

## Provincial Public Library Grant Report (PLGR) 2020

### INTRODUCTION

The **Cariboo Regional District Library** offers public library services to residents of the Cariboo Regional District, a predominantly rural area of more than 80,000 square kilometers located in north-central British Columbia. Approximately 64% of the Region's residents live in or near rural communities. The remaining 36% live in the three urban municipalities of 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel. Industry in the area is primarily ranching, businesses related to the forest industry, mining, small farming enterprises, and small-scale tourist enterprises.

Library Services is a function (or department) of the Cariboo Regional District. As such, it is one of only two integrated library systems in the province of British Columbia.

Library services are offered in twelve rural and three urban communities spread throughout the Region.

The twelve rural 'Community Branches' are open 2-3 days per week and are staffed by a community member. Most rural branches occupy rented space in community halls or schools. Three are in buildings owned by the Cariboo Regional District. Rural branches offer a wide variety of library services including an on-site collection of print materials, DVDs, audiobooks, and access to computers and wi-fi. Rural residents are fiercely loyal to their small community library branch and use it for most of their informational and recreational reading needs. They also occasionally visit the larger urban branches.

The three urban Branches are located in the larger municipalities of Quesnel, Williams Lake and 100 Mile House and are open 5 days per week; including evenings and Saturdays. Each branch has a professional librarian, a library technician, a variety of library clerks, and part-time students. Urban branches offer a full slate of library services to their local urban populations and are also regional hubs for the surrounding rural areas.

An administrative office located at the center of the region (Williams Lake) offers centralized support services to the Branches including cataloguing, acquisitions, interlibrary loan, shipping, purchasing and administration. Staffing includes a variety of full-time and part-time positions including a professional librarian, a library technician and various levels of clerical staff.

### Strategic Plan

As an integrated library, the Cariboo Regional District Library has not traditionally developed strategic plans separate from the Cariboo Regional District. Instead, the Library develops a 5-year Business Plan each year that supports the Cariboo Regional District's Strategic Plan. However, the 2019 Business Plan for Library Services included a goal to complete a Strategic Plan for the 2020-2024 period. In late 2019, the Library adopted its own separate Strategic Plan for 2020-2024. Work on the goals and objectives developed for the plan began in 2020.

## Challenges

The challenges of providing library services in the region are typical of rural communities in a vast, sparsely populated geographic area. Cell service is generally only available along the Highway 97 corridor and is completely unavailable in most parts of the region. Similarly, high speed internet often is available only in urban areas and along certain transportation corridors. In many rural communities, the local population is scattered across a large area. People visit a local community center once or twice a week for essential services such as mail pickup. Those are also the days they visit the local library branch.

Many rural homes are located at some distance from the major transportation corridor in their area and have limited or no internet options. The library often offers the only easily accessible high-speed internet connection, and even that is a challenge in some communities. Even in urban centers where internet is readily available, free internet and wi-fi connections available at the library are vital to low-income and disadvantaged individuals as well as to traveller to the Region. Demand for the Library's internet services in both urban and rural communities remains very high.

Travel in rural areas, especially between November and May, can be unpredictable and precarious. This makes in-person training a challenge, leaving only a short window of opportunity each year for travel. Technological difficulties, such as poor cell and internet service, make online training just as challenging. This means that new library services and initiatives that are easily adopted in urban areas take longer to implement in rural areas as staff try to figure out how to navigate the access and training challenges involved with introducing new services when staff are scattered across such a large geographic area.

The long distances between communities means that shipping costs to transport goods between branches are high and climbing, making participation in resource sharing expensive, even with Canada Post discounts. An emphasis on increased resource sharing between libraries, a service that has become incredibly popular with library users, continually challenges the budget. The provincial Resource Sharing Grant is very gratefully received to cover part of the cost of this very popular service.

The cost of digital resources rises 2-4% every year. Yet the demand for these services also rises each year. Library staff are challenged to balance demand for these services against the continuing popularity of print material. Provincial funding helps the Library to provide both digital and print materials to an appreciative public.

## PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

In 2020, the Cariboo Regional District Library supported the provincial priorities of improving access for British Columbians, building capacity, and advancing citizen engagement.

### Improving Access for British Columbians

Cariboo Regional District Library branches, both urban and rural, participate in resource sharing with other libraries throughout the province. Resource sharing extends the range of the collections of each participating library so library users have access to a much wider variety of material than could possibly be held in their local branch library. People from all corners of the Cariboo Region place requests for library material to be delivered to their local library from any public library in the Province of BC, using

Interlibrary Connect and Interlibrary Loan services. Conversely, Cariboo library branches lend their library materials to people attached to library branches throughout the province using the same systems. The importance and popularity of these services cannot be overstated. Resource sharing supports the provincial priority of “Improving Access for British Columbians”. The service leverages the strength of library collections throughout the Province of BC.

### Building Capacity

The Cariboo Regional District Library is committed to improving its capacity to provide high quality library services to its community members. Each year the Cariboo Regional District Library provides opportunities for staff to expand their knowledge and expertise. In 2020 the pandemic presented staff with an unexpected opportunity to develop a new skill set in the area of digital programming. Just as staff were working on plans for in-person activities for the Summer Reading Club, in-person gatherings were cancelled because of pandemic restrictions. Staff began to focus on how library programming could proceed during these restrictions. They quickly decided to move to a virtual format to deliver programming to library users. Since library branches were not equipped with the technology to produce virtual sessions, staff quickly adapted and ‘made do’ with a collection of equipment that was personally owned and loaned to the library. Staff learned the necessary skills from each other, from personal contacts, from YouTube videos, and later from webinars and other courses that were developed as the pandemic progressed. As a result of these efforts, the Summer Reading Club was not cancelled, as was feared. The Library was able to continue with plans to hire three summer students who were tasked with producing virtual programming sessions. The Library’s part-time Student Pages, whose jobs were impacted by the reduction in work due to the pandemic, assisted summer students with video productions. As a result, they were able to maintain their employment during the pandemic and add to their own skill set at the same time.

These changes to the program meant that children registered for the Summer Reading Program were able to maintain and develop their reading skills throughout the summer. It has become clear that this type of programming will become a normal part of the programming arsenal even after the pandemic is over. To this end, staff have registered for formal training in digital storytime production. The Library is using Technology Grant funds to purchase the necessary equipment and technology to make this expansion of service a success.

### Advancing Citizen Engagement

While library buildings were closed to in-person visits during the Spring and early Summer, library staff were challenged to find different ways to engage with library users and to find different ways for library users to access library resources.

Public-facing messaging announcing library closures encouraged library users to take advantage of the Library’s digital resources. As a result, library customers discovered digital resources they had never used before. Customers who usually read books in paper format discovered e-books. Wi-fi was turned on 24/7 in all branches so people could access the internet with their own devices even if they could not access public terminals inside the building. A successful system-wide Curbside Holds Pickup service was

initiated so people could continue to access print material while library buildings were closed to the public. That service continues to be offered to people who still feel uncomfortable with entering library buildings. It should be noted however that use has dropped off significantly now that library buildings are open to the public.

Throughout the pandemic, library staff maintained a presence in each branch to provide service to library customers by email, by phone, and through the Library’s social media platforms. As a result, members of the public were able to engage with library staff and access information even while buildings were inaccessible to them.

#### ADDITIONAL REPORTING FOR 2020

##### Technology Grant Report

Cariboo Regional District Library staff are making steady progress on projects identified for the Technology Grant. Projects that have been identified include: purchasing and installing upgraded routers in all branches to improve internet access, purchasing equipment to support virtual (digital) public programming, purchasing equipment to support the Library’s goal of offering lendable technology (computers and technology kits), and purchasing webcams and headsets to support online staff training and communication for rural library staff. Purchasing equipment for digital programming is almost complete, as is purchasing equipment for video conferencing. Other identified projects will continue in 2021 as time and weather-influenced travel throughout the Region permit.

##### COVID-19 and Public Libraries Report

COVID-19 had much the same effect on the Cariboo Regional District Library as it had on many other public libraries in the province. Plans for 2020, regular office routines, and public access to library services were disrupted by the initial closure in March and by on-going restrictions due to province-wide public health orders and WorkSafe BC requirements.

<b>How the Library was impacted/challenged</b>	<b>How the Library responded</b>
All 15 branches were closed to the public in March 2020, and all in-person library services ceased. Suddenly, library staff were unable to do their regular jobs. Library customers were unable to access most library services.	Staff remained on-site to field questions from the public by phone and email. Public-facing messaging was distributed through the media and social media channels to keep library customers informed. Library Managers assigned special projects to keep staff employed.
Safety Plans were required by WorkSafeBC. Even after they were in place, frequent updates were required due to constantly changing requirements. For a time, developing the Safety Plan and communicating it to staff became everyone’s first priority.	Staff conducted risk assessments and produced protocols to mitigate risks. ‘Crew talks’ were held to ensure staff received training on the Safety Plan and all protocols. Frequent staff meetings were held to ensure staff had up-to-date information about the progress of the COVID-19 virus and its affect on their work.

<p>Physical changes were required in every Branch to mitigate identified risks. Some of these changes took much longer than expected because sourcing materials was time-consuming and long backorders for things like Plexiglas, hand sanitizer, and cleaning products were common.</p>	<p>Permanent tempered glass or temporary plexiglas barriers were installed on all counters in branches where library staff and customers interface. All public seating was removed and stored to encourage short visits and to reduce the amount of time spent on mid-day cleaning. Some high-touch collections were made inaccessible. Barriers were used to change traffic patterns through staff and public areas. Required WorkSafe BC posters were produced and posted in all locations.</p>
<p>Book drops were closed to discourage library users from returning books until more was understood about virus viability on various surfaces. This inconvenienced library customers who worried that their books would be overdue and they would be charged overdue fines.</p>	<p>Due dates were extended to early 2021 so overdues and fines would not be triggered when material was not returned, library card expiry dates were extended for one year so customers could continue to use library resources and not need to worry about their card expiring during the pandemic. Interlibrary loan services were temporarily discontinued and due dates extended so people would not feel compelled to return material on time. Once bookdrops were re-opened new procedures including a 72-hour quarantine period for all returned library material were put into place.</p>
<p>Library staff were called on to perform extra duties unrelated to their usual customer service duties, such as mid-day surface cleaning and front door greeting duties. Door greeting duties included informing visitors about pandemic-related restrictions that were in place, encouraging people to use hand sanitizer, remain properly distanced from one another, and ensuring that occupancy limits were maintained. These duties put pressure on public service staff as these tasks were added to their regular duties.</p>	<p>New staff schedules were developed to ensure safety protocols for mid-day surface cleaning and door greeting duties were shared equitably amongst staff. Hours of opening were shortened to allow staff to complete new daily tasks within their regular shifts.</p>
<p>In-person programming was cancelled, just as Spring Pre-School Storytime programs were in full swing, and staff were planning for Summer Reading Club programming.</p>	<p>Staff quickly learned how to produce digital Storytime sessions so children’s programming could continue. Because of this ability to pivot, plans to hire summer students to oversee the Summer Reading Club continued and the program was offered on a digital platform. Staff were encouraged to attend training sessions on how to produce digital content. Programming staff continued to do their regular work, just in a different way.</p>

<p>As there were no staff layoffs, some branches struggled to keep public service staff busy between March and August, when branches were closed to the public.</p>	<p>Staff were assigned special projects for as long as possible while branches were closed. During July and August, Student Pages helped the summer students produce virtual programming sessions for children. In late summer, staff began to prepare their branches for re-opening.</p>
<p>Returning to regular operating status was (and still is) a bit challenging as all technical changes to library systems that were made very quickly at the outset of the pandemic needed to be carefully reversed (eg. Extended due dates, patron expiry dates, making temporary new library cards issued during library closures permanent, etc.)</p>	<p>Staff are still working on restoring all systems to regular operating status.</p>
<p>Funds normally raised from overdue fines, printing, photocopying and used book sales were reduced to zero, which was a blow as this expected income was lost.</p>	<p>Fortunately, funds normally required for travel to out-of-town conferences and meetings were not needed in 2020. This helped to offset the loss of income. Staff were able to see how the planned elimination of some fees would affect the Library budget.</p>
<p>Some expected grants (eg. Law Matters Grant) were cancelled in 2020. This caused some concern because the Library System was just completing a major weeding project of outdated legal material and was counting on these funds to replace the material that was removed.</p>	<p>Purchases planned to replace outdated legal material that was removed from Branch collections were postponed to 2021.</p>
<p>Scarce supplies. Supplies of hand sanitizer, hand soap, and plexiglass/tempered glass barriers were scarce for some time and delayed re-opening plans in some branches. Video conferencing equipment (webcams, headsets, etc.) were difficult to source and month-long delays in shipping caused delays in implementing plans to do more training and hold meetings with rural branch staff via video conferencing.</p>	<p>Staff coped as best they could with what they had available. The Cariboo Regional District helped to source cleaning supplies in bulk that were then shipped to rural branches. Increased video conferencing with rural library staff has been delayed to 2021, when shipments of equipment are expected to arrive.</p>
<p>The pandemic has been personally challenging for many library staff. Many had previously scheduled international travel in 2020 that was suddenly cancelled. New tasks and new ways of offering public services caused anxiety for some staff, as did worries about library customers who refused to follow public health orders.</p>	<p>Care was taken to ensure that staff were kept informed about the Library's Safety Plan. Staff were given options regarding their employment status at the beginning of the pandemic. Flexible options were available for re-scheduling vacations. Staff were able to use sick days as stress relief when necessary. Staff were reminded that counseling services are available as part of their staff benefits package.</p>

<p>Some staff chose this time to retire, leaving some branches short-staffed during a time when adding new people to a workplace made some people quite nervous. Hiring, onboarding, and training tasks became very challenging to do during public health restrictions.</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted via video conferencing. New ways of conducting skills testing were developed that could be completed by candidates at home. At least a week was added to onboarding and training schedules to make sure new employees were familiar with the COVID-19 Safety Plan. When close work was required during training, Plexiglas barriers and PPE were used between the trainer and the trainee.</p>
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Emerging trends identified.

The tempered glass barriers that were installed at the main patron/staff interface areas in our three urban branches are permanent installations that will remain in place even after the current pandemic is over. It remains to be seen if the temporary Plexiglas barriers installed rural branches will be replaced with more permanent installations.

Video conferencing technology has evolved to the point that its use is now common-place, making training and staff meetings between people working at a distance from one another much easier. Our library system will continue to use this technology well beyond the pandemic. This is especially important for our library system because our branches are so far apart geographically.

#### Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a major upheaval in the Library System's ability to provide library services in 2020. However, library staff were able to find ways to continue their work and to deal with the toll the pandemic has taken on their personal lives. Identified goals for 2020 were set aside so staff could concentrate on restoring public services.

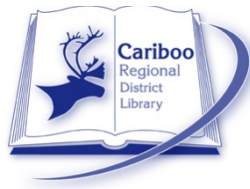
The Cariboo Regional District Library uses provincial funding in a myriad of ways: to ensure that rural residents have access to the same high quality of library services as their urban counterparts, to work with other libraries and agencies to take advantage of efficiencies of funding to provide as many high-quality services as are available, and to provide its staff with the professional development opportunities that are necessary to ensure that they are informed about and able to offer high quality library services.

Provincial library funding continues to play an important role in the variety of library services CRDL staff offer to residents of and visitors to the Cariboo Region.

Respectfully submitted,

Wanda Davis, Manager of Library Services

Cariboo Regional District Library



## 2020 Library Technology Grant Interim Report

Cariboo Regional District Library

October 15, 2020

Grant Amount = \$34,846

The Cariboo Regional District Library will use this grant to fund five projects.

1. Purchase and install upgraded routers in all CRD Library Branches.

Rationale: Routers currently in use in library branches are older consumer (household) grade routers. They do not allow staff to record usage statistics. As the use of library wi-fi has increased in recent years the ability to capture this data is becoming more and more important. Customers often use library wi-fi both inside and outside the building and the use is not currently counted. This data will be a valuable addition to the overall picture of library usage in local communities.

In addition, upgraded routers will increase the strength and range of the wi-fi signal in library branches. Many rural branches are open to the public only a few days a week. As evidenced by the presence of vehicles parked outside our facilities when we are closed, residents and travellers regularly access the library's wi-fi from outside the building in most rural communities in the Region, demonstrating that there is a real need for the service.

2. Purchase quality gear to support Virtual (Digital) Programming

Rationale: The success of digital programming during the COVID-19 pandemic has inspired staff to continue to offer this type of programming on a regular basis even after the pandemic is over. During the pandemic, staff have been using a motley collection of gear (some of it personally owned) to produce virtual programming. It is time to invest in gear dedicated to this purpose, but that can be used for other projects as well.

3. Lendable technology

Rationale: Library computers available to the public are often fully occupied in most Branches. Adding mobile computers (tablets or laptops) will extend the capacity of the Branch to serve more customers who require access to the Internet but who do not own their own portable devices. Additionally, adding lendable devices (including e-readers) to the Library's collection will expose people to technology and will promote the Library's digital collections, which extend well beyond e-books.



#### 4. Technology kits

Rationale: Technology kits contain multiple devices that inspire creativity, introduce people to new ideas, and let people explore examples of technology that are new to them. These kits can be used in library programming or can be lent to individuals or groups outside the library. In our particular case, the kits will be moved to different library branches in order to extend the reach of technology programming to all communities in the Cariboo Region.

#### 5. Purchase webcams and headsets for every Branch in the Library System.

Rationale: Holding meetings and training sessions using video conferencing has become ubiquitous since the beginning of the pandemic. Many people have become familiar with Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. and are using this technology on a regular basis. Our library system has always been challenged in delivering effective staff training and holding group meetings by the sheer size of the Region we serve. Travel in the Region is often difficult and always involves many hours of driving. Inevitably, multiple staff are not able to attend scheduled group training due to difficulties in travelling. Now is the perfect time to take advantage of video conferencing technology to overcome those challenges. Every library branch in the Cariboo Region will receive the devices they need to participate in video conferences. The project will help build the capacity of staff to offer quality services in their local community because they will be able to attend and participate in training sessions without the need to travel to a central location.

**2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: CARIBOO REGIONAL DISTRICT LIBRARY**

**TOTAL TECHNOLOGY GRANT AMOUNT:** 34,846

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
<b>Connectivity (internet speed, connection capacity, etc.)</b>	Residents and visitors will have improved access to the internet via library computers and wi-fi. Staff will be able to provide wi-fi usage statistics for the first time.	Install new routers in 12 rural and 3 urban library branches in 2021.	Strategy 1: Improving Access for British Columbians. This project will improve access to the Internet for all residents of the Cariboo Region who are able to visit one of the 15 branches scattered throughout the Region.	Purchase and install upgraded routers in all CRD library branches with a focus on rural branches.	Working with IT staff at the Cariboo Regional District to identify, source, and install hardware.	IT staff have allocated time to work on this project in 2021.	\$7500 Hardware \$3000 Travel costs (mileage) \$10,500 Total	IT staff time for travel and installation covered by Cariboo Regional District. (approx. \$3600)	
<b>Digital programming</b>	Residents who are unable or choose not to participate in in-person programming will have access to valuable library programming in their home. Library staff will develop new skillsets that will serve them well in their present jobs and in their future careers.	Equipment is already being used as it arrives and is distributed to staff. Produce and deliver 48 – 96 programs in digital format in 2021 that include virtual story times and craft times.	Strategy 1: Improving Access for British Columbians. This project will extend the reach of library programs, especially literacy programs, to people in the Region who have difficulty attending programming in person.	Purchase equipment to support digital programming, including lighting, backdrops, microphones, cameras, and editing software.		Purchase equipment and deliver to staff by November 2020.	\$8450	The Cariboo Regional District Communications Dept. has agreed to provide training to library staff on how to make the best use of the video editing software that is purchased.	
<b>Other, please specify</b>  <b>Lendable technology</b>	Library users will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge of electronic resources as well as being exposed to	Collaborate with Cariboo Regional District IT staff to purchase and set up Chromebooks for lending early in 2021.	Strategy 1: Improving Access for British Columbians. This project will give local residents access to digital content and to the	Purchase Chromebooks, and ebook readers to lend to the public through three library branches. Purchase equipment to		Purchase equipment by December 2020. Set up a lending program (create policy and procedures, train staff) by mid-2021.	\$11,000		

	new forms of technology.	Create policies and procedures in 2021. Introduce lending as pandemic restrictions permit.	internet even if they do not own a personal e-reader or a laptop computer, especially when library desktop computers are being used at full capacity.	store, charge and secure tablets and e-readers in three locations throughout the library system.		Program launch dependant on pandemic restrictions.			
<b>Other, please specify</b>  <b>Lendable technology and digital programming</b>	Introduce library customers in different age groups to technology that will inspire, teach, entertain and enrich their lives. This will be an excellent way to introduce new technology to remote, rural communities.	Create at least one Tech kit for adults/seniors and develop programming to go with it. Create at least different two Tech kits for children to promote STEM learning and develop programming to go with them. Create a show and tell programme that will be presented in all 12 rural library branches over the next two years.	Strategy 1: Improving Access for British Columbians. This project will improve knowledge of and access to technology to people in both urban and rural communities of the Cariboo Region.	Create Tech-kits for different age groups to be shared between Library Branches and used for STEM-based programming or lent directly to library customers. These kits will permit users to explore examples of new technology they might not have had the opportunity to be exposed to.		Consult branch staff	\$1296	Accessed funds from the North Central Library Federation earmarked for adult programming and for literacy projects. The Cariboo Regional District will purchase some items to be added to the kits and will use staff time to identify and purchase items and assemble the kits.	
<b>Staff hardware upgrades</b>	Library staff, especially in remote rural branches, will be able to participate in video conferencing events (meetings, training) without the travel time, expense, and risk, especially during winter.	Hold 3 video conferencing training events for rural library staff in 2021 on subjects that will help staff provide improved service to community residents.	Strategy 3: Building capacity. This project will expand the Library's ability to offer training programs to staff without the necessity of travelling. This is particularly important in our area of the province which covers a vast	Purchase webcams and headsets for use by staff in video conferencing.			\$3600		

