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The Royal Society of Canada
Walter House
282 Somerset West
Ottawa, ON K2P 0J6

Re: The Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

Dear Expert Panellists:

The West Vancouver Memorial Library appreciates that the Royal Society of Canada has convened an expert panel to undertake a study on the status and future of Canada's Libraries and Archives. We are honoured to have been included in the public consultation process, and to have the opportunity to further comment on a vision for our future.

For generations, our public library has supported our community by collecting, organizing and making available the best resources to meet the needs of residents of all ages. Through our organization, our community members make meaning and build understanding of their own identity, their relationships and the world they live in.

In our changing environment, we are challenged by the increasing complexity: community members with radically different information seeking behaviours; the evolution and discontinuation of digital technologies that require continuous adoption and adaptation; diversification in the cultural groups that we serve; economic instability; and the explosion of information both in physical printed formats.

These challenges also afford us unprecedented opportunities. We have tools that process large quantities of information and integrate dimensional points of view; communication channels that transmit quickly and (mostly) securely ; platforms that aggregate and display content created and located in visual, auditory, sensory, and language modes; and powerful engines that connect us with the interests and thoughts of others around the globe.

Our community's future is tied to how successfully we are at strategically addressing these opportunities. Our community's problems will be solved by people with advanced knowledge and skills, employing technological tools to their fullest capacity.

For our Library to support our community, we need, at a minimum, the resources for:

- A robust technological infrastructure with publically accessible platforms, equipment and software and access to secure and stable connectivity;
- A physical infrastructure with ample seating for both group study and socialization, and quiet, contemplative independent work;
- Staffing to support service models for early literacy, kids and teens school success, adult lifelong learning and cultural enrichment, digital literacy, and the social and mental needs of older adults. Such service models include information assistance and programming delivered by professional experts providing guidance and instruction;
- A comprehensive staff development program to assure staff skills and knowledge are current;
- Collections of resources, both in physical and digital formats, selected locally and delivered seamlessly;
- An administrative structure with the capacity to reach and engage the community with professional communication strategies and personal outreach, as well to capture and report out on accomplishments in sophisticated frameworks that demonstrate social value;
- A networked library system of public, school, special and academic libraries offering a continuum of service.

The impact we seek is for every person in our community to have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to reach their potential throughout life; to develop the connections with others so that they feel included; and to discover new ideas that foster their interests and support their personal well being. To have such an impact, our operation would need to be on a much larger scale for the size population we serve.

If we tie our vision of our library, and libraries in general, to the impact we seek to have on our community, and we were resourced adequately, then our Libraries would be significant drivers in advancing the world's knowledge and developing economically productive and socially engaged residents. If Canada was willing to make such an investment in its citizens, then the country's global rankings in such indicators as human development, education, quality of life, and economic freedom would improve.

Sincerely,



Jenny Benedict
Director of Library Services