

LETTER OF INTENT

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Mission: Novanet is a consortium of academic libraries in Nova Scotia that cooperate to enhance access to information and knowledge for the benefit of their user communities.

Strategic objectives:

- 1.To utilize and enhance information technologies to improve access and services to the Novanet user community.
- 2.To facilitate the acquisition and deployment of electronic information resources in collaboration with other consortia and organizations.

Technical, financial, human resources: Novanet has three full time staff - an executive director and system administrators - operating a library management system serving 26 library sites throughout the province of Nova Scotia. As well, a vast array of expertise in library science and information delivery exists among the 200 staff of the member libraries. The 2000-2001 operating budget of Novanet is \$513,400.

Recent achievements: Novanet has undertaken a strategic planning process that builds on 12 years of progressive achievement (see the Novanet [Web site](http://novanet.ns.ca/) <http://novanet.ns.ca/> Click on the button "About Novanet" and then "Novanet Milestones" as well as "Cooperative Initiatives".) Most recently Novanet has enhanced the delivery of documents and information through a patron initiated document delivery system (Novanet Express), consortium wide circulation policies, and expanded membership. Novanet now serves over 40,000 post-secondary students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

Priorities for future development: Novanet has developed a \$1,320,000 financial strategy as a partnership of Novanet, member libraries, foundations, and other external funding agencies. As part of this initiative Novanet has received a foundation grant of \$250,000, contingent upon identifying matching funding. The strategic plan includes undertaking a pilot project for distance and continuing education students to provide a core collection of electronic resources, document delivery, and most importantly reference / consulting services through a consortia approach.

Project Short Title: Developing a Consortia Strategy to Improve Library Support for Distance and Continuing Education Students.

Project Title: Developing a Consortia Model for Exploiting New Information Technologies to Improve Library Support for Remote Distance and Continuing Education Students.

Justification: Anecdotal evidence tells us that distance education students are experiencing difficulties in obtaining quality information and reading material to support their studies at the post-secondary level. Some battle it out. Many others simply quit. As one persevering student wrote, "It shouldn't be this hard! ...". A preliminary literature review has suggested that solutions are beginning to be developed at the institutional level, but not for groups of libraries in partnership.

Purpose: This project will develop a new service model in the context of the most recent and innovative developments in information technology, such that students' individual differences, geographic location, and level of technological infrastructure are evaluated and accommodated in a customized support program, by library specialists dispersed throughout the consortium, working as a team. This project will develop and support library specializations. The team will be instrumental in developing and maintaining a distance education Web gateway for Novanet.

The level of support that we envisage would be impossibly costly for most post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia, but may be cost-efficient and effective if provided jointly by the members of the Novanet Consortium, using shared virtual core collections, electronic library services, equipment and expertise. It is intended to supplement existing services and provide a guaranteed minimum uniform level of service.

The underlying purpose is to improve the ability of distance and continuing education students to successfully complete courses and programs at Novanet institutions, and ultimately to increase the numbers of students who successfully complete courses and programs at Novanet post-secondary institutions.

General Outline:

Developmental Phase: We anticipate taking one year to develop the Model. This research will be completed in five stages, with each contributing to the design of the Model.

I. Literature Review

II. Three Surveys

- Students: Demographics and Needs Assessment
- Library Services for Distance Education: existing and planned
- Faculty, Instructors, Coordinators: Needs Assessment

III. Develop a tentative Service Model in the form of a Discussion Paper

- Novanet Distance Education Working Group
- Distance Education Liaisons at each Institution

IV. Forum or Mini-Conference [estimated 45 - 75 people]

- to bring stakeholder groups together in a planning exercise
- to present the discussion paper and draft Service Model
- to examine, discuss, critique, and refine the Service Model

V. Business Plan for a Pilot Project

Estimated Cost of Developmental Phase: \$32,000

Category	Comment	Novanet (in kind)	OLT
Salaries	3 months: professional & support	5,000	10,000
Surveys	mailing costs, site visits consulting fee for statistician data analysis	1,000	
Forum	stakeholders planning meeting students, staff, faculty travel, accommodation, expenses for all attendees Facilitator		15,000
Business Plan	publication costs editorial fees	1,000	
TOTAL		7,000	25,000

Pilot Project:

I. Year one: development of staff specializations & implementation

II. Year two: testing and refining the model while offering services

III. Year three: conducting evaluations; preparing recommendations for Novanet

Estimated Cost of Pilot Initiative: \$180,000

Cost Centre	Comments	TOTAL	OLT
Administrative Overhead / Contingency	10%	20,000	10,000
Core Collection of Digital Material	E-Books E-Journals required by specific programs CANCOPY - E-reserves	50,000	25,000
Equipment Leases	Fax, Digital Copier, Answering machine, Proxy server, Toll Free Phone Line, Laptops for team and PCs for office	50,000	25,000
Training Training Modules Database Design Security	Software leases Contracts with Nova Scotia IT firms and in kind contributions	30,000	15,000
Travel & Accommodation for Services Team	2 Week Professional Development once a year, monthly or bimonthly meetings	20,000	10,000
External Examiner	Mid Term and Final Evaluation	10,000	5,000
Total		180,000	90,000

The principal cost will be the licensing of a core collection of digital materials directly related to current program offerings. Providing access for remote students through a proxy server may increase licensing costs although most students will be covered through licenses at their home institutions. Licensing of e-reserve material through CANCOPY may be a new cost.

The second cost centre will be the leasing of hardware and equipment for the use of the project. This would be a tangible benefit for participation in the project. A substantial volunteer effort will be required by the Service Team. We anticipate providing laptops for service volunteers and PC's for office support as well as fax, digital copier / printer, answering machine, toll free phone line, and a proxy server to manage access to resources. Access to the Internet, phone line, and other overhead costs would be in-kind contribution of a member institution of Novanet.

The third cost centre will include contracting out to private companies the development of training modules to ensure the sustainability of the project through on-going staff development; and contracting out of the design of databases to ensure security for databases which will require a high degree of confidentiality and privacy. The database will be shared by staff in institutions province-wide as well as by students in the client group.

The fourth cost centre will include travel and accommodation for team members. The service team, who may include people different from the Steering Committee (Novanet Distance / Continuing Education Working Group) will participate in professional development activities during two weeks each year. Coordination and planning meetings will be held biweekly the first year and monthly the second year and quarterly the third year or as needed.

Target Audience: the combined distance / continuing education client population of Novanet institutions. The diversity of programs within Novanet institutions is both our greatest challenge and our greatest strength.

Benefits:

The evolution of Novanet continues through periodic upgrading of the technical infrastructure, most recently in 2001 through an upgrade of the GEAC integrated library system, and through years of dedicated work in developing a union database and a cooperative management structure. The evolution of collections to incorporate digital materials is being achieved through consortia license negotiations for collections of materials, by substantial investments by individual institutions, as well as by full participation in the Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP).

The evolution of electronic reference support services for the digital or virtual environment, however, has lagged behind. For this reason the Novanet Management Committee identified “services to distance and continuing education students” as an area requiring attention. If we are successful in developing and implementing a new service model for distance and continuing education students, we will have done the groundwork for a transformation of library services for all students.

Why This Application Merits Financial Support:

1. It is innovative, and can serve as a model for other library consortia around the world:

- **This project will design a process for first developing and then sustaining a centre of expertise in the creative uses of technologies to support the Distance and Continuing Education student.**
- **This project will provide guidance and support for an established community learning network to transform an area of its operations that interfaces directly with a diverse and geographically dispersed client group.**

2. It focuses on an under-served student population in an educational “growth sector”:

- **Distance and Continuing Education students are a specific client population for Novanet.**
- **The purpose of this project is to improve students’ ability to succeed in their courses. This encompasses the informal skills and knowledge that will enable a student to graduate with strong information literacy skills - competent in locating, managing, reading, evaluating and citing, and communicating appropriate information.**
- **Novanet assists students to be successful in their academic career and later in their working and professional life, regardless of their geographic location. This project seeks to ensure that the student studying at a distance is not disadvantaged in accessing appropriate information.**

3. It explores new uses of learning technologies in a collaborative environment:

- **This project’s objective is to test a new approach that acknowledges disparities in access to technological infrastructure in the distance and continuing education client population.**
- **This project will identify barriers that distance students experience in accessing supports available to on-campus students.**
- **This project seeks to support the efforts of faculty and instructors to enrich their courses with material newly available in digital formats, and to ensure that distance and continuing education students are able to share in the advantages of evolving digital and virtual libraries.**

4. It will be implemented by a unique consortium with a proven record of success in networking initiatives:

- **Novanet is both a geographical entity and a community of interest**
- **Novanet supports formal learning within 10 post-secondary institutions in partnership**
- **Novanet supports informal learning by allowing community access to collections and services**
- **Novanet has an existing network in terms of the technology and in terms of the communication and relationships between post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia. We would like to expand this network to include all distance and continuing education stakeholders**
- **Some services that will be evaluated include:**

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| - electronic reserves | - online tutorials and help sheets |
| - electronic book collections | - customized user instruction |
| - interactive reference online | - IT remote user technical support |
| - full-text database access | - toll-free phone line to library |
| - interlibrary loan services | - answering machine for off-hours |
| - document delivery | - e-mail and attachments, spreadsheet , word processing |
| - online indexes and abstracts and reference databases | |

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