

**PRINCE OF WALES NORTHERN HERITAGE CENTRE  
CONSULTATION 13 September 2013**

***YUKON PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPONSE***

**SERVICES**

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

*Yukon Public Libraries operates a network of public libraries through a main library in Whitehorse and 14 community branches located throughout Yukon. Library service is available equally to all residents (and visitors) from all locations. Community libraries are open limited hours and have collections and services reflecting community size.*

*25% of Yukon's population is aboriginal. First Nations people in Yukon are of Athapascan origin, primarily Gwich'in, Northern and Southern Tutchone, Kaska, Tlingit, and Han. As well, people from other aboriginal groups and Metis ancestry have moved here. Yukon native languages are not widely used; various initiatives are in place to keep them alive. Most Yukon First Nations have negotiated land claims with Canada and are operating under Final and Self Government agreements.*

*Although Yukon in the past was not ethnically diverse, this situation has changed. 10% of Yukon's population, over 3000 people, now comes from elsewhere. In addition to immigrants from other parts of North America and Europe (particularly Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and France), 26% of immigrants to Yukon are from Asia - primarily the Philippines, China, Vietnam and India. The population overall is aging, and more people are now choosing to remain in Yukon after retirement.*

*Yukon Public Libraries has limited capacity to meet the diverse needs of a varied clientele within available resources. Our collections contain materials in both English and French, but we are challenged to provide materials in other languages. Yukon Public Libraries collect materials in Yukon First Nations languages (primarily those produced by the Yukon Native Language Centre).*

2. Libraries are currently hybrid operations, constantly pulled toward 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?

*Yukon Public Libraries are continually evolving to meet the needs of our users. Although standard print and audio-visual collections remain the mainstay of our services, we have added Internet-based reference, online databases, and an e-library (downloadable books and audio books) and are looking at other services to meet*

*patron needs.*

*We are also continually re-defining our clientele. Many public library users now access information independently and have less need for library resources; nonetheless the library is still important to them, particularly at a social level. At the same time, our libraries are increasingly used by the disadvantaged, particularly those without access to or familiarity with online resources or those who find our libraries to be comfortable places to spend time, especially during our harsh northern winters. We are also aware that some demographics use the library more than others and that we don't have resources to meet all needs.*

*The Internet has become a prime activity in our libraries, bringing in a vast number of new users, including many who don't use the library otherwise. We are encouraged when we see computer users also accessing other resources e.g. teens reading, and all ages attending library programmes, asking reference questions and browsing our collections. Tourism is a significant part of Yukon's economy and visitors from around the world use our services, particularly for the Internet and our reference service.*

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

*We evaluate library use through statistical data as well as feedback from library patrons and the community at large. Aside from quantitative data (e.g. books borrowed, reference questions, programme attendance, Internet use), most of our measures are soft and more anecdotal. People tell us how important the library is in their lives and how they use it. People thank us for being available to help with a wide range of needs, including those of a social service nature. People make suggestions for ways to improve our services.*

4. What needs to be done to facilitate libraries in cataloguing, storing, and providing access to research data? Who would be an appropriate partner in providing these services?

*This question is less applicable to a small public library system. We use copy cataloguing as much as possible, although local and northern materials and some audio-visual formats require original cataloguing. We have limited print small reference collections and mostly use electronic resources to answer questions posed by our users.*

*Yukon Archives has the mandate to acquire, preserve, and provide access to Yukon's documentary heritage.*

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS**

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

*Canadians by and large are familiar with public libraries, whether or not they personally use them. Library users in general are happy with the service they receive from their public libraries. People identify with their local libraries and see them as important parts of their lives. They trust and value them, and, as importantly, like them.*

*In some way, each library in Canada contributes to the overall health and strength of Canadian libraries. The fifteen public libraries in Yukon are part of the over 3,000 public library outlets across the country.*

2. Describe the services provided directly to users, and if they are consortial in nature please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine and measure the impact of the services.

*Through Yukon Public Libraries, the Public Libraries Branch coordinates library services throughout Yukon. This includes a universal library card, centralised collection development, an integrated library system for acquisitions, cataloguing, public access catalogue, circulation and electronic databases, the Yukon e-library with downloadable e-books and audio books, advertising and promotion, programming for all ages including author readings, slide shows, workshops, summer reading programme and story times, website and social media presence and public Internet and WIFI.*

*We are continually evaluating our services to ensure they meet government objectives and user needs. New services ensure that we keep pace with developments and technology. Yukon Public Libraries collaborates with partners inside Yukon and elsewhere to access programmes and services that assist in meeting our needs.*

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

*As noted above, most of our reference work is done online and is tailored to a broad public library clientele. Although our users include researchers, they are not our target audience. We refer people with specialised needs to other local libraries or electronic resources. Patrons seeking Yukon-specific information are generally referred to Yukon Archives.*

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?

*Our public libraries have a strong role in community building. They are at the centre of our communities and provide a public space for people of all ages to meet, learn and grow. Libraries provide a free, warm, safe, welcoming, comfortable and inclusive environment that encourages people to visit regularly. With the shift in society to digital resources, people need interaction with each other more than ever. Libraries can serve that need, acting as community meeting places for individual and group activities. Overall, libraries make a significant contribution to the personal,*

*professional, academic and creative growth of our communities.*

*As the prime repository for Yukon resources, memory building is a strong component of the Yukon Archives mandate.*

## **NEW DIRECTIONS**

### **Digitization**

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

- *Not all library users are comfortable using digital resources. There is a wide range in people's level of experience and interest in using and understanding digital materials.*
- *Not all resources are user-friendly.*
- *Incompatible formats and devices.*
- *The constant upgrading required is at times demanding, confusing and draining, as is the need to ensure information is accurate and current and links are live.*
- *Information is evolving at increasingly fast rates leading to expectations that it be "of the hour". The digital age is compressing the life span of "facts".*
- *Anyone can self-publish so standards and quality control are an issue.*
- *Cost associated with some digital materials exceeds available resources.*
- *Time and resources required to set up and maintain certain digital material can be considerable.*

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

*While housing, organising and providing access to information remains the main function of a public library, the role of the physical library is evolving to be more of a community meeting place, a "third place" apart from home and work/school. In a world where people are increasingly online and have access to the information they need, there is still a desire for in-person interactions. Library services (including programmes, meeting rooms and the Internet) are big draws.*

*The future is already here. Print reference collections in public libraries have been largely replaced with electronic sources. Audio-visual formats are more compact or have been replaced by digital versions. Some items (e.g. digitised rare books, newspapers, magazines) are now only available online.*

*Less space is already required for physical collections, and that trend will continue exponentially. Instead, libraries will have more room to house users and assist them in navigating resources to get what they need.*

### **Education**

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

- *Commitment to core values that are the heart of public library service.*
- *A strong focus on librarians who are people-oriented. Most library jobs have significant public interaction, both inside and outside the library.*
- *A strong focus on communication and technological skills.*
- *The ability to be flexible in response to changing demands and priorities..*
- *Administrative skills to ensure the evolution of services is well managed and direction is kept focussed.*
- *Marketing skills to ensure the user base remains strong and dedicated.*

2. What conversations do you think need to take place with library, archival, and information studies programs about staff requirements, and have they begun?

*See above: There is no library school or library technician training in Yukon so there isn't any direct involvement in library programmes.*

## **Resources**

1. Public libraries are primarily funded by local municipalities, with little funding from any other level of government. Most towns and cities 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 and vital digital resources of libraries?

*In Yukon, public libraries form a territorial library system, embedded in legislation and funded through government. The legislation ensures that library service is available to Yukoners in their home locations, independent of community size or other factors.*

*Yukon government provides direct funding to the Public Libraries Branch, which administers the public library system and operates Whitehorse Public Library. Whitehorse Public Library is a direct Yukon government operation. Community libraries are managed by local volunteer boards, with support and majority funding from Yukon government. There is little or no municipal or other funding to libraries in Yukon; some branches supplement Yukon government funding with local fund-raising and grant applications.*

*Centralised systems ensure that all Yukoners have access to the same level of library resources. A de-centralised service ensures equitable access to these resources for Yukoners in their home communities.*

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 2020.

*Libraries will always put additional budget to good use, expanding collections, programmes, services and staffing. However, budget in itself is not always the answer. The funds currently available for library services in Yukon are reasonable to maintain a viable library service throughout Yukon.*

*Additional funding could provide the ability to expand into new territory and reach demographic groups that don't normally access library services.*

*Some possible examples would be:*

- Expanded bandwidth to provide additional online access*
- Programming for target groups e.g. teens and young adults*
- Support to new Canadians*
- Outreach to seniors*
- Accessible resources for patrons with special needs e.g. print handicaps*
- Expanded collections – books, e-library, multilingual resources*
- Additional operating hours in branch libraries*
- Facelifts in specific branches*
- Branding, marketing and related promotions*

Website link:

<http://www.ypl.gov.yk.ca/>

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