



building communities together

2025 Business Plan Library (1660)

Anton Dounts, Manager of Library Services

Working in partnership with communities, large and small, to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically and environmentally desirable region.

Department/Function Services

The Cariboo Regional District Library (CRDL) was established in 1994, after the agreement between the Thompson Nicola Regional District and the Cariboo Regional District for the provision of public library service to the residents of both regions came to an end.

As defined by the Library Act, the Cariboo Regional District Library is an integrated public library system that provides library services, via its fifteen branches, to residents of the Cariboo Regional District (CRD). With their library card, residents may, in addition to borrowing materials from any Cariboo branch, visit and borrow materials from any public library in BC through the BC OneCard agreement. Furthermore, cardholders from other BC public libraries may visit and borrow materials from any CRD Library Branch and return them to any library in the province.

The CRDL's primary public services include: region-wide lending of print, audio, and video materials; special "Library of Things" collections of hobby-specific items (such as sports equipment, radon detectors, activity kits for people with cognitive challenges, etc.); online lending of e-books and e-audiobooks; free access to a variety of digital resources available via the library's website; resource sharing with other libraries; provision of free internet access via public internet stations and wireless local area networks (Wi-Fi); free meeting space for nonprofit groups; a variety of programming for children and special interest programming for adults, some of which involve collaborating with other organizations. Centralized technical services for library branches include maintaining of the website, ordering, cataloguing, processing and distributing materials, and interlibrary loan support.

The library was established by the Cariboo Regional District Library – Local Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2466. Bylaw No. 2466 stipulates that the requisition for the

service cannot exceed the greater of \$1,574,604 or a tax rate of \$0.81508/\$1,000 of assessment. Property owners in rural areas pay based on improvement assessment only, whereas those in municipalities pay on land and improvements.

All directors on the Cariboo Regional District Board are responsible for the governance of the library function. Library services are provided throughout the district, in all electoral areas.

Significant capital projects:

- 2009 completion of the Quesnel Library building
- 2010 completion of the new 100 Mile House Library building
- 2017 replacement of the McLeese Lake Library building
- 2018 re-location of the Bridge Lake Library from rented space in Bridge Lake to a new CRD-owned building located in Interlakes. The branch was re-named Interlakes Library.
- 2024 commencement of the renovation project of the Williams Lake Branch

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

Building upon the significant efforts to establish services and necessary level of professional staffing and training, the Library is poised to continue its work in building capacity, by introducing new programming for patrons of all age groups, renovating and updating spaces that are used by our staff and clients, improving collections, seeking out opportunities for professional development, and standardizing policy and practices to ensure consistent approach to library operations.

2025 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Contract security personnel for at-risk locations.
Rationale: This goal was identified as a strategic priority in the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. Given the increased risk of hostile encounters between the staff (and library patrons) and the growing unhoused population in the larger communities of Williams Lake and Quesnel, the CRDL needs to identify and implement a security strategy to ensure the safety of the affected staff.
Strategy: Seek out funding opportunities by engaging the other CRD departments for possible collaboration or isolate a portion of the library budget (including grants) for this purpose.
- 2. Goal:** Begin the necessary renovations for the Williams Lake Library Branch.
Rationale: The drafting of the design, which commenced in 2024, to upgrade the layout and furnishings of the Williams Lake Branch, needs to be completed to fulfil grant report obligations.

- Strategy:** Work closely with the consultant, the design firm, the construction supervisor, and all relevant parties, to ensure an expeditious and cost-effective completion of the Williams Lake Branch renovations project.
- 3. Goal:** Redesign the exterior space of the Williams Lake Library Branch.
Rationale: The seating area and green space beside the Williams Lake Branch has become a source of consternation in the community as it attracts unwelcome behaviour. Additionally, the paved surface of the area, which is made of brick, is deteriorating and is beginning to pose a tripping hazard for some of our patrons with low mobility.
Strategy: In collaboration with the Procurement department, identify solutions to the aforementioned issues and design a workplan for 2026.
 - 4. Goal:** Identify and implement emergency response services for the Library communities.
Rationale: With wildfire seasons getting progressively more intense and prolonged, the Library must consider mitigation strategies to alleviate the hazards of the changing environment. The Library has the capacity to develop services that will benefit the residents of the Cariboo Regional District to better prepare for future emergencies and accommodate those residents that require immediate assistance.
Strategy: Consider collaborating with relevant municipalities in the creation of cooling and fresh air centres. Purchase air scrubbers for Area Libraries to serve as safe environments for all of our patrons (particularly the unhoused) from the polluted and harmful air during the wildfire seasons.
 - 5. Goal:** Complete the accessibility project for the Nazko Community Library Branch.
Rationale: Removing and reducing the barriers that prevent the residents of the Cariboo Regional District from accessing the services of the CRD equitably was emphasized within the CRD's Accessibility Plan. More precisely, the Nazko Community Library, which is located inside of the Nazko Community Association facility, is currently lacking accessibility features.
Strategy: The CRD Accessibility Committee is committed to secure funding through a provincial grant in order to adequately retrofit the facility to bring up to the standards of the CRD Accessibility Plan. This will require significant time commitment on the part of the CRDL staff and the CRD Accessibility Committee members.

2026 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Provide additional resources for the staff to mitigate risks of encountering hostile interactions and exposure to possible trauma.
Rationale: This goal was identified as a strategic priority in the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. Due to the increased risk of hostile interactions with the growing population

who are suffering from the ongoing housing and opioid crises, the CRDL staff requires the necessary training, knowledge, and tools to handle harmful interactions.

Strategy: Identify and subscribe to learning platforms that may provide the staff with the necessary skillsets, and then provide the staff with ample time and opportunity to engage with training materials. Alternatively, CRDL may organize workshops for full participation.

- 2. Goal:** Standardize library procedures to provide fair, equal, and predictable services to residents throughout the Cariboo Regional District.

Rationale: Library customers who visit multiple branches on a regular basis have noted a difference in how library policies are followed in different branches, which they find confusing and sometimes upsetting. The Cariboo Regional District Library is committed to providing equitable service in branches across the region.

Strategy: Identify library procedures that are being followed differently in different branches, causing confusion for patrons who visit multiple branches. Meet regularly with Area Librarians and develop standardized procedures for all Library branches. This is expected to be a large, time-consuming project with a significant staff training component.

- 3. Goal:** Complete the redesign of the Williams Lake Library Branch exterior space.

Rationale: The efforts of strategizing the workplan for the redesign would need to be put into practice in order to complete the goal in a timely manner.

Strategy: Assist the Procurement Manager in hiring a landscape designer and coordinate these efforts with the Williams Lake Branch Manager to mitigate any service interruptions.

- 4. Goal:** Develop a marketing strategy to advertise the library services and programming within our communities.

Rationale: Many of our patrons are often unfamiliar with the variety of services offered by the Library and indicated that they would use more of them if only they had known about them. This need was also identified as a strategic priority within the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Strategy: CRDL would like to establish a marketing plan committee of library staff; connect with the resources offered by the Communications Department; and develop a marketing plan for Library Services that will serve as guideposts for the expansion of the library patron base. This will require additional staff time in order for them to participate adequately.

- 5. Goal:** Engage the community in order to expand public programming for broad range of age groups.

Rationale: CRD libraries have developed good and consistent programming for young children, yet have struggled in attracting older patrons. The 2018 public engagement survey conducted to generate ideas for the future direction of Library

Services revealed a desire for library programming aimed at a more diverse range of ages, specifically adults. This was also identified as a strategic priority of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Strategy: Collaborate with Communications Department to extract public feedback on the types of programming appropriate for each community served. Feedback will be collected with the help of the new Library website's Forms function, in-person interviews, and, if necessary, surveys. With feedback collected, we will seek out opportunities to present programmes of varied themes, delivered by library staff.

2027 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Explore the possibility of eliminating overdue fines for all patrons.

Rationale: Overdue fines pose a barrier to people who most need access to library materials. Our experience indicates that patrons may stop visiting their library because they either cannot afford to pay their overdue fines, or they are too embarrassed about having fines. Other BC libraries have already taken this action and have reported a positive response from the public that appears to outweigh financial cost. Although it has now plateaued, the Library's fine revenue has been falling off, as we have increased loan periods, and as the popularity of digital books and audiobooks continues to grow, and do not generate fines.

Strategy: The Library will conduct a cost-benefit analysis to help it decide if eliminating fines outweighs the cost of revenue loss. If so, the Library budget will be adjusted to accommodate the complete elimination of overdue fines. A progressive approach may be utilized by eliminating the late fees for juvenile patrons to start. Note that fines will still exist for lost and damaged material, but staff will be encouraged to make accommodations where possible.
- 2. Goal:** Implement regular training days, in-person and remotely, that include staff from Area Libraries and Community Branches.

Rationale: In engagement sessions, staff indicated that they would like more training. Some staff admitted they were not comfortable discussing some library services with customers because they, themselves, were not sure how they worked. One of the suggestions for staff training that was made by library staff was to have regular group training days to cover topics specific to library work.

Strategy: On a regular basis, identify topics and schedule in-person and virtual meetings to cover topics that are most relevant. Area Libraries will consider having training sessions on Mondays with Community Branches joining in remotely via MS Teams app. This will require more labour hours from the auxiliary staff to fill in for those in training.

- 3. Goal:** If feasible, procure laptops (or other devices) to improve the patrons' access to digital services.

Rationale: In order to bridge the digital divide within the region between those who have access to the internet at home, and thus able to take advantage of our digital collections, and those who do not, we should consider offering personal devices that will narrow this technological gap. This goal was referred to in the Strategic Plan.

Strategy: Consider the possibility of acquiring and lending laptops (or Chromebooks) to patrons. To finance this purchase, some reallocation of funds may be necessary, or we may consume a portion of the provincial grant to accomplish this objective.
- 4. Goal:** Improve the wait-times of our digital resources.

Rationale: With the continued popularity of e-books and e-audiobooks, we have witnessed an incredible demand for these resources. Unfortunately, the popularity has also resulted in the exponential growth of the associated fees (approx. 10% YoY). Which means that fewer copies of the most popular items can be purchased with the allocated budget.

Strategy: Re-allocate the funds within the collections budget to improve the wait times for digital resources (possibly, by assigning them to OverDrive Advantage, via BC Libraries Cooperative Licensing).

2028 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Investigate the feasibility of instituting self-directed learning sessions for all.

Rationale: Library staff mentioned in a staff engagement survey that they would like to expand their knowledge but need a more flexible working schedule in order to make that happen. This is particularly true for part-time staff whose positions require them to work directly with customers for their entire shift, leaving no time during their day to focus fully on learning activities.

Strategy: Investigate the financial and other implications of instituting self-directed learning sessions (staff that includes one paid hour per week (or month) dedicated to a subject of the employee's or employer's choosing that is related to library work) for FT, PT, and Casual staff in all Library branches. Present the results at a Library Manager's meeting for comments and adjustments. Deliver a presentation on the topic to library staff that outlines the options available to them at scheduled meetings held at the three urban branches. If feasible, begin to offer paid, self-directed staff learning to all levels of library staff in 2028 or 2029.
- 2. Goal:** Examine the practicality of a digital-services-only library card.

Rationale: Digital-services-only library cards are a growing trend in public libraries. The card accommodates people who only want to use the Library's digital

resources, who prefer to read books only in e-book format, and those who are not eligible for a full-services library card.

Strategy: Identify other public libraries that offer digital-services-only library cards and compile policies and procedures related to the service. Create a set of policies and procedures specifically for CRD libraries for a digital-services-only library card. Introduce staff to the service and provide training in the policies and procedures prior to launching the service.

- 3. Goal:** Review infrastructural and material needs of all branches and implement a plan of action.

Rationale: In order to serve our communities and attract future users to our programmes and services, the library necessitates a pleasant and welcoming environment. It is paramount to maintain the library branches in a comfortable, clean, and organized state. Which requires that we evaluate each branch and highlight aspects that need to be improved.

Strategy: Visit each branch and, in coordination with the Community and Area Librarians, identify items or facilities in need of repair or upgrade. Then, compile a list of priorities, schedule for their execution, and budget accordingly.

2029 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Increase the Library's visibility and profile as a community service and collaborator.

Rationale: One of the elements that was included in the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, was the necessity to inform the public of the services the Library provides. Through discussions with the staff and the public it was revealed that many of our community members are notably unaware of the programmes CRDL offers, and we would like to redress that.

Strategy: CRDL will reallocate the necessary resources to allow the library staff to participate in more community events. This may require the purchase of equipment (tents, tables, banners, etc.), materials for giveaways, and additional staff labour and travel expenses.

- 2. Goal:** Identify and improve the physical spaces of the branches through workflow and patron traffic flow assessments.

Rationale: The layout of many of our branches was established at the beginning, when the branches were created. The layout of the branches was largely guided by the existing furniture that would go into that branch. Over time, in some cases, this led to cluttering and inefficient space use.

Strategy: CRDL will create ad hoc committees to review the floorplans of all existing branches and assess if space usage can be made more efficient and effective (not to mention accessible). When needed, the existing furniture will be discarded or replaced with furnishings that will better suit the space and the library's needs.

Overall Financial Impact

The following major projects are expected to draw down a significant portion of the Library's budget:

Williams Lake Library Branch Renovation Project

Major redesign and renovation of the Williams Lake Branch, including complete reimagining of the interior space, will be supplemented, in large part, by the provincial one-time Library Enhancement Grant. The total grant was in excess of \$1.2 million - \$750,000 of which is earmarked for this particular project. As of September of 2024, the consultations with the designer have already begun, and the design contract has been signed.

Accessibility Project for Nazko Community Library

With the introduction of the Accessible BC Act and the availability of provincial funding (through grants) to improve accessibility in communities throughout BC, we now have an opportunity to remove these existing barriers in some of our rural Community Branches. Specifically, the Manager of Library Services will make all reasonable efforts to secure funding through SPARC BC's Local Community Accessibility Grant Program (up to \$25,000) to subsidize the expenses to retrofit the Nazko Community Hall to make it compliant with the current accessibility standards. In September of 2024, CRDL is still waiting on the contractor's estimates which are required for the submission of the grant application.

Community Emergency Preparedness Initiatives

In addition to the acquisition of furniture for the Library branches, the provincial Covid-19 Relief and Recovery Grant, which was applied for and accepted in 2022 (to the amount \$127,000), will be used for Emergency Preparedness initiatives. The portion of the grant that is allocated to this is \$31,987. These initiatives may include, but are not limited to, emergency evacuation preparedness kits, FireSmart resources kits, air purifiers and scrubbers for urban branches, air filtration systems for rural branches, etc. The Library will also explore the possibility of collaborating with CRD municipalities in creation of Cooling Centres in our library branches. By September 2024, CRDL has acquired air purifiers for all branches and distributed cooling towels, water bottles, and N95 masks to the 3 Area Branches in preparation for summer heatwaves and poor air quality.

100 Mile House Library Log Treatment

The 100 Mile House Library Branch, completed in 2010, is a log structure and as such requires specific, regular maintenance including the re-staining of the logs. This will be an expense of approximately \$35,000-\$40,000 which is included in the budget on a 5-year rotation that began in 2017. That amount is included in the projected budget for 2024. The project is expected to be completed by the end of October 2024.

Contracting security for the Williams Lake Library Branch

Given the increased frequency of hostile interactions between the staff and patrons of the Williams Lake Library Branch, CRDL contracted Mars Security with the help of the one-time provincial Library Enhancement Grant. This initial contract (approx. \$45,000) was set for the period of 6 months, terminating at the end of December 2024. Possible contract renewal will be evaluated based on work satisfaction, budget capacity, and other CRD departments' willingness to share the cost of this service.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Costs involved in the hiring and training of staff in 2024 will be covered by regularly projected expenses. However, if the regular training days that are planned for 2027 and extra time for part-time staff to participate in self-directed training sessions (planned for 2028) are implemented, there will be implications to the Salaries and Benefits for Part-time Staff lines in the library budget, which will need to be identified and addressed in 2026.

Elimination of Late Fees

Eliminating overdue fines for all age groups, which is projected for 2027, will have financial implications because there will be less revenue generated (approx. \$10,000). It is expected that staff will adjust expenditures in 2026 and beyond to accommodate the change in revenue so the financial impact will be as close to neutral as possible.

Library services are projected to have \$765,000 in capital reserves at the beginning of 2025.

Significant Issues & Trends

Challenges Caused by Housing and Opioid Crises

For many public libraries that are situated in urban environments, an unfortunate development is unfolding: the noticeable increase of unhoused patrons and patrons with apparent mental health and substance use disorders. This presents a myriad of challenges that the libraries are ill-equipped to deal with, much less to address or remedy. The most concerning aspect of this trend is the library staff's safety and security. Hostile interactions have become a daily occurrence, and the library workers suffer as a result. The presence of the security personnel has become commonplace; however, this puts additional financial strain on the already overburdened public libraries.

Book Challenges and the Strain on the Library Processes

School and Public Libraries throughout North America have witnessed an exponential rise in the number of book challenges since the pandemic. The vast majority of challenges are based on materials that cover the themes and topics of sexual orientation and gender identities. To a lesser extent, the objections also revolve around characterizations and depictions of sex and their incompatibility with the Christian religious teachings. Despite the library workers' formal vetting processes, to ensure that the materials are age-appropriate, challenged books present a strain on the libraries' financial and human resources. Each challenge requires hours of labour by professional librarians: to review the challenges, research the subject, consult with trade publications, draft responses, and inform the colleagues from the Centre of Free Expression. In extreme cases, the staff is being targeted and harassed (in-person and online), as well as threatened with vexatious litigations.

Going Fine Free

Removing barriers to accessing library services continues to be a strong trend in the library sector. One way to accomplish this is by eliminating the fines that have traditionally been charged when borrowed material is not returned on time. However, it has been difficult to locate literature review on this topic to deduce the effectiveness of this shift. An additional challenge is to balance the annual funds realized from overdue fines against the value of removing one of the barriers to library access suffered by people in challenging economic circumstances.

Technology

Access to reliable, high-speed internet remains a concern for rural areas while demand for it continues to grow. In some areas of the region, internet access in residents' homes is either unreliable or an impossibility. This, and the fact that access to many necessary government services is increasingly available only online, makes centralized internet access in remote communities a necessity. The non-commercial nature of the public library makes it the perfect location in a community for this service, which includes access to internet stations and printers/scanners within our branches, and wireless connectivity for those with laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Evolving Library Collections

Many libraries have added 'objects' to their lending collections as an addition to reading, listening and viewing material. Objects have included such things as musical instruments, computer tablets, science kits, recreational equipment, etc. CRD Area Libraries have already started to offer this service ("Library of Things") by lending out everything from exercise kits for people suffering from dementia and radon testing kits to pickleball and disc golf sets.

Staffing

Maintaining a staff that is trained to a level where they can continue to offer optimal library service during the best of times is a challenge; it has been doubly challenging during the years of the pandemic. Staff need to continually update their knowledge to remain current on the emerging trends within the librarianship field. For this reason, the CRD Library Strategic Plan (and the 5-year Business Plan) will focus on this very important issue.

Measuring Previous Years Performance

Library Services is primarily a public facing, operational-based service, as opposed to a project-based service. As such, although special projects are identified each year in the business plan, significant progress can only be made on those projects if the operational side of Library Services is stable.

At this time, we are primed to resume work on established goals in 2025, as we are ready to tackle the goals of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Furthermore, significant efforts have been made to improve our Community Libraries in 2024. The facilities of all branches were evaluated, a purchase list of new furnishings was compiled, and deliveries were made in 2024.

Lastly, many projects (Williams Lake Branch Renovation, 100 Mile House Library maintenance, Nazko Accessibility Project, etc.) that were commenced in 2024 will be seeing tangible results in 2025 and the years to follow.