



Annual Report

2023





Ken Sim
Mayor

A Message from the Mayor

On behalf of my colleagues on City Council, I'm pleased to introduce the 2023 Vancouver Public Library (VPL) Annual Report.

A library is the heart of every neighbourhood in Vancouver. VPL's 21 locations are where people go to gain new skills, connect with their community, find their next great read, and do their day's work.

Our libraries play a key role in delivering on many of the City's priorities. The relocation of the West Point Grey branch to a more accessible location, and opening all branches on Sundays are a few ways that VPL is helping to meet the needs of Vancouver residents, particularly families with children and isolated seniors. It is my hope that all residents will take the time to discover all that VPL offers, both digitally and in person.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ken Sim



**Christina
de Castell**
Chief Librarian
& CEO



Kevin Lowe
Board Chair

Chair/CEO Message

VPL had a busy year in 2023, with some amazing achievements and progress toward our [strategic priorities](#), and work that will put the foundations in place to be a stronger organization in the future.

To advance our Learning and Creativity goals, we continued to deliver thousands of programs for children and families, welcoming people in our locations and through popular programs online. Our Children's department has embraced STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and in 2023 we expanded STEM learning opportunities for our youngest patrons. Through programs, equipment, games, and collections, the love of all things STEM will power our next generation of leaders, and we look forward to inspiring children through new opportunities for learning.

We celebrated our Shared Spaces and Experiences goals with the relocation of West Point Grey branch to a bigger, brighter and more accessible location, and began applying guidelines that will make all our spaces more welcoming and accessible for everyone. This included beginning to share Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh art and languages in our locations to recognize the history and continued presence of Indigenous Peoples on these lands. Also in 2023, we responded to changing patterns of library use, revising our hours to offer full day Sunday openings at every VPL branch. As all this happened, behind the scenes we planned for future library spaces, including Oakridge, Marpole, and a revitalization of the Children's Library at Central Library.

Building Belonging and Connection is at the heart of VPL's commitment to Vancouver. When we moved our Accessible Services department into Central Library this year, our aim was to raise awareness of these critical collections and services for people with disabilities, and to provide a central and easy to find location. Our efforts to build belonging extend to newcomers to Canada, and this year VPL's English language learning programs and resources were re-imagined and re-energized to create more opportunities across our neighbourhoods, while we also offered foundational courses for understanding Indigenous history and amplified the voices of Indigenous creatives and professionals through our programs for everyone.

At the same time, we worked together to explore ways to shape a more equitable, diverse and inclusive organization for staff, who make it possible to provide amazing opportunities for learning and connection at VPL both in our spaces and online. Thank you for all that you do, each day, to make VPL a vital and welcoming part of our community.

Thank you to the members of the 2023 VPL Board for generously sharing your time and expertise.

Kevin Lowe (Chair), Raji Mangat (Vice Chair), Tim Bottomer, Victor Huang, Emily Lapper, Melody Ma, Councillor Peter Meiszner (Vancouver City Council Representative), Harlan Pruden, Karen Spears, Ziming Yang and Abeer Yusuf. Scott Jensen – Vancouver Park Board liaison, Victoria Jung – Vancouver School Board liaison



Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation

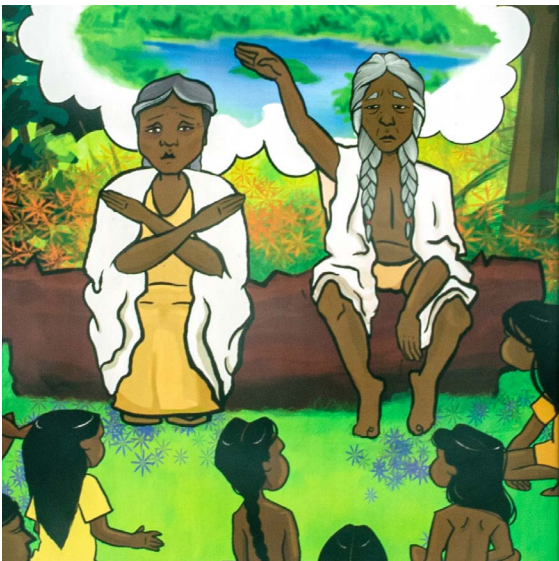
As part of ongoing efforts towards Rights and Reconciliation, VPL has been actively working to advance the City's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) strategy and VPL's own complementary Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy. In 2023, work was initiated to identify innovative library governance models to provide greater opportunity for involvement from Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

The Library is uniquely positioned to support Reconciliation by highlighting Indigenous voices through our collections and programs, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous history and cultures, and creating spaces where all Indigenous peoples feel welcome and heard.

Banners in the Central Library atrium feature the work s̓í:l̓:qəy̓ by Musqueam artist Kitty Guerin as part of *Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing*, a civic program dedicated to the work of Indigenous artists.

Library programs have been particularly effective in knowledge building in the past year. Two new courses: "Indigenous Considerations for Newcomers to Canada" and "Toward Reconciliation: Start Your Learning Journey" help bridge knowledge gaps and provide basic education. These programs grow more popular every time they are offered as the public looks to the library as their first step in understanding Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation.

In 2023, VPL hosted a Truth and Reconciliation Book Club, and continued to offer public programming which showcased Indigenous voices, including Michelle Good, Darrel McLeod, Angela Sterritt, Brian Trottier, and Jody Wilson-Raybould.



Detail from s̓í:l̓:qəy̓ by Kitty Guerin



Learning and Creativity



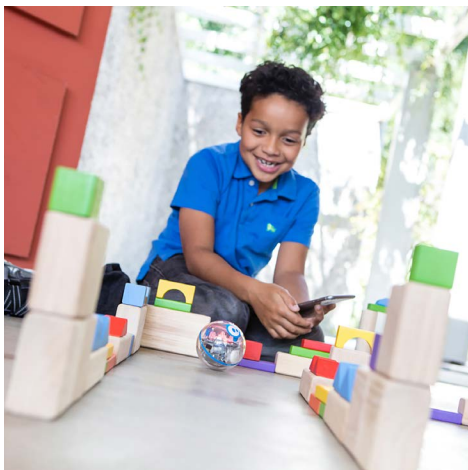
STEM at VPL

Helping children gain a deeper interest in and understanding of various science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts provides them essential skills for the future.

VPL offers a range of accessible STEM programs, educational resources and experiences that inspire and encourage exploration and learning through play.

Programs like STEM Makers and STEM Buddies increase engagement and encourage children to create, build, and code. VPL's STEM kits allow families, childcare educators and community groups to explore different topics with young learners and provide opportunities to discover new ideas.

To enhance children's in-branch learning experiences and facilitate engagement with families unable to attend traditional library programs, VPL piloted a new collection of hands-on educational STEM toys and games at four locations, including Snap Circuits, Ozobots, and digital microscopes. Building on the success of this pilot, the new STEM collection is expanding to all branches across the city in 2024, making exploring and learning at the library more widely available.



Creativity and Connection in the Inspiration Lab

VPL's Inspiration Lab continues to be a destination for digital creativity — bringing people together in new ways to connect, learn and follow their creative interests.

This year, VPL partnered with the Vancouver Linux Users Group to offer interactive Linux sessions, where users of all levels come together to network and learn about the alternative open source system with the support of seasoned professionals.

Working with the Vancouver Blender User Group also enabled the Library to offer workshops about the open source 3D animation software Blender. These workshops included presentations, hands-on practice on Inspiration Lab computers, and networking for beginner and intermediate-level animation creators.

VPL's ongoing partnership with the DOXA Documentary Film Festival continues to bring budding filmmakers to the library for film screenings and video production workshops. These sessions have become a valuable way for creators to share ideas and build skills to take creative projects to the next level.



Shared Spaces and Experiences



A New and Improved West Point Grey branch

The opening of a new library location is always met with excitement and anticipation from the local community, and VPL's new West Point Grey branch was no exception.

Offering improved accessibility, a fresh modern design, and enhanced programming areas, the West Point Grey branch reopened in June, one block west of the previous branch. The new location has more space to unwind, work or study, and enjoy the collection. Features include high contrast signage, window seating, a program/meeting room and an accessible height-adjustable public computer desk. Patrons have expressed how much they appreciate the changes, particularly the addition of a meeting room that can be booked by community groups or used for library programming.

The relocation of the West Point Grey branch also provided an opportunity to collaborate with members of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) community to develop a welcome sign in English and ḥəḡəmiḥəḡ at the front entry.



Updated Hours to Serve Vancouver Better

To meet the evolving needs of Vancouver library users, VPL adjusted its branch hours across the city in 2023, offering earlier openings and full-day service on Sundays across the system. Patron traffic data showing the days and times that each branch is used most was analyzed to determine how best to meet patron demand and provide more equitable access to library services across all locations.

Library spaces contribute to the City of Vancouver's network of cooling centres and cleaner air spaces, providing residents more options for finding a cool and welcoming place to relax, read, access drinking water and find respite from heat waves and other climate emergencies.



Belonging and Connection



Supporting Newcomers in Vancouver

Moving to a new country is a life changing experience, and learning English as a second language can be a daunting challenge. This is why many newcomers rely on the library to find resources and programs that can help.

In 2023, VPL expanded its English as a Second Language (ESL) collections to meet the growing needs of newcomers in our communities. Additions included print and digital titles, a new database of bilingual children's eBooks which also support adult speakers of 50 languages in their English learning, English language test materials, and an online guide to make resources easier to find. Four new modules for pronunciation and exam preparation were also added to Clarity English, a popular resource in the Digital Library.



VPL offers ESL Conversation Practice sessions in person at most of our branches, as well as online via Zoom. These provide an opportunity to practice English conversation skills in a supportive and casual environment and meet others learning English. The sessions are quite popular, with branch based ESL Conversation Practice representing over 20% of total programs hosted and 10% of adult program attendance.

The [Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre](#) is a free online and in-person resource centre that helps newcomers to Canada find the information they need to get a job, explore careers or start a business. NewtoBC's Library Champions is an opportunity for newcomers to BC to be trained to conduct outreach to other new immigrants on the range of programs, services, and resources that are provided by libraries and immigrant and community service agencies.

All of these library services empower newcomers to build a life in Vancouver by discovering new opportunities and supports.



Enhancing Accessible Services

To help patrons with disabilities better connect with and use the library, VPL's Accessible Services, which provides library materials for individuals with print disabilities and/or mobility challenges, made several improvements in 2023, including streamlining its library card system and relocating to a new, more accessible service point.

Accessible Services users now have a single account that allows them to access various services, including home delivery, specialty formats, and assistive technology. The borrowing period for these users was increased to 8 weeks, benefiting patrons with disabilities who may require extra time to finish their reading or listening. Users are now able to place holds on specialty material through the general holds system, giving them greater independence and autonomy in using the library.

Patron access to these specialized services and collections was further enhanced by relocating Accessible Services from a hard to find location to a more visible space on Level 3 of the Central Library. The new location has expanded hours, allowing patrons access to the collections in the evening and on weekends. An additional benefit is the increased awareness of services for patrons with disabilities among both the public and staff.

Organizational Strength



EDI an Ongoing Process

VPL continues to work towards building a workplace that embraces equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In 2023, VPL undertook an organizational assessment to understand employee experiences in our workplace, from recruitment and hiring to day-to-day work, across all levels of the organization. By the year-end, we had a clearer picture of the challenges and opportunities. The findings and recommendations will serve as the foundation for development of a multi-year EDI action plan. We want to ensure that all members of our staff feel as welcome and included as every member of the public who comes through our doors.

Creative Residencies



2023 Indigenous Storyteller in Residence Les George

2023 Indigenous Storyteller in Residence: Les George

Seasoned storyteller and cultural guide Les George highlighted Indigenous stories and culture as the 2023 Indigenous Storyteller in Residence at VPL. A member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, he drew from his decades of experience working as a First Nations support worker with at-risk youth and those with special needs.

Les George shared traditional Tsleil-Waututh songs, legends, and history with Vancouver residents who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience them. He hosted cultural sharing, film screenings, and special events discussing Residential Schools, Reconciliation, and the revitalization of Indigenous languages. During his residency, Les George also recorded a series of online Indigenous cultural resources for children and families.

Since its creation in 2008, the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence program at VPL has continued to honour Indigenous cultures and promote intercultural understanding and communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

2023 Writer in Residence: Aren X. Tulchinsky



2023 Writer in Residence Aren X. Tulchinsky

As the 2023 Writer in Residence, Aren X. Tulchinsky, the writer formerly known as Karen X. Tulchinsky, shared his talents as a novelist, screenwriter, and out-and-proud member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community to promote Canadian writing and literature.

His written works include the award-winning *The Five Books of Moses Lapinsky*, *In Her Nature*, *Love Ruins Everything*, and *Love and Other Ruins*. During his residency, he continued work on a new novel, *Second Son*, which follows a transgender man's personal journey of grief and acceptance.

As a mentor, Tulchinsky offered writing workshops for dialogue and overcoming writer's block, and one-on-one consultations to aspiring writers. He also hosted special literary events with music and performances and led a panel discussion on the future of queer literature.

Since 2005, VPL's Writer in Residence program has provided space and time for writers to work on their craft and share their knowledge with developing writers. The program is made possible with the generous support of the Friends of the Vancouver Public Library.

Financial Highlights 2023

REVENUES	2022	%	2023	%
City of Vancouver	\$53,418,837	90.9%	\$54,723,569	89.0%
Other fees and recoveries	\$2,216,477	3.8%	\$2,128,023	3.5%
Other grants	\$6,000	0.0%	\$9,500	0.0%
Provincial Government*	\$1,488,221	2.5%	\$3,200,837	5.2%
Investment income	\$178,831	0.3%	\$473,773	0.8%
Interlink reciprocal services	\$52,862	0.1%	\$45,768	0.1%
Charitable donations and bequests	\$1,380,143	2.3%	\$904,596	1.5%
Total Revenues:	\$58,741,371	100.0%	\$61,486,065	100.0%

EXPENDITURES	2022	%	2023	%
Amortization	\$3,678,051	6.5%	\$3,916,443	6.6%
Books and publications	\$2,428,023	4.3%	\$2,798,654	4.7%
Building occupancy and maintenance	\$6,184,050	10.9%	\$6,440,822	10.9%
Equipment and fleet	\$667,517	1.2%	\$773,204	1.3%
Other	\$993,181	1.8%	\$1,349,399	2.3%
Supplies and materials	\$867,306	1.5%	\$845,423	1.4%
Salaries and benefits	\$41,842,386	73.8%	\$43,207,668	72.8%
Total Expenses:	\$56,660,513	100.0%	\$59,331,613	100.0%

2023 Statement of Financial Information

*B.C. Ministry of Municipal Affairs

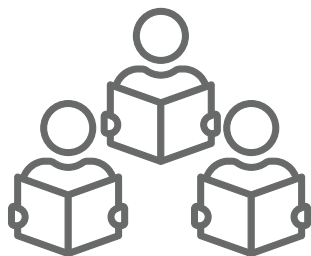
Note: Expenditures on Books and publications in 2023 were \$5,564,200 (2022: \$5,236,400), with adjustments made at year-end for capital assets and amortization.

Complete audited financial statements are available at: vpl.ca/about

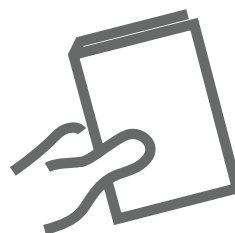
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Vancouver Public Library would like to thank the [Vancouver Public Library Foundation](#), the [Friends of the Vancouver Public Library](#), and all those who generously gave their support in 2023.

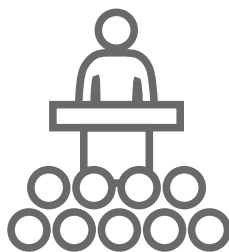
Highlights of 2023



4.6 MILLION VISITS



**10.4 MILLION ITEMS
BORROWED**



OVER **6,870** PROGRAM SESSIONS
WERE ATTENDED BY MORE
THAN **182,500** PEOPLE.



OVER **54,000** NEW
CARDHOLDERS

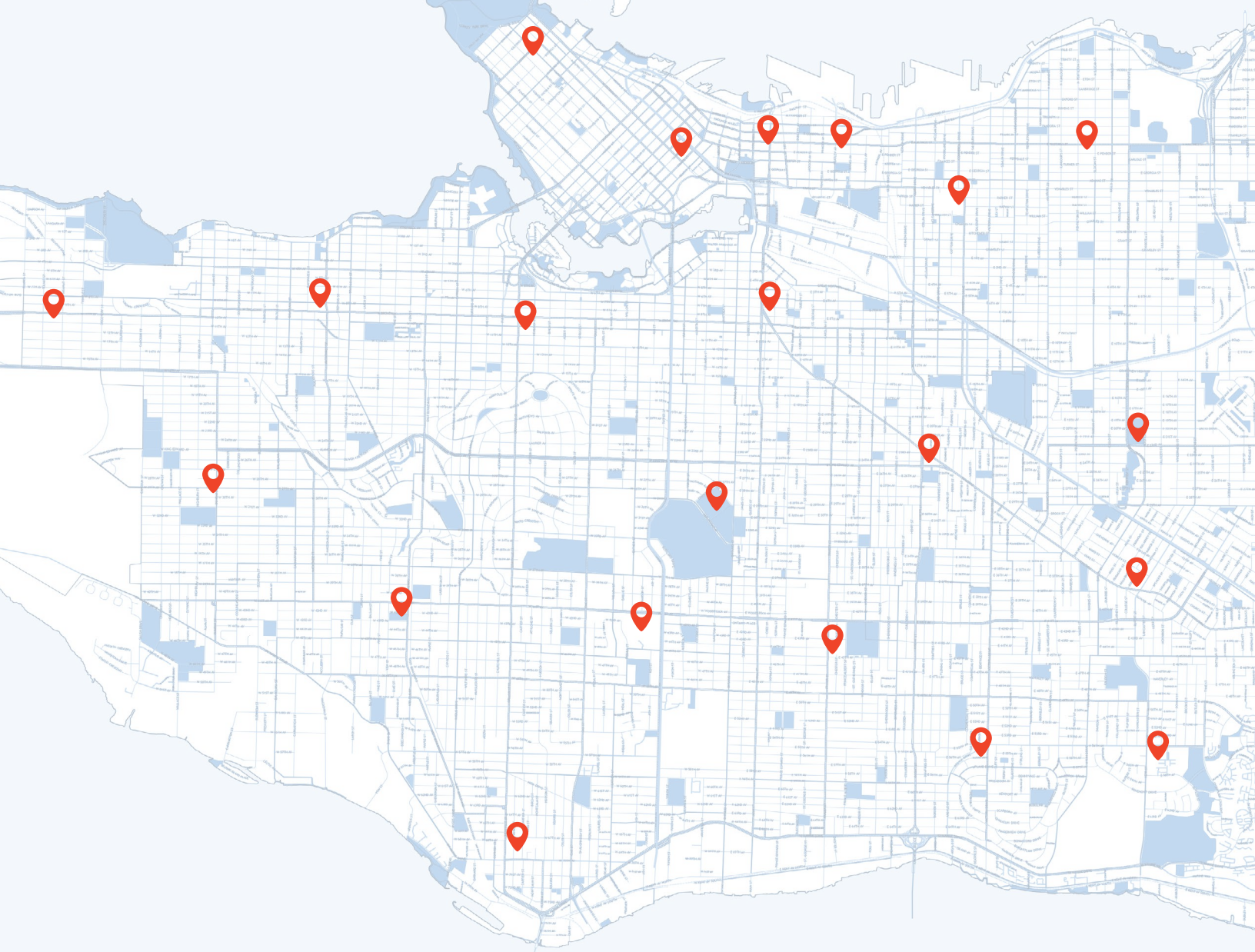


OVER **140,000** E-BOOK
AND E-AUDIO USERS



WITH A **92%** SATISFACTION
RATE* AMONG RESIDENTS,
THE LIBRARY IS THE CITY'S
MOST HIGHLY-RATED
MUNICIPAL SERVICE.

*Data from CoV Civic Service Satisfaction Survey (Jan. 2023)



PROUDLY SERVING VANCOUVER AT
21 LOCATIONS AND ONLINE AT VPL.CA



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