



Annual General Meeting - Thursday, June 22, 2023

Instructions:

a.) Please join at 10:00am Pacific: Attendees are requested to connect to Zoom so staff may verify voting and non-voting participants and ensure quorum *prior to 10:30am Pacific meeting start time.*

b.) Options to Join Zoom Meeting:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84049580814>

or

ii. One tap mobile

Meeting ID: 840 4958 0814

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iii. Dial by your location

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+1 780 666 0144 Canada

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Agenda

Please note that the meeting will be recorded for minute-taking purposes only.

1. **(10:30am Pacific)** Call to Order and Opening Remarks - (Shirley Lew, Chair)
2. Land Acknowledgement
3. Agenda, *motion for approval*
4. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting (attached), *motion for approval*
5. Reports for information:
 - a. Verbal Chair's Report (Shirley Lew)
 - i. BC Public Library Partners Update
 - b. Executive Director's & Staff Reports (Kevin Millsip, Co-op Staff)
 - i. Annual Report (attached)
 - ii. Verbal Strategic Planning update
6. Financial matters:
 - a. FY22/23 Audited Financial Statements, (attached) for information (Lenora Lee, KPMG)
 - b. Appointment of the auditor (KPMG) for FY 23/24, *motion for approval*
 - c. FY23/24 working budget, for information
7. Governance matters:
 - a. Appointment of Board of Directors
 - i. Acclamation of Nominees (2) to the Board

ii. Introduction of new Board members: Jacqueline Kozak and Noreen Ma

8. Recognition of Service

a. Beth Davies and Anna Babluck

9. Closing Remarks

10. Adjournment



Annual General Meeting, Thursday, June 23, 2022 - **DRAFT MINUTES**

Via Zoom video conference

Attendees:

Member Delegates/Alternates: Diana Davidson (Alberta Public Library Services Branch), Ciara O'Kelly (BC Legislative Library), Rina Hadziev (BC Library Association), Beth Davies (Burnaby PL), Wanda Davis (Cariboo Regional District Library), Kimberly Partanen (Castlegar PL), Kayla MacDonald (Chetwynd PL), Chris Vriesema-Magnuson (College of Physicians & Surgeons BC), Suzanne Rackover (Emily Carr University of Art + Design & Council of Post-Secondary Library Directors), Ursula Brigl (Cranbrook PL), Alexandra Faucher (Elkford PL), Danika Andrews (Fort Nelson PL), Karli Fisher (Fort St. James PL), Dean Kelly (Fraser Valley Regional Library), Cari Lynn Gawletz (Grand Forks PL), Melanie Reaveley (KLF), Toby Mueller (Lillooet and Area PL), Heidi Rees (Manitoba Legislative Library), David Christensen (Manitoba Public Library Service), Tracey Therrien (Nelson PL), Jorge Cardenas (New Westminster PL), Thomas Knutson (North Central Library Federation / North East Library Federation), Deb Hutchison Koep (North Vancouver City PL), Dawna Turcotte (Northern Lights College), Heather Buzzell (Penticton PL), Rebecca Burbank (Powell River PL), Austin Matheson (Prince George PL), Michael Burris (Interlink), Charlene Tweed (Red River PL), Teresa Wright Eastley (Saskatchewan Provincial Library), Jennifer Wilson (Surrey PL), Cheryl Sinclair (University College of the North), Shirley Lew (Vancouver Community College), Ben Hyman (Vancouver Island Regional Library), Dana McFarland (Vancouver Island University), Julia Brewster (Vancouver Public Library), Jennifer Barg (Vanderhoof PL), Sarah Felkar (West Vancouver Memorial Library), Vicki Kyvrikosaios (YMCA Greater Vancouver Child Care Resource & Referral)

Non-voting attendees: Mari Martin (BC Public Library Services Branch), Daphne Wood (Greater Victoria PL), Lenora Lee (KPMG), Chris Reimer (North Vancouver City PL), Kevin Stranack (Simon Fraser University)

Co-op Staff: Kevin Millsip (executive director), Ayesha Ali, Christine Burns, Sharon Herbert, Scott Leslie, Daniella Levy-Pinto, Jennifer Pringle, David Ryland, Tami Setala

1. **(10:30am Pacific) Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement - (Beth Davies, Chair)**

Quorum (i.e., minimum 24 member delegates or alternates) was noted.

2. **Opening remarks – Beth and Kevin**

Kevin shared some housekeeping details, including procedures for using the Chat function to vote on the three motions on the agenda

3. **Agenda, *motion for approval***

Motion to approve the agenda of the 2022 Annual General Meeting.

Moved by: David Christensen; Seconded by: Kayla Macdonald

Carried - Unanimous

4. **Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting, *motion for approval***

Motion to approve the minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

Moved by: Deb Hutchison Koep; Seconded by: David Christensen

Carried - Unanimous

5. **Reports for information:**

5.1. Verbal Chair's Report (Beth Davies) –

The year since our last AGM in June 2021 has been another extraordinary period, for co-op staff and for members. The reports and business of our AGM today remind us of the important work that we do together in a cooperative way in ordinary and extraordinary times. We're carrying on differently, but we are carrying on, with the services and technologies of the Co-op offering key supports to members in difficult times. I'm glad to be here with everyone today, celebrating what we can do together, and introducing members who are reporting on co-op activities.

As a Board, we have spent the past year beginning to work on a member engagement strategy and an anti-racism plan, in line with commitments in our strategic plan. Both these actions have taken more time than we anticipated, but I'm happy to report that both will begin in earnest this summer.

The BC Libraries Cooperative has been around since 2009. We've changed and grown a lot since then. We've begun a process to look at Coop finances and services to ensure that we are sustainable and that we meet the needs of you, our members. We need to ensure we're engaged with the members both to maintain the historical understanding of what led to the Co-op's formation, what values

ground our approach and services, and how that shapes how we move ahead. Some of our services are built on technological foundations which are now over a decade old, this brings with it a number of challenges for our work. As we plan ahead, we'll be involving members in discussion about our services, how they need to be resourced, and how we fund them. Our goal is to have these conversations now, so that a few years down the road, the Co-op is in the best position it can be in regard to our technology, funding base and sources and staffing. We'll be sharing more on this process and timeline as the strategy comes together.

This past year, the power of collaboration and cooperation has resulted in some significant wins for our sector. The BC provincial government recently provided \$8M in one-time covid relief and recovery funding to the public library sector in BC. This funding is the result of many years of collective advocacy, and the focused efforts of the BC Public Library Partners, of which Co-op staff and board are a key part. A lot of hands helped to get us to this spot - supporters and users of libraries, allied and supportive organizations, CUPE BC and other labour leaders who supported our advocacy asks, city councillors across the province, Ministry staff at different levels, MLA's from all parties in the legislature and the three Ministers who have had responsibility for Public Libraries in BC over the past five years. Although the one-time funding is welcome, we remain committed to addressing the ongoing funding deficit that the public library sector has faced since 2010. I look forward to working with those who've been part of this ride so far, and others who will join, to make that goal a reality.

On the federal front, Co-op staff have been working closely with staff from the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) to advocate successfully to stop proposed cuts to federal funding for the work of NNELS and CELA. In addition, we convinced the federal government to create a brand-new funding program called the Equitable Access to Reading Program, that will fund the essential work ensuring access to reading materials for people in Canada with print disabilities. The new program will be in place in two years' time and promises to provide \$7M annually in funding.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to highlight the work of Coop staff. Kevin will talk in a bit about specific achievements across the broad work that staff are engaged in. I want to share the board's thanks for the way that staff have continued to support members over the past year. At a time when technology is more vital than ever in providing access to critical information, and when vulnerable members of the communities that libraries serve face growing digital inequity, the work that Coop staff do is critically important. Staff have embraced new projects, coped with rollercoasters of threatened funding cuts and shortfalls, all while navigating the ongoing pandemic. Coop staff are the best. Please join me in giving them thanks.

5.2. BC Public Library Partners Update (Rina Hadziev, BCLA)

For those who don't know me, I'm Rina Hadziev, Executive Director of the British Columbia Library Association, or BCLA, and I'm grateful to be joining you from the traditional and unceded territories of the lək'wəŋən speaking Peoples, specifically the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

I'm happy to be providing an update from the BC Public Library Partners. The Partners are made up of 4 organizations: BC Library Association (BCLA), Association of BC Public Library Directors (ABCPLD), BC Libraries Cooperative (BCLC), BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA).

We work together to present a united voice for BC's public library community to senior levels of government, in order to increase awareness of the positive impact of BC public libraries and influence provincial public policy and funding impacting public libraries and their communities.

For the past several years, the Partners have been focusing on advocating for increased annual funding from the provincial government. Since 2020, we have had a consistent message to the BC Government: BC public libraries are essential for healthy and vibrant communities; they are an integral part of the social safety net; they help support and advance government priorities,; and provincial funding needs to be restored to where it was before the cut in 2009, and then adjusted annually to keep up with inflation. This would equal \$23 million in 2023.

On June 7th, we presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance, and received a positive and engaged reception. We hope and anticipate they will support our recommendations, although that does not mean they will actually be included in the budget.

In September we are going to the Union of BC Municipalities 2022 Convention in Whistler, where we will hold an open house with the support of the Whistler Public Library and Fraser Valley Regional Library. UBCM is always a good opportunity to engage with municipal politicians, who are important and powerful advocates with the provincial government. It is also an opportunity to highlight the value and importance of libraries for the MLAs in attendance, including our minister. Last year we attended the virtual convention and are looking forward to the increased opportunities for networking that result from an in-person event.

We heard at last year's UBCM that many municipal politicians felt there should have been a resolution about libraries, so this year we supported libraries in working with their municipal councils to put forward resolutions affirming the value and importance of libraries and supporting our request for improved annual provincial funding.

We're also excited to share that this year, the BC Chamber of Commerce has also passed a resolution in support of increased provincial funding for libraries, recognizing the vital role of libraries in supporting businesses and strengthening community. Having the formal support of the Chamber will be a significant asset in

our ongoing advocacy with the provincial government, and we're thankful to Jerrilyn, Executive Director of the BCLTA, who led this effort.

On an ongoing basis, we're having positive and promising conversations with the new minister of Municipal Affairs, Nathan Cullen, and ministry staff. We're also exploring other advocacy avenues and options, as we know there are many sectors competing for funds, but we also know we have a compelling case.

Over the past 2 years, we've learned more about government relations and gained a better understanding of what is really required to achieve improved provincial funding for public libraries. We have also had some successes. In 2021 libraries received one-time funding of \$3 million for digital improvements, and most recently in 2022 libraries received one-time funding of \$8 million for covid relief and recovery. This most recent funding was in response to a case for one-time funding that the BC Public Library Partners put forward, working with the Public Libraries Branch to advocate for library funding as communities strive to recover from the impacts of covid, and, as Beth said, reflects the work of many advocates and stakeholders.

We are proud of those successes and their impact on libraries, but we know that this kind of one-time funding is not a permanent solution. As Kevin said to the Select Standing Committee this year about the one-time funding, "These funds are a very welcome respite from what has been, for many of our members, an ongoing annual exercise in belt-tightening, in looking for more efficiencies where none exist — because of previous rounds of belt-tightening and, in too many cases, cuts to programs and services."

You will note we've shifted our messaging to highlight that, while libraries are incredible value for money, the funding they are receiving is not enough, and that is having a negative impact on libraries and their communities. We have shifted from "libraries are doing more with less" to "libraries are having to make difficult cuts and reductions in service but can and will do more with more".

All the BC Public Library Partners are immensely grateful to all the people in the library sector who do amazing work throughout BC. While we do formal advocacy, none of that would be possible without the daily impact libraries have on the lives of the people in their communities.

5.2.1. Executive Director's & Staff Reports (Kevin Millsip, Co-op Staff)

5.2.2. Annual Report (written, included in agenda package)

Kevin Millsip thanked everyone for attending the 3rd AGM via video conference. We've heard from many members that this method facilitates participation. Kevin expressed thanks to staff, Board, and members for working with us.

Co-op managers Tami Setala, Sharon Herbert, Scott Leslie, Daniella Levy-Pinto, and Ayesha Ali provided verbal updates for their respective service areas

5.2.3. Verbal Strategic Planning update

Kevin provided updates on the Co-op's strategic planning initiatives, including the member engagement strategy.

6. Financial matters:

- 6.1. FY21/22 Audited Financial Statements, for information (Lenora Lee, KPMG) - *see separate attachment*

Lenora reviewed highlights from KPMG's report

- 6.2. Appointment of the auditor (KPMG) for FY 22/23, *motion for approval*

Moved by: Deb Hutchison Koep; Seconded by: Dawna Turcotte

Carried – Unanimous

- 6.3. FY22/23 working budget, for information –

7. Governance matters:

- 7.1. Appointment of Board of Directors

- 7.1.1. Introduction of nominee Kevin Stranack and brief comments

Kevin Stranack, Director of Operations, Public Knowledge Project, Simon Fraser University introduced himself

- 7.1.2. Declaration of Acclamation of Nominee to the Board: Kevin Stranack

8. Recognition of Service

- 8.1. Dana McFarland – Beth thanked Dana for her service to the Board. Dana joined the Board in 2016 and served as Board Chair from 2018 to 2020. Dana also served on BC Public Library Partners. We've appreciated Dana's

thoughtfulness and her insights and that her approach to her role on the Board was driven by values. In recognition of her service, the Board presented Dana with a gift certificate and donation to the Nanaimo Pottery Store as well as one of the rare Co-op K-way jackets.

8.2. Shirley Lew - Beth welcomed Shirley Lew as Incoming Board Chair.

Shirley is looking forward to working with the Board and with Deb Hutchison Koep as vice chair. Shirley expressed thanks to Beth for her leadership as Chair, noting that she has led thoughtfully, particularly around EDI and member engagement initiatives and in supporting everyone in Partners. Beth has been a steady and calm presence leading the Board and supporting Co-op staff, exemplifying values-based leadership, coupled with concrete action.

9. Closing Remarks

- 9.1. Beth thanked everyone for participating today, noting that BCLC occupies a unique space in the community as a member-owned and community-driven initiative, it provides the resources and knowledge to investigate and create what is possible.

10. Adjournment – 11:51am Pacific



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual General Meeting - June 22, 2023

Submitted by:

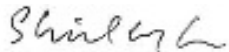
Kevin Millsip, executive director

Kevin.Millsip@bc.libraries.coop

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The Co-op is grateful for the ongoing support provided by the Province of BC through the Public Libraries Branch (PLB) of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Collaboratively, we've made significant progress on several files of mutual interest through this last fiscal year, including the Covid Relief & Recovery Projects, and we look forward to further advancing these initiatives in FY23/24. This past year has seen the strengthening of ongoing sector relationships through the BC Public Library Partners, and we are pleased to continue as an integral service partner with the PLB. We are future-focused and committed to providing a responsive service to our members. Our mission is to provide our members with the products and services they need to lead and succeed.

We'd like to acknowledge the financial contribution of the province as illustrated in the FY22/23 Government Letter of Expectation (GLE). The annual contribution allows the Co-op to build on its shared service delivery model and continue to seek equitable solutions for libraries of all sizes across the province. Our continual growth and improvements this year are highlighted throughout this report. We would also like to thank all in the sector, and in particular the members of the BC Public Library Partners, for the ongoing, and successful efforts to bring additional provincial monies into the sector. In particular, the recent infusion of \$45 million in one-time funding over 3 years is the result of years of efforts and strategic advocacy led by the Partners. This collective effort has benefited from wide-spread support across the sector, from patrons and supporters, from CUPE BC and the BC Federation of Labour, past and current Ministers responsible for public libraries and provincial government staff. This funding provides a solid financial footing for us to continue to advocate for permanent funding increases for the entire public library sector.



Shirley Lew, Board Chair

INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

The BC Libraries Cooperative (BCLC) was founded in 2009 in a collaboration between the Public Libraries Branch and B.C. public libraries. Today, with over 200 multi-type library members we provide services across Canada, and we continue to grow in both membership and range of services to take advantage of opportunities we see for our members, and in response to what our members tell us they need in their communities.

WHAT WE DO

As BCLC is a member-owned cooperative, we conduct our work based on shared values. We work and innovate for public benefit, to reduce costs and to extend service delivery across our membership. We do these things by:

- supporting consortium purchasing and economies of scale;
- saving money by making the most of open-source technology;
- driving innovation by designing services for inter-operability and open access;
- creating opportunities for members to work together;
- respecting our members' voices in the development of Co-op services;

- offering full-service support and training for every service.

COLLABORATION WITH BC PUBLIC LIBRARIES BRANCH

The Ministry continues to prioritize its relationship with the Co-op as we collectively focus on enhancing the ability of libraries to serve the needs of their community members. The strategic direction and connections the Ministry provides for our work are supported by a representative in an ex-officio capacity on the Co-op Board of Directors.

The Ministry fulfills its long-standing role enshrined in the *Library Act* to help extend and improve library services in B.C. by identifying gaps, needs and opportunities and working collaboratively with the Co-op to achieve better outcomes for public libraries and the patrons they serve. Through the Public Libraries Branch, the Ministry provides resources, joint project planning, and oversight of key initiatives such as the Covid Relief & Recovery and Francophone Affairs projects. The Co-op provides service area planning and expertise, ensures deliverables are met and reports at regular and ad hoc intervals to the Ministry.

COMMUNITY

We are proud to provide cost-efficient access to digital resources and promote accessible library services to our 200+ organizational members across Canada. The Co-op's membership includes public and post-secondary libraries, as well as K-12, government and special libraries in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon. The Co-op is also increasingly seen as a leader in the Co-operative sector through our work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of this report is to provide a summary overview of Co-op activities for the period April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023. The Co-op's work in the 22/23 year supported by the Province of BC was aimed at furthering the goals set out in [BC's Strategic Plan for Public Library Service](#). The Co-op is a key sectoral partner in supporting the province in its work to ensure equitable access to library services in BC and to building the capacity of our members to be able to serve people in their communities across the province.

The Co-op is also funded by the Federal Government, and the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia as well as the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and the Territory of Nunavut, to provide accessible reading services through NNELS.

We also want to thank the Co-operators, and The BC Alliance for Co-operative Development, for funding to support our business development, member engagement and EDI initiatives.

Some highlights from the year include:

- continuing to enhance our internal operational systems and processes;
- the refinement of financial and budgeting processes;
- implementation of several projects funded through provincial Covid Relief and Recovery Funding, including work on
- business planning work to update our service fees to help address the Co-op's financial sustainability;
- *undergoing our first EDI Audit and the development of a Member Engagement Strategy roadmap;*
- acting as the sectoral HUB along with the Public Libraries Accessibility Working Group, in regard to the application of the Accessible BC Act to public libraries;
- *continued enhancements to our various service lines which are outlined in the report;*
- *working with the BC Public Library Partners to advocate on behalf of the public library sector in BC;*
- essential upgrades to support secure service offerings, and member engagement, equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies for the organization's work.

On March 31, 2020, the BC Libraries Cooperative was awarded one-time funding in the amount of \$1.8M to support deliverables of the B.C. provincial strategic plan for public library services, through the Digital Resource Initiatives and Connectivity Project. The project continued into 22/23 and the focus remains on supporting equitable access and helping people, regardless of their circumstances, to participate in an increasingly digital world. Through systemwide collaboration and by leveraging innovative technologies, libraries are supported in offering services and resources beyond their physical walls. The project is now mature and substantially completed. It facilitates enhanced resource sharing and the development of a reliable and equitable digital infrastructure for library services. An increased demand for digital materials due to COVID-19 has also been supported through licensing work funded through Digital Initiatives Project funding.

In 2021, the province of BC announced \$8M in Covid Relief and Recovery Funding for public libraries. The Co-op received \$3.1M of that total, to be used for several projects, which are outlined below.

At the end of March 2023, the province of BC provided 14.5M to the Co-op in one-time end of year funding. This funding represents an increase to our annual operating funds from the province of \$481,000/yr. for the next 3 years, \$10M in funding for digital resources to be used over the next 3 years, and an additional \$25,000 year for the next 3 years to support the work of NNELS. We are now planning out the best use of these additional funds on internal co-op operations, staffing, and enhanced digital resource support for public libraries.

ANNUAL REPORT

LICENSING BUSINESS FUNCTION GROUP

The suite of licensed product offerings for BC public libraries and the Manitoba Licensing Consortium Inc. (MLCI) continued to diversify over the past year. There are currently over 100 products available to BC libraries, and approximately 80 products licensed on behalf of MLCI. As in past years, the licensing community came together to advocate on common issues such as user privacy, accessibility, and digital content licensing models. Sub-committees supported several key initiatives including the Annual eBook and Digital Collections Summit, Privacy Impact Assessment working group, the French-Language Selections Committee for Bibliothèque numérique de la Colombie-Britannique, as well as the ongoing OverDrive Selections Committee.

The Co-op continues to build relationships with adjacent efforts through national organizations like Consortia Canada, and informal alliances with other public library consortia across the country and elsewhere. Consortia Canada meets quarterly to discuss issues and license resources that are relevant across the country. The Co-op's Licensing Manager continued as Consortia Canada Chair for a third term. We met and regularly consulted with our public library consortia counterparts in other provinces on common issues.

We continued to receive support from Francophone Affairs in BC, which enabled us to launch a standalone French Language eBook collection, Bibliothèque numérique de la Colombie-Britannique (Cantook Station), in all BC Public Libraries. The collection launched in October 2022 with almost 5000 titles. A marketing campaign was launched that included a press release, and digital marketing materials for libraries to use.

Alina Gherman, of the New Westminster Public Library finished her term as Licensing Business Function Group Chair. Chris Reimer (North Vancouver City Library) will start as chair at the June 2023 AGM. The Licensing Business Function group met every two months to discuss products for consideration and share information about common issues related to licensing and digital resources.

SITKA'S EVERGREEN AND CO-OP SUPPORT

Sitka's Evergreen® community welcomed three new members from BC in the past year: Quest University, Coquitlam College, and Alexander College. The consortium includes over 100 multitype institutions (public libraries, public post-secondary, private post-secondary, childcare resource centres, K-12, government and special) at over 210 locations in BC, Manitoba, and Ontario. Sitka's Evergreen® serves 73% of BC's public

libraries and over 50% of Manitoba's public libraries, providing a familiar interface with a localized experience for community members.

Staff continued partnering with several large consortia and library systems to pool funds and prioritize Evergreen development, while providing a significant return on investment for our members. Again, this year the Co-op's investment of \$20,000 in software development for the Evergreen ILS leveraged into nearly \$200,000 of shared development demonstrating the power of community and open-source development.

Co-op staff also continue to actively contribute to the Evergreen community's Acquisitions, Cataloguing, Documentation and Developers' working groups, which meet several times a year. Staff routinely participate in bug squashing and testing cycles in the wider Evergreen community, as well as contributing information for bug reports, resolving bugs and contributing to the writing of new code.

Sitka's Evergreen® was upgraded to version 3.9 in August 2022, which included several features and enhancements including: a new public catalogue written in Bootstrap (an open-source framework for building responsive, accessible, and mobile-first websites), a new holdings editor, a consolidated patron notes interface, an updated interface for Acquisitions administration and a brand-new course reserves module.

Thirty-one Sitka training sessions were held for 280 participants during the 2022-23 fiscal year. Sessions included core suite training for staff at new member libraries as well as continuing training for all library staff, including overviews of new features and cataloguing and circulation refresher training.

The Cataloguing Working Group, a committee of the Sitka Business Function Group, continued work in the last year to decolonize description in the shared database. Progress in the past year includes creation of a draft Statement for libraries to share with library users, testing of scripts and drafting of workflow processes. The work to decolonize subject headings and metadata is in response to the [CFLA's Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Report](#) and specifically, the recommendation to "Decolonize Access and Classification by addressing the structural biases in existing schemes of knowledge organization and information retrieval arising from colonialism by committing to integrating Indigenous epistemologies into cataloguing praxis and knowledge management".

IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout 22/23 the Co-op Systems team continued to provide a robust, Canadian-hosted, computing environment for the Co-op and its members. This environment achieved 99.99% uptime and continues to offer a reliable and cost-effective choice for members.

Through our hosting environment, licensing authentication mechanisms that facilitate access and privacy of user information continue to improve. ezProxy support now also hosts instances for both post-secondary and public library members. Sitka provides unlimited SIP2 connections for Sitka libraries to authenticate Overdrive and other services. Significant progress was made in the past year to develop and implement API authentication to address privacy concerns with the SIP standard. Robust authentication promotes seamless user access and efficiencies resulting in improved usership and utility.

In addition to its support for all the Co-op's hosting environments, the Systems team also continued to provide many services both for Co-op staff and members. The Systems team also led an engagement with an identity management consulting firm to investigate the viability of validating patron account requests online against the BC Services card. The report was delivered in April 2023 and will inform future development work at the Coop.

LIBPRESS AND WEBSITES

The LibPress service saw a large overhaul of both technology and personnel. The service replaced the calendar system, expanded that service with a Community Calendar and Ticketing option, and overhauled the fee structure to better reflect the actual efforts and costs to support the system.

The Web team continued throughout 22/23 to provide high quality and cost-effective web development and hosting services for member libraries. In addition to the core service of LibPress, this also includes multiple standalone sites and applications both internally and for our membership. LibPress serves 54 BC libraries and library federations.

This LibPress Coordinator worked with the Service Lead to perform a full audit of the documentation and accounting for all member customers, resulting in much better overall service tracking. The technology underlying the main service theme was completely overhauled and rolled out behind the scenes to all libraries in the service. This will result in much easier long-term maintenance and easier changes by staff members for the look and feel of library websites. In addition, a major upgrade is now underway on the 3rd party calendar software that is used across the service. The LibPress team delivered three workshops throughout this period and hosted a community call that ushered in a new way of managing the service and its communications, leading to more transparency about service development plans and priorities.

ACCESSIBILITY AND NNELS

NNELS continues to support libraries in providing direct and integrated service for patrons with print disabilities through public libraries. Provincial funding from British Columbia leverages funding from other provinces and territories (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut), as well as the federal government. This significantly extends the impact of the work done by NNELS.

Some highlights in core content and production this year include production for all major literary prizes, such as the [BC and Yukon Book Prizes](#), [2023 Canada Reads](#), [BC Summer Reading Club 2022](#), [TD Summer Reading Club](#), [First Nations Communities Read 2022.](#), [First Nations Communities Read 2022.](#)

NNELS continued with the core work of adding titles in multiple accessible formats, of excellent quality to the collection: NNELS produced 33 braille titles, and 26 human-narrated audiobooks. This is critical to enhance accessibility for the NNELS collection and represents a significant increase in reading material and options for people with print disabilities in British Columbia. Thanks to funding from the Social Development Partnerships Program for Disability, NNELS purchased close to 6000 titles last fiscal year alone, which are in the process of having accessibility features added. NNELS is still in the process of reviewing and remediating the files.

NNELS continued providing accessible COVID-19 information: <https://nnels.ca/covid-19-accessible-information>. Thanks to federal funding, accessible instructions for rapid tests were created. The instructions are available in a variety of formats to accommodate user need and preference: <https://nnels.ca/covid-19-rapid-testing-instructions>. NNELS also produced several guides to create accessible documents including accessible hyperlinks in Word; accessible tables in Word; Using Headings in Word; changing font attributes in Apple Books, Libby, and Thorium; using inherent accessibility settings in Google docs; Voice typing in Google docs; adding alt text in Google docs; Using the Grackle Google Docs add on.

The core work of creating accessible books and documents for the repository has been instrumental in positioning NNELS' staff to support publishers in creating born accessible books. New resources continue to be added for [Accessible Publishing Resources for Publishers](#) on [AccessiblePublishing.ca](#). NNELS staff delivered an Image Description workshop for the SaskBooks Annual Conference, and a webinar on Digital Accessibility for a Museum Digital Publishing group NNELS staff also participated at BookNet Canada's "How to Make Accessible Ebooks: A Workshop for Beginners."

NNELS continued to participate and inform the creation of a new braille file type (EBRF) and continues to contribute to the new EPUB 3.3 Specification, and the EPUB Accessibility 1.1 Specification (which shares the Conformance and Discoverability Requirements for EPUB publications).

NNELS staffing policies continue to give priority to those living with print disabilities to ensure the service reflects the needs, values, and input of the community NNELS was created to service. In this way, NNELS is not only responsive but more importantly responsible and accountable to the public it serves. From 2022'23 FY there were four full time and seven part time staff with various types of print disabilities within the NNELS overall staff lineup. Their expertise is key to create awareness around accessibility, identify and eliminate barriers, and

empower librarians to provide accessible services, and content creators produce content that works for everyone, regardless of ability.

Over the last fiscal year, [Reading App Testing](#) was performed on a variety of reading platforms and applications for accessibility and usability. Accessibility reports posted on [accessiblepublishing.ca](#) include Simply E, Rocket Language, Freading, Libby, and NoveList.

NNELS, along with several stakeholders and partners, including CELA, Braille Literacy Canada, CNIB Beyond Print, Alternate Education Resources Ontario (AERO), Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB), and the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) held a series of webinars related to World Braille Day throughout January 2023. The four events addressed different areas relevant for both seasoned and new braille readers.

NNELS continues to work on the [Public Libraries Accessibility Resource Centre \(PLARC\) Project](#), co-led with CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access), in partnership with eBOUND, with funding from Canadian Heritage through the Canada Book Fund. The main goal is to build a consolidated nation-wide resource centre (website) for accessibility awareness and training in all areas of the library, for mainstream accessible library service. New and curated accessibility resources are being added to [accessiblelibraries.ca](#), and to [bibliosaccessibles.ca](#) (the French version). This project is directly informed by library staff from across the country, through an advisory committee, as well as by people with lived experience of disability. Funding continues for FY 2023-24.

NNELS presented at several conferences and delivered training workshops and webinars related to accessibility in libraries, braille, publishing, digital technologies for reading, and best practices for designing and developing products inclusive of people with print disabilities. In each presentation the work NNELS does is highlighted, thus raising NNELS' profile. Conferences include Atlantic Public Libraries Association, Stronger Together conference, Connecting the Dots, and the OLA Super Conference.

CO-OP OPERATIONS

Co-op Strategic Plan Progress

The Co-op continues to make progress on implementing our [Strategic Plan](#). The Public Libraries Branch continues to receive quarterly updates on the implementation of our Strategic Plan and GLE progress. Much of our progress on the plan is contained in other sections of this report. Briefly, and so as to avoid restating information in other parts of this report, four main themes from our strategic plan are covered:

1. **Boldly pursue member services** is being demonstrated through continual upgrades to services, including but not limited to the new LibPress add-on services to improve the memberships service experience.
2. **Help members be catalysts for healthy, resilient communities** is demonstrated through our work on climate action in the public library sector and our work supporting the sectors compliance with the Accessible BC Act. In 22/23 we have co-convened the Public Libraries Accessibility Working Group (PLAWG) to be the liaison body between the sector and the Disability Alliance of BC. This work is focused on supporting public libraries across BC coming into compliance with the act. PLAWG received \$150,000 from DABC, which is being used to hire a consultant to support public libraries in BC, in coming into compliance with the Act. We continue to support sector-wide professional development on mental health in collaboration with other library partners on advancement of wellness and mental health in the workplace, and by participating with the Digital BC group which is working to develop a single digital discovery portal for the intellectual, historical, and cultural record of the province for the people of BC.
3. **Model and advance library and cooperative values** is being advanced through:
 - our work with the BC Public Library Partners,
 - our federally directed work with CELA and Canadian Publishers advocating for more support for people with print disabilities,
 - promoting education on the cooperative model with our members and,

- our work on decolonizing the catalogue and through our upcoming EDI audit process.
4. **Strengthen the Co-op as an organization and partner** is demonstrated through:
- the creation of a three-year budget projection as part of the business planning work to forecast the resilience of the Co-op's financials and identify any gaps that exist.
 - investing in staff through a remote work network benefit, and
 - implementation of a new performance review process for Co-op staff.
 - The co-op has recently completed a member engagement process. The process, facilitated by cooperative consultants from GIA Consulting, has resulted in a number of recommendations on ways that the co-op can strive to enhance member engagement. Through the fall we will be prioritizing action items in the report.
 - Similarly, we have finished our first EDI audit with Commons Consulting. We anticipate receiving the audit and its recommendations by the time of the AGM.
 - We continue our work with the President's Group, and Accessible Employers, to support employment opportunities in BC for people with disabilities.
 - The Co-op continues to work with CELA to advocate to the Federal government in regard to the structure of the forthcoming Equitable Access to Reading Program (EARP). The creation of EARP was the result of several years of combined advocacy efforts between CELA and the Co-op with support from many allied and supportive organizations and individuals. We will continue our work in this area to ensure federal funding for this essential work.

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS & EVALUATION

The Co-op continues to work in partnership with the BCLA (British Columbia Library Association) and InterLINK on two sector wide projects:

- i. the development of engagement and capacity activities for the sector regarding climate action. During the 22/23 the sector first climate week was organized and the BCLA now has a dedicated committee focused on advancing the work of climate awareness and education across the sector.
- ii. The Co-op is a member of the President's Group, which provides advice to the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction on ways to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is this relationship that led to the Co-op being approached to act as the sectoral HUB for public libraries, in relation to the Accessible BC Act.

COVID RELIEF & RECOVERY FUNDING

The Co-op began the implementation of the Covid Relief & Recovery project (CRRF). The BC Ministry of Education allocated \$3.1 million in one-time funding through the Co-op to support several initiatives over a three-year period. Work on these initiatives is well underway.

As part of the CRRF project, from January to the end of February 2023, Co-op staff consulted with experts at Equinox Open Library Initiative (EOLI) to provide the Co-op with a detailed technical document to help Co-op staff understand the technical and skills requirements to implement multi-tenancy. Based on this technical document, Co-op staff will hold planning meetings this spring to determine if there is a business case to build a multi-tenant environment (i.e., to provide hosting for multiple stand-alone Evergreen libraries outside of the current Sitka consortia offering). In late February, Co-op staff had a kick-off call with consultants from EOLI to develop technical specifications for two projects which will improve privacy in the Evergreen ILS. Consultations on these projects will continue into April.

Licensing will support access to the products purchased under the CRRF Project. Work towards eBook and Audiobook queue relief is also underway.

Thanks to CRRF from British Columbia, NNELS is in early stages of the "Accessibility and Diversity of Reading Needs: outreach and awareness for library staff" project. The objective is to empower library staff across BC to better serve readers with print disabilities in their communities, by helping them to understand the current

landscape of accessibility, assistive technologies, and a diversity of reading needs. A job description and posting for an Outreach and Communications Coordinator has been drafted, and the hiring process will begin in March, for the role to start in April 2023.

LOOKING AHEAD AND WRAP UP

The enhancement funding from the province of BC, along with other financial sustainability work at the Co-op, will put us on a solid financial footing for the next few years. During the 23/24 fiscal year Co-op staff will add to the business planning work done this year and continue to conduct service valuations and we will continue to examine the overall fee structure for Sitka. We will be implementing some new initiatives supported by the provincial government's end of year enhancement funding, continuing our sectoral work through the Public Library Accessible Working Group, and the BC Public Library Partners, and begin to implement

These initiatives will enhance our communications, member engagement and business development processes.

The Co-op Accessibility Committee has a remediation work plan for the year involving ensuring the accessibility of all internal Co-op documentation as well as anything member-facing on our websites. During the 23/24 fiscal year the Co-op will also implement recommendations coming out of our member engagement exploration process and will be finalizing work as part of an Equity Diversity and Inclusion audit of the organization and our operations.

With a positive shift to our funding situation for the next 3 years, the Co-op looks forward to deepening our work on service valuation, financial processes, and enhanced service for members, while providing support to our members through enhanced resources available for digital resources. We will also continue our advocacy efforts on various fronts, to seek permanent increases in public library funding.