



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: March 21, 2019  
Author: Patricia Chong, Manager, Policy & Planning  
Phone No.: 604-331-3705  
VanDocs#: DOC/2019/077704  
Meeting Date: March 27, 2019  
TO: Library Board  
FROM: Carol Nelson, Director, Planning and Communications  
**SUBJECT: Provincial Library Grants Report 2018**

---

### **SUMMARY**

This report, created for the B.C. Ministry of Education Libraries Branch, demonstrates how provincial funding supported the Vancouver Public Library to generate positive impact in our communities in 2018.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **BACKGROUND**

On an annual basis, the Libraries Branch requests that public libraries report on new or enhanced programs that are enabled by provincial grant funding. This report demonstrates the value of provincial funding, identifies how key programs have delivered on VPL's strategic goals, and highlights outcomes achieved. It also illustrates VPL's alignment with the strategies of the Provincial Strategic Plan – *Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities*.

### **DISCUSSION**

This report focuses on eight key initiatives that VPL delivered in 2018. Together, they highlight VPL's commitment to identifying innovative ways to expand our reach and generate measurable impact in the communities we serve.

## INTRODUCTION

For over one hundred years, the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has championed the vision of an informed, engaged, and connected city by providing free spaces for everyone to discover, create, and share ideas and information.

The Vancouver Public Library serves a population of 631,486 through the Central library and 20 branches across the city. Vancouver is a thriving urban centre known for its ethnically and linguistically diverse neighbourhoods - it is home to a significant Indigenous population, and 44% of residents speak a language other than English as their first language.<sup>1</sup> It is also a city with an increasing aging population, with the number of seniors expected to grow by 51% by 2050.<sup>2</sup>

While the City of Vancouver is one of the fastest-growing major metropolitan economies in Canada, the city faces key challenges in terms of housing and affordability. It is home to the largest homeless population in British Columbia, and in 2018, the homeless count increased 2% over 2017<sup>3</sup>. In terms of income, Vancouver continues to be one of the more polarized cities in Canada, with the top 10% of the population taking home 34% of adjusted after-tax income,<sup>4</sup> while one in five Vancouverites is forecast to experience poverty.<sup>5</sup> The city's high real-estate prices pose significant housing challenges for residents.

VPL's programs and services are popular and heavily used by the community. In 2018, VPL recorded over 6 million in-person visits and an additional 6 million visits to vpl.ca. Patrons borrowed over 9 million digital and physical items, received answers to over 715,000 reference questions and attended over 8,500 programs for children, teens, and adults. In addition, patrons borrowed from our expanded 319-piece musical instrument collection nearly 8,800 times.

Our VPL 2020 Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to continue providing our core services while evolving to meet the changing needs of our community. We identified four strategic outcomes grounded in VPL's mission, vision and values: Learning, Creativity & Innovation; Access & Equity; Sharing & Collaboration; and Organizational Strength.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Census Profile, 2016 Census" Statistics Canada. Retrieved Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=933&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All>

<sup>2</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Vancouver Homeless Count 2018. Urban Matters and BC Non-Profit Housing Association. Retrieved Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-homeless-count-2018-final-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

In 2018, we focused on achieving our strategic goals by creating community spaces, connecting partnerships and programs, and increasing digital offerings to reach more people in their busy lives. The Central Library Expansion opened two new floors for community collaboration, meeting spaces, an outdoor garden, and quiet study, welcoming new patrons and renewing relationships with existing patrons. We developed a Facilities Master Plan, outlining a 25-year plan to improve VPL's branch facilities and develop new service points in Vancouver's growing neighbourhoods.

We also launched two major digital initiatives, encouraging readership (eBook Fast Reads) and early childhood literacy (Roots of Reading). Developing new partnerships with community organizations, we launched several new events and built lasting relationships. These initiatives and more are detailed in this report and continue our momentum toward VPL's strategic goal: "By 2020, we are all connected to the ideas and information we need to be inspired and thrive."

---

**PROVINCIAL STRATEGY - FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

### **The Roots of Reading**

In 2018 VPL launched *The Roots of Reading*, an online video collection of songs, rhymes, and activities that help caregivers to develop early childhood literacy and support VPL's goal of increasing access to our professional services.

This fun and appealing collection of online videos was developed for parents and caregivers, addressing common barriers they face: inability to travel to branches for storytime, lack of familiarity with songs when English is a second language, working parents unable to learn songs that caregivers are teaching. The videos were designed to incorporate best practices in early childhood literacy from the American Library Association's *Every Child Ready to Read* research. They are short, jargon free, and welcoming to children and families of all abilities.

A skilled team of VPL Children's Librarians developed and filmed 30 videos using VPL's Inspiration Lab resources.

- Each video includes tips on how caregivers can support their child's early literacy, collected into 3 different series: Songs & Rhymes, Make & Takes, and Every Child Ready to Read.
- The Every Child Ready to Read series discusses the early literacy practices of talking, playing, singing, writing, and reading.
- The filming, production and editing were completed using VPL resources, particularly the library's Inspiration Lab (a digital media lab available to patrons to film, record sound, create visual media, and edit multi-media).
- Staff developed skills in Adobe Premiere Pro, video recording, lighting, and audio techniques through this project and all staff who were filmed gained on-camera experience.

These videos highlight the expertise of our children's librarians and showcase VPL as a source of up-to-date and well-researched information on early childhood development. To date, the videos have more

than tripled viewership of VPL's Youtube channel, with over 14,400 views from May to December. Viewers also tended to watch several videos, with an average of almost five views per visitor.

The outcome of providing this service is that more families with young children are able to access VPL's early years programming when and where it is most convenient for them. Caregivers are inspired to incorporate literacy activities into their everyday lives. Families who speak English as a second language use the subtitles and repeat the videos for a better learning experience. Many parents and caregivers report feeling more confident singing songs they hear in storytime while others say that accessing the videos helps to "fill the gap" when they can't make it to the library.

The project has been featured on Decoda literacy's website as a resource for other Early Childhood Educators. Looking ahead, we will continue to develop, film, and upload additional videos each year in order to provide families with access to high quality learning opportunities to support children's early literacy skill development.

### **eBook Fast Reads**

At the end of August, VPL launched a new *eBook Fast Reads* collection providing patrons with quicker access to popular digital content. This initiative gives patrons more borrowing options and meets their demands for bestselling eBooks.

Hold queues and wait times had been increasing for popular content in the existing downloadable eBook collection and it was apparent that improvements were needed to ensure that patrons were able to access this content in a timely manner. The solution was a technology-driven application of a classic library strategy – making more copies available for shorter check-out periods, which facilitates greater circulation, reduces pressure on waitlists in the existing collection, and provides faster access to content for patrons. Because eBook loan models are reliant on third-party vendors, significant planning was required. To ensure a successful launch, the working team:

- worked cross-functionally to plan the service integration and launch,
- investigated multiple eBook platforms and public-facing catalogue software, and determined that the CloudLibrary app was the best tool to deliver this content to patrons given that their user-friendly circulation model matched the proven "Fast Reads" model offered in the print collection
- selected popular, high-interest titles that would appeal to readers
- communicated the new offering in a clear and compelling manner through the phrase "Fast Read eBooks. No Holds."

This initiative has been a great success: of the 800 titles available at launch, 60% were checked out in the first week. In the first four months, the number of patrons using eBook Fast Reads grew by 43% while the total number of checkouts grew by 53% reaching 8,874 by year-end. Some patrons using this new service had not used the standard (OverDrive) eBook collection before; some had not borrowed a print item in over 5 years. In the words of VPL's patrons:

*"I just downloaded CloudLibrary on my ipad...and I easily got the book! Easy-peasy! Thank you so much!"*

*"I love having access to the Cloud Library!"*

Use of this collection continues to grow in 2019, and we are continuing to expand the Fast Read eBook collection.

---

## **PROVINCIAL STRATEGY - BUILDING CAPACITY: ENABLING INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION**

### **Vancouver Public Library Central Branch Expansion**

After 23 years of operation, the top two floors of the iconic Vancouver Central Library were transformed into a collection of community spaces which opened to the public on September 29, 2018. These spaces address the needs of the community by providing residents, creators, and community organizations a place for collaboration, creation, and connection.

The expansion features a publically accessible rooftop garden, outdoor terraces, an 80 seat theatre, writer-in-residence offices, rentable meeting rooms, as well as an exhibit gallery, currently featuring *morph*, our first self-curated exhibit.

The overarching goal of the expansion was to provide community spaces for Vancouver residents, creating a feeling of connectedness and belonging, which is increasingly important as more residents live in smaller and denser surroundings.

Activities to support this goal included:

- Developing a launch campaign using a combination of low cost social media, out-of-home and digital advertising, and public/media relations to raise awareness and drive visitation. Specific tactics included out of home advertising (with media space generously provided through the City of Vancouver's cultural services program), paid social posts, and social media activation;
- Generating unpaid media coverage of new spaces by offering a 'sneak peek' to select media and social influencers in advance;
- Updates of VPL.ca website to showcase new spaces;
- Creating a sense of energy and excitement through programming and hosting celebratory launch events for media, politicians, staff, public, donors

Success was measured by tracking public perceptions, awareness and satisfaction levels. Specific objectives for the expansion included generating media interest and increasing physical visits to the Central Library.

The launch campaign was an overwhelming success. Media coverage included print (front page of Vancouver Sun), radio, and television. Social media response was extremely positive with over 3,000,000 impressions reaching 900,000 individuals and 100,000 views of our promotional video on Facebook. We exceeded our impressions goal by 140% and our "click goal" by 420%. Unique page views

on vpl.ca were up 9.20% and in-person visits to Central increased 13% over the same quarter in 2017 attracting over 56,000 more visitors than the same period last year. Public survey results are extremely positive, with over half of residents reporting awareness of the expansion, and two thirds of respondents saying they are very or somewhat likely to visit the Central Library expansion in the next 12 months.

VPL's expanded community spaces are helping to deliver against the goal of enabling inspiration and innovation. The outcomes for the community are greater social connection and opportunity for all in Vancouver to access programs and services. Going forward, VPL will continue to develop programming and exhibitions to maximize the use of these new spaces.

### **Indigenous Storyteller in Residence**

In 2018, VPL once again offered the *Indigenous Storyteller in Residence* program as part of our commitment to fostering community connections and supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. From March to June, the resident Indigenous Storyteller T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss offered an innovative set of programs, highlighting the importance of oral storytelling as a way to learn about and from Indigenous communities.

During her residency, T'uy't'tanat-Cease delivered 26 programs to over 650 patrons throughout Vancouver's neighbourhoods. Featured and unique programs were:

- Outdoor programs rooted in Indigenous medicine traditions, focusing on local history, and emphasizing the roles of women in the Skwxwú7mesh Nation.
- A Mobile Herbal Lounge, sharing Indigenous medicinal teas and stories on a school bus mobile art gallery.
- A slam poetry youth event with songs and stories performed by young Indigenous poets.

The residency concluded with the finale event *Smart People Talking About Life*, a lively evening of songs, stories and slam poetry from Indigenous poets of many different nations. For the more than 100 people in attendance this was an engaging, moving and inspiring event. T'uy't'tanat-Cease developed a following with her programs, inspiring emerging writers and poets. Participants learned local oral history and were able to engage in meaningful conversations about reconciliation and our current shared community experience.

In addition to offering these programs, T'uy't'tanat-Cease also focused on her creative projects, one of which was collecting local oral stories about the great fire of 1886 and the role of the Skwxwú7mesh people in rescuing victims of the fire.

Looking ahead, T'uy't'tanat-Cease has already been working with VPL staff to plan and deliver more public programs. VPL will continue to offer the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence program in 2019 with Joseph A. Dandurand offering his knowledge and skill as a poet, playwright, researcher and archeologist.

### **Islamic History Month Celebration**

In October 2018, VPL partnered with the Simon Fraser University Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies and the City of Vancouver to present a daylong celebration of Islamic History Month. This event supported our goal to create welcoming spaces to share knowledge and build mutual understanding among diverse groups.

In a single day, over 1,000 members of the public participated in the event at VPL's Central Library. The event was delivered in partnership with several organizations, artists, and a dedicated group of volunteers from the Islamic community. It was carefully planned to encompass diverse representations of Islam.

An official proclamation of observance opened the celebration, followed by a day filled with performances and art installations including:

- A featured exhibition of cultural artifacts curated by Bilal Hammoud of the *Museum of Islamic Art*,
- Various presentations of music, poetry readings, comedy, film presentations and digital art installations,
- Displays of contemporary art in hallways and common areas, and
- Workshops on design and calligraphy.

VPL staff from across the organization worked together to ensure that the presentations and display materials were easily accessible while remaining secure.

It was the first major event held in the newly renovated ninth floor of VPL. The event's high attendance indicated that it met a strong community need. It was overwhelmingly well received, and served to fostered community inclusion (one patron expressed great thanks and was overwhelming positive about the event as she had experienced persecution in her former country for her faith).

The principle partner, the Simon Fraser University Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies, was very pleased with the outcome of a true community building event that offered a space for diversity to flourish. We have already started planning the next event for 2019 with many of the same partners.

### **DOXA Podcast Festival**

In November 2018, VPL partnered with DOXA (Documentary Film Festival Vancouver) to deliver the Podcast Festival addressing VPL's goal of providing space for people to share information, ideas and culture. As a platform for sharing, this program created meaningful opportunities for patrons to discover the craft of podcasting, to co-create podcasts, and to learn how VPL's Inspiration Lab multi-media studios can be used as a resource.

Hosted in the recently opened *Montalbano Family Theatre* (part of the recent Central Library expansion) the *Vancouver Podcast Festival* attracted over 800 attendees to 15 programs over three days. VPL's Inspiration Lab team collaborated with DOXA to deliver a variety of educational and interactive programs about podcasting and the creation of podcasts, including:

- Panel discussions with well-known podcasters
- Live podcast recordings from local and nationally known podcasters
- An interactive "Harry Potter" podcast event
- Orientation tours of VPL's Inspiration Lab

Attendees were noticeably excited and inspired to connect in person with their favourite podcasters and learn about VPL's Inspiration Lab. As podcasting is a popular medium among younger adults and teens, it was a new way to engage this demographic.

The outcome of this event was a productive partnership with the Documentary Media Society (creators of DOXA) and increased awareness of VPL's Inspiration Lab. Based on the popularity of the event, VPL developed a new set of courses on producing podcasts. We have seen growth in the profile and use of the Inspiration Lab since this event. DOXA is planning the next festival for the fall of 2019 with a full slate of free offerings to deliver in partnership with VPL.

---

## **PROVINCIAL STRATEGY - SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND DEMONSTRATING IMPACT**

### **Facilities Master Plan**

In June 2018, VPL's Board approved a new *Facilities Master Plan* providing a long-term strategic framework to guide the planning and decision-making for VPL's physical facilities for the next 25 years. In addition to identifying strategic priorities for facility investments, the plan contains decision support tools that will enable VPL to make evidence-based and data informed strategic decisions for VPL's physical facilities well into the future.

To develop the Facilities Master Plan, VPL assigned a project team to lead the 12-month long project. To assess how well VPL was meeting current population needs, and how prepared it was to serve future needs through its facilities, the team researched library facility planning trends and Vancouver population forecasts, reviewed and analyzed internal and external data, and conducted a patron survey.

A successful engagement strategy involved VPL's Board members, management, key City departments, staff and the public to identify current strengths and challenges, and future opportunities and risks, related to VPL's facilities.

The strategic assessment laid the foundation for the development of the Facilities Master Plan. Deliverables included:

- VPL Facility Model – identifying the types and sizes of facilities required for VPL's physical network to serve long-term population needs.

- Branch Location Decision Framework - a set of criteria and a decision support tool to help users systematically assess future potential branch locations.
- Strategic Priorities for Facility Investments – a roadmap that contains:
  - a prioritized set of branches requiring significant re-investment as well as key opportunities for new facility investments for the next 25 years
  - an analysis of total space requirements for VPL to meet the needs of Vancouver’s growing population over the next 25 years
  - a multi-factor model that supports VPL to re-prioritize investment in existing facilities as changes occur in the future

The Facilities Master Plan has already proven to be useful in discussions and negotiations with City counterparts on the planning of several branches, including a potential new location in the East Fraser Lands area, a former industrial site in Vancouver that is undergoing massive redevelopment into a livable self-sufficient community. The plan contains guidelines to review certain aspects of the plan annually and other elements, such as the strategic priorities for Facility investment, every four years in keeping with the City’s capital planning cycle.

### **Project Outcome**

To support VPL’s strategic priorities of developing organizational strength and demonstrating library impact, we embarked on the second phase of the Project Outcome pilot as part of an InterLINK working group.

In 2017, four InterLINK libraries (Vancouver, Surrey, North Vancouver District and Whistler) agreed to work together to pilot the use of Project Outcome, an online evaluation toolkit developed by the Public Library Association. We tested Project Outcome on infant storytime, a program common to all four library systems. VPL deployed a first survey to the 53 participants at the end of the program in December 2017. We then followed up by emailing a second survey in March 2018, three months later, to assess the program’s longer-term impacts.

The research confirmed that VPL’s Babytime resulted in both immediate and long-term positive change for the participants. From the initial survey, 97% of respondents said they learned something they can share with their children, and 89% felt more confident helping their children to learn. From the second survey, the large majority of respondents reported a change in behaviour: 100% used what they learned to do something different with their children, and 92% reported spending more time doing what they learned with their children. One participant shared:

*“I had not known English songs and rhymes for kids, but now I know <most> of them and love them all. We have a great time at the library and at home singing and dancing with these songs. I feel very positive about it.”*

In addition, by directly comparing VPL’s results to that of other Canadian libraries and noting a gap in participants’ use of VPL’s materials, we identified the opportunity to take a more proactive approach in promoting library resources (books, CDs, etc.) during Babytime programs.

Overall, the InterLINK working group was satisfied with Project Outcome as a tool for evaluating outcomes of library programs and services. With the pilot complete, VPL is now pursuing the application of Project Outcome to programs on digital literacy and career exploration for newcomers to Canada. The participating libraries will share their learnings at the next BC Library Association Conference in the spring 2019.

## SUMMARY

The initiatives presented in this report highlight VPL's commitment to continually evolving to meet Vancouverites' needs and expectations. This year's outcomes demonstrate the community's positive response to VPL's increased community spaces, digital offerings, and programs that enhance community relationships and diversity. These are key deliverables that support our VPL 2020 Strategic Plan and the Provincial Strategic Plan.

### Opportunities

We have learned from these initiatives that there is a tremendous opportunity to broaden VPL's knowledge and practice of research, analysis and evaluation to inform decision-making. Building on our experience and learnings with the Facilities Master Plan and Project Outcome, VPL will further embed analytical approaches and evaluation methodologies into the planning, execution and measurement of our strategic and operational initiatives. A number of successful projects this year leveraged insights gathered from market research, previous new service launches, and the strategic planning process. We plan to integrate more insights-driven and evidence-based decision making as we move forward, and to share our learnings with other public libraries across Canada.

Another key opportunity is to continue finding fresh and innovative ways to deliver on longstanding library priorities. A number of the initiatives reported represent areas of focus that are core to VPL's mandate – early childhood literacy, improved access to collections, community engagement, and delivering service to underserved communities. We will sharpen our focus on patron insights, user-centred design, and seek to respond quickly to external trends to continue innovating in a rapidly evolving sector.

### Challenges & Lessons Learned

Organizational shifts require a focused effort for staff to develop new skills, change workflows, and discover new ways of working together. We need to account for time for successful change management, while continuing to deliver on day-to-day operations to meet the current needs of our patrons. As an example, further application of outcomes-based evaluation is promising, but will require on-boarding of staff and design of new organizational processes.

When we build and launch new services, focused time to maintain them must be provided. We recognize the need to monitor progress and to make changes to ensure our range of services remains appealing. For example, the Roots of Reading program team proactively scheduled staff time to ensure that new videos are created and added.

We also learned the importance of being nimble and responding quickly to changing circumstances. For example, we experienced construction delays with the Level 8 & 9 expansion that impacted opening planning, campaign communications and opening celebration. To mitigate these challenges we needed to be creative and willing to take risks, informed by research.

As we enter the third and final year of our VPL 2020 strategic plan, we will consider not only how to continue delivering on our strategic priorities, but also how those priorities may need to shift to meet the future needs of Vancouverites. We look forward to developing our next strategic plan, and to continuing to deliver innovative services to the public in the years to come.