2018 PROVINCIAL LIBRARIES GRANT REPORT
Introduction

The Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) is one of the largest public library systems in Canada. We serve a population of approximately 380,000 people spread over a diverse geographic area the size of Ireland. The ORL provides service through our 30 physical branch locations and an ever-growing provision of online services and partnerships. This includes some of the fastest growing urban areas of Canada, such as the cities in the Central Okanagan, as well as very rural and sparsely settled regions. The demographics of our population vary, but in general our citizens tend to be older than average as the ORL includes areas containing a large number of retirees. However, a vibrant and expanding economy particularly in the Central Okanagan as well as the continuing growth of UBCO, Okanagan College, and a tech and other services have drawn many younger people as well.

Each year, the ORL delivers millions of service transactions thru providing physical and online material, connecting people to the web, delivering programs and learning sessions, providing provision of community space, offering public tech equipment and training, and assisting with research and referral to other resources.

The ORL is a regional library governed by a 24-member board, entirely comprised of elected councillors, mayors, or directors of municipalities, regional districts and a First Nation. We have a staff of 265 people or approximately 115 FTE. Direct service points include 29 full service branches, one pocket unstaffed location within UBCO, 2 active book deposits run by volunteer organizations, as well as our website. The Library also has numerous local partnerships.

The increasing majority of our funding (over 92%) comes from local tax revenue. Provincial Government grants have been frozen for many years causing them to drop to about 5% of our funding from close to 25%. Provincial funding is particularly important in regional systems that face significant additional costs in servicing rural and remote areas due to distance, geography, and lack of connectedness. It is more challenging, inefficient, and costly to service a widely spread population using many smaller points than the same size population gathered in one urban area. Our Board is constantly reviewing how the ORL distributes resources to assure local taxpayers that they are receiving at least the same amount back in local services to the tax money related to that area. Provincial grants, which provide more per capita to rural areas than urban ones are critical to ensuring rural services do not need to be curtailed and it is hopeful that they can soon be increased annually in recognizing these increasing costs.

The ORL is well into its strategic plan for 2016-2019. Its vision statement lines up very closely to the provincial priorities as do our 4 strategic directions:

**VISION**

**THE ORL PROVIDES FOR LEARNING, INNOVATION, CREATIVITY AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY.**
Our library advances learning, creativity, and imagination

Our priority has always been on reading and learning, but technology is changing the way people learn. The library is evolving to reflect that.

Our library is an integral part of life in our diverse communities

Our communities are diverse, but we are stronger together. This Direction is about listening to those in our communities and addressing their unique needs. It is about making ORL a library system that represents the best of working cooperatively combined with the best of providing flexible service responses.

Our library branches are innovative, inviting and reflect their communities

Is the library a bit bland? Maybe. Does it need to be? No! We have the unique opportunity to refresh and reinvent in response to changing needs in our communities. Bring it on.

Our library is focused on customer service, staffed by learners confident in their abilities

ORL staff care about their patrons – we see it every day. We need to make structural changes to enable staff to provide effective services that continue to make a difference in peoples lives.

Each of these 4 strategic themes push forward fostering connectedness through:

- technology and programming,
- working together and developing additional partnerships with other groups and organizations
- building capacity in renovating to repurpose space to be more flexible, multipurpose, and available to the public,
- sustaining success through training and hiring new skills that continue to innovate and change.
519,567 ORL eBooks & eAudio Checkouts

47% increase since 2016

740 Hours spent learning new languages through Rosetta Stone

13% increase since 2016

1,301,103 Number of times patrons logged on to use wifi

19% increase since 2016

1,622,850 Patrons walked through our doors

620,143 PressReader Articles Read

50% increase since 2016

106,003 Active cardholders in 2018

Patrons attended ORL programs and used Library meeting spaces

8% increase since 2016
40
Public use computers added, totaling 250 ORL system wide

2,303,332
Patrons visited our website

57 TB
Terabytes of wireless data traffic

2,796,898
Books, magazines and other materials borrowed

6,644
ORL programs ran in 2018, 28% increase since 2016

3,274
Adults attended programs, 68% increase since 2016

2,799
Hours spent learning new skills though Lynda.com
55% increase since 2016
Government Priorities

GOVERNMENT PRIORITY 1: FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: ADVANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RESOURCES.

The goal of this provincial priority rests within several of our defined organizational values, specifically those values of

Learning and Discovery – we are here to help our customers learn, discover, create, and connect

Equity – we believe in and provide equity of access to the tools of discovery, learning, creation, and connection

Intellectual Freedom – we champion access to information and support free exchange of ideas

Community – we are here for the purpose of connecting people and serving the needs of our communities

Programs and/or Services that align with priority 1

ORL’s commitment to enhancing equitable public access to connectivity and technology is supported by several initiatives undertaken by our Information Technology department. The ORL continues to increase bandwidth speeds in our locations without the need to authenticate to access this. We

Added about 40 new public computers and tablets that provide internet access and Microsoft Office. This brought our total number of public computers in the system up to 290.

Continue to add teaching laptops to the system, which are used to support digital literacy classes to support those individuals who do not own their own computers.

Enhancing equitable access includes not only making technological resources available, but also helping to bridge the digital divide through education. Several ORL locations offered digital literacy classes to help learners use computers and mobile devices. Most of our ORL libraries offer some level of one on one customer service with digital devices and computers as needed.

The majority of our branches now offer at least some STEAM programming for children. During 2018 we focused on additional steam training for presenting staff as well as adding some shareable steam materials. They encourage kids to release their inner genius with self-guided play based learning using Lego, KEVA Planks, Meccano, Magformers and other technology tools. These popular programs help children think through
problem solving tasks, and engage them with mathematical, scientific and creative thinking.

The ORL continues to change some of its buildings and furnishings to better meet the varied needs of programming and the community. In 2018 we renovated Salmon Arm branch to add a study room with sliding doors that could open out to the larger area as well as a smaller study room. These rooms are constantly being used by students studying, special program offerings, and people just needing space to gather. Major renovations to Kelowna Branch done in 2017 have also offered several small group study rooms and 3 larger classroom spaces that are adjustable to fit the size of the function. These are in high demand and used for offering everything from college courses to community games nights and special speaker series. These are also connected through an internal link to the newly opened Innovation Centre which provides high tech start-ups, non-profits, social enterprises, and other technology related firms space to build “Canada’s most innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial technology community”. We also added phone and device charging stations in some of our branches for transient workers and other visitors. We also introduced online fine payments for the convenience of our customers.

Outcomes for priority 1

The outcome from the efforts of our IT department is improved connectivity and increased computing resources. In 2018 there were over 155,000 individual sessions on our public computers throughout the system, totaling over 106,000 hours of internet access. The number of wireless logins in our branches grew by 8% to 1.3 million, comprising over half a million hours of wireless usage. Wireless data usage in these sessions grew by 18% to over 57 terabytes of wireless data traffic. In terms of the impact of this usage on people’s lives, we know from staff experience that people use this internet access for everything from keeping in touch with family and friends through social media, to searching for work and posting resumes online, to watching their favourite bands on YouTube. The library is critical to help level the playing field between rich and poor by enabling all, whatever their socioeconomic class, the opportunity to participate in the digital world.

The impact that our digital training sessions has had on our public is clear from the evaluative surveys conducted. The most common comments received in the open-ended questions were, “have more lessons!”, “continue these programs”, and “keep offering these!” This clearly indicates the ORL should increase offerings in digital learning.

The ORL recognized the need to have material to support staff, and recognized the need to support training on a system level. ORL purchased STEAM tools to enable staff to create programs that inspire children in math, science, engineering, technology and art. We focused in 2018 on training staff in their use of these tools throughout our system. Most of our library branches have provided STEAM programs using art supplies, Lego, KEVA Planks, Little Bits (electronic building blocks for creating inventions) or Snap Circuits (easy to use electronics to create projects such as alarms, doorbells, and much more), and Ozobots.
GOVERNMENT PRIORITY 2: BUILDING CAPACITY: ENABLING INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION

Strategic Theme 1 from our 2017-2019 Strategic Plan aligns closely with this priority:

Our library advances learning, creativity, and imagination

The ORL has a written commitment to strive for new learning initiatives and spark imagination by piloting new tools, connecting with local community groups, inviting talented local people to share what they know. Each community has its own variations of talent and local culture.

Programs and/or Services that align with priority 2

During 2018 we ran a 3D printer and other tech resource tour to all of the branches of our system. This highly promoted tour was received with excitement and helped open the eyes of our communities to the new technologies and how they can be used. This will be strengthened further in 2019 by introducing permanent tech equipment including sound recording, video editing and other maker items to several of our branches. Throughout 2018 we planned for a new technology lab and branch on WFN territory. This exciting new facility will open in February 2019 and be focused on community learning, technology, teaching, and will be focused on working with local community resources within the entire community with a particular focus on the Westbank First Nation.
GOVERNMENT PRIORITY 3: WORKING TOGETHER: CREATING LASTING AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic Theme 2 from our 2016-2019 Strategic Plan aligns closely with this priority:

Our library is an integral part of life in our diverse communities

This theme is about making the ORL a system that represents the best of working cooperatively with our communities, listening to them, and addressing their unique needs.

Through this theme, we commit to engage with our communities by:

• Integrating the library into local planning processes and related community conversations.
• Actively exploring community and cultural needs, and tailoring services accordingly while maintaining a baseline of service across the region.
• Developing programs and partnerships that integrate the library into the community

Programs and/or Services that align with priority 3

One thrust that came out of community engagement is the development of diversibility information and contacts within our communities. This listing of resources that are available has been very helpful for physicians, counselling and support groups, and parents. We have received numerous thanks and comments on how this has really encouraged and connected people who were scrambling for where to go for help. We have also been contacted by groups from other communities across Canada who are being encouraged to develop similar resource guides.

The Library continues to connect with homeless, literacy groups, college staff and courses and other support groups. The Library is more and more becoming a gathering place for learning new languages, Board game nights, integrating newcomers, as well as the more traditional activities of research and reading. During 2018 we also hosted a couple of citizenship ceremonies for the Kelowna community within the main library area so that the entire public could be a part of it. These were also well received.

Another key undertaking was the opening of the pocket library for UBCO. This enabled us to extend the electronic and collection resources to that large and growing community of over 10,000 people.
GOVERNMENT PRIORITY 4: SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

Strategic Theme 4 from our 2017-2019 Strategic Plan aligns closely with this priority:

Our library is focused on customer service, staffed by learners confident in their abilities

Specifically, aligned with Priority 4, ORL commits to foster a culture of innovation in service to library users by encouraging our team to look through the lens of the people using the library to provide more enjoyable, effective and efficient services. We continue to try to get feedback forms from all major programs. We also annually work with our branch heads to review the known needs in their communities and tailor our services to try to meet those needs in our programming and the partners we try to strengthen relationships with.

We have focused a significant amount of staff training and attention to the security issues within our branches and the issues of homelessness. All staff have been required to take homeless courses and to undergo training to improve their skills in understanding and working with the underserved or out of the ordinary members of the community. The goal is to continue to ensure that everybody feels welcome within the Library and community, can get the services they need, and also both be and feel safe. As already mentioned, technical skill training has also been a major thrust which has enabled technical skills and resources to also be an increasing part of what the Library is able to offer to our communities.

We have also focused internal attention at strengthening some of our internal systems, and particularly focusing on training and developing our human resources as they are the future of the library.
SUMMARY

In a system as diverse as the Okanagan Regional Library, services and initiatives need to be constantly expanded, evaluated, and adapted to meet the needs of each location. The above report is a broad overview of some of the more significant changes and initiatives that took place in 2018. New technology was introduced; new partnerships were explored, new programs were delivered to engage discussion or encourage exploration, and improvements made or planned in several branches creating flexible and adaptive spaces. We look forward to 2019/2020 as we build on our past successes and move forward in meeting the needs of our communities.
## Serving 30 communities:

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