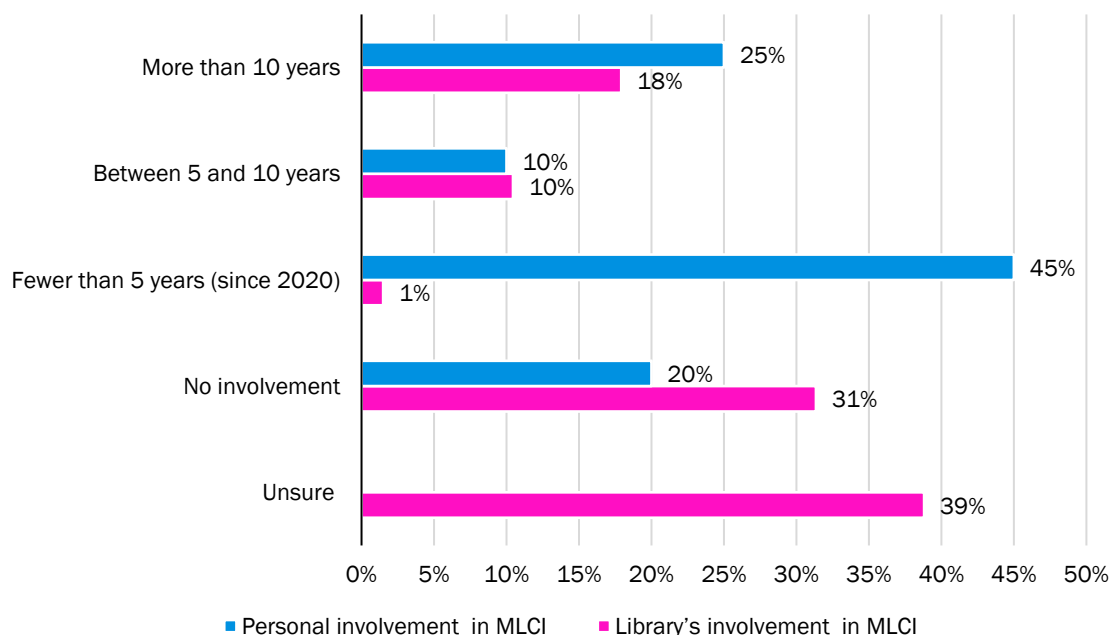
Membership & Value

Level of Involvement

Respondents were asked about their **library’s involvement with MLCI as well as their personal involvement** (Figure 31). On the institutional level, the largest share of respondents (39%) was unsure about their library’s involvement, followed closely by those indicating no involvement (31%). Among those who indicated some level of involvement, respondents were most likely to have been personally involved with MLCI for fewer than 5 years – in other words, in the period that the organization has been mainly inactive.



Figure 31. Which of the following best describes your library's level of involvement with MLCI? n=67; How long have you personally been involved with MLCI through your library. n=20



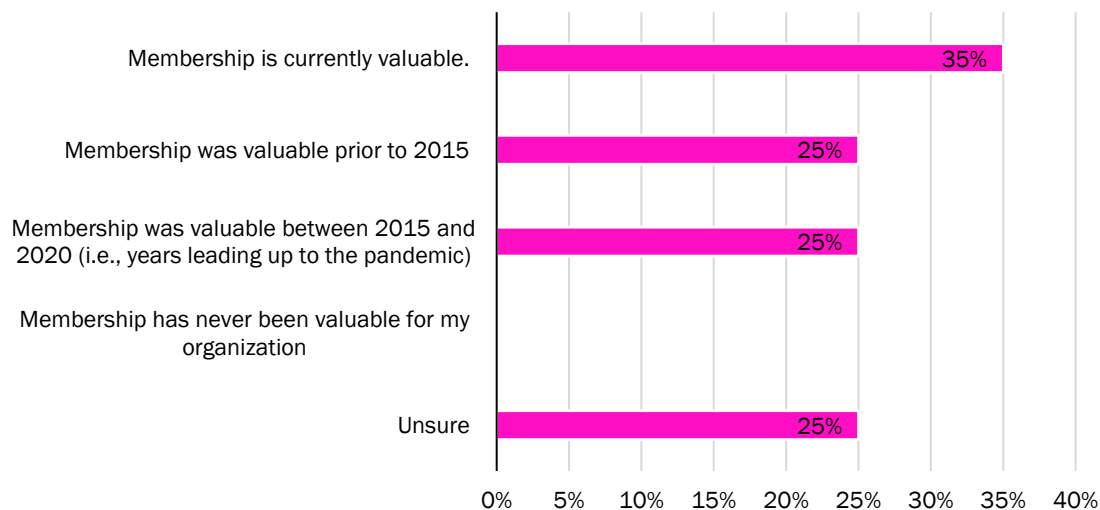
Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Value of MLCI Membership

Among respondents who indicated some level of library involvement with MLCI, more than a third (35%) indicated their membership is currently valuable (Figure 32). A quarter (25%) also indicated membership was valuable prior to 2015 as well as between 2015 and 2020. Additionally, a quarter (25%) were unsure of the value of membership.



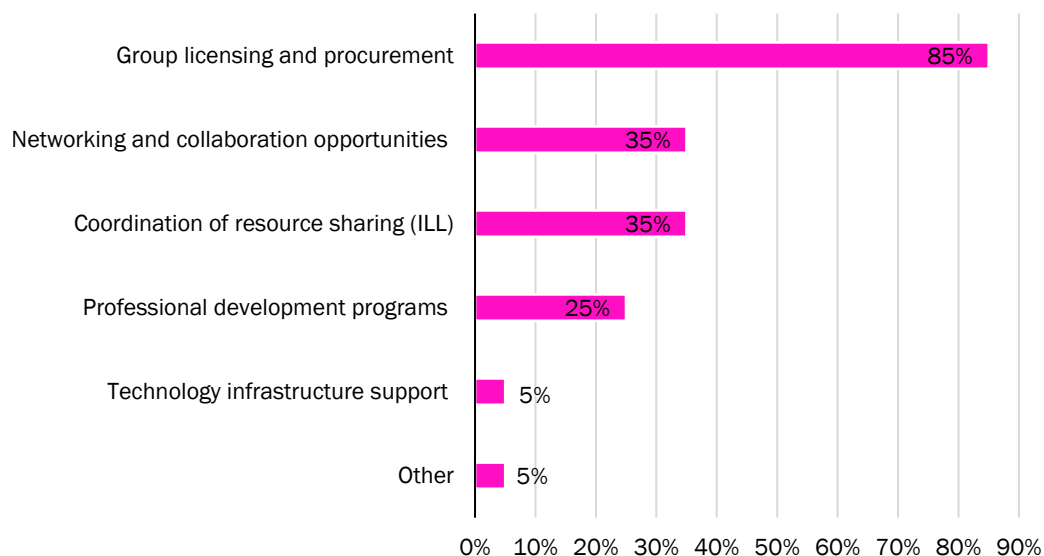
Figure 32. Has MLCI membership been valuable to your organization in any of the following ways? Select all that apply. n=20.



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Among the same segment of respondents who indicated some level of library involvement with MLCI, the **most valuable service** clearly identified by 85% was group licensing and procurement (Figure 33).

Figure 33. What is or was the most valuable service from MLCI for your library? n=20



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Engagement Insights: Sector Memberships & Affiliations

Engagement findings largely reinforce survey results indicating limited awareness and uneven engagement with MLCI across the sector. Many participants, particularly from public and school libraries, were unsure whether their institution had ever been a member, or what the benefits of membership had been. In some cases, past participation was mediated by other organizations (e.g., MPLS purchasing group access for EBSCO), making it harder to trace. These findings reinforce broader challenges around communication, visibility, and clarity of mandate – all of which affect perceptions of MLCI's value.

Public and school library participants commonly reported stronger familiarity and involvement with other sector organizations such as MLA and MSLA. Several highlighted the role associations could or should play in supporting the onboarding of new staff – a recurring need throughout the engagement process. MLA was generally seen as a hub for individual professional development and peer connection, though some noted that its communications do not always reach board members or other decision-makers. MSLA and Canadian School Libraries were identified as important sources of resources and other supports for school libraries, especially in rural or isolated contexts.

Postsecondary library participants were more likely to have had direct institutional involvement with MLCI, though activity levels varied. These participants emphasized the importance of affiliations that offer tangible institutional value, particularly in terms of group pricing and shared resources. The distinction between professional associations like MLA and institutional bodies like MLCI was seen as important, especially for institutions that depend on consortial arrangements to extend access.

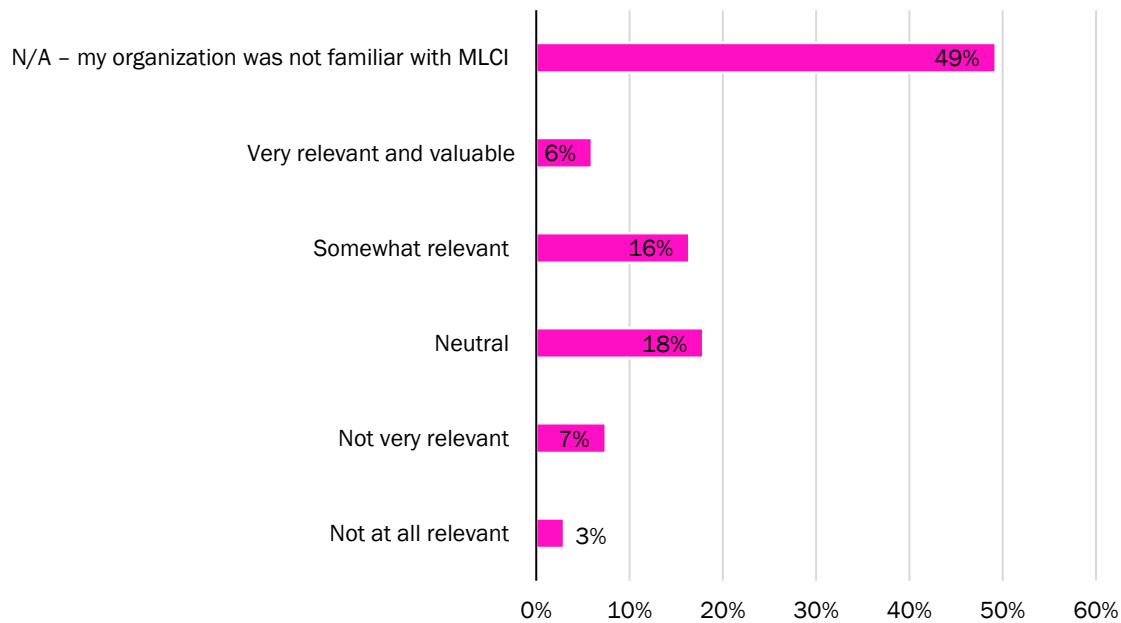
Across library types, participants generally valued associations most when they enabled resource sharing, professional development, or connection across isolated roles and geographies. However, findings also point to a lack of consistent awareness about what sector organizations offer – particularly, though not exclusively, MLCI – and a disconnect between library staff and the decision-makers who determine institutional participation. These insights underscore the need for any current and future sector support models to clearly articulate their purpose and value, including at the institutional level.

Perception of Past Role

Respondents were asked about their perception of **MLCI's role in the sector prior to the COVID-19 pandemic** and pause in the organization's activities (Figure 34). Nearly half of respondents (49%) – by far the largest share – indicated their organization was not familiar with MLCI at the time, while nearly a quarter (22%) thought MLCI was somewhat or very relevant/valuable.



Figure 34. Prior to the pandemic, how did you perceive MLCI's role in the sector? n=67

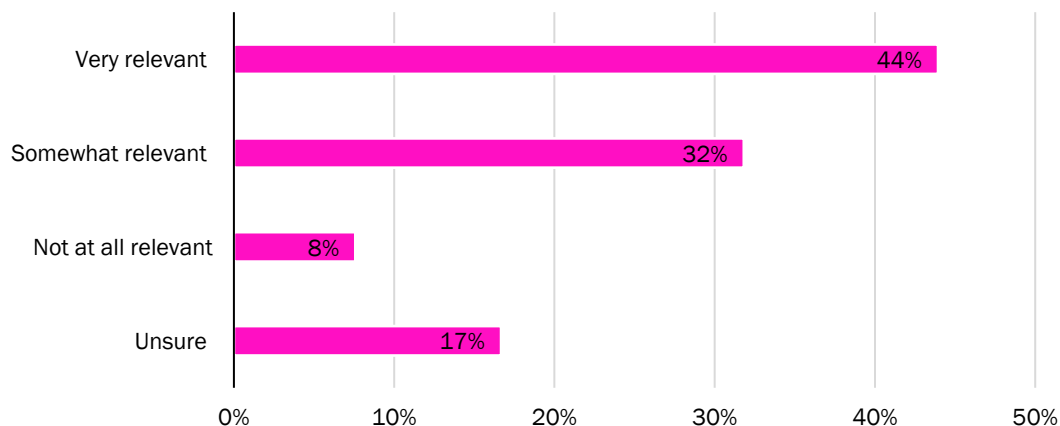


Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Relevance of Mandate

Respondents were asked to indicate **how relevant this MLCI's organizational mandate is in today's Manitoba library landscape** (Figure 35). Most respondents (76%) view the mandate as somewhat or very relevant, with only a few (8%) indicating it is not at all relevant. Notably, 17% were unsure, continuing the pattern of uncertainty among a segment of respondents regarding their organization's membership status, the value of that membership, or past awareness of MLCI's role.

Figure 35. In your view, how relevant is this mandate in today's Manitoba library landscape? n=66



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025



Respondents were provided the option to elaborate on the preceding question on the **relevance of MLCI's mandate**. MLCI occupies a somewhat unclear but potentially critical role in the province's library ecosystem. While some respondents question its current relevance – citing inactivity in recent years, overlap with MLA, and the availability of alternative consortia services – others emphasize its unique value as the only provincial organization representing all library types. Key insights from responses include:

▪ **Opportunities for coordination and collaboration:**

- MLCI is seen as potentially valuable in fostering cross-sector collaboration across library types.
- There is importance placed on unified efforts to address province-wide issues like censorship (e.g., book bans), digital literacy, and equitable access.
- Coordination and collaboration would be especially useful for smaller libraries that benefit most from shared planning, licensing negotiations, and interlibrary loan systems.

▪ **Concerns about visibility and activity:**

- Many respondents (especially from school libraries) had not heard of MLCI or were unclear on its purpose, indicating limited visibility and engagement.
- There is a perception that MLCI having been inactive or absent over the past five years has led to its functions being absorbed or replaced by other organizations (e.g., MLA).

▪ **Mandate seen as ambitious but under-resourced:**

- Some feel the current mandate is too broad or unachievable under current structural and resource constraints.
- There is a desire for MLCI to advocate more clearly and actively on issues like minimum professional staffing standards in school libraries.

▪ **Mixed perceptions across library types:**

- Academic and technical service staff value MLCI's role in shared technical infrastructure and expertise exchange.
- School libraries feel siloed and underserved, especially French-language schools which note a lack of French-language training or support.
- Some rural public library staff see MLCI's mandate as overly generalized and mismatched with their specific needs.

▪ **Emerging needs reinforce potential value:**

- Respondents highlight rising costs, demographic shifts, and technology demands as areas where a cross-sector coordinating body could add value – if properly resourced and reactivated.
- There is general agreement that sector-wide collaboration is increasingly important, even if the current structure of MLCI is not meeting those needs.

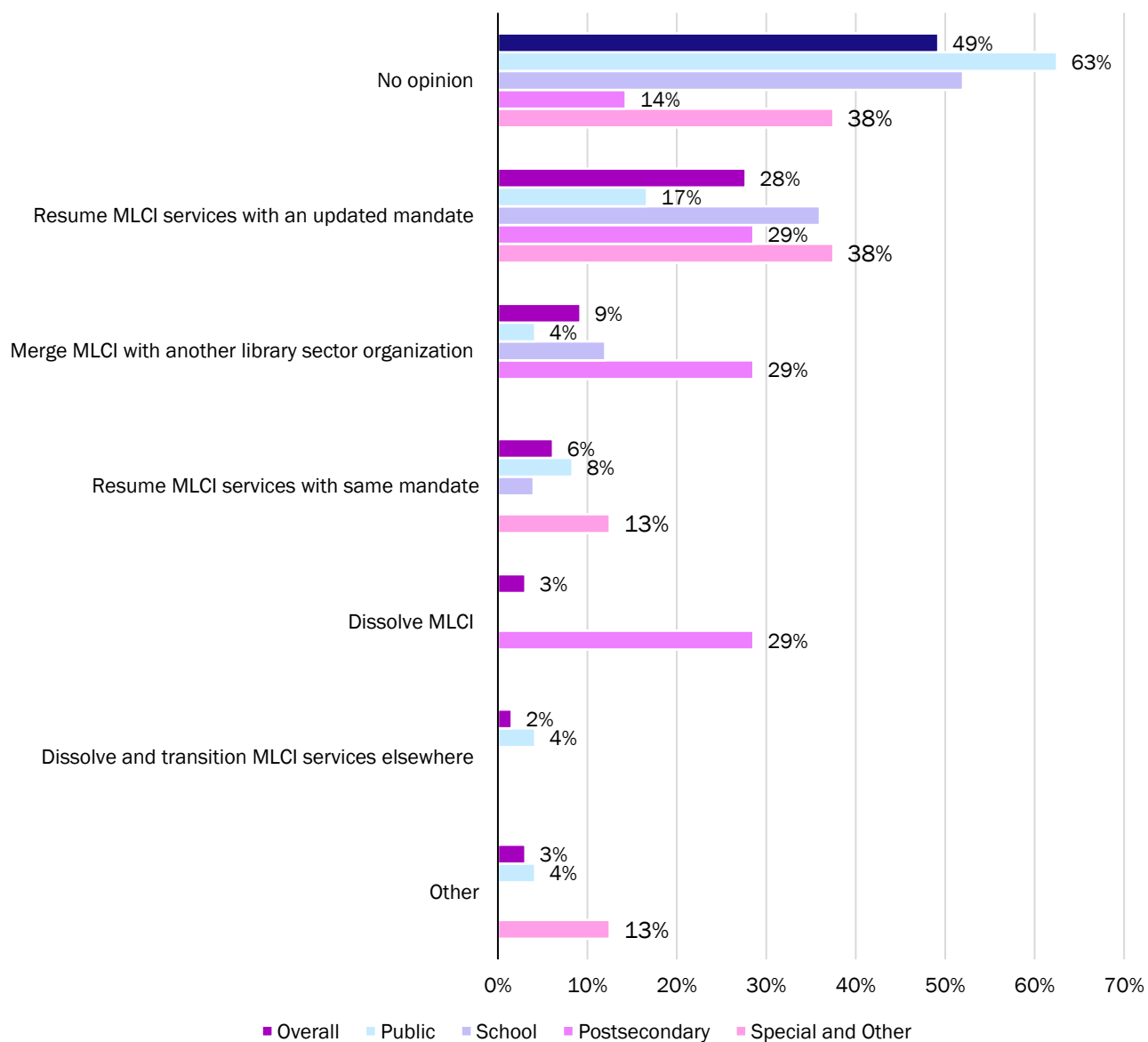


Future Scenarios

Respondents were presented with a number of possible approaches for the future of MLCI and asked to select the best option from their perspective (Figure 36). Overall, nearly half of respondents (49%) reported they have no opinion on the approaches provided. The next largest share (28%) indicated a preference for MLCI to resume services with an updated mandate. Looking at where results differ by library type compared to overall findings, public library respondents (63%) were significantly more likely to have no opinion with 17% less likely to indicate a preference for MLCI to resume with an updated mandate. The only respondents who selected the option to dissolve MLCI entirely were from postsecondary libraries – though it should be noted that given the relatively low number of responses in this category, this represents only a small number of institutions.



Figure 36. Considering your library's needs and the potential value of MLCI to the sector, which of the following approaches is most appropriate (recognizing that some directions would depend on feasibility and sector support)? n=65



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Participants were provided the opportunity to elaborate on **what they thought was the most appropriate approach to MLCI's future**. Key themes emerging from these responses include:

- **Maintain group licensing and consortia pricing:** This is considered essential to the functioning of many libraries, and there is strong support for continuing this core function.



- **Prioritize cross-sector professional development and advocacy:** Many respondents expressed a desire for stronger provincial collaboration, knowledge-sharing across library types, and unified advocacy.
- **Improve communication and infrastructure:** A union catalogue or Z-source, shared staff contact network, and clearer information about MLCI's activities and goals were mentioned as priorities.
- **Reconsider organizational structure:** There were several suggestions to either merge with or transfer responsibilities to MLA, particularly to avoid the burden of sustaining multiple volunteer-led entities. This approach would depend on MLA's willingness and capacity to take on aspects of MLCI's current mandate.
- **Clarify and refresh the mandate:** Some respondents called for a review and update of MLCI's mandate to better reflect the realities of today's libraries, particularly digital needs and advocacy roles.

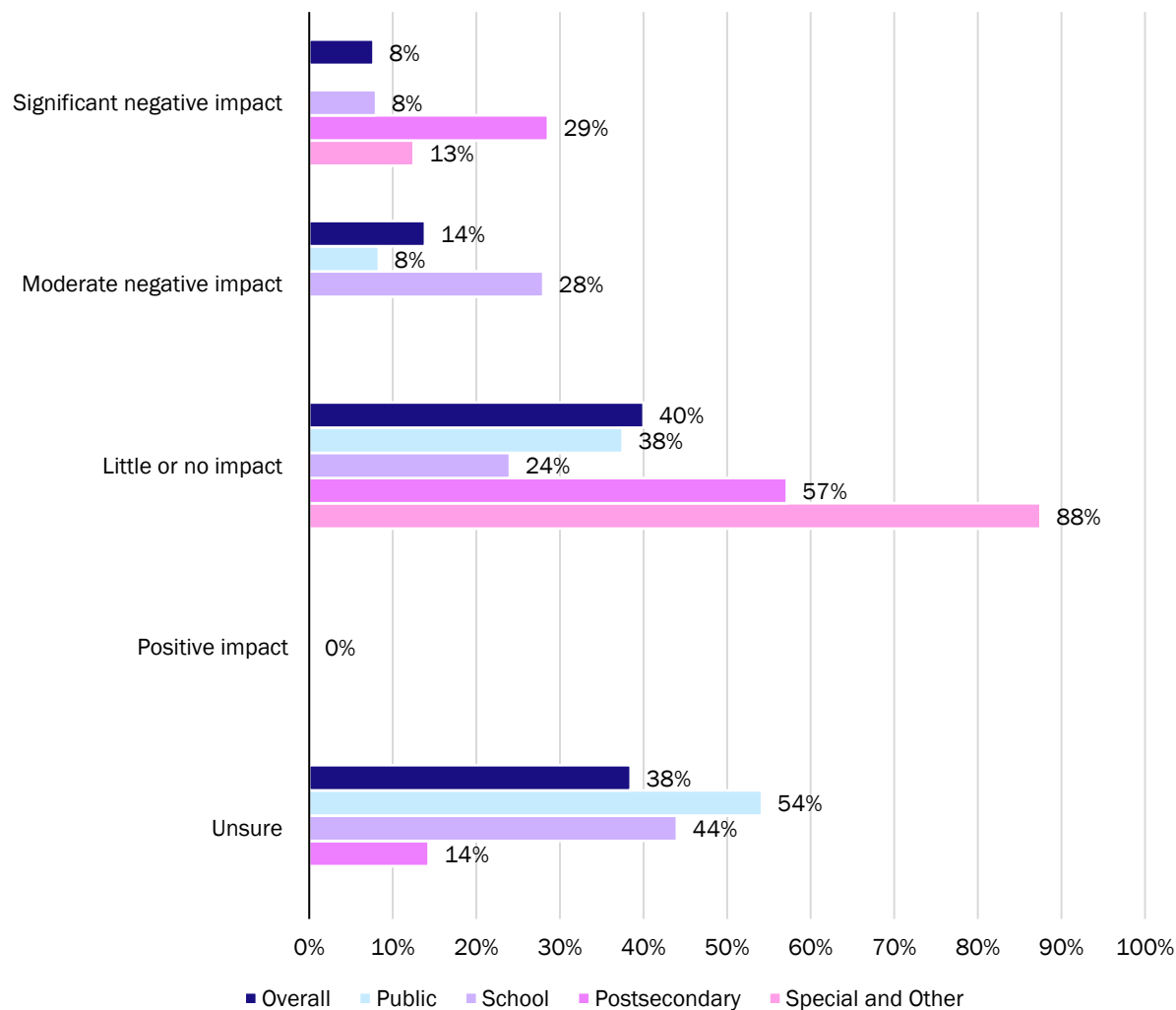
Considering Dissolution

Respondents were asked to indicate **what impact it would have on their library if MLCI were to dissolve** (Figure 37). Overall, more than a third of respondents (40%) indicated that dissolving MLCI will have little or no impact on their library. This selection was especially high for respondents from postsecondary (57%) and special/other libraries (88%) – though it should be noted here as well that given the relatively low number of responses in both of these categories, this represents a fairly small number of institutions.

Among library types, respondents from postsecondary and school libraries were more likely than others to foresee a negative impact (26% moderate negative impact for school, 29% significant negative impact for postsecondary). Public libraries were somewhat more likely than other respondents to be unsure about the impact and no respondents foresaw a positive impact.



Figure 37. If MLCI were to dissolve, what impact would it have on your library? n=65



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Participants were asked to elaborate on the preceding question, for example commenting on whether dissolving MLCI might impact licensing agreements, interlibrary loans, or other services. Key themes emerging from the data include:

▪ **Licensing and costs:**

- Loss of group licensing (e.g., through the Co-op) is seen as a possibility that could increase costs and reduce access to resources.
- There is some uncertainty about how dissolution might affect current database subscriptions.

▪ **Interlibrary loans (ILL):**

- Respondents see potential for a negative impact on ILL services, especially for rural libraries.



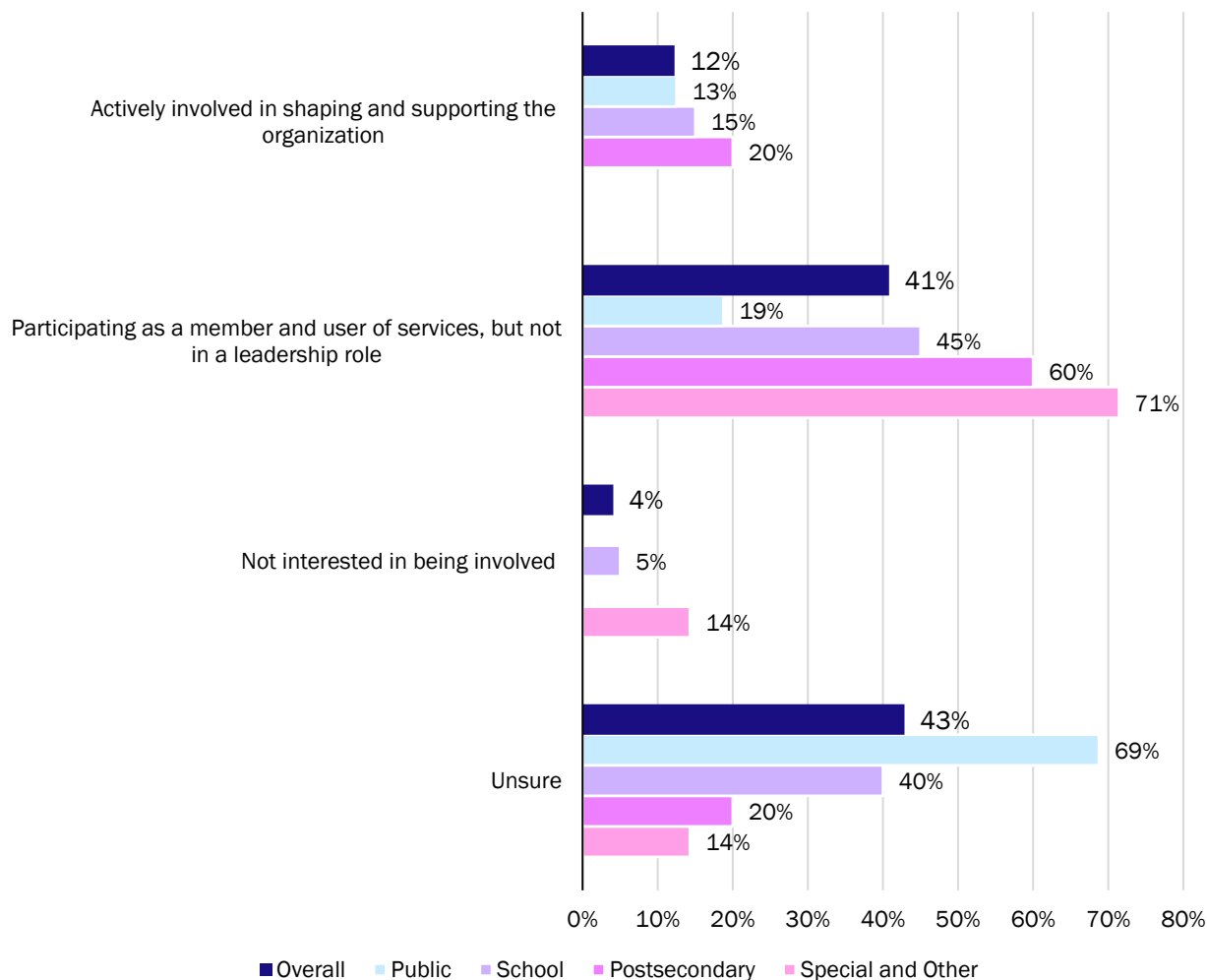
- Some respondents were unsure how ILL would be affected.
- **Collaboration and sector-wide coordination:**
 - Respondents noted concern about loss of cross-sector connections and collaboration among Manitoba libraries.
 - Others noted missed opportunities for shared learning, problem-solving, and support networks.
- **Advocacy and vision:**
 - The loss of a coordinated provincial voice may negatively impact library advocacy efforts
 - Concerns about the absence of leadership and vision for the future of libraries in Manitoba.
- **Current limited involvement:**
 - Some libraries reported no immediate impact due to limited or nonexistent current engagement with MLCI.
 - Several respondents only recently became aware of MLCI but expressed interest in future participation.
- **Future potential:**
 - Several noted that while the current impact is minimal, MLCI has the potential to play a valuable role if reactivated or restructured.
 - Dissolving now could undermine efforts to build a more unified and supportive provincial library ecosystem.

Considering Future Involvement

Respondents were asked if they would be **interested in supporting MLCI's efforts if they resume operations and services** (Figure 38). Overall, most respondents were fairly evenly split between being unsure (43%) and being interested in participating as a member (41%). These results are similar across library types, though public libraries were more likely to be unsure (69%) and less likely to be interested in participation. This divergence may reflect the fact that public libraries are more commonly engaged with MLA and also benefit from direct support through MPLS.



Figure 38. If MLCI resumes operations/services, would you be interested in supporting MLCI's efforts? n=50



Source: Manitoba Libraries Needs Assessment Survey 2025

Participants were asked to elaborate on the preceding question about their level of interest in future engagement with MLCI. Themes emerging from the responses include:

▪ **Generally supportive with some conditions:**

- Some respondents expressed interest in supporting MLCI in principle, especially if its mandate emphasizes provincial collaboration and cross-sector cooperation.
- Others emphasized the value of a strong, inclusive provincial organization that represents all types of libraries, including rural and school (public and independent) libraries.

▪ **Interest in participation (with role or capacity caveats):**

- Some are currently serving on the MLCI Board or have served in an interim capacity and would be open to continued involvement, depending on capacity and evolving roles.



- A few respondents are open to sitting on the Board or participating in operations, provided MLCI's future direction aligns with their priorities (e.g., cooperation around licensing).
- One respondent noted a willingness to be involved even with limited experience or time, as long as collaboration is the focus.
- **Constraints and considerations:**
 - Some noted time limitations or upcoming role transitions that may affect their ability to contribute.
 - Others flagged geographic (e.g., rural location) or sectoral challenges (e.g., lack of representation for independent schools or non-teacher librarians).
 - A few respondents indicated they would need more information about MLCI's future structure and activities before making a commitment.
- **Organizational and strategic factors:**
 - One respondent noted their organization would need to determine its own level of involvement.
 - Another highlighted the need to assess how MLCI fits within the broader landscape of other organizations (e.g., MLA, COPPUL, Canadian Federation of Library Associations).
- **Topic-specific interest:**
 - Interest in specific outcomes such as expanding academic journal access was mentioned as a potential motivating factor for involvement for some respondents.

Additional Considerations

Respondents were provided with the option to provide any additional **comments for MLCI to consider as it undertakes this needs assessment and plans for the future**. Themes emerging from responses include:

- **Targeted communication and awareness gaps:**
 - Respondents noted a need for better outreach and communication, especially in French and to school library staff, where many workers remain unaware of MLCI.
 - There were also suggestions to ensure communication is bilingual and better targeted to different library sectors, particularly school libraries.
- **Advocacy and provincial voice:**
 - MLCI could play a vital role in advocating for libraries across Manitoba, especially in the current climate of funding cuts, censorship, and staffing challenges.
 - Respondents see value in representing all library sectors and fostering unity over division.
- **Networking and training:**



- Respondents expressed appreciation for past MLCI networking and training opportunities and would like to see those continue or expand.
- **Future direction and governance:**
 - There is hope among some respondents that MLCI will emerge from its current pause with a renewed vision, potentially attracting new, energized members.
 - Some comments acknowledged the organization's past contributions and encouraged it to refocus its pillars to fulfill its important mandate.
- **Equity and inclusion:**
 - There was strong emphasis on including rural libraries as much as urban ones.
 - Some respondents also noted past perception that school libraries, especially independent or rural ones, were underserved by MLCI.
- **Practical considerations:**
 - A question was raised about whether MLCI has coordinated with the Co-op on the implications of dissolving, especially regarding licensing agreements.
- **Appreciation and encouragement:**
 - Several comments expressed gratitude for the needs assessment and optimism for MLCI's future.

Engagement Insights: Future Role and Expectations

Engagement discussions reinforced survey findings that MLCI occupies a currently unclear but potentially valuable space in Manitoba's library ecosystem. Participants across all library types emphasized that sector coordination, shared services, and cross-library collaboration remain critical needs – yet there was wide variation in views about MLCI's current relevance, preferred future direction, and what would be required to rebuild engagement.

Overall Perceptions and Reflections

Participants expressed a general recognition of MLCI's original purpose, but most felt the organization's visibility, impact, and clarity of role have diminished. Several pointed to a lack of strategic planning and implementation follow-through in the past and emphasized that any future model must demonstrate clear value, practical outcomes, and responsiveness to the sector's evolving needs. Support for MLCI's continuation was strong in principle, especially given the persistent demand for cross-sector coordination and shared infrastructure. However, participants across library types agreed that a "reactivation" of the original model without significant updates to mandate and structure would not be viable.



Feedback on Future Scenarios

- **Resuming with an updated mandate** was the most widely supported scenario. Participants favoured a renewed focus on institutional services such as group licensing, interlibrary loan coordination, and cross-sector planning. A revised structure with defined strategic priorities, improved governance, and measurable results was seen as essential to justify participation and investment.
- **Merging with another organization** – most commonly discussed in relation to MLA – received mixed reactions. While some acknowledged the potential benefits of streamlining and aligning efforts, concerns were raised about differences in mandate and capacity. Many participants emphasized that any merger would need to maintain institutional-level services, cross-sector representation, and distinct governance (e.g., through an advisory committee or division model). School library participants were particularly concerned about losing voice or visibility in a larger entity, as some experienced in MLCI previously.
- **Dissolution** was generally seen as a last resort. Some participants acknowledged that the organization's current inactivity has already limited its value, but there was broad agreement that dissolving MLCI outright – without exploring reform or merger options – would be a missed opportunity. The absence of a coordinating body was perceived as a risk to long-term sector health and resilience.

Conditions for Future Engagement

Across library types, participants were candid about the constraints that limit their ability to engage in sector-level work – particularly time, staffing, and institutional support. To overcome these barriers, any renewed model must demonstrate:

- **A clear and compelling value proposition**, tailored to library type and institutional realities. Tangible supports – such as cost savings, shared systems, or improved access – are key motivators for engagement.
- **Inclusive structures and communication**, with particular attention to school libraries, rural and small institutions, library technicians, and French-language libraries. Participants repeatedly emphasized the need for sector organizations to reflect the full diversity of roles and library contexts.
- **Practical, strategic governance**, including defined roles and responsibilities, regular planning cycles, and visible accountability. Many noted that board-run entities require strong administrative infrastructure to function effectively.
- **Collaboration without duplication**, respecting the existing contributions of MLA, MSLA, and MPLS while filling gaps in shared infrastructure, institutional coordination, and province-wide planning.

Taken together, these insights suggest a path forward that is neither a simple return to the past nor a full reinvention. Instead, participants called for a pragmatic, intentional approach to sector coordination – one that reflects current challenges, builds on existing strengths, and fosters trust through action and clarity.



4.5. Key Takeaways

The findings offer a snapshot of the Manitoba library sector's operational realities, service gaps, and aspirations for greater coordination and support.

- **Diverse library types, shared constraints:** School (40%) and public libraries (37%) comprised most respondents, with a notable rural service orientation (54%). Despite variations in size and focus, libraries across all types face common barriers including funding constraints, staffing shortages, and outdated infrastructure.
- **Professional capacity and staffing gaps:** Many libraries operate with limited trained personnel – 74% report no MLIS-qualified staff and 43% report no LIT-qualified staff. Training is often inaccessible due to cost, time constraints, and lack of relevance to on-the-ground needs. Engagement findings further emphasize the absence of sector-wide supports for onboarding, mentoring, and professional learning tailored to small, rural, and school libraries.
- **Fragmentation and sector-wide gaps:** Respondents emphasized poor coordination both within and across library types, along with limited access to shared digital resources and infrastructure. A lack of provincial oversight and structural inequities amplify disparities, especially in rural and school libraries. Engagement findings add that the weakening of shared services and underdeveloped infrastructure contributes to silos and duplication of effort.
- **Technology preparedness and emerging pressures:** Most libraries recognize the increasing importance of digital literacy, improved cataloguing, and resource discovery, though also feel unprepared for emerging technologies like AI. Engagement insights highlight a growing disconnect between institutional expectations and on-the-ground capacity, particularly in integrating new tools and technologies into library services.
- **Mixed awareness and engagement with MLCI:** A third of surveyed libraries report no current involvement with MLCI, and nearly half were unfamiliar with the organization prior to the pandemic. Among those who had participated in MLCI, group licensing, resource sharing, and collaboration were identified as the most valuable services. Engagement findings confirm uneven awareness and reinforce the need for clearer communication and value proposition.
- **Mandate seen as relevant but under-resourced:** Despite gaps in awareness and delivery, 76% of respondents view MLCI's mandate to unite library types and improve province-wide access as relevant. Engagement discussions suggest that reactivation would require clarified focus, stronger governance, and tangible services to meet today's needs.
- **Uncertain but cautiously optimistic future:** While 40% of respondents said MLCI's dissolution would have little or no immediate impact, nearly 38% were unsure – suggesting limited communication and potentially latent opportunity. A notable portion (41%) expressed interest in supporting MLCI if it resumes operations, though with caveats related to role clarity, time, and institutional capacity.



5. Future Direction for MLCI

MLCI was established to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and shared services among Manitoba's libraries. While that mandate remains relevant, MLCI's prolonged dormancy – alongside evolving sector needs, structures, and capacity – prompted a reassessment of its role and viability. This section examines what future, if any, MLCI might have within Manitoba's library ecosystem. It begins with an exploration of three potential scenarios, developed to support Board reflection and strategic discussion, and concludes with a recommended path forward grounded in the findings of this needs assessment.

5.1. Exploratory Future Scenarios

To support the development of a viable and forward-looking direction for MLCI, three exploratory scenarios were developed and shared with the MLCI Board of Directors for consideration:

1. Dissolve/Wind Down the Organization
2. Merge with Another Organization
3. Reactive and Renew MLCI

These scenarios are not recommendations, but rather analytical models designed to illuminate possible paths forward. Each reflects a distinct option for the future of MLCI, grounded in the findings of this needs assessment, including survey results, engagement insights, and cross-jurisdictional research. The analysis outlines the potential benefits, risks, and feasibility considerations associated with each option.

Nordicity facilitated a workshop with the MLCI Board to explore these scenarios in greater depth, with the goal of identifying the conditions under which each path might be viable. This exploration helped clarify what level of institutional commitment, governance capacity, and sector engagement would be required for each option – ultimately informing the recommended direction presented in Section 5.2.

Dissolve/Wind Down the Organization

In this scenario, MLCI would formally wind down its operations and cease to exist as an organization. This wind-down would include fulfilling all outstanding legal and administrative responsibilities (e.g., termination of service agreements, financial reporting, dissolution of board).

Potential Benefits

- Aligns with MLCI's current inactivity and the sector's limited capacity to maintain a separate governance and operating structure



- Eliminates the administrative and governance burden on institutional delegates (i.e., members and Board members) already facing capacity constraints
- Allows sector attention to be redirected toward other models of coordination or toward strengthening existing institutions

Potential Risks

- Permanently removes the only Manitoba-based organization with a cross-sector, institutional mandate for shared infrastructure
- Leaves a gap in areas where the sector expressed need, particularly for shared licensing, interlibrary delivery, and overall coordination
- Licensing currently coordinated via BC Libraries Co-operative (the Co-op) would need to be assumed by individual libraries, creating significant administrative burden and potential inequities in access
- Risks undermining interest expressed during engagement activities, where many participants valued the idea of cross-sector, institutional collaboration
- Loss of organizational history, documentation, and sector memory could hinder future efforts to build a new collaborative model

Key Questions

- What process is needed to wind down MLCI's legal and financial obligations?
- Who, if anyone, will assume responsibility for the agreement with the Co-op?
- How will institutional memory and documentation be preserved or transferred?
- What communications are needed to support transparency and clarity during wind-down?

Takeaway: This option may be appropriate if the MLCI Board determines that sector capacity is insufficient to sustain even a limited version of MLCI's activities, and no feasible pathway to renewal or merger exists.

Merge with Another Organization

Definition: In this scenario, MLCI would be integrated into another Manitoba-based organization with complementary objectives and infrastructure. The aim would be to preserve cross-sector coordination in a more sustainable structure. Two variants include:

- A merger with the Manitoba Library Association (MLA), which could absorb MLCI's functions while extending its own institutional coordination role
- A hosted "shared table" model coordinated by Manitoba Public Library Services (MPLS), which would act as a convener of multi-type dialogue and action. This model would likely require expansion of MPLS's current mandate and government endorsement.



Note: These potential variants have not been formally discussed with either MLA or MPLS. Their inclusion is exploratory and intended to illustrate possible structural approaches, not to indicate confirmed interest or feasibility.

Potential Benefits

- May provide access to administrative support, communications infrastructure, and staff (MLA and MPLS both have staff)
- Eliminates duplication of governance structures. Both MLA and MLCI have faced board recruitment challenges, and combining efforts could make more efficient use of available leadership capacity
- If housed in MLA, merger could support MLA's efforts to build a pan-sector presence (evident through conference programming and membership eligibility)
- MLCI's institutional focus could enhance MLA's mandate by deepening its engagement with library systems and institutions not just individuals
- Could offer a stable structure for managing the Co-op and/or future licensing agreements – if roles and mandates are clearly defined

Potential Risks

- Requires careful negotiation to maintain MLCI's mandate, particularly its cross-sector and institutional lens, within a differently mandated host
- Risk of de-prioritization if MLCI functions are not adequately resourced or integrated
- No existing organization currently manages shared delivery or licensing for multiple library types – new capacity would need to be developed
- Merger would involve legal complexity and sector buy-in, both of which may face challenges given limited bandwidth
- The MPLS variant would require a shift in public policy or practice, given that MPLS's current scope is limited to public libraries

Key Questions

- Is MLA open to absorbing or hosting MLCI functions? What resources would be required?
- Could MPLS feasibly expand its scope to convene sector-wide coordination?
- Can the Co-op agreement be transferred under a new host organization, and if so, how?
- What governance model would preserve MLCI's mandate and ensure equitable participation?
- How would sector engagement be maintained across library types under a merged structure?

Takeaway: This scenario may be viable if a host organization is willing and able to absorb MLCI's role – and if doing so supports its own strategic goals and demonstrates clear benefit to the broader sector.



Reactivate and Renew MLCI

Definition: In this scenario, MLCI would be reactivated with a renewed mandate, revised governance model, and potentially new operational capacity (e.g., dedicated coordination role or staffing support). The aim would be to re-establish MLCI as a focused, value-driven support body for Manitoba libraries.

Potential Benefits

- Strong alignment with survey and engagement findings that identified clear interest in services historically provided by MLCI (licensing, delivery, infrastructure)
- Maintains Manitoba-based, multi-type coordination – a role no other organization currently fills
- Opportunity to rebuild around a realistic, focused scope (e.g., targeted service delivery or time-limited pilot)
- Preserves Co-op licensing coordination function without interruption or burden to individual libraries
- Provides a platform for institutional collaboration desired by many participants

Potential Risks

- Would require renewed sector commitment (e.g., participation, membership fees, volunteer governance) at a time of widespread capacity challenges
- A fully Board-led model may no longer be viable; however, introduction of staff would require new funding sources or in-kind support
- Overextension risk if MLCI attempts to restart all past services rather than focusing on those with highest current value
- Limited awareness of MLCI among many libraries suggests outreach and communication would be critical to rebuilding participation

Key Questions

- What services should MLCI prioritize, and how should they be scoped?
- Is there sufficient sector willingness to participate and contribute financially?
- What staffing or coordination structure is needed to sustain even a minimal model?
- Could a phased or pilot-based reactivation approach help build momentum and test feasibility?

Takeaway: Reactivation may be a viable and strategically valuable path if MLCI focuses on a clearly defined mandate with high sector demand – such as coordinated licensing or digital infrastructure – and secures reliable institutional commitment.



Key Takeaways

As summarized in Table 2 below, each of these scenarios offers trade-offs in terms of sustainability, alignment with sector needs, and level of effort required. Determining the best path forward will require not only understanding sector appetite, but realistically assessing operational capacity, resourcing needs, and the governance structure best suited to deliver on MLCI's potential role.

Table 2 Overview of potential future scenarios for MLCI

Scenario	Potential Benefits	Potential Risks	Takeaway
1. Dissolve / Wind Down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with current inactivity and sector capacity limits Eliminates governance/admin burden Frees attention for other models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent loss of Manitoba-based, cross-sector coordination Increased burden on individual libraries (e.g., licensing) Loss of institutional memory 	Appropriate if sector capacity is too limited to support even a modest renewed model, and no feasible path to renewal or merger exists.
2. Merge with Another Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to staffing, systems, and comms infrastructure Eliminates board duplication Could enhance MLA's institutional role Offers stability for licensing agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of mandate dilution or de-prioritization No current org handles cross-sector delivery Legal and logistical complexity MPLS option may require mandate shift 	Viable if a host is willing and able to absorb MLCI's role — and if it advances both parties' strategic goals.
3. Reactivate and Renew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong alignment with identified needs Maintains Manitoba-based, multi-type coordination Opportunity for focused, phased renewal Preserves Co-op role Responds to sector appetite for collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires new sector commitment (funding, participation) May need staffing to be sustainable Risk of overextension Limited current awareness of MLCI 	Viable if MLCI can focus on a clear, high-value mandate (e.g., licensing or infrastructure) and secure reliable institutional commitment.



5.2. Recommended Path Forward: Establishing an Institutional Collaboration Division within MLA

Based on the findings of this needs assessment and an analysis of sector conditions, **Nordicity recommends that MLCI formally dissolve as a standalone incorporated entity and that its core mandate be transitioned into a new division within MLA.** This recommendation reflects our expert view on the most feasible and strategically valuable option available to the sector at this time. The mandate in question – to coordinate collaboration across all library types at the institutional level – remains relevant and needed. However, it would be better served by a more sustainable structure that reduces governance burden and leverages MLA’s existing communications infrastructure, sector reach, and administrative systems.

The new division would focus explicitly on institutional collaboration across all library types in Manitoba – public, postsecondary, school, and special. Within MLA’s broader mandate to “support libraries, library workers, and library trustees,” this division would fill a clear gap by focusing on institutional needs and fostering collaborative efforts to meet those needs. Participation would be open to library leaders and other institutional representatives who can speak to and act on behalf of their organizations. Proactive efforts should be made to ensure participation from all library types, with a particular focus on involving school and special libraries, which have historically been less engaged in cross-sector initiatives through MLCI.

A small volunteer leadership group (e.g., a steering committee) would guide the division’s early activities, set direction, and ensure momentum. Projects should be modest in scale and issue-specific, reflecting both the flexibility of the model and the sector’s current capacity constraints. This structure aligns with MLCI’s original purpose of **“answering the needs of Manitoba libraries as they arise”** and allows for gradual development of collaborative efforts grounded in real demand and feasibility.

To help ensure that MLCI’s core mandate is safeguarded within MLA, the agreement to establish this division should ideally include provisions in MLA’s bylaws that (1) articulate the division’s purpose, (2) provide for representation of the division on the MLA Board, and (3) clarify how institutional collaboration priorities will be reflected in MLA planning. Additionally, it is recommended that representatives from the division should participate in MLA’s standing committees on communications and advocacy, ensuring the division’s mandate is reflected in MLA’s external presence and sector leadership. Alongside these governance changes, the division should work with MLA leadership to explore establishing a modest fund dedicated to initiatives that advance institutional collaboration priorities.

Key Benefits

- **Sustains institutional, cross-sector collaboration:** Engagement participants and MLCI Board members alike emphasized the importance of a forum for institutional coordination across library types – a function not filled by MLA, MSLA, or MPLS in their current forms. This division preserves and renews that commitment in a more feasible format.
- **Leverages existing infrastructure to reduce overhead:** Rather than duplicating systems, the division can rely on MLA’s communications channels (e.g., listserv, newsletter), event infrastructure (e.g., the semi-annual Manitoba Libraries Conference, new networking events outside Winnipeg), and



member perks (e.g., Perkopolis). This streamlining will improve reach and visibility – a key shortcoming identified in the needs assessment.

- **Engages the right participants:** The needs assessment found a recurring misalignment between MLCI delegates and institutional decision-makers. This model encourages participation from individuals with the authority to act and/or advocate on behalf of their institutions, while offering flexibility in how that participation is structured.
- **Enables focused, responsive coordination:** The division’s flexible format allows for issue-driven collaboration, starting with one or two initiatives that can demonstrate value. Key areas identified through the needs assessment include shared licensing, onboarding tools for new leaders, and coordinated sector responses to book challenges – each of which could form the basis of early action.
- **Reduces governance and volunteer burden:** MLCI Board members describe their roles as institutional delegates rather than individual volunteers but nonetheless recognize that serving on multiple boards is often not feasible. Hosting this work within MLA eliminates the need for separate incorporation, financial reporting, and board recruitment – all noted pain points for both MLCI and wider sector participants.

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Table 3 Overview of risks and mitigation strategies

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
New division lacks momentum or becomes inactive (as seen with other MLA divisions).	Recruit a committed founding group; define clear mandate and priorities; select a first initiative with potential for quick wins. Assign responsibility for participation in MLA Board and committees.
Institutional mandate of MLCI becomes diluted within MLA’s individual-focused programming.	Establish the division with a clearly articulated, standalone purpose; integrate representation into MLA Board and standing committees to embed an institutional lens.
Cross-sector engagement remains uneven across library types.	Proactively recruit leads from each library type, including Indigenous-led libraries; promote participation using MLCI’s existing contacts prior to wind-down; leverage the sector scan from this needs assessment as an outreach tool.
Challenges in maintaining focus or avoiding overextension.	Adopt a phased model with issue-specific or time-bound initiatives; reassess annually to recalibrate based on capacity and interest.
Sector interest-holders perceive the wind-down as a loss of independence or influence.	Communicate clearly that MLCI has already been inactive for more than five years; emphasize this is a way to carry its legacy forward while addressing real capacity challenges.
MLA is not willing or able to host the new division.	Engage MLA leadership early to explore feasibility and mutual benefits; demonstrate alignment with MLA’s mandate and how institutional focus complements MLA’s existing strengths.



Recommended Transition Steps

1. **Engage MLA to explore the hosting model:** Before making the plan public, share the results of this needs assessment with MLA and initiate formal discussions about hosting the division. Emphasize mutual benefits and how this model complements MLA's support for individuals by strengthening support for libraries as institutions.
2. **Develop a communications and transition plan:** Prepare a plan to share key findings and next steps with members and the broader sector. Include dissemination of the needs assessment, public framing of the proposed new division's purpose, and a process for archiving MLCI documentation (potentially drawing on resources compiled during this project).
3. **Hold a meeting of MLCI members to approve formal dissolution:** As per MLCI's bylaws, a meeting must be convened with the explicit purpose of dissolving the organization. A special resolution must be passed by a majority of members.
4. **Design and formalize the new division's structure:** Collaborate with MLA to develop terms of reference that outline the division's mandate, leadership structure, participation model, and reporting relationships. Consider including performance indicators (e.g., engagement levels, initiative outcomes) to track success and prevent stagnation.
5. **Recruit a founding leadership group:** Identify and confirm a team of institutional representatives to guide the first two years. This group should reflect diversity across geography, library type, and organizational size, and particular effort should be made to ensure representation from an Indigenous-led library. This group will build trust, shape early action, and liaise with MLA committees.
6. **Select an initial initiative with high visibility and impact:** Based on the needs assessment, potential first projects include licensing coordination with BC Libraries Cooperative, onboarding resources for new leaders, or coordinated response to censorship pressures. Selection should balance strategic value and feasibility, while aiming for early, tangible outcomes ("quick wins").
7. **Leverage MLA communications and sector convening power:** Promote the new division through MLA channels and at the Manitoba Libraries Conference, as well as through direct outreach to institutions not currently engaged (making use of the sector scan compiled as part of this project). Emphasize the relevance and institutional value of participating.
8. **Evaluate and adapt the model as needed after 18–24 months:** Review outcomes, participation levels, and resourcing needs. Use findings to determine whether the model is functioning as intended – and if not, what changes may be needed to sustain it.



Implications for Future Coordination and Sector Readiness

This approach draws on the strengths of all three scenarios considered:

- It responds to the capacity constraints that make reactivating MLCI as a standalone entity unfeasible.
- It builds on the structure and reach of an existing organization to reduce overhead and promote sustainability.
- It renews institutional collaboration on a manageable scale, aligning with clear sector needs and aspirations.

If this new model fails to gain traction – even with a reduced governance burden, clearer scope, and better-aligned infrastructure – it may indicate that broader systemic conditions are currently insufficient to support ongoing coordination at the provincial, cross-sector level. This would represent a significant gap in Manitoba's library ecosystem. At the same time, such an outcome would offer important insight: that **effective collaboration is not only a matter of will or vision, but of resourcing and structural support**. Addressing this gap may require renewed attention from governments and funders to invest in the enabling conditions (e.g., workforce stability, leadership development, cross-sector infrastructure) that make collaborative progress possible. In this way, the recommended model is not just a pathway forward, but a test of what the sector is currently ready and able to support.



6. Beyond MLCI: Sector-Wide Issues

While the focus of this needs assessment is the role and future of MLCI, several cross-cutting issues emerged that affect the broader Manitoba library sector. These matters were raised consistently across engagement activities and supported by jurisdictional and internal analysis. Though beyond the immediate scope of this project, they highlight key areas where coordinated, sector-wide attention may be needed to ensure a resilient and responsive library ecosystem in Manitoba.

- **Legislative gaps:** *The Public Libraries Act* does not provide a mechanism for the formal inclusion of libraries governed by First Nations band councils. This gap has implications for service equity and sector coordination.
- **Lack of provincial policy for school libraries:** There is no province-wide policy or guiding framework for the existence, staffing, or resourcing of school libraries. This has contributed to highly inconsistent provision and underinvestment.
- **Workforce development challenges:** Manitoba does not have an in-province MLIS program, and the Red River College library technician program has shifted to distance delivery and is under review. These gaps limit the local talent pipeline and affect training, recruitment, and succession planning across library types, especially in rural and remote communities.
- **AI readiness and disparities:** The sector is grappling with uneven capacity to respond to generative AI – some institutions are leading AI literacy training while others lack infrastructure or staff knowledge to engage meaningfully.
- **Advocacy and sector visibility:** Institutions across all library types report difficulty in articulating their value to funders, administrators, and the public. There is interest in stronger, coordinated advocacy strategies and messaging.
- **Digital resource inequities:** Manitoba libraries face significant limitations in purchasing power for digital resources, particularly following the City of Winnipeg's withdrawal from the provincial OverDrive pool. French-language collections and access to Canadian MARC records are additional pain points.
- **Service expectations without corresponding support:** Public, school, and postsecondary libraries are increasingly expected to support users with complex needs – including newcomers, multilingual and neurodivergent learners, and unhoused individuals – but often lack the resources, training, or infrastructure to do so.
- **Censorship and content challenges:** Emerging pressures around book challenges and content censorship were raised, with concerns about insufficient support for front-line staff navigating these issues. These pressures reflect a broader climate of polarization and heightened scrutiny, particularly around materials related to equity, identity, and history.



- **Indigenous library needs:** The absence of data from Indigenous-led libraries in this assessment points to broader structural and system-level barriers that affect visibility and participation in sector-wide initiatives. There is a need for future research specifically focused on the needs, priorities, and aspirations of Indigenous libraries in Manitoba, undertaken with guidance and cooperation from Indigenous-led organizations and library practitioners.



7. Appendix



7.1. Comparative Review

This review aims to support the Manitoba Libraries Consortium Initiative (MLCI) in evaluating its role in fostering a robust and collaborative library sector in Manitoba. Through a jurisdictional scan, the study examines five comparable Manitoba-based organizations and consortia, five service providers across Canada, and three consortia support organizations. Key areas of focus include organizational structures, shared services and resources, budgets (where available), and governance and policy frameworks. The findings will offer valuable insights into the library sector's needs and priorities, guiding MLCI's strategic decisions and future contributions to the sector. Note: These findings are based on publicly available information and have not been validated with the organizations included in the scan, with the exception of Manitoba Public Library Services (MPLS), which was represented on the MLCI Board during this project.

Manitoba

Manitoba Library Consortium Inc.

Overview

About: The Manitoba Library Consortium Inc. is an incorporated non-profit organization created to plan and manage cooperatively projects and activities which will provide the citizens of Manitoba with faster and more equitable access to the library and information resources of the province. Incorporated 1992, the Consortium initiates and coordinates a wide range of projects and activities that promote and enhance resource sharing, networking, and collaboration among Manitoba's libraries.

Entity Type: Non-profit

Established: 1992

Purpose/mandate: MLCI was designed to plan and manage cooperatively projects and activities that will provide the citizens of Manitoba with faster and more equitable access to the library/information resources of the province. The purpose of the consortium is to facilitate effective and efficient resource sharing among the libraries in Manitoba in order to strengthen the library services provided to the residents of the province.

Organizational structure

MLCI is a membership-based consortium of libraries in Manitoba and is supported by a board of directors.



Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Group Licensing	<p>The Consortium negotiates group licenses on behalf of members, allowing libraries to provide enhanced access to a variety of electronic products and resources at significant savings. MLCI currently offers a wealth of reliable, credible information resources, including many with full-text journals and magazines.</p> <p>A list of current resources as well as information on trials can be obtained on the MLCI web site. Resources are selected based upon the input and broad interests of the members as well as the needs of their users, such as those with difficulty reading print.</p>
Library Express	<p>The Consortium offers a priority interlibrary loan and document delivery service that allows libraries to share and exchange resources quickly and easily.</p>
Training and Support	<p>The Consortium develops and provides a variety of educational programs and events to support libraries in the implementation and application of new tools and technologies to facilitate access to information.</p>
Resource Development	<p>The Consortium welcomes opportunities to build unique community resources in a collaborative manner. As an example, the Manitoba project is a unique and nationally recognized initiative that brings Manitoba's past to life through the digitization of historical documents, newspapers, maps, pictures and photos, and the development of easy-to-use search tools, interpretive resources and curriculum guides.</p>



Organizational budgets (if available)

MLCI's 2024-2025 budget indicates an expense of \$7,240 while its closing balance for 2024 was \$60,202.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

MLCI has a constitution titled statement of purpose and general by-law no 1 which outlines the purpose and mandate, rights and obligations of members, as well as other legal and administrative procedures.

MLCI is also guided by its 2015 Strategic Plan. MLCI's mission is to facilitate resource sharing of human, financial, and material resources among the libraries in Manitoba to benefit the residents of the province. The Consortium chose four priorities that will guide its activities and decisions over the course of the next three years (note, the 2015 Strategic Plan was the most recent strategic plan provided by MLCI):

- Create cost saving opportunities: Identify areas where financial pooling can be beneficial to all members; and provide advantageous cost reductions to member libraries and their staff for events.
- Develop partnerships: Create and develop partnerships with likeminded organizations in culture and education.
- Communicate effectively: Connect and share; Manage communications; Explore social media
- Support access to knowledge: Offer professional development; Support research opportunities; Optimize services through collaboration.

These priorities echo the activities stated in the Consortium's mandate and outlined in its proposed revised bylaw.

Manitoba Public Library Services (under Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage, and Tourism)

Overview

About: [Manitoba Public Library Services](#) (MPLS) is a policy and program unit within the Strategic Policy Branch of Manitoba Sport, Culture and Heritage, and is responsible for the [Public Libraries Act and associated Regulations](#). It administers *The Public Libraries Act* and the Public Libraries Allocation of Grants Regulation, providing oversight, professional support, and funding to Manitoba's public library system. MPLS plays a central role in shaping and supporting Manitoba's public library services, including governance, planning, and compliance with provincial standards.

Entity Type: Provincial Agency. MPLS operates as a governmental unit under the provincial department of Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage, and Tourism.

Established: Not available

Purpose/mandate: MPLS is responsible for *The Public Libraries Act* and associated regulations. MPLS provides libraries with funding and professional support on governance, policy development, and planning.



It also provides professional advisory services, coordinates interlibrary loan for public libraries, and facilitates participation in national programs.

The Public Libraries Act, C.C.S.M. c. P220

The Act governs the establishment, operation, and funding of public libraries in Manitoba. This Act ensures that public libraries in Manitoba are established and operated in a consistent manner, providing accessible library services to residents across the province. Key provisions include:

Establishment of Libraries:

Municipal Libraries: Municipalities can establish public libraries through a by-law following a petition from voters. A municipal library board is then appointed to oversee operations.

Local Government District Libraries: Local government districts can establish libraries by passing a by-law and levying a special library tax.

Regional Libraries: Two or more municipalities may collaborate to form a regional library through agreements and by-laws, managed by a regional library board.

Library Boards:

Composition: Municipal library boards consist of three, five, or seven members, including one council member and other voters selected for their suitability. Regional boards include representatives from each participating municipality.

Duties: Boards are responsible for the governance, supervision, and control of libraries, including financial management, staffing, and ensuring free public access to materials.

Funding and Taxation:

Library Tax: Municipalities and local government districts may levy a special library tax on assessed property values to fund library services.

Separate Fund: Funds collected from the library tax must be kept separate from other municipal funds and used exclusively for library purposes.

Grants: The Act provides for provincial grants to support public libraries, with eligibility and allocation determined by regulations.

Advisory Board and Director:

An advisory board and a Director of Libraries are appointed to advise the minister on public library matters, recommend regulations, and oversee the implementation of library services.

The Public Libraries Act, C.C.S.M. c. P220. For more see: [C.C.S.M. c. P220](#)



Organizational structure

MPLS operates under the direction of the Director of Public Libraries. Its team includes two bilingual professional library consultants, a program and research assistant, a policy analyst, and a director. MPLS works across all regions of Manitoba, both virtually and through field engagement.

Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Grant Programs	MPLS administers over \$7 million in annual operating grants to 54 public library systems and to the Manitoba Library Association. Budget 2024 introduced a new funding model, increasing funding to \$8.3 million in 2024/25.
Training and Development	MPLS offers a library training calendar and tailored support on topics including Reconciliation action plans, AI, and strategic planning.
Professional Support	MPLS provides guidance on operations, governance, policy development, performance measurement, and data-informed planning.
Resource Sharing and Program Coordination	MPLS coordinates interlibrary loan, block loans, and supports participation in national initiatives (e.g., NNELS, CELA, TD Summer Reading Club, First Nations Communities Read). It also supports eLibraries Manitoba.
Sector Representation	MPLS represents Manitoba's public libraries at national tables, including the Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council and Library and Archives Canada.

Organizational budgets (if available)

Specific operating budget details for MPLS are not published independently. However, public library support administered by MPLS is publicly reported. Budget 2024 includes \$1.2 million to implement a new funding model, bringing total provincial support for public libraries to \$8.3 million in 2024/25 – a 17% increase from the previous year.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

MPLS operates under *The Public Libraries Act* and associated regulations, providing guidance on governance and policy development to public libraries. It also offers resources to assist library boards and staff in understanding their roles and responsibilities including:



- [Manitoba Public Libraries - Governance at a Glance](#): This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of trustees and library staff in governing their local public library. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of public library boards and trustees as defined by *The Public Libraries Act*. It emphasizes the board's authority in policymaking, financial oversight, and ensuring efficient library services that meet community needs. Key governance principles include establishing a solid framework with bylaws and policies, aligning with municipal processes, and maintaining accountability through regular assessments and public engagement. Understanding fiduciary duties and effective decision-making are highlighted as essential components of successful library governance.
- [Manitoba Public Libraries Standards and Guidelines](#): The document provides a comprehensive framework for the governance, facilities, accessibility, services, collections, technology, staffing, and financial accountability of public libraries in Manitoba. It outlines best practices and benchmarks to ensure libraries effectively meet community needs, maintain high service quality, and operate efficiently. This resource is essential for assessing current library services and planning future developments to align with provincial standards.
- [Public Libraries Review Report](#): The Reaching our Vision Report (May 30, 2006) outlines a strategic plan to enhance public library services across Manitoba. It emphasizes improving access, particularly for underserved populations, ensuring long-term sustainability through adequate funding and resource sharing, and integrating modern technology to meet evolving community needs. The report presents 22 recommendations aimed at achieving these goals, including restructuring establishment grants, promoting library services, extending access to First Nations communities, and enhancing technological infrastructure.

Manitoba Library Association

Overview

About: [Manitoba Library Association](#) (MLA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for libraries and library professionals across Manitoba. MLA provides leadership in the promotion, development, and support of library and information services in Manitoba for the benefit of MLA members, the library and information community and the citizens of Manitoba.

Entity Type: Member Association (non-profit)

Established: 1936

Purpose/mandate: The MLA provides networking and professional development opportunities and advocates on behalf of its members. MLA's mission statement: "MLA provides leadership in the promotion, development and support of library and information services in Manitoba for the benefit of MLA members, the library and information community and the citizens of Manitoba."

MLA has five **Guiding Principles** (Values)

- **Collaboration & Partnerships**: Providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner with community organizations.



- **Inclusivity & Acceptance:** Supporting inclusion by creating services and supporting spaces that welcome everyone.
- **Communication:** Promoting and supporting dialogues with our members, partners, volunteers and the public.
- **Community:** Creating opportunities to bring people together while building a sense of community.
- **Open Mindedness:** Committed to a culture of teamwork, collaboration and communication where the viewpoints of others are heard and respected.

Organizational structure

MLA is a member-driven associations governed by 12 Board of Directors.

MLA has two Division:

- **Trustees** (formerly the Manitoba Library Trustees' Association): The Trustees Division of MLA seeks to promote and foster the effectiveness of public library boards through leadership in communication, advocacy, and support of trustee education.
- **Library Technicians** (formerly the Manitoba Association of Library Technicians): The Library Technicians Division is a dedicated group of Library Professionals working as part of MLA to represent the interests of Library Support Workers in the Province of Manitoba, and mentor students entering the Library Profession.

MLA also has five committees focused on Communications, Advocacy, Prison Libraries, Finance, and Scholarship and Awards.

Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Perkopolis Member Benefit	Perkopolis is Canada's leading provider of fully managed perk programs, continually sourcing exclusive, high value offers, rewards, and benefits.
Listserv Group	The group is for members of the Manitoba Library Association to share ideas, news, and issues as they relate to the libraries, library workers, and librarianship in Manitoba. Members can seek guidance from colleagues, brainstorm solutions to a potential problem, or connect with one another about a new idea or program.
Scholarships and Awards	The Manitoba Library Association administers several awards and scholarships. Scholarships are open to Manitoba students enrolled in Library and



	Information Studies graduate level programs, while awards recognize and honours the exceptional achievements of Manitoba library students, workers, and supporters.
Advocacy	MLA is concerned with advocating on behalf of Manitoba libraries, library workers and all Manitobans regarding issues relevant to library and information services. Advocacy is done primarily through participating in national campaigns and promoting issues which affect libraries.
Manitoba Libraries Conference	The Manitoba Libraries Conference connects library and information workers from across the province. The conference often involves two days of informative and engaging sessions, a large exhibitor hall, and opportunities to network and engage.
Professional Development	<p>MLA provides a variety of professional development programs including Safety Toolkit Training for Rural Public Library Staff, Artificial Intelligence in the Library etc.</p> <p>MLA also has membership on the CFLA-FCAB Copyright Committee</p> <p>To support other public library systems in the province that may face similar challenges, MLA has designed the Public Libraries Intellectual Freedom and Anti-Censorship Toolkit to be used by Manitoba public libraries to “prepare for challenges associated with intellectual freedom and attempts to actively censor public library materials/services”.</p> <p>MLA has access to Partnership which is the open-access journal of “Partnership”, Canada’s national network of provincial and territorial library associations, that promotes the exchange of ideas about libraries, librarianship, and information science among practitioners across all library sectors.</p> <p>MLA provides a Manitoba Library Technicians Job Board, in addition to access to The Partnership Job Board.</p>



Document Libraries

MLA has collected documents and information that members might find of interest for their libraries, library services, and library planning.

The documents are organized by the following categories:

Accessibility

Copyright

Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice

Organizational budgets (if available)

No publicly available information on budgets. As a non-profit, MLA's funding typically comes from membership fees, grants, and donations.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

MLA is guided by its current [Strategic Plan](#) (2021-2025), which spells out four key priorities:

- **Streamline and optimize administrative functions:** Optimizing and streamlining administrative functions will allow our volunteer Board members to focus on those supports and services that best serve membership.
- **Promote and market services more effectively:** Optimizing and promoting our services and supports to members and non-members is key to sustainability and growth. We aim to do this in an active and strategic manner that guarantees success.
- **Expand volunteer base:** Recruiting member and community volunteers will expand our human resource base beyond Board members thus ensuring the association remains vibrant and relevant to members.
- **Conduct more outreach:** Providing outreach programs to members, the library community and other organizations in Manitoba will allow us to disseminate information, offer training and skill development, support one another and advocate for libraries.

Additional notes



Figure 39. MLA membership in numbers (2020-2024)

MLA Membership (Past 5 years)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (As of April 3rd)
Individual Membership	86	67	65	65	74
Institutional Membership	22	21	15	16	14
Public Library Board Membership	20	20	13	14	12
Total	128	108	93	95	100

Divisional Breakdown (Past 3 years)

	2022	2023	2024 (As of April 3rd)
Technicians Division	14	16	13
Trustees Division	18	15	9

Source: MLA 2023/2024 [Annual Report](#)

Manitoba School Library Association

Overview

About: The [Manitoba School Library Association](#) (MSLA) is a professional organization dedicated to supporting school library personnel in Manitoba. MSLA acts as a vital liaison with Manitoba Education and with provincial, national and international school library associations. The association provides a variety of support to staff in school libraries. The membership in the MSLA allows the organization to maintain its status as a Special Area Group of the Manitoba Teachers' Society which, in turn, allows us the organization to carry on its work.

Entity Type: Member Association. The MSLA operates as a Special Area Group of Educators (SAGE) under the Manitoba Teachers' Society (Yearly Membership: \$25.00 and Student Membership is \$10.00) and has a Non-Profit Status.

Established: March 1938

Purpose/mandate: MSLA has a mandate to support the personnel in school libraries through providing opportunities for professional growth; encouraging improvements in the qualifications of all personnel in school libraries; promoting high standards of educational programs that support a broad range of literacies across the curriculum for Manitoba students; maintaining liaison between school and other organizations interested in library and information services; providing means for communication and interaction; and



advocating for equity of services, resources and programming in school libraries across all Manitoba schools.

Organizational structure

MSLA is governed by an executive committee (7 members) and standing committee (Seven standing committee). The MSLA's executive and standing committee for 2024-2025 includes positions such as Co-Presidents, Past President, President Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and various committee chairs and members-at-large.

Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Manitoba School Library Association Journal	The MSLA Journal is a free publication available digitally to all members published twice a year. Print copies are available on request. The Journal is one of the best ways to stay informed of the latest research and topics in the field of school libraries in Manitoba, Canada, and worldwide.
Professional Development	MSLA strives to provide ongoing professional development opportunities through its website. Annually, MSLA also hosts: a fall Conference, as a Manitoba Teachers' Society SAGE (Special Area Group of Educators). A Forum takes place in March featuring literature, information literacy or technology. An AGM is held in May which features our award winners for Outstanding Manitoba Teacher-Librarian of the Year, School Administrator Award for Distinguished Service, and Distinguished Service Award.
MSLA Grants	MSLA offers a variety of \$500 grants including the Canadian author grant, the makerspace grant, the diverse books grant, and the Kevin Mowat memorial seed grants
Advocacy	MSLA advocates for a variety of issues including on provincial elections impact on school libraries, toolkit for collection diversity and intellectual freedom etc. Additional resources include: Election Resource CDN Library Challenges Database



[CSL Collection Diversity Toolkit](#)

[Centre for Free Expression](#)

[The Rights of a Reader](#)

Organizational budgets (if available)

No publicly available information on budget.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

MSLA is guided by its [constitution](#) and By-Laws which outlines the association's objectives and codes of conduct. MSLA's [Handbook](#) also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the board, standing committees and membership.

Federation of Bilingual Municipal Libraries of Manitoba

Overview

About: The [Federation of Bilingual Municipal Libraries of Manitoba](#) (FBMB) consists of eight member libraries. The members of the Federation are those municipal and regional libraries of those bilingual municipalities which are members of the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM). The Federation serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and promotes interaction among bilingual libraries, with a primary goal to enhance the quality of bilingual services provided to patrons.

Entity Type: Member Association

Established: 1989

Purpose/mandate: The Federation has the mandate to:

- Ensure that the libraries of the Manitoba bilingual municipalities become intellectual and cultural centers, real hubs of information in their respective communities.
- Facilitate the promotion books at the level of those libraries of those bilingual municipalities which are members of the AMBM, with the aim of raising the awareness of the cultural heritage and the preservation of that community heritage through reading and the dissemination of information.

Organizational structure

The Federation was established under the umbrella of the AMBM, which serves as the voice for bilingual municipal governments in Manitoba. The AMBM's Board of Directors comprises representatives from member municipalities, including elected officials and municipal administrators.

Types of shared services and resources provided



The Federation coordinates the purchase of books to prevent resource duplication and facilitates the exchange of resources among member libraries, enhancing the availability of bilingual materials.

Organizational budgets (if available)

Information not publicly available

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

As per the Federation's Articles of Incorporation and General Regulations, FBMB is guided by the following objectives:

- Provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to promote interaction among those bilingual libraries which are members of the AMBM, with the aim of providing their customers with the best service possible.
- Provide a coordination centre for the purchase of books in order to avoid a duplication of resources.
- Facilitate the orderly exchange of resources among the libraries of the bilingual municipalities which are members of the AMBM.
- Provide an information clearing-house for the libraries of those bilingual municipalities which are members of the AMBM, so that they can benefit from the improved purchasing power resulting from province-wide purchases.
- Make the provincial government aware of the needs and concerns of the libraries of those bilingual municipalities which are members of the AMBM.
- Adopt those measures which will assure quality bilingual services on the part of the libraries of those bilingual municipalities which are members of the AMBM.

Additional notes

It's important to note that the Federation is currently dormant due to a lack of resources to carry out its mission and objectives as well as to adequately support its members. (Source: [AMBM Consolidated Activity Report](#), March 2022). While the Federation's stated objectives included items such as coordination of book purchases and resource sharing, these functions do not appear to have been put into practice.

Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks (MERLIN)

Overview

About: The [Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks](#) (MERLIN) is a special operating agency with the Province of Manitoba's Department of Education. It was formed as a facilitating body to coordinate the delivery of technology services to the education community across Manitoba. MERLIN provides support to schools and postsecondary institutions in Manitoba. MERLIN offers a variety of IT services that support educational institutions in applying technology tools to enhance and expand



program delivery. Their Partner Programs include all Manitoba school divisions and most postsecondary institutions, resulting in savings in areas such as communications, software, Internet, and security.

Entity Type: MERLIN is designated as a Special Operating Agency (SOA) within the Province of Manitoba.

Established: 1995

Purpose/mandate: MERLIN mandate is to:

- To support the use of technology in improving educational services to learners.
- Provide services that support educational institutions in the application of technology tools to enhance and expand program delivery; and
- Provide direction and management in the educational use of networks, acting as a broker of services to meet client needs.

Organizational structure

MERLIN currently operates under the Department of Innovation and New Technology with 14 staff as of March 2024. As a Special Operating Agency, MERLIN operates under the governance framework established by the Province of Manitoba. Specific details about its internal organizational structure are not publicly available.



Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Provincial Licensing and Purchasing	<p>Products include Microsoft, Adobe and SketchUp</p> <p>Purchase advice and assistance for hardware such as routers, switches and firewalls</p> <p>Negotiation of software licensing agreements and hardware discounts</p> <p>Advice on licensing and purchasing software</p> <p>Licensing and purchasing on a province-wide basis helps ensure consistency in hardware and software products and provides economies of scale for smaller school divisions.</p>
Consulting	<p>This service includes per diem consulting, project consulting and support contracts.</p> <p>Design and implementation of LAN and WAN directory services and server infrastructures</p> <p>Advice on the selection of technical equipment and services</p> <p>Support for the installation and maintenance of workstations</p> <p>Advice on technologies that support distance education delivery</p> <p>Network systems management</p> <p>Security services (VPN, WAN, etc.)</p> <p>Review of a school division's existing technology plans</p>
Hosting	<p>MERLIN offers an array of Information Technology (IT) hosting services saving school divisions and postsecondary institutions costs in server hardware, software, upgrades and staff resources.</p> <p>Hosting services include: applications, managed firewalls, SharePoint for staff, data back-up service and email list server.</p>
Security	<p>MERLIN has a comprehensive line of IT security services to assist in analyzing risks to networks and set up steps needed to select and deploy the appropriate counter measures to reduce exposure to network threats.</p>



Access to High-Speed Internet Services	<p>MERLIN continues to offer Internet gateway services to educational institutions that can connect directly to MERLIN.</p> <p>MERLIN provides access to CANARIE and MRnet (Manitoba's Regional Advanced Research and Education Network). – MRnet is a consortium of private and public sector research and development organizations dedicated to the advancement of broadband networking and network applications. CANARIE interconnects the provincial research networks, universities, research centers, government, research laboratories, schools, and other eligible sites, both with each other and with international peer networks.</p> <p>MERLIN staff have created a new "Weather Map" dashboard. This new tool is a point-in-time view of the school division, postsecondary and Independent School Internet usage across the Province of Manitoba.</p> <p>MERLIN offers both native IPv6 connectivity and assistance with deploying IPv6 in client's networks.</p>
Partner Programs	<p>The MERLIN Partner Programs include a collection of commonly used technology services that translates into major cost savings for schools and postsecondary institutions in Manitoba. This is a unique opportunity for the education sector to work collaboratively with MERLIN to facilitate technology solutions common to all.</p>

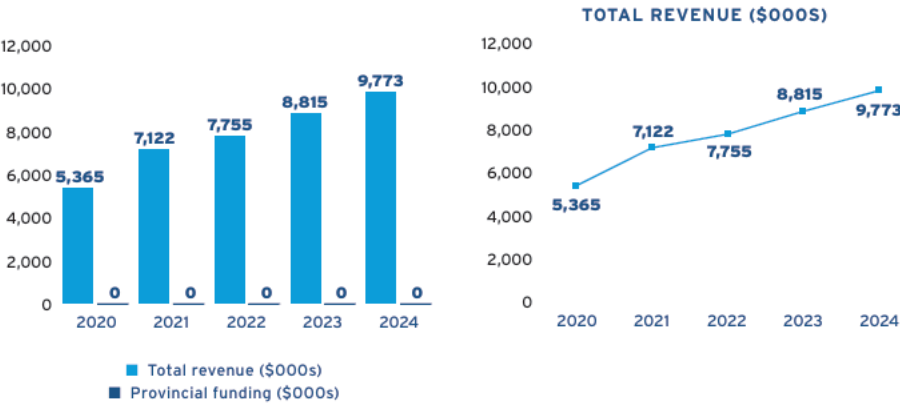
Organizational budgets (if available)

The figure below provides MERLIN's financial analysis for 2023-2024.



FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Clients value MERLIN's services and have increased the use of MERLIN's service offerings over the last five years. This has had a favourable financial impact as the Agency is now self-sufficient and no longer requires provincial funding.



Source: [MERLIN 2023-2024 Annual Report](#)

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

Information not publicly available

Additional notes

MARKETS

PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY
Schools and school divisions (K-12) comprised of 37 school divisions, 697 public schools, 135 independent schools (69 funded and 66 non-funded) and 56 band-operated schools within 63 First Nations and 12 post-secondary institutions.	Adult learning centres, educational organizations, Department of Education	Other government departments and the broader public sector

While MERLIN does not have a monopoly for its services within the province, it has a unique position in the education community, allowing for the provision of an education-specific component to decision-making, provincial coordination, and advisory services. The Agency fosters cooperative relationships with private industry to benefit the education community.



Rest of Canada

The Alberta Library

Overview

About: The Alberta Library (TAL) is a not-for-profit organization existing to address challenges and opportunities created by a changing information, economic, and political environment. The organization serves more than 300 libraries across public and regional, postsecondary, and special library types. Members collaborate to take advantage of discounted purchasing, sharing resources, and seeking new opportunities for reducing duplication and providing equitable access to information for communities in Alberta.

Entity Type: Not-for-profit corporation consortium

Established: 1997

Purpose/mandate: Tal exists to serve the needs of its members.

TAL is guided by five key principles:

9. TAL negotiates and advocates for optimal pricing and service to its members.
10. TAL facilitates connections among member libraries.
11. TAL creates opportunities for staff of member libraries to develop professional relationships with staff from other Alberta libraries.
12. TAL seeks, evaluates, and implements opportunities for products and services that allow members to improve services.
13. TAL works with others to be sustainable and cost-effective.

TAL membership benefits include:

- Exclusive savings on products from a growing list of vendors (90+ and counting)
- Centralized licensing negotiation, often in coordination with other consortia and associations
- Access to specialized services for libraries, including training and accounting services
- Be part of a strong cross-sectional community to amplify individual and institutional voices

Organizational structure:

TAL is governed by an elected board of 10 members which makeup covers large and small public libraries, large and small academics, and a variety of members-at-large to represent the remaining institutions. The TAL staff team includes a CEO, Finance Manager, Learning Services Librarian, Licensing Librarian, Infrastructure Librarian, and Library Support Assistants of youth workers and students.



Types of shared services and resources provided:

TAL provides a variety of services and resources to (or through) its members. Beyond the services and resources described below, TAL employees are also accountable to provide assistance on a variety of other areas including institutional phone systems, records management, digitization, and event management.

Service/Resource	About
<u>Licensing</u> Including: <u>Discovery Link</u> <u>Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library (LHCADL)</u>	<p>TAL facilitates licensing agreements that enable member libraries to provide users with access to a wide range of digital resources, including newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, ebooks, and instructional databases. These agreements ensure cost-effective access to high-quality content for library users across Alberta. Members can explore available resources, review membership populations for 2024, and manage licenses through Consortia Manager by logging in via the licensing link. For assistance, TAL's licensing librarians are available to support members in navigating and optimizing these services.</p> <p>Discovery Link is TAL's in-house K-12 opt-in digital resource for Alberta K-12 schools.</p> <p>LHCADL is an initiative established by the Alberta Government, funded by Alberta Advance Education, which provides 35 participating postsecondary institutions in Alberta with access to commercially licensed digital resources and unique collections of digitized content.</p>
<u>TAL Card</u>	The TAL card provides individuals with borrowing privileges at all TAL card participating libraries across Alberta.
<u>Accounting Services</u>	TAL offers bookkeeping and accounting services tailored to small and mid-size libraries and library associations. Members can benefit from personalized support and guidance on a wide range of business matters provided by a dedicated accountant who specializes in libraries and their unique administrative requirements.
<u>The Key & SNAP Study Guides</u>	TAL has collaborated with Castle Rock Research to offer its members access to The KEY and SNAP study guides at a discounted rate.
<u>Library Toolshed</u>	A joint venture between The Alberta Library, The Association B.C. Public Library Directors, and The Manitoba Public Library Services Branch, hosted by the B.C. Libraries Coop. The Toolshed is an online platform for library staff to share, download and comment on library training resources.



Membership Directory & Interactive Map	A directory of TAL members and an interactive map of libraries in Alberta both listed by type (Academic, Public & Regional, and Special Libraries).
Pd Calendar	A regularly updated calendar that includes filters for TAL events, events provided by vendors, events provided by member libraries, events from the internet, conference/association/training opportunities, as well as if there is an associated cost with the event.
Resources	A resource page including a variety of toolkits and other sources such as an advocacy toolkit, municipal election advocacy toolkit, provincial election advocacy toolkit, symposium/conference records and webinar records.

Organizational budgets (if available):

Nordicity was unable to locate any publicly available annual reports, financial statements, or budgets for TAL. As a consortium, TAL's financial information may not be as readily accessible as that of individual public library boards, which are required to submit annual reports and financial statements to the provincial government.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks:

The Alberta Library (TAL) is guided by a comprehensive set of key policy documents that ensure the organization's operations align with its values and goals. These policies cover a broad range of areas, including advocacy, governance, human resources, finance, and membership. Key documents include the Advocacy Principles, Code of Conduct, Finance Policy, Governance Policy, and Human Resources Policy. Additionally, TAL has specific policy guidelines for external funding, risk management, and resource sharing, as well as policies related to records management, recruitment, and selection. The organization's commitment to a respectful workplace and staff service recognition is outlined, alongside policies for nominations, elections, and reimbursement of expenses. Full list of policies and documents which can be accessed to download can be found [here](#).

Additional Notes:

Over the years, TAL has offered a range of impactful services that, while now obsolete, played a significant role in meeting the needs of its members and communities at the time. TAL Online launched in 2000, was Alberta's first federated search platform for library catalogues, enabling users to search across all member libraries, request books, and access them through Inter-Library Loan. Despite a 2015 refresh, TAL Online was eventually replaced by OCLC's Relais D2D in 2020, officially retiring in 2022. Netspeed, a forward-thinking conference launched in 1997, brought together librarians, technical staff, and trustees to explore emerging technologies relevant to libraries. The conference ran for two decades, hosting its final event in 2017 as library technology and networking opportunities evolved. Similarly, the Online Reference Centre (ORC) provided Alberta K-12 schools with free digital resources in English and French, alongside training for



effective use. In 2021, the ORC was replaced by TAL's Discovery Link, a flexible, opt-in service designed to better meet the needs of modern K-12 education. These transitions highlight TAL's ability to adapt to evolving sector and organizational needs while continually enhancing services for its members.

TAL has regularly partnered with other organizations and to enhance opportunities available to its members. Notable collaborations include the TELUS Internet for Good program, participating in a province-wide pilot of providing low-cost high-speed internet to single-parent families; CBC & TAL Out Your Way Collaboration, hosting in-person events at libraries across the province to showcase smaller communities; and most recently, with the UK-based Social-Ability Happiness Program, to distribute and license the program which was designed to engage users with cognitive and physical challenges.

Saskatchewan Information Library Service Consortium

Overview

About: The Saskatchewan Information Library Service Consortium (SILS) was formed to bring together all 10 public library systems in the province (regional, municipal, and northern libraries), plus the Provincial Library & Literacy Office, a branch of the Ministry of Education, to provide access to library resources to Saskatchewan residents and enable library members to collaborate on joint projects and purchases that would benefit everyone in the province. The consortium serves over 300 branch libraries and thousands of library patrons through the easy-to-use province-wide catalogue through its "One Province, One Library Card" mission.

Entity Type: Not-for-profit consortium

Established: 2009

Purpose/mandate: To provide equitable access to library services through one-card access to public library resources for citizens across the province.

Organizational structure

The SILS Consortium is governed by a Board of Directors, the officers of which form an Executive Committee with limited decision-making power. The Board of Directors consists of the Library Directors of the eleven member libraries and the Provincial Librarian. Day to day operations of the consortium are delegated to the Executive Director and carried out by SILS Office staff.

Types of shared services and resources provided

SILS Office provide a variety of technical and online supports to member libraries including training for implementing an online fines payment system, data reporting using statistics from ILS, and those that self-manage the Google Apps for Business platform. SILS Office staff also maintain a Helpdesk which is accessibility to all member library staff. A variety of services are offered by SILS to member libraries as well as library card holders are outlined in the following table:



Service/Resource	About
Integrated Library System (ILS)	SILS administers this online catalogue which lets library card holders search and borrow library materials from any public library in the province. SILS also uses this software to assist member libraries in managing various operational tasks, such as tracking assets, cataloging materials, supporting end-user search interfaces and self-service account pages, and sending account notifications to third-party services for delivery via email, phone, and SMS.
SILS Intranet	The SILS Intranet is accessible to member library staff. It provides a directory, a calendar of upcoming events, and a document repository for library staff and committee members.
Library2go	Library2go is a province-wide, shared collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks made available through the consortium's member libraries. The collection is jointly purchased and maintained by all public library systems and the Provincial Library and Literacy Office and is accessible to all public library patrons across the province.

Organizational budgets (if available)

Nordicity was unable to locate any publicly available annual reports, financial statements, or budgets for SILS.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

The organization is guided by Consortium Bylaws which include directives for members to work co-operatively to delivery and provide library services and resources in the most efficient and effective manner possible. This includes policy language in areas such as loan periods, fines, and fees.

Additional notes

The following services are not offered directly by SILS, but these services are critical to the delivery of public library service in Saskatchewan:

- Interlibrary loan services are provided by Palliser Regional Library. Interlibrary loans allow patrons access to materials that are not owned by any Saskatchewan public libraries. Palliser coordinates the loan of these materials from university collections or public libraries outside the province.
- Community Net is an initiative of the provincial government which provides libraries with access to a protected, controlled network environment.



- Cataloguing is coordinated by the Provincial Library and Literacy Office and performed by staff at designated cataloguing agencies.
- Database authentication through EZProxy is managed by the Provincial Library and Literacy Office, which contracts with OCLC to host EZProxy.

BC Libraries Cooperative

Overview

About: The BC Libraries Cooperative strives to offer a wide range of services related to information technology infrastructure to its membership in order to increase technological capacity for communities. It also seeks to work and innovate for public benefit, to reduce costs, and to extend service delivery across its membership. Its membership includes over 200 Canadian non-profit library related organizations. Members come from every province in Canada and include public, school, academic, and special libraires, as well as governments, associations, school districts, library consortia and other Co-ops.

Entity Type: Limited-liability, non-profit corporate body registered under the Cooperative Association Act of BC.

Established: 2009

Purpose/mandate: We help libraries help people.

The Co-operative does this by:

- supporting consortium purchasing and economies of scale;
- saving money by making the most of open source technology;
- driving innovation by designing services for inter-operability and open access;
- creating opportunities for members to work together;
- respecting our members' voices in the development of Co-op services;
- offering full service support and training for every service; and,
- working with fellow cooperatives and like-minded organizations to advance the sector.

Organizational structure

The organization is governed by a board which is elected by its membership. The organization has seven Co-op staff members and also has a Public Library Accessibility Working Group (PLAWG) which was formed to support the sector in the implementation of the Accessible BC Act.



Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Sitka & Evergreen® ILS	The Evergreen is a open-source software that helps library users discover resources and helps library staff to manage, catalogue, and circulate those resources. Sitka is a consortium of libraries that benefit from sharing server infrastructure and bibliographic databases.
National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)	NNELS is a publicly funded library service dedicated to making library collections accessible to readers with print disabilities in their local communities.
Library Toolshed	The Library Toolshed is a collaborative initiative supported by The Alberta Library, the Association of BC Public Library Directors (ABCPLD), Saskatchewan's Multi-Type Library Board, and the Manitoba Public Library Services Branch. It is hosted by the BC Libraries Cooperative. The Toolshed is an online space where library staff can share, download and rate a wide variety of library training resources.
Licensed Content	The Co-op support licensing across several provinces offering price-point access to nearly 200 digital products, including eBooks, research databases, mobile apps and more.
Member Map and Directory & Member Service Uptake Map	The Co-op hosts two types of maps which identify member organizations, service offerings, and service uptake.
Newsletter & Blog	The Co-op maintains a digital blog on its website and offers a public newsletter available for subscription. Co-op members are automatically enrolled in the newsletter.
Events Live Stream	The Co-op features a live stream page for events and a page for sharing past event notes and useful documents accessible to the public.
Library Website Development and Hosting	The BC Libraries Cooperative provides comprehensive website development and hosting services, offering 100% Canadian hosting for a wide range of websites and digital platforms. These



	services include full development and support for custom library websites, hosting repositories such as the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS), and assisting organizations in transforming outdated websites into modern, user-friendly platforms.
<u>Consulting Services</u>	In addition to offering members access to expertise through its core services, it also can help members with specific projects by providing affordable member-support rates with expertise to support with strategic planning, project management, and technology management plan development.

Organizational budgets (if available)

Nordicity was unable to locate any publicly available annual reports, financial statements, or budgets for the BC Libraries Co-operative.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

The BC Libraries Cooperative is guided by its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan: Helping Libraries Help People. Guided by 7 Co-operative Principles as well as the Core Values of Librarianship, the strategic plan will enable the Co-op to build on its strengths and foundational services and pursue new services and initiatives. The plan centres around four core themes:

- Boldly pursue member services innovation
- Help members be catalysts for healthy, resilient communities
- Model and advance library and cooperative values
- Strengthen the Co-op as an organization and partner

The BC Libraries Cooperative also operates under a robust framework of policy documents that guide its governance and leadership. Key policies include the Board Director Confidentiality Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy, ensuring ethical leadership, and the Business Expense Policy and Travel Expense Policy & Form, promoting financial accountability. Operational directives such as the Memorandum of Association, Rules of Association (updated 2023), and the Operating Reserve Fund Policy provide structural and fiscal stability. Additionally, the Open Source (FOSS) Contribution Policy reflects the Cooperative's commitment to innovation, while the Privacy & Security Management Plan safeguards member and user data. The organizations People Policy and the Service Management Agreement have been most recently updated in 2023.



Additional notes

The BC Libraries Cooperative is deeply committed to the values of openness and access to open data, recognizing them as essential to fostering innovation and collaboration. By embracing open approaches, including regularly releasing open data sources, the organization ensures transparency, inclusivity, and the continual growth of shared knowledge within the Canadian library and information sector. This commitment drives the development of tools and services that are co-created and enhanced in partnership with members, communities, and industry leaders, empowering libraries to better serve their users and expand access to information for all.

Canadian Research Knowledge Network

Overview

About: [The Canadian Research Knowledge Network \(CRKN\)](#) CRKN empowers researchers, educators, and society with greater access to the world's research and Canada's preserved documentary heritage, now and for future generations. CRKN delivers value by representing its membership in large-scale licensing and content acquisition, collaborating to expand the digital knowledge ecosystem, and advocating for fair and sustainable access to public research. Additionally, CRKN supports the digital infrastructure needed to preserve and access critical Canadian content and mobilizes its members to transform scholarly communications across the country. CRKN members represent 85 institutions across Canada including academic libraries and research institutions, two national libraries, and Canada's largest public library system.

CRKN delivers value to academic libraries, heritage organizations, and knowledge seekers within Canada in the following ways:

- Represent our membership in large-scale licensing and content acquisition activities;
- Collaborate to expand and enrich the digital knowledge ecosystem in Canada and the world;
- Advocate for fair and sustainable access to public research and content;
- Support the digital infrastructure required to preserve and access critical Canadian content; and,
- Mobilize our membership to transform scholarly communications in Canada.

Entity Type: Not-for-profit organization

Established: 2004 (originated in the late 1990s from the creation of the Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP) through a collaboration of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and four regional library consortia CAUL, BCI, OCUL and COPPUL).

Purpose/mandate: Its vision is for "The world's knowledge [to be] accessible by all." Its mission is to advance interconnected, sustainable access to the world's research and to Canada's documentary heritage content.



Organizational structure

The Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) is led by a 12-member volunteer Board of Directors, selected from its membership. This board provides strategic oversight and guidance, supported by various standing committees, sub-committees, and task groups that address specific aspects of CRKN's programs and initiatives. A sample of committees include executive, finance and audit, content strategy, preservation and access, CFI application and strategy and conference planning committees. CRKN employs a diverse team of librarians, developers, technicians, and other professionals to meet the evolving needs of its member community. Staff work across seven divisions: management team, licensing and member services, infrastructure and development, persistent identifiers team, heritage services, finance and administration, and engagement. The organization's staff collaborates closely with the Board and committees to implement strategic priorities and manage day-to-day operations, ensuring CRKN's objectives are effectively pursued.

Types of shared services and resources provided

CRKNs services and resources span across three key areas:

Service/Resource	About
Licensing and Open Access	CRKN collaborates with librarians, researchers, administrators, funders, and publishers to negotiate large-scale licenses for scholarly content, supporting the expansion of research capacity across Canada. Currently, CRKN oversees and manages over 50 licenses for its member institutions, including agreements with publishers such as Wiley, Sage, Cambridge University Press, Institute of Physics Publishing, and Canadian Science Publishing.
Canadiana Collections and Infrastructure	CRKN provides access to 64 million pages of Canadian documentary heritage through the Canadiana and Héritage collections and preserves this content through the Canadiana Trustworthy Digital Repository (TDR). CRKN also provides digitization services to its member and stakeholder community.
Persistent Identifiers	Persistent identifiers (PIDs) are unique digital codes that distinctly identify researchers, institutions, and their works, playing a vital role in ensuring an interoperable and dependable global research infrastructure. CRKN supports the adoption and use of PIDs in Canada by leading the ORCID Canada Consortium and co-managing the DataCite Canada Consortium in partnership with the Digital Research Alliance of Canada.



Other services and resources provided by the organization include:

Source/Resource	About
Membership Lists	CRKN hosts a membership list of its institutional and associate membership.
CRKN Conference	The CRKN Conference is an annual event that provides a platform for members, stakeholders, and experts for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and discussion on initiatives and work that support the advancement of research and education in Canada.
CRKN Member Summits & AGM	CRKN Board, committees, and staff welcome its membership for an opportunity to participate in conversations about the progress and future outlook for CRKN and its programs.
Webinars & Training	CRKN hosts a page for sharing notes, articles and announcements related to webinars, meetings, and event opportunities.
News Page	CRKN hosts a page for sharing news related to recent events, sector activities, and blog posts.
Other Projects and Collaborations	Along with being a member of <i>Fédération des milieux documentaires</i> (FMD) the National Information Standards Organization (NISO), Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access in Particle Physics Publishing (SCOAP ³), and Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage, CRKN regularly seeks to develop partnerships and join ventures to advance digital scholarship and continually enhance the programs and services it offers for its members.
Ron MacDonald Outstanding Service Award	The Ron MacDonald award annually recognizes an individual within a CRKN member institution who has demonstrated vision, dedication, and outstanding services in building bridges and collaboration to advance access knowledge in Canada.

Revenue profile

In 2023-24, CRKN's total revenue was \$4.6 million. Roughly two thirds of that revenue is attributed to earned revenue from membership fees and Heritage Content Access and Preservation (HCAP) fees. It was noted that CRKN draws on accumulated surpluses from previous years and supplements operating



activities with interest and other revenues as needed. The following table presents the composition of CRKN's revenues for the FY2023-24.

Revenue Source	2023-24
Membership Fees (content and admin)	\$1,528,930.00
Heritage Services	\$1,538,597.00
Digitization Revenue	\$48,168.00
Hosting Revenue (platform)	\$10,806.00
Interest Revenue	\$961,159.00
Conference Registration (admin)	\$30,066.00
In-Kind	\$144,000.00
Other	\$356,508.00
Total Revenue	\$4,618,234.00

Source: CRKN Annual Report: Financial Results for 2023-24

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

CRKN operates in accordance with its Membership Policy and CRKN By-laws. Its Membership Policy outlines the criteria, rights, and responsibilities of its members, ensuring alignment with the organization's goals and values. Additionally, CRKN is governed by its by-laws, which provide a formal framework for decision-making, organizational structure, and the roles and responsibilities of its Board, committees, and staff.

The organization is guided by its [2019-2024 Strategic Plan](#) which is to provoke action, galvanize support, and create a framework for meeting bold and audacious goals for the organization. Underpinning the plan are three strategic goals:

1. Transform Scholarly Communication
2. Develop and Foster Partnerships
3. Collaborative Advocacy

Registered as a not-for-profit organization, the CRKN produce publicly available Annual Reports & Financial Statements.



Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries

Overview

About: [The Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries \(COPPUL\)](#) is a not-for-profit consortium. Members leverage the organizations collective expertise, resources, and influence, increasing capacity and infrastructure, to enhance learning, teaching, student experiences, and research at member institutions. The consortium is comprised of 23 university libraries located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, plus 21 affiliate members that participate in resource licensing only.

Entity Type: Not-for-profit society

Established: 1991

Purpose/mandate: COPPUL leverages resources, expertise, and infrastructure across member libraries to support and enhance teaching, learning, student experience, and research on member campuses.

Members benefit from:

- Discounted pricing and favourable terms for licensed resources
- Networking and information sharing
- Shared expertise to advance collaborative projects
- Opportunity to participate in working groups and committees
- Workshops and continuing education opportunities
- Connecting and coordinating with regional consortia in other parts of Canada

Organizational structure

COPPUL is led by a Board of five Directors composed of library directors from tis member institutions. The organization's operations and activities are supported by a small staff team of approximately six staff roles including Executive Director, Licensing Coordinator, SPAN Coordinator, CDSN Coordinator, Indigenous Knowledge Coordinator, and Administrative Assistants. COPPUL also accomplishes its work using a variety of committees and working groups which bring together member representatives to focus on specific areas including collections, digital stewardship, indigenous knowledge, scholarly communications, resource sharing, and print archive sharing. Membership meetings are held bi-annually and Board meetings are held monthly.

Types of shared services and resources provided

Services and resources fall across three areas: Collections, Digital Preservation, and Indigenous Knowledge. Some of the key services and resources provided at COPPUL (not exhaustive) include:



Service/Resource	About
Licensing	COPPUL licenses a variety of e-resources on behalf of full and affiliate members. COPPUL works in partnership with other regional consortia in Canada to secure consortia agreements with vendors.
Shared Print Archiving (SPAN)	The SPAN program is a distributed, retrospective print repository designed to provide access to shared print archives, facilitate the reallocation of library space, and preserve the print collections of its member institutions.
Digital Stewardship (CDSN)	The COPPUL Digital Stewardship Network supports member institutions in building digital preservation capacity through its preservation and storage infrastructure (WestVault and Archivematica), educational programs, advocacy resources, and by linking local digital preservation initiatives to regional, national, and international efforts.
Interlibrary Loan (CURBA)	CURBA is a COPPUL-initiated, patron-driven reciprocal borrowing agreement and between Canada's regional academic consortia: COPPUL, Ontario Council of Universities Libraries (OCUL), Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (BC), and Council of Atlantic University Libraries/Conseil des bibliothèques universitaires de l'Atlantique (CAUL-CBUA).
Document Delivery Resource Sharing Agreement	This agreement formalizes and establishes a standard e-resource sharing agreement across Canada for academic institutions by COPPUL at no cost.
Scholarly Communications	The Scholarly Communications Working Group (SCWG) organizes the annual SkillShare Day, providing a platform to exchange experiences, share best practices, and discuss interests in scholarly communications. The group also showcases publications, conference presentations, posters, and working papers by Canadian librarians on the COPPUL website and produces issue briefs that address current topics in scholarly communications.
A COPPUL Consortium of Library Electronic Data Sets (ACCOLEDS)	Provides training to those who are apart of the Statistics Canada Data Liberation Initiative (DLI).
COPPUL Lists COPPUL General List Licensing General List	COPPUL retains and maintains a variety of different lists to share information, resources, and direct to other services. Lists have varying levels of access, with many lists only



Collections Community List Resource Sharing Community List Western Web Archiving Community List CDSN Peer Services Community List Indigenous Collections Management list	available to members, affiliates, and other library-related collaboratives to contribute to.
Indigenous Knowledge	COPPUL supports member libraries in their respective efforts to respectfully work with Indigenous Peoples to change practices to more accurately represent Indigenous knowledge systems, worldviews and cultures. Recognizing that relationships with Indigenous communities are essential and inherently local, COPPUL helps to facilitate discussion, learning and information-sharing. COPPUL achieves this through a few key areas to its membership including providing experiential learning opportunities, connecting members to resources and education, as well as supporting information sharing of Indigenous initiatives and best practices on an ongoing basis.
News Page	COPPUL hosts a public facing news page sharing events, articles, announcements, and other relevant community resources.

Organizational budgets

Nordicity was unable to locate any publicly available annual reports, financial statements, or budgets for COPPUL.

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

COPPUL is federally incorporated under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (S.C.. 2009, c.23), and subject to its Regulations. COPPUL [by-laws and policies](#) that align with the Act govern the operation of the consortium including policies regarding membership, travel, GST, and net assets and reserve funds.

Additional notes

Governance Structure Evolution: The Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) traces its origins to the Cooperative Western Canadian University Libraries (COWCUL), established in 1974 to foster collaboration among university libraries in Western Canada. By 1981, the organization had evolved into the Council of Prairie University Libraries (COPUL), reflecting a more focused regional scope. In 1991, the name was changed to COPPUL, embracing the inclusion of libraries in both Prairie and Pacific regions. Throughout its history, COPPUL has prioritized resource sharing, collective purchasing, and advancing library services, adapting to the changing needs of member institutions and the evolving landscape of academic libraries. Notably, in 2013, COPPUL revised its by-laws and changed its governance structure to conform with the revised Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. A smaller, streamlined Board of Directors has been in place from October 2013 to the present.



Consortia Support Organizations

Consortia Canada

Overview

About: Consortia Canada is an informal group of library consortia representing all library types (public, postsecondary, health, special, and K-12 schools) working together to license electronic resources that are useful and relevant to members across the country. Consortia Canada is made up of 20 consortia across the country. Note, MLCI is a member.

Entity Type: Informal Group

Established: 1998

Purpose/mandate: With a “made in Canada” approach, Consortia Canada’s primary goal is to contribute to the collection and organization of information and knowledge in digital form for the benefit of all Canadians.

Organizational structure

Governance and Management

Participation in national site licensing initiatives will be conducted through existing library consortia (formal or informal).

Initiatives will adopt legal and technical systems of delivery that are cost-effective, accountable, and sustainable.

One consortium acts as the lead, working with the vendor and coordinating efforts of the other consortia behind the scenes. Each consortium coordinates communications with its own members. Consortia share the responsibilities of taking the lead.

The governance and management structure will ensure accountable decision-making at the individual consortium level and build on the communications infrastructure that exists in current library consortia. In addition, inter-consortia communication will be facilitated through existing consortia staff and the use of a “Consortia Canada” listserv.



Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Licensing	<p>Consortia Canada provides list of databases that are licensed by a lead consortium on behalf of Consortia Canada and the member institutions of Canadian consortia.</p> <p>Consortia Canada negotiates the best terms of use for the products licensed on behalf of member consortia.</p> <p>Securing favorable licensing terms for electronic resources, databases, and digital content on behalf of members.</p>
Technology Platforms	<p>Providing access to shared technology solutions, such as integrated library systems or collaborative tools.</p>
Professional Development	<p>Hosting workshops, webinars, and training sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of library professionals.</p> <p>Conducting studies and projects that inform best practices and drive innovation in library services.</p>

Organizational budgets (if available)

Information not publicly available

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

Detailed governance structures and policy frameworks are not publicly disclosed.

Additional notes

Consortia Canada members must:

- Be operational as a library consortium in Canada (formal or informal).
- Embrace the Consortia Canada philosophy of providing affordable, universally accessible information to licensed content that support learners and researchers across the country.
- Have adequate staffing and infrastructure to convey Consortia Canada communications (e.g. information on resource offers and renewals) to members so that decisions can be made in a timely manner.



- If willing to take the lead on resource offers and/or renewals, have appropriate staff to work with the vendor and to communicate with fellow consortia.

International Coalition of Library Consortia

Overview

About: [The International Coalition of Library Consortia \(ICOLC\)](#) is a professional organization of approximately 200 library consortia from around the world (241 members as of Dec 2024). Note, MLCI is a member.

Entity Type: Informal Association

Established: 1997 (initially known as the Consortium of Consortia (COC), as a voluntary organization of consortial leaders and directors.)

Purpose/mandate: ICOLC provides information on *licensing of electronic* resources to academic libraries; a forum for exchange of ideas and information and discussion on topics related to activities of library consortia. ICOLC serves consortia staff by providing professional development, information and expertise sharing, and peer benchmarking with like-minded organizations.

Organizational structure

ICOLC operates as a decentralized, informal coalition without a formalized hierarchical structure. ICOLC operations are guided by a Coordinating Committee elected by ICOLC Members – currently 11 committee members.

Types of shared services and resources provided

Service/Resource	About
Professional development	Professional development programs for library staff.
Information and expertise sharing	Twice per year, ICOLC conducts meetings dedicated to keeping participating consortia informed about issues of importance to directors, governing boards, and member libraries of consortia.
Group purchasing	Cost reduction through group purchasing of licenses.

Organizational budgets (if available)

ICOLC does not have a centralized budget, as it is an informal coalition without membership fees or formal financial structures. Participation is open to all library consortia worldwide without financial barriers



Relevant governance and policy frameworks

ICOLC's governance is characterized by its informal, self-organized nature. It does not have a formal governance structure or policy framework. Instead, it relies on voluntary participation and consensus-building among its member consortia. ICOLC has issued public statements on key issues, developed through collaborative efforts among members. Proposals for statements come from within the membership, gather support, and are drafted by small working groups. All members are invited to review drafts and suggest changes, leading to consensus-driven statements.

ICOLC has a number of guidelines utilized by its members including:

- Guidelines for Statistical Measures of Usage of Web-Based Information Resources (1998, revised 2001, 2006)
- Privacy Guidelines for Electronic Resources Vendors
- Guidelines for Statistical Measures of Usage of Web-Based Information Resources (1998, revised 2001)
- Guidelines For Statistical Measures of Usage of Web-Based Indexed, Abstracted, and Full Text Resources

Additional notes

Membership in the ICOLC community provides value through fostering trusted personal relationships with trusted colleagues. These relationships offer opportunities for problem-solving, mentoring, and counseling. The organization advances common goals through peer-to-peer networking, development of best practices, and by facilitating deeper collaborative action and advocacy amongst members.

American Library Association (specifically Consortium Management Interest Group)

Overview

About: The [Consortium Management Interest Group](#) is part of the American Library Association's (ALA) Core's [Leadership and Management Section](#). Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures is the national association that advances the profession of librarians and information providers in central roles of buildings & operations, leadership & management, metadata & collections, and technology. The Leadership and Management Section provides librarians and library staff from any positional level or library type who desire to impact the broader profession a space to connect around the fundamental proficiencies and knowledge necessary to lead a successful organization.

Entity Type: Interest Group

Established: Not available

Purpose/mandate: The Consortium Management Interest Group focuses on consortial funding, advocacy, services, etc., and discusses topics of interest to statewide library cooperatives, multi-state, national cooperatives, and multi-type library systems. Interest groups in Core offer members networking,



informational, and problem-solving opportunities. They are open to participants as widely as possible, and anyone with an ALA account can join.

Organizational structure

The group operates under the Core division's Leadership & Management Section. Interest groups typically have a convener and may have additional leadership roles. Conveners must be Core members, but anyone can join or leave an interest group at any time.

Types of shared services and resources provided

While specific services and resources offered by the group are not detailed, the group's focus includes discussions on consortial funding, advocacy, and services relevant to library cooperatives and systems including a variety of webinars for its members.

Organizational budgets (if available)

Information not publicly available

Relevant governance and policy frameworks

The group is governed by the policies and frameworks established by the ALA and its Core division. Interest groups are expected to adhere to the guidelines and policies set forth by the parent organization.

Additional notes

Interest group members do not need to be members of Core, or even of ALA. Anyone with an ALA account can join a Core interest group in ALA Connect. Conveners must be Core members, but anyone can join or leave an interest group at any time.



7.2. Additional Documentation

The following supporting documents were submitted to MLCI alongside this report. Developed as part of the background research for the needs assessment, these materials are intended to inform both this process and any future initiatives:

- **Manitoba Library Sector Scan** – A foundational reference identifying libraries across the province by type and geography. Includes contact information where available.
- **Sector Service Map** – An overview of library-focused organizations and the support services currently available in Manitoba.

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