

BC ELN Member Engagement Report

Released November 2024

Executive Summary

Survey Goal

The BC Electronic Library Network (BC ELN)'s [2023-27 Strategic Framework](#) calls upon the organization to “empower and engage our community”. To support this direction, in spring 2024 BC ELN conducted a Member Engagement Survey to assess the kinds of connection, learning, and knowledge-sharing experiences the BC ELN community would benefit from. Results of the survey will inform the types of engagement and connection experiences that BC ELN hosts for its members in the future.

Demographics

135 staff members from 28 of BC ELN's [34 partner libraries](#) responded to the survey. Of the respondents:

- 40% were Librarians
- 23% were Library Technicians
- 15% were Writing Centre Staff
- 10% were Library Directors

The remaining percentage held other roles at their institutions. The diversity of roles and range of perspectives provides a well-rounded understanding of the engagement needs within the network.

Key Findings: Eager to Connect and Learn Together

The survey results showed a strong interest in connection and learning opportunities among BC ELN partner library staff, with **an overwhelming 98% of respondents indicating that they were moderately to very interested in opportunities to connect and learn.**

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The survey's findings suggest that enhancing these opportunities would not only meet the expressed interests of the community but also strengthen the overall connectivity and

collaboration within the consortium while moving towards the goals laid out within the strategic framework.

Survey Results

The BC ELN Member Engagement Survey assessed community connection levels and interest in expanding collaborative learning opportunities. By “community,” we mean the staff working at BC ELN’s 34 partner libraries (e.g., library technicians, librarians, library directors) and staff involved in BC ELN services (e.g., writing centre staff who contribute to WriteAway).

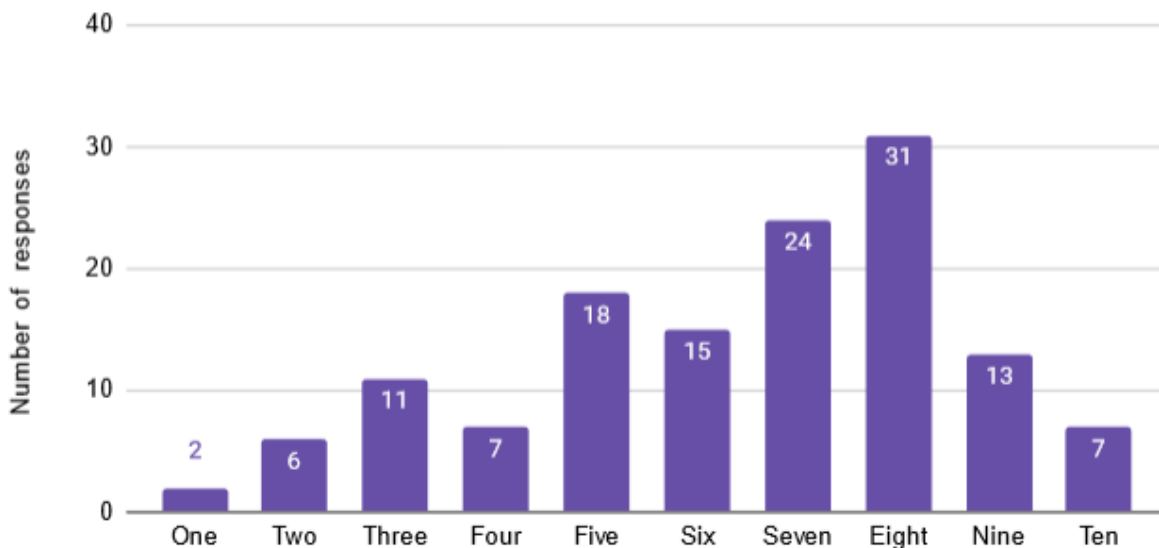
We defined the feeling of professional connection as:

“a sense of rapport, mutual respect, and collaborative spirit that an individual experiences with their colleagues and within their network. This includes feeling valued, understood, and supported, and having a sense of belonging to a community of professionals.”

With this definition in mind, we asked how connected respondents felt to the BC ELN community. Over half (55%) indicated a fairly strong sense of connection with their peers (7 or higher out of 10).

How connected do you currently feel to the BC ELN community?

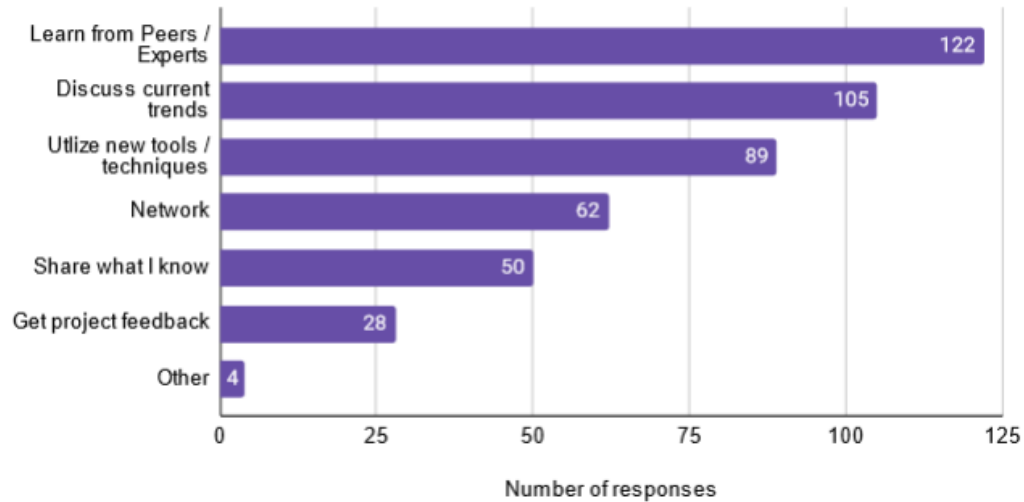
(1 = Not at all connected, 10 = Very connected)



We also asked respondents why they wanted to connect with their peers. The top two reasons were to learn from peers and experts, and to discuss current trends.

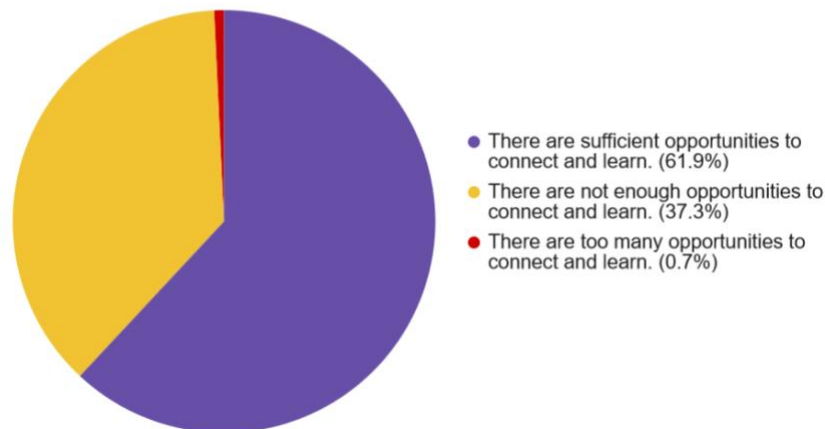
What drives you to want to connect?

(Multiple answers allowed)



BC ELN is just one of many avenues for member connection and learning – formal or informal. For example, library staff also connect with one another through the BC Library Association, its sections (e.g., BC Academic Libraries, Library Technicians), and other professional groups and events. Similarly, writing centre staff connect through various professional networks. Survey responses supported this assumption, with the majority of respondents (62%) indicating that sufficient opportunities to connect and learn already exist. That said, there seems to be a gap for some, with 37% responding that there are not enough opportunities to connect and learn.

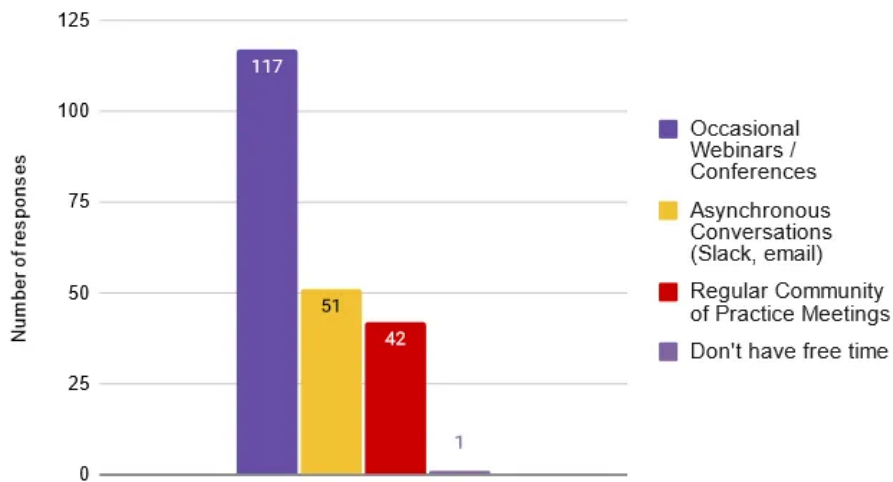
What do you think of the number of professional development opportunities for connection and learning that currently exist?



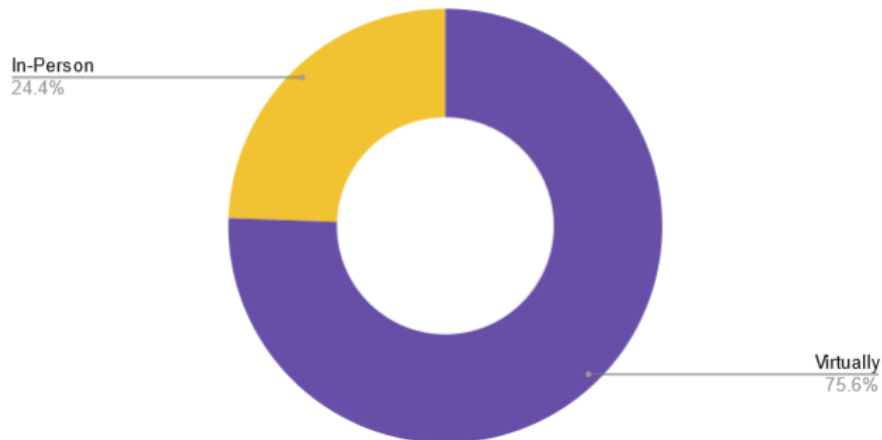
Recognizing the learning and connection opportunities currently available in the post-secondary sector, we aimed to identify ways to complement existing efforts. To that end, we asked respondents how much time they have for connection opportunities, and their preferred methods for connection.

While there is interest among a portion of respondents to attend regular community of practice meetings (31%) and to communicate via asynchronous online conversations (38%), the vast majority indicated they would like to connect with one another by attending one-off webinars and conferences when their schedule allows (87%). Additionally, 75% indicated a preference to connect with one another online (e.g. via online meetings or digital collaboration spaces) over in-person events.

How much time can you commit to connection opportunities?

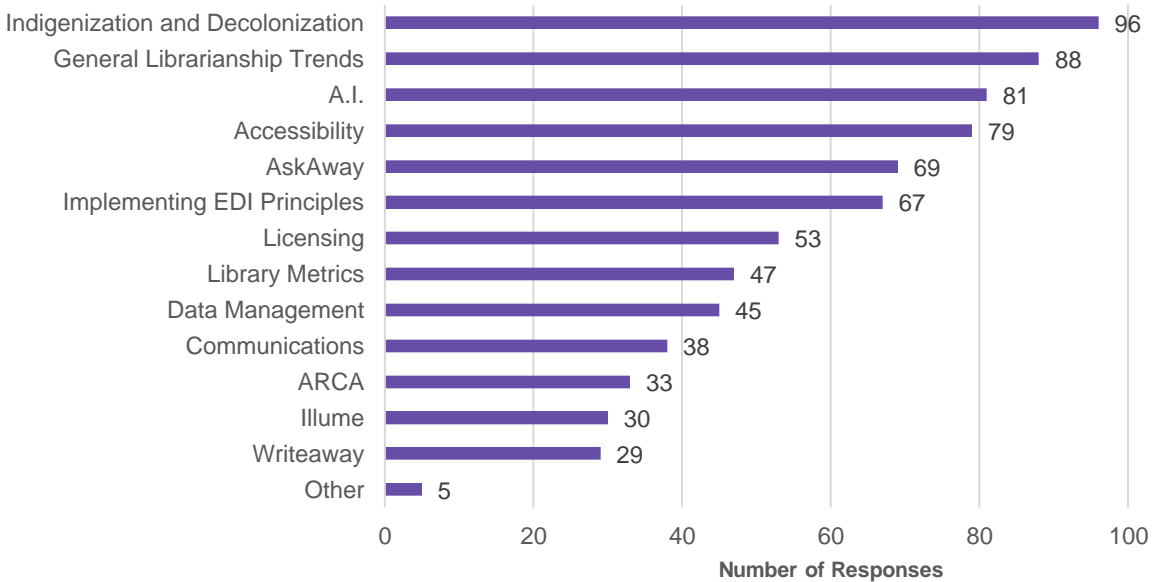


How do you prefer to connect with your professional community?



Survey responses showed varied preferences for potential discussion or learning topics. However, there was a strong consensus that the most valued aspects of such a gathering would be networking and open discussion.

What topics do you want to discuss? (Multiple answers allowed)



Through open comments, respondents also shared valuable insights into what fosters a sense of belonging in a community, along with examples of recent impactful events and learning opportunities. Key aspects to integrate into our future community-building efforts include:

- **Safe and Inclusive Spaces:** Whether online or in person, spaces should feel safe and welcoming. Tools like Codes of Conduct and responsive design can help achieve this.
- **Informal Social Opportunities:** Professional learning events should include time for informal socializing, as respondents value chances to connect over non-work topics.
- **Opportunities to Contribute:** Respondents emphasized the importance of having ways to share knowledge and make a meaningful impact within the community.
- **Clear Support Contacts:** Knowing who to contact for support and feeling comfortable reaching out fosters a stronger sense of connection.

What makes you feel like you belong to a community? (example responses)

“Being able to share my ideas/thoughts/ramblings in a safe and non-judgmental/supportive environment. Essentially when my natural introversion can tip over to feeling a bit more extroverted and comfortable to speak out loud!”

“Being actively involved in sharing knowledge, periodic meetings (either in-person or face-to-face), feeling like my presence makes a difference/impact within that group, being aware of what's going on within the community.”

“Being recognized as relevant, having shared values and ideals, feeling welcomed.”

“Being included, having my voice heard.”

“Having personal connections that I know I can rely on when I have questions or need support (and also being a personal connection that others can rely on when they have questions and need support).”

“A sense of shared professional practice and values; regular communication within the community.”

“Feeling like I can ask a question without being judged. Being alongside others in similar roles with similar circumstances to navigate. Collaborative problem solving.”

Recommendations

Based on the survey results and the goals of the BC ELN Strategic Framework, offering regular online or hybrid webinars for BC ELN partner library staff is a logical next step. Members expressed a strong interest in more opportunities for connection and learning. Online webinars offer valuable chances for discussion and networking while addressing practical limitations such as travel and event costs.

These webinars should align with the needs and preferences of the BC ELN community:

Offer Flexible and Diverse Event Formats:

- **Online and Hybrid Options:** While online webinars are convenient in a geographically dispersed network like BC ELN's, where possible, BC ELN should explore taking a hybrid approach, accommodating geographic constraints and busy schedules while still allowing in-person connection for those who are able to attend. Recorded sessions can further support accessibility.

- **Diverse Learning Experiences:** Consider a mix of formats, including conferences, workshops, and interactive exercises. Respondents appreciated hands-on activities (e.g., zine-making) and practical exercises at other organizational events, which could be expanded upon.

Foster Inclusivity and Create Safe Spaces:

- **Foster Safe, Inclusive Environments:** Establish accountability guidelines to ensure all voices are heard in a respectful, non-judgmental space.
- Connect with organizers of other events noted via the survey for their inclusive designs and experiences.

Value Personal Connection and Shared Experience:

- Facilitate the building of personal relationships through the use of icebreakers and other social activities outside of purely work topics.

Vary Webinar, Conference, and Discussion Topics:

- Vary discussion topics so that everyone has a chance to contribute towards something familiar.
- Survey respondents had the highest interest in Indigenization, General Library Trends, Artificial Intelligence, and Accessibility as potential topics.

Recognizing that BC ELN is just one avenue for professional connection and development, BC ELN should also consider ways to support connection via other groups. BC ELN might propose sessions at the BC Library Conference, sponsor events with other professional organizations, or co-host events to further enrich professional learning opportunities.

Conclusion

BC ELN has an opportunity to support its 2023-27 Strategic Framework goal of “empowering and engaging our community” by developing webinars and learning opportunities for staff at partner institutions. The need and interest for these activities were highlighted in our Member Engagement survey. Successful events like Code4Lib, the BCLA Library Conference, and the Canadian Writing Centres Association conference offer models that BC ELN could emulate or contribute to. By providing meaningful, tailored events and resources, BC ELN can strengthen its mission of supporting and connecting library professionals across all its partner institutions.