

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY

Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL), with 25 libraries and a central administrative centre, serves over 750,000 residents spread over 13,000 square kilometers that are governed by 15 municipalities and regional districts. In each of our communities, the local library is a trusted partner and is recognized as a vital community destination and resource for literacy, recreation, and informed decision making.

The communities and local governments we serve grapple with the same long list of huge challenges that impact our province and our nation: globalization, socio-economic change, sustainability, big data and smart technology, lifelong learning, aging demographics, and financing the future.

Spread across our region are people groups that are reflective of past and continued immigration to British Columbia, as well as industries that are both new and old – agriculture, forestry, and fishing to tourism, entertainment, and technology. The communities are dense and urban, as well as scattered and rural. Neighbourhoods are posh and upscale as well as humble and neglected. Roads are occupied by pedestrians and cyclists, mini-cars and buses, SUVs and pick-up trucks, delivery vehicles and semi-trailers. A snapshot of Fraser Valley Regional Library is a picture of the splendor and complexity of British Columbia society today.

FVRL'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2020

Inspiration

Our staff, combined with our technologies and resources, encourage strong economic, creative and social growth in our communities, families and individuals.

- Feasibility study for a mobile makerspace / creativity lab.
- Identify and explore non-traditional library collections and experiences.
- Support residents to create, launch and promote their own eBooks.

Welcoming Place

Fraser Valley Regional Library is an essential destination connecting people living, working or studying in our communities. We provide a fun, friendly environment focused on knowledge, creativity and experiences that transform lives.

- Create a digital library card and evaluate the online customer journey.
- Identify and explore best practices and strategies for physical space design.

Partnerships

Our libraries are integral to sparking the potential of individuals and their communities through meaningful connections and relationships.

- Build a strong partnership infrastructure.
- Support community partnerships.

Engaging Staff

Our staff continue to grow their expertise and confidence needed to meet evolving customer needs.

- Evaluate and improve internal communications.
- Promote an environment that supports staff in doing their best work.

Know us. Love us.

We are known and celebrated for providing a broad and dynamic range of services. Our customers appreciate the friendly and personalized Fraser Valley Regional Library experience. Those who know us, love us.

- Increase public awareness and delight with our services.
- Enhance the reputation of Fraser Valley Regional Library and the value of libraries.

FVRL'S MISSION

Opening minds. Enabling dreams.

FVRL'S VISION

Improving the quality of life for our communities through knowledge, ideas and experiences.

FVRL'S VALUES

1. We value development that invests in the enjoyment, lifelong learning, literacy, and the vibrant health of communities.
2. We value open access to library services and materials that remove barriers associated with education, technology, culture, economics, and physical disadvantage.
3. We value and celebrate diversity as integral to an inclusive, vibrant community.
4. We value our responsive, courteous, and friendly staff as the foundation of FVRL's service and success.
5. We seek collaboration and partnerships to maximize our potential to serve our customers and communities.
6. We value innovation as it gives us freedom to grow and take risks to find creative solutions and better serve our public in a fiscally responsible manner.

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

MEETING CUSTOMERS WHERE THEY ARE: ECARD & FVRL EXPRESS

FVRL Program/Service

FVRL takes a strong customer experience perspective. We carefully evaluate the customer journey and touchpoints with the library, and seek opportunities to ease access. In the course of 2020 we accomplished two leaps forward in not only removing barriers to access, but recognizing broad new swaths of people who want to use our libraries in new or different ways.

First, by introducing our new self-registration eCard on April 2, we were able to provide access to all our online services to residents who preferred not to visit the library physically. While this step was already part of our long term strategic plan, we understood 2020 events were further emphasizing the need for such a service. Lockdowns meant the proportion of our residents wanting digital-only access was higher than ever. Many citizens were also experiencing significant new economic pressures and needed library access more than ever. We responded by accelerating our eCard timeline – and went even further by providing some physical materials borrowing with the new self-registration membership as well.

Second, we launched our new FVRL Express service on June 1. Using FVRL Express, customers can retrieve materials outside the library, without having to physically come in. They simply let us know they're at the library and we bring their material out to them – all checked out, packed up and ready to go! This is a great option for customers who have busy schedules but still want to read library material. As it happened, with 2020 health restrictions, including some library space closures, it was also the perfect solution for continuation of service with all those customers who might prefer to enter the library but were restricted from doing so. Further, we extended the impact of this service by multiplying the effect of two other services: one, for customers who like to browse, we offer Grab & Go bags of curated library materials (no need to place holds – just tell us what you like!), and two, for those who missed in-person library programs, we offer Take 'n Make kits of literacy activities for all ages.

FVRL Outcomes

To evaluate the effectiveness of these new services in increasing access to our residents, we tracked registration statistics and customer feedback. Upon analysis, both these new services proved to be effective strategies for providing access to new and/or existing library customers during 2020.

- We achieved over 4000 new membership registrations through the self-registered eCard service in 2020. These were brand new customers! This clearly demonstrates:
 - Customers value digital-only access, and
 - Self-registration options reach a resident demographic for whom physically coming to the library to register for a library card was a significant barrier. This service helps us meet these customers where they are, often simply, at home! (We conject this may be due to convenience in our instant-gratification society or transportation barriers in the broad Fraser Valley.)
- Since libraries closed (March 16), there was a 71% increase in eBook and downloadable audiobook checkouts. That's more than 100,000 additional checkouts! This clearly demonstrates our impact in responding to an increased demand for digital resource access. IT also further expounds the impact of the self-registration option for increasing library access to those who want to make use of the online library, possibly exclusively.

- FVRL eCard members borrowed 3,518 (416 cardholders) physical materials in 2020, and 22 new eCard customers have so far converted their self-registered membership to a full access regular membership. These indicate self-registration may increase access to library services by easing the transition into physical library use for those who aren't necessarily devoted to digital-only access.
- During library space closures, FVRL customers used the FVRL Express service to borrow over 280,000 materials. This clearly demonstrates demand for continuity of library access during these closures, and the value of this new service to our customers.
- Customers expressed appreciation for our Grab & Go service through accelerated use of the service. We schedule replacement bag purchases at regular intervals – however our libraries ran out of bags much more quickly! We responded by placing a much larger order for Grab & Go bags and labels.
- During our pilot test of Take 'n Make, customer interest in the kits vastly outstripped our anticipation – we had to work hard to keep resupplying this service in pilot locations. In recognition of this newly identified customer need, we quickly expanded the service out to all our locations.



Getting ready for FVRL Express service.



Wanda showing off our new FVRL Express service.

TAKE 'N MAKE

FVRL Program/Service

FVRL, like all public libraries in 2020, had to pivot quickly in order to continue meeting the needs of our communities in the context of the pandemic. Many families found themselves spending much more time together at home over the course of the year, as the situation evolved, and depending on their personal circumstances. In non-pandemic times, many adults and families enjoy various in-library craft programs as a way to spend time together and learn something new. FVRL staff noted that families are always looking for safe and fun activities to do together, and they sought to find a way to continue offering this kind of experience, even while in person programs were restricted. With a focus on improving access to the library, building on customer relationships and meeting people where they are, staff put their heads together to come up with a meaningful solution.



Enter Take 'N Makes do-it-yourself craft and activity kits, an idea which sprang up organically from our creative library staff and spread to almost every FVRL location by the end of 2020, with over 3000 kits created. The kits are made for different age groups across the libraries, from preschoolers to adults, and have proven to be wildly popular everywhere and every time they are offered. The kits include everything one needs for a simple and fun craft or activity, and they're often, but not always, themed for a season, holiday or occasion.

Libraries have offered a wide variety of crafts in the kits, from bat bookmarks to Halloween pumpkins, cupcake wrapper flowers to tissue paper Remembrance Day poppies and from snowman stained glass to Christmas trees made from discarded books. Many libraries also include paper based items like bingo sheets, rhymes and songs to augment the family fun with literacy activities, especially for our youngest customers.

Take 'N Makes are available for pickup in library or via our ongoing FVRL Express contactless holds pickup service. Offered on a first come, first served basis, the kits are typically "sold out" within days, with hundreds of the kits reaching customers across the system every month. We know that word of new Take 'N Make offerings tends to make the rounds on social media, including within local moms' Facebook groups, which leads to eager parents visiting the library to pick up kits along with new books for themselves and their children. Adults too have enjoyed the opportunity for a new activity they can do at home, as we know many people in our communities have been dealing with boredom and isolation over the course of the pandemic.

We find that many customers are sharing their Take 'N Make creations on social media, and we know of at least one case in which the word of mouth regarding the kits served to alert one family that the library had re-opened. We have heard over and over again how grateful our customers are to be able to access the library, our services and full collections once again, so any means by which this news is shared in our communities is welcome and encouraged.

We have heard a great deal of positive feedback on the Take 'N Makes from customers in person, on social media and even via phone calls made for the express purpose of thanking staff for providing such a fun service. Customers are delighted with the kits and universally thrilled to find out they will be an ongoing offering as the pandemic continues. The following comment is representative of the type of appreciation we are routinely

hearing from customers: “I grabbed one of these from the library today and they’re a great idea! Thanks so much for this and for all the staff working through the pandemic to allow us access to the important resources at the library :)”

While most people tend to take the kits home from the library, we do offer limited socially distanced seating, and one special customer enjoyed working on his kit in the library. A young man with special needs has been a regular customer at one of our libraries. He visits the library once a week to pick out books and movies. He likes to browse the shelves and select his own items, and then use the self-checkout all by himself. During the FVRL Express only phase of service, this young man and his father came by a few times, but the young man was not interested in choosing his books from a computer screen so they stopped visiting the library. When our doors re-opened to the public, it took some convincing to get him interested in coming back to the library, but he is now firmly settled into his regular weekly routine. Recently, he discovered the Take 'N Makes, and he sat at a table with his aide completing the activity. He was very excited to show off his completed craft, and the ability to do so in the library was an important way for him to continue the meaningful connections he has built with library staff.



HOMEBOUND CUSTOMERS AND FACILITIES

FVRL Program/Service

The Outreach Department at FVRL provides materials to people in our communities who are unable to visit the library due to illness, age, or disability. Services available include a delivery of library materials to private residences, delivery of a printed book collection to a facility, facility staff recreation collections and an audiobook by mail service. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the Outreach staff had to re-think the best way to serve our customers.

Audiobooks by Mail

Within a week of the libraries closing due to COVID-19, Outreach staff reached out to those customers who were used to going into the library to pick up resources, either by themselves or with the help of a family member. They were offered our audiobook by mail service. Outreach staff select audiobooks based on the customers reading profile and the number of items they wish to receive each month. These items are sent via Canada Post to our customers on a monthly basis. Outreach was able to provide uninterrupted service for our regular audiobook by mail customers and they would have noticed no difference in service. When Canada Post was swamped with mail delays, service was switched from a monthly delivery to a weekly deliver so customers could have more consistent access to our collection.

Outcome

Increased interest in audiobook service. Customers previously picked up audiobooks in the library were able to use this mail service and found it suited their needs better. Many are not comfortable or able to go back into the library and have switched permanently to this service.

Customer Feedback

“Outreach has been a godsend, especially during COVID-19. It’s wonderful to be able to be able to pop in an audiobook and escape, especially during COVID-19 isolation”.

Joan is so very grateful for audiobooks by mail as this is her only enrichment. Joan is blind, almost 101, and has been isolated to her room with meals delivered outside her door, completely alone as her daughter lives in the US.

FVRL Express

On June 9 Outreach staff sent out the first delivery of items for the FVRL Express service. Our homebound customers who were signed up to receive print resources delivered to their home, were offered the choice to have their items delivered to a nearby library as our delivery trucks were not running. 80 home delivery customers eagerly jumped at the chance to continue library services this way. For our customers experiencing delays in Canada Post delivery, this was a welcome solution.

Outreach staff saw how bad the home delivery service was missed and how far customers would travel to get their library resources. Many customers couldn’t switch to FVRL express because they had no way to get to the library or no help from family to get items.

Several home delivery customers had neighbors or even friends in other towns, pick up their library books using the FVRL Express Service. This shows how valuable and necessary the home delivery service is to our customers. Community members recognize the value of library service for their friends and neighbors with disabilities and it showed how friends and neighbors have come together to support and care for each other during COVID.

Customer feedback

One customer who previously received home delivery was so determined to get books that she retrofitted her walker with a Rubbermaid tub and estimated she could fit 11 large print books in her walker. She walked to the library to use FVRL Express with much stopping to sit and rest along the way.

Resuming Service

When FVRL began making plans to reopen the libraries, the Outreach Department began developing H&S protocols in regards to resuming service to facilities and home delivery. Staff worked with our H&S Officer and developed a screening checklist as well as instructions for the truck drivers. Then all facilities on service were contacted as well as home delivery customers and asked if they were still interested in the service. The overwhelming response was YES.

On October 13, truck delivery service resumed. 100% of customers who were using FVRL Express to pick up their items, switched back to home delivery. By mid-January Outreach had reached out to all facilities and we currently have 62 facilities that have resumed normal delivery and 21 facilities who are on hold for various reasons such as lack of staff or a COVID-19 outbreak.

We had to establish contactless delivery service with facilities and with home delivery customers. Most facilities prefer this method of delivery as it meshes with their own COVID-19 safety protocol. Drivers are wearing PPE and screening home delivery customers if they can't get their library materials outside of the home for the driver because of a disability.

Challenges in offering service

We ran out of mail bags because of increase in service and Canada Post slowdown. Some customers increased their monthly count by double because people were locked in their homes. The Outreach service is a lifeline to a lot of our seniors. Many of them are very isolated and they welcome the chance to speak to the staff about their requests.

Outreach service allowed those customers who can't access our digital resources because of age, digital divide, impairment, or disability, to be able to use the physical library resources during the lockdown.

The pandemic also allowed for new partnerships with facility staff as well as better facility understanding of the services we offer. Some facility staff were doing FVRL Express pickup of library materials and Daisy players, for their customers who couldn't reach the library. Many of the facility recreation staff reached out to Outreach staff to supplement them with DVD collections such as exercise, travel, documentaries and music CD's because they were not able to offer the same amount of programming as residents were used to. A large number of facilities asked for an increase in the number of books because residents were reading more because of isolation.

Customers were very concerned about Outreach staff. Many inquired as to how staff were handling the lockdown.

Customer comments

Anita is 94, paralyzed, bedridden, and alone as her friends and family have all died. Our driver unpacks her delivery onto her bedside table. Anita is an avid modern romance reader and was missing her 25-book delivery each month (last delivery was February). Anita was in tears of joy to learn 25 new books were being delivered in October.

Ted Francis: “Thank you for the delivering these books to me. I appreciate it very much. I am enjoying this very effective and efficient library system. I especially am impressed your colleague who brings my grey box puts it on my white wicker chair on our front porch. That’s my reading spot in warmer climate for reading. Thank you. Ted.”

Wesbrooke: Books were the one thing that carried the residents through isolation. Love the Library for You collection, it is appreciated and well used. CS/ACO 24-Nov-2020

Sunridge Gardens: Residents came out to clap on a balcony when the truck driver arrived with new items. Receptionist ran out to thank him for bringing new books.

Dr. Al Hogg: Wonderful! Thank you so much for the drop off dates!! DAH2 will ensure our books are at the front door for you!! It is such a valuable service during this time!! Our residents are incredibly GREATFUL!!!!!! Thank you! – Miranda, Therapeutic Recreation @ Dr. Al Hogg.

Harrison Pointe: As an avid reader myself, I think the Library for You program is an amazing resource and public service, and I am so thankful our residents have the opportunity to benefit from it. I really appreciate the work your staff do, and your friendly, clear communication with us J.

BUILDING CAPACITY

CREATING VIRTUAL PROGRAMMERS

FVRL Program/Service

FVRL recognizes the importance of empowering staff to meet the needs of our customers. One of the crucial services that we provide and excel at is early childhood literacy programming such as Storytimes. Before March 2020, FVRL libraries offered regular in-person early childhood literacy programs. To be successful, this type of programming requires skill, depth of knowledge, and practice; FVRL offers a robust selection of regular trainings to staff to support effective delivery of childhood literacy programs in a brand new format: online.



When COVID-19 rendered in-person library programs impossible, FVRL staff agreed that continuing to offer childhood literacy programming remained a top priority. We worked hard to develop and deliver nontraditional virtual programming experiences that would be meaningful and comforting to customers. In order to achieve this, staff worked together to create and implement a completely new system and process for virtual programming including instructions, communication systems, procedures, handbook, coaching tips, video review checklists, calendars, submission process-es, video editing processes, digital promotions, copyright publishers guide and uploading and publishing processes.

Since virtual programs were a completely new approach for FVRL, we started by assaying equipment and skills, and researched broadly to identify the most effective methods and best practices for delivering remote programming. We identified and solved the following areas of need:

- Determining what equipment would be used to film while working from home or in library.
- Sound & lighting standards and methods to produce consistent sound/lighting/backdrop
- Ideal length for online programs balancing literacy best practices and format
- Workable content for online programs, respecting copyright guidelines and determining what formats work most effectively on screen, incorporating STEAM learning
- What recording, sharing, editing, and distribution platforms were available to us and what would be the most effective.
- Which staff would do virtual Storytimes
- Scheduling the release of virtual programs to maintain consistency for customers
- Training and feedback for staff to get them comfortable and camera ready

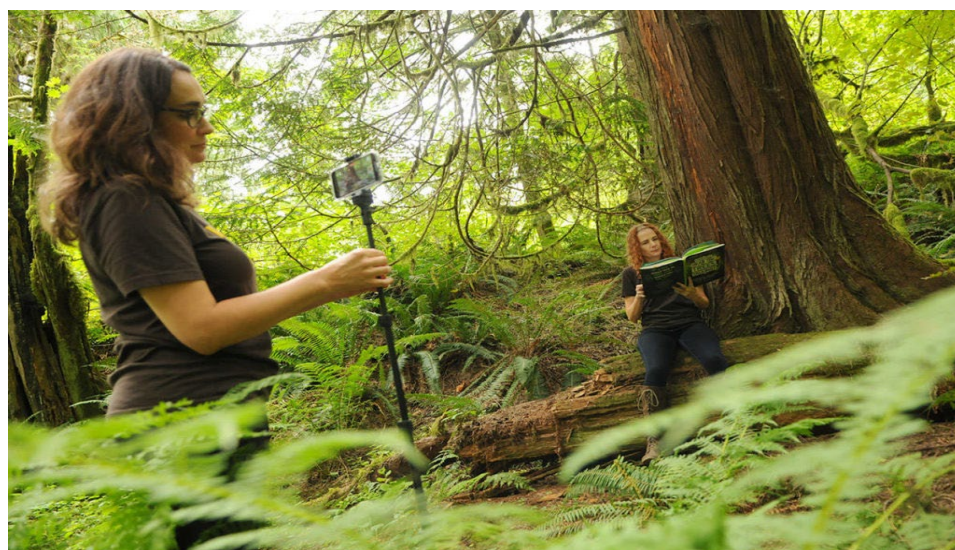
Outcomes

FVRL's virtual programming has been successful in building staff capacity to reach a larger audience, and has been embraced by the communities we serve. In 2020, we adopted two new software platforms to facilitate communication about and sharing of video files between staff. We developed an exhaustive 16 page handbook and checklist for the first wave of staff to use in recording virtual programs. Later in the year, we offered five formalized training sessions to staff who were more hesitant to do online programs; in total we trained over 100 staff to do virtual programs in 2020, and have more sessions underway. We also developed and recorded three

specialized training videos about sound, lighting, and presentation skills for staff to refer to in between live trainings.



FVRL staff worked hard to learn valuable new skills in 2020. They have been flexible, and applied their creativity and expertise in new directions. We were able to adapt Storytimes, Babytimes, our teen creativity contest, Summer Reading Club performances, Makerspace activities, and more to the online format.



One example of our most successful virtual programming is “Explorytimes” - STEAM themed virtual programs that happen outdoors and utilize local community places to combine science and traditional literacy concepts for kids. These have been our most popular virtual programs and have even drawn coverage from local press. In total, our staff produced and released 430 virtual pro-grams that had 130,000 views in 2020.

ENHANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

WELCOME RACK CARD - HALQEMÉYLEM TRANSLATION

FVRL Program/Service

FVRL recognizes the importance of the new member experience. While the simple milestone of receiving a library card is a functional start, to create lifelong library users our new customers need to feel represented and welcome in our libraries. In the FVRL service area we have large visible minority populations, most notably people of South Asian (approx 9%) and Indigenous (approx 5%) culture. Diversity is a longstanding value in our FVRL strategic plan, and one of the ways this value shines is through our multilingual Welcome rack cards. Our Welcome rack cards are available in 16 languages in print and electronically at the World Languages page of our website. They contain an overview of the benefits new customers will enjoy in their library membership, such as:

- Diversity of materials available,
- Membership is free,
- How to get a membership,
- Benefits of online access,
- Variety of available events, and
- Ways they can connect with us.

FVRL has been making ongoing efforts in the past few years to ensure local Indigenous customers feel recognized and welcome in FVRL libraries. This work includes:

- Professional photo shoots with Indigenous FVRL customers to ensure our public promotional and marketing materials encourage Indigenous customers to see themselves in our libraries,
- Indigenous Acknowledgement Procedure to ensure staff know when, how and what to say to acknowledge our use of traditional Indigenous territory during library programs and meetings.

In early 2020 we made another big step forward for reducing barriers to library access for our Indigenous customers: we expanded our suite of translated Welcome rack cards to include a Halqeméylem Welcome Rack Card. This resulting card looks simple – but the steps were involved! Thankfully they were worth the effort. These cards are now visible in all 25 of our FVRL locations as well as on our website, clearly indicating to local Indigenous customers that FVRL recognizes, respects and welcome them. We further multiplied the impact by distributing these rack cards through our Library Live and On Tour outreach initiative to our Indigenous neighbours at locations such as:

- Seabird Island First Nation Daycare Center
- Mission Friendship Centre in Mission
- Read Right Society in Hope
- Yale First Nation in Hope

Our hope is this new Halqeméylem Welcome rack card translation will increase confidence in visiting the library among Indigenous citizens in our service. We recognize becoming a new library member is just the first step, and represents an opportunity to develop a continuing, trusting relationship with the library.

Outcomes

- We printed 1,500 Halq'eméylem Welcome rack cards and distributed them for display in all 25 locations, indicating an ongoing commitment by FVRL to ensure continued welcoming messaging to local Indigenous customers.
- We began distributing the cards to Indigenous community organizations throughout our service area, demonstrating proactive effort to increase library access to Halq'eméylem-speaking customers.



MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

FVRL Program/Service

LiLi and Frontier College partnership

Library Live and On Tour (LiLi) reacted to the COVID19 pandemic by continuing a partnership with a literacy non-profit, Frontier College. Together, LiLi and Frontier College distributed literacy kits to two First Nations communities in the Fraser Valley, reaching more than 200 children between ages 5-14. Each kit included a variety of material such as books, coloring pencils, craft supplies and more. The distribution of literacy kits connected the library with remote Indigenous communities and provided material to engage with STEAM learning, encourage curious minds and ultimately improve access to literacy opportunities.

FVRL Outcomes

LiLi's partnership with Frontier College increased the library capacity for hands-on learning opportunities for remote First Nations communities. This is significant during a time of isolation when gaining access to physical library services was reduced greatly.

Summer Reading Club

While the Summer Reading Club turned virtual in 2020, LiLi connected with the Seabird First Nation to deliver in-person SRC to four groups, including an Infant Development program. Children and families participated in the SRC program while engaging with literacy and learning about the knowledge opportunities available at the library. Over the course of the summer months, youth engaged in literacy activities, recorded these activities in SRC material, and also received SRC medals for their participation. LiLi continues to visit the community and deliver early literacy programs to children and caregivers in an ongoing capacity, sharing library services as well as promoting literacy.

FVRL Outcomes

LiLi's Summer Reading Club activity with the Seabird First Nations provides further opportunity to gain access to information and literacy through library services such as storytime, 1000 Stories before Kindergarten and introducing the library as a welcoming space. This partnership opportunity allows LiLi to engage with our First Nations neighbors and encourage a journey of lifelong learning.

Connecting Virtually

The LiLi service adapted to the pandemic by quickly turning to connect with the community virtually. Where LiLi once provided in-person visits, there was still opportunity to engage and improve access to library services by connecting virtually.

The Community Development Specialist connects with community partners to provide engaging discussions about the library in an online format. Ongoing visits to four mental health clubhouses, one treatment center and a church coffee hour occur via online platforms. For example, LiLi partners with mental health clubhouses throughout the Fraser Valley to deliver ongoing presentations, book clubs and Armchair Travel programs, all which highlight and engage with library resources.

FVRL Outcomes

The ability to connect virtually allows LiLi to provide information on lesser-known library resources, especially to populations that are traditionally unfamiliar with digital resources. This also includes reducing digital anxiety by providing demonstrations and encouraging discussion about the digital environment.

Health and Safety

LiLi remains connected and engaged with the community during the pandemic by establishing and following Health & Safety practices. With a focus on outreach visits outside of the library, the Community Development Specialist collaborated with FVRL's Health and Safety department to establish safe practices and procedures that align with provincial health measures. Each visit in the community adheres to FVRL's H&S plan in addition to the community organizations own COVID safety practices. These measures ensure that both the safety of the Community Development Specialist and the community members are addressed.

FVRL Outcomes

In addition to virtual visits, LiLi continues to connect in-person with clients at youth and adult treatment centers, shelters as well as mental health facilities and Indigenous communities. LiLi can engage with people of all backgrounds to hear their needs and concerns while also providing opportunity for literacy and community engagement.

ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD MUNICIPAL MEMBER STAFF

FVRL Program/Service

Early in March 2020, it became clear that FVRL would have to temporarily end in person services. The potential impact on the relationship with the member municipalities was assessed, and it was recognized that a new communication model would be required as FVRL transitioned to a new pandemic service model focusing on virtual and curbside service. Key stakeholders were identified, and a communication plan developed. The communication plan was implemented when the library closed to the public, and took the form of weekly email digests highlighting new services such as virtual programs and FVRL Express, and statistical analysis of activity levels, modified from pre-COVID-19 statistical tracking. The emails were sent to the Chief Administrative Officers of the municipalities and regional districts, and when not confidential were copied to the Directors of Finance and Directors of Parks and Recreation. FVRL's Board also received a comparable communication, often edited slightly to include Board specific information.

FVRL Outcomes

It was reported by the municipal members that at least half of the municipalities included these communications as part of their regular Council meetings. In municipalities where this was not done, the FVRL Board representative often reported on their version of the communication to Council. These communications significantly raised the profile of FVRL at Council, and the overall awareness and visibility of library services during the pandemic. As a direct result of seeing these communications, which chronicled the restoration of library services over the course of last year, and in particular highlighted FVRL's COVID-19 Safety Plan, a number of municipalities contacted FVRL staff seeking advice on considerations when restoring municipal services such as Parks and Recreation programs. COVID-19 provided an opportunity to reassess and improve our communications with municipalities. Post COVID-19, these communications will continue on a monthly basis.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORT

BAT PACK LENDING

Grant Budget

\$35,000 or 70% of total Technology Grant

FVRL Program/ Service:

The major project of the Technology Grant is to provide residents of the Fraser Valley with a new FVRL [Playground](#) collection, Bat Packs. After seeing the success of FVRL's Birdwatching Backpacks, staff in the Conservation Science Section at the British Columbia Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy contacted FVRL to inquire about developing a new loaning collection of digital bat detecting "Echo Meter Touch 2" units in support of BC's Bat Conservation Strategy. The collection will formally launch in conjunction with Bat Appreciation Day, on April 17, 2021. This is when bats are coming out of hibernation, which will ensure the successful launch of the new collection.

BC bats contribute to the Fraser Valley economy and biodiversity, but little is known about them - and they get a bad reputation. The Bat Packs provide an opportunity to develop community understanding, appreciation and support for bats through citizen science opportunities (e.g. summer [bat counts](#), installing bat boxes), [Bat-Friendly Communities](#) certification/designation (e.g. the [City of Delta](#)), community bat organization partnerships, and preserving endangered [habitats](#) and species. We can also dispel myths (e.g. bat attacks are rare and they don't chew up houses – but they sure eat a lot of mosquitoes).

Each Bat Pack will include:

- One branded backpack
- One Bat Echometer detector device (customer will select either Android or iOS detectors when placing a hold dependent on their mobile device type)
- One laminated quick-start guide
- One copy of Bat Programs of BC's [Bat-Friendly Communities Guide](#)
- One copy of [Bat Citizens – Defending the Ninjas of the Night](#) a bat identification book

Key FVRL Partnership:

FVRL is working with community bat conservation groups, the province's Bat Conservation Coordinator, Conservation Science Sector in Dept of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and partnering with the regional Bat Coordinator from the [Community Bat Programs of BC](#).

FVRL Outcomes:

- Increased bat advocacy/awareness through enhanced community digital literacy skills and opportunities for Citizen Science activities in support of BC's Bat Conservation Strategy.
- Promote Bat Friendly city designations to 15 FVRL Communities.

STUDY HELP AND EXAM PREP FOR GRADES 3 – 12

Grant Budget

\$7,000 or 14% of total Technology Grant

FVRL Program/ Service:

Solaro connects school children and home-schooling families with online learning resources while supporting digital literacy. Supporting school success is a key component to building a strong, educated BC community. Solaro provides additional support to all students to achieve their educational goals. The digital platform, fully aligned to the BC provincial curriculum, offers course lessons, activities, reviews, practice tests and details solutions for students in grades 3 to 12. A product by the company that created the popular Key Study Guides, Solaro is the leading online education app for students.

FVRL Outcomes:

- Since the beginning of the school year, FVRL saw a steady increase in usage month over month, with customers improving their math, science and English language arts learning with lessons, quizzes and tests.
 - From September to December, 7,003 activity sessions were logged.

VIRTUAL BOOK CLUBS

Grant Budget

\$8,000 or 16% of total Technology Grant

FVRL Program/ Service:

The growth of customer usage of FVRL's eBook platform, OverDrive, has tripled over the past five years, with more than a quarter of active cardholders borrowing eBooks and downloadable audiobooks. At the same time, physical book clubs have been growing rapidly in popularity and attendance for well over ten years. Increasing interest in virtual book clubs led FVRL to experiment with this format in the spring of 2020 with great success, providing strong evidence that this new format meets people's current lifestyle. The Virtual Book Clubs offer temporary unlimited licenses to select titles carefully chosen to enhance library programming as well as support community groups, with new titles planned for 2021. The availability of these digital book titles help to develop stronger community engagement and relationships while building traditional and digital literacy skills.

FVRL Outcomes:

- The spring pilot of the Virtual Book Club featured Canadian Indigenous author Waubeshig Rice's [Moon of the Crusted Snow](#)
 - 1,246 customers participated
 - 254 audiobook check outs
 - 992 eBook check outs

COVID-19 AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

This year was defined by the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous challenges were faced throughout the year, requiring constant attention and effort to address. Early in the pandemic, the challenges were primarily concerned with finding safety protocols with which to operate. Once these protocols were identified and implemented, the challenge became finding ways to enhance and improve the services currently offered, while simultaneously searching for new service needs in the communities that FVRL could fulfill.

Many of the innovative services and practices developed during the past year were implemented as a direct result of the pandemic, and have already been described earlier in this report. The ongoing needs of Fraser Valley residents are becoming even more critical, while new emerging trends are becoming evident as the pandemic progresses.

The emotional and mental health of the residents in the communities FVRL serves is a present and increasing need given the social isolation resulting from the impact of Provincial Health Orders. New services and collections are being assessed that may help FVRL customers manage these challenges. FVRL's staff is not immune to these impacts, and effort continues to be focused on helping staff cope through these challenging times.

Access to government services can be challenging for those with limited technology resources, or with limited access to government service points in more rural and remote areas. The pandemic has intensified this challenge, and libraries undoubtedly have an even stronger role to play in ensuring that communities have access to these critical resources as they cope with the social and economic disruption resulting from COVID-19.

The steadily increasing impact of technology on keeping communities connected while maintaining social distancing and reducing contact has further highlighted the inequities inherent in the "digital divide". FVRL will continue to enhance and expand our Playground service offerings, focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM). STEAM services and collections will be critical to the economic recovery from the pandemic, and increasing skills and knowledge in these areas will be even more important for the future of work.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the biggest challenge libraries have faced in a generation, and continues to impact library operations in a previously unimaginable way. However, the pandemic has also offered incredible new opportunities for both expanded and new library services, and above all highlighted the critical role libraries play in their helping the communities they serve adapt to change and adversity.

SUMMARY

Fraser Valley Regional Library has continued its efforts to support our communities with strong leadership, transformative programming, and innovative services and collections. We focus on both traditional and new literacies that are key to knowledge creation and creativity as our communities increasingly engage with the new economy. Partnerships are a key foundation to supporting successful initiatives, and we continue to be heavily engaged with all levels of government, community organizations and our municipalities.

In the third year of our Strategic Plan, FVRL continues to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM). Notable additions to our STEAM initiatives included [Specdram](#) lending and [Sunshine Lamp](#) lending. Programs and collections such as these represent a constant challenge to traditional library operations, requiring continuous infrastructure and process evolution, but offer amazing opportunities for our communities.

Underlying all our efforts is a continued emphasis on improved impact measurement, effective governance and increased business efficiency. All of these were built into FVRL's strategic plan, itself an example of our commitment to stronger governance and better management practice. Funding for libraries and other public services remains at a premium, and is expected to remain so through the duration of FVRL's next strategic plan. To provide the services that our communities need, FVRL will continue to work closely with local and provincial government to ensure that we successfully meet the challenges ahead.

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FRAMEWORK – INTERIM PLANNING REPORT

FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY

Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) gratefully acknowledges the support of the Provincial Government with the 2020 Library Technology Grant. In considering how to spend this grant, projects were identified that were not currently funded that supported both provincial government goals articulated in the [Provincial Strategic Plan for Public Library Service](#) as well as goals articulated in FVRL's Strategic Plan "[Opening Minds Enabling Dreams](#)", representing FVRL's commitment to provide needed service and support in our local communities.

The major project this grant is to provide residents of the Fraser Valley with a new FVRL [Playground](#) collection, Batpacks. After seeing the success of FVRL's Birdwatching Backpacks, staff in the Conservation Science Section at the British Columbia Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy contacted FVRL to inquire about developing a new loaning collection of digital bat detecting "Echo Meter Touch 2" units in support of BC's Bat Conservation Strategy. This will support citizen scientists as they engage in the study of their local environment while developing new digital literacy skills. The collection will formally launch in conjunction with Bat Appreciation Day, on April 17 2021. This is when bats are coming out of hibernation, which will ensure the successful launch of the new collection. We respectfully ask that the Province keep this project **confidential** until that date to support FVRL's marketing plan.

Additional projects funded by this grant include:

- Solaro, a BC school curriculum based digital resource providing course lessons, reviews and practice tests for students in grades three to twelve; and
- Temporary unlimited licenses to specific eBooks to support virtual book clubs.

Both of these projects support the Ministry's goals of improving access for British Columbians to digital technologies.

FVRL looks forward to launching and supporting these innovative projects that will successfully support the goals of the BC Provincial Government in increasing digital access and improving citizen engagement while providing greater enrichment to the lives of the citizens in the Fraser Valley.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY

Area of Need	Outcome	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Grant Budget	Additional Budget	Comments
Enhance Digital Literacy Skills supporting BC Citizen Science Bat Conservation Supporting Digital Literacy/Programming through a Lending Collection of 100 BatPacks- including Echo Meter Touch 2 units and educational tools	Increased bat advocacy/awareness through enhanced community digital literacy skills and opportunities for Citizen Science activities- in support of BC's Bat Conservation strategy. Promote Bat Friendly city designations to 15 FVRL Communities.	Provincial Library Strategic Plan: Advancing Citizen Engagement/ Improving Access for British Columbians ---The experience of accessing FVRL Batpacks will allow FVRL customers in 15 communities to learn how to apply digital skills to locating, identifying and reporting critical bat information and participate in becoming citizen scientists/advancing the BC Bat strategy	Purchase 100 Echo Meter Touch 2 Units /Adaptors/Batpacks/Books/ Create Staff Training/Metric Team/ Develop Marketing Plan/ Coordinate with contacts at BC Ministry of Environment & Climate Change and community groups/ Train staff/Develop public programming and learning opportunities/ create Public BatPack Survey to track metrics and outcomes.	Bat Conservation Coordinator Conservation Science Section Environment and Climate Change Strategy/ Local Naturalist Groups/ 15 FVRL Municipalities	Begin Formal Planning Nov 2020 Launch April 17, 2021 – Bat Awareness Day	\$35,000 or 70% of total Tech Grant	\$20,000 from FVRL Innovation Reserve	Through Enhanced digital Literacy abilities our community citizen scientists will be able to apply their new skills and bat knowledge to support bat conservation in BC and utilize the transferable digital skills in their lives. Agriculture is very important to Fraser Valley and bats are a critical part of a healthy and thriving agriculture economy. Please keep this project confidential until April 21,

		and the Province's objective to provide British Columbians with access to the latest technologies.						2021, in support of FVRL's marketing plan.
Digital programming Solaro BC school curriculum based course lessons, reviews and practice tests for students grades 3-12	Connect school children and home-schooling families with online learning resources while supporting digital literacy		Purchase, launch and market Solaro in September 2020 to coincide with the 2020-2021 School Year.	Fraser Valley School Districts and Home School Associations	Access to Solaro provided starting September 2020 for the 2020-2021 School Year.	\$7000 or 14% of total Tech Grant		Supporting school success is a key component to building a strong, educated BC community. Solaro provides additional support to all students to achieve their educational goals.
Electronic collections (licensing) Virtual Book Club Collection	Provide exciting eBook content to support virtual book club programming, building both traditional and digital literacy skills in BC residents while developing stronger	Provincial Library Strategic Plan: Advancing Citizen Engagement/ Improving Access for British Columbians: Participating in virtual book clubs will allow British	Purchase temporary unlimited access to specific eBook titles to support virtual book clubs, which will then be facilitated by FVRL staff and independent Book Clubs.		Pilot project completed successfully in July-August 2020. New titles will be continually added throughout 2021	\$8000 or 16% of total Tech Grant		Physical book clubs have been growing rapidly in popularity and attendance for well over ten years. Increasing interest in virtual book clubs led FVRL to experiment with this

	community engagement.	Columbians to build stronger community relationships while supporting digital and literacy skills development.						format this year with great success, providing strong evidence that this new format meets people's current lifestyle.
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