



*building communities together*

## **2024 Business Plan Library (1660)**

*Anton Dounts, Manager of Library Services*

***Working in partnership with communities, large and small, to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically and environmentally desirable region.***

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### **Department/Function Services**

The Cariboo Regional District Library (CRDL) was established in 1994 after the agreement between the Thompson Nicola Regional District and the Cariboo Regional District, for the provision of public library service to the residents of both regions, came to an end.

As defined by the Library Act, the Cariboo Regional District Library is an integrated public library system that provides library services, via its fifteen branches, to residents of the Cariboo Regional District. With their library card, residents may, in addition to borrowing materials from any Cariboo branch, visit and borrow materials from any public library in BC through the BC OneCard agreement. Furthermore, cardholders from other BC public libraries may visit and borrow materials from any CRD Library Branch and return them in any library in the province.

The CRDL's primary public services include: region-wide lending of print, audio, and video materials; online lending of e-books and e-audiobooks; free access to a variety of digital resources available via the library's website; resource sharing with other libraries; provision of free internet access via public internet stations and wireless local area networks; free meeting space for nonprofit groups; a variety of programming for children and special interest programming for adults, some of which involve collaborating with other organizations. Centralized technical services for library branches include maintaining of the website, ordering, cataloguing, processing and distributing materials, and interlibrary loan support.

The library was established by the Cariboo Regional District Library – Local Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2466. Bylaw No. 2466 stipulates that the requisition for the service cannot exceed the greater of \$1,574,604 or a tax rate of \$0.81508/\$1,000 of

assessment. Property owners in rural areas pay based on improvement assessment only, whereas those in municipalities pay on land and improvements.

All directors on the Cariboo Regional District Board are responsible for the governance of the library function. Library services are provided throughout the district, in all electoral areas.

Significant capital projects:

- 2009 completion of the Quesnel Library building
- 2010 completion of the new 100 Mile House Library building
- 2017 replacement of the McLeese Lake Library building
- 2018 re-location of the Bridge Lake Library from rented space in Bridge Lake to a new CRD-owned building located in Interlakes. The branch was re-named Interlakes Library.

## **Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies**

Building upon the significant efforts to restore services and necessary level of professional staffing and training, the Library is poised to continue its work in building capacity, by introducing new programming for patrons of all age groups, renovating and updating spaces that are used by our staff and clients, seeking out opportunities for professional development, and standardizing policy and practices to ensure consistent approach to library operations.

### **2024 Goals**

- 1. Goal:** Optimize the patrons' use of the new website.  
**Rationale:** In late 2023, the Library has introduced a brand-new website to replace the old and seldom-used site. Despite the considerable work and care that went into the construction of the site, further tinkering will be necessary, as we continue to learn about the patron usage of this virtual space.  
**Strategy:** Collect the feedback provided by the staff and patrons (that can be submitted directly from the website) and compile it thematically. A team composed of Area Librarians, Manager of Library Services, and a Library Support Services Technician will then review the suggestions and act accordingly to facilitate a more user-friendly experience for the staff and patrons while they are visiting our website.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 2. Goal:** Finalize the new Strategic Plan for Library Services for 2025-2030.

**Rationale:** Libraries use strategic plans to focus on specific actions to move forward. Public libraries throughout B.C. have adopted strategic plans as their primary planning tool. This will allow us to complete the work started in the previous year.

**Strategy:** Use established strategic planning guidelines to create a strategic plan for Library Services for the next 5 years. Conduct an environmental scan, refresh the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, identify stakeholders, and engage stakeholders in planning for the future direction of Library Services. Based on research and stakeholder engagement, develop goals, objectives and actions that will move Library Services forward for the next 5 years.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

**3. Goal:** Renovate the Williams Lake Branch.

**Rationale:** The Williams Lake Branch is the most-trafficked, most-used, and the oldest Area Library Branch. No major renovations have been undertaken there since its inauguration in 2000. Major renewal is imperative for this branch to continue to serve the growing demands of its growing community.

**Strategy:** Utilize the funds received as part of the one-time provincial Enhancement Grant to hire a library design firm/architect. The redesign will include the library's new floor plan to improve shelving, accessibility, and sightlines; additional programming spaces for the public; reimagined staff-only area and the circulation desk; new cabinetry to accommodate the "Library of Things" materials, Cariboo-Chilcotin Archival Collection, and Holds items; and new well-appointed furniture that will appeal to all visitors.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

**4. Goal:** Purchase and deliver new furniture to the Community Library Branches.

**Rationale:** Rural Community Branches and their patrons require well-appointed and comfortable facilities to take full advantage of the services the Library offers. New furnishings will make these spaces more inviting, accessible, and functional.

**Strategy:** Expend a portion of the funds received through the Provincial COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grant to cover the costs of purchase, delivery, and installation of furniture to all 12 Community Branches. The acquisitions will be made with the assistance of the Procurement department, and the deliveries will be planned for Spring/Summer of 2024.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

**5. Goal:** Seek out grant opportunities to improve accessibility for rural Community Branches.

**Rationale:** The recent introduction of the Accessible BC Act and the creation of the CRD's Accessibility Advisory Group serves as a great encouragement to

evaluate accessibility barriers in some of our Community Branches. Available provincial grants allow us the opportunity to remove some of these barriers.

**Strategy:** Apply for SPARC BC's Local Community Accessibility Grant Program to cover the costs of retrofitting Nazko Community Hall (where Nazko Library Branch is located) to make it compliant with the accessibility standards.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

## 2025 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Begin to implement goals identified in the new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.  
**Rationale:** The work that was completed in 2024 with drafting of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan must be executed within the appropriate timeframe.  
**Strategy:** Apply the parameters of the Strategic Plan goals to all proposed programming and service opportunities to ensure that the Library does not deviate from the established mission.  
**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 2. Goal:** Complete the necessary renovations for the Williams Lake Library Branch.  
**Rationale:** The work commenced in 2024, to upgrade the layout and furnishings of the Williams Lake Branch, needs to be completed to fulfil grant report obligations.  
**Strategy:** Work closely with the consultant, the design firm, the construction supervisor, and all relevant parties, to ensure an expeditious and cost-effective completion of the Williams Lake Branch renovations project.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 3. Goal:** Begin redesign of the exterior space of the Williams Lake Library Branch.  
**Rationale:** The seating area and green space beside the Williams Lake Branch has become a source of consternation in the community as it attracts unwelcome behaviour. Additionally, the paved surface of the area, which is made of brick, is deteriorating and is beginning to pose a tripping hazard for some of our patrons with low mobility.  
**Strategy:** In collaboration with the Procurement department identify solutions to the aforementioned issues and design a workplan for 2026.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 4. Goal:** Identify and implement Emergency Response Services for the Library communities.

**Rationale:** With wildfire seasons getting progressively more intense and prolonged, the Library must consider mitigation strategies to alleviate the hazards of the changing environment. The Library has the capacity to develop services that will benefit the residents of the Cariboo Regional District to better prepare for the future emergencies, and accommodate those residents that require immediate assistance.

**Strategy:** Consider collaborating with relevant municipalities in creation of cooling and fresh air centres. Purchase air scrubbers for Area Libraries to serve as safe environments for all of our patrons (particularly the unhoused) from the polluted and harmful air during the wildfire seasons.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

## 2026 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Standardize library procedures to provide fair, equal, and predictable services to residents throughout the Cariboo Region.

**Rationale:** Library customers who visit multiple branches on a regular basis have noted a difference in how library policies are followed in different branches, which they find confusing and sometimes upsetting. The Cariboo Regional District Library is committed to providing equitable service in branches across the region.

**Strategy:** Identify library procedures that are being followed differently in different branches, causing confusion for patrons who visit multiple branches. Meet regularly with Area Librarians and develop standardized procedures for all Library branches. This is expected to be a large, time-consuming project with a significant staff training component.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
- 2. Goal:** Complete the redesign of the Williams Lake Library Branch exterior space.

**Rationale:** The efforts of strategizing the workplan for the redesign would need to be put into practice in order to complete the goal in a timely manner.

**Strategy:** Assist the Procurement Manager in hiring a landscape designer and coordinate these efforts with the Williams Lake Branch Manager to mitigate any service interruptions.

**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #2 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- 3. Goal:** Develop a marketing plan for Library Services that will keep the public informed about services the Library has to offer.

**Rationale:** Many people who have answered the 2018 public engagement survey were surprised at the variety of services offered by the Library and indicated that they would use more of them if only they had known about them.

**Strategy:** Establish a marketing plan committee of library staff; connect with the resources offered by the Communications Department; and develop a marketing plan for Library Services that will serve as guideposts for the expansion of the Library patron base.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

4. **Goal:** Expand public programming to include a broad range of age groups.  
**Rationale:** CRD libraries have developed good and consistent programming for young children, but have fallen short of providing programming for other age groups. The 2018 public engagement survey conducted to generate ideas for the future direction of Library Services revealed a desire for library programming aimed at more diverse range of ages, specifically adults.  
**Strategy:** Consider public feedback on the types of programming appropriate for each community served. Feedback will be collected with the help of the new Library website's Forms function, as well as in-person interviews, and, if necessary, surveys. With feedback collected, we will seek out opportunities to present programs of varied themes, delivered by library staff.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

## 2027 Goals

1. **Goal:** Explore the possibility of eliminating overdue fines for the public.  
**Rationale:** The elimination of overdue fines is a growing trend both in BC and internationally. Hundreds of libraries across Canada have already taken the action of eliminating late fees. Ostensibly, overdue fines can pose a barrier to people who most need access to library materials. Anecdotal evidence indicates that patrons may stop visiting their public library, because they either can't afford to pay their overdue fines, or they are too embarrassed about having fines. Additionally, other libraries that have taken this action, have reported a positive response from the public that appears to outweigh financial cost. Although it has now plateaued, the Library's fine revenue has been falling off, as we have increased loan periods, and as the popularity of digital books and audiobooks continues to grow, and do not generate fines.  
**Strategy:** The Library should conduct a cost-benefit analysis to help it decide if eliminating fines outweighs the cost of revenue loss. If it is so, adjust the Library budget to accommodate the complete elimination of overdue fines. Note that fines will still exist for lost and damaged material, but staff will be encouraged to make accommodations where possible.  
**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

- 2. Goal:** Implement regular training days, in-person and remotely, that include staff from Area Libraries and Community Branches.

**Rationale:** In engagement sessions, staff indicated that they would like more training. Some staff admitted they were not comfortable discussing some library services with customers because they, themselves, were not sure how they worked. One of the suggestions for staff training that was made by library staff was to have regular group training days to cover topics specific to library work.

**Strategy:** On a regular basis, identify topics and schedule in-person and virtual meetings to cover topics that are most relevant. Area Libraries will consider having training sessions on Mondays with Community Branches joining in remotely via MS Teams app.
  
- 3. Goal:** Investigate the feasibility of instituting self-directed learning sessions for all staff that includes one paid hour per week (or month) dedicated to a subject of the employee's or employer's choosing that is related to library work.

**Rationale:** Library staff mentioned in the staff engagement survey that they would like to expand their knowledge but need a more flexible working schedule in order to make that happen. This is particularly true for part-time staff whose positions require them to work directly with customers for their entire shift, leaving no time during their day to focus fully on learning activities.

**Strategy:** Investigate the financial and other implications of instituting self-directed learning sessions for FT, PT, and Casual staff in all Library branches. Present the results at a Library Manager's meeting for comments and adjustments. Deliver a presentation on the topic to library staff that outlines the options available to them at scheduled meetings held at the three urban branches. If feasible, begin to offer paid, self-directed staff learning to all levels of library staff in 2025.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** None.

## 2028 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Examine the feasibility of a digital-services-only library card.

**Rationale:** Digital-services-only library cards are a growing trend in public libraries. The card accommodates people who only want to use the Library's digital resources, who prefer to read books only in e-book format, and those who are not eligible for a full-services library card.

**Strategy:** Identify other public libraries that offer digital-services-only library cards and compile policies and procedures related to the service. Create a set of policies and procedures specifically for CRD libraries for a digital-services-only library card. Introduce staff to the service and provide training in the policies and procedures prior to launching the service.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** None.

2. **Goal:** Review infrastructural and material needs of all branches and implement a plan of action.

**Rationale:** In order to serve our communities and attract future users to our programmes and services, the library necessitates a warm and welcoming environment. It is paramount to maintain the library branches in a comfortable, clean, and organized state. Which requires that we evaluate each branch and highlight aspects that need to be improved.

**Strategy:** Visit each branch and, in coordination with the Community and Area Librarians, identify items or facilities in need of repair or upgrade. Then, compile a list of priorities, schedule for their execution, and budget accordingly.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.

## Overall Financial Impact

The requisition level for 2023 was an increase of 3.5% above the 2022 requisition. This percentage may remain at 3.5% going forward or may be lower depending on actual costs and other funding sources that might be identified in each year of the library budget.

The following major projects are expected to draw down a significant portion of the Library's budget:

### *Williams Lake Library Branch Renovation Project*

Major redesign and renovation of the Williams Lake Branch, including complete reimagining of the interior space, will be supplemented, in large part, by the provincial one-time Library Enhancement Grant. The total grant was in excess of \$1.2 million - \$750,000 of which is earmarked for this particular project.

### *New furniture for all Library branches*

A much-needed and long-delayed rejuvenation of the library furnishings is necessary to continue to provide the expected services and facilities for our patrons. An estimated cost of \$65,000 will be incurred to service that goal. This amount will be entirely covered by provincial COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grant (\$127,000).

### *Accessibility Project for Nazko Community Library*

With the introduction of the Accessible BC Act and the availability of provincial funding (through grants) to improve accessibility in communities throughout BC, we now have an opportunity to remove these existing barriers in some of our rural Community Branches. Specifically, the Manager of Library Services will make all reasonable efforts to secure funding through SPARC BC's Local Community Accessibility Grant Program (up to \$25,000) to subsidize the expenses to retrofit the Nazko Community Hall to make it compliant with the current accessibility standards.

### *Community Emergency Preparedness Initiatives*



In addition to the acquisition of furniture for the Library branches, the provincial Covid-19 Relief and Recovery Grant, that was applied for and accepted in 2022 (to the amount \$127,000), will be used for Emergency Preparedness initiatives. These initiatives may include, but not limited to, emergency evacuation preparedness kits, FireSmart resources kits, air purifiers and scrubbers for urban branches, air filtration systems for rural branches, etc. The Library will also explore the possibility of collaborating with CRD municipalities in creation of Cooling Centres in our library branches.

#### *100 Mile House Library Log Treatment*

The 100 Mile House Library Branch, completed in 2010, is a log structure and as such requires specific, regular maintenance including the re-staining of the logs. This will be an expense of approximately \$50,000 which is included in the budget on a 5-year rotation that began in 2017. That amount is included in the projected budget for 2024.

#### *Staff Training and Professional Development*

Costs involved in the hiring and training of staff in 2024 will be covered by regularly projected expenses. However, if the regular training days that are planned for 2027 and extra time for part-time staff to participate in self-directed training sessions (planned for 2026) are implemented, there will be implications to the Salaries and Benefits for Part-time Staff lines in the library budget, which will need to be identified and addressed in 2026.

#### *Elimination of Late Fees*

Eliminating overdue fines for all age groups, which is projected for 2027, will have financial implications because there will be less revenue generated (approx. \$10,000). It is expected that staff will adjust expenditures in 2026 and beyond to accommodate the change in revenue so the financial impact will be as close to neutral as possible.

Library services are projected to have \$786,823 in capital reserves at the beginning of 2024.

## **Significant Issues & Trends**

### Access to Services

Remote access to the Library's public catalogue, to online circulation services, and to digital resources is growing in popularity as the public is showing an increased interest in self-service from wherever they happen to be. People want to place holds, renew checked-out materials, pay fines, download digital content, and update their contact

information without needing to visit the library in person. To serve this need the Library has recently (October of 2023) launched a new website. The new platform is up to date, interactive, and easy to use from a variety of devices with screens of varying sizes. To facilitate as much remote access as possible, some longstanding library policies and procedures will need to be updated and staff trained in their proper application.

Removing barriers to accessing library services continues to be a strong trend in the library sector. One way to accomplish this is by eliminating the fines that have traditionally been charged when borrowed material is not returned on time. However, it has been difficult to locate literature review on this topic to deduce the effectiveness of this shift. An additional challenge is to balance the annual funds realized from overdue fines against the value of removing one of the barriers to library access suffered by people in challenging economic circumstances.

### Technology

Access to reliable, high-speed internet remains a concern for rural areas while demand for it continues to grow. In some areas of the region, internet access in residents' homes is either unreliable or an impossibility. This, and the fact that access to many necessary government services is increasingly available only online, makes centralized internet access in remote communities a necessity. The non-commercial nature of the public library makes it the perfect location in a community for this service, which includes access to internet stations and printers/scanners within our branches, and wireless connectivity for those with laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

### Partnerships and Collaboration

Working in collaboration with other libraries, local community groups and agencies continues to be an ongoing trend. Cost savings can be significant when libraries that consume similar products and offer similar services work together to negotiate better prices. This has been proven time and again as the Library works with other public libraries at the national, provincial and regional level to negotiate prices for such things as Canada Post shipping, digital resources, author visits, technology programming, and library-related supplies such as library cards, security strips for books, DVD security overlays, etc. Similarly, it is more efficient and beneficial to the community when local agencies with overlapping programs and services collaborate together. Professional staff regularly attend meetings of regional and provincial library partners where members coordinate on projects of interest to the library sector and larger libraries provide guidance and help to their smaller counterparts.

### Evolving Library Collections

Our Library, like all libraries, has been experiencing a decline in use of physical collections. For the most part, this can be attributed to the shift in demographics, the effects of the

pandemic, the increasing popularity of digital media, and entrenchment of online resources as the mainstay of information-gathering behaviour.

DVD collections continue to be highly used in all CRDL branches, even as their popularity decreases in most urban areas. This is due, primarily, to the inability of many Cariboo residents to access video streaming services via high-speed internet from home. A subscription-based streaming service would be an option for CRD branches only if the majority of library users had the ability to access it, and if a reasonable pricing model could be secured through a consortium. The former would require an expansion of affordable, high-speed internet to homes throughout the region. Nevertheless, to bridge that gap, we have begun to offer a curated collection of ad-supported video streaming platforms (on our new website) that anyone with a high-speed internet can access.

While the library's magazine collections are still well used, the provincial print newspapers have been largely discontinued in the Cariboo. Although, the e-journals and e-magazines have become an appealing option for active users of smart phones and tablets, the absence of the long-standing subscriptions to The Province and The Vancouver Sun are already being felt. To negate some of these effects, the Williams Lake Library Branch has begun a pilot project to introduce an ePaper version of The Vancouver Sun that can be accessed from a iPads that will be made available to the public upon request.

Many libraries have added 'objects' to their lending collections as an addition to reading, listening and viewing material. Objects have included such things as musical instruments, computer tablets, science kits, recreational equipment, etc. CRD Area Libraries have already started to offer this service by lending out everything from exercise kits for people suffering from dementia to pickleball and disc golf sets.

### Resource Sharing

There have been significant changes to resource sharing on a province-wide basis. As predicted, the Interlibrary Connect (ILC) service that was launched in 2015 has become the resource sharing method of choice for most people due to its simplicity of use and the quick turnaround of requested material. Meanwhile, traditional interlibrary loans (provided via Illume platform) now represent only a small (and diminishing) fraction of the total number of items shared between BC libraries, while ILC loans between libraries have increased exponentially.

### Staffing

Maintaining a staff that is trained to a level where they can continue to offer optimal library service during the best of times is a challenge; it has been doubly challenging during the years of the pandemic. Staff need to continually update their knowledge to remain current on the emerging trends within the librarianship field. For this reason, the

CRD Library Strategic Plan (and the 5-year Business Plan) will focus on this very important issue.

### Planning/Community Engagement

Public library services are transforming to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society. The challenge that CRDL faces, along with all public libraries, is to ensure that its facilities and services accommodate the past while anticipating the future.

Community engagement remains important in public libraries, particularly when developing plans for library services in future years. The perfect opportunity for the community to engage with library staff, to express their views and contribute to the direction library services will take in the future, is during the strategic planning process. The next major community engagement initiative will take place in 2029 in preparation for the next Library Strategic Plan.

### **Measuring Previous Years Performance**

In January 2020, CRD library staff began work on identifying goals for the 2020-2024 Library Strategic Plan. After making positive progress initially, however, the closure of public libraries in March of 2020 and the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021 has stalled forward progress on projects. Library Services is primarily a public facing, operational-based service, as opposed to a project-based service. As such, although special projects are identified each year in the business plan, significant progress can only be made on those projects if the operational side of Library Services is stable. In 2020 and again in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the effect of significantly de-stabilizing the operational side of Library Services.

Library managers have had to adjust to and help staff adjust to constantly changing provincial health orders that affected how the library service was offered to the public.

Sudden and unexpectedly high staff turnover has also had the effect of de-stabilizing the operational side of library services during this period. Although all branches have been affected to some degree, turnover has been significant in rural branches where staffing has been relatively stable for many years. This high rate of turnover followed a trend noticed in many sectors during this pandemic. Contending with these challenges prevented staff from working on goals that were set pre-pandemic.

At this time, we are primed to resume work on established goals in 2024, as we are regaining our footing. We are already beginning to see encouraging signs of operations returning to pre-pandemic levels. Staffing vacancies have been steadily diminished with a robust marketing campaign; as of this writing, CRDL has only 4 casual position vacancies, which are expected to be filled in the next few months.

Foot traffic, circulation numbers, and programme participation has been steadily climbing back up, as we continue to see familiar faces return to our libraries. Our digital services, that have been steadily used, will no doubt see a boost with the introduction of our new website, which serves as a portal for these electronic resources.

Furthermore, significant efforts have been made to improve our Community Libraries in 2023. Despite the barriers to connectivity and geographic dislocation, CRDL improved internet access for Big Lake and Anahim Lake by installing StarLink satellite dishes. All community libraries received new public access computers. The facilities of all branches were evaluated, and a purchase list of new furnishings was compiled – deliveries are expected in 2024.

Lastly, many projects (Williams Lake Renovation, 100 Mile House Library maintenance, preparation for Strategic Planning, Community Library facilities improvements, etc.) that were commenced in 2023 will be seeing tangible results in 2024 and the years to follow.