

Provincial Library Grants Report 2020

Introduction

The Pemberton & District Public Library is located within the Community Centre in the Village of Pemberton. It serves a total population of approximately 6,000, covering the Village of Pemberton and the Squamish Lillooet Regional District Area C, with a service area in excess of 5,600 square kilometers. Its location within a shared recreational facility in the village and the range of services offered strengthen its position as the hub of the community.

Pemberton and District is largely a young and growing population but with a sizeable seniors community too. The community has solid roots in the past and 45% of the population is aboriginal. Agri-tourism, service-based industries, and recreation tourism are the principal industries in the area. Its proximity to Whistler make it attractive to both tourists and those who wish to settle in the area.

Limited public transport options between Pemberton and the surrounding communities can make accessibility to the Library service difficult for some and we must seek out outreach opportunities to strengthen our connection with the outlying areas. Unemployment, low income, lack of affordable housing, and high cost of living, are challenges faced within the community, making the Library and its services an important resource for many.

Our strategic plan covers the period 2020-2023. Our strategic priorities are:

1. **Inspire Minds Through Literacy and Learning**
2. **Create Welcoming Spaces**
3. **Live Our Values**
4. **Build Connections**

The pandemic presented many challenges in our approach to achieving the goals set out in the 2020-2023 strategic plan but our overarching strategic areas remain our primary focus.

Library Priority 1: Improving Access for British Columbians

Our strategic priority of *Create Welcoming Spaces* focuses on *reducing barriers to accessing library services*, aligning with the provincial strategic goal of improving access for British Columbians.

In January 2021 we launched *Sea To Sky Interlibrary Connect*. With the goal of improving resource sharing and patron experience along the Sea to Sky Corridor, we leveraged the functionality of the Sitka Evergreen enabled Interlibrary Connect (ILC) system and opened up our catalogue to patron initiated holds between the three member libraries. With residents of Pemberton, Whistler, and Squamish often living and/or working in more than one of the communities, through Sea To Sky Interlibrary Connect we were able to offer our patrons more choice and flexibility in where they choose to borrow their library materials from.

Unfortunately with the pandemic and the temporary stop to Interlibrary Lending, we had to put a pause on the service but relaunched a modified version again in August. Once member library capacity increases and provincial travel restrictions are further lifted, we endeavor to restore the service to its full pre-pandemic levels.

Improved access would be demonstrated through the number of items being shared and in the first month of the service alone, the number of items being borrowed and loaned via ILC doubled. The weekly InterLINK courier delivery has supported this service being sustainable for us even with minimal staffing as significant staff time is being saved not having to mail items individually. Since resuming service in August, ILC sharing is back at pre-pandemic levels. Patrons no longer need to wait for the return of an item owned by their home library if it is available at one of the neighbouring libraries. As more and more patrons are now accessing our online catalogue to place holds instead of in-person browsing, this has helped us keep waitlists for items to a minimum and getting our patrons access to their desired reading material much faster.

On March 13th, the Pemberton & District Public Library was one of the first libraries in the Lower Mainland/ Sea to Sky Region to close the doors to the public after an exposure event within the shared facility. During the initial two-week quarantine, we immediately mobilized to offer online support to patrons via email and social media. We later added a chat function to the website. We offered online library card registration and renewed all checked out items while we developed safety protocols for accepting returns. A priority in the early stages of the pandemic was finding ways to safely provide access to library materials for those not able to access our online services. We partnered with the Pemberton Lions Club to offer home book delivery to seniors and established a “contactless holds collection” (aka curbside) service, both of which were up and running by the end of March. Although overall borrowing of physical materials decreased by 50% due to the pandemic, the steady increase in borrowing month by month as we restore services demonstrates the value of the various approaches we were taking to provide access to resources in a safe and sustainable way for our patrons.

With limited access to the Library building during the early stages of the pandemic, we saw an increase in demand for access to our digital resources and responded accordingly by diverting funds intended for print materials to digital materials. Overall, we experienced a 23.1% increase in digital borrowing through our Overdrive/Libby

platform alone, a 5.4% increase in new users and a 21% increase in the number of patrons accessing the service when compared with 2019.

One patron commented early in the pandemic: *“Libby has been a key entertainment part of our experience over the past month. You and the rest of the Library staff are much appreciated and am looking forward to when you are open again.”*

Library Priority 2: Building Capacity

Our strategic priority of *Live Our Values* has the primary goals of **fostering our culture of service excellence** and **cultivating a resilient and healthy workplace**.

One of the strategies to achieve these goals was *to assess and enhance staff capacity through appropriate staffing levels and ongoing professional development opportunities*., aligning directly with the provincial strategic priority of *reducing barriers for library staff and board members to access training opportunities so that they can continue to provide quality and future-focused library services*.

While the pandemic undoubtedly has presented many challenges in terms of staffing levels for a small library such as ours, the notable transition to increased online access to training opportunities has been of significant benefit to our team and board members. Pre-pandemic, training opportunities and meetings were predominantly delivered in-person in larger urban locations, requiring both staff time away from the Library and significant travel expenses.

Two significant online learning opportunities made available to staff in 2020 were:

- 3Rs and Moments of Power customer service training: Provided by InterLINK, in partnership with the University of Victoria Gustavson School of Business, these course teach the foundations of delivery excellent customer service.
- Ryan Dowd’s Homeless Library training teaches a compassion based approach to customer service and equips learners with tools to deal with challenging situations. Throughout the year they have continue to add to the core suite of modules with pandemic-specific learning opportunities.

Both of these self-led learning opportunities have become core elements of our staff development program and have been of significant benefit to the team particularly when navigating the unique challenges presented by the pandemic. Generative discussions have emerged from the various theories presented in the trainings that have helped us remain focused on the delivery of quality future-focused services and experiences for our community. Through these discussions we have been able to explore and execute different models for delivering core services and programs to our community.

To be able to connect with other members of the Library community through other Zoom based training sessions and meetings has been of great benefit to a small library such as ours. We have had access to opportunities throughout the year that we would previously had to forego due to staffing and budget constraints. While we would never want this to replace in-person learning opportunities, it is undeniable that the online model has significantly improved our access to training and development opportunities.

Library Priority 3: Enhancing Citizen Engagement

Our strategic priority of *Inspire Minds Through Literacy and Learning* aims to *engage community expertise to expand and diversify programming and to embrace creative approaches to learning opportunities that will broaden horizons and inspire curiosity.* This aligns with the provincial strategic goal of *increasing opportunities for people to access the information and resources they need to thrive as engaged individuals, workers and lifelong learners and bringing the library community together to foster knowledge-sharing, collaboration and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.*

In early 2020 the Library hosted a Service Canada and CRA Superclinic where patrons could visit the Library for in-person access to representatives from Service Canada and the CRA. The nearest Service Canada office is over 90km away so this is an important service for our community in accessing these important government resources, particularly for those unable to access or navigate the online services. We also participated in the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program until we had to cease in-person service in mid-March.

23 people accessed the January Superclinic and our goal had been to offer four clinics a year, but with restrictions on travel and in-person programs, this was unable to happen in the rest of 2020. We continue to signpost patrons to the relevant services when requested and aim to resume the Superclinics and information sessions once it is considered safe to do so.

With the pandemic-imposed restrictions on access to the physical library building, we quickly sought new ways to still provide “space” for our community to connect and engage with one another. By the end of March we had moved our core storytime programs and Parent Infant Drop-In programs to the Zoom platform, maintaining them as live meeting formats so that patrons could continue to connect and engage with us, and each other.

Traditionally attendance was considered a measure of success for these programs but in 2020 we viewed recurring attendance a better measure of success as we focused on building connections with smaller numbers of patrons and having a positive impact on their day. Many of those attending storytime in the early stages of the pandemic only knew staff via a screen and now as they return to visiting the Library in person, they already have an established connection with the team even if they hadn't been to the Library before the pandemic. Participant feedback also indicated that offering the same program schedule we had provided in person had helped with maintaining a routine for the day and fostering a sense of “normality” during the initial stages of the pandemic response.

We continued to expand on our online programs over the course of the year and collaborated with our neighboring Sea to Sky libraries in Whistler & Squamish to offer a number of learning opportunities including the popular author event *A Conversation with Bob Joseph*, author of *21 Things You May Not Know About The Indian Act*. Meeting capacity of 100 people was reached and a follow up Q&A session was later scheduled for those that missed out.

We partnered with The Wellness Almanac, a project of the Winds of Change Steering Committee, a 10 year old community-to-community initiative to build healthy relationships and respect between the people of the Lil'wat Nation, N'Quatqua,

Pemberton and Area C of the Squamish Lillooet Regional District to offer a 5 part series of Sharing Circles.

Led by Tanina Williams, a Lil'wat7ul educator, weaver, knowledge keeper about traditional plant use and storyteller, the series of free bi-weekly zoom conversations aimed to provide a safe space to explore reconciliation, decolonization, white fragility and ask hard or awkward questions about how to share this unceded territory in a way that moves us towards better relationship. The goal of these sharing circles was to explore how we can connect better, and what possibilities open up when we explore indigenous ways of knowing.

The program was well received and attended. A total 67 registered for the program with an average of 25 attending the individual sessions. One participant shared: *I am grateful for the sharing circles that you (...) hosted. They were well advertised. Some beautiful intention went into inviting thoughtful sharing. The facilitators worked together to create a virtual gathering for people to connect and contemplate the teachings of some wonderful teachers. I didn't have to travel. I laughed, I cried & I felt heard / understood*

With so much focus in recent years on the library as a place for building connections and community, it was a priority for us to still be able to offer this sense of connection even when the physical library building was no longer a meeting space in the traditional sense. We had a number of other successful online events that brought the community together and while "Zoom Fatigue" has undoubtedly impacted on people's desire to interact online, until we can congregate again in person it is vitally important for us to continue to offer "space" for people to engage and connect with each other over topics that interest them.

Library Priority 4: Enhancing Governance

Our strategic priority of *Build Connections* intends to strengthen the role of the Library in the community, and increase advocacy and awareness of the Library. These are key governance roles that are achieved through an active and engaged board of trustees and staff.

Board members were able to benefit from the various governance workshops and meetups provided online by the BCLTA in 2020. Again the move to an online platform has made these training opportunities significantly more accessible to trustees, and affordable for the Library. Former Board Chair, Judith Walton was awarded the BCLTA Trustee Excellence Award, highlighting the many achievements during her 8 years of service to the Library. Being able to access the expertise and governance training opportunities of the BCLTA in an affordable and convenient format has been of significant benefit to our trustees in supporting them in their governance work.

Technology Grant – Final Report

We used the funds from the Technology Grant to purchase a self-check machine which was installed in mid-November.

This has enabled us to give our patrons another option for how they wish to check out their library materials. This also supports patrons that wish to have more privacy, wish to minimize in-person contact, or to not have to queue up for in-person service.

11% of items borrowed in December were performed on the self-check and we are already seeing that number grow significantly as more patrons return to the space to perform express browsing in favour of placing holds for pick up or curbside collection. As with any new technology, familiarization will be the key for many and feedback has indicated that it is user-friendly and is a valuable option to have if staff are unavailable due to assisting other patrons. This has been invaluable during peak periods with limited staff availability and minimized the need for patrons to queue for assistance. While number of patrons utilizing the self-check is the chosen metric to demonstrate a positive outcome, our primary goal is to provide our patrons more choice in how they check out items, not to require or encourage they use it over a staff assisted method. We expect to see the usage continue to rise in line with increased visits to the library but that it will eventually stabilize to a consistent percentage as patrons make informed choices about their options.

Our next step will be to raise funds to complete the RFID conversion of the collection to make the self-check even more accessible and user-friendly.

Covid-19 and Public Libraries

As highlighted throughout the report Covid-19 has presented many challenges to how we deliver our services but equally presented many opportunities to explore and execute alternative strategies to meet our goals.

The biggest challenge faced by the Pemberton & District Public Library has been staffing, and restoring access to services within a shared facility.

Staff relocating to other communities, and family commitments as a direct result of the pandemic put considerable strain on ensuring sufficient staffing levels for the safe restoration of services, while remaining cognizant of staff mental wellness and burnout. Rehiring and retraining new staff has also been a more significant task than in previous years, particularly for a small library that previously had minimal staff turnover. Focusing on staff mental wellness has been a priority over the year for without healthy and engaged staff, the Library cannot offer the high standard of service and support that our community has come to expect.

Being located in a shared recreational facility with no primary external access to the Library led to creative solutions for providing access to the Library space while the rest of the building remained closed to the public. Operating alongside a recreational facility with previously joint access points still continues to pose challenges as we manage access and occupancy levels separately from each other through different entrances. This has highlighted a need to address the lack of external public access exclusively to the Library going forward.

Providing access to the resources and services that our community wants and needs, in a safe and sustainable way has been at the forefront of the many adaptations we have made to services over the year. Some additions such as curbside pickup, wireless printing, and customized book selections for patrons have been popular changes that we think are here to stay. With the move to wireless printing we have noted a decrease in demand for access to our public computers, with primary computer use now centering on government and employment related matters. Better supporting patrons with accessing technology for essential services remains a priority.

With the skills gained in moving to delivering programs online, we will look to ways to embrace hybrid models that could complement our in person programs when they resume. Continued collaboration with our neighbouring libraries will open more opportunities to offer programs that we could not offer alone if we can continue to remove the geographical “barriers” we once had with events being hosted in one fixed location. We have been presented with the opportunity to look at different ways of delivering traditional services and I believe many of those changes will be here to stay in some form.

Summary

2020 has undoubtedly been a challenging year that has required much adapting and responding to ever-evolving situations.

We have taken a slow and measured approach to restoring services over the year to ensure we provide sustainable and consistent access for the community. While we are currently operating at 70% of pre-pandemic opening hours we will continue to expand on this where possible over the coming months to better support our community. Reaching our wider community members outside of the Village area remains a challenge to overcome and will be a focus in the coming year.

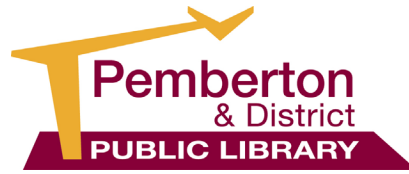
What remains clear from feedback received is that throughout the various challenges of the past year, our community still very much loves and needs their library:

“You are doing an amazing job of adapting and anticipating and responding to community needs. Thanks for providing such valuable services”

“Thank you for your responsible responses and services to the community during these months of distancing and uncertainty”

“Wow, that’s great! It is awesome you can provide a great service even when you are closed”

Ensuring adequate funding for core operations, collections and programs so that we continue to anticipate and respond to these changes to remain relevant and vital to our communities, will remain at the forefront of our strategic planning. This further reinforces the importance of the funding we receive from these provincial grants, for the continued investment in our services, and the importance of demonstrating our value and impact to our funding bodies.



October 14th 2020

RE: 2020 Library Technology Grant

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Pemberton & District Public Library, thank-you for the generous grant of \$11,016 that has enabled us to complete a long-awaited digital upgrade project.

The Pemberton & District Public Library is using the 2020 Library Technology Grant for the purchase of a self-check machine. The need for such technology, while once a “wishlist” item for a small library such as ours, has become more essential as we have experience increased annual visits to the library, and more recently, to help us adapt our services to accommodate the health and safety protocols to reduce the spread of Covid-19. The addition of a self check machine will assist in promoting physical distancing within the library, reducing queues at the service desk for staff assisted check-out, while also freeing up staff time to provide more meaningful support services for our patrons.

The Pemberton Library is a small library with a single service point, and a small team of staff. With the installation of a self check machine, patrons will most importantly have the choice of how they wish to check out their library materials – whether self-serve or with a staff member. We are purchasing the Bibliotheca selfCheck 500, a freestanding self check system that can recognise both barcode and RFID. This gives us the opportunity to move to RFID as we are financially able to, but still implement a robust user-friendly self check system in the meantime.

While there were many exciting digital initiatives we had hoped could have been funded by this grant, the changes brought about by Covid-19 required us to prioritise those projects in terms of their impact on both staff and patrons. A key strategic area of our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan is to *Create Welcoming Spaces* by reducing barriers to accessing services, and making the Library easier to use. Many of our other digital initiatives focused predominantly on one demographic but ultimately, the self check is a service addition that can be of benefit to everyone who enters the library, whether by offering patrons a choice for how to check out materials/ interact with staff, or by reducing queues and freeing up staff time for those more meaningful connections and interactions that our patrons and staff value.

Thank you again for this generous contribution that we know will have a lasting impact in our community.

Yours faithfully,

Emma Gillis
Library Director

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: PEMBERTON & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Total Technology Grant Amount: \$11,016

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.) Self Check Machine	Enhanced service for patrons by offering more choice in how they interact with the library and the staff. This also includes increased privacy for those who want it and Improved speed of service delivery/ reduced wait times during busy periods.	Checkouts using the self check machine will increase over time. Positive customer feedback. Positive staff feedback.	Self-check machines reduce transmission risk of Covid19 and enable more physical distancing while still enabling digital and social connection to the library and its services, thereby “improving access” (a provincial strategic public library priority). Staff time is freed up for greater opportunity for connection and meaningful interaction with patrons.	Self check will be installed, staff will be trained and patrons will be offered the choice of checkout options and assistance if required.	While this is a standalone product for use inside the Pemberton Library, future collaboration will be improving access to the collections of our neighbouring libraries in Whistler and Squamish by enabling patrons to view and place holds on these collections on the self check via Sea to Sky Interlibrary Connect. The same self checks also exist in these libraries so will offer a more cohesive experience for patrons using each of the different libraries.	November 2020	\$13,856.50	The remaining \$2840.50 will be leveraged from existing reserve funds intended for the redesign of the main library space	