BCELN
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ELECTRONIC LIBRARY NETWORK

BC ELN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 10, 2026

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Pacific
Online via Zoom

In Attendance:

Gohar Ashoughian, Simon Fraser University
Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria
Rita Cavaliere, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, *Rural Colleges*
Tania Gottschalk, Thompson Rivers University, *Small Universities* (*Alternate)*
Darcy Gullacher, Trinity Western University, *Associate Members*
Shirley Lew, Vancouver Community College, *Urban Colleges*
Julie Mitchell, University of British Columbia
Christina Neigel, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Chair)
Kenley Neufeld, University of the Fraser Valley, *Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions* (Vice-Chair)

Non-voting:

Ben Ferrel, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS)
Mar González Palacios, Simon Fraser University, Host Site Officer

BC ELN Office:

Amber Gallant (moderator)
Leah Hopton
Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director
Reba Ouimet (recorder)

Regrets:

Trina Fyfe, University of Northern BC, *Small Universities*

Welcome

C. Neigel welcomed attendees and provided a territorial acknowledgement.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as distributed.

2. PSFS Update on Administrative Transition

C. Neigel introduced the topic and handed over to B. Ferrel for an update on the current situation.

Currently BC ELN is administratively hosted by Simon Fraser University, and this arrangement has worked well for many years. Challenges with this model have become more significant as risks associated with cyber security and data privacy have grown, and as BC ELN services have expanded and become essential. The Provincial Government has provided direction to transition BC ELN and the 3 other post-secondary sector organisations (The BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT), BC Campus, and Education Planner BC) to a single new public sector organisation (PSO).

The new PSO will be a standalone crown corporation with a Board and Chief Executive Officer, offering a more streamlined model and stable foundation for sector organisations to deliver on core mandates and support operations, while offering an opportunity to expand on shared post-secondary services through collaboration. The plan is to ensure ongoing connection between existing BC ELN governance and governance of the new PSO. The process to date has engaged the governance committees of the four sector organisations and heard thoughts and reactions to the change, potential challenges and risks, and future opportunities. PSFS anticipates key approvals will be complete by early Fall, which permits creation of the new entity and the transition of operations, which will proceed into 2027.

This news has been shared with presidents of public post-secondary institutions and with BC ELN library directors.

Discussion following this update included the importance of clarifying mandate and scope of the new PSO in relation to BCNet, particularly when it comes to BC ELN's Shared Library Services Platform initiative, noting that BC ELN has long-standing relationships with LSP vendors.

B. Ferrel concluded the discussion and invited further questions via email.

3. Strategic Framework Planning

L. Hopton highlighted her study leave work, which involved researching capacity in library consortia, conditions that help or hinder achieving collective goals, and approaches to strategic planning.

After reviewing BC ELN's current strategic framework (expiring in 2027) and updating the Committee on the work completed so far, L. Hopton outlined two options for the new strategic planning process:

Option 1 – Bridge Plan

- This option is a shorter-term bridge plan that recognizes that there may be a period of significant transition upcoming, and prioritizes a clear, focused framework while providing time to see how the environment evolves.
- It assumes that the current strategic directions still provide a useful foundation that can be extended while updating the actionable goals underlying each direction.
- BC ELN would consult broadly with members and bring feedback to the Steering Committee to develop updated goals. There is flexibility here to adjust the strategic directions as well.

- As this option builds on existing work, completion is possible by December and could be led internally with light external co-facilitation support.

Option 2 –New Strategic Framework

- The second option is a more comprehensive planning process that, rather than starting with the existing framework, begins with fewer assumptions and revisits BC ELN's vision, strategic priorities, and goals.
- The consultation process would be similar but library directors contribute more to shaping the vision and future directions before the Steering Committee finalizes priorities and goals.
- Given the additional facilitation and coordination required, this approach would benefit from external consulting support and would conclude in Spring 2027.

L. Hopton noted that both processes involve consultation with members, with the key distinction being whether the process is primarily refreshing existing goals or using this as an opportunity to rethink BC ELN's future directions.

Highlights of the ensuing discussion included:

- A deep need for flexibility, keeping in mind the PSFS update and the upcoming Sector Sustainability Review.
- The importance of planning for priorities that can support institutions in dealing with the seismic shifts happening in the post-secondary world.
- Necessity of stability and direction, and the need for comprehensive, long-term planning which will benefit BC ELN during the transition to the new PSO.
- The importance of balancing consultation with the need to confront significant issues arising because of these changes in the landscape, which may not surface during the bridging approach. This reinforced the importance of raising difficult issues now and giving structure via a comprehensive approach.

The consensus was to take a hybrid approach: a comprehensive, flexible process with the establishment of smaller goals to tackle in the short term, and surfacing larger, more difficult issues for the long term. The Committee advised consulting with as many people as possible, and providing information publicly for comment, using both surveys and focus groups.

L. Hopton noted that the required hiring of external consultants for a more comprehensive process would incur a necessary expense. S. Nishimura confirmed that the Executive Committee would work to identify the amount in the BC ELN budget.

L. Hopton thanked the Committee for the discussion, noting that the planning process would begin in September with the proposal circulating beforehand.

4. Associate Membership: Adler University & LaSalle College

C. Neigel reminded the Committee of BC ELN’s newest provisional Associate Members, Adler University and LaSalle college, and provided an update of their status:

Adler University:

- Granted a one-year provisional Associate Membership last year, which expires August 31st.
- Maintained good standing and paid its membership fee, which is $3,000 CAD at Tier 2.
- They have begun the process of joining Illume and have expressed interest in licensing products through BC ELN. They are primarily interested in Indigenous and Canada-specific resources.

LaSalle College Vancouver:

- Also granted a one-year provisional Associate Membership, which expires August 31st.
- Maintained good standing with BC ELN and paid its Tier 1 membership fee of $1,500 CAD.
- They license public performance rights through BC ELN, and have expressed interest in licensing other BC ELN products, budget dependent.

C. Neigel noted that the BC ELN Office has no concerns with either institution, and reminded the Committee that if approved, both institutions would become continuing Associate Members. Associate Members pay an annual fee and sign a letter of agreement that sets out the expectations of membership. Current Associate Members renew agreements on a three-year cycle and if approved, Adler and LaSalle would sign new agreements that bring them into alignment with the rest of the Associate Member group.

In response to a question about financial stability, S. Nishimura noted that there were no concerns at this time.

> **Motion:** That the BC ELN Steering Committee approve Adler University and LaSalle College Vancouver as continuing BC ELN Associate Members.
>
> **Moved:** D. Gullacher
>
> **Seconded:** T. Gottschalk
>
> **Motion carried.**

5. Removing Barriers Initiative

L. Hopton provided an update on the Removing Barriers Initiative, along with the summary report prepared by Two Worlds Consulting. She reminded the Committee that the work began in 2024, following one-time funding from the Ministry. The goals were to a) learn what internal barriers within BC ELN structures may exist that are stopping Indigenous post-secondary institutions from joining BC ELN, and b) to better understand how BC ELN can meet the information needs that Indigenous students, educators, and researchers have.

Progress

In 2025, BC ELN hired Two Worlds Consulting (TWC) to assist. TWC consultants conducted environmental scans and developed an engagement plan for Indigenous institutions and organizations that support Indigenous institutes, such as:

- FNESC - the First Nations Education Steering Committee, represents First Nations education interests in BC and provides staffing and policy support to IAHLA. Together they act as the leading advocacy bodies for First Nations education.

- IAHLA – the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association, an umbrella organization that represents approximately 44 First Nations post-secondary and adult institutes throughout the province.
- The First Nations Technology Council

In April 2025 staff at FNESC stressed the importance of involving the IAHLA Board in discussions about BC First Nations adult education institutions and TWC paused work until there was a chance to meet with and present at the IAHLA Board meeting in August last year.

The IAHLA Board showed interest in BC ELN and a collaborative exploration of how BC ELN could better support IAHLA members. One more meeting took place in the Fall, with representatives from FNESC, IAHLA, the Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch and members of the BC ELN Steering Committee (R. Cavaliere and S. Lew). This 'exploratory working group' confirmed IAHLA and FNESC's openness to BC ELN meeting with IAHLA member institutions to continue our engagement.

Next Steps

The Office plans to work with FNESC to arrange engagement meetings this fall with Indigenous institutes and bring the findings back to the exploratory working group to discuss.

Although TWC did not complete as many engagement sessions as originally planned, their contract and summary report is complete. Several recommendations point toward ongoing collaboration with IAHLA, which has already begun through the exploratory working group.

Given that engagement with Indigenous institutes is still ongoing, the Office suggested the Committee keep the report confidential and not release it publicly as FNESC and IAHLA did not co-create this report nor endorse the recommendations. The Office received Steering Committee support to:

- Receive the report as a discussion document;
- Continue engagement with Indigenous partners through the exploratory working group; and
- Use TWC's recommendations as a starting point for further discussion and refinement as that engagement continues.

Discussion

In response to a request to highlight the report's recommendations, L. Hopton responded that most recommendations are around relationship-building and foundational understanding of Indigenous organizations, and that TWC proposed goals from their perspective (e.g. including an Indigenous representative on the Steering Committee).

There was discussion around membership eligibility and the potential to reexamine the eligibility requirements or provide an alternate path for Indigenous institutions.

It was noted that strategic planning may offer opportunities to address some recommendations from TWC, aligning with the plan to meet with these Indigenous institutions in the Fall.

S. Lew offered insights around relationship-building with Indigenous communities and IAHLA's response to not being consulted initially. L. Hopton and R. Cavaliere confirmed that the feedback from IAHLA was heard, and all groups wish to move forward. This will be a collaborative process to center Indigenous voices and continue respectful stewardship of Indigenous knowledge by following Indigenous protocols.

6. Service Updates

S. Nishimura provided service area and operational updates**.** Some highlights:

Licensing

AI in Licensed Resources

- In 2025, the Executive requested that the Office compile information about the AI tools in BC ELN licensed electronic resources.
- A survey was sent out in February to vendors with an excellent response rate; BC ELN webpage with the information was just launched.
- The goal is that this will be an interactive resource, collectively updated and maintained, to help libraries understand what is changing, share insights and strategies, and support advocacy efforts.

Undergraduate Resource Bundle

- BC ELN is in the final term of the three-year agreement for the Undergraduate Resource Bundle (URB), which includes Academic Search Complete and Business Source Complete.
- Partner libraries made it clear that these foundational resources are essential to supporting students in their early years of post-secondary studies. BC ELN's goal in this instance is to meet undergraduate-level students' broad research needs with reputable academic databases.
- The bundle is negotiated at a substantive consortial discount off list price and provides multi-year price stability; participants receive additional discounts on 30+ EBSCO databases due to deduplication.
- Uses the BC ELN Model License, which has beneficial terms and conditions for partner libraries.
- Initial interest survey indicates 30 participants intend to renew, despite budget challenges.

LEAP Pilot Project

- The Library eResources Accessibility Portal (LEAP) was developed by the Ontario College Library Services consortium.
- Library staff benefit from workload sharing with library colleagues and can access a repository of standardized accessibility reports that help make acquisition decisions, support library users, and advocate for accessible eresources.
- In response to partner library needs, BC ELN approached OCLS and is proceeding with a pilot partnership approved by Steering Committee at no cost to the seven piloting institutions.
- Feedback will be gathered in the fall and reported back to the Steering Committee with results and recommendations.

Illume Software Review

- Being conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs Public Libraries Branch
- Phase 1 2025/26: Supported by a $35,000 PLB grant and included an environmental scan of ILL software and recent consortial implementations.

- Phase 2 2026/27: Supported by a $38,000 PLB grant and will include a needs assessment of BC post-secondary and public libraries.

A question was raised about differences between postsecondary and public libraries ILL usage of Illume. S. Nishimura responded that in comparison with other provinces and states, BC's overall ILL usage is very high due in part to our strong infrastructure (80,000+ ILL requests). The Illume Administrative Centre can provide a more nuanced breakdown upon request.

Learning & Research Support

AskAway Sustainability

- After consultation with the AskAway community, the efforts of working groups, and special meetings of the AskAway Advisory Committee a sustainability model was endorsed for 2027/28.
- The new model takes a moderate approach to adjusting service support fees, staffing commitments, and service hours, balancing the change required to create a sustainable service with the need to preserve AskAway's value for individual libraries and the students.
- A commitment survey was sent out to all BC ELN partner libraries in early June with 26/27 participating libraries recommitting to the new sustainable model (with NLC still deciding).
- Transition funding from Ministry will be used to moderate the transition to the increased service support fees, an example of how targeted one-time funding can help sustain services.

WriteAway Sustainability

- WriteAway currently provides asynchronous feedback to students.
- After extensive consultation and working group efforts the WriteAway Advisory Committee approved sustainability recommendations to lean into human-centred support by investigating a synchronous option and explore other service enhancements such as standardised ways of providing feedback on alternate written formats such as PDFs and presentation slides.
- PSFS transition funding will provide room to explore adapting the service to meet the rapidly evolving needs of students.

Shared Services

Shared LSP Feasibility Study Initiative

- In Spring, the Steering Committee endorsed the Shared LSP Leadership & Advisory Group Terms of Reference but requested that the Leadership Group provide clarity on the document.
- G. Ashoughian consulted with S. Parker and J. Bengtson and drafted changes to emphasize that participation in the Shared Library Services Platform Initiative remains voluntary throughout all phases of the project; BC ELN partner libraries may elect to join or withdraw at any stage.
- Effective continuity between feasibility and implementation is essential for initiative success. If the feasibility study supports proceeding, the Leadership & Advisory Group will guide the transition, identify early adopters, develop an implementation plan with institutions and the BC ELN Steering Committee, and recommend governance structures tailored for implementation phase and ongoing operations following approval.

- The new language anticipated that the governance structure established for implementation would differ from that of the feasibility phase to reflect the distinct requirements and responsibilities associated with implementation and ongoing operations.
- The Leadership group approved these changes, and the finalised TOR are now available on the BC ELN website Shared LSP Feasibility webpage.
- Next steps include selecting a Feasibility Study consultant and finalizing the project communications strategy.

G. Ashoughian thanked S. Parker and J. Bengtson for their feedback.

Arca Migration to New Islandora Platform

- The final partner repository will transition on June 18th, at which point the migration to modern Islandora will be complete across all partner sites.
- The final major component of the Arca migration, the aggregator site allowing search across all Arca repositories, is now ready for launch, with only minor visual adjustments remaining.
- An announcement will be sent to the BC ELN community shortly, highlighting new platform capabilities, the Ministry funding that minimized costs to participating institutions, and the collaborative work of Arca partner sites in establishing shared standards.

Research Data Management

S. Nishimura then introduced A. Gallant to speak about BC ELN's recent investigations into current research data management needs across the province and BC ELN's potential role in this support.

- In 2023, at the Steering Committee's request, BC ELN began to investigate the role of the consortium in supporting RDM. This revealed several areas of needed support and led to five recommendations that can be seen on the Research Data Management Support webpage.
- The Office recently conducted a new RDM Needs Assessment survey with the goal to further understand the challenges partner libraries are currently facing, along with plans to launch an environmental scan of the data repositories used by BC researchers.
- The needs assessment survey had 80% of institutions respond with an even spread across governance categories. Three governance categories had a 100% response rate, with others between 61%-72%.
- The challenges and needs of members were reported across three main categories:
    - **Data deposit requirements:** Information is scattered and guidance changes rapidly. Members highlighted a desire for shared documentation and guidance on best practices. Small institutions highlighted a need for guidance on Indigenous data sovereignty and sensitive data specifically.
    - **Training challenges**: These included limited capacity, limited researcher interest in training, and lack of ready-to-use materials and templates. Small institutions highlighted need to reduce duplication of effort and a desire for training repository and coordination of efforts, including catalogue of existing training or future provincial workshops.
    - **Communication:** Communicating data deposit requirements and engaging with researchers was difficult, as members find it challenging to maintain institution-specific documentation, convince reluctant researchers to deposit, and overcome researcher unfamiliarity with requirements. In this respect, members would welcome ready-to-use messaging and facilitation of peer sharing sessions to share strategies.

- The Office is finalizing the survey analysis and drafting the report and environmental scan. In late Summer/early Fall, the Office will engage in knowledge mobilization and connection with groups examining repository characteristics, such as the Data Repositories Expert Group and small institutions, via RDM Small institutions Community of Practice (SiCOP).
- The Office will also complete implementation of the original recommendations, including building a repository of materials and investigating facilitation of peer sharing sessions and communities of practice.
- Once complete, the final report and environmental scan will be sent to the Steering Committee for approval and posted on the BC ELN website.

Operations

S. Nishimura provided an overview of the day-to-date operations of BC ELN, which happen in conjunction with the work outlined above, and reminded the Committee about the reports and progress updates available on the BC ELN website. Highlights included:

- The Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Collective, an internal team led by co-chairs A. Gallant and K. McCallum, facilitating the strategic work of advancing JEDI principles within the BC ELN workplace and across the consortium;
- Consortial finances processing ~$11 million in flowthrough vendor invoices and library billing;
- Technical infrastructure work, currently focused on consulting with SFU IT and our Arca and Illume vendors about the upcoming Nutanix server migration and migrating the current BC ELN website to updated Drupal infrastructure.

7. New Business

There was no new business.

8. Wrap-up

The next Steering Committee meeting will be in-person following the All-Partner Meeting held on December 4th, 2026, at La Salle College in Vancouver. More information is forthcoming.