

## REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

**MEETING DATE: Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Knowledge Ontario
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Purpose of Report:	For Receipt and Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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### Recommendation

It is recommended that this report be received by the Library Board.

### Issue / Opportunity

Knowledge Ontario (formerly the Ontario Digital Library) is a province-wide collaboration of libraries (public, school, college and university), archives, museums, heritage organizations, educational institutions, and community groups. The goal of Knowledge Ontario is to create an integrated and interactive digital environment about, and for, Ontarians.

Funding for Knowledge Ontario was provided by the Province of Ontario as a one-time grant of \$8 mil in the spring of 2006.

### Background & Review

The objectives of Knowledge Ontario are as follows:

- Maximize a common base of digital resources freely available to all.
- Create transformational access to local, provincial and national culture and heritage resources.
- Help to develop a more competitive Ontario with an innovative edge.
- Enable a stronger, more integrated and effective library system in Ontario.
- Offer students and teachers access to curriculum support and enrichment materials.
- Build a better knowledge economy.

Knowledge Ontario hopes to foster a closer and more collaborative relationship between the different library sectors and the cultural heritage sector. They plan to leverage their own resources, with school, public, college and university libraries being equal partners in shaping and constructing a visionary initiative that will have a significant impact on all Ontarians.

The Guiding Principles of Knowledge Ontario Digital Services Development are as follows:

- A sensible collection reflects a knowledgeable collections policy.
- Libraries are a sensible infrastructure for mediating community access to licensed content, and Knowledge Ontario is well positioned to promote the creation and dissemination of free content.
- Authentication and authorization mechanisms must be within reach of all Knowledge Ontario partners, regardless of available systems and systems expertise.
- Knowledge Ontario partners will retain some level of branding even when providing access to remote content.
- A digital collection must be accessible and discoverable to all of its target audiences.
- Preservation is fundamentally a commitment rather than a technology.
- The best digital collections play well with others.
- Virtual Reference, digital collection building, and many other technology-fuelled initiatives have established enough of a track record to make the effort of identifying best practices worthwhile.
- A framework of "social software" has emerged to facilitate communications and interactions with the communities served by Knowledge Ontario partners.
- A URI/URL is your contract with the world, persistent and sensible web addresses are what gives you the ability to leverage the web to tell your stories.

### **KO Programs and Services**

Six initial projects have been identified as the foundational components of Knowledge Ontario. [Ask Ontario](#), [OurOntario.ca](#) and [Resources Ontario](#) are all in various stages of active development.

#### ***Ask Ontario***

- 24/7 virtual reference help in locating information, solving problems and understanding issues
- Access in real time through email and instant messaging
- Assistance provided by qualified librarians and subject specialists in the public, school, college and university sectors.

#### ***OurOntario.ca***

- One place to search, discover, access, interpret and interact with Ontario's cultural heritage content in digital format
- A toolkit that will enable the creation, hosting and development of new digital cultural content at the local level
- Local London Room resources, depending on copyright status, can be made available in digital format to all Ontarians.

#### ***Resource Ontario***

- Electronic resources and materials that go beyond what is available on the Internet
- Online and digital databases and the full-text of newspapers, magazines and books equally available to all Ontarians at no cost
- A way for small and large, rural and urban, school, college, university and government libraries to provide equal access to a core set of valuable electronic resources
- Funding for electronic database subscriptions has been provided for a two year term.

### **Connect Ontario**

- A multi-level digital space for Ontarians to connect and interact with each other, sharing information and creating new knowledge

### **Teach Ontario**

- Online modules that will assist students, teachers, businesses and individuals to find, evaluate and use the information they locate through Knowledge Ontario and other Internet resources
- Learning tools to assist Ontarians in building their digital literacy and thinking skills

### **Video Ontario**

- Fast, reliable access to educational video content
- Connects Ontarians with health information, to help them make sound decisions and informed choices about their health care
- Promotes better health and supports the goals of Tele-health Ontario
- Platform for future educational video content

### **Knowledge Ontario's Project Activities for Year 1**

- Negotiating provincial licenses for a core suite of digital information resources that would serve the information needs of all Ontarians. DONE
- Vendor supplied training made available for libraries acquiring new or unfamiliar databases. DONE
- Developing technology and expertise to enable the digitization of Ontario information, with open space access to these materials
- Developing a 24-hour online reference service
- Developing innovative web-based learning tools

### **Implications for London Public Library**

- All publicly funded libraries in the Province are automatically eligible to receive Knowledge Ontario products and services.
- Knowledge Ontario has negotiated access to electronic resources from two vendors: Thomson Gale and EBSCO.
- Since London Public Library already subscribes to these databases through the CELPLO Library Consortium, we have received credits from the vendors in the form of additional digital resources.
- Sustainability of funding will be an issue for all public libraries at the end of the one-time funding term.