



BCLibraries
COOPERATIVE

Annual General Meeting - Thursday, June 20, 2024

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:

i. Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81235176939?pwd=RIVpMk1KM2c3WStVT3Nzakd0Y0RHQT09>

Meeting ID: 812 3517 6939

Passcode: 079653

or

ii. One tap mobile

+12042727920,,81235176939# Canada

+14388097799,,81235176939# Canada

or

iii. Dial by your location

- +1 204 272 7920 Canada
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Meeting ID: 812 3517 6939

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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 2023 Annual General Meeting (attached), *motion for approval*
5. Reports for information:
 - a. Verbal Chair's Report (Shirley Lew)
 - b. BC Public Library Partners Update (Jessica Aldred, executive director, ABCPLD)
 - c. Executive Director's & Staff Reports (Kevin Millsip, executive director, BC Libraries Co-operative and Co-op staff)
 - i. Annual Report (attached)
 - ii. Verbal Strategic Planning update
6. Financial matters:
 - a. FY23/24 Audited Financial Statements, (*attached*) for information (Lenora Lee, KPMG)
 - b. Appointment of the auditor (KPMG) for FY 24/25, *motion for approval*
 - c. FY24/25 working budget, (*attached*) for information
7. Governance matters:
 - a. Appointment of Board of Directors
 - b. Election to the Board (1 vacancy by acclamation and 1 appointment)
 - c. Introduction of new Board members

8. Recognition of Service

a. Cari Lynn Gawletz and Kevin Stranack

9. Closing Remarks

10. Adjournment



DRAFT Minutes – 2023 Annual General Meeting

Thursday, June 22, 2023

Attendees

Member Delegates/Alternates: Emily Gunn, Alexander College; Rina Hadziev, British Columbia Library Association; Beth Davies, Burnaby Public Library; Gwenda Bryan, Camosun College Library; Anton Dounts, Cariboo Regional District Library; Chris Vriesema-Magnuson, College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC, Library Services; Dean Kelly, Fraser Valley Regional Library; Heather Evans-Cullen, Gibsons & District Public Library; Heidi Rees, Government of Manitoba Legislative Library; Cari Lynn Gawletz, Grand Forks Public Library; Laura Beswick, Island Link Library Federation; Melanie Reaveley, Kootenay Library Federation; Toby Mueller, Lillooet and Area Public Library Association; David Christensen, Manitoba Public Library Services; Adam Farrell, New Westminster Public Library; Thomas Knutson, North Central Library Federation; Thomas Knutson, North East Library Federation; Deb Huchison Koep, North Vancouver City Library; Jacqueline van Dyk, North Vancouver District Library; Alison Moss, Parkland Regional Library; Heather Hadley, Port Moody Public Library; Chris Field, Prince George Public Library; Jackie Kozak, Radium Hot Springs Public Library; Charlene Tweed, Red River College Polytechnic Library; Susan Walters, Richmond Public Library; Teresa Wright Eastley, Saskatchewan Provincial Library and Literacy Office; Rylie Mawhinney, Surrey Public Library; Shirley Lew, Vancouver Community College; Dana McFarland, Vancouver Island University Library; Zoey Peterson, Vancouver Public Library; Mikale Fenton, Whistler Public Library; Raegan Stewart, YMCA of Greater Vancouver - Child Care Resource & Referral;

Non-Voting: Noreen Ma, Burnaby Public Library; Mari Martin, Public Libraries Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, BC; Cindy Fu and Sabrina Meng, Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives; Cheryl Sinclair, University College of the North; David Alexander, Vancouver Island University.

Staff: Cimoan Atkins, Devon Bates, Christine Burns, Sharon Herbert, Kris Jorgensen, Kevin Millsip, Jennifer Pringle, David Ryland, Tama Setala, Christine Wallace

Guest: Lenora Lee (KPMG)

The meeting was recorded for minute-taking purposes only.

Minutes

1. **(10:30am Pacific)** Call to Order and Opening Remarks - (Shirley Lew, Chair) -
Quorum was noted (minimum 23 for Quorum; 33 registered voting Member Delegates/Alternates were in attendance)
2. Land Acknowledgement - Shirley
3. Agenda, *motion for approval*
 - a. Motion to approve the agenda *Moved by: Deb Hutchison Koep Seconded by: Adam Farrell Carried unanimously*
4. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting (attached), *motion for approval*
 - a. Motion to approve the 2022 AGM Minutes *Moved by: David Christensen Seconded by: Anton Dounts Carried unanimously*
5. Reports for information:
 - a. Verbal Chair's Report (Shirley Lew)

It's a privilege to offer some remarks and reflections on the past year on behalf of the BC Libraries Cooperative Board of Governors. It has been another extraordinary year for the Co-op. As we'll hear from the reports and business of our AGM today, we continue to adapt to a shifted and shifting world post-pandemic into a time marked by further uncertainty and disruption. Some of this disruption is necessary, as we take steps toward reconciliation and decolonization and to challenge power structures that enable racism, inequity, and exclusion. Other shifts feel destabilizing from climate disasters to political unrest to unfettered technological advancement that both hurt and aid us. In a time that feels bigger than we can grasp, it is more essential to stay connected and to work together collectively and cooperatively, as we do through the Coop. I'm happy to be part of this community and to be here with you today to share how the Coop and the Board have strived to do this work together.

It's impossible to reflect on the past year without starting with the historic and unprecedented announcement of \$45M of funding from the province for public libraries in BC. \$14.5M of this funding was directed to the Coop to support operations and shared service projects such as digital collections and NNELS. This announcement builds on the one-time \$8M of provincial Covid Relief and Recovery funding for public libraries, received last year. These funds are essential for the sector's sustainability. Equally important, these funding announcements are a recognition of the value libraries play in our communities in these critical and challenging times. This could not have happened without a long history of continued advocacy by so many in the sector, beginning with those who are doing the work on the ground in communities across the province. The key role Kevin Millsip has had at the BC Public Library Partners to make these funds possible needs to be named and recognized, as well as Deb Hutchison Koep, and Beth Davies before them, all of whom have represented the Co-op at the Partners table. A big

thank you to Mari Martin as well for her advocacy of the sector within the Ministry.

In terms of the Co-op and Board, we have spent the past year on initiatives in keeping with our strategic plan. We have completed work on a Member Engagement Strategy roadmap, on our first EDI Assessment and Audit, and continued focus on our financial and budgeting processes to ensure we have an accurate starting place to plan longer term financial sustainability. The year has also been marked by several projects funded through the provincial Covid Relief and Recovery funding. We will hear more about these initiatives later in the meeting. Our current focus is the wonderful challenge of planning the use of \$14.5M over the next three years to reinforce and advance our operations, technology infrastructure, and shared services for Coop members and the library community. We look forward to embarking on this planning in the coming months and sharing our progress throughout the year and at next year's AGM.

In some ways it feels the Co-op is at a nexus of a paradoxical time. The enormity of the provincial funding, coming at this very time for the Coop, cannot be underestimated or overly celebrated. This funding gives us a path to move forward on surer footing and a clearer sense of direction and scope. At the same time, we come out of the pandemic and into a time that is uncertain. The coming year for the Coop is paradoxically challenging and yet full of potential. I'll end with gratitude and sincere thanks to Coop management and staff who have worked hard and with tremendous commitment. Our members and the communities we serve are better as a result of their efforts.

Thank you, on behalf of the Board and members.

i. BC Public Library Partners Update - Susan Walters (ABCPLD)

Good morning, I am joining you today from Richmond, the ancestral territory of the hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəm̓ (hung – ka – me – num) speaking peoples. I am the Chair of the Association of BC Public Library Directors, who along with BCLTA, BCLA and the BCLC make up the BC Library Partners.

In 2022, the partners determined that the next step forward in our advocacy work would be to engage government relations consultants. As Shirley pointed out, while we have been very successful in one-time funding asks, the public library sector needs increased, sustained and consistent core funding.

To support this work, last spring/summer and into the fall, ABC reached out to our public libraries across the province and with the support of directors and their boards, raised approximately \$180k for the Strategic Initiatives Fund. This will support a 3-year contract with consultants.

The partners selected Earncliffe Strategies and within days of signing the contract in early 2023, we mobilized to put forward a year-end ask for an investment of \$48M over 3yrs; an increase of \$16M per year as the annual \$14M we receive has not shifted in over a decade. We were successful in receiving \$45M.

There's no slowing down, however. On June 12, the partners individually, but sequentially, presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, advocating for sustained funding of \$30M annually. We are also in the process of reviewing Earncliffe's Government Relations Strategy which will guide the work the partners and ultimately, our members do, ensuring that we speak with one voice and are consistent in our ask of government over the next several years.

And I would be remiss if I did not say thank you and acknowledge our Executive Directors – Kevin, Rina and until very recently, Leigh Anne – who have been instrumental in moving this important Library Partners work forward.

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

i. Annual Report (attached)

1. Co-op staff provided verbal updates on their respective services: Tami Setala (Licensing), Sharon Herbert (Sitka/Support), Kris Jorgenson / for Daniella Levy-Pinto (NNELS), Kevin Millsip / for Scott Leslie (SysOps & LibPress), Cimoan Atkins (Finance/Operations)

ii. Verbal Strategic Planning Update

Our strategic plan takes us to 2024 - now we started working on it in 2019, which after all of the events of the past 3 years, actually feels like a lifetime ago. That said, the overall objectives, the four core themes, and framework of the plan continue to guide our work and planning:

Staff report out to the board three times a year on our strategic planning progress, all of what's already been mentioned today by staff connect to our strategic plan, and I'll share are some additional items connected to the four core themes:

Boldly pursue member services is being done through:

- continual upgrades to services,
- the business planning work that Co-op staff are undertaking through 2023 and into 2024,
- the new projects being implemented with our Covid Relief and Recovery Funding from the province of BC.

Help members be catalysts for healthy resilient communities is being advanced through:

- our work supporting climate action efforts in the public library sector, which is now ably being led through a committee of the BCLA,
- supporting sector wide professional development on mental health and wellness in collaboration with InterLINK and the BCLA,
- participating with the Digital BC group on advancement of that concept,

- the purchase of annual carbon offsets for the Co-ops greenhouse gas emissions,
- the Co-op remaining a certified living wage employer.

Model and advance library and cooperative values is being pursued through:

- The successful and ongoing collaboration at the BC Public Library Partners table, to increase funding for the sector in BC – Susanne’s comments - we saw the results of that work this year and hope to so more success in future years,
- our federally directed work with CELA and the Canadian Publishers Association, advocating for more support for people with print disabilities led to the creation of the new federal Equitable Access to Reading Program – details of which we hope to know more about in the fall,
- promoting education on the cooperative model with our members,
- our work ongoing work on decolonizing the catalogue,
- an annual contribution to an open-source technology development fund
- Working with the Public Library Accessibility Working Group to support public libraries in BC in their work to come into compliance with the Accessible BC Act. A special thanks to the Disability Alliance of BC for funding to engage with consultants at Untapped Accessibility. Those support offerings are now taking place
- establishing the co-op's own accessibility committee and developing an accessibility policy

Strengthen the Co-op as an organization and partner through:

- the continuation of our operations related work on finances and budget reporting, role to oversee budget, business and finance for the Co-op,
- building a 3-4 year rolling budget cycle for Co-op operations. And now thanks to enhanced support from the provincial government, we will be building a 4–5-year budget cycle mapping out additional investments in staff and internal capacities at the co-op,
- working with the Commons Consulting to conduct the Co-op’s first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion audit,
- Working with GIA consulting, to develop a member engagement strategy for the organization. I should note that both processes were supported with funding from the Cooperators and the BC Alliance for Cooperative Development.
- Implementing a recurring Home Office Allowance for staff, to help defray peoples home office costs,

As you can see, there’s a lot at play - and the year ahead will continue to be a busy time at the co-op. As we begin to implement recommendations from our various planning efforts.

Ok, enough from me - I’ll finish where i began, thanking our board, all of our staff and our members, for being along on this journey with us, and most importantly, for doing the great work that you, in supporting

healthy and equitable communities across the country. And a very special thanks to Sharon and David, for organizing this AGM.

6. Financial matters:

- a. FY22/23 Audited Financial Statements, (attached) for information (Lenora Lee, KPMG) - Lenora Lee provided a verbal update
- b. Appointment of the auditor (KPMG) for FY 23/24, *motion for approval*
 - i. Motion to approve appointment of the auditor (KPMG) for FY23/24
Moved by: Beth Davies Seconded by Deb Hutchison Koep Carried unanimously
- 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
– Jacqueline and Noreen introduced themselves to members

8. Recognition of Service (Shirley)

- a. Beth Davies and Anna Babluck – Shirley acknowledged the contributions made to the Board by both Beth and Anna as they both stepped down from their service at this AGM.

9. Closing Remarks (Shirley)

10. Adjournment – 11:40am Pacific



BCLibraries
COOPERATIVE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual General Meeting - June 20, 2024

Submitted by:

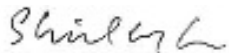
Kevin Millsip, executive director

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. In addition, we want to thank the various funders of NNELS, as well as our members, for your continued engagement and support of the Co-op's work. Collaboratively, we have 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 the fiscal year 24/25. 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 responsive services to our members. Our mission is to provide our members with the products and services they need to lead and succeed.

We would like to acknowledge the financial contribution of the province as illustrated in the FY23/24 Government Letter of Expectation (GLE). The 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.



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. With over 200 library members we provide services across Canada, helping libraries help people. We continue to grow in both membership and range of services, seizing opportunities we see for our members, and respond directly to member feedback regarding needs in the community.

WHAT WE DO

As BCLC is a member-owned cooperative, we conduct our work based on shared values. We work and innovate for the public's 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 PUBLIC LIBRARIES BRANCH

The BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs continues to prioritize its relationship with the Co-op as we focus on enhancing the ability of libraries to serve their community members' needs. 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 over two hundred organizational members across Canada. The Co-op's community-led communication network continues to improve and grow as our members' needs evolve. The Co-op's BC-based members include public library systems in the province. We continue to take a thoughtful and engaged approach in understanding the specific needs of our diverse member communities. Our growing membership outside of BC includes Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report's intent is to provide a summary overview of Co-op activities for the period April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. The Co-op's work in the 23/24 year supported by the Province of BC was aimed at furthering the goals set out in [BC's Strategic Plan for Public Library Service. In addition, the Co-op has been working to enhance accessibility across the country through NNELS, through the Public Library Accessible Resource Centre and via the BC Public Library Accessible Working Group.](#)

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.

Highlights from the year include:

Operations

- continuing to enhance our internal operational systems and processes;
- the refinement of financial and budgeting processes;
- multi-year budget planning and forecasting;
- business planning work to update our service fees to help address the Co-op's financial sustainability;

Services

- continued implementation of connectivity and licensing work from the Digital Initiatives Project and Covid Relief and Recovery one-time funding from the province;
- acting as the sectoral HUB along with the Public Libraries Accessibility Working Group (PLAWG), regarding the application of the Accessible BC Act to public libraries;
- essential upgrades to support secure service offerings, and member engagement, equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies for the organization's work.

A \$4.5M enhancement grant that was awarded March 29, 2023, to support the public library system over three years has allowed us to conduct multi-year budgeting and forecasting to better anticipate longer-term financial needs and to allocate resources accordingly. In FY 23/24, the funding has provided the opportunity to hire a Junior Evergreen Specialist to support the SITKA service line, a Communications and Engagement Coordinator to support the Co-op's core communications and membership engagement efforts, support an indefinite term employment for the LibPress Coordinator, and to extend the limited term agreement of our Acting Operations Manager to lead various one-time strategic business projects throughout the summer.

Spending for a one-time \$300K grant that was awarded to support business planning, member engagement, and strategic planning will begin in FY 24/25. We are currently interviewing consultants, with the proposal to support work on a valuation report, succession planning, and a financial health check to review the Co-op's current financial systems and processes to ensure they continue to meet industry standards and support the Co-op's evolving needs. These projects are scheduled to begin in April and projected to go until the end of August 2024.

Project planning for the \$10M Digital Resources grant awarded for the delivery, coordination, and enhancement of digital resources/electronic collections (licensing) is well underway, with a recent purchase of a ConsortiaManager license. Planning will continue into fiscal year 24/25 and over the next three to four years.

The Co-op received a \$450K grant at the end of FY 22/23 to help support the core activities of the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS) for three years (2023-2025). This grant along with core Co-op funding will allow NNELS to continue to build its capacity by employing persons with lived experience, be an industry leader, and provide core services to the jurisdictions that it supports.

LINKED REPORTS AND GUIDES

- [BC's Strategic Plan for Public Library Service](#)
- [BC Libraries Cooperative Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#)

ANNUAL SERVICES 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 80 products licensed on behalf of MLCI. New products introduced this year include Kanopy+ streaming video packages, Blackstone Unlimited audio and Comics Plus. The Licensing Business Function Group collaborated to create a Vendor Product Proposal form focused on screening vendors for privacy legislation compliance as well as streamlining the PIA process for both libraries and vendors. Efforts are underway to enhance this form to include accessibility questions, to assess new vendor platforms and content for accessibility. Every year various subcommittees are convened to advise on key LBFG initiatives such as the Vendor Proposal Form, The Enhancement Fund Consultation Group, the Annual eBook and Digital Collections Summit, and the ongoing OverDrive Selections Committee. The latter is responsible for selecting content for the shared Library2go collection and advising on collection policies.

The COVID Relief funds continued to pay for LinkedIn Learning and OverDrive Magazines for all 71 libraries in the province. Additionally, an OverDrive hold queue relief credit was issued to help libraries manage the increased demand on digital collections.

The first round of consultations on the digital Enhancement funds were completed in February 2024. A sub-committee of the Licensing Business Function group put together a survey to determine which subscription resources should become licensed. Of the 51 (out of 71) libraries that responded, over 85% wanted to continue with OverDrive Magazines and OverDrive hold queue relief. Almost 70% voted to continue with LinkedIn Learning. These three resources will be covered by the Enhancement fund through to the end of 2025. The next round of Enhancement fund consultations will look at long term strategic projects to sustain improved access to digital content through BC's Public Libraries.

As an active member of Consortia Canada, the Co-op contributes to Canada-wide licensing advocacy initiatives and national licenses. Consortia Canada meets quarterly to discuss issues and license resources that are relevant across the country. The Co-op's Licensing Manager completed her third term as Consortia Canada Chair. Through Consortia Canada, the Co-op opted into the license for ConsortiaManager, an electronic resources management tool designed specifically for the consortium workflow. ConsortiaManager

includes a library interface that will help libraries access license information quickly and easily. Implementation and data migration is underway and a full launch of ConsortiaManager is expected late summer/early fall 2024.

We received ongoing support from Francophone Affairs which enabled us to continue to build 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 and now has over 5,500 titles. This year we promoted the collection for Francophonie Day on March 20th and participated in the Canada-wide promotional event Un Livrel / One eRead Canada.

Chris Reimer of North Vancouver City Library started as chair at the June 2023 AGM. The Licensing Business Function group met every two months to discuss potential new products and to discuss common issues and shared challenges related to licensing and digital resources.

SITKA'S EVERGREEN AND CO-OP SUPPORT

Sitka Growth

Sitka's Evergreen® serves 73% of BC's public libraries and over 50% of Manitoba public libraries, providing a familiar interface with a localized experience for community members. 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.

In the past year, there was significant interest in Sitka from BC childcare resource centres, and we welcomed two new centres this spring: Kamloops YMCA-YWCA and Sea-to-Sky Child Care Resource and Referral, joining the 6 childcare resource centres and literacy centres that already participate in Sitka.

Evergreen Community and Software Development

Co-op staff maintained the partnership with the Evergreen Community Development Initiative (ECDI) - a group of several large consortia and public/academic library systems across North America - 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 (Integrated Library System) leveraged nearly \$200,000 of pooled development, demonstrating the power of community and open-source development. Co-op staff also participated in decisions to select a new host organization for the ECDI and will participate in the ECDI's strategic plan and hiring of a new ECDI coordinator later this year.

Co-op staff also work with the wider Evergreen Development community to improve the user experience for library staff and residents using the service. Accessibility was a key focus area for the community in the past year and Covid-19 Relief and Recovery funding from the BC government enabled accessibility testing of Sitka's public-facing catalogue by NNELS testers. This work dovetailed nicely with the Evergreen Project Board's commissioning of a VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) review and report in Fall 2023. While the Evergreen software is largely compliant with current accessibility standards, both formal review processes identified areas where the software could be more

accessible. Funding from the BC government was provided this spring to fund resolution of high and medium priority accessibility improvements, which we expect to be included in Sitka's Spring 2025 upgrade.

Software development to improve security in Sitka's Reports were also enabled by the province's COVID-19 Relief and Recovery funding. We expect these improvements to be available with the next upgrade to Sitka's Evergreen in Spring 2025.

In addition to working across several Evergreen community committees to improve specific components of the software and documentation, as well as to guide development in meeting user needs, 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 3.11 in October 2023, which included several enhancements to streamline workflows and improve efficiencies.

Co-op staff also participated in The Evergreen Project's strategic planning community discussions, as well as discussions regarding potential membership models, with the strategic plan and membership model recommendations expected to be shared with the wider Evergreen community by Fall 2025.

Library Support and Training

In 2023, BC Libraries and the Co-op received one-time funding from the BC Government to enable "modernized technology, enhanced programs and services, and better access to information". As a result of this funding, the Co-op was able to hire a second Sitka software developer for a limited 3-year term, with a focus on supporting libraries that wish to use Sitka's database to securely authenticate patrons or share specific resource availability data for patron empowering services such as streaming video, charging stations and remote pick-up lockers. The addition of this new role has allowed these services connectors to be developed more rapidly than in previous years, particularly in a time when we have seen increased growth in public libraries requiring these services.

Co-op staff offer ongoing training sessions to member library staff throughout the year. Twenty-one training sessions were held for 195 participants in 2023. Sessions included core suite training for staff at new member libraries, as well as continuing training for all library staff, a custom interest session at the Beyond Hope library conference, as well as two joint Sitka/LibPress training sessions on accessibility.

Sitka Community (Sitka Business Function Group)

The Cataloguing Working Group, a sub-committee of the Sitka Business Function Group, continued work in the past year to decolonize description in the shared database. Progress in the past year includes continued testing of scripts to change specific headings and drafting of workflow processes. The latest report on the committee's work, updates and other resources are available on the Co-op website:

<https://bc.libraries.coop/support/sitka/decolonizing-description/>

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."

We greatly appreciate David Christensen's (Manitoba Public Library Services Branch) support in serving as Chair of the Sitka Business Function Group for the past two years.

IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout 23/24 the Co-op Systems team maintained 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. A major undertaking that began in 23/24 (and will complete in 24/25) is transitioning from their current co-location facility to leased servers in the cloud. Extensive research was undertaken by systems staff to justify this move, which was approved by the board initially in November 2023 and formally by vote in January 2024. Co-op staff then embarked on a lengthy planning process to migrate all servers to a new environment. This move started in February 2024 and will be completed in November 2024, with the co-location hardware being fully dismantled and decommissioned by Feb 2025. This represents a *major* change to the Co-op and will occupy a good portion of staff time in the current fiscal year.

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 to 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. The Co-op explored the use of the BC Services Card for online identity verification by libraries. There is a potential path forward on this, but implementation was not feasible in 23/24, and unlikely in 24/25 because of the lack of capacity in the Sitka team.

Systems staff piloted a new project management tool which other team members at the Co-op are now exploring. In addition, systems staff deployed a new password management tool that will increase security and reduce the amount of password re-use, in addition to providing a mechanism for Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) for staff not able to use personal handheld devices for this purpose. This password manager is slowly being rolled into other parts of the organization.

In addition to its support for all the Co-op's hosting environments, the Systems team also provides many services both for Co-op staff and members, including mail services, mailing lists, phones services for federations, and all internal tooling for Co-op staff. A major initiative in 23/24 was the Co-op's adoption of Microsoft 365 for its "office" computing needs, which provides a fully accessible environment that meets FOIPPA requirements.

Finally, the systems team oversaw the management of the Open-Source Contribution Fund through which, for the 9th year running, the Co-op and its members were able to contribute back some funds to open-source projects that materially support the Co-op's operations but for whom contributions in code or in kind are not possible.

LIBPRESS AND WEBSITES

The LibPress service provides ongoing high quality website development and hosting services for 54 BC libraries and federations. The service received a complete accessibility audit (performed by the NNELS accessibility testers) and subsequent remediation to bring the core service up to modern web accessibility standards. The major undertaking in 23/24, underwritten by the province through the Covid Recovery Funds, was an “overhaul” project that impacted ALL BC member users. Driven by the specific needs of each member library, the overhaul included everything from graphic redevelopment, to major changes to site usability and information architecture, to individual staff training. In addition, all libraries were given instruction and resources to render the page content they maintain accessible. All of this was performed in a “concierge model” by the LibPress Coordinator and resulted in both a massive improvement to the sites themselves, a better educated set of users, and stronger relations between the Co-op and members on this service.

This year saw the roll out of the new fee structure, which was changed to be both more equitable for smaller libraries and more sustainable for the Co-op. In addition to the hosting, maintenance, and support of the LibPress sites the coordinator delivered 5 service-wide workshops and numerous one-on-one retraining sessions. In addition, team members supported non-LibPress sites from individual libraries and most of the BC partner organizations and other national library groups.

Finally, in addition to the LibPress accessibility audit and remediation, team members worked with the NNELS testers to audit both the central Coop website and the Library Toolshed, and then to remediate both up to modern accessibility standards.

NNELS (National Network for Equitable Library Service)

The [National Network for Equitable Library Service](#) marked the [tenth anniversary](#) since its inception. In addition to providing accessible library services, including producing alternate formats of on-demand titles requested by library patrons, NNELS has developed expertise in accessible reading and publishing in Canada.

NNELS continues to support the provision of direct and integrated services for patrons with print disabilities through public libraries in British Columbia. Provincial funding from British Columbia leverages funding from other jurisdictions, including other provinces and territories, as well as the federal government. While federal funding for NNELS ended on March 31, 2024, we are still working on creating content for our users – the core-funded work of NNELS continues; NNELS is applying to the new [Equitable Access to Reading Program](#) (EARP), with work expected to begin in late 2024.

Thanks to federal funding, NNELS added over 2000 titles to the collection in 2023-24 after converting them to accessible formats, including human-narrated audiobooks and transcribed braille titles. NNELS partnered with Penguin Random House to produce two new titles from Jamie Oliver that were [simultaneously released in braille](#), complete with image descriptions. All of this represents a significant increase in reading material and options for people with print disabilities in British Columbia and across the country.

Other highlights regarding content and production include all major literary prizes, such as the [Governor General's Literary Awards 2023](#), [Red Cedar Awards 2023/24](#), [BC Summer Reading Club 2023](#), [First Nations Communities Read 2023](#), and [CBC Canada Reads 2024](#).

NNELS continued to improve searchability of the collection by enhancing the metadata—over 3000 titles were updated with NNELS genre terms in the fiscal year 2023-24. NNELS has also been adding accessibility metadata to files that did not have it, enabling users to filter search results by accessibility feature.

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 [TumbleBooks](#), [KANOPY](#) and more.

NNELS also performed accessibility assessments of several services provided by BCLC (LibPress, Toolshed, Sitka's Evergreen Online Public Access Catalogue and the BCLC website) and made recommendations for improvement.

A variety of instructions and [tutorials for downloading and reading content](#) from NNELS with different assistive technologies were created and added to the NNELS website.

NNELS continued contributing to the Public Library 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 third stage of the project concluded in March 2024; an outcome of the entire project was the creation of a consolidated nationwide resource centre (website) for accessibility awareness and training in all areas of the library for mainstream accessible library service. A variety of new and curated accessibility resources were added to the website, including [learning paths to get library staff learning about accessibility](#) and an overview resource of how accessibility can be incorporated into the process of [procuring licensed digital resources](#). This project has been directly informed by library staff from across the country, through an advisory committee, as well as by people with lived experience of disability.

The core work of creating accessible books and documents for the repository has enabled NNELS to support publishers in creating digital books that are “born accessible” – i.e. accessibility features like headings and image descriptions are built in from the start. In January 2024, NNELS successfully hosted the 2024 Accessible Publishing Summit, which brought together stakeholders from the book publishing and distribution chains, fostering discussions on creating an accessible reading environment. Comprehensive [summit report, guidelines, and tester demonstrations](#) are now available on the [Accessible Publishing website](#).

Thanks to Covid Relief and Recovery Funding from British Columbia, NNELS is undertaking an outreach project to promote the service and provide support to BC public libraries. Megan Sellmer is the new Outreach Coordinator at NNELS (internal hire).

CO-OP OPERATIONS

Co-op Strategic Plan progress

The Co-op continues to make progress on implementing our [Strategic Plan](#). Much of our progress on the plan is contained in other sections of this report. Briefly, and 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 established by:
 - continual upgrades to services, including but not limited to the new LibPress add-on services to improve the memberships service experience.
 - the Co-op Accessibility Committee produces checklists to assist with testing, remediation and creation of documents and websites. It also continued to guide internal processes to enhance accessibility across the Co-op and beyond.
2. Help members be catalysts for healthy, resilient communities is demonstrated through:
 - our work supporting the sector's compliance with the Accessible BC Act. In 22/23, we co-convened the Public Libraries Accessibility Working Group 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.
 - continued support of sector-wide professional development on mental health in collaboration with other library partners on advancement of wellness and mental health in the workplace.
 - 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 illustrated by:
 - our work with the BC Public Library Partners to advocate for increased BC provincial for the public library sector,
 - 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 (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) audit process.
 - **The Co-op is a member of the President's Group**, which provides advice to the Minister of Social Development and Poverty on ways to **enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities**. This relationship led to the Co-op being approached to act as the sectoral HUB in relation to the Accessible BC Act.
4. **Strengthen the Co-op as an organization and partner** is supported 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.

Covid Relief and Recovery Funding

The Co-op began the implementation of the Covid Relief & Recovery project (CRRF) in FY 22/23. The BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs allocated \$3.1 million in one-time funding through the Co-op to support several initiatives over a three-year period with work on these initiatives ongoing. There are still planned expenditures that have not yet actualized for the FY 23/24, and changes to how the funding was allocated in FY 22/23 but with a current year two spend at \$1,014,213, there is \$1,720,239 remaining to disperse in the final year of this funding, as illustrated on table 1.

PROJECT YEAR		
YR 1 – 2022/2023	Actual	\$365,548
YR 2 – 2023/2024	Actual	\$1,014,213
YR 3 – 2024/2025	Forecast	\$1,720,239

TABLE 1

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

The funding continues to support and provide public library network connectivity and home office allowance for our core Co-op staff. The funding also supports accessibility testing across service lines by NNELS testers.

Covid Relief and Recovery Funding (CRRF) from British Columbia has enabled NNELS to undertake the "Accessibility and Diversity of Reading Needs: outreach and awareness for library staff" project in the province, to empower library staff to serve readers with print disabilities in their communities. Through an increased outreach via social media and direct communications about accessible titles, resources and assistive technologies, library staff are obtaining information to serve their users. This project is being re-envisioned and scoped in spring 2024.

LOOKING AHEAD AND WRAP UP

Going into the 24/25 fiscal year, Co-op staff will work to add to the business planning efforts that started in 23/24 including work towards developing our new strategic plan with our current plan expiring in 2024. As part of one-time funds, and through the lens of our strategic plan, the Co-op is conducting a service valuation which will be supported internally through the new Communications and Membership Engagement Coordinator role and has engaged a consultant to assist the Co-op report on the qualitative and quantitative value brought to its membership. We are putting in place succession plans for key co-op roles and undergoing a financial systems review.

With a positive shift to the Co-op's funding situation for the next few years, the Co-op looks forward to deepening its work on enhancing services for our membership, renewing our commitment and leadership of accessibility initiatives, improving our financial function and

processes, while providing support to public libraries through enhanced offerings available for digital resources.