

BC Electronic Library Network: Innovation & Success 2023



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Message from the Chair

I am pleased to present the 2023 Innovation & Success report as Chair of the BC ELN Steering Committee. We saw significant developments in the evolution of our consortium in 2023, and I am confident these changes will position BC ELN for continued success.

Notably in 2023, we said farewell to retiring Executive Director Anita Cocchia, who dedicated 23 years of exemplary service to BC ELN. Her leadership shaped our organization, and we are grateful for the legacy she leaves behind. In her place, BC ELN welcomed new Executive Director Sunni Nishimura, who brings over 15 years of consortial experience to the role. Sunni's transition has been smooth, and we anticipate positive progress under her leadership as BC ELN's services and initiatives continue to advance.

Aligning with our new Strategic Framework, BC ELN has begun the work of implementing key goals. Services like AskAway are developing action plans, leveraging our collaborative approach to meet the demands of a dynamic academic landscape.

In response to the evolving needs of BC ELN partner libraries, the consortium is implementing strategic changes. As one example: the long-standing "all-in" Common Suite, designed to meet undergraduate academic needs, is being phased out. In its place, BC ELN has introduced the Undergraduate Resource Bundle, an opt-in alternative that maintains significant discounts on resources that serve broader needs of undergraduates, while offering flexibility to institutions.

On the technological front, the consortium is actively updating infrastructure supporting the Arca Digital Repository, and there are plans to migrate BC ELN websites to Drupal 9. These upgrades are crucial to ensure the continuity and enhancement of our services.

Reflecting on the many changes of the last year, I believe we can look toward the future with optimism. Our consortium is not static; it adapts and grows to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Here's to a future marked by innovation, collaboration, and the sustained success of BC ELN.

- Trish Rosseel



Photo 1: Trish Rosseel, Director, Learning Resources & Records Management, Privacy Officer, Douglas College, BC ELN Steering Committee Chair

BC ELN Executive Leadership Transition

After 23 years at the helm, BC ELN Executive Director Anita Cocchia retired in 2023. During her tenure at BC ELN, Anita oversaw a multitude of transformative changes. Under her guidance, the consortium developed BC's first interlibrary loan management system, which revolutionized resource sharing among provincial libraries. Anita's strategic vision and negotiation skills propelled the growth of BC ELN's licensing program, and many of BC ELN's highly successful collaborative services – including Arca, AskAway, and WriteAway – grew and flourished under her care. The BC ELN community celebrated her contributions and legacy at a retirement event in the summer.



New Executive Director Sunni Nishimura

After an international search, Sunni Nishimura was appointed BC ELN Executive Director for a five-year term. On her appointment, Nishimura commented: “I believe a healthy BC ELN consortium is critical to support a thriving community of diverse post-secondary library partners. I look forward to leading the stellar BC ELN team and a resilient BC ELN consortium into the next five years with joy, hope, and collective engagement.”



Photo 2: Sunni Nishimura

Savings and Impact

BC ELN leverages the Ministry’s yearly investment of just under \$500,000 to help the sector avoid expenses amounting to millions of dollars. Efforts are concentrated in four key areas: group licensing, resource sharing, learner support, and shared services. Between all four service areas, BC ELN saves the province \$11.4 million dollars.

In addition to saving libraries money, BC ELN:

- reduces duplicated efforts across libraries, saving staff time
- enables libraries to offer much more than they could alone
- fosters communities of practice to develop staff skills and knowledge
- works with partners to achieve mutually beneficial goals
- supports students, faculty, and researchers in accessing information and support online - just about anytime they need it.

The Power of Collaboration

BC ELN saves libraries millions of dollars on electronic resources for students by leveraging collective subscription power. BC ELN negotiates bulk discounts and more favorable contractual terms on behalf of members. Centralized license management increases efficiency across institutions and reduces financial burdens on individual libraries. BC ELN also allies strategically with other consortia to deliver even better savings.

- Partner libraries collectively saved 4.5 million dollars on licensed digital resources in 2023 through the strength of group subscriptions.
- BC ELN negotiates licenses for a wide variety of digital resources, such as journal databases, e-book collections, streaming videos, and newspaper collections. In 2023, partner libraries collectively licensed 1,050 products, services, and add-ons through BC ELN.
- BC ELN licensing staff work hard to keep annual increases as low as possible on product renewals. In 2023 BC ELN succeeded at keeping the average annual price increase to just 1.87%
- In 2023, BC ELN participated in 29 agreements in partnership with Consortia Canada. Consortia Canada brings library consortia across the nation together to license electronic resources for the best possible price.

Service Achievements

BC ELN unites post-secondary libraries, fostering a collaborative and equitable approach to address the evolving information needs of learners, educators, and researchers throughout BC and the Yukon. This is accomplished through services dedicated to group licensing, resource sharing, online learning support, and the pursuit of shared objectives through strategic partnerships.

Group Licensing

BC ELN seeks out top-quality electronic resources and negotiates the best possible price on behalf of partner libraries. Resources are more affordable for libraries, and students get 24/7 access to online articles, e-books, streaming media, and more.

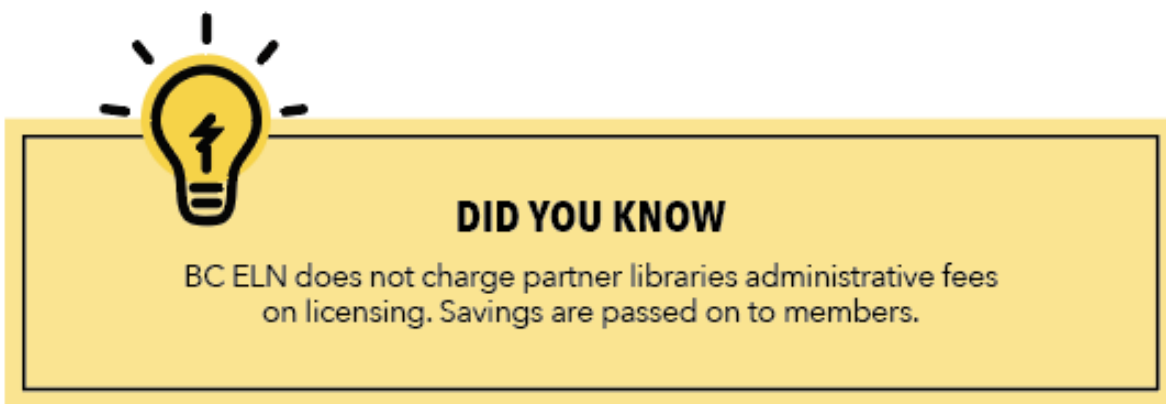
2023 Achievements

Completed a consultative process to establish the new Undergraduate Resource Bundle (URB) for partner libraries. With the all-in Common Suite phasing out in 2024, the URB is an opt-in alternative for institutions seeking to license Academic Search and Business Source.

Negotiations were completed in 2023, with 30 of BC ELN's 34 partner libraries committing to licensing the new bundle in 2024.

Updated and launched a new BC ELN Model License. Updating the Model License terms and conditions was a substantial project which involved an extensive review of licensing documentation from national and international consortia, consultation with a licensing expert, and collaboration with fellow licensing colleagues. The new Model License, which communicates the consortium's ideal terms, has been adopted with minimal changes by BC ELN's two largest vendors, EBSCO and ProQuest.

Contributed to a growing ConsortiaManager community of practice. In 2022, BC ELN transitioned to using ConsortiaManager to support licensing workflows. Since that time BC ELN staff have regularly joined with staff at other consortia – both national and international – to strategize optimal ways of working with the software and the vendor.



Resource Sharing

BC ELN manages Illume, the interlibrary loan service that connects public and post-secondary libraries in BC and the Yukon. With Illume, patrons can request and access items held outside their home libraries.

2023 Achievements

Negotiated a highly favourable new 5-year contract for SHAREit, the software used to power Illume. The agreement includes waived implementation costs for a variety of new and existing software features. This allows Illume libraries to explore enhancing patron-initiated interlibrary loans with automated authentication options and reduced staff workflow through SHAREit to ILS automation.

Onboarded BC ELN Associate Member Alexander College as a new participating institution. Alexander College is the second BC ELN Associate Member to open its collection to interlibrary loan via Illume.

Advocated for several technology enhancements on behalf of members that were approved for implementation by Auto-Graphics, the SHAREit software vendor. Illume Support Centre staff actively participate in the Auto-Graphics User Group and bring forward requests that will improve Illume technology for its members and patrons.



Photo 3: Camosun College Library

Illume: 2023 by the Numbers

- 104 participating Illume members
- 82,000 Interlibrary loan requests filled
- 45,000 Patron-initiated requests submitted
- 458 support cases addressed by the Support Centre
- 80% of Illume's suggested enhancements approved by Auto-Graphics

Online Learning Support

BC ELN coordinates AskAway and WriteAway, two critical provincial learner support services.

AskAway

AskAway connects students and instructors with real-time research help via chat. Participating AskAway institutions staff the service together to help students across BC and the Yukon.

2023 Achievements

Completed an environmental scan to understand AskAway's current environment. The scan included surveys of participating and non-participating AskAway members and a collaborative study of Canadian collaborative chat reference services. AskAway's Action Planning process was informed by the collected data.

Developed an [Action Planning Framework](#), approved by the AskAway Advisory Committee, using a participatory approach that involved all AskAway participating libraries. The Framework sets out two- to three-year priorities for the service.

Utilized Year-2 PSFS bridge funding to hire auxiliary service providers to staff AskAway during peak traffic hours and provide administrative support. The funding ensures that AskAway staffing keeps pace with traffic levels, which have increased significantly since the pandemic began.

Implemented several service enhancements to improve the AskAway experience for users and service providers, including: a new flexible summer collaborative scheduling approach, a new self-paced [AskAway orientation module](#), and updates to AskAway staff help call-out buttons.

"I literally love AskAway, I use it all of the time! ...The service providers are always super helpful, it saves me time, and helps me use the library more efficiently."

– UBC Student

WriteAway

Students at participating WriteAway institutions can submit a draft paper online to receive free, fast, friendly feedback within 48 hours. Participating institutions pool tutoring hours to collaboratively staff the service.

2023 Achievements

Celebrated WriteAway's Ten-Year Anniversary. WriteAway participating institutions marked the occasion with party packs distributed by the Administrative Centre. The packs, which included treats and promotional materials, were designed to allow each institution to commemorate the occasion alongside tutors and students.

Used Year-2 PSFS bridge funding to effectively reduce pressure on participating institutions as staffing meets the "new normal" of increased usage. Strategic application of funding focused on:

- Hiring auxiliary staff and an Asynchronous Writing Tutor to staff the service on evenings/weekends and at peak times, as well as to provide Admin Centre support.
- Bringing on new participating institutions Yukon University and Okanagan College.

Welcomed new Associate Member Coquitlam College to WriteAway. Coquitlam College offers a 2-year Associate of Arts Degree program, an English Certificate program, and a High School program. Students are mostly international with many coming from South Asia.

"Appreciate the quick turnaround time, and the very concise yet constructive feedback provided by the tutor. The WriteAway tutor focused on my requested areas but was also able to point out my other weaknesses that could definitely help my future writing. Thank you very much!"

– Langara College Student

Collaborative Impact

BC ELN’s collaborative approach to online learning support services AskAway and WriteAway delivers benefits to institutions, their students, and the sector.

- Expands Access to Writing and Research Help: Together, libraries and writing centres provide student support beyond what one institution could offer alone.
- Convenient, Low-Barrier, Online Access: Students receive fast, approachable, and expert help from anywhere.
- A Skilled and Connected Community: Service providers build communities of practice and hone their skills by serving a diverse range of students.
- Local and Provincial Cost-Savings: Individual institutions and the post-secondary sector realize cost-savings by being part of a shared service.

AskAway and WriteAway: 2023 by the Numbers

- 56,100 questions answered via AskAway (second highest annual total)
- 308 professionals staff AskAway
- 94% of students say they are likely to return to AskAway*
- 5,637 student papers received feedback from WriteAway tutors
- 4.6 out of a top score of 5 was the typical “helpfulness” rating that students gave their WriteAway experience*
- 80 writing specialists across the province provide assistance through WriteAway

* based on students that completed an exit survey.



DID YOU KNOW

In its ten years of operation, WriteAway has grown from 6 to 21 participating institutions.



Photo 4: Students at University of the Fraser Valley.

Shared Services and Partnerships

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

Arca

Administered by BC ELN, Arca is a digital repository network spanning the province. It serves as a crucial resource for BC ELN partner libraries and smaller GLAM organizations (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) that may lack the human or financial resources to safeguard and provide access to their digital collections.

2023 Achievements

Secured \$500,000 from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to migrate Arca's technical infrastructure – which is reaching end-of-life – to Islandora 2. This critical funding ensures that Arca's digital collections are preserved and openly accessible. The new infrastructure will improve the Arca experience for both member sites and visitors. Made significant progress in preparing for the migration to Islandora 2, including standardizing metadata fields across all repositories and implementing shared vocabularies. BC ELN also successfully negotiated a contract to work with discoverygarden, the vendor for Arca's technical support and maintenance, on the migration.

Expanded to encompass five additional BC ELN institutions within Arca. Arca now comprises 30 “parent sites” (member organizations), of which 22 are partner libraries affiliated with BC ELN. Arca membership has steadily increased since 2017, with an average number of 5 new sites joining each year. This continual expansion serves to enhance the Arca community of practice, introducing fresh voices and diverse perspectives into the collaborative network.

Collaborative Impact

The collaborative approach used by Arca doesn’t just “save money”, although that is a real and compelling benefit. It brings equity into the system by providing custom, supported digital repositories to organizations that could not afford to build and maintain one on their own.

- **Affordability:** By joining Arca, members avoid 77% in costs associated with developing and maintaining an individual Islandora installation.
- **Preservation:** Arca supports preservation of and access to important cultural and institutional heritage assets.
- **Efficiency:** Thanks to its central administration, Arca member sites collectively avoid 39,000 hours of labour each year on developing and maintaining their repositories.
- **Access:** Arca now includes 240,000+ digital assets, including reports, photographs, oral histories, videos, newspapers, and more.

External Partnerships

BC ELN regularly partners with external groups to enhance resource accessibility and achieve mutually beneficial gains.

BCHDP Support Service

Partnership with the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC

BC ELN reduces barriers for organizations by offering support to prospective British Columbia History Digitization Program (BCHDP) grant applicants. In 2023 BC ELN assisted 13 GLAM organizations (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums). Of these, six organizations chose to apply for a BCHDP grant.

BC Assessment Data Access

Partnership with BC Data Service

BC ELN has joined with BC Data Service to make BC Assessment data sets available at partner libraries. BC ELN plays a liaison role in this partnership, and supported the

development of workflows, training, and a communications infrastructure. As of 2023, eight BC ELN institutions have signed on.

Open Journal Hosting

Partnership with the University of Alberta

BC ELN provides Open Journal System (OJS) journal hosting and support to partner libraries. BC ELN has partnered with the University of Alberta Library, which provides free hosting and maintenance, while BC ELN offers coordination and support. As of 2023, six BC ELN partner libraries have published ten journals.

Community Engagement

BC ELN consistently strives to connect with its wider community and external colleagues to broaden perspectives and discover innovative solutions. Within British Columbia, BC ELN meets regularly with fellow sector organizations BCCAT, BCcampus, and EducationPlannerBC to discuss issues affecting the post-secondary sector. Staff members at BC ELN actively participate in both Canadian and international committees and user groups, facilitating the cross-organizational cultivation of expertise.



DID YOU KNOW

Each December BC ELN brings all partner library directors together to discuss issues of importance for the group. In 2023, the All Partner Meeting focused on building future-ready libraries with conversations on Artificial Intelligence and Indigenization.



Photo 5: All Partner Meeting

In 2023, staff members from BC ELN engaged in the following groups:

Auto-Graphics SHAREit User Group
BC Cataloguing and Technical Services Interest Group
BC Library Association
BC Museums Association
BC Open Education Librarians Steering Committee
Canadian Collaborative Chat Reference Services Group
Canadian Research Knowledge Network Platform Technical Subcommittee
Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage (CCDH) Advisory Committee
CCDH Cross Sectoral Capacity Building Working Group
Consortia Canada (Chair)
Consortial Activity Working Group
ConsortiaManager-International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) Working Group (Co-Chair)
DataCite Canada Consortium Governing Committee
DigitalBC Committee
ICOLC Consortial Awareness Group (Chair)
Islandora Coordinating Committee
LocalContexts Technical Implementation Working Group
North American Virtual Reference Online Conference Planning Committee 2023
North American Collaborative Virtual Reference Services Group

Supporting Ministry Priorities

BC ELN operates with core funding from the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and plays an important role in advancing Ministry objectives. Broadly, BC ELN enhances the quality of education offered by post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, ensuring that students, regardless of their study location, enjoy equitable access to academic materials and support.

BC ELN is aligned with Ministry's commitment to lasting and meaningful partnerships with Indigenous peoples in B.C. and has begun exploring ways of including more First Nations-mandated institutions into BC ELN services. BC ELN has also been working to advance the Ministry's Post-secondary Digital Learning Strategy through staff participation in relevant forums and committees.

Moving Forward

BC ELN is committed to meeting goals as outlined in its Strategic Framework, while remaining responsive to Ministry and partner library needs. Some activities on the horizon for early 2024:

- Strengthen operations by filling vacant positions and staff team development.
- Initiate a planning process for the migration of all BC ELN websites to Drupal 9.
- Strengthen engagement between Steering Committee members and constituency groups.
- Explore mechanisms for connection, learning, and knowledge-sharing among all partner libraries.

Strategic Framework

BC ELN's work is directed by the [2023-2027 Strategic Framework](#). The framework outlines the following overarching directions to guide the consortium's progress over five years:

- Develop responsive, inclusive, and sustainable services.
- Empower and engage our community.
- Pursue meaningful, reciprocal partnerships.

Financials

BC ELN is a partnership between British Columbia’s post-secondary libraries and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. 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.

Revenue	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Projected
Core Funding (Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills)	485,417	485,417
Host Site (SFU) Allocation*	356,389	378,389
Illume InterLibrary Loan Service (including Support Centre, etc.)	184,616	199,313
Illume Service Support	11,640	11,900
Miscellaneous Revenue (Associate Membership Fees, Prepayments, Arca Partnerships, etc.)	83,327	41,040
Carryforward	86,070	237,580
Carryforward Projects (includes PSFS Bridge Funding - Year 2)	168,842	n/a
Total	1,376,300	1,353,639

*Host Site Allocation includes Progress Through Ranks & Provincially-funded flow through General Wage Increases.

Expenses	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
Salaries and Benefits (Continuing, Limited Term, and Contract)	722,374	585,208
Host Site Infrastructure Support Fee	56,000	56,000
AskAway Chat Reference Contribution	10,000	10,000
PSFS AskAway Bridge Funding	15,000	15,000
Arca Digital Repository Contribution	10,000	10,000
WriteAway Online Support Contribution	10,000	10,000
PSFS WriteAway Bridge Funding	15,000	15,000
Illume InterLibrary Loan Service (BCUC hosting, Support Centre)	228,359	214,075
Arca Partnership Expenses (BCHDP-Arca Hosting/Support, etc.)	23,920	18,939
Administration/Communication/Governance	25,918	60,135
Technical Infrastructure (including ConsortiaManager, etc.)	22,149	22,751
Total	1,138,720	1,017,108

BC ELN Administration and Illume Revenue minus Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2022/23 Actual Carryforward: \$237,580
- 2023/24 Projected Carryforward: \$336,531

AskAway Chat Research Help

Revenue	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Projected
Partner Library Support (Service Support Fee and Flexible Contribution)	96,113	98,962
BC ELN Contribution	10,000	10,000
PFSF Bridge Funding	15,000	15,000
Miscellaneous (Carryforward, marketing, etc.)	410	4,808
Total	121,523	128,770

Expenses	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	102,932	108,272
Administration/Communication/Governance/Marketing	513	3,968
Software and Technical Infrastructure	13,602	15,260
Total	117,047	127,500

AskAway Revenue minus Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2022/23 Actual Carryforward: \$ 4,476
- 2023/24 Projected Carryforward: \$ 1,270

WriteAway Online Writing Support

Revenue	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Projected
Partner Institution Support Fee	66,507	59,229
BC ELN Contribution	10,000	10,000
PFSF Bridge Funding	15,000	15,000
Miscellaneous (Carryforward, marketing, etc.)	12,494	24,975
Total	104,001	109,204

Expenses	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	66,678	85,987
Administration/Communication/Governance/Marketing	58	4,490
Software and Technical Infrastructure	12,453	9,100
Total	79,190	99,577

WriteAway Revenue minus Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2022/23 Actual Carryforward: \$ 24,811
- 2023/24 Projected Carryforward: \$ 9,627

Arca Digital Repository

Revenue	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Projected
Member Service Support (includes additional storage and support fees)	151,935	180,003
BC ELN Contribution	10,000	10,000
Miscellaneous (Unrestricted and targeted carryforward, etc.)	24,662	41,640
Arca Migration Specialist Salary Reimbursement	n/a	15,138
Total	186,597	246,781

Expenses	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	110,105	127,301
Islandora Foundation Membership	4,000	4,000
Targeted Migration Carryforward	n/a	38,230
External Funding Exploration for Migration	417	n/a
Administration/Communication/Governance	2,994	3,263
Vendor Support and Technology Infrastructure	28,441	25,615
Total	145,957	198,409

Arca Revenue minus Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2022/23 Actual Carryforward: \$ 40,640
- 2023/24 Projected Carryforward: \$ 48,372

Licensing Programme

Flow-through finances for licensing activities.

Revenue	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Projected
Carryforward	(186,656)	(100,471)
Partner Library Contribution	5,194,365	5,746,171
Miscellaneous Revenue (Prepayments, etc.)	9,204	—
Total	5,016,912	5,645,700

Expenses	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
Payment to vendors	5,117,383	5,645,700
Total	5,117,383	5,645,700

Licensing Programme Revenue minus Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2022/23 Actual Carryforward: - \$100,471
- 2023/24 Projected Carryforward: nil



BCELN

BRITISH COLUMBIA
ELECTRONIC LIBRARY NETWORK

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