



building communities together

## 2023 Business Plan Library (1660)

*Anton Dounts, Manager of Library Services*

***Working in partnership with communities, large and small, to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically and environmentally desirable region.***

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### **Department/Function Services**

The Cariboo Regional District Library (CRDL) was established in 1994 after the agreement between the Thompson Nicola Regional District and the Cariboo Regional District for the provision of public library service to the residents of both regions came to an end.

As defined by the Library Act, the Cariboo Regional District Library is an integrated public library system that provides library services, via its fifteen branches, to residents of the Cariboo Regional District. With their library card residents may, in addition to borrowing materials from any Cariboo branch, visit and borrow materials from any public library in BC through the BC OneCard agreement. As well, cardholders from other BC public libraries may visit and borrow material from any CRD Library Branch.

The CRDL's primary public services include: region-wide lending of print, audio, and video materials; online lending of e-books and e-audiobooks; free access to a variety of digital resources available via the library's website; resource sharing with other libraries; provision of free internet access via public internet stations and wireless local area networks; free meeting space for nonprofit groups; free story time programs for children and special interest programs for adults, some of which involve collaborating with other organizations. Centralized technical services for library branches include ordering, cataloguing, processing and distributing materials, and interlibrary loan support.

The library was established by the Cariboo Regional District Library – Local Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2466. Bylaw No. 2466 stipulates that the requisition for the service cannot exceed the greater of \$1,574,604 or a tax rate of \$0.81508/\$1,000 of assessment. Property owners in rural areas pay based on improvement assessment only, whereas those in municipalities pay on land and improvements.

All directors on the Cariboo Regional District Board are responsible for the governance of the library function. Library services are provided throughout the district, in all electoral areas.

Significant capital projects:

- 2009 completion of the Quesnel Library building
- 2010 completion of the new 100 Mile House Library building
- 2017 replacement of the McLeese Lake Library building
- 2018 re-location of the Bridge Lake Library from rented space in Bridge Lake to a new CRD-owned building located in Interlakes. The branch was re-named Interlakes Library.

## **Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies**

Coming out of the tumultuous period, that has seen a great number of temporary and permanent changes, the Library's overall strategy for the next 5 years is to regain its footing. This can be accomplished by addressing the high number of vacancies, professional training to accommodate newly recruited personnel, upgrading the infrastructure of our rural library network, improving patrons' accessibility to our resources, and commencing the work on the much-needed Strategic Plan.

### **2023 Goals**

1. **Goal:** Ensure that all library branches in the Cariboo region (rural and urban) are fully staffed.

**Rationale:** After many years of relatively stable staffing, staff turnover in Library Services began to grow in 2020 and, as the pandemic continued to drag on, grew significantly in 2021 and continues unabated. Rural library branches have seen the highest turnover of staff in recent memory, with long-term staff deciding this was the right time to retire. Since part-time staff are permitted by the collective agreement to work in multiple locations, when some of these staff retired multiple positions in multiple locations became vacant at the same time. As of October 2022, the Library Network is still severely understaffed, with most Community branches' casual positions unfilled, and one branch without a Community Librarian entirely.

**Strategy:** Fill the remaining vacancy to allow all branches to remain open, without the interruption of services. Recruit and hire casual staff to assure that the Community Librarians have back-up, in cases of emergency or scheduled vacations. Promptly recruit a certified library technician to mitigate a processing backlog. Continue to fill positions in urban branches as they become open. This goal has the highest priority and will continue to take precedence over work on all other goals.

**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

- 2. Goal:** Ensure that all staff hired during this period of high staff turnover receive the training necessary to provide a high standard of customer service.

**Rationale:** Replacing high numbers of staff in a short period of time often results in a situation where positions are filled, but adequate training has not yet taken place. The challenge is to bring the skill level of all new staff to an acceptable level, so customer service does not suffer, and new staff do not feel frustrated by not being able to complete tasks that are required of them or provide satisfactory service to the public.

**Strategy:** Offer new (and existing) staff in rural branches a combination of digital and in-person training in basic and advanced library education and skills. In-person training will take place both in the employee's own branches and in larger branches, with all due considerations to the budgetary constraints.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.
- 3. Goal:** Improve access to the Library's digital collections and other online services by developing an improved library website.

**Rationale:** The CRD Library website is a portal to its digital resources and services and is the 'face of the library' to the digital world. The existing website, while still functional, is outdated, not mobile-friendly and difficult to update. It no longer offers the best access to the Library's digital services, which are growing.

**Strategy:** Connect with our partners at the BC Libraries Co-op and collaborate in the designing and implementation of a LibPress website, which is based on a template that is used by 62 libraries throughout BC and Manitoba. The addition of a LibPress website is the logical next step as the CRD already uses a number of services offered by the Co-op. This will allow us to share the costs with other Co-op members, use the expertise of the LibPress team, and benefit from the Co-op's round-the-clock technical support.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 4. Goal:** Resume work on the Strategic Plan.

**Rationale:** Develop a plan to help the Library respond to the changing needs of the region and the communities it serves; and to meet directives from the Province's Libraries Branch that all public libraries have an up-to-date Strategic Plan.

**Strategy:** Given the challenges faced during the pandemic, the efforts on the 5-year strategic plan were stopped indefinitely, as the Library was sidetracked by the more pressing issues in staffing and the outcomes thereof. The unexpected interruptions necessitate that we re-evaluate the feasibility of resuming the strategic plan that was started in 2018, or begin anew if the datasets that were collected are now considered outdated.
- 5. Goal:** Provide facility/equipment improvements to Area and Community library branches.

**Rationale:** Maintain library buildings and ensure essential equipment is replaced / updated as needed; ensure facilities continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve; and support new services.

**Strategy:** Prioritize viable projects that focus on access, safety, comfort, energy conservation, building aesthetics and which meet service delivery requirements. Priorities for 2023 include: updating the furnishings and the computer hardware, as well as conducting long-awaited maintenance on the 100 Mile House branch (log staining).

## 2024 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Expand public programming to include a broad range of age groups.

**Rationale:** CRD libraries have developed good and consistent programming for young children but have fallen short of consistently providing programming for other age groups. The 2018 public engagement survey conducted to generate ideas for the future direction of Library Services revealed a desire for library programming aimed at more diverse range of ages, specifically adults.

**Strategy:** Use the results of the 2018 staff and public engagement surveys, and a survey of other public libraries to identify adult workshop ideas. Develop and deliver an adult workshop series in each Area Branch in 2024 and encourage staff to make this a regular part of the annual programming schedule.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
- 2. Goal:** Develop a marketing plan for Library Services that will keep the public informed about services the Library has to offer.

**Rationale:** Many people who answered the public engagement survey were surprised at the variety of services offered by the Library and indicated that they would use more of them if only they had known about them.

**Strategy:** Establish a marketing plan committee of library staff from various sized branches to develop a marketing plan for Library Services with help from Communications.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
- 3. Goal:** Complete work on the new website.

**Rationale:** The process of developing and customizing the website will take significant time and effort. We will need to build on the work done in 2023 and familiarize all staff with the new portal to our resources.

**Strategy:** Following the initial rollout of the website in 2023, additional work will be necessary to polish some design features and the user interface, to make the website as inviting and user-friendly as possible.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #5 Increase public awareness and use of services and resources the Library has to offer.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

- 4. Goal:** Finalize the new Strategic Plan for Library Services for 2025-2030.  
**Rationale:** Libraries use strategic plans to focus on specific actions to move forward. Public libraries throughout B.C. have adopted strategic plans as their primary planning tool. This will allow us to complete the work started in the previous year.  
**Strategy:** Use established strategic planning guidelines to create a strategic plan for Library Services for the next 5 years. Conduct an environmental scan, refresh the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, identify stakeholders, and engage stakeholders in planning for the future direction of Library Services. Based on research and stakeholder engagement, develop goals, objectives and actions that will move Library Services forward for the next 5 years. This process is the only major goal for 2025 and is expected to be a year-long effort.  
**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #3 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 5. Goal:** Provide facility/equipment improvements to Area and Community library branches.  
**Rationale:** With the initial work of creating a list of priorities, we will need to complete the purchase and delivery of the equipment to the branches in need of upgrading.  
**Strategy:** An itemized purchase list will be created for each branch. The items will then be purchased and delivered to the respective branches.

## 2025 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Begin to implement goals identified in the new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.  
**Strategy:** Apply the parameters of the Strategic Plan Goals to all proposed programming and services opportunities to ensure that the Library does not stray too far from the established mission.  
**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 2. Goal:** Eliminate overdue fines in all age categories.  
**Rationale:** Overdue fines are a significant barrier to people who most need access to library materials. Stories abound about people who stopped visiting their public library, sometimes for decades, because they either can't afford to pay their overdue fines, or they are too embarrassed about having fines even if they can afford to pay them. The elimination of overdue fines is a growing trend both in BC and internationally. More than 300 libraries across Canada have already taken this action. Fine revenue has already been falling off, as the popularity of digital books and audiobooks outpaces the popularity of print material. Digital material is automatically returned to the library on the due date and does not generate overdue fines. The library should be able to make adjustments to expenditures that will

accommodate the reduction in revenue previously generated by overdue fines. Libraries that have already taken this action report a significant positive response from the public that greatly outweighs any financial inconvenience.

**Strategy:** Adjust the Library budget to accommodate the complete elimination of overdue fines. Note that fines will still exist for lost and damaged material, but staff will be encouraged to make accommodations where possible.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

3. **Goal:** Examine the feasibility of a digital-services-only library card  
**Rationale:** Digital-services-only library cards are a growing trend in public libraries. The card accommodates people who only want to use the Library's digital resources, who prefer to read books only in e-book format, and those who are not eligible for a full-services library card.  
**Strategy:** Identify other public libraries that offer digital-services-only library cards and compile policies and procedures related to the service. Create a set of policies and procedures specifically for CRD libraries for a digital-services-only library card. Introduce staff to the service and provide training in the policies and procedures prior to launching the service.  
**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #1 Meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant library services and collections.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** None.

## 2026 Goals

1. **Goal:** Standardize library procedures to provide fair, equal, predictable services to residents throughout the Cariboo Region.  
**Rationale:** Library customers who visit multiple branches on a regular basis have noted a difference in how library policies are followed in different branches, which they find confusing and sometimes upsetting. The Cariboo Regional District Library is committed to providing equitable service in branches across the region.  
**Strategy:** Identify library procedures that are being followed differently in different branches, causing confusion for patrons who visit multiple branches. Meet regularly with Area Librarians and develop standardized procedures for all Library branches. This is expected to be a large, time-consuming project with a significant staff training component.  
**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #1 Meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant library services and collections.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
2. **Goal:** Implement regular training days, in-person and remotely, that includes staff from Area Libraries and Community Branches.  
**Rationale:** In engagement sessions staff indicated they would like more training. Some staff admitted they were not comfortable discussing some library services with customers because they, themselves, were not exactly sure how they worked.

One of the suggestions for staff training that was made by library staff was to have regular group training days to cover topics specific to library work.

**Strategy:** On regular basis, identify topics and schedule in-person and virtual meetings to cover topics that are most relevant. Area Libraries will consider having Training sessions on Mondays with Community Branches joining in remotely via MS Teams app.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.

- 3. Goal:** Investigate the feasibility of instituting self-directed learning sessions for all staff that includes one paid hour per week or month dedicated to a subject of the employee's or employer's choosing that is related to library work.

**Rationale:** Library staff mentioned in the staff engagement survey that they would like to expand their knowledge but need a more flexible working schedule in order to make that happen. This is particularly true for part-time staff whose positions require them to work directly with customers for their entire shift, leaving no time during their day to focus fully on learning activities.

**Strategy:** Investigate the financial and other implications of instituting self-directed learning sessions for FT, PT, and Casual staff in all Library branches. Present the results at a Library Manager's meeting for comments and adjustments. Deliver a presentation on the topic to library staff that outlines the options available to them at scheduled meetings held at the three urban branches. If feasible, begin to offer paid, self-directed staff learning to all levels of library staff in 2025.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** None.

## 2027 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Review infrastructural and material needs of all branches and implement a plan of action.

**Rationale:** In order to serve our communities and attract future users to our programmes and services, the library necessitates a warm and welcoming environment. It is paramount to maintain the library branches in a comfortable, clean, and organized state. Which requires that we evaluate each branch and highlight aspects that need to be improved.

**Strategy:** Visit each branch and, in coordination with the Community and Area Librarians, identify items or facilities in need of repair or upgrade. Then, compile a list of priorities, schedule for their execution, and budget accordingly.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

## **Overall Financial Impact**

The provincial Covid Relief and Recovery Grant was applied for and accepted to the amount \$127,000. The funds will be used on a number of initiatives: Upgrading the furnishings and computer hardware of community libraries; facilitating the access to electronic resources with the creation of the new website and renewal of digital subscriptions; improving the accessibility of library services by purchasing additional DAISY reader for the visually-impaired; developing professional development training by participating in trade conferences (2023 Beyond Hope Conference in Prince George); and other related projects.

The requisition level for 2023 is an increase of 3.5% above the 2022 requisition. This percentage may remain at 3.5% going forward or may be lower depending on actual costs and other funding sources that might be identified in each year of the library budget.

The 100 Mile House Branch, completed in 2010, is a log structure and as such requires specific, regular maintenance including the re-staining of the logs. This will be an expense of approximately \$40,000 which is included in the budget on a 5-year rotation that began in 2017. That amount is included in the projected budget for 2023.

Major repairs to the Williams Lake Branch, including dealing with tree roots growing into the sewer lines may soon be required. In addition, the branch is aging and soon will require repairs and updates to the interior. When undertaken, these repairs and updates will draw on capital reserves.

Costs involved in the hiring and training of staff in 2023 will be covered by regularly projected expenses. However, if the regular training days that are planned for 2026 and extra time for part-time staff to participate in self-directed training sessions (planned for 2026) are implemented, there will be implications to the Salaries and Benefits for Part-time Staff lines in the library budget, which will need to be identified and addressed in 2026.

The much-needed website upgrade will be tackled in collaboration with our partners at the BC Libraries Co-op, which will significantly reduce our expenses. The projected costs are one-time fee of \$1,500 to rollout the website and additional \$1,200 (approx.) per month for hosting and maintenance. The work is scheduled to begin in 2023.

Although the goal of standardizing library procedures will be time-intensive, there should be minimal financial implications. This is also true of the 2024 goal of expanding public programming to a broader range of age groups than is currently being served.

Developing a marketing plan will have insignificant financial implications. However, implementing the plan will have implications on future budgets. It will be the responsibility of staff working on this goal in 2024 to identify those projected costs.

Eliminating overdue fines for all age groups, which is projected for 2025, will have financial implications because there will be less revenue generated. It is expected that staff



will adjust expenditures in 2024 and beyond to accommodate the change in revenue so the financial impact will be as close to neutral as possible.

Library services will have \$758,930 in capital reserves at the beginning of 2023.

## **Significant Issues & Trends**

### Access to Services

Remote access to the Library's public catalogue, to online circulation services, and to digital resources is growing in popularity as society shows increased interest in self-service from wherever they happen to be. People want to place holds, renew checked-out material, pay fines, download digital content, update their contact information, etc. without needing to visit the library in person. The Library needs to recognize and accommodate this trend with a website that is up to date, interactive, and easy to use from a variety of devices with screens of varying sizes. To facilitate as much remote access as possible, some longstanding library policies and procedures will need to be updated and staff trained in their proper application.

Removing barriers to accessing library services continues to be a strong trend in the library sector. One way to accomplish this is by eliminating the fines that have traditionally been charged when borrowed material is not returned on time. The challenge is to balance the annual funds realized from overdue fines against the value of removing one of the biggest barriers to library access suffered by people in challenging economic circumstances.

### Technology

Access to reliable, high-speed internet remains a challenge for rural areas while demand for it continues to grow. In some areas of the region, internet access in resident's homes is a challenge or, in some areas, an impossibility. This, and the fact that access to many necessary government services is increasingly available only online, makes centralized internet access in remote communities a necessity. The non-commercial nature of the public library makes it the perfect location in a community for this service, which includes access to internet stations and printers/scanners within our branches, and wireless connectivity for those with laptops, tablets, and smart phones.

### Partnerships and Collaboration

Working in collaboration with other libraries and with local community groups and agencies continues to be an ongoing trend. Cost savings can be significant when libraries that consume similar products and offer similar services band together to negotiate better prices. This has been proven time and again as the Library works with other public libraries at the national, provincial and regional level to negotiate prices for such things as Canada Post shipping, electronic resources, author visits, technology programming, and library-related supplies such as library cards, security strips for books, DVD security overlays, etc. Similarly, it is more efficient and benefits the community when local agencies offering similar programs and services to the public work together. Professional staff regularly

attend meetings of regional and provincial library partners where members collaborate on projects of interest to the library sector and larger libraries provide guidance and help to their smaller counterparts.

### Evolving Library Collections

Our Library, like all libraries, has been experiencing a decline in use of physical collections. For the most part, this can be attributed to the shift in demographics, the effects of the pandemic, and the increasing popularity of digital media.

DVD collections continue to be highly used in all CRDL branches, even as their popularity decreases in most urban areas. This is due, primarily, to the inability of many Cariboo residents to access video streaming services via high-speed internet. A subscription-based streaming service would be an option for CRD branches only if the majority of library users have the ability to access it. That would require an expansion of affordable, high-speed internet to homes throughout the region.

While the library's magazine collections are still well used, the provincial print newspapers have been largely discontinued in the Cariboo. Although, the e-journals and e-magazines have become an appealing option for active users of smart phones and tablets, the absence of the long-standing subscriptions to The Province and The Vancouver Sun are already being felt.

Many libraries have added 'objects' to their lending collections as an addition to reading, listening and viewing material. These additions have been very popular and fill a community need when multiple people want to borrow and use a 'thing' for only a short period of time. Objects have included such things as musical instruments, computer tablets, science kits, recreational equipment, etc. CRD library staff are investigating how this might be implemented in our own library system.

### Resource Sharing

There have been significant changes to resource sharing on a province-wide basis. As predicted, the Interlibrary Connect (ILC) service that was launched in 2015 has become the resource sharing method of choice for most people due to its simplicity of use and the quick turnaround of requested material. Traditional interlibrary loans now represent only a small fraction of the total number of items shared between BC libraries, while ILC loans between libraries have increased exponentially.

### Staffing

Maintaining a staff that is trained to a level where they can continue to offer optimal library service during the best of times is challenge; it has been doubly challenging during the years of the pandemic. Staff need to continually update their knowledge to remain current on the emerging trends within the librarianship field. For this reason, the CRD Library Strategic Plan (and the 5-year Business Plan) will focus on this very important issue.

## Planning/Community Engagement

Public library services are transforming to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society. The challenge the CRDL faces, along with all public libraries, is to ensure that its facilities and services accommodate the past while anticipating the future.

Community engagement remains important in public libraries, particularly when developing plans for library services in future years. The perfect opportunity for the community to engage with library staff, to express their views and contribute to the direction library services will take in the future, is during the strategic planning process. The next major community engagement initiative will take place in 2030 in preparation for the next Library Strategic Plan. Smaller scale engagements may take place before that time that focus on a particular community or library service.

## **Measuring Previous Years Performance**

In January 2020, CRD library staff began work on identifying goals for the 2020-2024 Library Strategic Plan. After making positive progress initially, however, the closure of public libraries in March of 2020 and the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021 has stalled forward progress on projects. Library Services is primarily a public facing, operational-based service, as opposed to a project-based service. As such, although special projects are identified each year in the business plan, significant progress can only be made on those projects if the operational side of Library Services is stable. In 2020 and again in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the effect of significantly de-stabilizing the operational side of Library Services.

Library managers have had to adjust to and help staff adjust to constantly changing provincial health orders that affect how the library service can be offered to the public. Staff have had to learn how to cope with members of the public who are aggressively vocal in their disagreement with provincial health orders related to the pandemic.

Sudden and unexpectedly high staff turnover has also had the effect of de-stabilizing the operational side of Library Services during this period. Although all branches have been affected to some degree, turnover has been significant in rural branches where staffing has been relatively stable for many years. This high rate of turnover follows a trend noticed in many sectors during this pandemic.

Dealing with these challenges has prevented staff from working on goals that were set pre-pandemic.

The following progress was made on 2021 goals.

**Goal:** Improve access to the library's digital collections and other online services by developing an improved library website.

This goal was completely set aside as staff turned their attention to developing new services and new models for delivering old services after the COVID-19 pandemic

forced libraries to close in March 2020. Staff will return their attention to this project in 2023. The preliminary work of identifying partners and paths of action is already underway.

**Goal:** Adjust hours of operation to meet customer needs.

Hours have been adjusted at two branches on a test basis (McLeese Lake and Tatla Lake) and changes are being considered at the Wells Branch.

**Goal:** Provide facility/equipment improvements to Area and Community Library Branches.

Work on this goal was suspended in 2021. Work will resume in 2023. The project to identify new uses for the mezzanine in the 100 Mile House Library has been identified as a low priority project for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope to resume work on established goals in 2023 as changes to services due to a (hopefully) waning pandemic are no longer required.

Despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff made progress on the following initiatives in 2022:

- The Canada Summer Jobs application for three students to run the Summer Reading Club was successful again this year, with the largest potential grant of this kind that has ever been on offer. However, responses to the job postings were uncharacteristically low and only two students were hired. Nevertheless, the students at Quesnel and Williams Lake successfully took on the challenge of running the program and had positive impact on our young library patrons.
- The loan duration for most library material was increased from 3 to 4 weeks and the number of renewals increased from one to two. Longer loan periods and more opportunities to renew material relieved some of the pressure people feel to return books quickly and reduced the number of overdue fines that are charged. This is the first step in achieving the Library's goal of being fine-free by the end of 2025.
- The hours of operation were adjusted at the McLeese Lake Branch, as well as at the Tatla Lake Branch, for a trial period beginning in January 2021. The suitability of the new schedules will be evaluated in 2023.
- In collaboration with Area Librarians and their staff, a new Patron Code of Conduct has been created and enacted.