BC Electronic Library Network

Innovation & Success 2020

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Photo provided by Justice Institute of British Columbia.

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All institutional photographs courtesy of the institution.

A note about non-institution images: At the 2020 BC ELN All Partner Library meeting, library directors were asked to select photographs from unsplash.com that express how they see "Collaboration through Challenge". Some of these photographs have been included in this report.

Chair's Message

Innovation and success looked very different in 2020 for post-secondary libraries than it has in previous years. COVID-19 disrupted in-person service delivery and interrupted procedures, forcing institutions to reconsider usual processes. Fortunately, BC ELN's established services – from licensing electronic resources to resource sharing – were there to support institutions as they 'pivoted to online'. As the pandemic compelled educators to adapt their in-person curricula to virtual learning environments, BC ELN's:

- online learner support services AskAway and WriteAway saw record-breaking traffic; institutions recognized the need and pooled resources to add staffing and service hours

- licensed e-journals, e-books, and streaming content supported online studies; libraries saved money with BC ELN collaborative licensing

- Illume Support Centre guided libraries through uncertainties of sharing resources during the pandemic

- Arca Digital Repository grew by thousands more digitized theses, newsletters, images, and more, all available for exploration online

You'll read stories and see images in this report showing the innovative spirit of BC ELN partner libraries. Masks, social distancing, curbside pickup, and online delivery of services are just some of the ways we have adapted to the changed needs of our students, educators, and researchers. 2020 hasn't been an easy year, but BC ELN partner libraries have been able to count on the fruits of collaboration to succeed even through adversity.

- Susan Parker

On left, Susan Parker, BC ELN Steering Committee Chair and University Librarian at the University of British Columbia. On right, Anita Cocchia, Executive Director of the BC Electronic Library Network.

Support in Difficult Times

Through a year of uncertainty and unexpected disruptions to in-person services, BC ELN was there to support partner libraries. BC ELN provided reliable access to electronic resources through collaborative licensing, and where possible, resource sharing. Institutions leaned into established online services AskAway and WriteAway, and partner libraries continued to capitalize on shared services like Arca to open digital collections to the world - an endeavour more important than ever.

Shelter from the Storm: Collaborative Licensing

- 33 partner libraries benefit
- 925 electronic resource licenses collectively held by partner libraries in 2020
- 30% average savings on electronic resources
- BC ELN's collaborative approach to licensing saved partner libraries 4.2 million dollars in 2020

Capacity for More: Learner Supports AskAway & WriteAway

- 31 AskAway participants, 18 WriteAway participants
- 42 extra days of AskAway service in 2020, 15 extra days of WriteAway service in 2020
- 60,847 reference questions answered on AskAway, 6,850 assignments received feedback from WriteAway tutors
- AskAway and WriteAway achieved cost avoidance of 2.58 million dollars for the sector in 2020

Guidance through Uncertainty: Resource Sharing

- 102 provincial partners benefit from Illume
- 510 support cases filled by the Illume Support Centre
- 39,000 items shared via Illume in 2020
- Illume's centralized coordination and shared infrastructure saved public and post-secondary sectors 1.53 million dollars in 2020

Strength in Numbers: Arca Digital Repository

- 33 Arca members benefit

- 7 GLAM organizations joined Arca in 2020

- 122,000 total items available via Arca, including faculty publications, student research, and photographs

- Shared infrastructure, storage, and coordination saved Arca participants 1.54 million dollars in 2020

Supporting Students, Educators, and Researchers in Unprecedented Times

In 2020, online access to information and services was paramount for the teaching and learning community. With BC ELN:

- The post-secondary sector had access to 1.5 million e-books, 130,000 electronic journals, magazines, and newspapers, and 169,000 videos through BC ELN's licences.

- AskAway and WriteAway gave students a place to go online for expert help with research and writing. Both services expanded their semesters to offer more availability, and both saw record-breaking usage.

- Students and educators were able to continue requesting and receiving electronic articles through the BC ELN Illume interlibrary loan service.

- The Arca Digital Repository continued to grow with shared scholarship and research. Arca received 131,000 visits from individuals around the globe.

Photo of Columbia Bible College Library.

Collaborative Licensing

In 2020, partner libraries collectively held close to 1,000 licenses through BC ELN for resources and services that supported learning and research needs during the pandemic.

Support Through COVID-19

In addition to maintaining a consistent schedule of offers and renewals, BC ELN:

- facilitated resource upgrades in cases where publishers opened access to their electronic resources due to COVID-19;

- signed the [International Coalition of Library Consortia's Statement on the Global COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Library Services and Resources](#), informing vendors and publishers of the pandemic's effects on the information community and requesting actions that will ease hardships; and

- streamlined billing payment processes to reduce labour and decrease handling of physical materials by moving payments to electronic funds transfer (EFT); 91% of partner libraries switched to EFT.

Crucial Cross-Consortial Collaboration

BC ELN and sister consortia The Alberta Library (TAL), the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL), and the Electronic Health Library of BC (eHLbc) collectively negotiated low common inflationary renewal rate increases for EBSCO and ProQuest resources, resulting in:

- renewal increases kept at a low 0-2% across the board

- significant cost savings for approximately ninety-six institutions across four provinces

- guaranteed predictability for budgets

Did you know: Half of BC ELN's licenses are negotiated in collaboration with other library consortia.

Exploring the Future of the Common Suite

The Common Suite is a unique multi-year bundle of resources that provides equity to the BC post-secondary system while delivering considerable discounts to BC ELN partner libraries.

With the current three-year licence set to expire May 31, 2021, partner libraries began a process this year to investigate a possible next iteration. As administrative lead, the BC ELN Office:

- conducted three surveys for feedback on approach, process, and initial proposal;

- created the "Common Suite Web" - a website to share background and incoming information about the Common Suite, and provide a forum for library questions;

- supported partner library discussions via four watercooler sessions; and

- negotiated an initial common suite proposal, shared in November.

In consultation with an external facilitator, the Office is arranging partner library meetings for early 2021. The consortium will explore decision-making and communally discuss the future of the Common Suite.

Did you know: Partner libraries save 65% on the Common Suite, a shared set of online resources that serves the broad needs of undergraduate students.

A quote from Derek Yap, Manager Library & Technology Services, Yukon University:

"There is no question that 2020 was a challenging year for many institutions, and it was no different at Yukon University. BC ELN helped us greatly by maintaining and increasing access to online resources. This access was fundamental not only because of new demands regarding online delivery during the pandemic, but also because of our new university status."

Photo of Yukon University Library.

Learner Support

AskAway and WriteAway saw record-setting usage in 2020, a testament to the importance of these learner support services.

AskAway Chat Reference

When COVID-19 halted in-person library services in the spring, students turned to the well-established online chat reference service in higher numbers than ever; traffic increased by 62% in 2020 over the previous year. Staff recognized the need to extend this virtual support and cooperatively added forty-two extra days to the service to increase student access.

Responding with Empathy

AskAway institutional coordinators created strategies to support both service providers as well as students who may be feeling stressed during the pandemic. A blog post and scripts were released for service providers to use, aimed at empathetically turning interactions around when students are frustrated.

Quote from a Douglas College AskAway user: "It's so great that [AskAway is] available for immediate assistance on the weekends. Especially right now during COVID-19 it makes finding what you need much easier."

Did you know: Students can chat live with AskAway library staff any day of the week during the semester. The service is open most days until 9 pm.

Institution spotlight: College of the Rockies Library is open during the pandemic with reduced hours and services. Students are making good use of the space while following protocols.

In addition to offering instructional workshops via Zoom, library staff offer virtual assistance through AskAway. The feedback is positive: "Thanks for an awesome service!" say students.

Photo of College of the Rockies Library.

WriteAway Online Tutoring

As students adjusted to ongoing emergency remote learning, WriteAway saw a 56% increase in submissions in the early months of the pandemic, with usage remaining high through the rest of 2020. To meet the increased need, the service was extended by two additional weeks in the January-April semester.

Quote by Julia Lane, Writing Services Coordinator at Simon Fraser University: "When the pandemic forced us to close the in-person Student Learning Commons at SFU, it was a busy time of year (March). We were very conscious to ensure that we were open and accessible to students. WriteAway was like a security blanket. We were able to tell people, "this service hasn't changed, we are still available.""

Did you know: WriteAway Coordinator Megan Robertson published an article called [Asynchronous Affordances: WriteAway's Pandemic Experience](#).

Community Growth and Connection

In 2020 the WriteAway Administrative Centre welcomed a new member and sought ways to deepen connections with the writing community.

- Alexander College joined WriteAway, bringing the total number of participating institutions to eighteen.

- Institutional coordinators met regularly to share information, with a particular focus on acknowledging tutors on the front-lines.

- The Administrative Centre developed "grab and go" social media promotional kits for institutions to broaden marketing of the service and reach more students.

Resource Sharing

BC ELN supports activities that strengthen the entire research cycle from discovery to delivery, including the [Illume Interlibrary Resource Sharing Service](). Illume is jointly supported by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training through BC ELN, and the Ministry of Education through the Libraries Branch.

Illuminating the Way

2020 began with big plans for interlibrary resource sharing, a key project being the elimination of interlibrary loan (ILL) fees for non-returnable items between BC ELN partner libraries. COVID-19 forced a shift in priorities, and in March 2020 the Illume Support Centre swiftly moved into support mode.

As public and post-secondary libraries grappled with new restrictions around sharing physical resources, the Illume Support Centre provided front-line assistance by:

- facilitating province-wide communications;

- establishing closing and re-opening ILL procedures; and

- tapping into the network of other Auto-Graphic SHAREit users across North America to keep the service in step with actions taking place in other jurisdictions.

Back to Work: Eliminating ILL Fees

With ILL activities settling near the end of the year, BC ELN returned to work on the [elimination of ILL fees for non-returnables](). In December, library directors approved the [Illume Benefits & Responsibilities](), which outline system protocols and will serve as an important foundational document.

Cleaner, Faster, Better! The Union Database Project

Students and library users don't need to know all the intricacies at play when they request a document through ILL, but they do deserve the most streamlined experience possible.

The Union Database Project is aimed at cleaning up records "behind the scenes" in the BC Union Catalogue (BCUC) so the Illume system runs more smoothly. In 2020 the project improved processes, fulfillment times, and shelf availability checks, and streamlined work flows overall for both users and ILL staff.

Shared Services

BC ELN works with partner libraries and stakeholders in BC and beyond to coordinate, develop, and implement shared services that benefit all participants.

Arca Digital Repository

Arca expanded in 2020 with the addition of seven new sites. Close to forty thousand items were added to the Arca Digital Repository, including newsletters, theses, and historical photographs. To support this growth and improve site performance, the Arca Administrative Centre fortified infrastructure in a number of ways, from building new module features that support larger amounts of content to strengthening server architecture.

New Arca Sites in 2020

grunt gallery, Hazleton Oral Histories Project, Karen Jamieson Dance Society, Mount Royal University, University of the Fraser Valley Library Technician Program, Vancouver Public Library, and White Rock Museum & Archives

Did you know: The Arca site had 131,000 visits from 207 distinct countries in 2020.

GLAM Sector Support: The BCHDP-Arca Hosting Initiative

Past, present, and future GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) organizations receiving a BC History Digitization Program (BCHDP) grant have access to free, standards-based hosting for their online collections into 2025 thanks to an extension of the BCHDP-Arca Hosting Initiative.

The initiative is a joint effort between BC ELN and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at the University of British Columbia Library. Four new sites took advantage of the offer in 2020.

EHLbc: Cross-Consortial Synergies

BC ELN acts as the Administrative Centre for sister consortium the Electronic Health Library of BC (eHLbc), providing project management, licence negotiation, and technical support on a cost-recovery basis.

Two consortia co-existing under one "roof" produces multiple synergies – expertise is shared, and similar processes are streamlined. To read more about eHLbc activities, please visit the eHLbc Progress Reports page.

Partner Libraries

BC ELN brings post-secondary libraries together to collaboratively meet the expanding information needs of learners, educators, and researchers in BC, Yukon, and beyond. This collaborative approach creates multiple opportunities for cost savings and results in equitable, affordable access to educational resources and services for the province.

- Acsenda School of Management
- Alexander College
- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Coast Mountain College
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Columbia Bible College
- Columbia College
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Art + Design
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

- North Island College
- Northern Lights College
- Okanagan College
- Quest University Canada
- Royal Roads University
- Selkirk College
- Simon Fraser University
- Thompson Rivers University
- Trinity Western University
- University Canada West
- University of British Columbia
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of the Fraser Valley
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University
- Yukon University

BC ELN held its first ever virtual All Partner Meeting in 2020. Recognizing that we all needed a little extra TLC this year, the Office sent packets of tea and branded cookies to library directors to enjoy at the meeting. The core topic was Collaboration through Challenge, with attendees discussing how the pandemic has affected their work, and how instances of collaboration have made a positive impact during the pandemic.

Upholding Ministry Priorities

BC ELN's work aligns with and supports Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training goals and priorities.

Economic Recovery

Proper training and education are crucial to economic recovery. BC ELN supports students, educators, and researchers by providing access to critical learning resources, student success support through AskAway and WriteAway, and cross-provincial access to resources and services regardless of a student's location.

Affordable, Accessible Education

Students, educators, and researchers are the ultimate beneficiaries of BC ELN's collaborative approach and cost savings. BC ELN negotiates discounted prices on electronic resources, saving the sector millions, and collaborative services are highly affordable thanks to a shared administrative infrastructure and pooling of expertise.

Investment in Health

For over ten years, BC ELN has served as the administrative centre of the Electronic Health Library of British Columbia (eHLbc). EHLbc includes 51 members across the post-secondary and health sectors. Thanks to group licensing, eHLbc saves its members millions of dollars and provides equitable access to online health resources (including journals, books, and videos) for students, educators, and health care professionals, wherever they are located.

Support for Indigenous Content

BC ELN negotiates licences for Indigenous content on behalf of partner institutions. The Arca Digital Repository allows institutions to showcase Indigenous content in appropriate ways. The platform supports Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels, which allow communities to express local and specific conditions for interacting with the content available through Arca.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

BC ELN staff attend a range of conferences and workshops that focus on Indigenous issues, representation, and racism. A focus on accessibility has resulted in a closer alignment of the BC ELN website and BC ELN reports to accessibility standards.

Institution spotlight: The Library at the British Columbia Institute of Technology adapted to COVID-19 conditions by making use of resources and services that were already in place prior to the lockdown, including AskAway, WriteAway, and 23 e-resources licensed through BC ELN. In October, the Burnaby Campus Library partially re-opened with 40 bookable study tables.

Photo of British Columbia Institute of Technology Library.

Moving Forward

BC ELN is committed to meeting goals as outlined in its [Strategic Plan](#), while remaining responsive to Ministry and partner library needs. Some activities on the horizon:

Common Suite Discussions
BC ELN partner library directors and guests will come together in early February to discuss the Common Suite and utilize a new decision-making model to explore how to proceed in 2021, and subsequently implement the decision.

Elimination of Interlibrary Loan Fees
BC ELN will proceed with work supporting the elimination of ILL fees for non-returnable items between BC ELN partner libraries, including developing best practices for use of the Illume Service, investigating Illume software improvements, and assessing the impacts of system optimizations.

Service Area Terms of Reference Update
With the completion of the BC ELN Steering Committee Terms of Reference refresh, BC ELN will next work on updating its service area terms of reference to ensure alignment of processes and practices.

Strategic Planning
2021 marks the conclusion of BC ELN's five-year strategic plan. The Office will begin consultation with partner libraries on future directions for the consortium.

BC ELN Steering Committee as of December 2020

- Susan Parker, Chair
- Helen Akulova, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training
- Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria
- Gwen Bird, Simon Fraser University
- Andrei Bondoreff, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training
- Anita Cocchia, BC ELN Executive Director
- Rosie Croft, Small Universities
- Ali de Haan, Associate Members
- Natalie Gick, Simon Fraser University Officer
- Brenda Mathenia, Rural Colleges

- Julie Mitchell, University of British Columbia
- Trish Rosseel, Urban Colleges
- Debbie Schachter, Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions

Financials

BC ELN is a partnership between British Columbia's post-secondary libraries and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. BC ELN leverages the Ministry's investment of just under $500,000 to deliver equitable services and incredible savings to the post-secondary sector and beyond.

Core Administration and Illume

Includes core and licensing staff, Illume, and partnership activities.

Core Administration and Illume Revenue		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Core Funding (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)	485,417	485,417
Host Site (SFU) Contribution (Progress through ranks & general wage increases)	209,860	240,008
Illume Interlibrary Loan Service (including Support Centre, etc.)	192,839*[*]	51,535
Miscellaneous Revenue (Associate Membership Fees, Carryforward, Prepayments, Resource Sharing support, etc.)	237,495	229,648
Total	1,125,611	1,006,608

Core Administration and Illume Expenses		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Salaries & Benefits	551,278	628,853
Host Support (SFU)	56,000	56,000
AskAway Chat Reference Contribution	8,000	10,000
Arca Digital Repository Contribution	8,000	10,000
WriteAway Online Tutoring Contribution	10,000	10,000
Illume InterLibrary Loan Service (BCUC hosting, Support Centre)	216,275	219,751
BC Historical Digitization Program, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC - Arca Support	5,760	5,860
Digital BC, BC ELN Contribution	2,474	2,500
Administration/Communication/Governance	27,322	4,132
Technical Infrastructure	6,358	12,362
Total	891,467	959,458

Core/Illume Revenue minus Expenses (Carryforward): 234,144 (2019/20 Actual); 47,150 (2020/21 Projected)

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[*] includes $138,339 prepayment for 2019/20.

AskAway

AskAway Revenue		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Partner Library Support (Service Support Fee & Flexible Contribution)	95,610	96,569
BC ELN Contribution	8,000	10,000
Miscellaneous Revenue (Carryforward, Marketing, etc.)	2,884	2,152
Total	106,494	108,721

AskAway Expenses		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	87,164	89,118
Administration/Communication/Governance	340	1,233
Software & Technical Infrastructure	17,195	14,542
Total	104,699	104,893

AskAway Revenue minus Expenses (Carryforward): 1,795 (2019/20 Actual); 3,828 (2020/21 Projected)

WriteAway

WriteAway Revenue		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Partner Institution Support Fee (Service & Infrastructure)	50,256	54,274
BC ELN Contribution	10,000	10,000
Miscellaneous Revenue - 2019/20 Carryforward of ($2,207), Marketing etc. revenue of $579	-1,628	1,603
Total	58,628	65,877

WriteAway Expenses		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	48,122	50,986
Administration/Communication/Governance	1,110	352
Software & Technical Infrastructure	8,842	8,842
Total	58,074	60,180

WriteAway Revenue minus Expenses (Carryforward): 554 (2019/20 Actual); 5,697 (2020/21 Projected)

Arca

Arca Revenue

	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected

Member Service Support:
    Service Support Fees
    Additional Support Fees
    Additional Storage Fees
	121,679	129,838

BC ELN Contribution	8,000	10,000
Miscellaneous (Unrestricted and targeted carryforward, etc.)	15,791	19,661
Total	145,470	159,499

Arca Expenses

	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	96,314	93,996
Islandora Foundation Membership	4,000	4,000
Security Service Implementation	n/a	6,335
Administration/Communication/Governance	3,203	848
Vendor Support & Technology Infrastructure	22,292	33,529
Targeted Carryforward: Migration to Islandora 8	15,000	15,000
Total	140,809	153,708

Arca Revenue minus Expenses (Carryforward): 4,661 (2019/20 Actual); 5,791 (2020/21 Projected)

Licensing

Flow-through finances for licensing activities.

Licensing Revenue		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Carryforward	75,872	-53,227
Partner Library Contributions	4,872,355	5,436,069
Total	4,948,227	5,382,842

Licensing Expenses		
	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Projected
Payments to Vendors	5,001,454	5,370,126
Total	5,001,454	5,370,126

Licensing Revenue minus Expenses (Carryforward): -53,227 (2019/20 Actual); 12,716 (2020/21 Projected)

BCELN

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC LIBRARY NETWORK

Contact Information:

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