
Submission to the
Royal Society of
Canada Expert Panel

**The Status and
Future of Canada's
Libraries and
Archives**

Calgary Public Library

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&

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Services:

1. How would you describe the services Canadians, including Aboriginal Canadians and new Canadians, are currently receiving from libraries and archives in Canada?

Public libraries are community support networks, fostering learning and growth at every life stage. Canadians have free and full access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity, and intellectual activity at public libraries: from materials (e.g. books, DVDs/CDs, and electronic resources) to programming for all ages (e.g. early literacy, critical afterschool hours, English language learning, career support, and author readings) to online courses (e.g. Learn4Life and Mango Language) to subject experts (both staff and community partners). Knowledge creation is facilitated through the provision of these resources as well as public access computer workstations, wireless access to the Internet, and quiet and collaborative spaces. Canadians of every ability, ethnic origin, and financial capacity are encouraged to explore topics of interest, develop their skills, and express their thoughts publicly in a friendly, trusted, neutral, and non-commercial environment. In practice, however, primarily middle-class Canadians use public libraries. Additional resources need to be directed towards aboriginals and other scattered vulnerable populations to make sure they are socially connected to our communities.

2. Libraries are currently hybrid operations, constantly pulled towards traditional services by many core users and pulled, equally, by a concern for relevancy from other users and potential users. What issues are libraries facing as they try to make the transition to new service models?

The transition to new service models is challenging because even though knowledge is our currency, books are perceived to be our brand. That is, we have traditionally marketed library services as access to print materials. While this traditional service model meets many of our core users' needs, other users and potential users have different needs that require different service approaches. Effectively allocating resources between services offered in-branch or through the library's website with community outreach is difficult, but essential to maximize social return on investment. Librarians need to relinquish control to work collaboratively with and for their communities, not simply deliver services "at" their customers. Three strategies Calgary Public Library is utilizing to make this transition are: (1) moving to a functional, rather than subject-based, staffing structure; (2) committing resources, including staff who are willing to "get their hands dirty," to community outreach and public engagement; and (3) striving to make digital content more visible. Calgary Public Library realizes the importance of responding to changes in a timely manner and is working to speed up bureaucratic processes.

3. How do libraries and archives measure outcomes of their service and community impact?

Traditionally libraries have focused on reporting outputs, i.e. the volume of work completed through activity, rather than outcomes, i.e. the changes in individuals, groups, or organizations anticipated to result from the exerted work of an initiative. A shift in recent years has been towards sharing outcomes as part of libraries' advocacy strategies, the high-impact stories we tell our customers, partners, and funders to demonstrate value and relevancy. For instance, Calgary Public Library offers a volunteer-run Career Coaching program where customers can drop-in for one-on-one help with job searching skills, interviewing, and resume or cover letter writing. While an immediate outcome is the acquisition of new resume writing skills and knowledge, the long-term outcome is that customers obtain meaningful employment. Focusing on identifying, tracking, and reporting outcomes requires different skills and more resources to be an effective practice.

4. Are libraries the appropriate institutions to catalog, store, and provide access to research data? If not, which institutions should provide these services?

Yes, libraries are the appropriate institutions to catalog, store, and provide access to research data. Not only are librarians specially trained to catalog, preserve, and provide access to information, they are also committed to the principle of intellectual freedom. Publicly-funded research data should be accessible to all and maintained by a neutral organization. Public libraries are democratic institutions, open for all.

Community Outreach and Awareness:

1. Would Canadians know of, or understand, the contribution you make to library/archival service in Canada?

Many Canadians have a dated and narrow understanding of public libraries. Books are an entrenched brand and many Canadians do not realize the vast array of services and resources libraries now offer. Public libraries need to do a better job of communicating their value to users and non-users. If impact is measured in part by the percentage of Canadians who are library members, libraries need to attract new users and better engage current users by communicating a more detailed library story. It's a matter of focusing more attention on library advocacy and reporting outcomes that relate to community building.

2. Describe the services provided directly to users within your context, or whether they are consortial in nature; please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine, and measure the impact of the services.

Calgary Public Library provides a "standard" suite of library services, including collections, borrowing, information services, and programming.

Strong partnerships and support from 2,100 volunteers allows the Library to offer specialized services for vulnerable populations; for example, the Library:

- Participates in SCORCE (Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Centre), a grassroots initiative supported by community-based organizations which work together to enhance capacity and leverage existing resources to help people access programs, services, and support that address their current situation;
- Offers Settlement Services desks, funded by Citizenship Immigration Canada, at five Library locations with enhanced partnerships arrangements with Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary Immigrant Women's Network, Immigrant Services Calgary, Bridge Foundation, and Centre for Newcomers; and
- Pairs volunteers and adults with low literacy skills through the *Learning Advantage* program, in which volunteer coaches help participants develop basic reading and writing skills, experience the joys of reading, and pursue individual goals.

Also, relationships with key stakeholders facilitate public engagement initiatives, a real growth area for the Library.

In addition, as a member of The Alberta Library, Calgary Public Library collaborates with 48 libraries across the province to offer Albertans access to more than 30 million resources. Recently The Alberta Library moved their online catalog over to OCLC's WorldCat platform, which means that Albertans now have the ability to search over 2 billion records from OCLC's 20,000 worldwide members, as well as open web resources. The Calgary Public Library also supports the RISE Network, which provides Albertans

with opportunities to connect with health care professionals, attend meetings, and participate in lifelong learning programs – all by videoconference from their local library. In addition, Calgary Public Library collaborates with Edmonton Public Library to strengthen services and programs for the benefit and growth of our customers and communities. For example, Edmonton Public Library cardholders may apply for a Calgary Public Library card and vice versa.

3. In the digital era, what support for patrons do/should libraries provide?

As addressed in a previous response, public libraries support knowledge creation. In a digital era, the resources provided should reflect the needs of customers interested in developing their digital literacy skills and creating electronic content. Calgary Public Library supports the ongoing digital learning of our customers in very concrete ways; for example, programs are offered for adults in the areas of Computer Basics, Microsoft Office, Careers & Small Business, Social Media, and Adult Learning & Specialty (including downloading eBooks and participating in online courses). In addition, children have the opportunity to learn how to search topics safely on the Internet and create documents in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint in the *Computer Buddies* program.

4. What in your opinion are the specific roles of libraries and/or archives and/or museums and other heritage institutions in community building and memory building?

Public libraries play a key role in community building and memory building. Calgary Public Library recognizes and reflects the values and diversity of our city. We celebrate inclusion and ensure that there are resources, programs, services, and spaces for Calgarians of every age, ability, origin, and financial capacity. The result is more meaningful connections for Calgarians, not only to each other and across generations, but also to their communities, to the province, to the country, and to our shared world.

Calgary Public Library works with community partners to keep our heritage alive and to make it accessible to Calgarians. In particular, the Library works with Heritage Triangle partners, the Glenbow Library and Archives and The City of Calgary Archives, to collect and preserve the city's heritage. Customers can access local history materials, such as books, newspaper clippings, maps, and old media, in the Community Heritage and Family History Room at the Central Library. *Century Homes Calgary*, a Governor General's History Award for Community Programming-winning database of 500 century-old Calgary homes, is one example of the resources accessible online through the Library's *Community Heritage and Family History Digital Library*. In addition, Calgary Public Library supports those who are interested in exploring their personal histories and genealogy by offering genealogical resources such as Ancestry Library Edition and programs such as *Family History Coaching* and *Genealogy for Beginners*.

New Directions:

Digitization

1. What are the main challenges of born-digital material for your institution?

The main challenges of born-digital material for Calgary Public Library are discovery and promotion. That is, it is more challenging to highlight the wealth of electronic resources available through the e-Library than it is to merchandise physical collections. In addition, library staff members often need to educate customers as to digital rights management, as many customers do not understand the licensing agreements the Library has with electronic content providers such as OverDrive.

2. What will be the function and future of a brick-and-mortar library or archive in a paperless future?

The functions are:

- I. To provide neutral, free, safe, non-commercial space for individual and collaborative activity as well as program and performance venues;
- II. To facilitate opportunities to experience and interact with the cultural, intellectual, and demographic resources of communities;
- III. To support information creation, access, and exchange;
- IV. To offer customers in-person assistance from expert staff;
- V. To strengthen connections between library staff and communities, contributing to personalized customer service experiences; and
- VI. To be a statement of a city's civic identity.

Education

1. What changes, in your judgment, are necessary in the professional education and training of librarians/archivists in the 21st century?

Professional development should not end with the completion of a Master of Information or Master of Library and Information Science. These degrees prepare librarians for scholarship; they do not prepare them well for community outreach librarianship. As the profession is continually evolving, librarians need to actively pursue educational opportunities and look to other disciplines for best practices. In addition, it is important that librarians understand and are committed to civic mindedness: social altruism, equality, tolerance, humanitarianism, civic participation, and civic responsibility.

Newly graduated librarians often lack knowledge in the following areas:

- Business basics – strategic planning, leadership, and project management;
- Stakeholder relations, partnership management, and community engagement;
- Advocacy, including how to working effectively with all levels of government; and
- New and emerging technologies.

Resources

1. Public libraries are primarily funded by local municipalities, with little funding from any other level of government. Many towns and rural communities are too small to support needed technology. How do we encourage the creation of library systems (or consortia) that can meet the increasingly sophisticated technology-driven needs of libraries-whether urban or rural?

Since public libraries are primarily funded by municipalities, it is challenging to work in a consortium. Libraries need to develop partnership agreements that clearly state the benefits for all stakeholders, so that libraries can speak these points with their funders.

2. What percentage increase to your current budget would permit you to realize the aspirations of your users? If you received an increased budget and consistent adequate resources, describe your library/archives in 2017.

It is difficult – maybe even impossible - to put a budget figure to the resources required to fully satisfy the library needs and aspirations of a growing and diverse city like Calgary. In the immediate future, increased funding would allow Calgary Public Library to better address the following current priorities:

- Development and implementation of a signature early literacy strategy and strengthening of programs for children, teens and families;
- Further emphasis on services for the financially barriered;
- Additional access points, such as enhanced mobile services and 21st century book dispensing;
- Extended hours of service; and
- Internal capacity building in select areas, including risk and asset management, marketing and communications, and stakeholder relations.