INTRODUCTION

Creston Valley Public Library serves a population of just over 13,000 people within the Town of Creston and Regional District of Central Kootenay Areas A, B, and C. A few defining characteristics:

- Approximately 92% of the population identifies as Caucasian, 6% as Aboriginal, and less than 2% as other visible minorities.
- Creston has an older population, with a median age of 57.6, compared to the provincial median of 43.
- The median total income of households in 2015 was $46,643, compared to the provincial median of $69,995.

The biggest challenge facing Creston Valley Public Library is the low level of local government support for library operations, ranking 64th of 71 public library systems in per capita support. Nevertheless, our outcomes are comparable to larger and much better funded libraries, thanks in part to a talented staff, large volunteer workforce, and tremendous goodwill in the community.

We are nearing the final stretch of our current Strategic Plan that was developed for the years 2016-2020 (accessible here: http://crestonlibrary.com/about-us/library-board/#open-data). This year has seen a great deal of internal change with the departure of our IT Coordinator and Chief Librarian and a time of transition with the new staff in these roles. But next year is an important one for Creston Library as we will be planning projects and celebrations for our Centennial and beginning the process of building our new strategic plan.
STRATEGY 1: FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – ADVANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Our goal: Invest in information technology, including physical and digital resources and programs to facilitate universal access

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Provided “User Friendly” drop-in tech support program for 6 hours each Saturday, throughout the year. In 2018, the program assisted 221 Creston community members with free one-on-one tech support.
- Implemented self-serve meeting room booking program called Skedda to allow patrons to view meeting room availability in real-time, and to manage their own bookings without staff assistance.
- Provided access to 16723 public computer internet sessions over the year.
- Experienced an 8% increase in digital materials borrowing.
- Set up a digital magazine kiosk next to our print magazine collection. The kiosk allows patrons to browse the library’s digital magazine collection.
- Launched a YouTube channel to feature videos promoting the library as well as movie trailers for all the documentaries the library was showing in 2018. A video featuring one of our volunteers reached 1643 people and was “liked” by 65 people.

The outcome of these activities is that the Creston community recognizes the library as a place not just for books but for digital resources and technology assistance as well. Our Saturday “User Friendly” program is the only place in Creston where community members can get free computer skills instruction and IT support. And our digital materials use is increasing despite a decrease in our subscriptions due to lack of available funds.

In the next year we plan on expanding public access to digital technology by seeking funds for more computer resources and offering ongoing instructional workshops in collaboration with community partners.
STRATEGY 2: BUILDING CAPACITY – ENABLING INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION

Our goals:

*Invest in tools and resources to facilitate the creation and sharing of knowledge and discoveries*

*Develop programs to enable community access to creative tools and resources*

*Prioritize staff competency in creative tools and resources for training and hiring purposes*

The library undertook the following activities to support these goals:

- Applied for and utilized Columbia Basin Trust Schoolworks Grants to hire and train high-school students as facilitators for children’s SCRATCH and STEAM programs.
- Advocated for increased support for STEAM programs with the Kootenay Library Federation (KLF).
- Staff attended a STEAM Day of Learning put on by the KLF and the library purchased new coding/robotics equipment for STEAM programs.
- Planned and facilitated 40 SCRATCH programs and 3 STEAM programs for 229 participants.
- Hosted several class visits featuring STEAM-based programming with circuits, robots and coding.

The outcome of these activities is that the community recognizes the library as a hub for children’s digital literacy. By providing free public access to tech resources and qualified instruction, children in the Creston community are able to experience and learn skills they might not otherwise have access to. Our SCRATCH and STEAM facilitators are also provided with enriching work experience that helps prepare them for their post-secondary plans.

Regular STEAM programming has continued in 2019 with “Coding with Robots” just wrapping up this winter and a variety of new workshops planned for Spring Break in March. STEAM program elements will also be included in this year’s Summer Reading Club.
STRATEGY 3: WORKING TOGETHER – CREATING LASTING AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Our goal: Commit staff time and resources to developing community relationships and supporting shared initiatives

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Collaborated with the Early Years Table on numerous community initiatives and events including the Annual Parent’s Conference, Magic School Bus (variation of Ready, Set, Learn program), Songs & Rhymes for Parents and Newborns CD, Baby Fair and Winter Celebration. The Winter Celebration, alone, reaches 300 children and families in the Creston Valley, connecting them with early years resource providers in our community.
- Developed Teen programs in partnership with Sweet Turtle Chocolates, the Valley Mudders (pottery), Yellow Rose Soap Company, and Make/Do, amongst others.
- Partnered with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL) to offer Family Rhyme Time at Mormon Hills, a weekly early literacy program in Bountiful that serves approximately 30 children and their families.
- Hosted adult workshops through our Locavore Book Club, in partnership with Morris Greenhouse and Blueberry Farms, as well as local community experts in food dehydrating and fermenting.

The outcome of these activities is that both community members and community service providers see the library as an important partner and resource in the Creston community. The library’s partnership with the Early Years Table, especially, means that families in the community are provided with a seamless web of service as they travel from Family Place, to the library, to schools, and through community health service.

Community partnerships are a top priority at the library and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with our fellow service providers in 2019.
STRATEGY 4: SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS – ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

Our goals:

*Ensure that community-led principles and strong evaluative measures are incorporated in delivery of all library services and programs*

*Plan for sustainable and adequate funding*

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- The Library Board formed an Advocacy Committee and has begun planning concrete actions for sustainable and adequate funding.
- Developed a new evaluative tool to elicit feedback and input from teens.
- Collected and shared both qualitative and quantitative data with our staff, volunteers and board, funders, and members of the public, in the form of bi-monthly Librarian Reports and Statistics Reports.
- Purchased a subscription to Grant Advance – a grant writing and funding database - to assist in securing funds for future projects.
- Engaged in an active dialogue with our local government about increased funding for additional service hours and programming.
- Provided the board with detailed updates on Strategic Plan directions and actions, including outcomes-based evaluations data, photos, and public comments.

The outcome of these activities is that the library has a strong collection of data that tells a compelling story about our library operations. Our statistics, along with strong administrative reporting practices, are effective tools which we can use to advocate for funding with our stakeholders. This year our local government approached us for additional traffic data to support our request for increased funding and, although the library was unsuccessful in their request this year, we will endeavor to keep the conversation going.

SUMMARY

As mentioned in the introduction, this been a year of transition for Creston Public Library. After 6 years, Chief Librarian Aaron Francis left the library and new Chief Librarian Saara Itkonen took over in October. The current strategic plan has provided a tremendous amount of stability and direction during this time. Although specific new actions were not set in 2018 (as they were in previous years), the overarching goals still provide a clear vision for the library into 2020.

The greatest challenge still facing Creston Public Library is funding. We don’t have the resources available to provide the level of programming and services that our community would like to see. However, having identified advocacy as a top priority and having recently signed a new 5 year collective agreement with our staff, we look forward to what we can accomplish together in the future.
Creston Public Library supports the Libraries Branch’s efforts to promote and facilitate collaboration among BC public libraries. We understand the need to work together to ensure equitable access to library service across the province and we hope that we can contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable provincial infrastructure through which all libraries can prosper.