



# **GRAND FORKS & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## Provincial Public Library Grants Report 2020

Grand Forks & District Public Library



### Introduction

The Grand Forks & District Public Library is located in the heart of the Kootenay Boundary region. Serving the communities of the City of Grand Forks, Christina Lake (Area C), and rural Grand Forks (Area D), our library is an important community hub for a population of approximately 9000 people. Our population is a bit older than in other British Columbia communities, with many choosing Grand Forks and the surrounding area as a place to retire. Although it can be a quiet place during the winter, warmer months find our area bustling with tourists coming to enjoy the unparalleled beauty of the sunshine and our stunning lakes, rivers, and mountains. Industry in our area includes logging, agriculture, and some manufacturing. There is something for everyone in Grand Forks and the surrounding area, and at the Grand Forks & District Public Library we strive to provide excellent service to all demographics of our community.

2020 began strong for the Library, with increased circulation, steady programming attendance, and a consistent number of daily visitors. Of course, like all libraries across the province, we made the decision to close the Library on March 17 due to uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, staff worked behind the scenes, mostly from home, while we outfitted the building with safety gear, moved furniture to promote distancing, and adjusted cleaning procedures. We were able to reopen our doors with limited hours for browsing and borrowing on June 3. Though we have extended our hours and services since June, we are still operating in a limited capacity, and expect to be doing so for many months to come.

Our last strategic plan ended in early 2020, and the Board opted to delay implementing a new plan until the global situation became more predictable. In February 2021, the Board adopted new Strategic Goals for 2021-2022.

## PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

### PRIORITY 1 - IMPROVING ACCESS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

The Grand Forks & District Public Library supported this priority in the following ways:

- The Library offers 24/7 wi-fi service that is accessible even outside the building in our parking lots or on the front street. At all hours of the day, patrons park or sit on the steps using a laptop or a mobile device to use our internet.
- In January until March of 2020, the Library offered a weekly drop-in technology help program, Community Learning Place, in partnership with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL).
  - This program generally serves seniors, who either bring their own devices or use a laptop we provide. They come with specific questions or tasks that they would like to learn and CBAL facilitators help them to master their objectives. 5-10 people attend the program each week. Participants report increased confidence in using computers and smartphones, and an improved ability to troubleshoot problems.
  - Neither the Grand Forks & District Public Library nor CBAL have offered in-person programming since March 2020, so this program has been put on indefinite hiatus, though it is a frequent request from library patrons and local service providers, so when it is safe to do so, we will be restarting the program.
- In July 2020, we received a \$3500 grant from the Emergency Community Support Fund, which we used to purchase new furniture and Plexiglas dividers for our 6 public access computers. The City of Grand Forks provided in-kind support by installing a new electrical outlet in the floor at the location we wanted the computers. This allowed us to safely offer access to all of our public computers, compared to just 3 when we first reopened. Having the public computers all in one place again also allowed us to provide additional safe seating for patrons wishing to use their own devices in one of our study carrels.



New public computer location and furniture with plexiglass dividers.

## PRIORITY 2 - BUILDING CAPACITY

The Grand Forks & District Public Library supported this priority in the following ways:

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Library Director has been participating in regular Zoom calls with the Association of British Columbia Library Directors (ABCPLD) and the Kootenay Library Federation (KLF) Library Directors Advisory Group. These calls have been an important opportunity for our library to learn and share about COVID responses and best practices, as well as normal library operations issues and other news.
- As Chair of the KLF Library Directors Advisory Group, the Library Director worked with the KLF and the BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) to plan a "Governance and Closed Libraries: Decision making in the time of COVID-19" workshop for KLF library directors and trustees, which was later offered more broadly to trustees across the province.
- The Library Director also took part in several other professional development workshops offered by the KLF, BCLTA, ABCPLD, the Homeless Library Institute, Canada Helps, and more throughout the year.
- All library staff participated in two all-day workshops in January ("The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness") and October (reader's advisory techniques).
- Three interlibrary loans staff participated in a roundtable Zoom discussion with other interlibrary loans staff in the KLF in November.
- For the first time in 2020, the KLF was able to offer the retained services of a labour lawyer. The Grand Forks & District Public Library used his services several times throughout the year to answer questions on both COVID-related and standard labour and union questions. If the KLF did not offer this service, our library would not have been able to afford this expertise and would have gone without seeking legal advice.

## PRIORITY 3 - ADVANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

The Grand Forks & District Public Library supported this priority in the following ways:

- Several library programs support this priority
  - Youth in Philanthropy Club, a monthly meeting of teens and young adults where they discuss opportunities for local philanthropy and consider a global perspective. This program continued in a virtual format following the cancellation of in-person programs this spring.
  - Death Café, a bi-monthly meeting offered in partnership with the Boundary Community Hospice Association, where participants discuss anything and everything death-related, including grieving, funerals, dying, and more. This program was put on hold in March and has not yet resumed, but it did attract about a dozen participants each time and we look forward to resuming the program in the future.
  - Peace Café, a monthly meeting offered in partnership with the Boundary Peace Initiative, where participants tackle big questions on environmentalism, violence, and more with an end goal of creating a more peaceful world. This program also attracts about a dozen people each time, and has grown in 2020 to be included in

the Grand Forks Secondary School's Citizenship class curriculum, with students joining the conversation with local people of all ages to achieve the same goals.

- In July, when library staff were comfortable with expanding hours and services following our reopening in June, we reinstated public computer access to help people access printing and government forms, services, and other information.
- In August, we completed a renovation of our reading area with funds from our Friends of the Grand Forks & District Public Library group and a private donation from 2019. The renovation included installing a Samsung Frame television, which we have used so far for virtual staff professional development, but intend to use in future for programming presentations. When the TV is off, it can be set to display artwork and convincingly replicates a real painting. We have partnered with Gallery 2, the local public art gallery, to use the screen to display pieces from the gallery's permanent collection, bringing quality local art to people who would likely not have seen these pieces as they are usually kept in storage at Gallery 2.



The Frame in our reading area displaying "Benches, English Bay" by Susan Gransby, part of the Gallery 2 permanent collection.

#### PRIORITY 4 - ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

The Grand Forks & District Public Library supported this priority in the following ways:

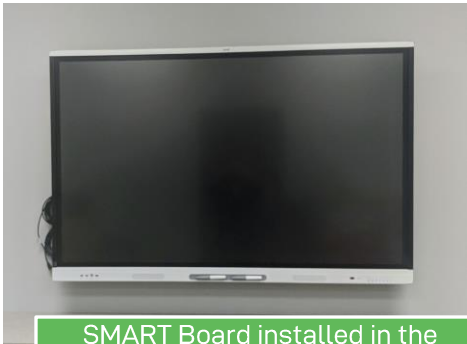
- The Library Director's planning and participating in the previously mentioned BCLTA "Governance and Closed Libraries: Decision making in the time of COVID-19" workshop also supports the 'Enhancing Governance' priority.
- The Library Director and Board Chair attended a BCLTA workshop on transitioning from a Public Library Association to a municipal library. After reporting on the process to the entire Board, the Board decided it was not a good time for the Library nor the City of Grand Forks to consider the change, and will revisit the idea later.



## TECHNOLOGY GRANT - FINAL REPORT

Funds from the Digital Initiatives grant were used for the following purposes:

- Purchasing a laptop and conference call speaker for in-library patron use.
  - At this time, the Library Board has not yet adopted a technology lending policy, and so these items are not yet in circulation. We expect to begin offering this service at the end of February 2021.
- Purchasing a SMART Board for use in the Library's Meeting Room.



SMART Board installed in the Library's Meeting Room.

- The SMART Board was installed in October and we so far have used it internally for Board committee meetings and staff Zoom workshops. As our Meeting Room is not currently available for public use due to COVID-19 precautions, we do not currently have further outcomes to report.
- When Meeting Room bookings resume, all users will have access to the SMART Board. We are looking forward to this opportunity as previously, approximately half of our bookings requested the use of a projector, which is not something we had available for public use, and so we expect this technology to fill that gap.

- Building the Idea Lab

- In addition to donations from private people, the Y. P. Heung Foundation, and the Grand Forks Credit Union, we used the remainder of the Digital Initiatives funding to build our new Idea Lab space where our public computers used to be. The lab includes a Samsung Flip digital whiteboard, plenty of electrical outlets, and flexible furniture.
- The intended purpose of the Idea Lab is to promote creative endeavors, offer space for students, entrepreneurs, and remote employees to work or do virtual meetings, and eventually (when it's safe to do so) for small groups to have meetings and work on group projects.
- The Board has not yet adopted policies for booking the Idea Lab, so it now available on a drop-in basis, but we expect to start accepting regular bookings to use the Idea Lab at the end of February.



Inside the Idea Lab.

- On February 6, 2021, the first trial booking of the Idea Lab was a local family without reliable internet access using the room to host a virtual birthday party for a family member in Ontario. We were happy to be able to offer this opportunity for a family to reconnect in a time when so many people are struggling to maintain social connections.

## COVID-19

The Grand Forks & District Public Library ceased all operations on March 17, 2020, due to uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. By the end of March, all full-time staff were working from home. Part-time staff were laid off. In late April, remaining staff began working at the library alone for one day per week. In May, we began working in earnest on reopening the doors, and after extensive health and safety discussions and training, we returned all staff to working in the building. We reopened the building for browsing at the beginning of June, and brought part-time staff back to work at the beginning of July and reinstated public computer access. We did not pursue a curbside-only phase.

Since July, library foot traffic has averaged 120 people per day, which is a little more than two-thirds of what we had in 2019. Circulation has been steadily increasing since reopening, with December of 2020 circulation at 99% of what it was in December 2019. Surprisingly, use of e-resources has not changed significantly, though e-books and e-audiobooks have seen consistent increases over the past several years.

The financial cost of COVID-19 supplies in 2020 amounted to about 1% of the 2020 operating budget. This includes Plexiglas, hand sanitizer, extra soap, cleaning supplies, and masks. Extra staff time was not calculated, but 2020 library staffing costs amounted to 100% of the total budget, despite laying off part-time staff for 12 weeks. We received full funding from our local government in 2020, but our 2021 funding request to the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary was not fully met, and we will be reducing programming and laying off a part-time staff position as a result.

The advent of regular Zoom KLF and ABCPLD meetings in March were an incredible opportunity to help us navigate the COVID-19 situation and beyond. These meetings have been an important lifeline for many public libraries as we navigate this uncertain time.

Grand Forks and Christina Lake have so far been lucky to see very few local cases of COVID-19. This presents an interesting situation for us: we are trying to take all of the precautions while knowing that infection here is highly unlikely. It is a challenge to maintain health and safety procedures in this situation while people are feeling fatigued with all of the new rules. Hopefully, 2021 will continue to bring very low COVID-19 numbers to our area, and good health and well-being to our staff and patrons.

## SUMMARY

2020 will be remembered as a time of great uncertainty and fear. It was also an important time of learning and innovating for our library, and it made clear how important we are to our community. We learned that we are able to adapt and innovate even in confusing and changing situations. When we first reopened our doors in June, we had patrons literally crying tears of joy to be able to come back inside the Library, and it was humbling to see how crucial our library is to the community. In a time when many businesses across the province face severe scrutiny for their safety protocols, people in our community are calling the Library “the safest place in town”. We hope to couple the renewed spirit of innovation and energy we discovered last year with that sense of community importance and safety to inform our practices moving forward, and are excited for the possibilities that the disruption of COVID-19 has opened for the future.

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: GRAND FORKS & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Total Technology Grant Amount: \$12, 240

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.)  SMART Board	Purchase a SMART Board for use in programming room	Increase meeting room rental use (in non pandemic times) by 30%. Eliminate staff time spent on setup of projector (30 minutes per week).	Increasing the electronic capabilities for meeting room rentals works toward Building Capacity, Improving Access, and Advancing Citizen Engagement.	Purchase and install SMART Board	none	October 2020: install SMART Board in meeting room.  2021 (???) Recommence programming and meeting room rentals and provide SMART Board access.	\$5975	none	Full cost of meeting room renovation estimated at \$17,000 with funds not provided by this grant coming from private donations in 2019.
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.)  Laptop for in-house use	Purchase a laptop for use in the new Idea Lab	Increase test invigilations by 50% in 2021.  Have Idea Lab bookings 3 times or more per week in 2021.	Having a laptop in the new Idea Lab works towards Building Capacity, Advancing Citizen Engagement, and Improving Access by allowing us to host computerized exams in the room and by providing flexibility for patrons working on other projects there.	Purchase laptop for use in Idea Lab	None	October 2020: purchase laptop and install necessary software  November 2020: open Idea Lab for public use.	\$1500	none	Full cost of Idea Lab project estimated at \$12,000, with funds not provided by this grant coming from private donations in 2019.
Other, please specify  Door for Idea Lab Construction	Install a glass sliding door on new Idea Lab	Increase test invigilations by 50% in 2021.  Have Idea Lab bookings 3 times or more per week in 2021.	The addition of a door to provide quiet space and audio privacy for individuals or groups working in the Idea Lab works towards Building Capacity, Improving Access, and Advancing Citizen Engagement.	Install a glass sliding door to the newly constructed Idea Lab	None	October 2020: install door  November 2020: open Idea Lab for public use.	\$6000	\$1235 - from 2019 private donation	See above