

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The City of Penticton is a community of approximately 34,000 situated in the Okanagan Valley between Okanagan Lake and Skaha Lake. Tourism is the community's largest industry, with local wineries and beautiful weather being major draws. Over the past few years BC's forest fires have adversely impacted this industry. Other major employers in the region are the local Regional Hospital which serves the entire South Okanagan, School District 67, and the federal government's local Canada Revenue Agency office.

The Penticton Public Library has served the city in one form or another since 1909 and is a well-established service in the community. It is a very well used and valued resource in this community seeing an average of 4,000 visits to the facility per week (pre-COVID). Our Library is one of a very few truly free public places in Penticton where all are welcome. Our central location is on the edge of the downtown core, and on one of Penticton's main roads – as such is on a main bus route and is easily accessible to most in our community. We are also located opposite one of Penticton's two high schools and students visit often.

Outside of the difficulties presented by the current pandemic, the challenges for our library in the community include: a relatively stagnant tax base, limited capacity in staff members to expand on current workload, an aging facility too small for our population and needs, and social pressures due to homelessness and addictions.

LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC GOALS

The Penticton Public Library launched our 2020 to 2024 strategic plan in January 2020. The Library's strategic goals are focused on the following 5 areas:

- Funding: The Penticton Public Library needs to not only maintain current funding levels, but increase funding in order to provide and expand excellent and innovative service that both assesses and addresses the needs of the community.
- Community: The library will have events and programming designed to provide opportunities for interaction that are welcoming and accessible for all.
- Service: The core of the Penticton Public Library is providing relevant, respectful, and innovative service that evolves with the changing needs of its current patrons, while inviting new patrons to explore the library and its many assets.
- Communication: The library will promote its collections, programs and services, expand outreach initiatives and build relationships with strategic community partners for more open and effective communication.
- Growth: Growth for the Penticton Public Library encompasses both virtual and real spaces to create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment.

At this time, the Library staff and Board are engaged in reviewing these goals to determine how they may be adapted to our new situation following the COVID-19 pandemic.

LIBRARY ALIGNMENT WITH BC'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

The beginning of 2020 saw our library launching a new strategic plan as mentioned above. January and February were designated as a time for planning and learning. Staff involved were brainstorming ways to align with our provincial and local strategic objectives within the context of our new strategic plan.

Then the pandemic was declared, we shut our doors to the public and reverted to basic services. Like many public libraries we struggled with how to fulfil our function as a public space that provides a much needed educational and cultural service, supporting mental health, disseminating accurate information, and being the "community living room" when we could not welcome patrons through our doors.

Provincial Strategy: Improving Access for British Columbians

The Penticton Public Library maintains a constant focus on improving access for our patron and library users. Initial plans were to improve patron awareness of the interlibrary loan service, build on homebound delivery services, and explore opportunities for outreach.

In 2020, the Library made a concerted effort to educate our staff and public on access to resources from trusted sources. While the pandemic certainly impacted our ability to do this effectively through programming, staff did enhance our legal resources, shared out a lot of information from the Province, and ensured that staff were aware of what reputable sources were available to answer patron questions by telephone.

Provincial Strategy: Building Capacity

Over the past several years the Library has highlighted the need for Library Staff and Board Members to access training that will improve our work in providing library services to the community. In 2020, our budget for training was increased by 25% which led to several staff members participating in conferences outside BC, and an additional staff member and two board members being scheduled to attend the BCLA Conference (which was canceled).

While we were closed to the public and through out the year, PPL Staff have taken advantage of the Kootenay Library Federation sponsored *Librarian's Guide to Homelessness* online program and have been encouraged to consider and propose additional training as it arises. Additionally, we reviewed our trustee onboarding procedure and will be revising it throughout 2021. Trustees are also encouraged to participate in any workshops presented by the BC Library Trustees Association.

Provincial Strategy: Advancing Citizen Engagement

The Library has been working with the city for the past several years as a location within the City's citizen engagement strategy: *Shape your City*. This citizen engagement strategy reaches out to community members in various formats, both online and in person and works in conjunction with required public consultation and the City Council's communication goals. The City installed a kiosk at the Library and has used the kiosk to highlight various initiatives from a Lake-to-Lake bike route to budget consultations in 2020.

At the Library, the pandemic created the opportunity to trial a number of free resources and databases for our patrons. Further, the Library actively engaged with our patrons through social media. (Details provided under COVID-19 and Public Libraries section).

Provincial Strategy: Enhancing Governance

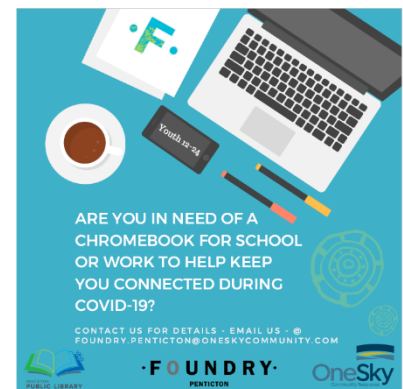
The launch of our strategic plan in early 2020 was the work of the library board. Throughout the year, the Chief Librarian and Board worked closely together to ensure that the provincial health directions and restrictions were followed and that the functional health of the library was maintained.

We currently have the original plan under review – due to the pandemic the library is in a much different position than we were in 2019 while the plan was being developed.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT – FINAL REPORT

The Penticton Public Library chose to take care of a number of projects with the Technology grant, many of these were internal projects, boosting our Wi-Fi for example by adding access points to extend the Wi-Fi outside the Library building. This is especially vital for the summer months as the Library's courtyard and the adjacent park are frequently used by patrons wishing to access the internet without coming into the Library. At this time this project is incomplete as we are awaiting delivery of the access points. However, this has been the most commonly requested technology feature and complaint by some library users for the past several years. During the shut down in 2020, we frequently had individuals comment on the spotty connection outside the library, and we are looking forward to being able to offer a more steady and strong connection. Further, some of our 'transitioning out of the pandemic' programming and service plans involve using our outdoor space for programs and, potentially, for book sales – all of which will benefit from a stronger Wi-Fi connection.

Approximately \$5,000 of the grant went to a mobile device lending project in support of our local Foundry youth support centre. This was in response to the need for access to technology for schooling and social connections by young people. With the pandemic both the library and the Foundry were forced to suspend in-person services for a time, and even when introduced could not provide access to space or technology sufficient to meet the needs of students struggling with schooling in the new environment. The Library purchased approximately 10 Chromebook devices for the Foundry to distribute to students in need. The intent of this project was to meet the needs of students from economically disadvantaged or impacted families, who would also be able to use the devices from home, school, or in the community to do their schoolwork under the uncertain circumstances of the pandemic. We were told by the Foundry that they had seen a decline in access and engagement by the young people they serve (aged 12 to 14) from March 2020. Since reopening they have told us that "Although in person visits are on the rise, anecdotal evidence suggests that barriers remain for youth accessing services virtually. Over the last 5 months, our staff - in particular, our peer support workers - report that lack of access to computers, phones and the internet have made it hard for youth to complete schoolwork and/or attend on-line appointments for mental and physical health support. Also, families with only one device now working from home means there is less access for other family members, especially youth." (Kim Conroy, Manager, Foundry Penticton) While the 10 devices we were able to offer were a small percentage of what is needed, we felt that this is the project that had the most personal impact.



The second, larger project, focuses on additions to the PPL's Library of Things collection. From video games to the planned addition of devices such as tabletop robot building kits and a loanable projector for when organizations are able to meet again. We felt that adding these types of items would have the greatest impact on the most people while providing access to technologies they may not have at home. Of these only the video game collection has launched to date (16 January 2021) and the 70 items have already circulated 300 times. The Library Leadership team is currently investigating other means of expanding this collection. As with most library collections, the strongest outcome has been benefits to mental health and well being, along with the advantage of accessing games (devices, books, and magazines) without having to purchase them, particularly while faced with job loss.

COVID-19 AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The City of Penticton closed the Library/Museum Building effective 5:30 pm on March 16th. The following day we launched our first Facebook Live Storytime, which evolved and was adapted many times as our circumstances changed. Many of our other programs were adapted for the social media environment including our: Creative Adults & Teens program, Book Crafts, and STEAM Studio – to name a few. Over the closure period, from March to May, we had a number of lovely comments from patrons on how the online programs were a life saver when their children weren't in school or in childcare and caregivers were working from home.

Unfortunately, during this period, we were told that we would be losing a portion of our previously approved budget for 2020 due to an anticipated shortfall at the City level. Further cuts were announced as part of the 2021 budget process, where the Library's budget was cut by 3%, resulting in the loss of service on seasonal Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesday evenings. While the Library Board decided to show its support of the city by agreeing to this cut, it has left us in an unfortunate position running to catch up with many basic library tasks and having to shelve several promising projects.

When it was announced that libraries would be able to reopen in May, our library was not yet at that stage. However, we were ready to launch the Library Takeout Service. This service was, as with most libraries, a tremendous success.



We were able to use the experience of other BC Libraries to help our circulation team refine the process, leading to minimal hiccoughs as the Library Takeout launched. Library Takeout coincided with a reader's advisory project (Shelf Love) developed by the Youth Services team to collect items based on reading preferences, without patrons having to do a known-item-search opening up access to patrons who may not know exactly what they wanted to read. While we only had moderate success with this for our adult patrons, parents requesting items from the Children's and Junior collection were close to half of our pre-closure monthly circulation. (Where the adult collection circulation was about 40%).

By the beginning of August, our library was ready to reopen our doors to the public with limited hours. We recalled some staff to act as greeters, explaining the new rules under the COVID-19

Safety Plan and slowly and carefully reintroducing services. By September we were ready to expand our hours to what is our “new normal” (until such time as we are able to regain sufficient funding to return to our pre-pandemic hours).

We continue to host programs online exclusively. The programming team has developed a strong response to being unable to see our patrons in person. Our Children’s Librarian has been offering Storytime via Facebook since March 17th and will continue to do so as long as needed. These were being offered on a daily basis for a while, as we received such a positive response and early in the pandemic we were told over and over about how parents were struggling working from home with their small children also at home due to the closure of their daycares. PPL’s Teen Services technician began meeting teens through a Discord server for the Youth Advisory Committee and organizing Dungeons and Dragons programs online (which had been a new program prior to the closure). Our Adult Services Librarian also carried on with her book club via Zoom, changing it to a “Cozy Classics” book club to access items that were out of copyright and so would be more easily accessible to our patrons.

Over time, and unsurprisingly, we found that our patrons were suffering from “online fatigue” and were less and less interested in attending programs online and those who were still interested were finding that the pre-recorded model worked best. From this our programming staff developed various Take-and-Make based programs which highlight projects and crafts related to reading themes. This was particularly effective around the BC Summer Reading Club and as an add-on to our usual Teen Summer Takeover. The latter was never an in-person program series, and so was also a welcome feeling of engaging with a familiar program.



Additionally, towards the fall and starting with Library Month, we added a special limited run “program” which was designed to provide a lift to patron mental health, advertise library services, and foster the love of reading. This program was a revised Shelf Love, with a box available for pickup on the subscription box model. These boxes included sweet treats, teas, books, and crafts. These boxes were extremely popular but unfortunately it was too expensive to run without requiring patrons to buy the boxes.

Like most libraries and many businesses, our services during the COVID-19 shifted to a largely digital platform. This also included the use and heavy promotion of digital services, along with the introduction of new databases. We had, in 2019, completed a review of our database and other digital services, with the expectation of expanding on that in 2020. With many vendors offering expanded access, or free extended trials of their databases, we were able to provide patrons extra access to these. Our library committed an addition \$10,000 to the BC Library 2 Go collection in 2020 and has increased our database budget by that same amount in 2021, even as we had to cut other line items. Throughout the remainder of 2021 and especially as we see a return to more normalized operations, we will be continuing to evaluate the usage of our database.

Throughout the pandemic, we have striven to serve our community the best we can. It has been heartening to see the ideas and innovations individual staff members have come up with to do this, and inspiring to see what other libraries have also done. Over the long term, our patrons and our community have repeatedly expressed the value they find in library services and the hope that we'll be able to continue to offer more and more as we 'return to normal.'

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Buzzell, Chief Librarian
Penticton Public Library

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: PENTICTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Total Technology Grant Amount: \$20,500

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Other, please specify Expanded loanable technology related collection	Video games will support the community in problem solving and enhanced learning through graphics. Patron engagement will increase	Increase borrowing from the library of things collection. Non-traditional library service	Improving access Advancing engagement PPL Providing resources that educate and inspire	Purchase seed video game collection.		End of 2020	\$4,000	Cataloguing, processing, and storage	The goal of the Library of Things collection is to provide access to devices and items which enhance multiple literacies.
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) Charging locker	Provide a secure central device charging station. Provide access to individuals without personal access to charging	Use and patron feedback	Building capacity Improved service level for high demand low staff requirement service	Purchase charging station.		End of 2020	\$700	Nil.	Very high demand community need. Our building electrical infrastructure often leads individuals to overload power outlets.
Other, please specify STEAM Based reusable devices and kits for patron loan	High demand and high need for children, teens, and interested adults programming and coding	Increased loan statistics and engaged patron feed back.	Improving access Building capacity Advancing engagement PPL - encourage creativity. - providing access to resources that educate and inspire.	Device selection process – including Robotics kits, MakeyMakeys, LittleBits, Spheros, Dash and Dot, Raspberry Pi	Working in partnership with other community organizations for programming (such as the School District and Penticton Museum) as well as other youth organizations locally to determine the highest impact items	Beginning Summer 2020 – end (this phase) Q1 2021	\$5,000	Cataloguing, processing, and storage	The goal of the Library of Things collection is to provide access to devices and items which enhance multiple literacies.
Other, please specify	High impact for students who are unable to do school work from home	Reported improved outcomes for students	Improving access Building capacity	Purchase & receive devices	Foundry Penticton to determine highest need	End 2020	\$5,000		Downside is that this a one-off project but it is the

Mobile device lending	due to limited connectivity. 10-15 data plans, with 5GB of data per month, and install them on 10-15 LTE tablets.		PPL providing access to resources that educate and inspire.						one of highest need.
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) Public Computer stations	High need for library as current public computer desk are not purpose designed or suitable for public space and computer wiring.	Increased patron satisfaction with public computers.	Improving access Building capacity Advancing engagement -providing access to resources that educate and inspire. - provides excellent levels of service to all of its members, in person and online. - welcoming and inclusive environment. - strives to encourage creativity.			Beginning 2021	\$8000	Library equipment reserve will make up cost	