

PUBLIC LIBRARY INTERLINK

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2021

INTRODUCTION

Public Library InterLINK (InterLINK) was established April 1st, 1994, growing from the foundations of the Greater Vancouver Library Federation, which operated from 1975-1994. InterLINK is a successful federation of eighteen public libraries, operating in accordance with the Library Act of British Columbia and governed by a Board of Directors. InterLINK's member libraries include those in Metro Vancouver, in the Fraser Valley, along Highway 99 north to Lillooet and on the Sunshine Coast. InterLINK's service area is home to approximately two-thirds of the population of BC.

INTERLINK STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

IN 2021, InterLINK continued to offer programs and services that brought value to member libraries, work collaboratively with the other provincial library federations to leverage the work being done by each federation for the benefit of libraries across the province and cooperate with other library organizations in areas of mutual interest. The board reaffirmed the priorities identified in InterLINK's *Strategic Framework* (attached), which as developed allows a greater degree of flexibility in pursuing specific actions in support of those strategic directions. This flexibility allowed InterLINK to respond most effectively to the evolving need of member libraries brought on as the COVID pandemic stretched into its second year.

The strategic framework is supported by the annual operations plan (attached) that is approved by the Board. The Executive Director reports on operations plan progress at each Board meeting, and progress on the operations plan comprises a major portion of the Executive Director's annual evaluation.

MISSION AND VALUES

InterLINK's Vision: *Vibrant communities supported by strong public libraries*

InterLINK's Mission: *Supporting public libraries through resource sharing and collaborative programs*

InterLINK's Values:

- **Collaboration** – *We believe that working together increases the reach and effectiveness of libraries.*
- **Equality** – *We believe that member libraries have equal voice in the decision making process at the InterLINK table.*
- **Innovation** – *We encourage creativity, experimentation and the generation of new ideas.*
- **Stewardship** – *We manage our resources in a manner that brings maximum benefit to member libraries.*

- **Accountability** – *We are open, transparent and committed to demonstrating our impact to members and funders.*

InterLINK Strategic Directions:

Strategic Direction - Enhancing Patron Experience

2021 Activities:

- Support member libraries and Outlook Online (OLOL) Administration with 2021 service developments and enhancements.

Report on 2021 Activities:

Since 2015, Public Library InterLINK has been committed to supporting resource sharing across the province, and has provided funding to ensure Canadian hosting of the SHARE-it resource sharing software.

While InterLINK continues to support ongoing service enhancement, this work has been less of a priority during the pandemic. InterLINK member libraries continue to work to implement patron-initiated interlibrary loans (ILLs), live shelf status and worked with the Illume Administrative Centre to develop a central online repository for ILL Policies. This central location will reduce the time and effort ILL staff at member libraries spend confirming those policies. Currently this confirmation process is done through time-consuming individual emails and phone calls, resulting in slower service to the public.

Providing the infrastructure to support in-person, non-resident borrowing continues to be a key priority for InterLINK. In 2020, non-resident borrowing was severely curtailed because of the pandemic. In 2019, non-residents borrowed 3,150,271 items from member libraries. In 2020, this number fell to 1,514,950. However, 2021 saw a recovery in non-resident borrowing, totalling 2,280,949. This upward trend is expected to continue in 2022. Interestingly, while non-resident borrowing levels have fluctuated, they remain fairly consistent as a percentage of overall member library circulation, at approximately 11%.

InterLINK continues to provide opportunities for member libraries to share best practices regarding resource sharing, by hosting a mailing list for member libraries interlibrary loan staff.

Outcomes:

- Enhancements to interlibrary loan procedures leads to better service to patrons.
- ILL staff in all libraries continue to benefit from efficiencies in workflows.
- InterLINK's investment in ILL infrastructure benefits libraries in both the public and post-secondary library sectors across the province.
- Interlibrary loan staff report greater awareness of benefits of the system after meeting with Admin staff and staff from other member libraries.

- Library users have access to collections at libraries other than their "home" library, greatly increasing their ability to borrow materials relevant to their needs.

Key Partnerships:

InterLINK continues to work closely with member libraries, the Libraries Branch, the BC Electronic Library Network (Illume Administration Centre), the BC Libraries Cooperative and the post-secondary library sector to improve resource sharing and work towards seamless service.

Strategic Direction - Building Member Library Capacity

Public Library InterLINK provides programs and services to member libraries that showcase the value of the Federation. InterLINK's commitment to the development of skills and knowledge at all levels remains in alignment with the commitment of the Libraries Branch in these vital areas.

2021 Activities:

- Manage 2021-2022 LLEAD program.
- Schedule virtual offerings of coaching workshops for member libraries.
- Continue to offer virtual customer service sessions to libraries across the province.
- Build on mental wellness session offered in November 2020. Coordinate with InterLINK working group and library partners on additional resources and sessions.
- Work to develop next steps and implement recommendations arising from the *Libraries and the Climate Crisis* event.
- Offer additional staff development sessions based on member library needs.
- Utilize technology to provide additional opportunities for member library staff to share information, best practices and areas for cooperation.
- Develop next steps in response to Reconcilia(c)tion Board development session.
- Offer additional Board development session, based on Board Self Evaluation and skills matrix results.
- Develop next steps in response to developments arising from the work of libraries and the Co-op on connectivity.
- Offer AAG development sessions based on AAG feedback.
- Manage centrally located collection of restricted audiobooks for member library outreach departments.
- Manage provision of physical copies of NNELS titles for all BC libraries.
- Manage 2021 patron card order including all federations.
- Review 2020 world language project/Manage 2021 world language project. Consider ways to expand program.
- Respond to member library requests regarding additional consortial purchasing opportunities, as appropriate.
- Manage year two of 2020-2025 NewToBC program.

Report on 2021 Activities:

Member Library Staff Development

Supporting member library staff development remains a key activity for Public Library InterLINK. Since 2013, the InterLINK Board has earmarked funding federation-wide staff development on subjects deemed a priority for member libraries. In the Federation's 2021 budget, the Board approved targeted funds to support federation-wide staff and board development opportunities. InterLINK also works closely with the other provincial library federations and other library partners to extend staff development opportunities beyond InterLINK's service area.

Program: LLEAD

InterLINK began offering the LLEAD program in 2016. The intent of the LLEAD program is to identify, develop and encourage staff from member libraries who are seen to have potential to become leaders within their organizations. Nominations from across the province and from outside the public library sector are encouraged.

InterLINK continues to be a key supporter of the LLEAD program. The InterLINK Executive Director is part of the program's administration team, and the in-kind contribution of the Executive Director's time is vital to the program's success. InterLINK member libraries continue to be the greatest source of program applicants.

In November of 2021, the program welcomed its largest cohort to date. 29 members embarked on their leadership journey, gathering for the 5-day intensive in Loon Lake. 14 of these members are from InterLINK member libraries. Other members from across Canada are also part of this cohort.

Background:

LLEAD participants are expected to practice and improve skills that are directly transferable to the library environment in organizational leadership, teamwork, finance, human resources management, and advocacy. At the end of the yearlong program, successful LLEAD participants will demonstrate the resilience, self-awareness and abilities to influence strategic outcomes at the organizational and community level.

Program Components

- Leadership Development Institute - a five-day institute based on current research and focused on transformational leadership with emphasis on organizational, strategic and personal leadership.
- Mentorship – participants are “assigned” a mentor from outside their organization.
- Coaching – coaches would be participants' supervisors or another appropriate person from within the participant's organization.

- Organizational Projects – a major project approved by the sponsoring library is presented and adjudicated. These projects may be of an extended nature that would continue past the duration of the program.
- Bi-weekly skills building sessions – topics for these virtual sessions include project management, managing change, courageous conversations, using wise questions, influencing stakeholders, inclusive work environments, managing in difficult times.
- Wise-Counsel – a technique from *Liberating Structures*, Wise Council is designed for a group of people to quickly delve into an issue presented by a colleague and tap into the group’s individual and collective experiences and perspectives to provide advice.

After the conclusion of the 2021-2022 cohort, 80 emerging leaders will have “graduated” from the program.

The 5th cohort is planned for 2023.

Outcomes:

- Libraries have access to a program that encourages senior staff to aspire to leadership roles within the library.
- LLEAD members gain greater knowledge and appreciation of the skills required to serve in a senior leadership role and can apply that knowledge in their organization, or in subsequent leadership positions.
- Libraries have access to a cohort of suitable applicants for senior management positions, reducing the need for expensive searches when positions become available.
- Of the 51 members of the first two LLEAD cohorts, nearly half have moved into positions of greater responsibility.

Program: Coaching for Library Managers

Libraries are challenged to deliver high-level service in an always changing, increasingly complex environment. In order to do so, library managers must be effective leaders of staff and develop appropriate skills for working with those who report to them. Coaching is one of these skills. In 2016, InterLINK began working with facilitators Alison Lee and Simon Goland to offer two-day *Coaching for Library Managers* sessions for library staff. Registration for the coaching sessions is limited to 18, as the session is developed for intensive, small group interaction.

In 2020, the coaching program shifted to a virtual platform. Instead of 2 full days (7 hours each) of instruction, practice and support, the facilitators provided 6 zoom sessions (2 hours each session). These virtual sessions continued into 2021, with sessions scheduled for September/October and November/December. 2021 was the first year that staff from outside InterLINK participated.

As of the end of 2021, just under 200 staff from member libraries had participated in the coaching program. Feedback continues to be extremely positive.

Outcomes:

Coaching participants are surveyed 6-12 months after attending the program to obtain feedback on the impact the session had on their practice and the workplace. This information will be reported in the 2022 *Grant Report*. Results from the past surveys indicate that:

- On a scale from 1-5, the average rating regarding the attendee's ability to coach was 3.25 and 75% noted that had changed after attending the session.
- With regard to the impact on the attendee's management style, with 1 being "none" and 5 being "a lot", the average score was 4.

Program: Customer Service Training

Since 2018, InterLINK has partnered with Dr. Mark Colgate from the University of Victoria's Gustavson School of Business on the delivery of virtual staff development opportunities focused on customer service excellence. Dr. Colgate worked with a team of staff from member libraries to create courses for InterLINK based on his 3Rs of Service Excellence: Be Reliable, Be Responsive and Build Relationships system.

Two online courses, *Ace the 3Rs* and *Moments of Power* were launched in January 2020. The courses are available to all public libraries in British Columbia. InterLINK works with the other library federations to promote the courses and track attendees. Total enrollment in these two courses as of the end of December, 2021 is 408 and 353, respectively.

In 2021, InterLINK worked with the Gustavson School of Business to develop two level 3 courses, *Develop a Service Strategy* and *Make Service Your Advantage by Building a Strong Service System*. Designed for managers and supervisors, the goal of the new sessions is to build systems within your libraries that deliver consistently great customer experiences. These sessions will be launched in early 2022.

Outcomes:

- Member libraries have a "shared language" regarding customer service that makes measurement and reporting more straightforward and increases ability to share information and compare.
- Staff that attend report that concepts used in training (3Rs, Moments of Power) have positively impacted their customer service delivery.
- Online courses will permit member libraries to incorporate material into staff onboarding, furthering the culture change.

Program: Mental Wellness Working Group

Mental health is an issue that impacts every workplace in Canada. According to the CBC, the mental health of Canadians has deteriorated in the two years since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, with 54 percent reporting their mental health has worsened. Further, surveys indicate that women have fared worse than men. This reality is part of every day for library workers.

Not only is there a very good chance that they are struggling with a mental health issue, the people they serve may be as well.

In 2018, InterLINK struck a Mental Wellness Working Group to provide recommendations regarding how best InterLINK could support the mental health of member library staff.

Activities to date have included:

- Organizing mental wellness sessions for the BC Library conferences in 2019 and 2020. When the 2020 conference was cancelled due to the pandemic, that session was rescheduled for November, 2020.
- creating a curated list of mental wellness resources that resides on the InterLINK website.
- working with member libraries to have a staff member at each library to act as the "point person" for the sharing of information.
- developing an inventory of mental wellness initiatives at each member library.

In 2021, InterLINK organized a session for the BC Library Conference, *BC libraries responding to staff mental wellness needs*, which focused on programs implemented in a large urban public library, a small rural public library and a large university library.

Also in 2021, planning began for a mental wellness mini conference, which is scheduled for the spring of 2022.

Outcomes:

- Member libraries and their staff will have a starting point for locating mental wellness resources.
- Member libraries will be able to share best practices and learn from each other.
- Over time, the impact of mental wellness stressors will be reduced.

Program: Libraries in the Public Arena: Responding to the Climate Crisis

In partnership with the BC Libraries Association and the BC Libraries Cooperative, InterLINK has organized a number of virtual sessions focussing on “big topic” sessions such as the climate emergency. These sessions grew out of the *Libraries and the Climate Crisis* event held in December 2019. The discussion regarding additional sessions also focussed on the stress felt in relation to these big topics was being exacerbated by the pandemic, and a feeling that people were powerless to affect change. The sessions planned for 2021 were meant to counter that powerless feeling and provide support for those feeling stress.

A session with Seth Klein, author of *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency* was held in June 2021 and a follow-up session with Rachel Malena-Chan on the topic of eco-anxiety was held in August.

Program: Managing Hostile Interactions

In late 2020, InterLINK became a member of the Homelessness Services Association of BC (HSABC). Through InterLINK's membership, public libraries across the province have access to HSABC's catalogue of sessions, both live (virtually) and recorded. One session, *Managing Hostile Interactions*, was of enough interest that InterLINK contracted with the facilitators to develop a library-specific session focussed on libraries. The first session was held in November 2021 with additional sessions scheduled for June 2022. A survey regarding the impact of this program will be conducted in 2022.

Program: Circulation Supervisors Committee Workshop

The InterLINK Circulation Supervisors committee was established in 2009 with a mandate to share information and best practices, through twice-yearly meetings and a mailing list where questions, suggestions and advice could be posted.

In 2021, a staff development session was organized specifically for the Circulation Committee. This session, *Crucial Conversations*, was facilitated by Deb Hutchison Koep, Chief Librarian at the North Vancouver City Library. Feedback was very positive and InterLINK will be surveying attendees after one year (June 2022) to gauge to what extent session content has been incorporated into their practice.

Outcomes:

- Committee members report that access to a pool of experience, suggestions and advice from peers who are similar positions as they are contribute to better planning and problem solving.
- Attendees at the Crucial Conversations have reported increased confidence in supervising their direct reports.

Program: Youth Services Committee Workshops

InterLINK's Youth Services Committee (YSC) has existed since the Federation was established and is an excellent example of how sharing information regarding best practices and programs leads to ongoing collaboration. As detailed in the YSC's terms of reference, the Committee is responsible for facilitating federation-wide sharing of program ideas, author visits, and children and teen services resources. The YSC also organizes staff development opportunities that focus on children's and teen services

In 2021, the YSC offered two workshops: Lindsey Krabbenhoft (VPL) coached InterLINK programming contacts on best practices hosting live virtual storytimes. This was done in direct response to the need for pivoting to virtual platforms in order to continue serving communities that was made necessary by the pandemic.

In addition, Maddison Spenrath (UBC) presented a current snapshot of the MDI literacy assessment instrument. This session is recorded and now available to InterLINK member libraries for on-demand viewing via the InterLINK web page.

Outcomes:

- Youth services staff develop skills that increase their effectiveness.
- Member libraries have access to resources created by the YSC.

Program: Board Development

The InterLINK Board continues to work to ensure that its members have access to development opportunities that assist them in the fulfillment of their role as a member of a federated board. The board conducts an annual skills assessment survey to determine appropriate areas for development. In 2021, the focus was on two areas: advocacy and reconciliation.

Advocacy – the Board worked with Anni Holtby on this session. Anni has served as Chair of the Nelson Public Library and as Chair of the Kootenay Library Federation was a recipient of the BC Library Trustees Association’s Nancy Bennett Governance Merit Award in 2020. The purpose of this session was to consider what advocacy role a federation like InterLINK should play. The session was followed by a generative conversation at the Board’s November meeting on InterLINK’s advocacy role.

Reconciliation – In 2020, InterLINK Board members Harlan Pruden and Barb Lawrie facilitated a session entitled “Reconcili-action for the rest of the Board. This was followed up in 2021 with a generative conversation on how Board members first learned about colonialism. In September 2021, the Board approved a proposal to contract with Nahanee Creative for a board development session focussed on developing meaningful territorial acknowledgements.

Outcomes:

- Board has opportunity to strengthen knowledge of topics tailored to skills areas identified as appropriate.

Objective: Realize cost efficiencies through consortial purchasing programs

2021 Action Items:

- Manage 2021 patron card order including all federations
- Manage 2021 world language project.
- Manage centrally located collection of restricted audiobooks for member library outreach departments.
- Manage provision of physical copies of National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) titles for all BC libraries.

Report on Action Items

Program: Consortial Purchasing of Patron Library Cards

In 2021, nine libraries (6 InterLINK member libraries and 3 from outside InterLINK) participated in the consortial purchase of patron cards, organized by InterLINK’s Program Coordinator

Candice Stenstrom. InterLINK again worked with Canadian supplier Dynamic Imaging on this consortial project. 74,000 standard cards were ordered at a cost of 22.5 cents per card. In addition, 43,500 key fob cards were ordered at a cost of 33.875 cents per card. Participating libraries continue to be very satisfied with the consortial program.

By collaborating on this purchase all participating libraries realized savings in the cost of cards over ordering on their own. Smaller libraries realized savings that are much larger as a percentage of what they would pay ordering on their own. If a small library ordered their cards independently, the price would have been 58 and 89 cents per card, respectively, for standard and fob cards. By participating in the consortial order, libraries can save over 50% of the cost of ordering on their own

In addition, the cost savings noted are on the product alone and do not reflect the staff savings realized by participating libraries by having InterLINK coordinate the purchase.

Outcomes:

- Participating libraries realize cost savings of over 50% by purchasing cards on a consortial basis.
- Participating libraries were able to repurpose resources for other priorities.
- Smaller InterLINK libraries are able to benefit from participating in programs that provide economies of scale.

Program: World Language Collection Development

In 2021, InterLINK continued to facilitate and manage a consortial purchase of selected shelf-ready world language materials for participating libraries.

InterLINK contracted with Library Services Centre for the 2021 World Languages project.

Four InterLINK libraries and two non-InterLINK libraries participated, providing an overall budget of \$36,200 for the 2021 program.

In total, 1,178 items in eight languages were added to the world languages collections in the participating libraries.

While participating libraries realize savings on cataloguing and processing of world language materials, the most important aspect of the program is that it allows libraries without the capacity to process materials in languages other than English the ability to have world language material collections fully accessible in their catalogues. These libraries also realize savings on staff time by having InterLINK coordinate the purchase.

Outcomes:

- Participating libraries realize cost savings by purchasing materials (including cataloguing and processing) on a consortial basis.

- Participating libraries were able to respond to community needs regarding world language collections in a more timely fashion.
- Participating libraries were able to repurpose resources for other priorities.

Program: Audiobooks

The consortial purchase of audiobooks for use by member libraries as restricted collections (outreach departments) is one of InterLINK's longest standing consortial programs. The importance of this program was heightened by the pandemic. As people were restricted more than ever in the places they could go, access to audiobooks and other outreach services provided by member libraries was more needed than ever.

In 2021, 853 titles were purchased, adding 1,782 (1,685 Mp3 – 97 digital) copies to the collections of member libraries and made available to patrons of this service.

In addition, InterLINK continues to support the NNELS service. InterLINK and NNELS have collaborated on the conversion of titles from InterLINK's audiobook collection (in cassette format) to Mp3 for inclusion in the NNELS catalogue. To date, 282 titles have been converted. InterLINK also has taken on the role of creating "hard copies" (on CD) of NNELS titles for libraries across BC whose clients request them. In 2021, 106 CDs were created and shipped to requesting libraries.

As of December 31, 2021 the audiobook collections held 14,285 titles (23,675 volumes) and 1318 patrons were registered for the service. Circulation for 2021 was 37,179, an increase of 14% over 2020.

In addition, InterLINK fulfilled 25 interlibrary loan requests from libraries outside of InterLINK for items from the audiobook collection. 106 NNELS request were processed.

Outcomes:

- Participating libraries realize cost savings by purchasing materials (including cataloguing and processing) on a consortial basis. Participating libraries were able to repurpose resources for other priorities.
- Libraries are able to provide clients with hard copies of NNELS titles.

Objective: Enhanced library capacity achieved through collaborative programs and the sharing of best practices and expertise

2021 Action Items:

- Manage year two of 2020-2025 NewToBC program

Report on Action Items

Program: NewToBC

NewToBC is a library settlement initiative that works with public libraries and other settlement service provider organizations to support the settlement and integration of newcomer immigrants in British Columbia. NewToBC is administered by InterLINK and funded by the federal government via a Contribution Agreement between InterLINK and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). NewToBC services are planned and delivered by a team of contractors.

Since its inception as a provincially funded pilot project in 2012, NewToBC has focused on supporting newcomers in InterLINK library communities in the Mainland / Southwest region of British Columbia. In 2021, InterLINK negotiated an amendment to its Contribution Agreement with IRCC to extend the reach of select NewToBC services to support newcomers, libraries, and other settlement service provider organizations in communities and regions across British Columbia.

Key aspects of the NewToBC in 2021

NewToBC Website & Social Media Presence

The NewToBC website (www.newtobc.ca) serves as both a tool for library staff and staff at settlement service provider organizations as well as a key source of information for newcomer immigrants and refugees as they settle and integrate into their new communities. In the first months of 2021, NewToBC developed and launched a redesigned version of the website that is more intuitive, usable, and accessible for newcomers and other website users. 38,847 unique users visited the website in 2021. Website users were from communities across British Columbia and Canada and from countries around the world.

In 2021, NewToBC's robust presence on social media continued to grow, with over 6,000 new Facebook "likes" and over 4000 new Twitter followers. As of 31 December 2021, NewToBC had nearly 50,000 Facebook "likes" (far more than any library system in British Columbia) and nearly 6,000 Twitter followers.

In 2021, NewToBC focused updates to the settlement information resources featured on the website and information shared via social media on connecting newcomers, library staff, and other project stakeholders to information, services, and resources to support the settlement of newcomers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Library Champions Project

The Library Champions Project is an expansive volunteer community engagement initiative. Through the Library Champions Project, NewToBC recruits, trains, equips, and supports newcomer Library Champions who are then deployed into their communities to share information about public libraries and to spread awareness about settlement services with other newcomers. Since its launch in 2013, 1,850 newcomers have been trained as Library

Champions. In turn, those Champions have contacted nearly 102,000 newcomers to introduce library services and other settlement programs and services.

Due to restrictions and guidance from public health authorities related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, NewToBC focused on delivering online rather than in-person cycles of the Library Champions Project in communities across the Mainland / Southwest region of British Columbia. In Fall / Winter 2021, NewToBC commenced planning for additional online cycles of the Library Champions Project for newcomers in communities and regions across British Columbia.

The impact of the Library Champions Project is reflected in the following quotes from clients who participated in cycles of the project in 2021:

- “I appreciated every session at LCP. It was so useful for me. I learned very much about library and my community and was able to help others with that information.”
- “I have been volunteering for years, but after doing this project I feel different. This program gave me psychological confidence, outreach, and communication skills.”
- “Thank you for providing this opportunity. It was such a meaningful experience for me. In the months after my baby was born, I just stayed home with a baby, lost the confidence in speaking English and felt lonely. This project gave me confidence and motivated me to go out and talk with my neighbours, in my niece’s school, even with strangers. I feel so good after this.”
- “The most wonderful thing was this sense of belonging, of being able to help someone just because I had information that they did not know about. You open another world for them. I will definitely recommend this project to others.”
- “I’m a library champion forever now. I’ve been here for 5 months yesterday, and those of you who have moved during covid, it’s interesting and isolating and I wanted to connect with Canada, I needed a way to feel like I’m in Canada. It’s been really interesting insight into the way Canada thinks. It’s lovely to see how deep the library resources go, and to see what happens when a well-resourced country puts the resources towards resources for the people. I’m conscious that I come from a place where that’s not possible. I feel privileged to see what’s available to citizens in this country. I keep telling people “I can’t BELIEVE what you can get from the library here!” I wanted to make touch with other humans, and this group has been lovely.”
- “During the pandemic it’s hard to meet new people, I’m an introvert, but here I get to meet good people and hear their stories. Everyone here, finding love and kindness to hear everyone share their experience. I share these experiences afterward with my husband. I had a wonderful time with the VPL program.”
- “I’m so grateful to have this experience, it’s my first volunteer job in Canada. Because we were so isolated, it made me reach out to people, and I needed that. I learned so much about the resources, any newcomer can connect to the library resources.”

Community Dialogues

In Fall / Winter 2021, NewToBC commenced planning for nine online community dialogues that will bring together newcomers, library staff and administration, settlement service providers, and other interested parties to share information and resources to support the settlement of newcomers in BC communities in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcomes

- Newcomers' settlement and integration into their communities is facilitated.
- Newcomers have access to information about library services and resources and other settlement services and resources.
- Library staff has increased understanding of the multicultural aspects of their communities.
- Library staff has an increased understanding of the needs of newcomers.
- Library staff has an increased capacity to provide appropriate information, referrals and outreach to newcomers in the library.
- Knowledge transfer, sharing of best practices and relationship building occurs between library staff and settlement service providers.
- Library staff and settlement service providers have an increased understanding of each other's areas of expertise and how they can mutually meet the needs of newcomers.

Key Partnerships

InterLINK's key partners in NewToBC are public libraries across British Columbia and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Public libraries (including InterLINK libraries) continue to develop new relationships and build on existing relationships with settlement service providers in their communities. These service providers include, but are not restricted to, Immigrant Services Society of BC, MOSAIC, S.U.C.C.E.S.S., Neighbourhood Houses, public schools and post-secondary institutions.

Program: Youth Services Committee

Youth services staff from member libraries participate on the Youth Services Committee. This program organizes staff development opportunities for youth services staff from member libraries, collaborates on programs that provide benefit to all participating libraries and hosts federation-wide author readings. The committee meets four times annually to share best practices and programming ideas. In 2021, the committee underwent a strategic planning exercise to ensure it was responding effectively to the needs of children and youth services at member libraries.

Outcomes:

- Youth services staff from InterLINK member libraries have the opportunity to learn from each other and improve programming in their library.
- Cooperating on author readings and collaborative programs allows member libraries to stretch budgets in these areas and participate in programming that might not otherwise be available.

Program: Audiobooks

In addition to its consortial purchasing aspects, the audiobook program remains an excellent example of collaboration across the Federation. A committee comprised of outreach staff from member libraries and InterLINK Program Coordinator Candice Stenstrom collaborate on

collection development while InterLINK provides processing of the materials and maintains the catalogue for access to materials. As mentioned above, the committee worked to pivot the service in face of the pandemic, establishing a direct mailing program to outreach patrons requesting materials.

Outcomes:

- Outreach patrons have a much broader selection of materials to choose from.
- Member libraries save money on the consortial purchase of materials.
- Libraries across BC have access to hard copies of NNELS titles when required.

Program: Books for Babies

The IslandLink Library Federation organizes this annual program. Board books, CDs and a carrying bag are part of a consortial purchase for libraries that offer a Books for Babies program. A number of InterLINK libraries take part, and InterLINK provides logistical assistance through shipping of the bags to all participating libraries in British Columbia.

Key Partnerships:

InterLINK's consortial purchasing projects and collaborative programs illustrate the partnership that exists among 18 diverse and independent public libraries and the ability for those partners to work towards consensus in order to provide benefit to all member libraries. While these programs are developed by InterLINK in response to federation needs, they could be extended to any public library in the province. The Books for Babies program is an excellent example of how federations cooperate to extend programs across the province.

Strategic Direction - Increasing Awareness of the Impact of Public Libraries

Objective: Communities have an increased awareness of the impact of public libraries

2021 Action Items:

- Support advocacy efforts of the Library Partners Advisory Group.
- Continue to support work on library data collection.
- Evaluate participation in 2021 Library Day at the Fair at PNE, as appropriate.
- Attend member library board meetings as requested to provide information and updates on InterLINK activities.
- Support a working group tasked with developing key messages regarding the library's role and library services in response to the COVID-19 emergency, as appropriate.

Report on 2021 Action Items

Program: Library Partners Advisory Group

An ongoing priority for InterLINK is to foster closer connections to other provincial organizations that share with InterLINK the goal of a strong, resilient library sector. While working more closely with the Library Partners Advisory Group was highlighted in the 2021 Operations Plan, this also extends to focusing on more effective relationships with the Public Libraries Branch and the other library federations.

Outcomes:

- Better coordination and more access to staff development opportunities for all libraries.
- Better coordination and more access to cost saving consortial purchasing opportunities for all libraries.
- Library sector is better prepared to effectively act cooperatively.

Program: COVID-19 Messaging Working Group

In support of the advocacy work undertaken by the Library Partners Advisory Group, InterLINK created a working group to review the 2020 Grant Reports submitted by member libraries. The focus of this work was to develop a narrative of how public libraries have stepped forward during the pandemic and provided essential services to communities and demonstrated leadership in those communities. The information compiled will support 2022 advocacy activities.

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S KEY COMMITMENTS

The continued strong relationship that Public Library InterLINK maintains with the Libraries Branch is demonstrated throughout this report. InterLINK is committed to improving the services it provides and working with its partners across the province to extend those services beyond InterLINK's service area. As detailed in this report the close relationship among the province's federations has led to improved access to staff development offerings and consortial purchasing programs across the province.

The commitment of the InterLINK Board to deepening its knowledge and work around reconciliation is another example. The workshop "ReconciliACTION," presented in 2020 will now be part of the BC Library Association's reconciliation work. The Board's commitment to governance excellence, as evidenced by its annual self-evaluation and skills matrix exercises, reflects the Branch's emphasis on this work.

InterLINK's continued support of the provincial interlibrary loan infrastructure improves access for all British Columbians. Our close relationship with library partners supports a connected library network that leverages its strengths and structure to deliver user-centred programs and services through the province. By working collaboratively, we are able to reduce barriers for library staff and board members to access training opportunities so that they can continue to provide quality and future-focused library services.

SUMMARY

The work of the Federation continues to emphasize its role as one of utility and support. In 2021, Public Library InterLINK continued to deliver programs and services of value to members and demonstrated the Federation's commitment to its partnership with the Public Libraries Branch and the province's other library federations, along with other provincial library organizations. InterLINK continues to focus on its key mission of supporting resource sharing both within the federation and across the province, and offering staff and board development opportunities that build capacity and support libraries in their pursuit of excellent service to their communities.

Public Library InterLINK would like to take this opportunity to thank the Public Libraries Branch, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Minister for the financial support received from the Province in 2021.