

PROVINCIAL DIGITAL LIBRARY

SYMPOSIUM

May 10, 2016

8:30 coffee and networking | 9:00 - 16:00
Melville Centre for Dialogue
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Overview

On May 10, 2016, more than 100 representatives from the academic, archive, education, library, and museum sectors gathered to engage in conversation about a shared aspiration for a Provincial Digital Library (PDL) for British Columbia.

This gathering expanded on the topics that were discussed at a smaller group discussion forum on November 4, 2015. To help activate and anchor the dialogue, Loren Fantin, Executive Director of OurDigitalWorld, generously shared her experience in the development of OurOntario.ca. After analysing other similar initiatives and agreeing on a preliminary list of aspirations for a BC PDL, participants discussed a planning framework to help move the ideas into actions.

Participants represented but were not limited to:

- 22 post-secondary institutions
- 20 public library organizations
- 10 K-12 sector groups
- 5 museum / archive participants

May 10th PDL Planning Committee

Tim Atkinson, BC Electronic Library Network Provincial Digital Library Resource Group Chair, Vancouver Island University

Jenny Benedict, Director, West Vancouver Public Library

Anita Cocchia, Executive Director, BC Electronic Library Network

Caroline Daniels, BC Library Association President, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Annette DeFaveri, Executive Director, BC Library Association

Melanie Houlden, Association of BC Public Library Directors Chair and BC Libraries Cooperative Chair, Surrey Public Library

Ben Hyman, Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative

Shirley Lew, Director, Library & Learning Centre, Vancouver Community College

Simon Neame, BC Digitization Coalition Chair, University of British Columbia

Debbie Schachter, Council of Post-Secondary Library Directors Chair, Douglas College

Sandra Singh, Chief Librarian, Vancouver Public Library

Dave Stewart, Digital Manager, Royal BC Museum

Facilitators

Amanda Gibbs and NikNaz Kahnamoui

Lessons from Existing Digital Libraries

In planning the development of a BC PDL, it is instructive to look at other existing digital libraries. While there are similarities between them, there are also significant differences in terms of their governance structure, funding model, scope, content, interface, and technical platform - many of which can be attributed to the broader context within which they were developed and operate. A deeper examination and analysis of the differences and similarities of these aggregators within a BC context can help facilitate more informed decisions in the process of developing a BC PDL. Through a brief examination of OurOntario, Canadiana, Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), Europeana, Trove, and the Digital Library of Georgia, we learn that:

Governance

Heavy, top-down, and complex governance models with many players may enhance representation but may also become costly and impede decision-making and operations. In developing the BC PDL, identify a governance model and operational structure that while inclusive, grassroots, and collaborative is also nimble. By leveraging the power of partnerships, the BC PDL can build on existing expertise and resources, maximizing efficiencies.

Funding and Sustainability

Single source funding, regardless of the source, can risk the sustainability and foundational values of the PDL. Alternatively, reliance on project-based and intermittent funding risks coherence and focus. A diversified funding model that prioritizes the sustainability of the PDL is critical. Membership and participation in the PDL will need to be scalable, to enable participation by different size organizations. Creating an assessment framework to measure impact of work as well as social outcomes will help maintain strategic and operational focus and support funding efforts.

Content and Metadata

Collections are not just data; they are social assets. The PDL can be an advocate for open and shared cultural heritage by and for the communities. The scope of content and focus of the PDL can vary and will depend on the infrastructure and the accessibility of the metadata structures to the public. An infrastructure that supports digitization and hosting content as well as harvesting metadata will allow for the most diverse content base.

Context

The BC PDL should not be developed in isolation. It should be imagined as part of a broader national strategy with connections to other provincial networks.

Aspirations for a BC PDL

Symposium participants represented a wealth of knowledge, experience, and interests. The discussion reflected that richness and range.

Among all the aspirations identified for a BC PDL, participants prioritized the following:

1. Leverage government seed funding into a sustainable, diversified funding model which provides enough to sustain the project and to fund continued growth and development
2. Beautiful user experience
3. Local communities, contributing in ways that are meaningful to them
4. Self-sustaining relevant tool that can be used by everyone to increase understanding of BC's rich heritage and its present
5. Rational approach to sharing and harvesting metadata
6. Community provided content that represents the diversity of BC memories

A Planning Framework

Fundamental to the planning framework that is required to move ideas into actions is a commitment to PDL guiding principles and values. For example, to realize the commitment to radical collaboration, what is needed to enable smaller organizations and communities to participate? How is unconventional and traditionally under-represented content included? What needs to happen to find ways to collaborate across sectors? Parallel to this reflective examination and commitment to process goals there also needs to be strong forward momentum – balancing perfection with agility in both planning and development.

Guiding Principles

At the core of these values is the deeply held belief and commitment to the public good.

- Radical Collaboration
- Action
- Sustainability
- Stewardship
- Coherence

See Appendix A: Guiding Principles

Making It Happen

The preliminary priorities identified by the participants to move forward development of the PDL conceptual ideas include the following:

Governance and Operations

- *Determine and implement a governance model:* With the understanding that the governance model will need to be provisional, the planning committee should consider inviting nominations for an initial PDL steering committee that is both representative of the broader community and also includes thought leaders and subject matter experts. To ensure that this large group focuses on the broader strategic decisions, create a smaller committee to support operational decision-making.
- *Recruit expertise and support:* Develop skill-based community working groups to focus on specific tasks. However, reliance on volunteer community members to move the initiative forward can be problematic. Ideally, consider a dedicated staff person(s) to help coordinate the activities and support sustainability efforts. Non-traditional support, such as business school students, could also assist in the development of the PDL business model.

Financial Sustainability

- *Develop Action Model:* A clearly articulated framework that will support fundraising and fund development activities, while also providing focus and engaging the community around a shared vision.

Community Engagement

- *Create communication channels:* To continue and expand on the dialogue with the community and to generate more support for the initiative, consider developing a few communication channels and processes for individuals and organizations to stay informed and get involved.

Infrastructure and Architecture

- *Assess, design and develop infrastructure/architecture:* These can occur in parallel with other processes. There was agreement that the platform should be non-proprietary, use existing open source work, and leverage experts in the community. A solid first step would be to look at platforms of existing digital libraries. A pilot project or proof of concept should be launched.

Moving Forward in the Months Ahead...

- Target expansion of Planning Committee membership
- Develop strategies for part-time dedicated staff
- Engage with identified digital libraries with open platforms
- Explore funding opportunities
- Mobilize the PDL Infrastructure group to investigate open source platforms
- Launch proof of concept
- Continue community engagement and socialization of ideas

Appendix A

Guiding Principles

In envisioning and supporting the development of a PDL, a set of guiding principles will serve as an anchor. These common values can form the foundation for ongoing dialogue, engagement, and collaboration across institutions, organizations, and sectors.

At the core of these values is the deeply held belief and commitment to the public good.

Radical Collaboration: We are committed to developing deep partnerships across institutions, trusting each other's expertise, wisdom and intentions. We will develop transparent processes that provide the opportunity for all willing institutions to participate and contribute equitably to the collaborative process, and we will support each other in developing capacity.

Action: We will collaborate, cooperate and coordinate across the different sectors to move ideas into actions and tangible outcomes.

Sustainability: We are committed to the sustained success of the PDL. We will determine and work towards achievable goals as part of a broader and more ambitious long-term strategic plan that supports the realization of our vision and we will seek alternative sources of funding to ensure the continuity and longevity of the PDL.

Stewardship: We will at all times act responsibly and ethically.

Coherence: We will align our efforts with the national development and remain cognizant of any other initiatives where we can create value-add cohesion.

In addition, the following priorities inform decisions in the design and development of the PDL:

Open: The PDL will be universally available at no cost to all audiences and users.

User-centric: All planning and development activities will start with end-users in mind, based on universal design principles, making both the platform and content accessible to all users.

Adaptable: The PDL will be developed to be flexible and open to change.

Quality: Best practices and quality standards will be considered in all our decisions.

Access: The PDL will provide equitable access to digital objects.

Preservation: The PDL will support preservation efforts, specifically as it pertains to the history of British Columbia.

Diversity: The PDL will be reflective of the diverse history, voices, and memories of British Columbians.

Appendix B

Participating Organizations

Andornot Consulting
Archives Association of BC
BCcampus
BC Electronic Library Network
BC Institute of Technology
BC Libraries Cooperative
BC Library Association
BC Teacher-Librarians' Association
Burnaby Public Library
Camosun College
CAPER-BC
Capilano University
Cranbrook Public Library
Douglas College
Educational Resource Acquisition Consortium
Emily Carr University of Art + Design
First Nations Technology Council
Fraser Valley Regional Library
Greater Victoria Public Library
iSchool, University of BC
Justice Institute of BC
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Legislative Library of BC
Library and Archives Canada
Ministry of Advanced Education
Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch
New Westminster Public Library
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
North Vancouver City Library
North Vancouver District Public Library
Okanagan College
Okanagan Regional Library
OurDigitalWorld
Port Moody Public Library
Prince George Public Library
Public Library InterLINK
Richmond Public Library
Royal BC Museum and BC Archives
Royal Roads University
School District 36, Surrey
School District 38, Richmond
School District 39, Vancouver, University Hill Secondary School
School District 42, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, Golden Ears Elementary School
School District 43, Coquitlam, Suwa'lkh School
School District 61, Greater Victoria, Craigflower Elementary
School District 68, Nanaimo-Ladysmith
Simon Fraser University Archives
Simon Fraser University Library
Squamish Public Library
Surrey Libraries
Thompson-Nicola Regional District Library System
Thompson Rivers University
Trinity Western University
University of BC, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
University of BC Library
University of Northern BC
University of the Fraser Valley, Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies
University of the Fraser Valley Library
University of Victoria
Vancouver Community College
Vancouver Island Regional Library
Vancouver Island University
Vancouver Public Library
West Vancouver Memorial Library

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