Inspiring Libraries, CONNECTING Communities

A vision for public library service in British Columbia.
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Message from the Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Executive summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Value of public libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 07   | Where are we going: *A vision for public libraries*  
          Strategic context |
| 08   | How will we get there: *strategies for achieving our vision*  
          **STRATEGY #1:** Fostering connected communities:  
          Advancing access to information and resources |
| 09   | **STRATEGY #2:** Building capacity:  
          Enabling inspiration and innovation |
| 10   | **STRATEGY #3:** Working together:  
          Creating lasting and sustainable partnerships |
| 11   | **STRATEGY #4:** Sustaining our success:  
          Enhancing governance and demonstrating impact |
| 12   | Where have we been  
          A brief history of public libraries  
| 14   | Serving our communities  
          Our public libraries today |
| 15   | Framework for public libraries  
          Working together |
| 19   | What’s driving change: *Trends influencing public libraries*  
          Embracing new roles for libraries  
          Changing communities  
          Changing economic markets |
| 20   | Technological evolution  
          Learning transformation |
| 24   | Charting our progress |
| 25   | Appendix A: *Stakeholder consultation* |
Through public libraries, our government invests in the intellectual, cultural and economic future of our province. Libraries inspire people and communities to take advantage of the province’s social and economic opportunities, ensuring British Columbia is a vibrant place to live and work today and for generations to come. Over the past decade, the Province has supported public libraries as they transform their technology and online resources to improve access to information across British Columbia.

Libraries impact us in more ways than just lending books — libraries bridge the physical and digital worlds, connecting people with each other and with knowledge and information.

As a part of a thriving community, libraries are trusted public places where anyone can go to develop literacy, work and life skills, share a love for life-long learning and find connections in their community. Libraries play a key role in welcoming newcomers and job seekers in British Columbia.

Government recognizes that in our rapidly changing world, British Columbians need different skills, tools, information, programs and services to succeed. That’s why the Province is committed to supporting the transformation of public libraries. I am pleased to share our renewed vision and strategic plan developed in consultation with our partners in the library community. With this plan public libraries will provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s changing world.

Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to library boards, staff, volunteers, local governments and partners for their hard work bringing quality library services to communities across the province, and for working with us on the development of this shared vision for libraries. Through strong partnerships and commitment to our strategies, we will deliver on our vision, and all British Columbians will benefit from access to information that inspires them.

Sincerely,

Mike Bernier - MINISTER OF EDUCATION
Executive summary

Libraries bridge the physical and digital worlds, connecting people not only with a world of information but with each other. They support and contribute to life-long learning by providing safe, open spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds. British Columbia’s public libraries strive to meet the needs of people at all stages of their life. Libraries are valued because they provide equitable access to information and services in many forms. By sharing innovative technologies and services, libraries are expanding services beyond their physical walls. Libraries continue to embrace new ways to support arts and culture, leisure, learning and skills development.

Today’s library is dynamic, multipurpose and flexible, supporting a broad range of community needs.

Since 2004, the vision for public library services throughout British Columbia has been guided by the Provincially developed plan, Libraries Without Walls: the World Within Your Reach. For the past 12 years, it set the Provincial strategy for libraries and provided a solid framework for realizing its goals. The plan helped libraries of all sizes navigate significant changes. Nationally, British Columbia ranks in the top third of provinces on its number of active users, number of items borrowed, and size of library collections. British Columbia’s libraries continues to see growth in these areas and in overall use. The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of supporting the improvement, extension and promotion of quality public library services across communities. That is why the Ministry of Education worked with key partners and stakeholders to develop this renewed vision and strategic plan.

This plan supports government’s vision that our public libraries provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s changing world.

The Province is focusing on the future by creating a strong and diverse economy and supporting thriving communities. Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities, details a renewed vision for public libraries, one that recognizes and supports their changing role and important contribution to the social, cultural, and economic health and well-being of communities. This plan also acknowledges the continuing importance of providing equal access to information through our libraries.

Our world is changing. To meet evolving user expectations and community needs, libraries are making adjustments to their programs, services, collections, policies, and systems. Trends in community demographics, global economic markets, and technological changes are driving the ways that libraries deliver services, develop staff, communicate and make decisions. Given the impact of these significant trends and drivers, it is critically important that all stakeholders work strategically with a clear vision in mind. This plan provides that vision.
To develop this plan, the Ministry of Education Libraries Branch engaged in a consultation process that included workshops, interviews, and various feedback cycles [Appendix A]. The ministry established a steering committee of library stakeholders to support the consultation and engagement process. This committee provided ongoing and regular feedback on the overall approach and direction of the consultative process. The steering committee included members of BC Library Trustees Association, BC Library Association, Association of BC Public Library Directors and BC Libraries Cooperative. Contributions from the library community and stakeholders formed the foundation of this vision and plan.

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS INCLUDED THE SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT OF VARIOUS PARTNERS:

This plan also affirms government’s strategic commitment to work with the library community to improve access and support the changing role of today’s libraries. It represents a commitment to working together on shared goals and ensures progress on the vision for the cultural, social and economic benefit of British Columbians. By working together at all levels we will be able to provide British Columbians with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed today and in the future. By expanding new opportunities everyone can benefit from publicly held and supported digital resources.

The strategies outlined below collectively support the vision for public library services in British Columbia:

1. **Fostering Connected Communities:**
   Advancing access to information and resources

2. **Building Capacity:**
   Enabling inspiration and innovation

3. **Working Together:**
   Creating lasting and sustainable partnerships

4. **Sustaining our Success:**
   Enhancing governance and demonstrating impact

The Ministry of Education, through the Libraries Branch continues to fulfill its mandate under the *Library Act*, including managing Provincial public library grants and associated accountabilities, administering the Act, and promoting the improvement and extension of public library services throughout the province.
It is through a thoughtful, cooperative approach to moving forward that we will all be successful in ensuring that our public libraries provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s changing world.

In today’s changing world, public libraries are engaging more closely with their communities in order to understand their evolving needs.

The strategic direction outlined in this document focuses on enabling libraries to deliver the connected and innovative services, programs, and information resources that British Columbians need now and will need in the future. The vision also recognizes the important role libraries play in enabling equitable access to information. People will have access to the information they need regardless of who they are or because of any physical or geographical barriers.

Moving forward, the ministry will work with library partners and stakeholders in the development of a plan to implement this strategy and is committed to reporting annually on its progress.
Value of public libraries

Public libraries support people at every stage of life. They foster life-long learning, help develop skills and promote social inclusion. Libraries are a key contributor to the social, cultural, and economic health and well-being of communities, helping to ensure that the province remains a vibrant place to live and work. Libraries remain unique among public services because of their commitment to free access, community focus, high-level of use and individuals can participate voluntarily in the services they provide.

British Columbia’s public libraries:

- **Foster life-long learning** and play a vital role in helping people of all ages access the information and tools that they need to live, learn, and work
- **Help people improve diverse literacy skills**
- **Play a key role in supporting learning** through varied collections, services, programs and online resources
- **Connect people with government and local information**
- **Help people develop the skills required to find and evaluate information** in order to adapt and succeed in a knowledge-based economy
- **Support economic prosperity by providing access to essential decision-making information** for organizations and businesses
- **Help ensure that arts and culture continue to flourish and thrive** by providing access to sources of inspiration
Where are we going

A VISION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

This plan supports government’s vision – that our public libraries provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s changing world.

Strategic context

The Province is focusing on the future by creating a strong diverse economy and supporting thriving communities. The vision for public libraries is consistent with many ongoing and broad government strategies including: Canada Starts Here: the BC Jobs Plan, #BCTech Strategy, BC’s Education Plan: Focus on Learning, Accessibility 2024 and building new relationships with First Nations.

By enabling equitable access to information and knowledge for British Columbians, this plan serves as a foundation for:

A strong diverse economy, where libraries enable small business, job seekers and learners to succeed by fostering creativity, innovation and content development. This is accomplished by offering access to the spaces, tools and information people need to be competitive in the knowledge and creative-based sectors. Libraries help residents and newcomers access the resources they need to develop ongoing skills training, allowing them to contribute to a highly skilled workforce and build their strong local and regional economies.

Access to programs and services that support diverse social and information needs. Libraries are the centres of their community: places where families come together to discover, develop literacy skills (including digital), life skills and share a love for lifelong learning and reading, while bridging generations and inspiring future generations.

Public libraries continue to identify and implement opportunities to strengthen partnerships with First Nations to enhance community and broaden cultural awareness, in order to ensure everyone shares in British Columbia’s economic growth and development.
How will we get there

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING OUR VISION

The strategies outlined in this document have been developed with the intent of supporting a vision where public libraries provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s changing world.

This strategic direction helps us work toward a future where:

- Libraries are at the heart of our diverse and unique communities, providing trusted access to physical and digital resources in ways that are responsive to individual and community needs.

- People in communities recognize the value that libraries provide as dynamic, flexible gathering places that enable life-long learning, recreation, literacy, innovation and knowledge creation.

- Libraries come together to share best practice, collaborate, cooperate on service delivery and explore opportunities to collaborate with other organizations that share a common purpose.

- Libraries are learning organizations that embrace innovation, incubation and respond effectively to the evolving needs of their community.
Strategy 1

Fostering connected communities:
Advancing access to information and resources

Libraries bridge the physical and digital worlds, connecting people with each other, and with the knowledge, ideas and resources they need to be successful. Reliable and affordable internet connectivity plays a vital role in helping people stay connected and participate in an increasingly digital world.

This strategy focuses on enhancing equitable public access to all types of information and tools.

THE ACTIONS we will take to deliver ON THIS STRATEGY include:

- Exploring opportunities to provide open and wider access to a core suite of digital resources and provincial digital library initiatives.
- Supporting enhanced resource sharing and improved system efficiencies between libraries to expand access to different types of resources users need.
- Exploring opportunities to bring affordable high-speed broadband to every public library.
- Supporting libraries in identifying under-served communities and develop strategies to address service gaps.
Strategy 2

Building capacity: Enabling inspiration and innovation

These actions will support libraries as they focus on helping their communities by inspiring creativity, innovation and knowledge creation. It will also help libraries service their communities better through professional development and information sharing.

This strategy focuses on fostering excellence and best practice: building capacity across all libraries to be inspirational, be leaders in practice and be responsive to their communities needs.

THE ACTIONS we will take to deliver ON THIS STRATEGY include:

- Supporting libraries as learning organizations which encourage innovation and develop leading practices.
- Facilitating strategic opportunities for professional development, collaboration and knowledge exchange, so library trustees, staff and volunteers can learn from each other’s successes, build best practice and respond to the evolving needs of users.
- Supporting libraries in improving the digital literacy skills of users and staff so that they can participate in an increasingly digital world.
Strategy 3

Working together:
Creating lasting and sustainable partnerships

The development and maintenance of strong relationships is fundamental to moving our strategies forward. The ministry is committed to continue our leadership role in this area by focusing on relationships with our partners, stakeholders, libraries and boards.

This strategy calls for the nurturing of these partnerships, harnessing libraries’ ability to innovate and deliver services collaboratively.

THE ACTIONS we will take to deliver ON THIS STRATEGY include:

- Creating opportunities for libraries to work together with the provincial government to identify and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, through the understanding that libraries provide British Columbians with diverse information, programs and services in their communities.
- Establishing a formal framework to engage in regular and ongoing dialogue with library partners.
- Exploring further opportunities across the wider library sector and with other jurisdictions to share best practices and realize cost-savings and other efficiencies.
Traditionally, libraries have been strong in measuring transactions, such as circulation. However, it is no longer enough to provide only this type of data. Effective impact measurement tools and outcomes enable informed decisions and alignment of services with the needs of the community. These practices allow library boards and staff to focus on communicating the impact, role and relevance of today’s libraries. Effective governance is achieved through planning, policy development and information sharing.

This strategy focuses on enhancing governance and supporting the library community. Through this we will better communicate our success and demonstrate the value that libraries provide.

**THE ACTIONS** we will take to deliver **ON THIS STRATEGY** include:

- Supporting the creation of a common measurement framework that may identify new data sources, and the means and mechanisms to regularly collect and analyze related data.
- Working with partners to enhance the capacity both of libraries and Boards, to further support evidence based and data informed decision-making and ongoing accountability.
- Continuing to encourage the use of strategic planning and reporting, including the use of community needs assessments.
- Reporting annually on the progress of this plan.
Where have we been

A brief history of public libraries

The establishment of library services not only preceded British Columbia’s entry into Canada, but it also preceded the union of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. As the province grew and communities were established, so too were libraries. New Westminster holds the distinction of forming the first municipal library in the colony of British Columbia in 1858. Small libraries, or public reading rooms, soon followed in 1859 in Victoria and Fort Hope.

In 1911, the BC Library Association was formed, and in 1919, the first legislation to regulate public libraries was enacted. The Public Libraries Act (1919) created the Public Library Commission, which was the first authority over library development in the province. The Commission worked to encourage the formation of public library associations, which provided for the development of public libraries in many small, rural communities, the promotion and extension of library services throughout the province and the establishment and improvement of school libraries. This was often accomplished through libraries and partners working together to share expertise and resources.

Throughout its history the Province, through the Libraries Branch has focused on 2 key areas

1. Promoting library services
2. Ensuring equity through public libraries

This was accomplished through communities, libraries and partners working together to share expertise and resources.

In the early days, the branch pursued its goals by focusing on direct service delivery and professional consultancy through field offices and supporting and building library services across the province. The mandate under the current Library Act is the ongoing improvement and extension of library services. As library services evolved from small community service points to larger and more connected systems, the role of the branch changed from one of direct service delivery to collaborative strategic initiatives and professional consultancy.

In 2004, British Columbia launched Libraries Without Walls: a World Within Your Reach, a vision for British Columbia Libraries. A first of its kind in Canada, Libraries Without Walls addressed the public’s expectations around access to emerging technologies and sources of online information through libraries.

The strategies and goals in Libraries Without Walls formed a practical, integrated vision that supported libraries in their efforts to take advantage of the opportunities of the information age.

As a key result of this strategic focus, British Columbians now have access to a broad range of quality information available online and through their local libraries. With a strategic focus on collaboration and partnerships to improve cost effective service delivery, access was increased to new online information sources such as eBooks and research databases, that otherwise would have been out of reach for many communities and individuals.

As a strategic plan, Libraries Without Walls, was highly successful in supporting libraries through significant technological changes and enabled them to provide national leadership in the delivery of innovative services and programs.

Overall, our success over the past decade has resulted in a number of accomplishments some of which include:

- The BC OneCard program which allows library card holders to borrow and return materials from other participating public libraries
- Sharing access to e-resources and research databases, generating costs savings and ensuring equitable access across the province
- Establishment of BC Libraries Cooperative, to support the library community in the development of shared services and capitalizing on collaborative opportunities
- Commitment to and development of standards based shared library technologies that improve services to citizens, equity of access and consistency in service delivery across the province
- Establishment of 5 new library federations to support regional sharing and collaboration
- Coordinated licensing for online resources, resulting in significant cost savings and efficiencies
- Leveraging the power of shared purchasing, resulting in lower prices from purchasing in bulk
- Development of an open source library catalogue shared by 58 libraries in British Columbia, 143 across Canada
- New partnerships with BC Library Association and BC Library Trustees Association in the delivery of professional development
Serving our communities
BRITISH COLUMBIA’S LIBRARIES

Our public libraries today

British Columbia’s public libraries are trusted institutions at the heart of our communities, providing free access to a world of information and knowledge through a broad range of programs and services. Libraries contribute to life-long learning, culture, and recreation by providing safe, open spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds. Libraries are hubs for community engagement, learning, inclusion and sharing.

Our 71 public libraries, with 247 service locations serve 98% of our population.

**2015**

**BORROWING**
A yearly average of **12 items per person** are borrowed

**PROGRAMES**
In 2015 **66,000 programs** were offered

**VISITS**
There were just over **60 million** physical and digital visits to libraries

**SUMMER READING CLUB**
Jumped 12% over 2014 and set a new record at **84,504** participants

**GOING TO THE LIBRARY**
On average a British Columbian visits the library in person **6 times a year**

**PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL**
Total library visits have **doubled since 2004**

**WIRELESS**
In 2015, wireless usage **up 42%** from 2014
In British Columbia, the Library Act outlines how public libraries are locally supported, established and governed, and provides the general rules and principles for services. Public libraries share a common mandate under the Library Act for borrowing to be free of charge to residents of a library service area. There are four types of public libraries: municipal, regional library districts, public library associations, and integrated public library systems. Libraries are led by locally established autonomous boards as legislated by the Act. The Act also provides a model of collaboration among library jurisdictions through library federations.

The Libraries Branch at the Ministry of Education fosters and enables efficient, effective, and connected library programs and services for British Columbians. The goal of the Libraries Branch is to strengthen the library network by providing support for shared services, innovation, collaboration and partnerships leading to programs and services supported by public libraries.

The Libraries Branch achieves this by:

- Administering the legislative and governance framework for public libraries
- Providing funding, leadership and advice to libraries, the library network and province-wide library programs and initiatives
- Building collaborative relationships between libraries and provincial and federal governments
The British Columbia library community has a history of successful partnerships that support the delivery of services to their communities. Over the past decade, a cooperative network of partnerships and services was developed. While libraries and federations are locally established independent bodies led by Boards of Trustees, they remain highly interconnected and interdependent. Libraries benefit from shared services, including BC OneCard, Inter-Library Loan, Evergreen/Sitka Integrated Library System, LibPress, database licensing, procurement, BC Summer Reading Club and professional development.

As trusted, skilled, community-focused individuals, library trustees, staff and volunteers are leaders in ensuring quality services across the province.

Working together with local government, public libraries are supported by services and programs provided by the Province, library federations and BC Libraries Cooperative. They are further supported by valuable membership associations such as BC Library Association, BC Library Trustees Association and Association of BC Public Library Directors. Together, along with partners, we will help ensure library services are innovative, equitable, responsive and progressive.

At the heart of all British Columbia’s public libraries are the trustees, staff and volunteers. Trustees provide the strategic direction and play an important role in ensuring that libraries meet their financial, legal and community obligations. As trusted, skilled, community-focused individuals, library trustees, staff and volunteers are leaders in ensuring quality services in communities across the province.
Inspiring creativity and creation –
VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY’S INSPIRATION LAB

Vancouver Public Library’s (VPL) Inspiration Lab is the city’s newest creative destination – a place that nurtures talent and creativity. Libraries have always been about creating, exploring and bringing ideas to life, and the concept for the Lab came from library users themselves; they wanted to learn how to use technology for digital creation, including self-publishing, photo editing, audio recording and music.

VPL’s Inspiration Lab opened in spring 2015. It is a hands-on digital media hub: 7,500 square feet of custom-built space with sound studios, video production and editing, analog-to-digital conversion and self-publishing software, all on high-performance computers. All of it is free to use – for the first time giving Vancouverites access to creative technology, a place to use it, and training from VPL staff and library partners from the city’s technology and creative communities.

VPL’s Inspiration Lab is home to podcasters, award-winning independent filmmakers, family historians and community music groups – just some of the many users who have flocked to the space to capture and share their stories. Among them are current and former youth in care who are using the space to create podcasts, talking about their experiences and issues. For example, a long-time street musician used the space to record his first CD and a grandmother who worked in the Lab to create a video of stories, music and images from her youth for her grandchildren. Vancouver has embraced the Inspiration Lab; in its first eight months the Lab had more than 4,400 studio bookings with more than 7,300 users. There were more than 300 workshops, classes, and training sessions drawing more than 1,850 attendees.

Find out more about the VPL Inspiration Lab at: vpl.ca/InspirationLab
What’s driving change
TRENDS INFLUENCING PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Embracing new roles for libraries

There are a number of global drivers of change for libraries, including changes to community demographics, technology and information services innovations, learning and economies. Around the world, government jurisdictions and public libraries are embracing these changes and developing new plans, programs and services to remain responsive and relevant in their communities.

British Columbia libraries are already embracing change as evidenced by the innovative programs and services being delivered around the province. From Farm to Table presentations to Truth and Reconciliation forums, libraries are responding to the interests and needs of their community by providing unique, focused learning and engagement opportunities. At the same time, libraries continue to look for ways to deliver new content and information across a number of formats and platforms, from traditional paper and audio books, to online research databases.

This plan recognizes that libraries have diverse community roles and are having an impact in the lives of British Columbians every day.

Public libraries impact British Columbians by:

- Providing open access and use to resources and tools that help people create content and learn by doing
- Creating flexible, multipurpose spaces to gather study, learn and share
- Offering forums to engage with other members of the community on topics of local and global interest
- Providing access to knowledgeable staff who can support using new skills and emerging technologies
- Connecting services which link libraries together as ways to expand services and improve access
- Cultivating the skills to find and evaluate information to adapt and succeed in British Columbia’s resource-based, knowledge-based and creative economies
- Bolstering economic prosperity by providing access to essential decision-making information and tools
- Supporting learning with access to varied collections, services, programs and online resources
- Enabling the multicultural and artistic diversity of British Columbian culture to flourish and thrive
Changing communities

Demographic trends and shifts in British Columbia’s communities have an impact on libraries, creating increased demand for new and existing programs and services. Greater cultural diversity has also changed the provincial landscape, highlighting the growing need for libraries to provide collections and services for newcomers and refugees, as well as programs that are culturally inclusive and enhance cultural awareness.

Our aging population and longer lifespans means that a growing segment of the population will seek services that support informal learning and leisure activities. This also means there is opportunity to increase a library’s focus on health and wellness and shifting services to address the different needs of changing populations.

What does this mean for libraries?

British Columbia’s public libraries’ role as a centre for inclusion, engagement and transformation is integral to supporting shifts in community and population demographics. Acting as one of the community hubs, libraries will need to continue to diversify their services and support for individuals in making community connections, learning new skills and accessing the cultural and social information and resources they need to succeed.

At the same time, libraries will be expected to continue to provide access to materials in physical and digital formats to ensure that everyone has access to materials in the form that best suits their needs and preferences.

Changing economic markets

Globalization has had a profound impact on British Columbia’s economy. The extraordinary growth of the creative digital and knowledge sectors in British Columbia has created new and ever-changing opportunities, allowing people to acquire new competencies and skills. Changes in the traditional employment sectors and the resulting economic diversity, has forced communities, particularly in rural areas, to explore new opportunities. Successfully adapting to these changes allows our workforce to develop the talent and skills to enable them to be successful on a local and global scale.

What does this mean for libraries?

Libraries can contribute to the overall success of their communities by supporting the development of new skills and by providing access to new digital content and emerging technologies. Equally important is the role libraries play as incubators and spaces for content and knowledge creation. Providing equitable access to tools and digital resources is a critical role for libraries. By working together, libraries can find ways to develop new resources and tools and to find sustainable solutions to costs associated with delivering these new services.
**Technological evolution**

New technology is changing how services are offered and accessed in every sector. This is no different in libraries as is evident in the increasing use of digital services by the public. Today’s technology has influenced everything in libraries — from how the modern library is designed, to staff training requirements. There is now a proliferation of information resources available from many different sources. There are many opportunities to leverage open data, information and resources, as well as increase engagement through social media platforms.

![Image 1](image1.png)

**What does this mean for libraries?**

Given the impact of technological change and information, it is critically important for both libraries and communities to have access to strong and affordable internet broadband in order to support innovation, emerging technologies and digital literacy skills.

It is also important for libraries to leverage opportunities to partner and collaborate to ensure efficient use of community resources. Through both formal and informal partnerships and enhanced governance, libraries have opportunities to share best practices, share costs for licensing, coordinate training requirements, build on current technology and explore areas where innovations can be integrated, making operations and services more efficient and effective.

---

**Learning transformation**

Learning continues to transform and evolve at a rapid pace. This is largely due to the impact of technology, wider access to information and the implementation of new skills and competencies. Historically, libraries have connected people with the outside world by providing access to resources for learning. Now, libraries play a significant role in connecting people with ideas and information, to create knowledge within their communities. Learners of all ages have always needed, and will continue to need, tools to support skill development to reach their highest potential.

![Image 2](image2.png)

**What does this mean for libraries?**

In order to take advantage of these opportunities, libraries will need to explore broader forms of literacy development. Beyond reading and writing, libraries support and enable digital, social and cultural literacy. Libraries have always been centres to support literacy and life-long learning. With increased access to information, libraries are poised to evolve in ways that are responsive to significant changes to the way people learn, build knowledge and access information. Libraries should continue to look for opportunities to further integrate, collaborate, and raise the profile of literacy and the learning services they provide, thereby reaching a broader range of users and newcomers.
Tumbler Ridge has the distinction of being one of the most comprehensively pre-designed resource towns in British Columbia's history. Built in the 1980s to support the development of local coal mines, its existence is directly connected to the success of the mining industry and subject to the fluctuations of the industry. In 2011, the international price for coal dropped, which triggered the first of four mine shutdowns. By 2014, two more mines closed and by 2015, the last of the mines went into ‘care and maintenance’ mode, mainly staffed by temporary workers. Initially mine workers were able to find work in the nearby oil and gas industry in the Peace Region and Northern Alberta, but as that industry also suffered its own dramatic downturn in 2015, hundreds of mine workers were left looking for new employment. Many of those unemployed mine workers found their way to the Tumbler Ridge Public Library for help. While helping users work on their resumes, the library staff noticed that some of the workers were struggling with low literacy and computer skills, especially the ones who had been in the mining industry since their late teens. In the absence of a Service Canada or WorkBC centre, library staff established a temporary volunteer Resume Writing Service. As the unemployment rate rose, they decided to offer the service on a permanent basis, along with other employment and social assistance support services.

The library actively collaborates with the Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce by participating in local job fairs, including BC Hydro’s job fairs for Site C. It was at one of these job fairs where the work of the library became known to Service Canada. After that discovery, Service Canada partnered with the library to provide in-depth training to library staff on Service Canada’s offerings, which enriched the information staff were able to pass along to their clients.

The library received an Industry Canada grant, which permitted it to hire an intern who provides computer and technology support to clients. The Technical Assistance Program, is held twice weekly. Clients can drop in or schedule time for one-on-one assistance with any kind of device or computer. The service has been indispensable to many of the unemployed workers. By developing their literacy and computer skills, workers were able to search for new jobs, complete employment insurance forms online and apply to jobs with confidence.

To this day, Tumbler Ridge Public Library is supporting community members by giving them the tools they need to be successful, and providing a safe space through career transitions.
Charting our progress

The ministry is committed to monitoring this plan on an on-going basis and tracking our progress through reporting annually.

It will be through our shared commitment to this plan and vision that we will find the most success and ensure we deliver transformations within the public library system.

Library boards, local representatives, partners, staff and volunteers all play key roles in supporting the strategies outlined in this document and will continue to provide us with valuable leadership and insight on how best to deliver on these strategies. Moving forward, the Ministry of Education will be working with partners to establish an implementation plan to ensure that our next steps and future actions are clear and attainable.

It is through this thoughtful and cooperative approach to moving forward that we will all be successful in ensuring that our public libraries continue to provide British Columbians with access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, create and thrive in today’s world.
Appendix A

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Recognizing that input and feedback from stakeholders is critical in developing strategies that are responsive and supportive of progress for public library services, this plan was developed based on consultation and engagement. The information and feedback received through this process formed the foundation to the development of this renewed vision and strategic plan.

As key partners and stakeholders in the delivery of library services across the province, the ministry worked closely with representatives from BC Library Association, Association of BC Public Library Directors, BC Library Trustees Association, and BC Libraries Cooperative.

A steering committee was made up of representatives from these partner groups. Additionally, library directors and trustees from different regions were also committee members. The steering committee provided invaluable advice and leadership during consultations, and positively influenced the approach, project plan and overall direction.

The steering committee met weekly throughout the development of *Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities* to provide input into the consultation process and findings, and to provide feedback on the strategic elements of this plan.

Wider consultation and engagement took place through workshops, one-on-one interviews, and online feedback processes. The Ministry of Education also reviewed the opportunities and challenges that global demographic, social, economic and technological changes have had on public libraries and the communities they serve. Through this process, the Ministry of Education leveraged the insights and expertise of participants to gain a better understanding of where libraries are seeing continued success, where they are experiencing challenges, and what opportunities exist that can be leveraged to enable them to work together and better serve their communities. Additionally, the Ministry of Education conducted a cross-jurisdictional review to gain further insights into strategic directions both nationally and internationally.
Purpose of the consultation – to identify:

- CURRENT OPERATING ENVIRONMENT
  - Opportunities and challenges

- STRATEGIC LEVEL
  - Opportunities where the Province can align its overall goals

- ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SECTOR
  - Shared goals, areas of commonality, previous plan goals and success

- VALIDATE CONSULTATION
  - Review information gained and implement within the plan and strategies

CONSULTATION with Library Partner and Stakeholders

- 30 interviews of select stakeholders ensuring wide participation across the province and cross-sector partners
- 70 representatives at visioning workshop (directors, trustees, staff, board chairs from partner organizations)
- Online survey, sent to 200+ library directors and trustees (95 responses received)
- Library Trustees through Board Chairs and BC Library Trustees Association
- BC Teacher Librarians Association, Council of BC Post-Secondary Library Directors, BC Electronic Library Network
- Library Directors (CEOs), from 71 public library systems, representing rural and urban communities
- Executive directors and chairs/presidents of library partner organizations
- Local government connections made through elected local government officials on Library Boards
- Feedback on strategies involved 10 days with over 220+ comments

Consultation → Plan → Implementation

- EARLY 2017 — Implementation project planning begins
- 2017 — Ministry of Education begins to report out on progress