

SSLA Celebrates Golden Anniversary

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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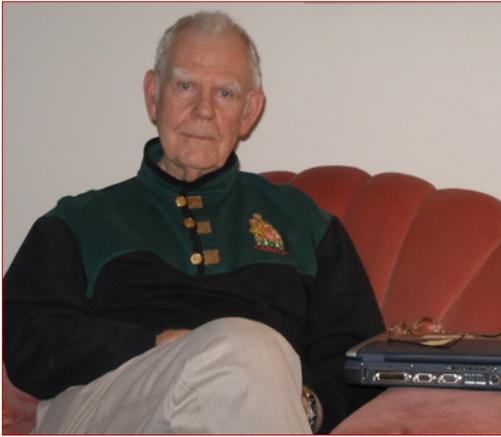
Violet Smotra-Cook, teacher-librarian at Regina's Judge Bryant Elementary School, can hardly contain her excitement. In 2009, the Saskatchewan School Library Association (SSLA) celebrates 50 years of leadership in the development, promotion, and improvement of school libraries. As chair of the Association's 50th Anniversary Committee, Smotra-Cook is hoping educators across the province will gain an appreciation for the SSLA's longevity and support for school libraries.

How will the SSLA mark its half-century milestone? Smotra-Cook and her committee will host a celebratory reception for SSLA members from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on March 23 at Saskatoon's Radisson Hotel. "The SSLA has partnered with the Saskatchewan iT Summit to provide keynote speakers and workshops of interest to teacher-librarians," Smotra-Cook explained. "Planning an anniversary event to coincide with the Summit seemed like the logical thing to do." In addition, a commemorative SSLA bookmark will be distributed to iT Summit attendees and to all teacher-librarians in Saskatchewan.

Smotra-Cook is delighted that former SSLA Executive members, many of whom are now retired from the teaching profession, are being invited to the reception. "The invitation is our way of thanking these individuals for their prior contributions," Smotra-Cook said. "They gave our organization a solid foundation and worked hard to improve school library programs in our province."

According to Smotra-Cook, the SSLA has an impressive list of accomplishments that are well worth celebrating. In 1964, the Association developed a standards document for Saskatchewan school libraries that was the first of its kind in Canada. In 1974, participation in a project coordinated by the Saskatchewan Library Association led to the founding of *Saskatchewan Library Week*, an annual event promoting literacy and libraries. The Association's 1987 publication, *The 4th R: Resource-Based Learning in the Curriculum*, was widely recognized for its delineation of the roles of stakeholders in quality school library programs. And most recently, SSLA input helped to shape a landmark document prepared by Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education – *Connections: Policy and Guidelines for School Libraries in Saskatchewan (2008)*.

The Saskatchewan School Library Association has an illustrious past, but its future is even brighter. This year, a new Web site (www.ssla.ca) was launched to commemorate the SSLA's golden anniversary and to move the Association into the twenty-first century. Smotra-Cook believes the Web site opens up a myriad of possibilities for promoting school libraries, disseminating information, engendering professional dialogue, and facilitating online professional development opportunities. "The sky's the limit," Smotra-Cook asserted. She may be right.



John G. Wright, founding president of the Saskatchewan Association of School Librarians (inception 1959), was instrumental in furthering the interests of school libraries in the province. Today, the Special Subject Council now known as the Saskatchewan School Library Association continues to build upon Wright's vision and confers an annual award in his honour.

*John G. Wright at his home in Edmonton, Alberta.
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