OKANAGAN REGIONAL LIBRARY

SPRING 2006

PRESENTATION

Okanagan Regional Library Review, Spring 2006

1. 2005 RECAP

- Use of the library's website continued to increase. We now have more hits on the home page than we have visitors to Kelowna Branch (296,769). Viewed as a virtual branch, **www.orl.bc.ca** is now our busiest facility.

- As part of the provincial strategic plan for libraries in the province, the ORL received grants for literacy projects, and for improved technology. We are just finishing off a project to improve the library's literacy collection stored in 13 branches but shared by all. We greatly improved our summer reading club, and succeeded in increasing attendance at those programs by 23% to 9,637. Finally, we were able to train 20 staff to present baby times. The library has wanted to provide these programs for a long time, but has never had the money or staff time to do it until now. The technology grant was used to upgrade the network backbone for the library. Most of the library's technology budget has gone into branch operations for several years, so being able to replace aging servers, switches, and software was important and long overdue.

- Province wide, we are seeing changes begin to occur as a result of the provincial strategic plan. The province is taking over the funding of some of the licensed databases we previously paid for separately. As an added bonus, the province is including schools in this project. By licensing some encyclopedias and magazine databases provincially, there are per capita cost savings, and it makes the provision of information much more equitable throughout the whole province. The library can now re-allocate these resources to other materials and databases.

- A new Mission branch opened in April to service this rapidly expanding area of Kelowna, and circulation increased by 33,000 (16%). This is now our third largest branch. The new branch had some effect on Kelowna Branch circulation, as some library users moved to the new Mission Branch.

- Overall, system wide, circulation of library materials declined by 2.7%, to 3,340,801.

2. 2006 PLANS

- The major task for 2006 will be to install new cataloguing and circulation software. We signed a contract in December with Sirsi/Dynix, the company we use now, for this upgrade. Our current classic Dynix software is over 15 years old, and is obsolete. The new software is windows based and will offer new features for the public, and for staff. We hope to go live with the new system in October. The changeover has been part of the Library's strategic plan, though we had originally thought we would wait until 2007. When it began to look as though a new Vernon Branch would be delayed for a year or two, this freed up the staff time to concentrate on the planned upgrade in 2006.

- Another major project is to replace all the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation public internet stations in the library system, as well as the servers, and much of the software. All in all, the Bill and Melinda Gates grant was worth about $250,000 in 1999. The equipment and licenses all are now due (maybe past due) for replacement. Fortunately, for us the price of computers is less than it used to be.

- The library is also part of the Provincial Books for Babies program. We have distributed about 2400 books for babies kits through our library branches to public health nurses and literacy organizations. Province wide, the plan is to have each mother with a new baby understand how important it is to read and sing to your child.

3. QUICK FINANCIAL REVIEW

- The Library Board has a 5-year budget plan. The Board has found it to be useful for planning, and for avoiding large fluctuations in the property tax levy for the library. The Board's goal is to keep any annual property tax increase to an average home to between one or two dollars. This has had broad acceptance, according to library surveys.

- We would like council to know how library cost sharing works, especially since there are many new councilors and rural area directors in the areas we serve.

- The library Board approves an annual budget every year in either October or November. As part of that process, they decide how many tax dollars are needed to run the library. Those tax dollars are then apportioned out to Municipalities and the rural areas of Regional Districts 50% on the basis of population, and 50% on the converted value of land and improvements. This is the formula in the Library Act. Population more or less predicts how much use the library is going to get, and the converted value of land or improvements, more or less, predicts the communities ability to pay. The formula is not perfect, but it seems to work….more or less.

- Because we have a single unified budget process, and because we have a cost-sharing plan, you need to be aware that you pay a portion of every service, and every building, and every staff member the library provides. Similarly, everyone else pays a share of your local costs. Some municipalities are surprised when a new branch goes up in their community, and there are no major increases to library costs in the following year. Others are surprised if costs go up, but there are no changes to library services locally. It is all due to the cost sharing formula. The Board ensures equitability of service through its Branch Guidelines, which ensure that branches are an appropriate size for the communities they serve, and are open appropriate hours.

- The only costs that are not shared are the costs of furniture and fixtures for the public areas of your library branch. Almost every year, you will get a letter from the Public Services Manager of our Library System, asking you to pay for shelving, or tables and chairs, or something else for your branch. Councils or rural area directors are asked to provide money for these things, because furniture and fixtures in a branch are used only by local users. If you decide not to provide the requested item, it is only library users in your local community that will usually be affected. Where we press hard for new furniture and fixtures though, is with respect to safety.

- Requests for furniture and fixtures are sent out in September. If at all possible, we would like to get a reply as to whether or not the municipality or rural area will fund the item by the first week in May, when budgets are finalized for the year. An email or letter from your treasurer is probably the best way to let the library know if the furnishing or fixture request has been approved or not. Once we get the funding information, we put together lists for items to be purchased, to see if we can improve on the costs by combining orders. Any savings are passed on to the municipality.

- Finally, with respect to furnishing and equipment for branches, you should know that costs can be shared with others. Often this occurs when a smaller municipality is surrounded by a rural area. The rural area and the municipality will often cost share on the basis of how the library is used by the residents of both jurisdictions. A cost-sharing agreement is something you would determine locally—the library's only role might be to assist you with branch usage statistics.