

2014 January 17

Dr. Patricia Demers, Chair
Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives
Royal Society of Canada
Walter House
282 Somerset West
Ottawa ON K2P 0J6

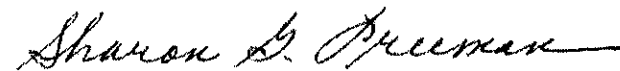
Dear Dr. Demers:

Burnaby Public Library is pleased to submit its response to the consultation of the Royal Society of Canada's Expert Panel on the status and future of Canada's libraries and archives.

Please extend to your members Burnaby Public Library Board's thanks and appreciation. The Expert Panel's efforts to hear from a broad range of Canadians about the value they place on libraries and archives and the Panel's efforts to engage with the library and archives communities in this country have not gone unnoticed.

The Board wishes the Panel well during its deliberations and looks forward to the final report.

Sincerely,



Sharon G. Freeman, Board Chairperson

Encl.

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The Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

Burnaby Public Library's Response to the
Consultation of the Royal Society of
Canada's Expert Panel

January 16, 2014



Burnaby Public Library

www.bpl.bc.ca

Submission to the Royal Society of Canada's Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

About Burnaby Public Library

Burnaby Public Library serves the community from four branches in Burnaby, British Columbia, and offers a mobile service for those residents who are homebound or have a visual impairment. The Bob Prittie Metrotown Branch, opened in 1991, is considered the central branch. The Home Library Service also operates out of this branch. The Cameron Branch, opened in 1980, serves the Lougheed Town Centre and is located in the Cameron Recreation Centre. The McGill Branch, redeveloped in 2001, serves the Brentwood Town Centre and houses the City of Burnaby Archives. Burnaby's newest branch, the Tommy Douglas Library, opened in 2009 and serves the Edmonds Town Centre.

The Library provides access to a rich array of the world's stories, ideas, and information. We support lifelong learning and literacy through our public programming, our collections, our public computing and Wi-Fi network, and our staff. Our branches are important public spaces, meeting places, and centres for discovery and dialogue.

All of Burnaby Public Library's actions and decisions are grounded in a set of shared values:

- Intellectual freedom: The Library encourages the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society.
- Community: The Library is a valuable community resource and a public place where everyone is welcome. The Library is committed to working in partnership with community groups and organizations.
- Visionary: The Library is future focused, looking beyond where it is today and anticipating the future.
- Stewardship and accountability: The Library is accountable to its patrons and funders, and practices *effective stewardship of Library* resources. The Library's decision-making processes are open and transparent to the community.

We envision a vibrant community where all people are informed, literate, and entertained.

Services

How would you describe the services Canadians, including Aboriginal Canadians and new Canadians, are currently receiving from Burnaby Public Library?

Our recent strategic directions include providing services that are inclusive and responsive to the Burnaby community, with a priority to reach out to newcomers, people on low income, teenagers, and young adults.

We serve a large population of immigrants (half of the 2011 Burnaby population was born outside Canada), and many who are new to the city (about a quarter of the 2011 population arrived within the previous five years). In support of newcomers and settled residents with home languages other than English, we

- Participate in the Urban Libraries Settlement Project (NewtoBC), which helps newcomers connect with libraries, and helps libraries connect newcomers with community services and programs;
- Loan children's books and music, and information on the benefits of adults sharing their first languages with their children, in 26 languages;
- Provide access to books, magazines, newspapers, and video materials in the languages most widely spoken in our community;
- Partner with other agencies to offer programs for adults and children in community languages; for example, we make our technology lab available to community partners who provide computer instruction in the languages spoken by their clients;
- Promote cross-cultural understanding and sharing through an award-winning web project featuring children's songs and rhymes in 15 world languages –
<http://www.bpl.bc.ca/kids/embracing-diversity>;
- Provide a Chinese-language interface to our catalogue;
- Feature information and links of interest to newcomers, on our website and in our branches;
- Offer programs and materials to support English language learners, and host an ESL learning centre operated by a community partner; and

"I am a new immigrant and if there is anything that I love most here in Canada, it is the amount of time and money invested to public libraries for people to use and take advantage of. The library encourages people to learn. It is a priceless benefit."

"The library also allows me to borrow Chinese books such that I can enjoy reading in my own language."

"As an immigrant to Canada (as a child) the library introduced me to this culture and has taken me around the world in books and in reality it has saved me!"

- Offer programs with a settlement focus especially for newcomers.

Our services to low-income individuals (and others) include home delivery of library materials, public computing services, and programs that support job seekers. We also participate in an interagency project to connect people who are homeless with community services and housing.

Increasingly, we support teens, young adults, and other users as content creators. We operate a creative technology lab with digital production tools that include image editing software and camcorders, hold contests that inspire and showcase creative work by teens, and offer workshops in which songwriters, illustrators, and other creators teach teens skills.

Libraries are currently hybrid operations, constantly pulled toward traditional services by many core users and pulled, equally, by a concern for relevancy from other users and potential users. What issues is Burnaby Public Library facing as it tries to make the transition to new service models?

As it becomes possible to automate more tasks, and more content and services can be provided remotely, we are adding unmediated services. But we remain committed to offering both mediated and unmediated services so our users have true choice. Mediated services remain in high demand and help us to stay in touch with our community.

The challenges we face in delivering our current mix of services, and in adjusting that mix on an ongoing basis, include

- Responding to pressure to reduce or eliminate mediated services; this pressure comes in part from funders looking for efficiencies that will reduce our operating expenses;
- Being nimble and imaginative enough to reinvent physical spaces for new purposes, and securing capital funding for these changes;
- Defining our place among other service providers (including arts, community, and recreation centres) as we move into new areas of programming, expand our services, and change the nature of our spaces —as the world around us changes;
- Providing adequate broadband and public computing capacity, and demonstrating to funders that this is an urban issue as well as a rural one;

“Library is absolutely crucial for low income people and seniors!!”

“It is the absolute best resource for low income folks like me.”

“It has been my comfort and solace when I was unemployed, my job search tool, my hope when I was sad and depressed. It’s indispensable to me.”

- Developing staff expertise in new technologies and devices, and maintaining this expertise as the sands beneath us continually shift;
- Maintaining emphasis on service to people with low digital literacy and technology skills, and also providing opportunities for them to increase their literacy and skills; and
- Branding the library and library services more effectively so people are aware of what we do today.

How does Burnaby Public Library measure outcomes of its service and community impacts?

We continue to use quantitative methods to measure use; these include counts of foot traffic, program participation, circulation, and website traffic.

But it's of equal or greater importance to measure transformations, so we employ qualitative methods, too. These include surveys and evaluation forms with open-ended questions, facilitated discussions, and channels such as social media, web forms, comment cards, and informal conversations, through which we receive feedback, ideas, and personal stories. We also learn about the impact of our services when our community partners share the stories and perceptions of their clients or nominate the library for recognition.

Each year, we compare ourselves to other libraries of similar size in municipalities with similar demographics. Every two years, we survey our users. Every six or seven years, we carry out a broader community assessment.

What's really needed is a way to measure transformations when the transformation doesn't become apparent at once or within months, but many years out.

Are libraries the appropriate institutions to catalogue, store, and provide access to research data?

Libraries are among the appropriate repositories of research data because we are value neutral, we are committed to providing access to wide-ranging views and diverse voices, we strive for universal accessibility, and we uphold principles of intellectual freedom.

At Burnaby Public Library, we subscribe or point to data stored by others (such as online census data), and also collect journals, books,

and other publications that present research findings and are of interest to a general audience that includes school-age students. We also catalogue, index, store, and provide access to research data in its broadest definition: information and ideas developed or collected through formal or informal research and presented in many forms and formats, including documentaries, memoirs, narratives, photographs, transcripts, meeting minutes, and self-help materials — anything that is meaningful to the communities we serve and supports community members in their own research and lifelong learning.

Our role is larger than holding data and facilitating access: we also help our users to navigate the data and find what is appropriate to their needs. For example, we recently created an online portal to documents and sites related to the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project (<http://bpl.bc.ca/reference-research/burnaby-information/trans-mountain-pipeline>), to aid patrons searching for information on the project and its potential impact on Burnaby.

Community Outreach and Awareness

Would people in the communities you serve know, or understand, how your library contributes to the community?

Those who use our services have, to various degrees, awareness and understanding of our contributions. They have described the library as “the heart and centre of the community,” “a cultural, learning and social center for the community,” “an awesome community hub that brings all walks together,” and “the foundation of a civil society.” We also find a high level of understanding of what we do, and its importance, among staff working at local service agencies and schools.

But there is still some ignorance, particularly among non-users, about how we contribute to the health and well-being of our community. Some of our non-users see the library as having value for other people in the community but not serving their own needs. Some assume we are no longer needed and will go the way of the dinosaur.

In the digital era, what support for patrons do/should public libraries provide?

Books are a cornerstone of the public library today, much as they were in eras past. When our patrons declare their love for the library, the reason they give most often is “free access to books.” Providing access to books will continue to be a core library service, even as the content and format of books change.

Our library also provides, and foresees providing for years to come,

- Free access to the Internet, computers, and basic software packages;
- Basic training or support in the use of computers, basic software and e-tools, and the digital products and devices (such as databases and e-readers) we make available or recommend;
- Training to build and strengthen information literacy skills;
- Assistance in navigating the stunning amount of information available online and in print;
- Access to digital production tools and other support for creative self-expression;
- Personalized readers' advisory services;

“It is the heart and centre of the community along with the community centre. It is for everyone and promotes growth and education.”

“It's the test of our society and culture.”

The library “gives one the opportunity to interact with other bibliophiles. Also to receive advice and suggestions from staff on almost any topic. Rumours abound that libraries and books will become obsolete due to development of electronic books and virtually all printed matter (“Kindle” etc.). As an old Luddite, I dread the day and hope I'm not around to see it!”

- Space to connect and engage with other community members;
- Quiet spaces — increasingly rare in a busy city;
- Programs that foster early learning and support lifelong learning, in a venue where people can ask questions and engage; and
- Support for offline and online education, including facilitated access to, or support for participants in, online learning opportunities such as webcasts and MOOCs.

What, in your opinion, are the specific roles of public libraries in community building and memory building?

In collaboration with other community organizations, we provide the building blocks of community: freely available and noncommercial spaces, resources, and support, for learning, for engaging with others, and for connecting to community services.

We build awareness of diversity and help to create a more welcoming community by reflecting many of the cultural practices and languages of our community in our programs, events, and collections.

Together with archives, schools, universities, and other heritage organizations, we help to preserve the heritage and history of the community by housing and promoting local collections. We have also helped people in our community to record and share their stories, and may one day play a stronger role in this regard.

And we maintain digital and physical collections that reflect the changing ideologies and events that shape our societies, and provide the opportunity to step outside current opinions and viewpoints.

New Directions: Digitization

What are the main challenges of born-digital material for your institution?

There are numerous challenges, many of which apply to digitized materials as well as born-digital materials.

- **Evaluation:** It can be hard to evaluate materials that haven't been reviewed in a traditional sense (or possibly in any sense).
- **Hosting:** A title may exist, but we lack the infrastructure to buy and lend it (authors occasionally want to donate their eBooks or sell them to us for 99 cents, but we need somewhere to host them).
- **Title-by-title licensing:** We don't have the capacity to negotiate rights with individual authors/creators.
- **Service options:** There are few platforms on which we currently can, as a Canadian library, purchase and loan eBooks.
- **Customizing collections:** When digital content is only available through all-or-nothing subscription services, selection is often left to a third party with no input from the library. Additionally, such services may offer little or no content from small or independent presses and Canadian creators. This makes it difficult to tailor a collection and appropriately apply budget to the needs and tastes of the local community.
- **User support and education:** Our users need to access eBooks on a dizzying and ever-changing array of devices with different software requirements and, often, high levels of support requirements. Lending models differ from platform to platform, so each new platform requires lots of user education. Checking out a streaming video on Hoopla or a digital magazine from Zinio is different from checking out an eBook from Overdrive. You can have five eBooks or downloadable audiobooks from BPL Library to Go, and five more from BC Library to Go as long as those five are older titles, and, once you have that straight, we start explaining about weekly or monthly limits on streaming video downloads and how they all cease once the library has reached the overall limit for the month — and that's without explaining the OneClick Digital audiobooks.
- **Equipment for access:** Some of the digital content we make available is inaccessible to those who cannot provide their own

devices or access our equipment when they need it, for as long as they need it.

- Availability to libraries: Lots of born-digital items will never be available for libraries to purchase; their funding model is for a one-user, one-download, one-price experience. We seem to be encountering this situation more often with interesting independent documentaries the library would love to own.
- Cataloguing: These materials don't enter our system through the usual workflow, so fitting them into the cataloguing stream in a timely manner, or deciding how they should be catalogued, has been a challenge.
- Catalogue coverage: Vendor-supplied batches of MARC records often have gaps, making it a challenge to ensure our catalogue has exhaustive and accurate coverage of digital titles. Also, the vendor can remove titles without notifying us, so we end up with catalogue records that lead nowhere, and these can be hard to find or manage.
- Catalogue terminology: Opacs / discovery layers do not always make it clear to the user where digital items "reside;" we have not arrived at consistent and widely understood terminology to indicate the location of e-content.
- Status: The status of e-content is often not displayed in the catalogue, or shows as "available" when this may not be the case;
- Integration: As the number of providers of e-content grows, the need for integration with conventional library content on one site (where users can place and monitor holds and checkout items) also grows.
- Creation: Though we provide access to some digital production tools, we can't yet offer what users need to create, in the library, such digital content as podcasts, videos, music, and webcomics. Creators would need space or equipment that allows them to make noise without disrupting others, far more time with tools than the one hour per day we currently offer, and guidance beyond what our staff and online tutorials currently can provide.
- Enduring access: As formats and software change, we may find ourselves with content that can't easily be migrated to new formats or accessed after, or without, software upgrades.

What will be the function and future of a brick-and-mortar public library in a paperless future?

It's not yet clear the future will be paperless, but if it is, or if we move much closer to that point, the brick-and-mortar library will continue to be a space for learning, creation, and connection.

Then as now, the library will operate as an informal learning centre, with face-to-face programs that serve, among others, those who benefit from learning and socializing with others in physical environments including people who are socially isolated and children, and those whose skills or circumstances make it difficult for them to participate in online environments.

The library will still provide an analogue learning commons in support of online education, with facilitated access to some online learning opportunities and space for group study.

It will remain a technology support centre for those who are unable to facilitate their own access to online content, services, and applications, and those who seek instruction in the use of digital content and related equipment.

And it will continue to be a point of contact with staff who have expertise in technology, research, literature, literacy, and community resources, for those who prefer to seek assistance, advice, and instruction in person, regardless of their skills. The library will also continue to be a place where information literacy is supported and encouraged.

We foresee the library of the future also being a place to access "old" paper and other analogue items that will not be digitized, as well as many print works that have persisted because they're superior to their digital counterparts for such purposes as shared reading with children, viewing large images, non-sequential reading, and reading for comprehension.

We hope the library of the future will serve as a creative studio, where people can develop and practise as content creators, storytellers, and communicators – in digital and other media. We also hope it can serve as a creative clubhouse, with access to other makers, especially members of the community, who can provide guidance or instruction.

We are confident the future library will remain a communal living and meeting room, where people can connect with others and feel part of a community, and a community services hub, where one can receive

"The library is a place for me to study; it provides the perfect working environment."

"A place of refuge. A place of opening the mind."

"It opens the world to me."

"Introduces me to other cultures."

"It makes it possible for everyone to learn new things so we can all be better people."

"With all the online material available today, it is still important to have a physical library available to foster a sense of community and humanity. Google is not the solution to all problems."

service referrals and access some services or their representatives. We humans are social animals, so we will always need public space.

In all of these functions, what differentiates the library from other media, entertainment, and learning organizations is that we provide free, universal, and unbiased access. We are better off as a society if non-commercial public spaces remain available.

“One of few refuges from commercial motives. Open and inclusive to needs of all users.”

New Directions: Education

What changes, in your judgment, are necessary in the professional education and training of librarians in the 21st century?

Professional programs need to develop as training for a profession rather than as a course of graduate studies. Scholastic achievement alone should not determine admission to a program; aptitude, related experience, and demonstrated interest in working with the public should carry significant weight.

Schools need to respect the experience of students who come to them after working in the field for some time without the degree: these students have much to offer in regard to practical application of the theory.

Schools also need to spend more time teaching students how to

- Connect with the communities they serve outside of the brick-and-mortar library, in the community;
- Conduct community assessments;
- Develop customer-oriented services;
- Evaluate impact;
- Manage people (staff, municipal councils, boards, patrons);
- Manage projects, finances, and buildings; and
- Apply critical thinking to management tasks.

Students need the option to prepare for careers in many types of libraries, including corporate and special libraries.

New librarians need to be encouraged to think outside of the box and re-envision what it means to be a librarian or library.

What conversations do you think need to take place with library, archival, and information studies programs about professional competency requirements, and have they begun?

The conversations need to be around what role we will be playing in an increasingly digitized world, and how we can use our particular skills to continue to contribute to healthy communities. These conversations

have begun; for example, they were a part of the recent process of accreditation of the University of British Columbia School of Library, Archival and Information Studies.

Schools are waking up to the fact they can no longer religiously stick to tradition, and course offerings are changing to reflect this. However, we would caution schools not to forget the “human” in “human-computer interaction,” and to remember that digital access to information and communication can both connect and isolate us. Face-to-face, in-person engagement remains vital to a healthy community.

New Directions: Resources

Public libraries are primarily funded by local municipalities, with little funding from any other level of government. Many towns and rural communities are too small to support needed technology. How do we encourage the creation of library systems (or consortia) that can meet the increasingly sophisticated technology-driven needs of libraries — whether urban or rural?

Multi-type library consortia, cooperatives, and federations already exist. Burnaby Public Library is a member of the BC Libraries Cooperative, a community enterprise strategically focussed on the delivery of shared operational infrastructure and resources for its diverse members. The Cooperative, with member libraries in BC, the Yukon, Manitoba and Atlantic Canada, helps libraries help people and is ahead of the curve in library innovation.

BPL is also a member of the Public Library InterLINK Federation — 18 autonomous public libraries located in a region stretching from Lillooet, Pemberton, Whistler, and Squamish to the Sunshine Coast and to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Interlibrary loan is another area where libraries, across sectors, cooperate. The success of a private member's bill dealing with the Library Book Rate in the House of Commons demonstrates that there is broad-based support for this type of facilitated sharing of resources. We note with regret that the National Library and Archives is no longer a key player in this important endeavour, undertaken by libraries on behalf of all Canadians.

For BPL, the real question is how do we support these multi-type library consortia, cooperatives, and federations? A strong national library and archives would be a good place to start.

What percentage increase to your current budget would permit you to realize the aspirations of your users? If you received an increased budget and consistent adequate resources, describe your library in 2017.

It would be difficult to come up with an exact percentage, but, beyond negotiated wage increases, we will need increases to cover the rising costs of maintaining aging buildings and of utilities. What is *most needed* is capital investment that will

- Make our older branches more flexible and adaptable to changing needs;
- Make our branches more energy efficient, to offset the increased costs of heating, cooling, and lighting; and
- Create more of the spaces being demanded by community members: Spaces in which to engage (through group study, meetings, workshops, and events) or simply for meeting with friends and neighbours; creative and “maker” spaces where Burnaby residents can produce and publish creative works in a variety of formats, learn to cook or preserve food, learn electronics, etc.; spaces that include resources for a specific purpose (job searches, English language learning, tutoring, etc.); quiet spaces for study, research, reading, and refuge from a busy city; and spaces with food and beverage services, especially for long-stay patrons.

Additionally, we will need to invest more in staff training to ensure our staff are thoroughly knowledgeable about *new* technologies, information sources, and approaches to service, and the nature and characteristics (demographics, diversity, interests) of the community we serve.

Our 2017 library would include

- Branches that can meet the needs of much denser populations in the areas they serve, through expansion of some branches, an additional location, and increased services;
- Great public spaces that offer well-designed program spaces, smaller group or quiet-study spaces, creative spaces, and plentiful seating — and that are attractive, flexible, comfortable, and welcoming;
- Buildings that are sustainable for the next decade or two (or longer) because they are designed for flexibility and to consume less energy;
- Services that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse community: enhanced world language collections (more electronic and physical items), more staff who are conversant in other languages and cultures, more newcomer collections and services, etc.;
- Services that foster literacy of all types — reading, information, digital, math, etc. — and for all ages;

- Staff at all levels who are knowledgeable, adaptable, innovative, and committed to regularly assessing, and doing their best to meet, the needs of the community;
- Designated staff who offer services beyond the walls of our library branches, bringing collections, programs, and information services to residents who may not come to our buildings for a variety of reasons; this would include a considerable expansion of our outreach services to reach community centres, parks, daycares, and so on;
- Continued and expanded strong partnerships with other local agencies and city departments for programming and services, and better integration of service provision between the library, schools, and city departments; and
- More-seamless service between Lower Mainland libraries.

In Conclusion

Burnaby Public Library is currently in the midst of a community consultation which will lead to a new Library Services Strategy. Board members and staff have been speaking with members of the community about trends that they believe the library needs to address and seeking their advice with regard to our future directions. What have been most revealing are the comments from teens. Technology is important certainly but they want us to “keep the real books”. They value the help they receive from staff and the wide selection of resources. They would like more space for study and more public computers. They see a future for libraries. Their advice – “keep up the good work!”

We would like to thank the Royal Society of Canada for undertaking an investigation into the status and future of Canada’s libraries and archives. It has given the library and archive communities a much needed opportunity to reflect on the role libraries and archives play and to describe the value Canadians place on these truly important public institutions.