

2020 Provincial Library Grant Report – Radium Hot Springs Public Library



Introduction:

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library operates on the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc peoples. The Library is situated in the heart of the Village of Radium Hot Springs, which is located at the entrance of Kootenay National Park. The Village also borders the Columbia River Wetlands – the largest continuous wetlands in North America.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library works to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community and outlying areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many of our services to a crashing halt, and severely impacted our ability to meet community needs.

The Library remains committed to improving access to information and expanded services; that being said, the pandemic has impeded our ability to do this effectively. Traditionally, our local population consists primarily of young families, retired seniors, and part-time second homeowners.

The pandemic has resulted in a lifestyle change for many, and we are witnessing these changes firsthand in our community. Full and part-time residency has increased significantly since March 2020; the population has increased by 20% since 2018.

In addition to this influx, tourism remained constant even in the off-season, and the Columbia Valley saw a record number of visitors. In normal years, this type of population influx would have a positive impact on our library statistics; however, pandemic restrictions impeded typical library operations. After the initial closure, and subsequently operating as a virtual space, the library had to make drastic alterations to our service structure. In May 2020, we offered contactless service only, and in July 2020 we were finally able to welcome patrons back inside the facility with strict safety measures in place.

Being a small facility, occupancy limits alone inhibit the Library's role as a community hub and gathering place. We have had to adapt to maintain our community connection, without being able to freely invite the community into our facility. Our patrons have even had to restrict their time in our facility to reduce the risk of transmission and to make room for other patrons. It has been a balancing act to try to make patrons feel welcome while adhering to necessary regulations. We have also had to remove the otherwise welcoming features of the library, such as seating and our children's play area.

Our staff are also reduced in their capacity to offer up-close computer assistance, which impedes our ability to serve a growing need. In addition to this, our library also had to reduce our hours and suspend our volunteer program. At the start of 2020, we relied on volunteer support for 11 of the 31 hours that we were open. When the library reopened to the public in July 2020, we had to reduce our hours to 20 hours per week so that we could always have two staff in the library to ensure staff safety. We chose not to bring volunteers back as it would increase the risk to staff and patrons and hinder our ability to adhere to WorkSafe BC guidelines.

Radium is also home to tourist attractions such as the Radium Hot Springs Pools, world-class recreational activities, and of course, herds of the iconic Bighorn Sheep. The local economy is tourism focused, with a year-round forestry sector. The seasonal nature of the tourism industry makes economic stability unpredictable. Pandemic restrictions have drastically impacted the already volatile tourism sector, and ultimately the local economy. While tourism remains strong despite Provincial orders, the tourism sector is also limited in its capacity to fulfill the ever-growing needs of the visiting population.



Our library serves as a gathering place where locals, tourists and recreational property owners all have equal access to information and services. Our facility bridges the gap between these demographics and provides a level platform for interaction, education and accessibility to information and services. This year patrons were unable to use the library as a gathering place or interact through regular social channels.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library is fortunate to have a strong working relationship with the local Village Council, and our facility is located inside of the newly built municipal building – the Radium Hot Springs Centre. Both the municipality, and the Regional District of East Kootenay, are integral to the survival of library operations. Without their joint support, the library would not be able to operate.

Our Strategic Plan is a “living document” that provides a road map from where we are now, to where we want to be. While we had made significant strides in the past few years, many of our efforts were halted by the pandemic. For example, in addition to reduced hours, we have also had to suspend our Community Technology Hub project until we are able to welcome our patrons back without heavy restrictions. This slows our progress in working towards the provincial digital library initiatives. That being said, the one-time Technology Grant received from the Province did provide our library with much needed upgrades for basic digital service, which improved our capacity to serve patrons. The Radium Library board will be updating the Strategic Plan in 2021.

Despite the difficulty of the year, the Radium Library managed to find ways to work towards achieving future goals. While we could not maintain our increased hours, we are now working to become more self-sustainable by lessening our reliance on volunteers to keep our doors open. Volunteers are a tremendous asset; however, the pandemic highlighted the fact that libraries need enough trained staff to sustainably maintain hours and offer adequate services. This year, both staff and board members engaged in professional development opportunities, and staff worked to increase their digital literacy.

The first two months of 2020 saw record breaking participation numbers for our in-library programs. We partnered with local organizations, such as the Columbia Basin Alliance for



Literacy, to offer innovative in-library programming. We were on track for our 'best year yet' when the pandemic hit.

In the early Spring of 2020, Library programming was significantly modified to adhere to pandemic regulations. Initially, all programming was moved online; the Library offered online story times and other creative initiatives to reach patrons at home. Even when in-person services resumed, in-person programming posed too much of a safety issue. In response, the Library implemented Grab & Go

Activities in place of our regular children's programming. For Halloween, we created a distanced candy chute to deliver festive goodies to our patrons in a safe and creative way. We were still able to offer a successful Summer Reading Club; however, the program structure involved a mixture of Grab & Go and online participation.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library is an active and proud member of both the Association of BC Library Directors and the Kootenay Library Federation. These partnerships allow for consortium purchasing and reduced costs for all member libraries. Both organizations have served as a lifeline to directors during the pandemic; our director participated in weekly and bi-weekly meetings to converse with other libraries about closures, reopening, and struggles brought about due to the pandemic.

The reciprocal support from member libraries is invaluable, and it is essential for likeminded organizations to work together for the betterment of every community. This year, the Kootenay Library Federation helped us to offer incredible online programming for children, teens and adults – including online book clubs with virtual visits from the authors. Without this connection, we would not have had the capacity to offer programming for adults and teens during the pandemic. We also received a grant from the Columbia Valley Community Foundation that was integral to our reopening; they provided the funding needed to purchase essential safety items such as plexiglass and cleaning supplies.

Without government and grant funding, we could not provide our community with adequate services, and we would not have the manpower to operate our facility. Finding the funding to meet growing operational demands continues to be a significant struggle for our library. Even though we are a small rural library located in Radium Hot Springs, we have become a vital and essential organization for all residents and visitors of the Columbia Valley.

Alignment with Strategies of Provincial Priorities:

1) Library Priority #1: Improving Access:

Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support the Provincial priority, and describe what outcomes were achieved.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Explore opportunities to provide open and wider access to physical and digital resources and provincial digital library initiatives.

As mentioned in the introduction, the pandemic severely impacted the launch of the Community Technology Hub. The funding for this project was secured, and a few items were purchased at the beginning of 2020; however, the board decided to defer the grant to 2021 once the pandemic had taken hold. While we have the means to purchase the items, we have had to reconfigure our space to accommodate safety requirements. This means that while safety restrictions are in place, we do not have the space to set up this initiative. Even if we could find a way to create the space, time limits and occupancy regulations would not allow for usage of the technology. Staff have been unable to assist with up close basic computer questions to ensure their safety. Advanced technology will require more intensive assistance and is therefore not feasible. Instead of purchasing items and having them sit unused for an undetermined amount of time, the Library instead deferred purchasing. We plan to purchase these items once all these pandemic related issues have been resolved. We may also have to adapt our initial plan to meet our new normal when the pandemic has reached its end.

Funding for this project came from the Columbia Basin Trust Community Technology Program, with a few smaller supporting grants from the Regional District of East Kootenay Discretionary-Grants-In-Aid Program, the Columbia Valley Community Foundation and the Village of Radium Discretionary-Grants-In-Aid Program. The grants for this project were approved in 2019, but the project will be implemented when it is safe to do so. This upcoming project will give us the opportunity to provide our patrons with wider access to the latest technology and digital resources to accommodate their educational, entrepreneurial, and personal needs.

At the start of the year, the library offered technological support to patrons through our partnership with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL). This helped to further develop digital literacy in the community; however, this was another service that was suspended indefinitely due to the pandemic.

Access to physical materials was limited due to both facility closures and the suspension of the Provincial interlibrary loan system. Being a small library, our patrons rely extensively on interlibrary loans to meet their needs. One way the Library improved access to physical materials was by implementing a brand-new service called Library Takeout. This service allows patrons to pick up library materials without entering the facility. Patrons can call,

email or use the library catalogue to place holds on items. Our library set up a doorbell system called the “Book Bell.” When patrons arrive, they ring the bell and inform staff that they are here to pick up their items. Staff bring the items out to them, and set them on a table for the patron to grab. Once the Provincial interlibrary loan service resumed in August 2020, the usage of this service skyrocketed.

Improving access was exceptionally difficult during a global pandemic, and even maintaining access proved to be an uphill battle. This year, it was not just operational costs that held us back, the restrictive nature of the pandemic reduced accessibility tenfold.

2) **Library Priority # 2: Building Capacity**

Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support this priority and describe their outcomes.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Support professional development initiatives to enhance the skills of library staff.

During the closure, library support staff were encouraged to take online courses, either on free library databases, or funded by federations, to increase their knowledge and ability to serve patrons remotely. Throughout the year, Library staff participated in an assortment of webinars designed to aid staff in navigating the new service structures. The director also participated in countless webinars, including webinars designed to improve budgeting skills and management during crises. Thanks to the Kootenay Library Federation, our library was able to participate in professional development opportunities that we would not otherwise have access to.

In late 2019, the Radium Library board supported the director’s decision to pursue a part-time Master of Library and Information Studies degree from the University of Alberta. In December 2020, the director completed the first two courses of the ALA accredited degree. The skills learned from this semester were applied to improve reference services in the library and reference knowledge for all library staff.

The Assistant Library director, who is also our children's programmer, participated in online training to adapt children and teens services. She completed the online Summer Reading Club (SRC) training and attended the online CATS conference to collaborate on how to adapt library programming during the pandemic. The conference gave staff new ideas for programming and methods to apply to current programs. Participation in the weekly SRC program remained strong despite the absence of an in-library component.



Our Story Time program went online for the first few months of the pandemic; however, when we reopened our facility to the public, we were unable to continue this initiative. Online story time also posed difficulties with copyright issues, and our staff did not have enough time to explore these challenges.

Our biggest obstacle to attending workshops was not having enough staff to cover the library when a workshop became available. Most professional development opportunities are during open hours, and we do not have enough staff in the library to both assist patrons and attend training at any given time.

3) Library Priority #3: Enhancing Citizen Engagement

Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support the Provincial priority, and describe what outcomes were achieved.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Strengthen partnerships within the community and surrounding area.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library supported this goal in 2020 by continuing to foster working relationships with other organizations in the Columbia Valley region. These include but are not limited to: Family Dynamix, Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, the Community Literacy Planning Committee, and the Edgewater Elementary School. At the start of the year the director participated in both the *Buddy Reads Family Literacy Event* and *Welcome to Kindergarten Event* at the Edgewater Elementary School. The director provided story time for families and engaged with parents to let them know about the resources offered at the Radium Library. The maintenance of these mutually beneficial partnerships is integral for the library to extend our reach in the community,

At the start of the year, we partnered with CBAL to host another Block Builders program for children ages 5-10. This after-school program ran weekly for several weeks and it was a big hit with local families. Attendance was strong, and children incorporated building blocks

with literacy in a fun creative environment. Snacks were provided so that a nutritional component could be included. This partnership worked seamlessly – it allowed CBAL to extend their presence in Radium, and it helped to bring more programming to our library, with minimal output for our already limited staff. The program was halted due to the pandemic. We were also unfortunately unable to support the CBAL’s *Book Under Every Tree* initiative in 2020. We usually provide gently used books; however, they were unable to accept donated items due to pandemic safety concerns.

Our community partnerships are invaluable; each relationship is mutually beneficial and ultimately creates more opportunities for the community to have equitable access to literary materials and services.

In addition to community connections, one of our main partnerships is with our Federation – the Kootenay Library Federation (KLF). Working towards mutually shared goals and projects with other libraries in the Kootenay region is tremendously beneficial for all parties. As an active member of the KLF, the Radium Library participates in consortium purchasing and benefits from reduced costs. Member libraries connect with one another daily through an email Listserv. This allows directors to bring up immediate questions or concerns relating to public libraries and their inner workings with fellow colleagues. Being a member of the KLF has substantial benefits for member libraries, both collaborative and fiscal. We have continued to work towards strengthening our relationships with member libraries and work together on shared goals and challenges. As previously mentioned, the KLF has been a lifeline during the pandemic and provided vital ongoing support.

4) **Strategy #4: Enhancing Governance:**

This strategy focuses on enhancing governance and supporting the library community.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Practise open governance through strong planning and clear reporting.

The Library took on several initiatives to support this goal 2020. The Radium Library board worked towards enhancing governance through clear and concise reporting. In early Spring 2020, the board Chair attended a governance training workshop that dealt with pandemic related governance issues. The board also reviewed a Trustee Orientation Handout, which highlighted the importance of evaluations, transparency and modernization. The board also consulted a Risk Management advisor to ensure library policies mitigated risk; the policy manual was updated accordingly.

The board Chair and director also developed and posted the previous year’s Annual Report for the Community on the Radium Hot Springs Public Library website. The report was then shared with Village Council at a monthly virtual meeting to profile our activities and results. The annual report addresses accomplishments for the year, provides a list of the Board of Trustees, showcases budget highlights, and provides statistics at-a-glance. The report consists

of data provided by the Province and the KLF. Posting the Community Annual Report is a way to clearly display library statistics and show a financial summary of responsible fiduciary management. We also continue to post our board meeting minutes on our website to provide transparency to the public.

In 2020, our board Chair participated in a letter writing campaign to the Minister of Education on behalf of the Library and BLCA to highlight the outstanding achievements of BC public libraries in their communities. This letter highlighted the breadth and depth of the work that public libraries do through the BC Summer Reading Club, and the significant impact it has on quality of life for participants. Writing a letter to the Minister on important topics is a way for our library to show what libraries achieve collectively, and raise our profile and importance to the Province.

The library also extends an invitation to our Mayor annually to attend one of our board meetings. This ensures transparency with our municipality, and encourages our local council to take an active interest in the library and what we offer the community.

Summary:

In summary, 2020 was a uniquely difficult year due to the challenges brought on by the global pandemic. Pandemic restrictions altered the service structure of our library and affected our capacity to effectively serve the public. The library had to reconfigure what it means to be a community hub; finding ways to reach out to the community rather than invite the community in.

It highlighted the fact that is not sustainable for a public library to rely on volunteers to maintain service hours, bringing to light the need for more operational funding for trained staff. This has always been one of our greatest challenges; however, the pandemic emphasized an already pressing issue. This challenge also presents an opportunity for the Radium Library to work towards more sustainable operational services.

In addition to shortening operational hours, the library was faced with uncertainty around the safety of public spaces. Uncertainty remained the most constant challenge throughout the year. There was uncertainty with the initial closure; in lieu of direction from Provincial health authorities, libraries worked with their boards and municipalities to make the decision to close. This followed with uncertainty on how to operate entirely as a virtual space. And then when reopening came, there was uncertainty about staff and patron safety, and how to navigate making patrons feel welcome, while restricting all facets of the library experience. There has also been uncertainty around rising cases and ever-increasing risk. The constant emotional drain and chronic stress of living and working during so much uncertainty had its effects on staff morale. There was also the daunting task of deferring all plans – including planned purchases and initiatives.

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Through innovative adaptations, we were able to safely get library materials into the hands of library patrons. We incorporated a takeout model that has quickly become a popular alternative, and very well may continue even as we establish our new normal in a post-pandemic world.

Professional development continues to be an important goal for our library to work towards. Each year we take advantage of opportunities for board and staff members to expand their knowledge and improve our services and governance structures.

Our partnerships with local organizations have proven both integral and mutually beneficial. They are a tremendous asset to the community, and we are fortunate to have strong relationships with organizations working towards shared goals in our community. Rather than working in competition with one another, we choose to work together to expand our services and the resources available to the community. Our partnership with our Federation is essential to maintain and expand our services, as is our relationship with local government.



RHSPL Library Hours:

Sunday: Closed
Monday: Closed
Tuesday: 11:00am-3:00pm
Wednesday: 11:00am-3:00pm
Thursday: 11:00am-3:00pm
Friday: 11:00am- 3:00pm
Saturday: 10:00am-2:00pm

Patron Quotes/Anecdotal Evidence:

“Stay safe, stay healthy. Radium library and staff are such a vital part of our community” – Facebook Comment

“The whole crew loved the week 3 Summer Reading Club activities tonight!” – Parent of Summer Reading Club participants

“I would like to thank you for the free access to Gale courses. I just completed by course and it was very interesting!” –
Anonymous patron

“It’s the right decision but you will be missed. Thank you.” –
Comment from a patron about the library taking the initiative to close due to the pandemic in March, 2020

RHSPL Vision:

A welcoming and inspiring community meeting place for all ages, and a vital community hub for connecting with others and for providing information about our valley, life in general, and topics of interest to our patrons.

RHSPL Mandate:

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library will strive to offer programs and materials that reflect the needs and interests of the community and its service area, and will provide Library services and programs to inspire life stories and to promote literacy, education and community relationships.

RHSPL Values:

• All of our Library Patrons • Involvement and Innovation in our Community • Intellectual Freedom • Literacy, Lifelong Learning, and Personal Growth • Our Volunteers • Sustainability for the Future

Cover Letter – RHSPL 2020 Library Technology Grant Report

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library is grateful to the Ministry of Education for the 2020 Digital Initiatives funding. Our library plans to use the funds in five different areas of need in our community. All of these areas tie into the provincial priorities – with a primary focus on improving access for British Columbians. In Radium, we are in dire need of staff hardware upgrades to support improved borrowing and finding systems to better assist our patrons. Staff are unable to effectively serve patrons using outdated technology; our patrons deserve to have systems that run as effectively as larger libraries. Our patrons also require software upgrades to ensure access to important word processing programs, and to have the ability to print from any device. We are also looking to purchase patron hardware in the form of loanable devices to reduce barriers to digital inclusion. These projects will help our community work towards better access to digital resources and better availability of library resources in accessible formats. We are also optimistic, and hope to be able to partner with a local organization – the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy – to offer in-person digital programming for patrons who wish to improve their digital literacy skills through tech support. This will of course will be contingent on the COVID-19 situation, and that is why we have projected Spring 2021 as our start date for this project.

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: [RADIUM HOT SPRINGS PUBLIC LIB]

Total Technology Grant Amount: [7,478]

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Staff hardware upgrades Computer upgrades to support circulation and reference	Improved finding and borrowing systems to help staff better assist patrons Access to services people want through libraries	Increased circulation and more efficient reference transactions Increase public computer availability	Improved finding and borrowing systems support the provincial priority to improve access for British Columbians by efficiently delivering the services people count on	Purchase computers, wireless barcode scanner, receipt printer and staff hardware upgrades		Fall 2020-Winter 2021	\$4,500 (500 for wireless barcode scanner) (1,000 for receipt printer)		
Patron software upgrades Update software suite	Updating the Microsoft Office suite on patron computers to ensure access to important word processing programs Access to services people want through libraries	Increased access to word programming to aid with resume building and equitable access	Updating the office suite supports the provincial priority to improve access for British Columbians by efficiently delivering the services people count on.	Purchase Microsoft Office suite and download onto computers.		Fall 2020-Winter 2021	\$500		
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) Loanable e-readers	Loanable devices to help reduce barriers to digital inclusion and equity for patrons Better access to digital resources Better availability of library materials in accessible formats	Increased use of e-books and library resources	Accessible loanable devices support the provincial initiative to improve access for British Columbians, and to Build Capacity	Purchase two waterproof kobo e-readers for public access Assist patrons with downloading books using library internet		Fall 2020-Winter 2021	\$500		

Patron software upgrades Mobile Print	Secure mobile printing for any device to enhance efficiency and provide more alternatives for patrons Better access to digital resources Better availability of library materials in accessible formats (access via personal device)	Reduced use of PC's used only for printing and free up access for other patrons. Particularly beneficial in COVID-19 times	Secure mobile printing helps to support the provincial priority to improve access in efficient and secure manner	Purchase and install Mobile Print through Envisionware Educate patrons and staff on how to use mobile print		Fall 2020-Winter 2021	\$978		
Digital programming Partner with Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy to offer Digital Literacy Programming	Tech support programming for patrons who wish to improve their digital literacy skills Better access to digital resources	Improved digital literacy skills and increased usage of digital resources	Digital literacy programming will help to the provincial priority to work towards improving access to British Columbians and to help build capacity by supporting quality programs, and advancing citizen engagement to improve access to government resources and tools	Work with CBAL to hire a CBAL employee to deliver the program in our facility	Work with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy to bring more digital literacy programs to the library (assuming it can be done safely and that covid is no longer as big of a risk at that point)	Spring 2021	\$1000		