



Nunavut Library Association

Response to Framing Questions

Introduction:

The Nunavut Library Association brings together people working in libraries, literacy organizations, museums and archives across Nunavut. The framing questions posed by the Expert Panel will be answered in the context of services to Nunavummiut (residents of Nunavut).

SERVICES

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

In Nunavut, 85% of the population is Inuit, and all residents of our communities are served by our libraries and archives. The official languages of Nunavut include Inuit language (Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun), English and French, and all of our publicly funded institutions are expected to provide service in all of these languages. In the majority of our communities, libraries are staffed by Inuit language-speaking residents.

Services provided by community public libraries can be less developed than elsewhere in Canada due to remote location, local infrastructure constraints, need for local training of staff, and limited broadband capacity. As well, current funding allocations mean that not all communities have either a public library or a college or learning centre library.

School libraries are almost completely lacking in Nunavut, and schools do not have trained staff to provide library or knowledge centre services.

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?

The digital divide is a major issue faced by every type of library in Nunavut. This divide includes issues of hardware, broadband capacity, and the very high cost of service. Community libraries are most heavily used by people seeking access to the Internet, as many residents have neither computers nor an Internet connection at home.

Government and college libraries are severely restricted in the size of documents that they can provide due to system restraints caused by lack of broadband capacity. To date, only the Legislative Library of Nunavut has sufficient electronic storage space to house a repository for government electronic publications.

Nunavummiut are keen to adopt new innovations in technology, particularly those that make it easier to connect our very widely-dispersed communities that lack road access to each other and the rest of Canada. They would like to have equal access to such services as e-book lending, electronic document delivery, and access to electronic databases. However, there are considerable constraints on library budgets, and with limited staff and limited broadband capacity.

Our libraries are engaged in finding creative solutions to meet these needs, such as consortial access to library catalogues and database subscriptions, and public catalogue access to the electronic repository of government publications at the Legislative Library.

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

Nunavut Public Library Services publishes an annual report that includes community use statistics, including program statistics. The Nunavut Arctic College and Legislative libraries also collect use and reference statistics. However, these quantitative measures do not reflect the actual level of service provided to foreign researchers, students, government bureaucrats, and the land claim organizations.

It is very difficult to measure community impacts, as not all communities are equally served, and given the very small nature of these communities, a single person can have a major impact on the service provided at any given time.

In many communities, the public libraries provide the single access point to aboriginal language materials for the general public, as there are no bookstores and the distribution of aboriginal language publications is limited. Some are also the centre of community literacy activities, which can be measured through participation in programs such as pre-school story times and the annual literacy “Read for 15” challenge.

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

In Nunavut, there are very few organizations other than libraries with the capacity or longevity to provide ongoing collection of and access to research material. Many community initiatives, such as historical societies and archives, depend on a key person with the appropriate enthusiasm and training, and can fade when this person is no longer available.

Nunavut libraries are an essential part of the necessary network to do research work here. Libraries and librarians have the expertise in resource description, storage, and access, which in Nunavut has included developing shared bibliographic standards for materials in Inuit languages.

Libraries can work within common standards so that data can be preserved, described, accessed, shared and, ideally used and re-used beyond its original context. Libraries take user privacy seriously and also have the capacity to be the interface between the public and the

research institution, for example as with the publicly accessible electronic document repository at the Legislative Library, which houses documents from Nunavut government departments, the federal government, and Nunavut land claim organizations.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

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

Most Canadians are probably unaware of the contribution we make. Most of our work takes place out of sight and is what is euphemistically called in industry “back work”—essential to the organization but not visible or receiving any recognition. For example, the cataloguing consortium has been producing Inuit language bibliographic and authority records since 2006, but the current Languages Commissioner of Nunavut only became aware of this very recently.

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.

Our various library systems (legislative, public, college, court) all provide direct service to their users, whether in person, by telephone, or by electronic or regular mail. Libraries in Iqaluit, with their larger collections, often provide direct reference and loan services to people in other communities.

Nunavut cataloguing services are consortial in nature, as the major Nunavut library systems have created their own cataloguing consortium within a single ILS that accommodates Inuit language bibliographic records (<http://nuvt.vtls.com/cgi-bin/nuvt/chameleon>).

The Nunavut Legislative Library provides leadership for a Government of Nunavut cost-shared annual database subscription that could not be afforded by any single government department or agency.

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

We should be making decisions about which collections should be digitized to provide easier access.

Libraries also provide programs for the general public in the use of digital resources and media.

It is important also to maintain library space for public Internet access, in order to bridge the digital divide.

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?

In Nunavut, community libraries have the potential to be community centres, housing Inuit language materials (print and other formats), documenting community memory, and providing connectivity to other communities and institutions. Many community organizations have the ability to access funds for digitization programs, and libraries can provide the technical support and metadata expertise needed to make these materials accessible to the community.

Collectively, Nunavut's libraries have also become the repositories of much historical material that would otherwise be completely lost, such as the community archival collection housed in the Pond Inlet public library. We have also been instrumental in repatriating historical material that had been removed from Nunavut, such as photographs, historical government documents, and records of people's work, residence and visits here.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Digitization

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

The bulk of born-digital materials published in Nunavut consists of government publications. Collecting and preserving this material is problematic. Many Nunavut government websites are not well-populated, and there is no centralized system of reporting new government publications, particularly since government documents from the provinces and territories no longer have to be deposited with Library and Archives Canada. Collecting these materials depends on personal connections and active research.

At present, Nunavut libraries lack the capacity to find, track and document such non-government digital materials as websites, videos, music and social media sites.

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

Physical library spaces remain important as social spaces in the community. In Nunavut particularly, they also provide space for work and research, as many homes are extremely crowded and may lack Internet access. Libraries will offer more programming, including support for learning new skills and for literacy and language development.

While the collections may contain less paper and fewer books, the access that libraries can offer to all of the world's resources will increase. Many Nunavummiut depend heavily on library access for their digital information, and may need to visit the library in person to access this material.

Libraries will also remain as a necessary repository for our paper heritage, both because they can preserve the existing paper record, and because the demand for books has not decreased.

Education

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

In Nunavut, we need to encourage more Inuit language speakers to take up the professions. Distance education programs for librarians and archivists need to be made available from Canadian institutions to give Canadian context. It is often difficult for Nunavut residents to leave the territory for an extended period in order to pursue higher education, and this has been an obstacle to encouraging Nunavut residents to take up this field.

Also, in an oral culture such as that of the Inuit, the appreciation of libraries as holders of culture and language, no matter what the form of the material, needs to be emphasized. Young Inuit identify more with the digital, online world than with their image of libraries as the world of print media.

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

In the past and currently we have members who have looked for a Canadian post-graduate library/information program on-line but none have been available. NLA members have gone to distance programs in Scotland and the USA to do their professional education. Why? – this is a conversation that needs to happen if we want to set Canadian competency requirements.

A considerable amount of work was done by the Canadian Library Association's President's Council on the 8Rs, 2006-2007. Did any of this become a strategic element in the planning conversations of studies programs?

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?

In Nunavut, public libraries are directly funded by the Government of Nunavut. The Manager of Nunavut Public Library Services intends to address these issues in a separate brief to the Expert Panel.

2. Assuming academic host institutions have financial resource constraints, and assuming academic libraries are equally constrained, how might these libraries attract funding adequate to meet the expectations of their users?

Nunavut Arctic College has the only academic library system in Nunavut. There are 3 campuses
The library manager's reply is below.

There are constraints when it comes to the College's materials budget. Working within a budget of \$50K the library manager has to pick and choose what we can afford.

There is the possibility of looking for grants, etc. for additional money to put towards our materials budget but as of yet, that hasn't been an operating necessity. The budget we have for materials covers what our libraries currently need. This will likely change with the higher demand to shift to more electronic resources. Subscriptions to online journal databases are not inexpensive and there has been discussion about shifting from certain texts to electronic resources that would better enable students/instructors across campuses to utilize what is now available to them.

Thankfully we have had a total three donations from the American Shelf over the last 8 years. Two of these donations have been for \$10,000 which is 1/5 of our annual materials budget. Though these donations were not something that we actively searched for, they have been quite valuable in that we have built the collection in non-core areas that we would otherwise have to have foregone.

3. 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.

As an association, this question does not apply directly to us.