



*building communities together*

## **2022 Business Plan Library (1660)**

*Wanda Davis, 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. As well, cardholders from other BC public libraries may visit and borrow material from any CRD Library Branch.

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; free story time programs for children and special interest programs for adults, some of which involve collaborating with other organizations. Centralized technical services for library branches include 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**

### **2022 Goals**

Over the next five years, library staff will implement specific goals identified in the CRD Library Strategic Plan, particularly as they coincide with strategic initiatives contained in the Cariboo Regional District Strategic Plan. The overarching goal of the CRD Library Strategic Plan is to ensure that library users enjoy excellent customer service and an enjoyable and useful customer experience whether using library services in the library's 15 branches or through the library's website.

- 1. Goal:** Ensure that all library branches in the Cariboo region (rural and urban) are fully staffed and that staff are trained to a level that offers a high standard of library service.

**Rationale:** After many years of relatively stable staffing, staff turnover in Library Services began to grow in 2020 and, as the pandemic continued to drag on, grew significantly in 2021 and continues unabated. Rural library branches have seen the highest turnover of staff in recent memory, with long-term staff deciding this was the right time to retire. Since part-time staff are permitted by the collective agreement to work in multiple locations, when some of these staff retired multiple positions in multiple locations became vacant at the same time. As of September 2021, Library Services had posted 39 positions and filled 37 during the pandemic. Although many of these positions were filled internally, the result was a very large number of staff in new positions in a very short period.

Some Casual backup positions in rural branches were not filled right away since Casuals in rural branches were receiving very little work during the first year of the pandemic. It was thought that by the time new Casual staff were called in to work they would not have remembered enough of their training to be effective working on their own in a rural branch.

**Strategy:** Fill all vacant Community Librarian II permanent part-time positions as staff retire or resign and provide enough basic training so all branches are open to the public. When that has been achieved, begin to fill all Community Librarian I (Casual) positions that became open during the pandemic so permanent staff in rural branches have back-up and branches can remain open when permanent staff are sick or on vacation. Provide enough training to new Casual staff so they can run a rural library on their own at a basic service level. Continue to fill positions in urban branches as they become open. This goal has the highest priority and will continue to take precedence over work on all other goals.

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

- 2. Goal:** Ensure that all staff hired during this period of high staff turnover receive the training necessary to provide a high standard of customer service.

**Rationale:** Replacing high numbers of staff in a short period of time often results in a situation where positions are filled but adequate training has not yet taken place. The challenge is to bring the skill level of all new staff to an acceptable level, so customer service does not suffer and new staff don't feel frustrated by not being able to complete tasks that are required of them or provide satisfactory service to the public. This goal has high priority and will take precedence over other goals in 2022.

**Strategy:** Offer new (and existing) staff in rural branches a combination of digital and in-person training in basic and advanced library education and skills. In-person training will take place both in the employee's own branches and in larger branches throughout the library system.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.

- 3. Goal:** Adjust hours of operation to meet customer needs.

**Rationale:** Residents told us in the 2018 customer engagement survey (Reimagine Your Library) that, while they appreciate having a public library in their local community, they are not always satisfied with the hours of opening. People in rural communities want their library branches to be open on different days, more days and for longer hours. People in the urban areas want their libraries to be open Mondays, earlier in the morning, and later Friday evenings. There was some interest in Sunday openings.

**Strategy:** Using the results of the most recent public engagement survey, additional small local surveys, and in consultation with local staff, determine public demand for changes to hours of operation in specific library branches. Explore ways to adjust hours of operation that will have limited impact on the library budget. Make any changes to hours of operation that are feasible. Investigate the feasibility of changing or extending opening hours of the three urban library branches.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #2 Provide a comfortable, welcoming, and useful environment for library users in branches throughout the Cariboo Region.

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

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

- 4. Goal:** Improve access to the library's digital collections and other online services by developing an improved library website.

**Rationale:** The CRD Library website is a portal to its digital resources and services and is the 'face of the library' to the digital world. The existing website, while still functional, is outdated, not mobile-friendly and difficult to update. It no longer offers the best access to the library's digital services, which are growing.

**Strategy:** Invite an interested group of library staff to conduct a scan of public library websites to determine how other libraries serve their users through their websites, to consult library staff about how they think the library website should serve library users, and to use the results of the most recent public consultations surveys to determine what users expect of the library's website. Use the results of these investigations to create a 'scope of work' to be used in an RFP for an improved website. Work with the Manager of Procurement to develop an RFP to hire a website consultant to develop the new website.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #5 Increase public awareness and use of services and resources the Library has to offer.

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

## 2023 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Improve access to the library's digital collections and other online services by developing an improved library website.

**Rationale:** The CRD Library website is the portal to its digital resources and services and is the 'face of the library' to the digital world. The existing website, while still functional on a basic level, is outdated and no longer offers the best access to the library's digital services, which are growing.

**Strategy:** Continue with progress made in 2022. Work with a consultant to develop a new website for Library Services. Hold staff training sessions to introduce the newly developed website to library staff. Once staff are familiar with the site and how to use it, launch the site to the public.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #5 Increase public awareness and use of services and resources the library has to offer.

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

- 2. Goal:** Standardize library procedures to provide fair, equal, 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. Develop standardized procedures for all Library Branches. This is expected to be a large, time-consuming project with a significant staff training component.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #1 Meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant library services and collections.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
- 3. Goal:** Implement regular training days at each Area Branch that include staff from local Community Branches.

**Rationale:** In engagement sessions staff indicated they would like more training. Some staff admitted they were not comfortable discussing some library services with customers because they, themselves, were not exactly 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:** After investigating how many training days would be feasible per year, host one training day in each of the three urban branches in 2023 that would include local library staff and rural library staff from that geographic area. If cost and time effective, host at least one training day in each Area Branch per year going forward.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.
- 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 neglected other age groups. The 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:** Use the results of the most recent staff and public engagement surveys, and a survey of other public libraries to identify adult workshop ideas. Develop and deliver an adult workshop series in each Area Branch in 2023 and encourage staff to make this a regular part of the annual programming schedule.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #1 Meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant services and collections.

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

## 2024 Goals

- 1. 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 shift 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 Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #3 Create opportunities for staff development.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** None.
- 2. 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 answered the 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 from various sized branches to develop a marketing plan for Library Services with help from Communications.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #5 Increase public awareness and use of services and resources the library has to offer.

**Related CRD Strategic Goal/Objective:** #3.2.2 Continue to offer Library Services that meet the needs of rural communities.
- 3. Goal:** Eliminate overdue fines in all age categories.

**Rationale:** Overdue fines are a major barrier to people who most need access to library materials. Stories abound about people who stopped visiting their public library, sometimes for decades, because they either can't afford to pay their overdue fines, or they are too embarrassed about having fines even if they can afford to pay them. The elimination of overdue fines is a growing trend both in BC and internationally. More than 300 libraries across Canada have already taken

this action. Fine revenue has already been falling off, as the popularity of digital books and audiobooks outpaces the popularity of print material. Digital material is automatically returned to the library on the due date and does not generate overdue fines. The library should be able to make adjustments to expenditures that will accommodate the reduction in revenue previously generated by overdue fines. Libraries that have already taken this action report a significant positive response from the public that greatly outweighs any financial inconvenience.

**Strategy:** 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 Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #2 Provide a comfortable, welcoming, and useful environment for library users in branches throughout the Cariboo Region.

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

**4. Goal:** Introduce 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 Library Strategic Plan Priority:** #1 Meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant library services and collections.

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

## 2025 Goals

**1. Goal:** Develop a 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.

**Strategy:** Use established strategic planning guidelines to create a strategic plan for Library Services for the next 3-5 years. Conduct an environmental scan, refresh the SWOT 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 3-5 years. This process is the only major goal for 2025 and is expected to be a year-long effort.

**Related Library Strategic Plan Priority:** Renew the Strategic Plan for a further 3-5 years.

**Related CRD Strategic Planning Goal/Objective:** #3 Planning. Intentionally plan services and activities for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.

## **2026 Goals**

- 1. Goal:** Begin to implement goals identified in the new Strategic Plan.

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

## **Overall Financial Impact**

The requisition level for 2022 is an increase of 3% above the 2020 requisition. This percentage may remain at 3% 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 100 Mile House 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 \$40,000 which is included in the budget on a 5-year rotation that began in 2017. That amount is included in the projected budget for 2022. No other major capital projects are planned for 2022.

Major repairs to the Williams Lake Branch, including dealing with tree roots growing into the sewer lines may soon be required. In addition, the branch is aging and soon will require repairs and updates to the interior. When undertaken, these repairs and updates will draw on capital reserves.

Costs involved in the hiring and training of staff in 2022 will be covered by regularly projected expenses. However, if the regular training days that are planned for 2023 and extra time for part-time staff to participate in self-directed training sessions planned for 2024 are implemented, there will be implications to the Salaries and Benefits for Part-time Staff lines in the library budget that will need to be identified and addressed in 2023 and 2024.

Adjusting the hours of rural branches should have no financial implications if the total number of opening hours per week remains the same. If it is found that expanding the hours of the urban branches to include Mondays or Sundays is popular enough to consider implementing, there will be financial implications on several lines in the budget for each year moving forward. These financial implications will be identified and considered

before making any decisions about increasing the hours of opening and the appropriate changes to the budget will be made at that time.

Once the scope of work is identified, the website upgrade project will require the help of a website design firm and will result in funds being added to the budget. Although it is unlikely that these funds will be required in 2022, they will be added to the budget for that year in case the project progresses faster than expected. If the project does not progress to the point of hiring a firm in 2022, funds will be moved to 2023.

Although the goal of standardizing library procedures will be time-intensive, there should be minimal financial implications. This is also true of the 2023 goal of expanding public programming to a broader range of age groups than is currently being served, and of the 2024 goal to introduce a digital-services-only library card.

Developing a marketing plan will have insignificant financial implications. However, implementing the plan will have implications on future budgets. It will be the responsibility of staff working on this goal in 2024 to identify those projected costs.

Eliminating overdue fines for all age groups that is projected for 2024 will have financial implications because there will be less revenue generated. It is expected that staff will adjust expenditures in 2024 and beyond to accommodate the change in revenue so the financial impact will be as close to neutral as possible.

Debt obligations relating to the library's Area Library building projects ended in 2017.

Library services will have \$758,930 in capital reserves at the beginning of 2022.

## **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 society shows increased interest in self-service from wherever they happen to be. People want to place holds, renew checked-out material, pay fines, download digital content, update their contact information, etc. without needing to visit the library in person. The library needs to recognize and accommodate this trend with a website that 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. The challenge is to balance the annual funds realized from overdue fines against the value of removing one of the biggest barriers to library access suffered by people in challenging economic circumstances.

### Technology

Access to reliable, high-speed internet remains a challenge for rural areas while demand for it continues to grow. In some areas of the region, internet access in resident's homes is a challenge or, in some areas, 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 within our branches, and wireless connectivity for those with laptops, tablets, and smart phones.

### Partnerships and Collaboration

Working in collaboration with other libraries and with 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 band 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 content, 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 benefits the community when local agencies offering similar programs and services to the public work together. Library staff attend planning meetings of local community agencies and offer the library as a venue for community-based programs. Professional staff regularly attend meetings of regional and provincial library partners where members collaborate on projects of interest to the library sector and larger libraries provide guidance and help to their smaller counterparts.

### Evolving Library Collections

The library, like all libraries, is experiencing a gradual decline in use of its physical collections. For the most part, this can be attributed to the increasing popularity of digital media across all demographic sectors.

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. A subscription-based streaming service would be a viable service for CRD branches only if the majority of library users have the ability to access it. That would require an expansion of affordable, high-speed internet to homes throughout the region.

While the library's print newspaper and magazine collections are still well used, e-journals and e-magazines also have become an appealing option for active users of smart phones and tablets.

Many libraries have added 'objects' to their lending collections as an addition to reading, listening and viewing material. These additions have been very popular and fill a community need when multiple people want to borrow and use a 'thing' for only a short period of time. Objects have included such things as musical instruments, computer tablets, science kits, recreational equipment, etc. CRD library staff are investigating how this might be implemented in our own library system.

### Resource Sharing

There have been significant changes to resource sharing on a province-wide basis. As predicted, the Interlibrary Connect 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. Traditional interlibrary loans now represent only a small 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 service during a time of rapid change in the library sector is a challenge. Staff need to continually update their knowledge of up-to-date library services. 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 the 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 last major community engagement initiative resulted in the present Library Strategic Plan. The next major community engagement initiative will take place in 2025 in preparation for the next Library Strategic Plan. Smaller scale engagements may take place before that time that focus on a particular community or library service.

## Measuring Previous Years Performance

In January 2020, CRD library staff began work on goals identified in 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 affect how the library service can be offered to the public. Staff have had to learn how to cope with members of the public who are aggressively vocal in their disagreement with provincial health orders related to the pandemic.

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 follows a trend noticed in many sectors during this pandemic.

Dealing with these challenges has prevented staff from working on goals that were set pre-pandemic.

The following progress was made on 2021 goals.

**Goal:** Improve access to the library's digital collections and other online services by developing an improved library website.

This goal was completely set aside as staff turned their attention to developing new services and new models for delivering old services after the COVID-19 pandemic forced libraries to close in March 2020. Staff will return their attention to this project after they adjust to the new tasks and procedures necessary for offering library services in a pandemic. Funding for this project has been moved to accommodate the shift in timing.

**Goal:** Adjust hours of operation to meet customer needs.

Hours have been adjusted at two branches on a test basis (McLeese Lake and Tatla Lake) and changes are being considered at the Well Branch. Work on this goal will continue into 2022 as staff have time to devote to it.

**Goal:** Provide facility/equipment improvements to Area and Community Library Branches.

Work on this goal was suspended in 2021. Work will resume in 2022. The project to identify new uses for the mezzanine in the 100 Mile House Library has been identified as a low priority project for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope to resume work on goals identified in the Library Strategic Plan in 2022 as changes to services due to a (hopefully) waning pandemic are no longer required.

Despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff made progress on the following initiatives in 2021:

- The Canada Summer Jobs application for three students to run the Summer Reading Club was successful again this year, with the largest potential grant of this kind that has ever been on offer. However, responses to the job postings were uncharacteristically low and only one student was hired. But that one student successfully took on the challenge of running the program for the entire library system from the Quesnel Branch.
- The loan duration for most library material was increased from 3 to 4 weeks and the number of renewals increased from one to two. Longer loan periods and more opportunities to renew material should relieve some of the pressure people feel to return books quickly and reduce the number of overdue fines that are charged. This is the first step in achieving the library's goal of being fine-free by the end of 2024.
- The hours of operation were adjusted at the McLeese Lake Branch for a trial period beginning in January 2021.
- The hours of operation will be adjusted at the Tatla Lake Branch for a trial period beginning in early November 2021.
- A change in hours of operation at the Wells Branch is being considered as the hiring process continues to replace staff at that location due to a recent retirement.