

Reflections 2012: BC Public Library Goals and Initiatives Report

By Cindy Ralph.

The Libraries and Literacy Branch is pleased to announce publication of the *Reflections 2012: BC Public Library Goals and Initiatives Report*. This report was created from what you have told us about how provincial funding works in, and for, libraries. We are pleased to be able to share the results with you. We welcome your feedback on the report and hope that you will share any information that you find useful, both with us and your networks.

What we found out

Simply stated - Libraries in BC are doing wonderful things. It is evident that libraries of all sizes are working towards excellent services and programs that fit their communities' needs. One of the main requirements of the report, was for libraries to outline what goals were set for the year, how those goals were achieved (successfully, unsuccessfully, in process), and what the impact was within their communities.

The goals outlined in the reports were similar. Some of the most identified goals were around digital services, early literacy, partnerships and collaboration, strategic planning, community engagement, professional development, renovations and IT infrastructure. These goals are not only identified but also supported by quotes and examples of what libraries are doing in these areas, as well as a showcase featuring the Fort St John Public Library.

This wordle (top right) was created from the report and it is quite telling of where, what, and how libraries in the province are focusing their energies.

Our process

In 2011, The Libraries and Literacy Branch introduced the Provincial Library Grants Report, a qualitative reporting structure as part of an accountability framework. Each of the 71 public libraries in BC submitted a report that included details on what programs were supported by provincial funding, how those programs supported provincial and local priorities, and whether those efforts achieved success.



One of our goals was to create a report from these reports so that we could not only celebrate the work that is taking place in the province, but also so that we could identify trends, shared strengths to leverage upon, and common gaps that might have been identified. There was no predetermined framework required so the structure and content of what libraries reported to us partially determined how that information is presented in the *Reflections* report.

What did we learn?

- Innovative and imaginative practices are developing in libraries across the province;
- Some libraries struggle with specific programming and delivery issues in ensuring high quality delivery of services funded by the Province;
- The Libraries and Literacy Branch needs to continue to refine our instructions and how we communicate our expectations;
- Changing the reporting format from the inaugural 2011 reporting year was confusing to some libraries. Small libraries need further support and direction;
- These reports do not adequately capture emerging or innovative services and programs. We know libraries are working on innovative and unique projects that are not being shared in the reporting process;

- Libraries have told us that the reporting process is labour intensive for directors and staff. We will examine ways reporting can be made easier while still demonstrating impact and providing evidence of their statements about "success" that will resonate with funders and their communities.

Next steps

We start by stating something obvious: reporting is a cyclical thing. It seems as though once you have completed one report, which reports on your previous year's work, you are about to start on the next cycle of setting up programs and services, assessing them, and then reporting on those.

With the increased need for accountability for all those who receive public funds, Libraries and Literacy

will continue requiring the annual Provincial Library Grant Report. The Libraries and Literacy Branch is committed to working with libraries to continue supporting the mandate of provincial government grants and providing seamless, high-quality library services throughout the province. In that vein we continue to refine the reporting requirements based on your feedback and needs.

We hope you enjoy reading about what your fellow libraries are doing throughout the province.

To read the complete report, *Reflection 2012 BC Public Library Goals and Initiatives Report* go to <http://commons.bclibraries.ca/reportshighlights>.

Cindy Ralph is a Library Consultant with Libraries and Literacy, Ministry of Education.