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**Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia
Rural Libraries: Approaches for Sustainable Service**



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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to evaluate rural library service in Nova Scotia through research, analysis and consultation with stakeholders, in order to develop recommendations that will support sustainable library service in Nova Scotia for the future. For the purpose of this project stakeholders were identified as the Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia (LBANS), Council of Regional Librarians (CORL), Nova Scotia Communities Culture and Heritage (CCH) staff, library staff, public library users and municipal units through regional library boards. Specifically the goals of the study were to identify core services, determine best practice models, examine linkages to government strategies, determine the impact of flat line funding over the next five years, investigate return on investment, identify common threads and global approaches, explore educational and economic impacts if funding is not sustained, complete stakeholder consultation and submit a final report with recommendations.

The objectives of this project were met through examination of financial documents, relevant reports, and prior studies as well as extensive consultation. The project took place over ten months and began with a working session at the Nova Scotia Libraries Association (NSLA) Conference in September 2012. The conference was followed by a two-day working session with CORL in November and cross province consultations with public participants and Trustees of each region. Public sessions canvassed in-depth experience of libraries from more than one hundred participants. Trustee sessions involved utilization of the Cynefin Framework exercise 'Future Backward' to analyze current trends, best and worst case outcomes, trigger events and historical turning points. Chief Librarians also provided comprehensive analysis of the impacts of five-year flat line funding. In addition Chief Librarians completed a detailed questionnaire, responded to questions by phone, in person and through correspondence. A Steering Committee composed of both LBANS and CORL representatives met monthly with the Project Manager via conference call and provided direction and guidance to the project. They also acted as liaisons between the project and LBANS/CORL membership.

Nova Scotia public libraries are spread across nine regions and serve seventy-nine branches. Over the years, international partnerships, new facilities, writing programs and family supports for literacy received investment as libraries worked hard to deliver meaningful service to Nova Scotia residents. Analysis of the data indicates core services of libraries are far-reaching and extend well beyond the supply of books. While maintenance of collections and provision of reading materials to library users is a central feature of what libraries do, they also provide community meeting space, maintain access to new technologies, link to schools for reading promotion, provide specialized community programs, maintain research and reference materials, provide digitization of local history documents, and offer community internet access. Libraries do extensive community outreach to seniors and shut-ins. They also provide support to home school families where regions have high populations who engage this philosophy. In addition, libraries link to health programs and assist community members with accessing pertinent health information. They also support small business through research, internet support

and connection to resources. In addition, Chief Librarians are responsible for maintaining collections, supervising staff, keeping abreast of changes to library service and designing and delivering programs.

Nova Scotia Provincial Library (NSPL) staff also play a pivotal role in the delivery of library service. Client services manage provincial funding to libraries and negotiate contracts for consortium purchasing. They also provide consulting and research support and pursue continuing education and training opportunities for regional library staff. NSPL also disseminates information related to libraries and library activities. Many services such as providing leadership in province-wide reading programs, oversight of the Canada Post Shipping Tool, links to other government departments and management of statistics are overseen by NSPL. The Systems and Collections Access division of NSPL hosts and maintains the Integrated Library System (ILS), manages internet connectivity, hosts email services and oversees digital collections, cataloguing and authority control. A number of these services are based on cost recovery, and NSPL staff indicated concern that this may become difficult as financial pressures on libraries increase, a concern echoed in some of the regional responses to the questionnaire.

Nova Scotia rural libraries are working hard to employ best practices. They stay abreast of new practices and service delivery options and where possible, implement these strategies. Chief Librarians freely share information and resources, supporting each other in the development of innovative programs and the acquisition of new technologies. Policies and strategies are shared. Collectively, the Chief Librarians of Nova Scotia have more than a century of experience. Chief Librarians have been thoughtful in developing their core values of service and adjusting their regional programs according to need.

Rural libraries in Nova Scotia deliver many unacknowledged services that complement the mandates of the Nova Scotia Departments of Health, Social Services, Economic and Rural Development and Justice, among others. Libraries provide safe, secular spaces for library patrons. Family programs, parent and toddler programs, interactive toys, exposure to early literacy experiences, access to health programs and information, partnerships with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police through the Adopt a Library program and numerous other services provide on-the-ground, direct support to community members and affect outcomes in profound ways. Libraries provide programs that increase school readiness and provide skills for students to succeed academically. Adults access government forms and services and perform job searches. Entrepreneurs research and plan new businesses. Seniors connect with others, remain intellectually active and sustain their independence through library access.

For the past three years, provincial contributions to libraries have held fast. However, continued flat line provincial funding is projected to pose serious challenges for rural libraries. The funding freeze in recent years came after a cut in funding in some regions as population adjustments were made, and has actually

represented a perceived cut in funding, since increases that would normally have been received during this time have been lost. While costs of overhead, collections, technology and programs have risen and demand for services from libraries has escalated, libraries struggle with loss of staff, resources and the demands of aging or inadequate infrastructure because of ongoing funding pressures. Impacts are expected to begin depleting existing baseline library service in fiscal year 2013-2014 in rural regions with the crisis tipping point projected to be fully reached in 2014-2015. In 2014-2015, most regions report they will be forced to close doors and reduce collections past the point of meaningful service. They will also have to cut further or eliminate outreach programs, staff hours, staff positions, library hours, collections, and services. Chief Librarians claim they have little efficiency left to utilize and therefore must now cut deeply into the core of service.

In addition, the current funding regime has resulted in inequities in service. Population based funding is failing to meet the needs of delivering programs and services to rural areas. The funding currently in most regions results in split funding with 70-75% of funding coming from the province while municipalities and local fundraising efforts provide the balance. Provincial funding covers roughly the majority of staff salaries, with municipalities covering the cost of buildings, furniture, janitorial services and general maintenance. Libraries are expected to raise 3% of their overall budget, with many working diligently to raise more. This split detracts from staff time, and funders often will not provide repeat funding. Funders also attach their funding to specific programs, which do not include general operational costs. Further challenges emerge because regions encompass more than one municipal unit, so multiple applications often must be made to ensure equitable service. Libraries are also coping with stiff competition for diminishing program dollars. Regions report that they are reaching the maximum 'ask' with municipal units; even highly successful regions which have been able to leverage strategic funds and develop new facilities feel they have reached maximum capacity of municipal funds. Inequities of staff salaries and benefits across regions also pose challenges.

Overall, Chief Librarians are committed to effective and equitable service. They seek solutions that will provide stability to the system across several fronts, with predictable funding and supports for diverse services. The ability to access training, maintain adequate infrastructure, support the creativity of staff, stay abreast of technology and be recognized for the multiple service delivery they provide is paramount. Chief Librarians and staff simply want to continue to do the excellent job they are doing without the overwhelming stresses of the current financial pressures. Community members seek more library service and longer hours of access. Technology is viewed as an adjunct to library services but not an adequate replacement.

Municipal units in many cases have contributed more than their mandated share. Rural municipalities are also feeling the pressures of outmigration, poor economic conditions and increasing pressure on their budgets in the face of shrinking tax bases. For the most part municipalities have assumed responsibility for the physical infrastructure of library buildings, which has often meant by necessity that libraries are housed in aging and inadequate buildings. Some of these buildings

do not have potable water; have decay issues, inadequate or malfunctioning heating systems and other challenges. Some rural libraries do not have meeting rooms, washrooms or staff rooms. Library users identify the importance of maintaining rural library spaces; with driving distances often an hour or more to the nearest more highly populated area, families in rural areas are at a severe disadvantage in accessing programs and services if they do not have a community library. In addition, the loss of schools, community halls, health programs and so forth have increased the importance of the library in these communities, as this is often the only space left for program delivery and access to knowledge and training. Rural users often have no other access to books; there are no bookstores nearby, nor can they afford in many cases to purchase books.

Notably, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) reflects a special and separate case. Halifax Public Libraries (HPL) enjoys the majority of its funding through the city of Halifax tax base, a much richer contribution than is able to be raised in rural areas. This situation has resulted in HPL being funded by the city of Halifax in a percentage almost equivalent to the provincial contribution in rural regions with a reduced provincial contribution. Nevertheless, HPL services extensive rural communities and faces many of the same challenges in service delivery. This is also true for other regions which have some centers of higher population surrounded by many rural communities.

Interestingly, through public consultation the differing flavour of rural communities serviced by HPL surfaced. In Musquodoboit Harbour where a public consultation session was held, residents expressed frustration at being labelled rural. They struggle with what would be deemed rural library service with small on hand collections and few hours, when their population base is rapidly expanding. They feel their community expansion is not reflected in census information or in the type of library service they have available. Rural communities in HRM more closely resemble those of rural Ontario which are attached to urban centers in employment and growth. They report that their efforts to increase library services have not been successful. HPL has undertaken a facilities review in an attempt to address these issues and meet community needs. The frustration of community demonstrates both the importance and the inadequacy of rural library service. The unique situation of Halifax region has allowed it to capitalize on its strengths but has also separated it somewhat from partnership and service sharing. The situation has also created a perceptual divide between HPL and other regions; HPL struggles with being perceived as non-rural when it does in fact service outlying rural areas and the more rural regions look longingly on the generous tax base support available in Halifax region.

The data collected for this report clearly indicates that the point at which sustainability of library service can be maintained has already passed and that in most regions service decline has already begun, yet libraries have continued to be dynamic forces in communities largely through the skill, professionalism and dedication of Chief Librarians, library staff including Provincial library staff, and Trustees. They have laboured quietly and politely in the face of impossible choices. However, staff are experiencing burnout and express that they are reaching a point when they will not be able to make the difficult decisions before them as such

decisions would result in an untenable gutting of public library services. Chief Librarians acknowledge the burdens shouldered by Provincial library staff, staff who work diligently to support public libraries and who have endured staff and funding cuts of their own. These sacrifices have placed further stress on the system.

The competence of library staff at all levels is identified as a major strength by library users and by Trustees. The degree of service has been so well managed that it has the appearance of a very high level of service despite the challenges. Patrons of all walks of life find their needs met at the library. Library staff are identified as knowledgeable, highly professional, and connected to their patrons. Clients report that library staff “know their names”, what types of books/materials they usually access, steer them toward materials of interest, and provide support and confidentiality and high quality service. Their professional expertise has resulted in a highly organized service rich in innovation where sharing of expertise and solutions has functioned as a substitute for dedicated training.

Also identified as a strength is the vibrant, warm and open atmosphere that small regional branches have been able to maintain despite significant infrastructure challenges. No matter how small the branch, interesting and interactive children’s centers are available, thoughtful collections and materials are provided, and staff work hard to offer stimulating programs. Patrons speak highly of their community libraries and their experiences there, regardless of age. Many speak of the importance of library service being free, given the current economic climate and the stressors it is placing on citizens.

In libraries children learn good citizenship, where few forums remain for them to receive such an education, and new Canadians learn the language and culture. Libraries are perceived as the last bastion of democracy.

The importance of library programming also rates very highly for patrons. These programs have been life changing for library users, and many have powerful stories of how access to libraries, to library staff, and to library programs has positively influenced their lives and their families’ lives. For many families, the weekly visit to the library is a ritual that connects their children to a broader sense of community and civility. The ability of children to reach their highest potential in areas with few opportunities for intellectual exposure is often attributed to community libraries. Access to libraries changes a child’s perspective of the world and of his/her place in it. Access to books by mail and inter-branch lending are also identified as significant services, which make library service available to those who are more isolated and ensure that libraries across the province are virtually one large library with respect to access, providing equal opportunity to access materials. Patrons who still have access to bookmobile or similar services identify this service as highly significant. They state that simply accessing books as physical entities is not the same as being able to interact with staff in a safe setting.

Libraries change lives. Nova Scotia clients of all ages, level of disability, and socio-economic status rate libraries as one of the most important and formative experiences in their lives. In consultation across the province, library users emphatically and universally state libraries are not a luxury, they are an essential

service. Communities that have libraries report earlier exposure to literacy for children, broad access to research materials, specialized training, and community and family connectedness. In rural areas of Nova Scotia, libraries play a critical role in small business support, cultural bridging, health education, literacy support, and centers for access to technology, employment support and safe neutral places for community connection. Libraries offer diverse services including book delivery to shut ins and the elderly, teen programs, specialized children’s programs, small business and technology supports, home schooling special lending periods, school partnerships, inter-branch lending, books by mail, book clubs, artists in residence, writing clubs and libraries provide essential employment in rural areas. Libraries bridge two worlds; the ever changing modern world of fast-paced technology, and the rich vibrant world of tradition. They have profound influence on communities but will require immediate medicine and restructuring of funding in order to remain viable.

Fifteen recommendations have been outlined in this report for consideration. They are intended to relieve, for the long-term, the current stressors in the system which, if continued, will see the collapse of library service in many rural areas by 2014-2015. Although the recommendations require initial investment, they do provide a structure for long-term sustainability in a manner that provides for predictability of expenditures in the system while addressing the major identified challenges. These recommendations include:

1. A one-time bridging payment to public libraries in 2014-2015 of an additional 5% of current budget to compensate for lost increases in recent years. This payment will provide time to implement the fiscal restructuring. If restructuring requires additional years, it is recommended that an additional 3% per year be provided until a stable financial base is established.
2. A restructuring of funding away from population-based funding to service-centered funding. Service-centered funding would mean working toward the provision of excellence and equality in services of the multiple roles libraries play in communities across rural regions, rather than funding according to population numbers.
3. To accomplish this restructuring and to address inequities, consideration of a transfer of staff salaries, professional training and benefits to the province in lieu of their current contribution with a professional alignment of pay scales should be considered. This adjustment will provide predictable year over year costs for the province.
4. Creation of a dedicated private sector fund which would be allotted to infrastructure upgrades, outreach programs, pilot programs and special services and for which regions could consistently apply.
5. Continued support from municipalities which would cover overhead costs of infrastructure and assistance with collection/materials acquisition.
6. Allocation of a percentage of existing special funds (provincial and federal) to support new and existing technology.

7. Annual cross-sectoral contributions by other provincial departments particularly Nova Scotia Economic and Rural Development, NS Health and Welfare, Department of Community and Social Services and NS Department of Justice.
8. Making support for public libraries the cost of doing business in Nova Scotia, with new business encouraged to contribute to the private sector fund as an investment in the people of Nova Scotia and an annual provincial fundraising program seeking to raise \$1.00 per resident of Nova Scotia.
9. Continued exploration of partnerships with other public services such as museums and schools.
10. Provision of a portion of special funds such as lottery monies as an allocation to library service.
11. Hiring of a Library Champion to oversee implementation of the recommendations in this report and to ensure success and accountability.
12. Review of basic services and staffing requirements as previously studied and outlined, ensuring delivery of service to library users.
13. Creation of an internal and external communication plan on the role and services of public libraries including a comprehensive media campaign to raise awareness of library services and annual reports on infrastructure issues from Chief Librarians to municipalities with subsequent plans to address inadequacies.
14. Creation of a one card system and alignment of policies and services to ensure greater ability to maximize partnerships among regions and create better user access.
15. Adaptation of bookmobiles to include mobile business support services.

The skill of librarians and the dedication of library staff have made up the essential strength of libraries to date, maintaining effective service in the face of many challenges. Trustees who have been willing to take on difficulties, advocating for their communities and supporting their librarians, have also played an essential role. So smoothly have these staff and advocates managed to deliver service despite severe internal stresses, public users have been largely unaware of the looming crisis. Libraries are so dear to the hearts of the public and so powerful in the role they have played in people's lives, that patrons cannot imagine losing their library as a safe community space in which to develop and grow. While this is certainly a tribute to those who work every day to better library service delivery in Nova Scotia, the difficulties and challenges must be faced, addressed and planned far into the future to ensure that every citizen of Nova Scotia has equal opportunity to excel, no matter their stage of life, their socio-economic status, or their level of ability. In this study, staff, trustees and public participants have articulated why libraries are important and what the most serious challenges are. In order to continue meeting that trust there will need to be a commitment of political will, a rethinking of how funding needs are met, and a dedication to standards of service that only libraries can deliver.

Section One: Overview

1.1 Methodology and scope

The Rural Libraries: Approaches for Sustainable Service study was commissioned by the Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia (LBANS) through special funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The study was intended to examine core service delivery; identify service pressures and gaps; seek solutions and innovative approaches applicable to small town and rural Nova Scotia; identify social, educational and economic impacts if funding is not sustained; examine the impact of continued flat line funding over the next five years, and provide a report with conclusions and recommendations. The report has used stakeholder consultations to include LBANS, Council of Regional Librarians (CORL), Nova Scotia Communities Culture and Heritage (CCH) staff, public participants and municipal units through regional library board trustees.

The study began in August 2012, concluded in May 2013 and included the following elements:

- A working session at the Nova Scotia Libraries Association (NSLA) conference (September 2012)
- A presentation and discussion at the Council of Rural Librarians (CORL) session (October 2012)
- A two-day facilitated workshop with CORL (November 2012)
- A ten point questionnaire and analysis to Chief Librarians (February 2013)
- Analysis by Chief Librarians of the impact of continued flat line funding
- Cross province public consultations (March-April 2013)
- Cross province trustee sessions (March-April 2013)
- Research review of prior studies and relevant literature
- Fiscal review
- Site visits to rural library branches
- Site visits with Nova Scotia Public Library staff
- Training and utilization of the Cynefin framework

A Steering Committee met via conference call monthly provide direction and feedback throughout the study, while also acting as a liaison to LBANS, Chief Librarians and regional library boards.

The working session in September included Chief Librarians, Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage Staff, Nova Scotia Provincial Libraries staff and LBANS representatives. We were also honoured by the attendance of Communities Culture and Heritage Minister Leonard Preyra. The working session addressed five key areas: core services identification, key challenges to service delivery, equitable service vision, and current inequities and desired innovations and technologies (Appendix A). The working session was followed by a report to

CORL in October, and subsequently a two-day working session was held in November for CORL. This two-day session explored more deeply the issues raised in the NSLA working session as well as risk analyses. Questions during the two-day session gathered responses on geographical boundaries, decision making structures, consistency of service, markers of the vital role of libraries including specific examples, standardization of service, and commentary on changing role of libraries (Appendix B).

Risk scenarios include surrender of library service to the province, e book challenges, rising infrastructure costs, virtual libraries and lack of increased funding. The 10-question questionnaire distributed to Chief Librarians probed the direct impacts of continued flat line funding, models of service, infrastructure challenges and other key issues (Appendix C). Responses to the questionnaire were detailed and thorough. Chief Librarians also prepared reports outlining the direct impacts of continued flat line funding in their regions. Trustee sessions were held across the province and included a presentation on the project, an exercise from the Cynefin framework and a summary discussion. In addition, public sessions were held in each region across the province. Delegates were selected by librarians and staff to represent a variety of user groups. Sessions were two hours in length and were delivered in a format which allowed the facilitator to gather information on the point of entry into library use, programs and services offered, times when use declined and the reasons why, recommendations and key messages. In total more than 100 library clients participated in the sessions, which were well attended and provided a wealth of information. Library users were keen to share their stories and ranged in age from teens to seniors. Delegates included single parents, teens, bookmobile users, young families, retirees, new Canadians, business owners, professionals, artists, writers and participants from all socio-economic ranges. Participants were articulate and cosmopolitan in their experience and outlook.

Throughout the study Chief Librarians and Provincial library staff provided documents and articles of research relevant to the study. In addition, previous reports, studies and conclusions were examined.

“Libraries are more than just buildings; it’s the people inside.”

Public Participant

1.2 Overview of Nova Scotia Libraries

The history of public libraries in Nova Scotia is rooted directly in rural communities. It was there that the first demand for libraries grew, out of a desire to create a better economic future. In the 1930s the Antigonish Movement restored small Maritime communities through a program of adult education and economic co-operation, a program that encouraged learning through study clubs for small and rural communities that promoted reading and discussion. The lack of reading materials for this program illuminated the dire need for access to materials, and the Antigonish Movement became a driver in encouraging citizens to develop libraries.

“In 1935 Father James J. Tompkins opened the People’s Library of Reserve Mines, in an attempt to provide material to support his study clubs. At this time he came into contact with Nora Bateson, a professional librarian in charge of the P.E.I. Library Demonstration. In this meeting of dedicated professionals was the seed of development for public libraries.” (Government of Nova Scotia, Provincial Libraries webpage, 2013).

In April 1937 the first provincial act to support libraries came into effect. Nora Bateson was commissioned by the province to provide a plan for a public library service in Nova Scotia. In 1949, the first public library was opened in Annapolis Valley. By 1981, every municipality in the province had joined the public library system.

Today there are seventy-nine public library branches across the province, occupying nine regions, most of which are rural in nature.

In 2011-2012, 53 items were borrowed per hour, more than 14,000 programs were run across the province, and more than 3,807,000 in-person visits were registered. On average, 31% of the population held active library membership, but this figure does not represent the number of people who access the library for programs or social contact. (Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Public Libraries Annual Report 2011-2012).

Nova Scotia libraries operate under the Libraries Act of Nova Scotia. Municipalities are responsible for providing and maintaining the buildings in which libraries are housed. They also make funding contributions which often exceed the regulated standard. The province provides the bulk of funding, which last year was in the amount of \$14,163,000.00.00; however, this amount has been frozen for the past three years and prior to that, experienced a wave of cuts and small increases. Regional library boards are responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the libraries and perform many functions including hiring, provision of headquarters and materials acquisition. Each board meets on a different schedule and has differing mechanisms. All consist of at least one municipal council representative, two provincially appointed members and additional members as designated. The Nova Scotia Provincial Library provides centralized technical support for regions and other supportive services. Library usage is free to all citizens. Fines, loan periods, programs and standards differ from region to region. A comparison of library service organization across the country is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Library Service Organization in Canadian Provinces

Prince Edward Island	In Prince Edward Island, the Public Library Service operates the public library system under the directive of the provincial government. The Province of PEI provides the material, staff and technical services while the communities are responsible for providing, maintaining and furnishing the facilities. Library services are free and open to all residents of Prince Edward Island.
New Brunswick	Governed under the New Brunswick Public Libraries Act, the provincial government and participating municipalities collaborate together to provide free library services to the residents of New Brunswick. The public library system also includes school districts, public library boards, Regional Forums, NB Public Library Foundation as well as the New Brunswick Library Trustee Association.
Newfoundland and Labrador	The Provincial Information and Library Resource Board, an independent board established by the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador, operates all public libraries throughout the province. There are 96 public libraries in the province that are divided into four administrative divisions. Every local public library appoints its own library board which operates, promotes and makes decision for their library. The service is free to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Quebec	Quebec public libraries are structured differently than public libraries in other provinces. All libraries are free to the residents and funded by the public, but they are administered and governed solely by the municipalities where they are housed. The Provincial Government of Quebec plays a minimal role in the Public Library System of Quebec.
Ontario	Over 40% of the population of Ontario own a public library card and 98 percent live in communities served by a public library. A free service to Ontario residents, the municipal by-laws creates Ontario's Public Library while the administration, operation and development are the responsibility of the Public Library Boards
British Columbia	There are 241 public libraries in more than 360 communities across British Columbia. A free service to its members, the majority of funding from public libraries comes from local governments while the provincial government accounts for 7.4% of library income through annual per capita operating grants. Other resource funding is provided by education funding and targeted funding for programs and technological infrastructure.
Manitoba	The Public Libraries Act ensures the residents of Manitoba have access to free library services. Administered by the Government of Manitoba, the province provides establishment grants to municipalities who wish to establish library services in their area. Certain criteria need to be met in order to apply, such as a minimum of 3.75% per capita contribution from the municipality.
Alberta	Alberta public libraries offer a free service to all people residing in the province and are governed by the Alberta Municipal Affairs, Public Library Services Branch. The branch establishes an agreement with municipalities and communities throughout the province and is paid by public funds. On a municipal level, the public library is supported by municipal taxes while provincial taxes support community based libraries.
Saskatchewan	Public Libraries in Saskatchewan are operated under seven regional libraries geographically placed to represent a group of cities, municipalities and communities throughout Saskatchewan. Each regional library is mandated to manage, operate and promote the libraries in their area. Under the directive of the Provincial Library, the service is free and accessible to all residents and funded by public monies.
Northwest Territories	Public Library Systems in the Northwest Territories is operated by provincial department of Education. Each library is placed strategically throughout the territory so residents have equal access to this free service. The management and operation of each library is under the authority of the Territorial Librarian and is funded by the territorial government.
Yukon	Public libraries in the Yukon operate through a Central Library and 14 community branches. The mandate of Yukon Public Libraries is to provide free and accessible service to the residents. The Central Library and branches receive funding through the territorial government for the overall management of each branch.

In 2006 a public consultation was held across the province which collated the hopes and experiences of patrons with libraries (Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Provincial Library Public Consultation, April-June 2006), resulting in the development of a provincial strategic plan. This plan set out eight specific goals as follows:

- Lead a dynamic and collaborative library community in Nova Scotia and beyond
- Employ expert staff at the forefront of research and development
- Effect positive change
- Achieve the balance between innovation and tradition
- Support community access to technology across the province
- Ensure that libraries are centres of culture, learning and creation in Nova Scotia communities
- Continue being a link to the rest of the world
- Operate within renewed legislation

Continued funding pressures globally and provincially have placed stresses on libraries that have made it difficult for them to accomplish these goals. The funding formula report of August 2008, (Province of Nova Scotia, Report of the Library Funding Task Force, August 2008), which recommended increases to salaries and benefits, technology refresh, collections, seed grants to youth, supplies and services and French language grants, has not been implemented. This failure to implement has resulted in skepticism among Trustees and staff alike that the commitment to maintain this vital service is accompanied by the necessary political will to make sustainable library service a reality. The situation, particularly in rural areas, has become critical. Hence, this report is intended to assess the state of rural libraries in Nova Scotia today and to develop a plan to meet the strategic goals.

The commitment of Chief librarians clearly is genuine and is inspired by dedication to a profession that for them is a calling; their request for resources is not a demand for funds but a cry for help. Throughout the course of this study librarians identified numerous challenges that require assistance. Strategies to address these challenges would include:

- Link closely with rural economic strategy which is under development
- Develop one card system
- Unify ILS system
- Review, revise and implement standards
- Develop broadband access across the province
- Explore and support fibre optic capacity across the province

- Have each government department review services and explore delivery of those services through libraries – libraries may very well be the most cost effective service delivery system for many existing and new services with investment in resources that would cost less than other mechanisms
- Explore and support stronger partnerships with schools
- Earmark funds from existing revenue-generating initiatives and dedicate them to libraries
- Develop and deliver a strong public education and marketing campaign about libraries
- Adopt the restructuring of funding recommended in this report to provide stability year over year
- Abandon population-based funding as it does not take into account the real costs of rural service delivery
- Develop an annual review of library infrastructure and work with library boards and municipal units to address it through a long-term plan and application of the new funding structure
- Provide and support training resources for library staff
- Develop a training program for library Trustees
- Develop province-wide standards for library buildings which could include a review and update of the Standards document of 2001
- Maintain the autonomy of library boards
- Recognize the unique nature of Halifax Public Libraries
- Revise legislation where necessary to adopt a new funding structure

In 2007, libraries were already attempting to warn of the impending crisis in service from chronic underfunding. Despite a comprehensive study in 2008 (Province of Nova Scotia, Report of the Library Funding Task Force, August 2008) to address these funding challenges, they remain unchanged today. In addition to persistent issues of staffing and aging infrastructure and technology, statistics demonstrate that on average, 48% of the current library collection is more than ten years old. The exception to this is South Shore Public libraries where the number is 28% because of a strategic plan that places emphasis on collections. (Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Public Libraries Annual Report, 2011-2012). Understandably, libraries want to be assured that this time there will be action on the critical issues before them.

1.3 Role of libraries

The key role of libraries is well documented elsewhere, however, the information gathered for this study indicates that the Nova Scotia public library system is in keeping with services as described in the National Statistical and Values Profile of Canadian Libraries (November 30, 2012) as follows:

- Preserve and make available the historical record
- Support scientific research and development that nurtures innovation and facilitates successful enterprise
- Rebuild the economy by helping people to learn new skills, and provide information and support for the unemployed and new immigrants
- Bridge the digital divide by providing computers and access to the internet, teach how to use them, and provide special equipment to help those with disabilities
- Enrich the lives of individuals by putting them in touch with creative works and ideas, factual information and genealogical materials
- Inspire a love of reading in children and develop emergent literacy skills, and essential foundation to higher education
- Improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities by supporting medical research and giving people information on which to base health and life decisions
- Facilitate a democratic society (Schrader & Brundin, November 30, 2012, p. 16).

Today there is talk of libraries becoming irrelevant because technology will revolutionize knowledge as it has revolutionized everything else. This statement would be true if libraries dealt with one service in which certain elements of the process could be delegated to users, such as Interac machines in banks and kiosks in airports to retrieve boarding passes. Yet libraries must meet a multiplicity of needs, all of which require human contact. Libraries, in a sense, are the intermediaries between technology and humans. As one library user noted in a previous study:

“The physical library is often dismissed as replaceable, on the theory that digitized material takes up less space than books, and can be accessed from anywhere. That would be possible, maybe, if the people accessing the material were also digital, and had no need for a human community of thinkers” (Ian Brown, columnist) (Schrader & Brundin, November 30, 2012, p. 9).

The success of the recently opened People’s Place Library in Antigonish demonstrates the reality of this insightful comment; the library vibrates with the activity of multiple user groups who access meeting space, technology, community kitchen space, study sections, family and children centers and art and cultural events. That same spirit can be felt in the tiny, highly isolated and rural village of Lockeport library. This space has none of the amenities found in the Antigonish library, but nevertheless is imbued with the same spirit of what a library means to people as the hub of the community.

The demographic population of Nova Scotia is changing. Between 2012 and 2038, Nova Scotia’s population of residents over 65 is expected to rise to 28.6% (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 8), and by 2013 one third will be over the age of 55 (Nova Scotia Department of Community and Social Services, powerpoint 2008, Overview of Social and Economic Trends). The exceptions to this trend are Mi’kmaq communities which have grown 40% in the last decade and have a large youth population with a median age of 25.4 years. (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 44) New Immigrants currently total 17,776 new residents of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 41) and their settlement is encouraged to replace outmigration. Approximately 29% of Nova Scotia residents between the ages of 18 and 64 are considering moving in the next three years, and 70% of them intend to move out of province. (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 41).

Libraries provide services that are directly related to supporting new immigrants and supporting skill matching to retain Nova Scotia residents. They also partner with Mi’kmaq school boards and communities on several programs. Libraries, because of their situate nature in communities and ability to reach all age levels, are perfectly positioned to assist in reversing the negative population trends affecting Nova Scotia.

Libraries have, of necessity, become experts in partnership. In 2010 a partnership report was prepared for LBANs which outlined no fewer than ten partnerships within government and community partners that are contributing to extensive programming across regions. (Nova Scotia Council of Regional Librarians, Public Library Partnerships: Innovative, Cost Effective, Sustainable, September 2009).

“Nothing can replace browsing through actual books and being surprised by something that catches your eye, something you never even knew you were interested in until it beckoned to you from the shelf”

Public Participant

1.4 Defining rural

Defining 'rural' is an elusive quest. Some define it by a magical number of population beyond which somehow there is a transformation into something else (usually around the 5,000 mark); some by the number of services within a specific proximity. Some would define it by a measure of their experience; what is 'rural' by their definition, having grown up in another context, is firmly a bustling metropolis to tried and true Nova Scotians. Some public participants firmly reject the notion of being called 'rural', associating it with 'no hope' communities on their way to a slow death while their communities are growing by leaps and bounds. One thing is clear; rural populations are not who we think they are; they are often cosmopolitan thinkers with a lifetime of varied experience and a high degree of professional practice behind them. At least three levels of 'rural' were agreed upon—villages which have the basic amenities and that hold tenaciously to the framework of schools and post offices, towns which have civic centers, malls and government offices, and 'really rural', the outlying areas with the remnants of churches and post offices dotting corner lots of dirt roads, now overgrown with foliage.

Rural Nova Scotia has a flavour all its own. Strong family ties and marriages between families have led to a passionate attachment to community. It is not unusual in rural Nova Scotia for residents of communities fifteen minutes' drive away to be referred to as 'not from here'. Rivalries abound, born in ancient boundary disputes, imagined slights and tests of will. Those who arrive from somewhere else are viewed with decided suspicion, because it is considered odd to leave one's family and geography to settle among strangers. But increasingly, rural Nova Scotia is populated by those 'from away', people who have settled here for the beauty, accessibility of the ocean, the peaceful quiet and neighbours who know your name and watch over your business. And surprisingly, many of those people say they chose their particular communities because they had libraries, and if those libraries were gone, they would not stay. So essential is the library to maintaining the fabric of a stimulating life, that people simply cannot envision their community, or their lives, without one. Somehow libraries link us all to one another. As one startled public participant responded to the question of what impact the loss of the library would have "... but without our library what would we do." Whether you have lived all your life in rural Nova Scotia, hardened from the struggle and claiming it as your birthright, or have arrived from away having chosen it from the heart, libraries are at the center of people's hearts, minds and activities.

Rural is a place we know, a place that eludes being constrained by words but that everyone recognizes upon arrival. In Nova Scotia rural means green spaces between people, it means you probably know the name of everyone in your community and probably their fathers' names too, and most of the time, it means you worked hard and made your own destiny because otherwise there was none to be had. If you chose it after other life wanderings, it means the evening sunlight on secretive ocean surfaces and cold, damp winters that bring the sweetness of wild apple springs. Other Provinces may have rural areas that are defined in their function as commuting communities or winterized cottages to escape high housing prices in the more urban areas

(Administrators of Rural and Public Libraries Ontario, January 2012, p. 3/4), but in Nova Scotia rural is an affair of the heart.

Recently the Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy released its interim report. Interestingly, the report identifies nine themes that it believes are the foundation to building a strong economy, six of which are precisely supported by library services who should be considered as front line recipients of programs to enhance these attributes: human capital, creating a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and sectoral approach to economic development. (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 6). Indeed such an approach has been recommended before (Geoffrey Allen, September 2009, p. 20), but has never been acted upon. As the founders of Nova Scotia public libraries envisioned, rural areas, given the right access and tools, can be drivers of economic growth.

According to the interim report above, fully 40% of Nova Scotians are rural, compared to 20% in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. Nova Scotia, with federal government assistance, invests \$1.9 billion annually in education and training, and \$400 million directly on education (Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy, May 2013, p. 42/43). Conversely libraries currently receive an annual investment of only \$14 million, yet they are perfectly placed to deliver services that would align with economic goals.

The role of libraries needs to be much more broadly communicated across government sectors, and an exploration of their inclusion in program planning incorporated into annual work planning. Currently, libraries perform many of these functions without any residual financial investment to do so. Indeed, in difficult economic times, library usage tends to rise for job search, skill building and access to technology, among other services, and libraries are always innovating. (Nova Scotia Provincial Library website Use of Public Libraries in Hard Economic Times).

"In my adult life we travelled all over the world working. At one point we were in South Africa during a time that apartheid was in full effect. I was shocked to see a sign over the library door saying 'we reserve the right to determine who we will serve'. This says a lot about how important libraries are that we would try to keep down one sector of society by denying them access to libraries. It also says something about our lack of willingness to fund libraries; to whom are we effectively putting a sign over the door to say we won't serve?"

Public Participant

Section Two: NSLA Working Session

Participants: Chief Librarians, Nova Scotia Provincial Library staff, library staff, LBANS representatives, CCH staff

2.1 Core Services Identification

In identifying core services, it became clear that the role of libraries in communities extends far beyond access to reading materials for the public. Core services were defined as including broad-based access to services that supported populations in various ways.

Information was ranked high on the provision of services, and encompassed not only direct access to books but also included reference materials, research documents, access to government services, provision of information to tourists, as well as small business supports. Libraries have been innovative in developing partnerships that allow them to access materials across the country, should patrons request them. They also stay abreast of the latest publications in literature genres for all ages and types, as well as maintaining access to archival materials. Libraries also provide access to audio books, movies, documentaries, and e books. Digitization and preservation of historical records also are important aspects of libraries.

In addition, libraries provide free access to internet services and computers through the Community Access Program (CAP). Increasingly, given current economic pressures, families report diminishing access to technology in the home, so library access to computers and the internet is crucial. Further, high speed internet access is not available across the province, and many rural citizens need the library for this purpose. Internet and technology are accessed to support small business, school research, general research, government programs and information as well as connection to others. CAP has been jeopardized in the past and this has been stressful for libraries as particular costs are no longer covered. Concern about the stability of the CAP program, which is a well-used service, is extremely difficult for library leadership.

Special programs are another essential core service. These vary from region to region but can include programs for pre-schoolers, families, teens, seniors, home schoolers, outreach to shut-ins, baby and toddler reading programs, visits to new mothers, book clubs, writer's workshops and artist in residence programs, province-wide reading programs and innovative technologies. However rural libraries identify the difficulty of providing these programs in inadequate facilities that do not have program rooms.

The maintenance of relevant and robust book collections clearly is a core service of libraries. The ability to utilize interlibrary lending services, wherein a user can order any book from another branch and/or return it to any branch in the province increases accessibility to a wide range of collections. Some regions have placed a priority on book collections in their strategic plans, which have forced innovative partnership in programming.

Libraries as community spaces are a growing trend across North America. The library is perceived as the one remaining place where people can gather in safety to discuss ideas, solidify family bonds and develop innate potential. Some libraries have been able, after long struggle and planning, to develop highly sophisticated community spaces, such as the People's Place library in Antigonish, which houses a community kitchen, ample meeting space, extensive collections with attractive reading chairs and study carrels as well as an array of community programs. Smaller rural libraries often do not have separate meeting space yet have been able to create vibrant multi-user spaces that attract patrons. However the lack of separate meeting space limits the ability to develop and deliver programs that are in increasing public demand.

Libraries also provide critical mobile and satellite services. These vary from region to region with some regions having had to make significant cuts in service resulting from funding pressures (see Impacts of Flatline Funding section 6.6 for detailed analysis) Bookmobiles, although treasured by users, have experienced diminishing use as population demographics shift and fuel and maintenance costs rise. Some regions have replaced bookmobile and similar services with books by mail, which do provide access to library materials but do not replace interaction with experienced staff and the ability to browse materials first hand. Others have opted for less expensive options of mobile services through small vans which can provide set up displays of books and deliver books that have been ordered. Innovations in satellite services include kiosk-type systems whereby a patron utilizes his/her library card to retrieve ordered books much like a vending machine and returns them to the same machine when finished, although these have not yet been implemented in Nova Scotia. These services, however, lack the essential nature of libraries which provides social spaces and extensive research capacity. Nor do these services provide the interaction with staff that patrons identify as a significant benefit.

Libraries are increasingly utilized to deliver public services, such as training, health and wellness programs and social supports. As government access to services becomes increasingly mechanized, libraries perform critical services in assisting citizens to access service. An example of this would be the recent changes to obtaining fishing tags; some rural library branches were able to offer training and guidance in utilizing the now computerized system.

“Lack of a dedicated capital funding resource is causing libraries to be housed in available vacant buildings which are often outdated and are experiencing critical issues.”

2.2 Key Challenges

Staff shortages and pressures that are due to current funding pressures are identified as critical problems that are increasing year after year. Pay scales and benefit scales vary widely from region to region making it difficult for advancement or new opportunities within the province, and also causing stressors between regions. There is no dedicated professional development fund for staff, making it difficult to stay abreast of innovations and training.

Chief librarians do enjoy a strong professional relationship which has fostered exchange of information across boundaries, but each region must search for resources to send staff for critical training or be able to access it themselves. Each staffing position that is cut means the workload must be divided among remaining staff, yet there are no resources to compensate for this extra work. Many staff positions are barely above minimum wage, and meeting the minimum wage requirement has actually meant cutting in vital areas of library service. Librarians are highly educated, highly qualified professionals with expertise in collections, research, programs and technical services, but compensation levels in Nova Scotia are sometimes below standard. With pay scales, benefits, professional training opportunities and a deeply stressed environment, staff retention is difficult. Some boards worry how they will replace librarians nearing retirement who have been providing extensive years of excellent service for below scale compensation. The current situation makes it difficult to attract such high calibre staff.

Lack of a dedicated capital funding fund is causing libraries to be housed in available vacant buildings which often are outdated and experiencing critical issues. Leaks, improper heating, poor ventilation, rot, mold, improper renovations and limited space are the uphill battles faced by municipalities in attempting to provide library space in communities. To the credit of library boards and library staff, despite less than optimum circumstances, rural libraries in Nova Scotia nevertheless have been able to provide enticing, warm, bright inviting spaces where community members feel welcome. Entering any rural library in Nova Scotia one will find fathers reading to children, mothers with toddlers at play centers, teenagers diligently working on computers, budding homeschooled scientists embroiled in discussions with librarians while checking out armfuls of books, adults connecting with each other, community organizations holding meetings, notice boards full of community announcements and beloved librarians and staff assisting every person to develop their full interests and potential. Not all of these users take out books; teenagers avidly read books on teen development and then shyly push them under the stacks rather than endure the embarrassment of withdrawing and returning them; seniors come to work on jigsaw puzzles and connect with others, artists come to share their perspectives and crafters come to find community and resonance. In libraries, everyone who comes through the doors finds a safe space to grow and connect, but they long for more; more space, more books, more materials, more innovative technology, and more hours of access.

The age and adequacy of collections is a serious concern (Appendix D). In most regions, collection budgets have slowly eroded over the past ten years until they have reached unsustainable levels. Since collection budgets are the one area that can be modified, increases in staff costs to meet minimum wage, or maintenance costs of buildings, or rising costs of outreach services can only be deducted from core collection budgets. In one region, these pressures have resulted in a 55% cut in collection spending over time.

Technology also poses specific challenges. E book publishers have varying scales of cost and lending restrictions. The costs of e books and difficulty in securing adequate lending requirements have posed challenges. Inconsistency of high speed wireless connectivity has placed demands upon library service at the same time that CAP programs have been threatened. With no dedicated technology funding libraries struggle to maintain and refresh technology, as well as keep staff trained and abreast of technological changes. Chief librarians have been strategic in securing funding to implement newer technologies such as 3D printers and have looked to share and partner these technologies. They see the tremendous potential in these technologies to support small business and artistry, demonstrating foresight in their acquisitions, but their diligence has meant constantly searching for innovative funds or partners.

Regional inconsistencies sometimes have made it difficult to have equitable and efficient service. Loan periods, whether or not fines are implemented, hours of operation and programs vary widely from region to region. Currently library cards are region specific; while books can be borrowed from any branch and returned to any branch, there is no province-wide card with standard borrowing specifications. Library users identify benefit from service that is province-wide, such as inter-library loans and the ability to search via the web any author or subject materials from the entire provincial collection. Therefore, further standardization of services would create ease of use for patrons and would also create greater opportunities for sharing services in order to capitalize on efficiencies. Other differences in how regions operate are apparent. Library boards meet on different schedules with differing compensation rates. In some measure the unique nature of library boards allows them to be very responsive to user needs as they know their clientele well, but it can also create differences in service and perspective.

Variability of municipal support is also identified as a challenge. Chief Librarians find themselves having to make the case annually for library support, competing for public dollars that have increasing pressures on them. Municipalities for their part are coping with huge challenges in rural areas as increasing outmigration levels, aging populations and loss of tax base place burdens on their ability to respond to requests. While communities view libraries as essential services, they risk being lost in the many vital requests that are made to municipalities, particularly in times of increasing constraint.

2.3 Equitable Service Vision

Equitable service is envisioned by CORL as including a one card system and common policies with respect to lending. Provincial alignment of pay and benefits is considered essential to providing long-term stability and to placing all regions on a level playing field. Working toward consistent high speed wireless access across the province and expanding new technologies such as fibre optics with all the potential it could bring is vital as well. Increasing staff to reasonable levels for the workload is seen as key to reducing stressors in the system. The ability to consistently refresh and expand collections rather than to cut this central resource is central to equitable service. Provision of staff training, particularly with respect to technology across the province is perceived as essential. Resolving e book issues in terms of cataloguing, publisher requirements and loan issues require funds and negotiation. Enhanced partnerships with schools, particularly in the face of library closures within schools, requires more staff and more staff time. Increasing levels of programming across the board with dedicated program assistants is particularly critical. Often staff are hired through grants or short-term funding but this arrangement provides no stability to public programming.

Maintenance of satellite services is particularly important in rural areas where many users can access library services only through these means. Lastly, a strong public media campaign to inform communities of services available at libraries and encourage community members to utilize the advantages of early introduction to libraries is sorely needed.

2.4 Current Inequities

Current inequities of service are directly tied to funding pressures. The inability to refresh collections in most regions makes it difficult to meet user needs. Public expectations with respect to programming also cannot be met due to staff cutbacks. Facility conditions such as lack of handicapped access, no running hot water or private meeting space make equitable user service difficult. Understaffing affects service across the board, from hours of operation to movement of items through the system. Security, safety and health concerns increase for staff and library users as difficulty in meeting standards increases. Some regions can no longer provide two staff for shifts in areas where safety and security are an identified concern and therefore have had to close branches. Upkeep and refresh of technology is a constant struggle; where regions have been able to leverage funds or have better access greater resources are available to library users. Staff training and development currently is not meeting the needs of community.

2.5 Desired Innovations/Technologies

The ability to sustain technology that is in place currently is a priority. Never knowing from year to year if the CAP program will be maintained is difficult. Technology changes rapidly, and the ability to upgrade and refresh technology is not built into the current funding formula. No dedicated budget is available to provide improvements in innovation and service. Staff training budgets would ensure professional growth is a priority; library users depend upon staff to be able to provide technology training and assist them in technology usage. Currently there are no set standards for defined core services, only guidelines.



Section Three: CORL Session

Council of Rural Librarians Two-Day Session

Attended by Chief Librarians, LBANS representative, NSPL Staff

The two-day working session included Chief Librarians with Halifax region sending delegated representatives, NSPL staff and a member of LBANS. The sessions addressed key questions and risk scenarios. Included in the session were various exercises that demonstrated hands-on themes related to library service challenges. Below is a summary of the information gathered during this session.

3.1 Geographic boundaries

For the most part geographic boundaries are perceived to be working well. These boundaries are viewed as primarily political boundaries representing geographic areas rather than boundaries determined by geographic features. However, some geographic features such as the Cobequid pass create a situation whereby some regions cannot be divided into other configurations. The current funding structure does not take into account difficulties in servicing rural areas.

Large rural areas require the same level of service yet are difficult to service because of distance issues. For example, the largest physical region is based on geography of 9,400 kms and includes 90 communities, yet it has the lowest population by numbers. The population base of this region also has special population challenges such as literacy and employment. Equity grants help, but they do not fully address the challenges. Cape Breton Regional Libraries (CBRL), Eastern Counties Regional Libraries (ECRL), and Annapolis Valley Regional Libraries (AVRL) all have higher costs as a result of broad geographic bases.

The boundaries correspond to traffic patterns such as shopping and commuting so hours of library operation are designed to connect with these. Some of the geographic boundaries are oddly composed, for example, not matching highway routes. Each region includes townships, villages and outlying rural areas. It was observed that regions would not be workable if they were any larger, and the course of the study certainly confirmed this fact. Many of these regions already require long driving distances between branches, up to three hours within some regions, and managing larger geographic areas would be fundamentally difficult. Virtual services and layering of services are perceived as ways of managing, but not replacing, services in rural areas.

Chief Librarians identified their strong commitment to service for the people and utilizing efficiencies for cross regional service, thereby creating porous boundaries in practice. Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) resulting in the sharing of funding to deliver service effectively, the 'Borrow Anywhere Return Anywhere' (BARA) policy, and inter-branch lending services have all contributed to virtual pan Nova Scotia service. Under BARA, a library card holder can borrow an item and return it to any public library branch, community college library or university library. Inter-library service is also available allowing borrowing across the province, the nation, and even internationally. However sometimes barriers such as inconsistencies in borrowing policies make implementation of MOA's difficult. Difficulties of tax base

and municipal contributions needing to stay within municipal boundaries sometimes make service sharing complicated. Some border areas could be better serviced by adjoining regions, but these are not common. There is a willingness to examine service agreements and explore potential shared services. Equity of service is the underpinning goal. Geographic boundaries are invisible to library users who perceive public library service as a larger entity.

Some of the challenges of regional boundaries come with complexity in relation to other services. Libraries are divided along municipal and use patterns. However health authorities, schools, and federal agencies all have differing boundaries. This incongruity can mean that multiple applications have to be made by libraries for grants and special funding. The recommendations of this project, therefore, highly advise the creation of a provincial fund sustained by corporate contributions and specific annual goals to which library regions could apply. This objective would streamline efforts and reduce complexity in the system. Library regions would still maintain the autonomy to apply for other project funds for specialized projects.

“When I first got this job, I thought it was a dream job. What could be more wonderful than bringing the library to people? The first day out, I had to tell some of the people that the service was being discontinued in their area. People cried when I told them. The bookmobile was a large part of their lives. It was a difficult experience. How do you explain that even if only four people use the bookmobile, to those four people it is very important?”

Library staff person, Nova Scotia

3.2 Decision Making

Chief Librarians report that municipalities support their decisions, their proposed efficiencies, and work very hard to maintain physical buildings of branches. Within regions, there is varying financial support from municipalities depending on ability to contribute. For Chief Librarians, effective rather than efficient service is the goal. Halifax Public Library is identified as having special challenges as it functions partly as a board, partly as a department encompassed in one large municipality.

Chief Librarians are also aware that what makes sense to them from an administrative view may not work well with municipal pressures and obligations.

Libraries do not have the funding to develop robust promotion and communication programs. Programming budgets have to be sought from other sources and their effectiveness and delivery depends entirely upon staff, which is difficult with so few resources. A dedicated provincial media campaign promoting libraries and library programs would be effective and increase usage.

The role of library boards with respect to decision making is acknowledged in this report. Boards determine whether partnerships will be formed with other regions for service delivery and boards from differing regions must be in agreement. Currently within their regions boards are described as fast, nimble and flexible in decision making. Pan Nova Scotia decisions are more challenging. However, boards are subject to political pressures which can interfere with efficiencies, and on occasion, decisions can take up to six months depending on the frequency of board meetings and workload, which can in turn put pressures on staff. Large issues take time and exploration, so information has to be provided ahead of time with clarifications so that discussion at the board level is efficient. Relationships also take time to build and to become mutually trusting. Chief Librarians are often negotiating with new boards or new board members resulting in loss of corporate memory and skill. Some areas for improvement are noted. These areas include ensuring that appointees have interest and commitment to library service, reducing the processing time for provincial appointees so they do not lose interest and withdraw from the process and improving awareness within municipal councils with set mechanisms for reporting back from library boards to councils.

Standardization of benefits such as health plans and pensions is identified as a major priority for stability of the system. Adopting or modifying existing benefit plans across regions would be complex and costly. Providing these benefits through the province has been discussed in the past and would provide the opportunity to standardize salaries and staff levels.

3.3 Consistency of Service

Barriers to consistency of service were linked to:

- Inadequate funding
- Inconsistencies in circulation and lending policies
- Unrealistic fundraising targets
- Physical access to facilities
- Pay/benefit inequities
- Guidelines for standards but no regulations
- Lack of supports to rural service and branch libraries
- Exploring future construction standards with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM)
- No standard facility requirements for closure
- Inconsistent training
- Varying job descriptions
- Initial training for new staff on ILS costly
- Regional programming by distance technology not as adequate as face-to-face
- Need to centralize training/programming
- Because of staff cuts branches often have to close if someone is on training
- Inconsistent circulation and lending policies
- Need to create one library catalogue to include universities and colleges
- Improve Overdrive e books and e audiobooks infrastructure
- Lack of one card system
- Need for shared services such as cataloguing
- Inconsistent levels of digitization

Chief Librarians report they would support greater standardization of service in salaries, wages and benefits, the creation of one ILS system, increased digitization/content management systems, the adoption of facilities standards, determining a unified fine system, standard loan periods, and adoption of a one card system. They also note that library-driven provincial guidelines should include school resources, distance requirements between locations, catchment areas, community demand or lack of other services, and partnerships with small community museums.

In the current system, variations in sick leave, pension, vacation, performance management tools, and pay scales make it difficult to pursue opportunities between regions.

3.4 Changing Role of Libraries

The traditional role of libraries is identified as important to preserve. The core role of libraries is defined as “helping people meet their potential”. Libraries are defined as essential to democracy. Face to face contact is not replaceable by technology, and libraries are perceived as the trusted intermediary. Communities assume that libraries will always be there. Although library staff are not trained social, healthcare or anti-poverty workers, they often play a strong adjunct role in providing these services to patrons. While some services such as reference services appear to be declining, services such as the Reader’s Advisory are seeing increased usage. Librarians show users how to access and use historical documents. They also continue to provide quality child and adult programs, support literacy and provide lifelong learning. While the internet is widely used, it is recognized as “1000 miles wide and 1 inch deep”, and is not a replacement for the accuracy and depth of library materials.

Libraries are places where New Canadians learn the culture and access support services. They are safe places in which to conduct English as a Second Language programs (ESL), for example. They provide cultural exposure; new arrivals to Nova Scotia can experience the varied culture and learn through books and materials the history and flavour of Nova Scotia culture.

The increase in online services such as Employment Insurance and Veteran’s services has increased the role of libraries as service providers. These services often are designed with the assumption of literacy and computer skill levels that exceed that of users. Libraries are where community members go to access these services with assistance. Yet no federal or provincial monies go to libraries to provide these services or to provide training for library staff who often are called upon to assist with access to the government websites.

Libraries are also experiencing an upward demand to provide social spaces. Perceived as the center of intellectual thought and safety, libraries are expected to deliver community programs and provide space for community organizations to thrive. Libraries are where innovation occurs. Provision of teleconferencing services for example is highly used because it allows organizations to put on sessions. Some regions have extensive outreach programs that include young offender prevention programs, health partnerships, technology training and access to business services. Increasingly, rural libraries are serving marginalized communities.

Chief Librarians also point out that they provide services to populations not captured in census figures, such as summer residents and visitors. Seasonal population pressures are particularly acute in rural areas. Rural libraries draw on a smaller pool of volunteers and struggle to provide cultural activities to a level found in larger urban areas. In rural areas walking to satellite sites is difficult because of widely spread population bases. Mail service has declined so even books by mail services are more difficult for rural users to access and larger books do not fit through new mail slots.

3.5 Measuring the Impact of Libraries

Measuring the true impact of libraries on individual lives and society can be challenging. Below are some of the measurable impacts observed by Chief Librarians:

Table 2: Measurable Impacts of Libraries on Society

Impact	Benefit
Health programs/partnership/information	Healthier citizens reducing health care costs
New business supports	Stronger economies and opportunities in rural areas
Senior programs – social connectivity and intellectual stimulation	Seniors are able to remain independent for longer therefore reducing social costs
Seniors have better quality of life	
Increased literacy	Linked to greater GDP/productivity
Stronger economy	
Greater opportunity for further education	
Community learning	Creates strong community bonds – better able to support each other, less reliance on social programs
Higher quality of life	Attracts more population to rural communities increasing tax base and economies
Neutral secular places	Creates cohesive communities where all ages and citizens mingle
Equalizer of poor, senior and youth	Increases social responsibility, equalizes opportunity
Direct investment in communities	Library services are designed to increase capacity of citizens – only place which serves every citizen
Provides direction for youth	Removes youth from the street, increase opportunity, as education/literacy rates increase recidivism rates decrease
Social spaces	Supports community organizations and strengthens communities
Intergenerational mixing	
Cultural and artistic opportunities	Honours cultures in community and provides exposure in rural communities to cultural and artistic aesthetic

Potential mechanisms to evaluate the impact of libraries include:

- use of testimonials
- recognize libraries as trusted government resources
- one region reviews annual yearbooks for prizes and scholarships; has noted that 80% are regular library users
- utilize tools such as Sensemaker software
- collect more meaningful statistics
- document money saved
- achieve recognition by other departments of the cost saving to their spending

Section Four: CORL Session– Risk Scenarios

Attended by CORL and NSPL staff

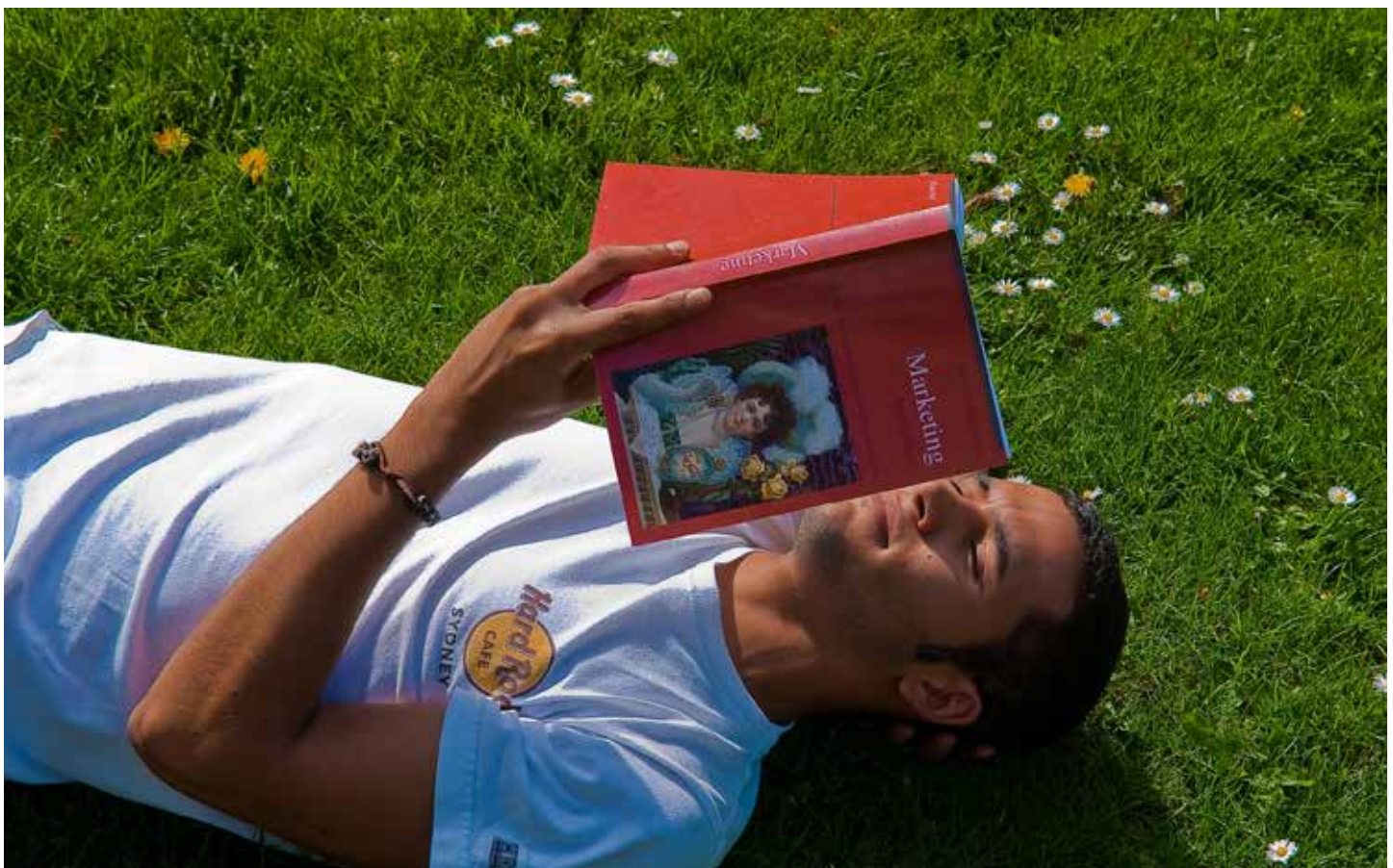
Risk Scenarios and Mitigation

4.1 Surrender of library service totally to Provincial administration

Concerns about complete turnover of library service to the province include: inability to apply for creative grants, loss of community-specific programs, bureaucratic malaise, diminishment of service, loss of layered services, and loss of responsiveness to community.

However, the need to establish salary scales, benefits and dedicated training is recognized. Ensuring mandatory standards and best practices is an additional priority. Communication plans to ensure effective decision-making and extensive community engagement are required elements. Strengthening relationships with municipalities, as well as departments and agencies of other government sectors is perceived as highly important.

The proposed realignment of the funding structure ensures that the concerns raised are addressed while at the same time preserving the ability of libraries to remain nimble and creative in responding to community needs. Proportionally provincial funding is closely aligned to staff salary costs, and while there would be some adjustment for professionalization and upgrading of salaries and wages, as well as the implementation of benefit plans, control over costs ultimately would be assured.



4.2 Municipal Risk: withdrawal of funding/region with continued expectation of service

Under the Library Act, municipalities have the right to withdraw from contributing to library service. One noted risk is the potential perspective of municipalities that if they don't have a physical site they shouldn't be paying for service, when in fact libraries provide lending services to residents via inter-branch lending and books by mail, as well as by satellite sites and bookmobile services where possible. The effect of municipal withdrawal of funding would be devastating to all regions, particularly if it is by a municipality that is a large funder. Many facilities are facing substandard conditions which may have liability risks. If municipalities decide not to provide space the public library system would be at risk. Under the current population-based funding regime, municipal contributions may decrease as population and therefore tax bases diminish. Amalgamation and merger of municipal units is also a perceived risk, potentially creating a situation where one site as opposed to multiple sites would be supported. Some municipalities currently pay more than they are mandated to pay; a reduction of their amount to the base amount would further erode library service.

Continued advocacy and engagement of library boards is perceived as the primary mitigation. Continued education of municipal council on the benefits and services of libraries is essential.

Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, particularly with respect to facilities, as well as understanding that municipal units are providing the best they can give under their current circumstances is vital. Revisiting the Libraries Act so that communities cannot opt out may be necessary. Capital funding for facilities currently is based on effective lobbying and is granted on a case-by-case basis. In the past there was a defined body that made these decisions and lack of a capital program is stressful. Some regions are building capital investment through staff savings, which creates difficult choices. Federal capital infrastructure monies are available to municipal units, but these funds are restrictive in their guidelines so they often don't include upgrades. Revision of regulations to increase the scope of availability and include flexibility for discretionary projects would be helpful.

The proposed recommendations would allow municipalities to see more clearly that their investment dollars go directly to community through collections and programs. Such vision would create higher buy-in from communities and clear benefit to municipal decision makers. Transferring capital costs to a corporate/fundraising pool ensures funding can be matched to real needs and provides investment from the business community into direct community benefit.

4.3 Virtual Internet Libraries

Virtual internet libraries are already appearing in some sectors. Google and Amazon are currently exploring negotiations directly with publishers. This could theoretically impact the life of libraries and the usership of middle income families, who may find access within the home to a broad array of reading materials, easily downloaded and accessed at leisure, to be attractive. Such access would eliminate bulk and storage issues of books. On the surface, this would appear to be a natural technological evolution that would gradually decrease library demand. Funding digital technology is perceived as cheaper than funding people and space. Establishing working relationships with publishers can be difficult for librarians and collections are not transferrable due to copyright issues. If costs decline over time this could affect the relevance of library service.

The experience of Chief Librarians, and indeed the response of the public in consultation sessions however, paint a different picture of library users and their needs. Clients of libraries want access to materials in all forms. They are very loyal to books and indeed where collections are allowed to expand user membership and usage grows. Library users engage libraries for their safe, vibrant space equally with their access to books. Indeed, books are perceived as more valuable and special as physical publishing declines.

Strategic timing of engaging technology, embracing new formats and perceiving technological changes as opportunities are considered key mitigation strategies. Continuing to provide free, neutral space to patrons ensures the place of libraries in community dynamics. Digital materials often do not offer an improvement over print materials. There are also cost, liability and copyright issues associated with digital materials.

Other mitigation measures include increasing the presence of libraries in the e-world as champions of literacy. Technology can enhance the ability to share stories and knowledge, gather and deliver programs, and libraries are the safe spaces in which to access this advantage.

Libraries provide the opportunity for technology users to access trained, knowledgeable staff who know about the issues and can champion them. Libraries could also become publishers of websites and books through digitization technology.

4.4 Funding remaining at flat line level for five years

Details of the following impacts of flat line funding by region are found in section 6.6. In this working session the following general impacts were listed:

- staff reductions
- fewer operating areas
- reduction of services
- decreased collection sizes
- undermining of entire system
- erosion of past successes
- staff burnout – illness/stress
- closure of libraries
- reduction of programming – choose between seniors and children
- local unemployment
- loss of access to knowledge
- decreased community reading/literacy levels
- loss of public space
- increased funding from other sectors–difficult
- declining community support as collections and services are reduced
- downloading onto municipalities
- less opportunity for advancement
- brain drain – unable to attract or retain population
- reduction in public resources/loss of access
- decreased ability to partner
- government statement on democracy and literacy
- in tough times, libraries are busier than ever
- loss of health and education resource supports provided by libraries

Mitigation strategies in this area all had serious impacts and included library closures, increased corporate fundraising by libraries, lower service standards, erosion of user base, staff reductions, salary freezes or rollbacks, damage to staff morale, loss of community literacy and productivity, and death of rural communities. Becoming vocal with the public about the survival mode of libraries would be an option. Clearly demonstrating the impact of cuts to communities, including loss of books, hours, story times, computer availability and outreach visits is vital.

4.5 E book risks: prohibitive costs, copyright challenges

Technology often is touted as the answer to issues, and in many sectors the ability and agility of technology can bring efficiencies and increased capacity. Libraries, however, are a different sector. Libraries are built on human beings; on their stories, their thoughts, philosophies, artistry, knowledge, history and connection. While e books seem like the brave new world of books on the surface, in reality they present many challenges. E books are costly and lending restrictions, expense and copyright issues make them complicated to acquire. Publishers often do not work with libraries with an eye to solutions. Purchasing multiple formats of books also involves extra costs. Technology and reading devices are ever- changing and there is a danger of obsolete purchases. Libraries don't own the rights to digital copies, so collections aren't transferrable. They also require staff training, as staff are expected to be expert in technological advances.

Libraries could arrange agreements with companies to provide tools and training. There is also opportunity for libraries to promote themselves as the third space – social gathering spaces. Libraries in the e world are champions for the reader and provide places to share knowledge and stories. Readers could have trained knowledgeable staff who can provide entrance into new technologies. Libraries are also places of added value, with their vast experience librarians can discriminate between good and bad materials.

4.6 Infrastructure Costs

Inasmuch as residents of Nova Scotia are finding the costs of electricity, heat and maintenance difficult to meet, so municipal units are also finding these costs prohibitive. Libraries face special challenges in the face of these rising costs.

Libraries are responsible for several vital services that involve rising fuel costs, insurance and vehicle maintenance. These include bookmobiles, delivery to shut-ins and seniors, satellite services, programs in remote branches, and materials delivery to service the rural branches. Addressing these rising costs often results in cutting collection budgets as they are the one flexible budget category.

Chief Librarians also identified risks linked to rising costs that could seriously jeopardize library service. These include: loss of the Canada Post book rate, rising costs of paper production, increased disaster scenarios resulting from climate change events such as flooding and sustained power outages. During Hurricane Juan residents were without power and water for days and during this time people used libraries as a safe community refuge. Ironically the creativity of librarians in meeting needs sometimes poses unexpected difficulties; during a recent flood in one rural branch the furniture was not covered by insurance because it was largely donated.

Presently staff wages are low, barely above minimum wage in many cases. As a result, staff could find that their wages cannot keep up with their costs and may become part of the outmigration that haunts the Atlantic region.

Section Five: Trustee Sessions

Participants: Library Boards of Nine Regions

5.1 Cynefin Framework Exercise

Trustee sessions were held across the province in every region. The sessions opened with a PowerPoint summary of the project and findings to date. LBANS and CCH had made a substantial investment into training and usage of the Cynefin Framework as an assessment tool for the study. Therefore the Trustee sessions included a brief overview and introduction to the Cynefin framework followed by utilization of a Cynefin tool called Future Backward. Future Backward screens for bias and allows for broader thinking. The exercise allows groups to map potential scenarios, determine how those would occur, analyse the current state, and determine significant turning points to both success and failure. This process was followed by a summary discussion from the perspective of Trustees on the current situation and future possibilities of libraries.

The Cynefin Framework is a tool to assist managers in addressing periods of crisis in organizations and to establish a decision-making framework that addresses issues. The Cynefin framework is being employed in other sectors of the provincial government such as the Nova Scotia Climate Change Secretariat and the NS Department of Community and Social Services, and has received attention from the Harvard Business Review (Snowden & Boone, 2007). The Future Backward exercise was utilized to determine how library boards would describe the current situation of libraries both positive and negative, where they felt significant past turning points occurred to lead to the present situation, what 'Heaven' would look like in library service and what 'Hell' would look like, as well as postulating some events that would lead to both scenarios.

The sessions allowed analysis of the following: disconnects and similarities between Chief Librarian and board perspectives, consistencies across regions, and perception of turning points. The results indicated that indeed there were some disconnects between library staff and library board perspectives, most of which revolved around the state of infrastructure. Library board sessions identified infrastructure as a strength, but for staff infrastructure was often identified as a concern.

Some boards have almost entirely new membership and therefore awareness of the current situation and past turning points is limited; indeed the use of this exercise was expressed to be of great value in those situations as it acted as a quick learning curve. There were strong similarities in the best and worst case scenarios modelling across staff and Trustee sectors. Interestingly, many of the characteristics of worst case modelling were identified in the two-day CORL working session as already existing, indicating the current stresses in the system and the imperative nature of addressing them.

The summary results of the exercise Future Backward is intended to assist organizations in identifying outliers, small alerts that can be missed but that can have severe consequences in the long term. The exercise also is intended to provide a checklist of both warning signs and positive signs of the direction the organization is heading as it institutes corrective change. Tabulating turning points in either direction assists in analyzing the types of steps needed to foster positive change, or to be alert to a pending decline.

The following table outlines the responses of Trustees:

Table 3: Summary of Trustee Sessions: Future Backward Exercise

Current Situation	Turning Points	Markers of Future Success	Markers of Impending Failure	Characteristics of Turning Points to Success	Characteristics of Turning Points to Failure
Loss of CORDA partnership	Staff evaluations	Recommendations from rural services study adopted	Fire/flood/disaster	Benefactor	Continuing Recession
Aging staff – retirements	Succession planning	Increasing municipal support	Staff safety event	Windfall	Economic Collapse
Technological capacity changes	Staffing for special programs	Increasing population	Lack of funds and crisis situation	Free technology to libraries	Repressive Government
Flat line funding	Increased funding from all levels	Community champions/support	Litigation – damaging reputation ie human rights/harassment	Recognition of libraries as essential in information age with concomitant support	Province turns funding responsibility over to municipal units
Lack of space – aging infrastructure	Partnerships with schools	Libraries acknowledged as essential by province	Closure of libraries	Full internet capacity across Nova Scotia	Inability to meet expanding need for services
Book sales	New buildings/ accessible buildings	Reliable cost based funding	Understaffed/ limited hours	Grass roots campaign by public	Automated library machine
Low hours	Capacity to hold community events	New jobs turn around economic decline	Further drop in funding/budget cuts	Funding formula not based on population	Changing regional boundaries
No broadband planning	Funding to automate led to loss of programs and addition of 3% board fundraising for operating each year	Motivated, well trained staff	Continued decrease of population	Promotional campaign for libraries	Local industries closed
Book sales	Loss of social interaction	Enough funding to do everything, books, programs, technology, spaces	Lack of political support at any level of government	Find novel ways to promote library	Municipalities opt out
Lack of space for personnel	Lack of community consultation	Public activity supports libraries (raise funds, donate technology)	Increase in postal rates/loss of special rate	Dedication and commitment of Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage	Totally individualistic society that moves away from social services
Affordable information	Struggle of decision makers re: new buildings	Appropriate pay scales	Complete closure of library system	Library representatives meeting with other Provincial representatives on what we are doing for them	Epidemics that result in social isolation
Lack of interconnectivity	Loss of government funding	Supportive premier	Unionization	Definition of cores services	
Community gathering space	Dedicated staff	Innovation funding	Government completely cuts funding to libraries	Long range planning	
Visible child activity	Flat line funding	Project funding	Rising collection costs		

Current Situation	Turning Points	Markers of Future Success	Markers of Impending Failure	Characteristics of Turning Points to Success	Characteristics of Turning Points to Failure
Insufficient infrastructure	Loss of bookmobile service	Technology budget	Rising costs of technology		
Interlibrary lending	Rising provincial debt	Good benefits and pensions	Forced layoffs		
Great staff	Funding formula task team and report – not implemented	Fully funded program into the future	No money to hire staff		
Lack of public exposure	Municipal contributions remain the same	Regular Cost of Living increases	Limited access		
Insufficient hours	Ongoing decrease in population	Healthy book budgets	State layoffs		
Decreasing staffing	Technology changes	Libraries a top priority for government	No books		
No capital money	Choosing of regions; large geographic areas, low population base	Well developed provincial strategic plan	No programs		
Complex changing needs	Complacency	Government investment in training and development	Loss of partners		
Rising membership	Libraries Act	State of the art buildings	User fees/entrance fees for libraries		
Private partnerships	Physical Improvements	100% access	Lack of political support		
Innovation of staff/board has kept us functioning	Establishment of CAP program	Libraries in every community	Infrastructure meltdown		
Popular programs	Diversified programs and services	Coffee shops located in libraries	No access to good staff		
Strong community support	Vision of staff	Bulk purchases & patron driven acquisitions	Status quo		
Highly educated staff	Empty promises	Community Support	Hostility to libraries		
Poor wages	Economic downturn	New Innovative Outreach Programs	Everyone turns to e books		
Increasing expectations	Change of departments	Happy staff	Government that supports censorship		
Increasing costs	Library expansions and development	Balanced collections/ programs	Government telling libraries how to operate without consultation		

Current Situation	Turning Points	Markers of Future Success	Markers of Impending Failure	Characteristics of Turning Points to Success	Characteristics of Turning Points to Failure
Diverse user base	Loss of capital funds	Services/programs that meet all community needs	Arbitrary change of regional boundaries		
Free	LBANs created and provide advocacy role with government	Libraries become center of communities	Government consistently in reactive rather than proactive mode		
Shortage of books	Chief Librarians recognizing importance of boards and municipalities	Ample staff during hours of operation	Suffering of rural communities		
Underfunded					
Overburdened staff	Excellent boards and chairpersons	24/7 operating hours	Increased illiteracy		
Strong public usage	Building maintenance shifted to municipalities	Not being forced to fundraise	Population that has lost interest in libraries		
Innovative programs	1998 funding formula provided three years of stable funding	New buildings for all			
Municipalities shouldering funding costs	Friends of the Library assisted libraries	No bureaucratic in fighting			
Good provincial library system in place	Technology grants	Green solutions on energy for infrastructure			
BARA – Borrow Anywhere Return Anywhere	Strategic plan that protects collections funding (South Shore)	Role model for community initiatives			
Lack of programming in areas with no branch	Formation of regions	Retention of CAP sites			
Facilities Review – Halifax	Standards updated 2001 – no funding to implement	Guaranteed inflation proof funding			
Desire for library service but unwillingness to fund	Reductions of municipal councillors	Committed long term partners			
Innovative summer reading access in rural areas	Municipal amalgamations	Partners coming to libraries for delivery of services for a fee			
Home delivery service	Security issues increasing costs	Integration of public programs into libraries			
Books by mail	Easy website access	Regular open hours			
Low hours in rural areas		Short waiting lists for materials			

Current Situation	Turning Points	Markers of Future Success	Markers of Impending Failure	Characteristics of Turning Points to Success	Characteristics of Turning Points to Failure
Removal of CAP sites		Every Nova Scotian has library card			
Access to full library collection		High literacy rates			
Shared programs with recreation					
Population benchmarks for library catchment areas are hard to meet in rural areas					
Long driving distances to rural branches					
Lack of program rooms					
No one size fits all					
Rural outmigration					
Shifting roles of libraries					
Fines/fees impact users					
No seed money for pilot projects					
Municipalities regard libraries as afterthought when planning infrastructure					
Need new vehicles					
Large geographic areas					
Computer replacements/upgrades					
Difficult to take opportunities from region to region due to different administrative policies					
New board/new board members					

5.2 Summary Discussion: Trustees

In summary discussions Trustees noted several key points with respect to the overall administration of library service. They encouraged a stronger relationship with Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage personnel, seeking greater understanding of what libraries do and how they do it. They also felt that site visits by these staff would enhance their understanding of how rural communities are living. They noted a strong need to accurately brand the multiplicity of services and functions libraries are performing and convey the message to the general public. With respect to aging populations, it was noted that as seniors age they are moving from their homes into seniors' complexes within town limits, so services to these institutions are essential. Even though populations are declining, basic operating costs continue to rise because of the increase in costs of utilities and maintenance supplies. Internet services to search and place book orders with libraries become increasingly difficult mechanisms of access for aging seniors.

In order to maintain service at current levels in the face of continued funding freezes, smaller branches would have to close, causing service to be lost in rural areas. Municipalities would not be able to continue to afford library services without raising taxes.

Greater communication with municipal units is encouraged. This could take place through inserts in municipal newsletters, regular 'library news' columns in local papers, brochures, promotion of the history of libraries. Legacies and endowments need to be actively encouraged. Social media could be used as a promotional tool. Training for Trustees/Board members is identified as important for development, and creating opportunities for brainstorming and sharing. Where long term strategic plans exist they have been excellent tools that bring assurance to board decisions. These strategic plans define core values and determine the emphasis of funding decisions.

As more schools close, libraries pick up the gap for youth. Librarians are wearing many hats and doing multiple jobs. They are, in addition, ambassadors for libraries and for their regions. There is concern about burnout and the ability to attract and maintain staff.

Retrofitting library buildings to green technology in order to reduce energy costs is vital for long-term planning. Audits and explorations of appropriate technology need to be explored. Municipalities could partner with provincial resources for this change, but municipalities express a desire to maintain control of the process.

A high-quality promotional and education campaign is recommended to be undertaken by the province that would include information on contributing to a fundraising campaign. Library support needs to be the cost of doing business for corporate investors in the province, both at the provincial and municipal levels.

Pop up libraries, satellite sites, 'Bring a Friend' days all are recognized as important and effective ways of taking libraries to the community and encouraging greater usage. Adding library branches to the pick-up/drop off stops of school buses could be considered.

Demographic changes are very difficult for municipal units. Libraries improve the quality of life for residents and provide cradle to grave services, opportunities for lifelong learning, recreation and community 'glue'. With so many services disappearing from the rural landscape, libraries have become even more central to community life. Schools, churches, community halls, grocery stores, gas stations, government offices, and hospitals are disappearing from the rural world. Yet populations in rural areas are hardworking, diligent and intelligent, with strong social bonds and deep commitments to their communities. Libraries have become the center for rural life. In the words of one Trustee, "If you want the community to die close the Library."

"There isn't so much a funding policy that isn't working as there is a series of haphazard funding decisions—we never know year to year what the situation will be and it is impossible to plan. In the past years our funding has been frozen, but our fixed costs have continued to rise. The only flexible budget item is materials and collections, and these continue to suffer."

Chief Librarian, Nova Scotia

Section Six: Chief Librarian's Questionnaire

All Regions Except Halifax Public Libraries

Chief Librarian Questionnaire

The questionnaire explored ten major issues: length of experience and major challenges observed over time; defining core services (including unrecognized and essential); defining equitable service delivery; impacts of flat line funding; other successful models; infrastructure challenge; challenges of current funding formula; impacts of reduction/loss of service, and instrumental partnerships to streamline services. Responses to the questionnaire were received from all regions except Halifax Public Libraries.

6.1 Observed Challenges

Chronic under-funding has led to an inordinate amount of time and energy given to “treading water” rather than growing library service to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the public. Uncertainty in year-to-year funding sabotages the ability to plan and innovate. The elimination of provincial/municipal capital and operating cost-sharing in the early 1990s resulted in the downloading of these entire costs to municipalities who are cash strapped, leading to continuing use of substandard and unsafe library facilities. New technologies and formats have been added to existing space, leaving many branches too small and far below standard. Many branches are inaccessible to wheelchairs and lack program space. Increasingly municipalities are turning to Friends of Libraries groups to fundraise for new libraries and for core operating funds. Previous funding strategies have not been implemented contributing to burnout and there appears to be no funding strategy left, only funding decisions haphazardly distributed.

Stable and sustainable funding is the major challenge, affecting two areas in particular: a) staff salary compensation has been too low for education and skill levels (barely above minimum wage) b) materials budgets have suffered as a result of the funding situation. Board-generated income has become too high to become sustainable, as this is where increases had to be made to make up for static funding from year to year.

The requirement to raise 3% of annual operating funds instituted in 1995/96 effectively diverts time and resources to fundraising rather than frontline service. This trade-off was made for much needed automation twenty years ago, and the effects are still being felt. People who donate see their donation as over and above the library budget and not as a donation to operating costs. Since most costs are fixed, books and materials budgets must absorb extra costs. Staff members now often volunteer their time to participate in fundraising activities, an activity that is increasingly difficult to achieve in rural areas with population declines. Many organizations compete for the same scarce dollars.

It is difficult to attract and retain library staff when salaries cannot be comparable to other types of libraries such as colleges and universities. Staff members indicate they would love to stay,

but often leave for better opportunities. Safety for staff is also an increasing concern. Despite libraries absorbing the cost of telephone monitoring services activated by a button in CBRL, response time to remote areas is too long to be of help. The library in this region also has had to assume the cost of security staff after incidents at the main branch, and the funds must come from the existing stressed budget.

Maintaining the demand for collections is difficult under the current fiscal regime. Books, audiobooks, DVDs, Playaways, Large Print books, e books all fall short of public demand. These areas of the budget are the shock absorbers for rising costs and insufficient funds. The public is more savvy and demanding than it was twenty years ago. People want items in multiple formats and they want libraries to teach them to use new digital technology. They also have increasing awareness of published titles because of their own research on the internet; therefore, they no longer rely solely on librarians for advice on what to read.

Libraries sometimes are underutilized for delivery of government programs, and should be considered first for delivery of new programs with adequate compensation. Unlike schools, libraries are open to all members of the public, and could be utilized to offer government services to citizens in under populated, remote areas, yet overtures to provincial government to do so have not garnered interest. Libraries could deliver services for less funding investment than wholly new service delivery models; they are a cost-effective conduit for program delivery.

Cancellation of the Federal CAP program has resulted in deterioration of equipment and compromised ability to offer the level of internet access and service that the public has come to expect from public libraries.



6.2 Core Services

Core services encompass educational and recreational materials in multiple formats. The ability to have person-to-person contact with library staff is essential to many patrons. Online services such as online catalogue of collections, databases, virtual reference resources, downloadable titles, local digital collections and Ask Us forms are well used. Deliveries to senior residences, care facilities and schools, library express services and BARA allow broad populations to access library services. Access to internet services, educational and recreational programs are in high demand. Barrier-free community space should be universal across branches, but it is not. Digitization of local history is also a feature of libraries.

Unrecognized roles of libraries include libraries as social and gathering places where youth gather to play chess, where community organizations hold information meetings and where new immigrants find friendship and support.

In some rural communities, the library, school and medical center might offer the only services they equate with being provided by the provincial government. Of all of these places, the library is the most welcoming and accessible. Libraries as social spaces for seniors are very important in rural communities, as they are free and safe.

Reference services are also well used by the public. Services such as ancestry searches, researchers seeking rare books and materials, and books that can be accessed only in other library systems are frequent areas of inquiry.

School classroom visits to promote reading and library use is also a core service. Often school outreach is the only route to reach scattered populations of youth. Virtual Homework Help services in areas where such assistance is difficult to access are other emerging services. Provision of health information and Adopt a Library programs are also essential to reaching vulnerable populations.

Mobile library service is viewed in some regions as a continuing core service. Although some have been forced by funding shortages to cancel mobile service, other regions have not offered programs such as books by mail in order to continue to support mobile library service in remote areas.

The provision of free services that allow people to reach their full potential is identified as core service across all regions. The UNESCO definition of the four pillars of learning, namely learning to know, to do, to be and to live together, are seen as the best expression of this central driving goal.

6.3 Defining Equitable Service

Offering people who live outside cities or towns a menu of diverse public library services that parallel those offered within cities or large town libraries is the essential vision of equitable service delivery. Maximum hours of operation and collections that are to a high standard are keys to quality delivery. The ability to deliver innovative programming and to provide technology training, thereby meeting the expectation of public users, is integral to equitable service to rural citizens. Enhancing books by mail to include DVDs and CDs (currently prohibited by Canada Post regulations), expanding downloadable e books, wide ranging audio book collections and improved outreach services, are necessary to reach the most rural of residents. Programming for users of all ages is essential. The ability to visit more readers and potential computer users whose health confines them to their homes or in an assisted/continuing care facility with services that offer not only access to collections but also training and contact with a caring person is a needed service in rural areas where few services are offered to this clientele. This concept requires further support and expansion.

Delivery services in some rural areas need to be increased and on a more frequent schedule. For people who access these services seeing a staff person and interacting through conversation and questions is a stimulating and important part of their lives.

The bookmobile also provides essential personal contact for people isolated in rural areas and is another service rated highly by users. Where bookmobiles have been lost, restoration of these services would increase the profile of library services in regions. Cutting of management positions to maintain service has overloaded the remaining managers to a breaking point. Bookmobile delivery needs to be reinstated to allow managers the time and resources to manage programs.

Well maintained, welcoming spaces that are handicapped accessible and senior friendly are essential for equitable service. Minimum guidelines to which library spaces must adhere across the province would need to have associated funding but the establishment of minimum standards would be paramount to establishing equitable service.

Access to reading materials and local information for anyone in the province is a hallmark of equitable service. The delivery of these services does not have to be the same from region to region, but the access to materials needs to be consistent.

“Library services that parallel services offered within city or large town libraries is the essential vision of equitable service delivery”

6.4 Aspects of Other Models– Are They Worth Adapting?

Most Chief Librarians in Nova Scotia have worked under other provincial systems, but they do not recommend other models for adoption. Rather they focus on particular areas that need addressing. These areas include standardization of pay and benefits, a funding plan that will provide security and that is adequate, the ability to remain autonomous and sensitive to community needs and the implementation of standards.

Some Chief Librarians in Nova Scotia identify that in New Brunswick bookmobiles are funded completely by the province and they would welcome a strategy that allows the same set-up here. Others identify minimum hours established for rural libraries. Such a strategy has been used to ensure greater access to bookmobiles that may come to a community once or twice a month. A successful example of this arrangement in Nova Scotia is the establishment of the St. Peter's branch in Richmond County which was a once-a-month bookmobile stop with circulation figures of approximately 200-300 items per month. The new branch, which replaced bookmobile service, is now the fourth highest circulating location in the region.

Partnerships with hub services have been identified as areas for potential growth to allow expansion at minimal cost. This idea has been applied successfully in other Provinces with detailed agreements in place to ensure their success, and such detailed agreements are seen as the route to successful community hubs. It is also stressed that libraries as community hubs are the focus, rather than schools that become community hubs. Community hubs may house schools and other critical community services, but to be successful they require thoughtful planning.

Models such as partnered space with schools were explored with Chief Librarians and Trustees. Where these partnerships currently exist, numerous issues were identified. Sharing janitorial services, for example, can be complicated. Many services are unionized and follow strict requirements regarding hours and specific duties. Library hours are meant to welcome all public patrons, whereas schools are mandated to protect the safety of children. This discrepancy results in library hours sometimes being held outside of school hours, a situation which curtails hours of access by adult public library users. Separate lending systems also cause confusion. Restrictions on school library materials can sometimes cause an uneasy blend with public materials.

In addition, evenings often are noisy times for extra-curricular activities such as sports, making achieving quiet space difficult. Visibility of the library is also an issue, and infrastructure issues with aging schools can pose additional difficulties.

Investing in more heavily populated areas and abandoning rural services is an economic theory that may make sense for economic investment, but in rural communities the more difficult the times the greater the use and need for library services. People choose rural areas in which to reside for many reasons; quality of life in retirement years, close proximity to aging family members, safe places to raise children, affordable housing and lifestyle, and personal preference. These are supportable reasons that deserve respect and accommodation.

6.5 Challenges and Improvements Required to the Current Funding Formula

Population-based funding poses serious inequities across the province (Appendix E). The lack of a multi-year funding plan has caused hardship in service planning. Often managers are in crisis management mode on a regular basis. An injection of funds is sorely needed regardless of the funding plan being used. Elements of a funding plan should include multi-year planning; advance notice of increases; realistic understanding of costs of service, and service-based funding. Core operating costs, geography, ability to provide programmes across the region, municipal ability to contribute, and cost of living increases are all factors that need to be addressed in a new funding formula.

The costs of central facilities to order, receive, process and ship books are incurred regardless of the number of people they serve. Understaffed regions are becoming overwhelmed by trying to meet demand; therefore, further reduction of staffing levels is no longer an option to compensate for costs.

Rejection of population-based funding is universal. Core levels of funding with the ability to address special projects and meet basic service needs are required. Maintenance of French-language grants was indicated as important to continue by Chief Librarians.

Standardization of core services across the province again is identified as a priority. For example, AVRIL provides special borrowing privileges to home schoolers, but other regions do not. If a family moves from one region to another in Nova Scotia it does not get the same service. Some regions provide delivery to institutions, daycares and schools, but not all regions do. These basic user needs should become standard across the province with funding to accommodate them appropriately.

6.6 Impacts of flat line funding

Chief Librarians analyzed the impacts of flat line funding over the next five years. They project serious reductions in staff and branch closures. The severity and number of branch closures is difficult to calculate. Below are general summaries of anticipated impacts followed by regional charts with specific anticipated impacts:

Pictou/Antigonish Regional Library (PARL):

Core services would be eroded to the point of no return, forcing cuts. Material budgets would decrease and purchasing power would therefore decrease.

Staff hours and positions would need to be cut which would reduce branch hours, eliminate programs and drastically reduce capability of forming partnerships which currently assists with board generated income.

Cape Breton Regional Library (CBRL):

Continued flat line funding would break the backs of most regional libraries. Significant cuts to book budgets, staff compensation, cost of living increases and technology have already been made. Salaries and benefits are not keeping pace with other sectors and libraries. Upcoming cuts would include branch hours, cuts to programmes and little or no cost of living increases for staff with significant impact on morale. Prior to 2010 this region had already reduced three full-time positions to part-time in North Sydney, New Waterford, and Sydney Mines, resulting in reduced programs and more hours during which staff had to work alone. Hours at Sydney Mines were reduced overall. Materials and collection budget was reduced despite rising costs of materials. Summer students were hired for fewer weeks despite the necessity of their positions.

The current requirement to raise 3% of the operating budget is extremely difficult. The result is that budgets must be forecast in anticipation of raising the required amount. In an area with 18% unemployment many people are not in a position to donate and yet require library service more than ever. There are not many large, prosperous industries or business that can be approached in this geographic area. As more organizations fundraise, competition for public dollars has become fierce. In addition donations or monies raised are often tied to specific allocations, and this is rarely applicable to the general operating budget.

Most significant has been the drop in the budget amount remaining for collections; more than 55% less than ten years ago. Purchasing ability has actually declined more than this, given the increasing costs in purchasing materials, new formats and shipping. The only areas left to reduce in this region are library branches and/or a significant reduction in library hours – the exact opposite of what communities are requesting.

Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL):

Continued flat line funding over a five-year period would be devastating to this region. In the past four years, four full time positions have been cut, two professional librarian positions have been downgraded to library assistant level and bookmobile service is in the process of being eliminated despite excellent

use by rural patrons. Institutional deposit service to seniors' complexes, daycares and schools would be eliminated. Currently reading materials are delivered free of charge to 23 schools, 13 daycares and nine senior citizen complexes through the Annapolis Valley.

The service is appreciated and not available in all regions, however, it is time-consuming and expensive for staff to select, pack and deliver these materials under current understaffed conditions. Popular programs such as preschool story time and other free programs for children and families would have to be cut in addition to computer classes currently funded through CAP. Staff salaries would be frozen eroding an already underpaid workforce. Further layoffs of staff would be required creating further pressure on remaining staff and contributing to unemployment in a rural area where employment is already scarce. Fewer purchases of materials and collections would mean longer wait times for popular items with some new requested items unable to be purchased at all.

Bookmobile and Outreach services have taken the heaviest cuts in this region. Existing staff have had to absorb additional duties without extra compensation. Two professional Librarian positions have been eliminated; in each case the Librarians originally in these positions left for better paying jobs at Nova Scotia Community College Libraries or government libraries (Capital Health Library). There are currently only two professional librarians employed at AVRL. Reserve Funds for capital purchases such as vehicles, books and automation replacement and upgrades have been compromised by removing the funds to boost the operating budget.

Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL)

There are no efficiencies left to find in the system without seriously impacting public service. Continued flat line funding would mean collection budgets would fall below the \$50,000 minimum required for ECRL. The collection budget would consist mostly of public/corporate donations that were specifically targeted for collections. Branch hours would be dramatically reduced with a strong possibility of library closures. All library programs would be cut. Delivery to homebound seniors would be cut. School outreach would be cut. Question/information services would be cut.

The current uncertainty about funding from year to year makes it impossible to complete rational planning for the future, since the continuance of this situation obliterates most services.

Western Counties Regional Library (WCRL)

Library hours, materials budget and staff replacement after departure and retirement are areas that have already been cut to the bone. Frontline and management staff are overwhelmed. Patrons are complaining that the library does not have the materials they want when they want them.

Operating costs keep rising but funding remains the same. In the next five years the options would be:

Significantly reduce the number of books and materials purchased so current staff can be maintained and branches can remain

open. The current materials budget does not allow WCRL to keep up with demand so this would have a serious impact on library service.

Lay off staff and reduce the number of open hours. This presents a risk of losing municipal support.

Close the smaller libraries that are not used as heavily. By doing this municipal support would be at risk. A loss of municipal support would result in even less funding which will result in further closures, producing a snowball effect where only a handful of libraries would survive. Those that would survive would be farthest from rural residents.

Cumberland Public Libraries (CPL)

The main result of flat line funding over the next five years in Cumberland would be a vastly reduced, crippled system that would probably not recover or be able to adapt to the changing expectations and needs of the public. In the 2012-13 fiscal year headquarters staff have already been reduced by one person; out of a staff of 18 full-time employees this is a substantial reduction, placing strain on the remaining staff with no savings left in shifting duties or taking on more work behind the scenes. Patrons also have been impacted insofar as there are longer wait times in processing items and getting them into patrons' hands. Future cuts will need to be in areas such as library hours, services and programs offered and the quality, number and variety of materials that make up CPL's collection. At a minimum, there would be reduced open hours at all libraries, closure of at least one library if not more, and reduction in programs due to decreased staffing.

Also, as salaries remain stagnant because of no, or very few, cost of living increases valuable staff will be lost to other organizations. Part-time staff will be lost as well in the wake of reduced hours and full-time staff likely will be reduced to part-time hours. Sub-par wages and lack of stability in the library system will make recruiting new employees more difficult. Headquarters and Amherst staff already are feeling the strain of having one position eliminated and it is becoming increasingly difficult to cover sick and vacation time in the Amherst library (headquarters staff assist with this need).

Cuts to library open hours would severely affect the purpose of being open at all. If patrons are unable to access the library because hours have been cut and programs cannot be offered, then patrons will go elsewhere for these services or forego them if there are no affordable options. In remote rural communities there is a lack of services in general and many people cannot access the services that are available to them because they are located too far away.

As patron demand grows for programs such as computer classes, children's literacy programs, information sessions and additional formats, there will not be the staff, resources or training available to meet these demands. Without the availability of these resources patrons who cannot afford services will simply go without.

There will not be enough money to purchase another library vehicle. Currently there is enough in reserve funds to buy the van needed for this year, but that took six years of saving. As expenses rise and budgets do not have any spare money, these funds may

need to be used for operating expenses. When the time comes to purchase a van, there simply may not be enough funds to afford it and this will mean that library deliveries, branch visits and other necessary tasks will be cut.

South Shore Public Libraries (SSPL)

The impact of flat line funding will be felt soon. Book budgets and/or staff budgets will have to be cut. Recruitment of volunteers may help fill this gap but this is a difficult issue in rural areas and service will suffer as a result.

Colchester-East Hants Public Library (CEHPL)

This region would go from 'treading water' to 'drowning'. Reserve funds, set aside for future capital purchase and enhancements such as replacement of the outreach service vehicle, computer upgrades and staff development, would be drained in an attempt to maintain the status quo. In all likelihood, open hours would be reduced, the collection and computers would become increasingly old and irrelevant, programming would be curtailed and employees would become demoralized as they witness positions disappearing through attrition or layoffs, and the buying power of their wages falling even further below inflation.

“Libraries are dying death by a thousand cuts. We are using reserves to meet operating costs; without a change in funding we will soon be at a point where we cannot realistically maintain core services.”

Chief Librarian, Nova Scotia

Annapolis Valley Regional Library Table of Impacts 2010-2016 (AVRL)

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010-2011	Staff	<p>Increased hours Hantsport/ Bridgetown 1% COLA Increased staffing at Kentville – double/triple staffing busy shifts Began offering downloadable Overdrive e book and audio-book formats Purchased new Ford E van for delivery between four branches Updated administration phone lines – up from 2 lines for 22 staff to 3 and managers now have own voicemail</p>	
	Materials/Collections	Cancelled subscription to Worldbook online	
2011-2012	Staff	<p>Eliminated .60 position of Books by Mail clerk Reduced Bookmobile Community Stops from 41 to 33 Discontinued special book selections for schools Reclassified one professional Librarian I position to Library Assistant IV</p>	<p>Duties added to other staff with no compensation School deliveries continue but teachers and/or library staff must request specific books themselves, books no longer customized for teacher's curriculum, tightened rules on payment for lost items, some school therefore opt to discontinue book delivery service Training taking place on the job</p>
2012-2013	Funding	<p>\$ 44,730 transferred from Book Reserve Fund to Operating Budget No funds put into Vehicle Replacement Reserve or Automation Replacement Reserve Reduced programming budget by \$ 1,000.00 Reduced Equipment Purchases budget by \$ 4,000.00</p>	
	Staff	<p>Bookmobile community stops cut from 33 to 9 Introduced three new satellite sites in remote locations as pilot for former bookmobile sites Reduced Staff Travel and Training budget by \$ 2,000.00 Reclassified one professional Librarian I position to a Library Assistant IV position</p>	
	Materials/Collections	Book budget reduced by \$ 24,317 compared to previous year	

2013-2014	Funding	\$ 42,018.00 will be transferred from Book Reserve Fund into Operating Budget	
	Staff	Cut one full time position	Duties assigned to remaining staff without compensation
	Materials/Collections	Bookmobile bus will be taken off road in September 2013	Hope to replace with smaller vehicle to save on costs
2014-2015	Funding	Will have to transfer further funds from reserves	Will reduce capacity to replace vehicles and computer equipment as they age
	Staff	No replacement of positions when staff leave	
	Materials/Collections	Cuts to book budget Elimination of school delivery service	

Cape Breton Regional Library Table of Impacts 2010-2016 (CBRL)

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010-2011	Funding	Small increase to provincial funding level	Inadequate to meet rising costs across many sectors
	Staff		
	Materials/Collections	Book budget reduced	
2011-2012	Funding	Decreased by \$ 23,200	
	Staff	Full time employee not replaced	Increased workload for other staff Less time allocated for delivery of programmes at branch
	Materials/Collections	Book budget reduced	
2012-2013	Funding	Budget frozen at 2011/2012 level	Lower than 2010/11 level
	Staff	No cost of living increase Salaries fall further behind Allocation for professional developed reduced	Difficult to attract and retain new employees
	Materials/Collections	Book budget further reduced	
2013-2014	Funding	Budget frozen at 2011/2012 level	Lower than 2010/11 level
	Staff	Unable to provide fair cost of living increase Considering reducing hours of operation at some branches Possible closure of small single staffed branch library due to workplace safety concerns with only one staff member on duty	Difficult to retain staff Decline in workplace morale Inability to keep wages fair and competitive with other types of libraries
	Materials/Collections	Continued decline Significant reduction overall due to rising costs of rent, insurance, fuel etc.	Unable to provide materials that public is looking for

Colchester East Hants Regional Library Table of Impacts 2010-2016

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010/2011	Funding		Have been able to secure a bequest and some fundraising but still can only function well below minimum standards as funds are not enough
	Staff	1.5% COLA (CPI – 1.5%) * Consumer Price Index – not able to keep up with inflation	
	Materials/Collections	6%–below minimum standard of 10%	Not meeting minimum standard amount as per 2001 Standards for Nova Scotia Regional Public Libraries
2011-2012	Funding	5.75%	
	Staff	1.5% (CPI – 2.2%)	
	Materials/Collections	5.75%	
2012-2013	Funding		
	Staff	COLA 1% (CPI – 3.8%)	
	Materials/Collections	5.25%	
2013-2014	Funding		
	Staff	COLA 1% (CPI-3.8%)	
	Materials/Collections	Unknown at present	
2015-2016	Funding	Will rely on reserves to meet operating costs	
	Staff	No COLA Will be difficult to meet salary increments	
	Materials/Collections	Will be frozen or cut considerably Will be difficult to continue programming	

Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL) Table of Impacts 2010-2015

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010/2011	Funding		
	Staff	Eliminated one management position	
	Materials/Collection		
2011/2012	Funding		
	Staff	Eliminated all double staffing at all branches	
	Materials/Collection		
2012/2013	Funding		
	Staff	Eliminated all page positions Did not fill management position – freed up \$ 75,000.00 for overhead and collections	
	Materials/Collection		
2013/2014	Funding		
	Staff		
	Materials/Collection		
2014/2015	Funding		
	Staff		
	Materials/Collection		

Pictou Antigonish Regional Library (PARL)

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary	
2010/2011	Board generated income	Down by 10,000.00 over previous year but still 30,000.00 above 3% mandated amount	Due to small increase in provincial base amount	
	Staff	2% cost of living increase Staff slightly increased		
	Materials/Collection	Increased by 30,00.00		
2011/2012	Board generated income	Increased by 32,000.00 placing it now 50% over the mandated amount	Due to drop in provincial funding	
	Staff	1% cost of living		
	Materials/Collection	Dropped by 30,000.00		Due to increasing costs of supplies, insurance etc.
2012/2013	Funding	Increased board generated income to \$ 123,000.00 now over 7% of the total budget and 4% more than mandated amount	Due to rising costs of fuel, insurance, basic supplies and technology Not a sustainable contribution	
	Staff	No cost of living increase Entry level front line staff now making only .10 above minimum wage		Inability to allow for cost of living increase results in minimum wage levels creeping closer to salary rates
	Materials/Collection	No increase		Budget should have risen due to e book service addition, but could not, resulting in less purchasing power overall
2013/2014	Funding	Proposed increase in municipal contribution	Intended to provide 2% cost of living increase for staff and slightly reduce board generated income	
	Staff	Proposed 2% increase in cost of living Training for staff in technology, reader advisory and similar items will be eliminated unless an outside funder can be found		As above
	Materials/Collection	No increase		
2014/2015	Funding	Will not be able to approach municipality again without increase from Province		
	Staff	Cost of living increases must be made or minimum wage will overtake salary base Approximately four full time positions will have to be cut		
	Materials/Collection	Rural outreach, children's and teen programs will have to be cut		

South Shore Public Libraries 2010-2015

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010/2011	Funding		
	Staff	No cuts	
	Materials/Collection	No cuts	
2011/2012	Funding		
	Staff	No cuts	
	Materials/Collection	No cuts	
2012/2013	Funding		
	Staff	No cuts	
	Materials/Collection		
2013/2014	Funding		
	Staff	No cuts	
	Materials/Collection	No cuts	
2014/2015	Funding		
	Staff	If no funding adjustment will have to cut staff	
	Materials/Collection	Will not cut	

Western Counties Regional Libraries (WCRL) Table of Impacts 2010-2015

Year	Item	Impact	Commentary
2010/2011	Funding		
	Staff		
	Materials/Collection		
2011/2012	Funding		
	Staff	Eliminated one full time position – Headquarters Clerk	
	Materials/Collection	Cut by \$ 21,000.00	
2012/2013	Funding		
	Staff	Cut Sunday open hours in Yarmouth 1 part time clerk – Yarmouth – cut Systems Administrator cut to part time from full time	
	Materials/Collection	Cut by \$ 12,000.00	
2013/2014	Funding		
	Staff	Cut 1 Clerk – Yarmouth Replace one Full time Librarian with Part time Branch Manager	
	Materials/Collection		
2014/2015	Funding		
	Staff		
	Materials/Collection		

6.7 Community impacts if library service is reduced or lost

Pictou Antigonish – PARL

User groups most impacted would be middle and low income citizens, seniors, children and teens. Overall 40% or more of the community would be directly affected as they are current library members.

Cape Breton Regional Library – CBRL

Reducing hours of service or loss of service in rural areas would be of particular hardship for those who do not have regular transportation, a significant problem for rural communities which do not have transit or even taxi service.

Should some programs be cut, users would be left without resources. Reduction in book budgets would cause hardship to patrons who otherwise cannot access materials, resulting in disappointment and frustration. Seniors and those on fixed incomes would be impacted by lack of resources to travel to another branch location. Families would miss out on early literacy opportunities.

Annapolis Regional Library – AVRL

A reduction or loss of service would greatly affect several segments of society including: the working class poor, senior citizens, people living in isolated areas with limited transportation, families with children, institutions such as senior care facilities, daycares and schools. Employment would also be impacted due to layoffs. People who use the CAP site to look for jobs and prepare resumes would no longer be able to do so.

Eastern Counties Regional Library–ECRL

Currently 40% of the children in East Richmond are not school-ready when they enter Kindergarten. Every classroom the library has visited in the last two years has at least one child who cannot read. One grade four class had six children who could not read. The level of learning disabilities in this region appears to be abnormally high. The 211 service has called the library asking if someone could provide assistance to an individual who could not read to fill out insurance forms. This task was completed by the Chief Librarian as there were no other staff with appropriate training, or the time, to help.

The groups most impacted by this difficulty are the poor. Residents in Guysborough County, Inverness County and Richmond County have median incomes below those in the rest of Nova Scotia. Seniors consistently represent a higher population base in these counties than in Nova Scotia overall (Nova Scotia Community Counts Website 2013).

Western Counties Regional Library – WCRL

In some of the smaller communities the public library is one of the only services left. Low Income, unemployed and seniors use the library to access and fill out government forms online. Government service agencies often direct callers to the local library to do so. The hardest hit populations would be seniors, unemployed, low income, school partners and general public users.

Cumberland Public Libraries – CPL

Seniors would be seriously affected and they make up the majority of Cumberland County's population and the majority of our patrons. The library assists seniors on limited budgets with reading materials and also provides a sense of community and a place for social interaction. As one staff member told us, her parent's day could be either good or bad depending on if she made it to the library where she knew she would receive friendly service.

Lower income residents, many of whom are unable to afford a computer and Internet connection, would be impacted. Many people still use the library as their only, or primary, place to connect online with services, information and family. Our 38 computers were in use over 23,000 hours last year, which is substantial in a County with a population of just over 31,000 residents. As well, we provide many of these people with print and audio-visual materials that they would otherwise be unable to afford. Patrons needing technology skills would be deeply affected—many people still do not possess the technology skills to use current technologies and we are (sometimes, depending upon grants) able to provide that service free of charge. Other organizations such as NSCC can charge up to \$200 for a basic computer course.

Many children get their introduction to the world of reading and education at the library before they begin school. With a reduction or loss of services many children would be unaware of the wonders of having many books available to them until they encountered a school library, and that would depend on the state of that school library.

Libraries are one of the staples of communities that citizens expect and that make people want to live in an area. With any reduction in community services and institutions (schools, churches, community centres) the community itself suffers and becomes less vibrant and sustainable. Also, it is seen as one more example of the perception that the Provincial government is not particularly concerned with communities outside of Halifax, particularly in Cumberland County where many citizens feel that the government sees Nova Scotia as stopping at the Cobequid pass. Reduced or disappearing library services will be one more example of non-support.

South Shore Public Libraries–SSPL

Losing library services in this region would be profound. Queens and Lunenburg counties have had considerably challenging economic news recently. Often our libraries are the only barrier free services people can enjoy. Losing libraries would only make things worse. The groups most impacted would be the most vulnerable: young and old living on meagre, fixed incomes.

Colchester-East Hants Public Libraries – CCHPL

The community as a whole would lose a key, democratic institution, the one which serves the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of all its residents for a lifetime and at no direct cost to the residents.

Potential newcomers (individuals and companies) to a community investigate the quality of life on offer as part of their decision-making process. Good public library service is one of the benchmarks.

The underemployed, unemployed, and unemployable members of our society and their families would suffer the most if there was reduced or no library service. Their one-stop, no-fee, user-friendly access to information, technology, learning opportunities, recreation, and a warm, nonjudgmental place to spend time would be reduced or gone entirely.

“If the current funding situation persists, we will have no choice but to turn our libraries over to the Province; we have no more efficiencies to find”

Chief Librarian, Nova Scotia

6.8 Key partnerships

Partnerships in the library sector are very broad and assist in delivering effective programs across all regions. Some of these partnerships are internal between regions and some external with other government or community partners. In order to meet strategic goals, libraries have become extremely effective at developing, and becoming, partners across a wide range of organizations. Partnerships however require staff time and resources. With higher staff hours or positions, partnerships could be greatly enhanced.

In this questionnaire, Chief Librarians identified specific external partners which have been essential to high quality service delivery. Among these, the CAP program is identified as critical to improving technology and offering public training. Libraries are ideally suited for CAP partnership as they have regular hours, staff continually present and generally they have central locations in communities.

Family Place Resource centers, Adult Learning Associations and partnerships with Mi'kmaq school boards are all identified as service delivery partners.

Health organizations are also common partners and include the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and others.

Partnerships with government departments are felt to be largely underutilized and unrecognized. Libraries act as de facto delivery systems for numerous government services and as points of access to government services, yet there is no departmental funding assigned to libraries for their services. When developing new community services, libraries are not considered potential partners with commensurate funding. In fact, providing services through libraries would cost less overall in the long run than developing entirely new systems. Information sessions for government departments enhancing their understanding of what libraries do would assist them in perceiving public libraries as vital partners to their services and could open doors for libraries to be better funded. Sharing of government facilities is also perceived to have potential, as well as database cost sharing with schools.

English as a Second Language programs are heavily concentrated in Halifax but greater numbers of New Canadians are settling in rural areas of Nova Scotia. Trained tutors are not readily available in these areas so delivery of this program through libraries would be an excellent partnership.

Provincially organized training is also an area of identified potential partnership. Individual regions sometimes struggle with travelling costs, so online or virtual training, as well as centralized assistance for training would be helpful. A formalized training structure would be welcomed.

Internal partnerships that are desired include bulk purchasing of materials and better methods for cataloguing/processing materials. Some regions have opted to purchase shelf-ready books but this is controversial as it involves extra cost and impacts staff. Bulk purchases of computer equipment and furniture were also perceived as areas where greater partnership could occur.

Delivery of materials between branches is different in each region and discussion on potential methods for streamlining this operational component is seen as an opportunity for internal partnership. MOAs that share services such as bookmobiles for border areas between regions also could be explored. A province-wide online reference system is recommended for development.

South Shore Public Libraries is particularly interested in working closely with developing community hubs. Bringing their collections and staff expertise into partnerships has provided excellent results in rural communities and ongoing potential to expand library services through such partnerships will be pursued.

Exploration of consortium based initiatives needs to be explored. Areas of inclusion would be a next generation integrated library system (ILS) for acquisitions, cataloguing, and circulation, potential outsourcing of acquisitions and cataloguing, and further development of access to a shared platform and digitization of resources held by Nova Scotia's archives, museums and libraries. The latter would involve sharing the cost of software licences, training designated staff from each agency and staff time to identify and digitize agency resources.

“Who suffers the most from cuts are the poor and middle income families, as well as seniors. These populations rely on the services libraries provide, and in rural areas there are no alternatives.”

Chief Librarian, Nova Scotia

6.9 Infrastructure issues

Infrastructure Issues by Region

Eastern Counties Regional Library

In headquarters aging rolling stacks/shelving unit is broken and unsafe, needs to be removed and/or replaced–cost is approximately \$20,000.00

General maintenance to library branch locations

Annapolis Valley Regional Library

No air conditioning causing summer temperature to be as high as 90-100 degrees on some days

Heavy truck repair facility has moved next door causing constant noise and issues with fumes

Heating is propane-based and there have been leaks in the last few years necessitating evacuation

Headquarters building was previously a factory, not easily converted into office space, is dirty and run down

Air quality very poor in headquarters

Difficult to move locations as there is a desire to keep the headquarters in the current town

Some branches do not have staff rooms

Cape Breton Regional Library

Victoria North

Location does not have washroom, for staff to use washroom they must put a sign on door, lock the building, go around the front of the building and down stairs to access a washroom

Difficult wheelchair access

No separate meeting space

Library located at back of building – no street view

Air conditioning is via a donated window model

Baddeck

No air conditioning

Aging building, aging windows/doors etc.

Dominion

No program room

Must leave library to access washroom

Not wheelchair accessible

Donkin

Temporarily closed because of safety issues

Not wheelchair accessible

Branch is in school located in a large field, staff cannot see entrance, security is a major concern

No program room

Washrooms not open to public

No air conditioning

Florence

Branch very small, therefore hard to have programs

Not wheelchair accessible

Collection very small

No air conditioning – branch very uncomfortable in summer

No program room

Glace Bay

Branch far too small for size of community and use
 Parking issues

Ingonish

Branch far too small – this is the only branch north of Cape Smoky
 No program room
 Located in area with large population of summer residents

Louisbourg

Just completed significant renovations
 No air conditioning
 No program room
 Community very attached to this space

Main-a-Dieu

No program room
 Located in community center

New Waterford

Aging building
 Not accessible
 Small program room
 Building requires significant repairs
 No air conditioning

North Sydney

New facility

Reserve Mines

No program room

Sydney

Aging building
 Serious space limitations
 No air conditioning, excessive heat in summer
 Not accessible
 No parking

Sydney Mines

Small program room
 Branch is small but in a newer facility

Cape Breton County Bookmobile

10 years old
 Mechanical problems, will need to consider replacement soon
 No municipal or provincial support for replacement

Victoria County Bookmobile

New – no immediate concerns

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library

Three new branches and three others have had expansions or significant renovations
 One branch should be replaced because of age and general condition of building
 One branch undergoing a multi- year improvement
 Strong municipal relationship has ensured infrastructure issues are dealt with

Cumberland Public Libraries

Advocate Library: located on lower floor of community building

Not accessible

Washrooms not wheelchair accessible making use difficult for anyone with mobility issues

No program room

Folding tables for some parts of the library as permanent furniture and cast off furniture from other libraries in the region or people's homes

Staff desk is too large and not ergonomically designed or user friendly, cleaned only once a week

One half of library floor is only sub floor

The Four Fathers Memorial Library, Amherst

Heat problems but well maintained

Oxford Library

Very poor condition

Electrical issues

Windows and roof leak

Washroom is not wheelchair accessible and in very poor condition

Most furniture is cast offs

Children's room shelving is unfinished wooden shelving not intended for books

No program space

Janitorial service only once per week

Parrsboro Library

Building is wheelchair accessible but because of inadequate size of space inside cannot be navigated

Washroom is not wheelchair accessible

Outside siding is deteriorating

Limited program space

Difficult to get maintenance done

Janitorial service once a week

Pugwash Library

Located in old train station

Walls are cracked and aisles extremely narrow

Not wheelchair accessible

Not senior friendly (floor uneven and door steps intermittently)

Inadequate heating, cold drafty building

Inadequate air conditioning

Only one window can be opened

No adequate program space

Walkway floods in spring

Inside entryway very wet during rainfall

Daily cleaning on open days

River Hebert Library

In basement with steep narrow stairs

Not wheelchair accessible

Older population so lack of accessibility is an issue

Janitorial service once a week

Springhill Miners Memorial Library

No air conditioning

Lack of furniture and shelving

Cleaned twice per week

Western Counties Regional Libraries

Westport branch

No program space
Requires upgrades

Weymouth branch

New library 2010
No potable water – water cooler provided

Clare Branch

Flooding issues in basement
Basement only place to store holiday books and materials
Basement damp and moldy
Stairs going down to basement are not built to code so dangerous for staff
Water not potable –water cooler provided
Branch too small

Yarmouth Branch/Headquarters

Persistent issues with temperature control, either unbearably hot or cold
Recent decision to install an air exchanger may help this
Mold in basement where special collections, Yarmouth's back up collection and program materials are stored. Mold is most likely the result of seasonal flooding

Pubnico Branch

Has problems with heating – oil furnace either runs full or not at all. Employees sometimes begin day with no heat.
Municipality working to resolve issue.
Washroom not wheelchair accessible
Carpet in branch is old, stained and coming apart when vacuumed
Branch smells musty
Storage areas are not insulated and sometimes leak
Water is not potable

Lockeport Branch

No wheelchair accessible washroom
No program space
Water not potable

South Shore Public Libraries

No infrastructure issues
New branch expected to be built in Bridgewater

Colchester-East Hants Public Library

Stewiacke and Truro significantly sub-standard in size, condition and functionality

Region's largest and busiest branch is located in Truro and is cost shared 50/50 between Town of Truro and the library board
Air quality is problem and has forced shut down of part of central library/headquarters

Installation of negative air pressure system to address infected space

Recent major repairs in Truro due to water damage and fire safety upgrades – hit budget very hard

Town of Stewiacke began lengthy process of determining needs and seeking funds for a new building for town hall and library about a year ago

Truro

Search for replacement facility is in its 23rd year
Recent agreement with Municipality of the County of Colchester to contribute some funds gives some hope

Section Seven: Public Sessions

Public sessions

Public sessions were held in every region with additional sessions in Pictou-Antigonish and Eastern Counties regions. Participants were selected by Chief Librarians and library staff. They represented a wide cross section of library patrons from rural areas. In addition, participants were welcomed to provide further commentary via email and to invite commentary from family/friends. The sessions were structured to elicit very specific information; point of entry into library usage, any periods when libraries were not used and why, what services were most important, role of libraries in people's lives, and key messages for government. The number of participants per session ranged from twelve to eighteen.

They spanned all age groups, life experiences and levels of education. In total more than one hundred individuals took part.

Participants were asked to sit in a circle and were welcomed. A brief overview of the study was provided. Participants were then asked to tell their individual stories of interaction with libraries throughout their lives from their earliest memory until today. Note takers recorded stories, trends and patterns. At the end of each session participants were asked what key messages they would like conveyed to decision makers about libraries. Sessions took approximately two hours to complete.

Participants in these sessions spoke with passion about the importance of libraries in their lives. Through their candour a picture emerged of the importance of libraries to rural communities and how they impact citizen's lives. The dedication and vision that Chief Librarians spoke of in their sessions emerged as a reality in the stories of library patrons. The commitment of municipalities and Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage was confirmed as a life changing investment.

The following are the key patterns which emerged from these sessions:

7.1 Quality of staff

Universally, every participant spoke of the high degree of professionalism possessed by library staff. They viewed staff as people with a special role in the lives of patrons, a role which was life changing. They felt staff recognized their abilities, interests, concerns and supported them without judgement. They could turn to staff to learn new skills and were comfortable doing so. Young, old, New Canadian, life-long residents...all expressed a feeling that they were special in the eyes of library staff. Participants were grateful for the variety of services and programs offered through the library and had accessed multiple programs through the life of their families. It mattered to them that staff knew their names, often their voices on the phone, took the time to recommend materials for them, went the extra mile to obtain hard to find materials, ordered books that were not yet part of the collection and responded to their requests quickly. If patrons had concerns, they felt these were quickly and adequately addressed. Participants had memories of childhood librarians who were legends in their communities for the role they had played in enhancing the capacity of their clients, inspiring them through their lifetimes to better outcomes and higher goals. Young people expressed a sense of safety in libraries and saw a role for themselves working in libraries in the future. The quality of staff in libraries was the primary observation of participants. One participant observed:

"I never had much contact with the library until after retirement, there just wasn't time and my job took me away a lot. When I discovered the library (my wife made me go) it became a very special experience. I rediscovered my interests. Now when I go into the library my special chair is waiting and staff have my books ready for me.

They know what I am interested in and they suggest new possibilities that would match my interests. They know my name, they greet me, and they make me welcome. I can't imagine what my life would be like without the library."



Creative Commons: surlygirl

7.2 Safe places

Libraries are perceived as places of safety and sanctuary. People feel there are very few places today where their children can be safe on their own, engaged in positive activities. Families who use libraries are very comfortable having their children spend independent time there. In rural areas it is difficult for children to go home before after school activities. Libraries make it possible for them to engage in these activities by providing welcoming, safe spaces. Patrons also report that libraries are sanctuaries from life stressors; difficult family situations, daily stress, economic worries. Libraries provide quiet spaces, room for thought and introspection. They provide what is difficult to find today; a place to embark on a private journey of reflection. In libraries people can wander among friends – books that take them on quiet journeys accompanied by characters that live through the page.

7.3 Passion for books

Love of books is alive, undaunted by new technologies. The ability to have the sensory experience of holding a book in hand was irreplaceable. Early memories of libraries recalled the smell, look and feel of books. There is a sense that books are treasures, waiting to be discovered. Books are considered by patrons as a very important part of life. Many library users unabashedly utilize the library for pleasure reading, and so this as an important part of keeping life balanced. Books are used for recreation and research. Some users do not read fiction at all. Books are found to be good conversation starters and lead to lifelong friendships that begin in libraries. Library users often follow book reviews and use these to develop borrowing lists through the library web pages. Books are prohibitively expensive for some people to buy; therefore, the library offers the perfect solution for many patrons.

In addition, bookstores are rare in rural communities so access to buying is not there. Newspapers and magazines also are available at libraries, saving costly subscriptions. Libraries are the only way to access the world of books. Books provide access to a wide variety of opinions and philosophies. They keep the mind active and for seniors, who depend upon book deliveries, they are often the only regular companions as peers pass on. Books provide open access to information. Books are accessed by all ages for pleasure, information, research, education, hobbies and esoteric knowledge. The ability to access any book throughout the library system, and the ability of staff to locate difficult to find books is very important to users, but even more important is the ability to browse books in person. Internet searches by nature have to be narrow, but in physical libraries patrons can search wherever their eyes wander and develop interests in subjects they would not have expected.

New Canadian patrons report that books available in libraries have been invaluable for learning the language. For some, libraries were not available in their home countries and they feel great pleasure in being able to freely access books. Older patrons who survived World War II remember a time when books were scarce and difficult to access.

“I have always loved books. When I was young I used to bring bags of books home from the bookmobile. As children we exchanged our library books with each other. They enriched our lives. I cannot imagine living without books.”

“Please tell them that teenagers still love to read books!!”

“Libraries are important because everyone has the right to read, even if they don’t own books, and because they’re important, period.”

7.4 Life changing

Across the province, public patrons told very powerful stories of how libraries had changed their lives. Libraries provided a sense of place and purpose. They connected people to the outside world and removed social isolation. Libraries provided forums for discussion and provoked thought.

They changed who people were, how they saw the world, how they saw themselves. Often people told stories of well-remembered and well-loved librarians who had positively influenced many lives, providing them with the tools to move on to great success in their lives. This was expressed also in sessions where people spoke of the influence staff had on them during times of uncertainty or difficulty.

“Libraries saved my life. I was born in an orphanage in Ontario, and in those times if you were placed with a family and they decided they did not care for you, you were returned to the orphanage. I was becoming aware that I was not wanted and had no real place in the world. In the basement of the orphanage I discovered a cache of books. I could not read yet, but I liked to go down and look through the pictures. One day the janitor discovered me there. I was afraid; I thought I would be in trouble because I wasn’t supposed to be down there. Instead, he pulled me up on his knee and read me the story. That was my first library and my first librarian. I have used libraries all my life, no matter where I am. They have given me a sense of place, a sense of belonging, a sense of connection to the world.”

“I grew up in a very rural community in Nova Scotia in a highly dysfunctional family. We did not have many books and I don’t remember going to the library. When I got older I discovered libraries. I learned everything I have accomplished in life from libraries; how to be a good parent, the skills I needed to become employed. Last year our family went through a very difficult crisis. I joined the writer’s club at the library and that is what got me through a very bad time. Today I volunteer at the library supervising an art program for youth. Without this library, I don’t know what would have happened in my life, but it would have taken a very different course.”

Perhaps the most striking comment came from a retiree:

“In my adult life we travelled all over the world working. At one point we were in South Africa during a time that apartheid was in full effect. I was shocked to see a sign over the library door saying ‘we reserve the right to determine who we will serve’. This says a lot about how important libraries are that we would try to keep down one sector of society by denying them access to libraries. It also says something about our lack of willingness to fund libraries, to whom are we effectively putting a sign over the door to say we won’t serve?”

7.5 Lifelong learning

Whether through lecture series, book clubs, crafting groups, science camps for children, writing groups, meeting space for community organizations, reference materials, technology training or business research, patrons of libraries use them for a wide variety of lifelong learning opportunities. Beginning with family literacy programs, libraries offer a wide array of services to ensure access to continued education. Each region tailors its programs to the needs and interests of its communities, adept at providing quality service on minimal budgets. Special programs are an aspect of library service that patrons cannot get enough of. In rural communities, libraries are the only venue for this service as there are no satellite campuses or lecture halls readily available.

“Our library has a knitting club, and we have become lifelong friends. We contribute our products to charitable causes and exchange patterns and information. It provides an opportunity to develop our skills and use them in a meaningful way. The library puts us in touch with patterns and knitting books that we would otherwise not be able to access.”

“Through the library we have been able to hear speakers and experience writers that have enriched our life and experience. We have been able to learn about other cultures first hand and to celebrate their richness.”

“I came from a poor family where we owned only one book. I was a slow reader and my mother used this book to help me improve my reading; it was Alice in Wonderland. My mother would take me to the library and it was an opportunity to bond with her as a child. In my adult life I travelled a lot. Now that I am retired I have rediscovered reading. I am interested in everything; gardening, history, many different subjects. I can connect to any book anywhere in Canada through the library. I couldn’t make it without a book.”

“My grandchild has a reading disability. Both her parents work so I am the one who brings her to the library. Through the library I have been able to access resource materials about her learning problems, and they have been able to support her through their programs so that she progresses and has the best outcome possible.”

“In a rural area, where else can a child connect with dinosaurs? In libraries children can explore the world and stimulate their dreams and imaginations.”

During the study as participants recounted early memories of libraries, they talked about the profound influence libraries had on their lives. Many remember the first book they read or owned. Others came to libraries later in life, when they finally had time to enjoy them. At that point they discovered the rich resource that libraries had to offer and were able to begin a learning process that had been deferred when family obligations took over.

Library programming is uneven across regions. Many rural branches do not have separate program rooms which makes it very difficult to run programs effectively. Others are not able to be staffed enough hours to provide programs nor do they have the resources to do so. These inadequacies result in inequities of service across rural regions.

7.6 Home schooling

Home schooling parents and children participated in sessions. For them, the library is an irreplaceable resource which becomes the hub of schooling activity. Many do not keep technology at home and therefore utilize the library to access this service. Access to research materials on a broad array of topics is also important.

“We have chosen to home school our children and the library is a tremendous resource for us. Artist in residence programs have been an important part of the library service. They inspire our children to pursue their dreams. We have a child who is very interested in being a cartoonist. Some months ago cartoonist Mark Oakley came to our library and it was a wonderful opportunity for our children to observe and interact with an artist. Where else in a rural community can you turn to have such exposure to culture and arts activities?”

“Taking your education from a library is a great opportunity. In a library nobody tells you what you have to read and what you have to think. You can study what you are passionate about and develop your ability to think critically on your own.”

“I really enjoy accessing the computer here because we don’t have one at home. Library staff know what I am interested in and what I like. They help me find materials on technical topics that I prefer to study. When I call, they know my voice on the phone.”

Some regions have a high proportion of home schoolers, and in those regions there are special programs such as extended loan periods. However not all regions offer these, which can be difficult for families who have to relocate or who cannot find the supports to have an effective, comprehensive home schooling program.

7.7 Mobile services and outreach

Many participants remember the bookmobile as their first point of entry into library services. For those who still have access to these services, they continue to be of value to communities. Some communities are an hour or more from basic services such as grocery stores, and there are few opportunities for connection with the broader world. Mobile book services and outreach services therefore are rated as highly important. The impact of losing these services can be difficult for patrons:

“When I first got this job, I thought it was a dream job. What could be more wonderful than bringing the library to people? The first day out, I had to tell some of the people that the service was being discontinued in their area. People cried when I told them. The bookmobile was a large part of their lives. It was a difficult experience. How do you explain that even if only four people use the bookmobile, to those four people it is very important?”

“If it comes down a choice between books by mail and our bookmobile, please let us keep our bookmobile. We live in a very isolated area. There are no other opportunities for social interaction or intellectual stimulation. Receiving books in the mail is not the same as being able to have contact with library staff and with other people who go there. Without this, we would be very cut off.”

“The bookmobile in our community used to come to the end of a long driveway that belonged to our 80-year old neighbour. He faithfully came down and browsed the materials whenever it arrived. Shortly after it was stopped, his health declined and he passed away. One could never prove they were related, but as friends and neighbours we feel this loss contributed to his decline.”

“When my mother was elderly and dying, library staff would bring her books up a long winding driveway. They would chat with her for a while and always knew what she liked to read. It meant a lot to her, and it meant a lot to us. This service contributed to her being able to maintain her independence in her own home and to her quality of life.”

Participants indicate that attending at the nearest branch is cost prohibitive for them in the face of rising costs of fuel. Interactions socially and with staff are a very important part of the library experience for rural patrons. Young families who utilize books by mail and who do not have bookmobile service indicate they try to attend the local branch at least once a month to connect with others and access staff expertise. Older residents who are still well enough and mobile enough to drive to a branch worry about what will happen as they grow older and mobility becomes more difficult. The loss of these outreach services will have a profound effect on their lives. In Eastern Counties Regional Libraries, services to shut-ins is so important to one senior that she wrote a letter of thanks and enclosed a ten dollar cheque, which was all she could spare, to try to support them. The message is a poignant one.

7.8 Social spaces

The importance of libraries as social spaces was stressed in public consultations. The safety of libraries and ability to connect with others were stressed as factors in social connectedness.

“Community organizations that benefit community members would have difficulty surviving without the library. They provide meeting space, research, support and access.”

“In small rural communities divisions often occur that are hard to overcome; they divide and polarize people. In the library those divisions are lost. It is the one place in community where there is unity.”

“In my senior years I have had to share a home with my brother. He is a very difficult personality. I come to the library to have peace. I can read what pleases me, meet with others in a friendly way, and staff are always very supportive in developing my interests.”

“There are few places left to go where you can safely meet others. Libraries are that space.”

“There aren’t many places for youth in our community. At the library there is always something interesting going on and our parents don’t mind.”

Social spaces are also critical for new immigrants. At the library they can learn about Canadian culture (and this has also been strongly stated by new residents from other provinces with respect to Nova Scotia culture), receive assistance in some regions with confusing tax and government forms, access ESL programs and develop friendships.

“When we moved here I did not know many people and I did not speak much English. I had two small boys and my husband was busy with his university work. I joined the knitting club at the library and they let me bring my children, who also learned to knit! I made strong friendships through this and was not so isolated.”

“In my country, libraries are not for pleasure, they are strictly for study. Being able to access books for interest was new and wonderful to me.”

“I feel very proud to come here tonight and represent what libraries have meant to me. It is a privilege for a person to have access to so much information and assistance; many other countries do not have this.”

7.9 Youth

Youth feel that libraries are places of connection and privacy. Libraries are sanctuaries against a sometimes difficult world. They also feel that libraries are considered ‘cool’ places to be. Libraries are freeing and allow young people to explore ideas and creativity. Some visit the library during their lunch hours and love being able to explore emotions through books. Some youth participants had been employed at libraries through summer grant funding and found the experience to be very positive. Some youth were looking forward to becoming librarians themselves and were very interested in the occupation. Parents found libraries particularly valuable places to connect with their children:

“My daughter becomes so excited when she knows we are going to the library. She is six, and when we go to the library, if she were a puppy, you would see her tail wagging. Her teachers have remarked that she is reading well above grade level and I am sure that is because of her early exposure to libraries.”

“As a single parent father, being able to bring my son to the library when he was young gave us a very important, safe space in which to connect. Now that he is a teenager we borrow movies from the library and it gives us a base from which to discuss things.”

Youth talked about their connection to libraries as well:

“Recently in class when we were asked where were the coolest places to go, many of us said the library.”

“People think that young people don’t read anymore, but we do, and there is a lot to do at the library.”

“When the new library opened in our community, I remember there were about a hundred people there. It was a really big event. I felt like I was part of history. This is a beautiful library with lots of wonderful spaces to read and study.”

Libraries are also seen as places where youth can learn citizenship:

“There are few places left today where youth can learn the attributes of character that allow them to excel in life, patience, responsibility, respect. Even the act of taking out a book that you know others will be borrowing after you, so that you need to be responsible with the item, teaches a young person they are connected to others in their community. Libraries are like sanctuaries; there is a code of conduct that everyone around you employs. Libraries teach manners, a lost art in today’s world.”

“I interview young people as part of my job, and so many of them can no longer write their name in cursive writing, they don’t know how to communicate respectfully and they want everything instantly. Libraries force families to slow down and be with each other, spending meaningful time in developing skills.”

7.10 Health

Health issues are intricately involved in libraries. Patrons reported the importance of accessing health information at the library. They also reported the need for rural libraries as health issues intrude on their lives. Hours of operation of libraries are critical for research; for example, a citizen with diabetes found it increasingly difficult to drive at night, but library hours made it hard to access in the winter when nightfall arrives early. Others have difficulty accessing buildings that are not wheelchair accessible or have accessible washrooms. One particularly powerful story was told by a young woman in a rural area of Cape Breton:

“My family were not big readers and we did not go to the library a lot. But when I was sixteen, I began to have some symptoms that troubled me. I went to the library and did research and was able to self-diagnose the precise brain tumour that I had. I told my family and I was able to access the right treatment early. Today I am an avid user of the library, particularly for health information, and I have made sure my daughter has regular access to the library.”

“I had dyslexia and reading was very difficult for me. My mother made sure I went to the library regularly and rewarded me for reading. Libraries became very, very important places to me and are to this day. I take home bags of books. We cannot afford technology and we have given up TV, but we use the library regularly and it is an important part of our lives.”

7.11 Technology

Technology was viewed by public participants as a complement to services rather than a replacement. People appreciated the access to and training on technology. E books were more controversial. Some enjoyed their e readers and desired greater e book collections at the library. Most felt that e technology has its place; it was very useful for travelling when it was not convenient to carry books with them and they appreciated being able to borrow e books for this purpose. However they felt that, as with any technology, it has its limitations. Batteries tended to die at the worst moments, access to power was essential to keep them charged, and they were not easy to utilize for browsing back to pages.

Different models were also better for different forms of lighting, making it difficult to purchase one all-purpose technological device. Libraries reported an upsurge in e books when they first became available, but that appears to have tapered off. However readers greatly appreciated being able to borrow books in different formats; if they had placed a hold on a book and it was not available for some time in hardcopy they could check out the e book format instead. The inability to borrow e readers was identified as a difficulty and library materials other than books are often not available through mail services. Public participants also observed that formats tend to become obsolete and information can be lost when it is no longer accessible due to rapidly changing technology and programs. Concern was expressed that this could result in entirely lost collections. Patrons astutely noted:

“In the end, books will outlast technology. Books last a minimum of 100 years as long as they are properly cared for. They don't need a power source and you can never lose data. Long after technology is gone, books will still be there. In our professional lives, we have seen entire databases lost because the programs to access them became obsolete and unavailable. We are also losing our primary sources and that is a big concern, because information becomes inaccurate over time when you cannot go back to your primary source. We will be left with interpretations rather than original thought. The internet is a sound bite of information, a book is a symphony”.

“There is nothing that can replace the feeling of a book in your hands and the smell of its pages. Books are magic.”

“It's fine to be able to order books online and it is a very valuable service, but nothing can replace browsing through actual books and being surprised by something that catches your eye, something you never even knew you were interested in until it beckoned to you from the shelf.”

“The ability to access technology in rural areas and receive training at libraries is crucial. In our small rural community fishermen were able to learn how to apply for tags online through the library. This type of technological change is very intimidating for many people and as more and more government services go online the library is an important partner in connecting those services to people. There is a level of literacy, in both language and technology that many people do not possess and rely on library staff to provide.”

7.12 Access to culture

Libraries offer exposure to other cultures in meaningful ways. Inclusion of Mi'kmaq culture in special events at libraries is an example of increasing knowledge and understanding among citizens.

Musical events, speaker series, artists in residence all serve to provide cultural venues that are scarce in rural communities. In addition, libraries provide a window in Nova Scotia cultural history by digitizing local history archives and connecting people to their history. Patrons relayed stories of special books they had experienced in earlier years that have become extremely rare that librarians were able to find for them. Patrons also used libraries for genealogical research and access to local cultural history. Libraries also support the work of local artists and provide places where they can exhibit their work and be supported through book readings and art exhibits.

“Libraries bring the world to your door. In rural communities there is no other access to culture, whether local, national or international. Libraries give us access to the process and product of artistry and culture.”

7.13 Key messages from public sessions

“Members of this community have fought hard to get the library. We need adequate supports.”

“People would become very vocal if the library services were lost.”

“Today’s bureaucrats don’t know what libraries are about or how important they are.”

“Our children use the library frequently to complete school work and projects. With the loss of libraries in schools, these services have become even more important.”

“I’d like to invite the Premier to come to the bookmobile.”

“We have filmmaking programs for teens at our library, services like this are very important to developing our youth.”

“When did it happen that after paying all of our taxes we have to fight and lobby government for basic service? Libraries are vital to communities, and so many services now have to fundraise that communities are becoming unable to continue to support them.”

“The library is the connector in community. If you want to know what is happening in your community and stay in touch with vital issues the library is the place to do it. If you want to know who needs help or if you are looking for a safe place to make friends, this is the place to go.”

“Libraries are one of the last public places standing; there are very few places that people can gather for an extended period of time without spending money.”

“Libraries are the best bang for your buck for adult education.”

“The library is an institution with a mind of its own, determined to survive.”

“Libraries are not costs, they are assets.”

“Libraries are a critical part of the social and intellectual community. Losing it would be a death knell to communities without a lot of services.”

“Our library is one of the most important buildings in town.”

“Learning becomes more important as you age. Libraries provide this service that is provided nowhere else.”

“The first thing a dictatorship does is burn books. Closing rural libraries is essentially burning books by eliminating access.”

“There is no stigma attached to using a library. If you go the food bank, it’s free but it’s embarrassing. In the library you can access free services and it’s considered wise.”

“If I could send one message, I would want the Minister to hear the passion in this room.”

“I want to emphasize the importance of programming. Libraries can be a safe venue for conversations in our community.”

“Every cent you put into libraries comes back with interest in human capacity.”

“Filled shelves are very important, but not as important as the people who work here. I am troubled by the decline in manpower in library services.”

“A library is an incubator for ideas, a free space to gather and share ideas. The service that libraries provide to the community is huge.”

“People who just love to read need a place and someone to talk to about what they read, especially since we no longer have many independent bookstores.”

“Libraries are a cultural archive.”

“Maybe not everyone uses the library, but for those who do, it is profound.”

“Libraries provide civic pride, a sense of being a citizen in a democracy.”

“You can have all the resources in the world, but if you don’t have trained, knowledgeable staff, the books are just taking up space on bookshelves.”

7.14 Recommendations from public sessions

Documentary film programs where books on the topic are recommended followed by a film, archives of the National Film board of Canada would be useful to view

Businesses should be able to post on the boards as well as community events

More hours

More programs

Our region has focused on collections, and yes we have beautiful books on the shelves, but we miss programs, things like the reader advisory which staff no longer have time to do

Of concern is the short staffing in libraries, we cannot get services the way we used to

CDs are often damaged, they need to be replaced more often

I use the search for books by copying and pasting selections from Amazon, but staff have told people this can’t be done, not all staff are aware of ways that services can be used

Invest more in libraries, they are the heart and soul of communities

More young adult/youth selections please

March break programs would be great

More literature for men, a lot of the books are geared toward female readers

Develop more youth for libraries groups

Use more social media tools

Assemble a panel from each of the public sessions to go to the Minister and tell him directly how much libraries mean to us



Creative Commons: CollegeDegrees360

Section Eight: Return on Investment

In 2009, LBANS commissioned a report that provided some guidance on evaluating the value of public libraries in Nova Scotia (Allen, September 2009). This report determined that methods of measuring the value of libraries are difficult to apply:

“Measuring the value of library services has become an important part of life in public libraries today as they struggle to receive adequate funding from governments. The valuation process is not simple, mostly because the services offered by libraries are not easily quantifiable” (Allen, September 2009, p. 2).

Further, the Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries in Ontario (ARUPLO) discovered the same issue as evidenced in their recent report:

“We were unable to locate any published Canadian studies of direct and indirect economic benefits to local communities; residential property values; increased business traffic; library employment; library material purchasing and the purchase of other goods and services; building construction, renovation, and maintenance; contribution to GDP; or of much-lauded but stubbornly-elusive economic multiplier effects; a little known example is a study by Statistics Canada that estimated an economic multiplier of 1.42 as the contribution of Ontario’s public libraries to GDP, and library employment as a job multiplier of 1.40 (Ontario Public Libraries Impact on Gross Domestic Product, Cultural Statistics Program, Statistics Canada, 1996).

Moreover, economic benefits research needs to be more rigorous and nuanced: simply calculating the annual value of a library as the number of circulations per year times an arbitrary dollar value per circulation, on the assumption that customers would buy all of their reading materials if there were no library, is not very sophisticated and even less convincing.” (Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario, January 2009, p. 2).

The 2011-2012 annual report, however, does provide some insight into the value of libraries for Nova Scotians, with more than three million in-person visits, more than seven million materials borrowed, and more than 14,000 programs attended, all at a cost of \$37.63 per person, (Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Public Libraries Annual Report, 2011-2012), it is clear that libraries are providing a valuable service to Nova Scotians. This per person cost is actually somewhat higher than the amount in rural areas, which are actually closer to about \$12.00 per person. The total of new users to the library system was in excess of 36,000, with a total population membership of 31.8%. National statistics indicate that more than half of Canadians visit public libraries annually, and nearly two out of three Canadians carry library cards. In addition, a staggering 204,000 Canadians undertake a job search per month at Canadian libraries. (Online Computer Libraries Cooperative, How Canadian Libraries Stack Up, 2012)

Librarians expressed the difficulty of measuring the value of what libraries have to offer; confidentiality makes it difficult for them to reasonably track the number of small business start-ups, number of health issues assisted, and number of families and individuals impacted and the manner in which they have been impacted. The National Values Profile of Canadian Libraries, however, does note several interesting facts:

“Increasing the general knowledge and vocabulary of a child before age 6 is the single highest correlate with later educational success. Disparities in the complexity and the number of words used by children across socio-economic groups are the most important barriers. Research has shown that children of professionals are exposed to 34 million more words by age four than children growing up in poverty.” (Ginia Bellafante, New York Times, 2012 (Schrader & Brundin, November 30, 2012, p. 9).

This same report notes there were 1.6 million users of library materials every day in 2010, and overall libraries in Canada run on .28¢ per day, Canadian. (Schrader & Brundin, November 30, 2012, p. 7) Libraries are critical for establishing and maintaining literacy in communities; a factor directly related to economic outcome. Recent studies in Canadian literacy demonstrate that “...almost four in 10 youths aged 15 have insufficient reading skills; while more than two in 10 university graduates, almost five in 10 Canadian adults and six in 10 immigrants have inadequate literacy....(literacy) is associated with better labour market outcomes, higher income, greater independence, community involvement and continued education.” (TD Bank Financial Group, Literacy Matters: A Call for Action, p. 2).

Perhaps the return on investment of libraries is most eloquently expressed by the commitment of the more than 100 patrons who drove through deserted, windswept rural highways in the dark of winter to enter their small yet vibrant community libraries in order to tell their stories of what libraries mean to them; stories of powerful life change, companionship, comfort, and connection, in the hopes that someone would hear their message...all we need from libraries is more.

Section Nine: Recommendations

9.1 Breathing new life into libraries

For decades, library reports have been churned out warning of the gradual disintegration of library services because of funding issues. Librarians have continued to wrestle success out of their resources but the toll is becoming apparent. Staff are devoted and committed to their patrons, but lack of stability is inevitably luring them to other opportunities. Library boards struggle with their commitments and have been diligent in trying to find answers. The recent three-year funding freeze, for many regions, has been the final blow. In extensive consultation, across the board regions recommended a 5% increase in funding this year just to maintain the seriously downsized services they currently offer. This figure is in all likelihood more a reflection of what they think they have a chance of receiving than what they actually need. However, this 5% would bring much needed relief and avert disaster while the other recommendations are being negotiated and implemented. This funding would breathe new life into libraries and library programs and restore the confidence of community in the commitment of their political leaders to their community health.

The pressures on provincial leadership are real and substantial in this difficult fiscal age. Their goals of prosperity in the long term are sincere. While implementing the recommendations of this report would represent a financial investment in times of restraint, there are sources of funding that could be applied to an increase, whether through cross- departmental program delivery with concomitant funding, through application of funds from provincial revenue activities or restructuring of other departmental programs, this investment would be the single best investment in the economic future of citizens.

9.2 Rethinking the funding formula

Population-based funding has proved problematic for both libraries and government. With persistent problems of outmigration in the province, the government has imposed a freeze at prior levels in order to avert disaster for rural library service in some regions. However, continuing with a mechanism of population-based funding causes library staff and administrators to consistently wonder when the shoe will drop, and make it impossible to do realistic long-term planning. Converting funding to a service- based formula would shift libraries into the light they should be in, with a focus on what they do rather than who they serve.

Accompanied by the establishment of minimum standards that have teeth, this approach establishes three critical mechanisms; a) it allows libraries to improve year over year and track that progress b) it establishes equity between regions while preserving autonomy in how services are delivered c) it creates the ability to determine in advance the funding needed and co-relate the direct benefit to be gained from that funding.

9.3 Transfer of staff salaries, benefits and training to the Province

The transfer of staff salaries, benefits and training to the Province would involve an increase that would be most acute in the transfer year. Standardization of salaries would have to be negotiated and established. Currently the provincial contribution is roughly equivalent to salary costs, and so this re-alignment would not be as fiscally painful as other types of funding restructuring. Following this recommendation would allow for ease of promotion and professional transfer throughout the province. It would also allow for planning of training with Chief Librarians with identified priorities.

This recommendation would require creation of set hiring practices that continue to include library board Trustees who are most familiar with their communities and have a sense of who would be a good fit. It may also require revision of the Library Act. Some regions may suffer a loss of benefits but most would gain. Accommodations for current salary rates, if they were to be affected negatively, would also need to be addressed. These barriers are not insurmountable when they are considered in return for stability of pay and benefit scales and the ability to plan and access training.

9.4 Private sector funding

A private sector fund to which Chief Librarians and library boards could apply for infrastructure, special services and pilot projects would provide ease of application processes and reduce loss of valuable staff time. Sponsors would contribute to an overall fund to which applications would be made.

This structure would not preclude utilizing a portion of the funds from this resource to leverage funds from other programs that have particular applicability or merit to libraries. Recommendations for funding this program are below.

9.5 Municipal support

Municipalities have often contributed above the mandated requirement. With support from the corporate fund, municipal money could be applied more readily to fixed costs and collection/ materials acquisition. Municipal partners have been willing to support increased funding over time and there is no reason to believe they would not continue to be substantial supporters of maintaining rural library service. Their continued support would allow their funding to be spent in a more realistic manner that has direct benefits to their community. Municipalities have indicated a willingness to investigate green retrofits to buildings and inclusion of libraries in new infrastructure builds. However, ensuring greater safeguards on legislated commitment by municipalities could be explored.

9.6 Annual allocation of special funds

Federal and provincial governments have special funds from time to time that are available for special cost items that are seen to be of particular benefit to communities. These funds generally are employment-related initiatives. An annual amount from these funds should be dedicated to libraries to contribute to special needs that can be directly tied to employment skill development.

9.7 Cross-sectoral contributions

It is recommended that an annual review in each provincial department be undertaken to determine programs that are best delivered through libraries, with an attachment of funding. In the long run, libraries can confidently be expected to provide the best service delivery for the best cost. The review will need to be accompanied by an interdepartmental communication campaign in order to ensure department administrators understand the multiplicity of roles libraries can undertake and the degree of expertise they can offer. At a minimum this approach could include Department of Community and Social Services, Department of Justice, Department of Health and Welfare and Department of Economic and Rural Development. Uniquely, libraries can deliver programs from childhood on, gradually decreasing the costs of these departments over time through education, social and health supports.

The impact of literacy supports can have repercussions across the board that provides cost savings in the future:

“Literacy skills are important for several reasons. On an individual level, literacy has been linked to physical health, the ability to access learning opportunities, social and democratic participation and obtaining higher income employment. In fact, it has been demonstrated that children’s literacy levels can predict high school completion and postsecondary participation. At the societal level, employment and reduction in crime rates have positive implications for the local economy, in reduced reliance on welfare and reduced expenditure in the criminal justice system. Nationally, the demand for, and the cost of, providing public goods and services including health and education, would be much reduced if literacy levels in Canada were higher overall.” (Murray, 2011, pp. p 1-8).

One public participant, who had been a social worker for many years, noted that there are no programs to ensure that clients are linked with library programs at point of entry. She felt this could positively affect the outcome of children in poverty, alleviating cyclical dependence.

9.8 Making libraries the cost of doing business in Nova Scotia.

Supporting libraries should become the cost of doing business in Nova Scotia. Corporate entities often provide funding for community initiatives. With their level of service to all sectors of society, libraries are an excellent investment. This investment can be pursued by both provincial and municipal partners. Sponsors should contribute to an overall fund to which library regions would apply for specific programs, materials acquisition, infrastructure, special services and pilot projects. Corporations may also choose to support outreach services and mobile libraries which are costly for libraries to replace. Such a contribution may be directed to the cost of fuel for mobile library service or to the purchase of a regional or provincial fleet.

An annual funding drive that aimed to raise \$1.00 for every citizen of Nova Scotia to support libraries would be of considerable benefit and affordable by all. It is recommended that this fundraising campaign be an annual event with special activities in each region and a competitive drive to reach goals. Such an effort would increase awareness in communities of the valuable services libraries provide and would provide a structured manner for communities to contribute in an affordable way. The result would be the creation an annual reserve fund.

9.9 Continued exploration of partnerships

Libraries have become expert at partnership. Highly skilled at working with others in a collaborative manner, libraries are well equipped to continue exploring these partnerships through early notification from government of new initiatives and the ability to provide feedback on potential collaborations. In the past, these offers of collaboration have not always been responded to. A mechanism for seeking library input on proposed initiatives has the potential to streamline project costs for government. At a recent event to explore the challenges of museum service delivery, a presentation by a Chief Librarian sparked interesting ideas of collaboration through 3D technology. Libraries are willing to share resources and expertise, and have a great deal to offer other organizations.

9.10 Designating a portion of special funds to libraries

Revenue generating activities in the province could contribute a set portion of their monies to libraries annually. Activities could include provincial lottery, Resource Recovery Fund or other sources. A provincial library lottery could also be explored. While there are some potential ethical reservations with respect to this, careful and thoughtful planning could ensure it is structured in a manner that is consistent with community benefit.

Constant uncertainty in the CAP program has made this vital part of library service difficult. Technology becomes outdated quickly and requires maintenance and expertise. It is recommended that Federal government funds be negotiated to support technology refresh and recurring needs, potentially through Human Resources and Development Canada, with an accompanying program for training and service delivery.

The Federal government has signalled a direction of employment encouragement and a weaning of benefits. Rural Atlantic Canadians are hardest hit by these changes and therefore represent a sector that could most benefit from support in skills development.

9.11 Hiring of a Library Champion

The Library Champion would have a special role to oversee the implementation of these recommendations and ensure their success. The Library Champion would:

- Oversee the implementation of the transfer of salary and benefits
- Educate and explore cross-sectoral partnerships within government
- Negotiate Federal funding to support technology refresh and maintenance
- Oversee the development and implementation of library standards
- Oversee a comprehensive communication plan which would include internal communication within provincial government on libraries and the role of libraries. Communication with the public would be highly professional and creative
- Ensure the creation of the corporate fund and solicit support
- Work with Chief Librarians and Trustees to develop a one card system which could include a sticker system for existing cards
- Develop screening processes for applications to the corporate fund
- Explore with provincial government departments areas of potential service delivery

9.12 Creation and implementation of standards

In the past Nova Scotia has developed a standards document for libraries (Department of Education Nova Scotia Provincial Library, September 2001). Other jurisdictions across Canada have created minimum standards on space, number of books per population, number of technological units and so on. These standards in Nova Scotia, however, have largely remained on paper as they are guidelines and not standards that have implementation plans. It is recommended that these standards be revisited, modified, and implemented. Such action would provide the province with a clear set of specific goals to work toward yearly with the new funding allocations.

9.13 Creation of internal and external communication plan

The role and services of public libraries are well understood by those who use them, but are largely unrecognized within government. Community assumes that libraries are fully funded according to their needs and are often not aware of the actual funding structure or of the pressures it has placed on library service. If government departments were more aware of the role and services of public libraries they could streamline their funding pressures by exploring service delivery through libraries. Some of these goals would be long term; for example, heightened literacy leads to greater employability which reduces demand on social service income. Annual reports from Chief Librarians to Trustees and the province also would ensure a clear picture of deficiencies and development of strategies to address them. A comprehensive media campaign would set the foundation for success in the annual 'every citizen' campaign and would increase use and support of public libraries.

9.14 Creation of a One Card System

Both the public and Chief Librarians have indicated the benefit of employing a one card system. Other provinces use the system and claim that it ensures greater ease of access for everyone. While the BARA program does allow for borrowing and return to any location, a card for the specific region must be used to withdraw books. Implementation of a one card system could adopt a sticker system for existing cards increasing ease of access at any location. This change is supported by both Chief Librarians and public users.

9.15 Adaptation of bookmobiles to include mobile business supports

Rural Nova Scotians are highly entrepreneurial; they have had to be. Without creating their own employment, they often would not have a local economy. Strong supports for entrepreneurs in rural areas who are interested in new business start-ups, particularly with the downslide of traditional natural resource sectors, will be critical economic drivers. Mobile library services are well placed to provide this service as libraries often function as supports for small business. Greater awareness of what can be offered through libraries, including research, education and links to funding agencies would encourage participation by rural residents in these important services. Mobile libraries reach citizens who otherwise have little opportunity to achieve the benefits of these services, in a supportive environment. Adaptability would likely be relatively easy given the history of innovative approaches that Chief Librarians have undertaken. This could also assist in promoting the services of technologies such as 3D printers which Chief Librarians see the potential for in business applications.

The implementation of the above recommendations would address the major challenges identified in this study and would ensure robust library service for many years to come while averting the immediate crisis in rural library service.

Conclusion

Across the province, on any given day, a special group of people labour to enhance the lives of every citizen, regardless of history, age, physical appearance, whether rich or poor. Enter any library branch and you will see the results of Librarians dedication; children engaged in educational play, families drifting companionably among stacks of books, teens congregating to study or explore the world, seniors looking for safety and companionship. If you are a crafter, if you are a writer, if you are displaced, if you have artistry, if you aspire to the magic of science, if you have a dream, if you are weary, if you are exploring, if you have a philosophy...there is a place for you. In a library, no matter who you are, you are valued. In a library you can be yourself, with all your idiosyncrasies and tastes. No one judges you for your choice of relaxation or study, and all the choices are good.

Perhaps it is not surprising that libraries mean so much to public patrons. After all, it is in libraries that the story of our species is contained. All of our propensity to love, struggle, triumph and excel are contained in the collections of libraries, each book a friend who knows something about us and has something to reveal. Perhaps we should not be surprised that people who are exposed to libraries in youth tend to excel later in life; after all they have a universe of stories and information to draw upon when going about their lives.

Neither is it a surprise that in our later years, when the obligations of family have quieted, the sheer enjoyment of the stimulation of libraries and the leisure to enjoy them is so important that people choose communities to live their final years in based on whether or not there are libraries. So intoxicating is the content of libraries that patrons do not notice if the buildings are old and the facilities poor.

Provincial commitment coupled with municipal dedication and supported by passionate staff has made libraries essential to patrons. Yet inequities of service and funding stresses threaten to derail the fabric of public libraries in rural Nova Scotia communities. Even those regions that have thrived through strategic planning and extensive partnership doubt they would be able to maintain service if the status quo continues. Rural libraries will be the first go.

Branch closures, staff layoffs, loss of collections, inability to keep pace with technology will all become a reality by 2014-2015. Yet with fresh approaches and tools in place to ensure success this particular story can end very differently.

Staff and trustees have articulated their primary needs and spelled out their ambitions for rural library service. They are willing to bring to the table their resources and talent. Rethinking funding structures so that they accommodate these needs and allow room for further growth, while supporting these changes through a Library Champion who will oversee the process and strengthen initiatives to foster success, will create a winning formula from which all communities will benefit. Not only are libraries service providers, but also they are investments in citizens, with dividends paid in capacity and achievement. With a strong backbone of library service, Nova Scotia rural communities could become the 'go to' centers rather than the 'run from' places.



Imagine a Nova Scotia which is known for its intellectual achievement, its leaders, its high literacy rates and innovation. This is possible through libraries; we only have to marry imagination with commitment.

Libraries are the places where immortality is achieved; the places where our stories are preserved and connected to the broader human story. And so, in Western Counties the Writing Memoirs program flourishes; South Shore library staff connect through outreach with Tanzania; “People’s Place” is born in Pictou-Antigonish; in Halifax an exciting, brand new facility is built; new services to children and youth are established in Eastern Counties; in Cumberland children and adults come together through a specialized reading program; in Colchester County, Tatamagouche awaits with excitement the construction of their new library with all its possibilities; Cape Breton Region citizens and leaders come together to articulate and commit to the importance of libraries, and in Annapolis Valley more books are put in the hands of readers than ever before. These are all successes that will quickly dwindle if we do not change our course. Yet it is possible that next year, if the commitment is secured and political will embraces vision, libraries will achieve even more, secure in knowing they can continue to do so for generations to come. After all, the story that lives on to represent us, is the story we choose to write.

“Imagine a Nova Scotia which is known for its intellectual achievement, its leaders, its high literacy rates and innovation. This is possible through libraries; we only have to marry imagination with commitment.”



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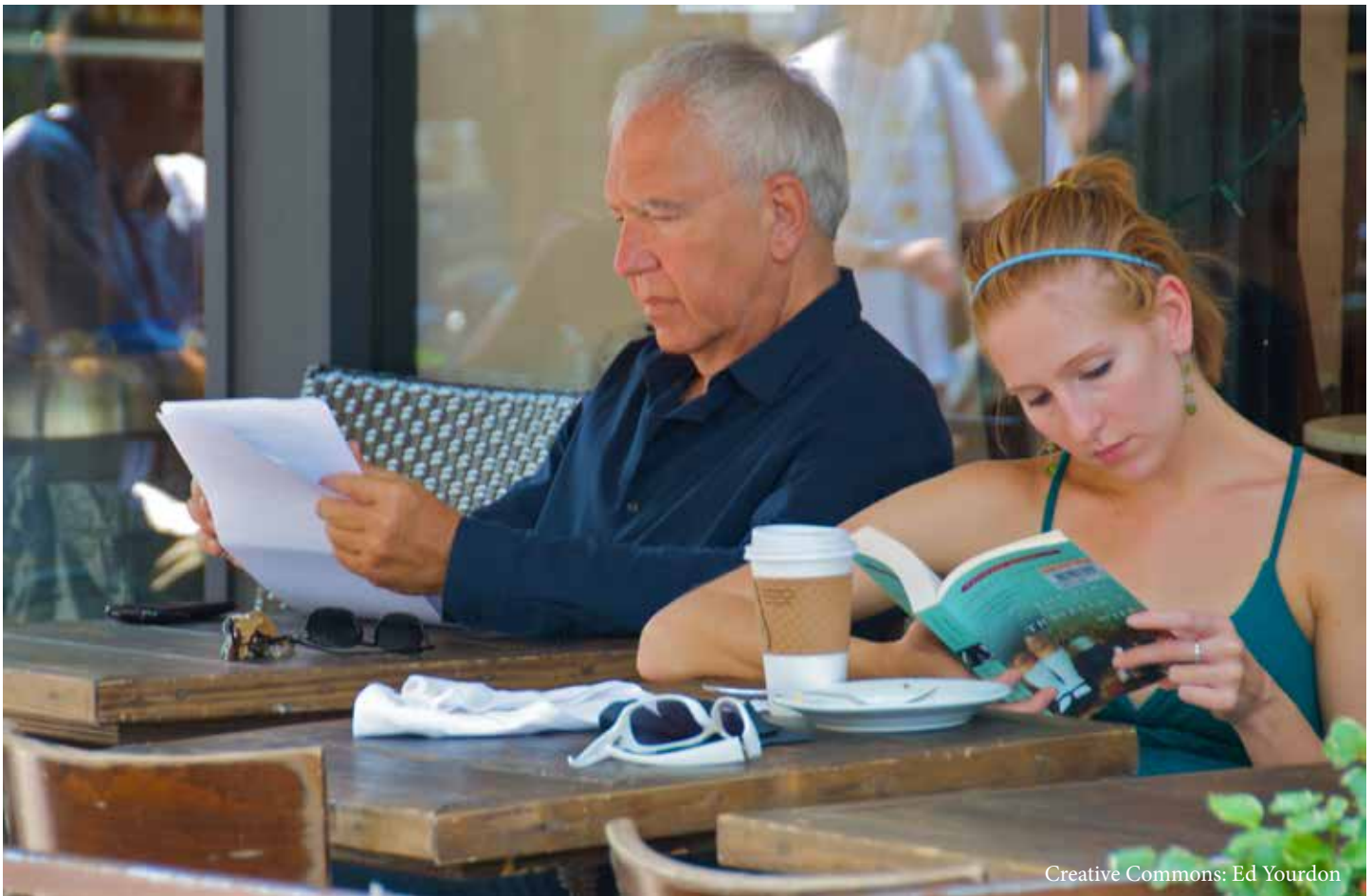
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Appendix A

LBANS NSLA conference questions

Table 1:

Do the core services as currently defined accurately represent the core services of the modern library? Are there services that should be added? Modified to reflect current client needs? How would you prioritize core services?

Table 2:

What are the key challenges that are affecting your ability to deliver core services? How has flatline funding affected your ability to deliver services? Please describe specific examples to illustrate your case.

Table 3:

If you had the resources you needed, what could equitable library service in Nova Scotia look like? Feel free to describe specific services/programs you would like to deliver that are on your 'wishlist'.

Table 4:

Describe the key inequities of client service that you have experienced currently exist in the library system.

Table 5:

What are some innovations of service delivery that you would like to see implemented? Are there areas where technological, training or other supports would enhance your ability to deliver services to clients or staff?

Appendix B

CORL meeting key questions.

Four key questions for the two-day workshop:

1. *Currently the library system in Nova Scotia is divided into 9 regions. Each of these has a regional board to which librarians report. Is this system working well for you in terms of:*
 - a) *geography -are the current geographical boundaries consistent for efficient service delivery*
 - b) *decision making - ability to make decisions with respect to efficiencies*
 - c) *consistency of service – ability for each region to deliver equal service to both employees and patrons. Can you identify areas where you would like to see modifications and give specific examples of how these would increase efficiencies?*
2. *The quantification and measuring of the impact of libraries is challenging. What would you consider the most important markers of the vital role libraries have and can you give specific examples of how you have observed this impact during your practice?*
3. *Currently libraries in different regions are open different hours and sometimes have differences in borrowing practices. This is to some extent the result of challenges in resources and capacity.*
 - a) *In what areas do you think greater standardization could be met?*
 - b) *Would you support attempts to deliver increased standardization of service if accompanying resources were available? Why or why not? How do you think this could be accomplished?*
 - c) *What would be the consequences of standardizing pay scales and benefits? Would these consequences be worth it?*
4. *Current theory discusses the changing role of libraries from sanctuaries of knowledge to vibrant social centers and an increased reliance on ‘virtual’ services.*
 - a) *To what extent do you feel it is important to preserve the traditional role of libraries?*
 - b) *If the role of the library is changing and more social roles are being assumed, should these be redefined into the ‘core services’ that libraries are expected to deliver? As a reference, core services are currently defined as: lending services/collections, customer service, lifelong learning, community information technology, regional support services (pertaining to lending, regular hours etc.)*
 - c) *How does this fit with rural library service and how would you define “rural”?*

Risk Scenarios: CORL Session

Risk Scenario One:

Provincial take-over of library service

Risk Scenario Two:

Municipal risk: withdrawal

Risk Scenario Three:

Virtual Internet Libraries/Library redundancy

Risk Scenario Four:

Continuance of flat line funding

Risk Scenario Five:

E books: licensing issues/copyright challenges/e book demand exceeds ability

Risk Scenario Six:

Infrastructure/energy costs become prohibitive

Preliminary Questions

Please fill out your name and region below.

Name: Region:

1. Please provide a description of your history in library service, and the major challenges you have observed over that time.

2. What do you define as core services based on your real experience in your region? Are there core services that are currently unrecognized? Which ones do you feel are absolutely essential to rural library service in Nova Scotia and why?

3. What, to you, constitutes equitable rural service delivery for libraries in Nova Scotia? Feel free to make this a wish list.

4. From your perspective, what would the impact of flatline funding be over the next five years? What services would you be forced to cut? Could library service in your region even be maintained? In this section, please include the stresses and challenges of current funding.

5. Are there elements of other models that you have worked in, or that you know of, that you think would be worth adopting?

6. In your region, please identify the infrastructure challenges you are experiencing such as lack of facilities, air conditioning, mould, etc.

7. From your perspective, what are the challenges of the current funding formula? How could it be improved?

8. How would your community/region be impacted by reduction or loss of library services? What user groups would be particularly impacted?

Preliminary Questions

9. What annual increase percentage would be reasonable to maintain services?

10. What partnerships would be most instrumental in streamlining of services; please describe specifics (ie technology, service delivery, special program delivery or expansion etc).

Notes and/or other comments you would wish to make.

Appendix D

Age of collection summary Feb 2013

Age of Collection Statistics 2012-2013

Region	Total # Items	# Items greater than 5 yrs old (Feb '13)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('12-'13)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('11-'12)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('10-'11)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('09-'10)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('08-'09)	% Items greater than 5 yrs old ('07-'08)
AVR	197,646	135,706	69%	72%	75%	78%	80%	84%
CBR	267,485	217,528	81%	81%	81%	81%	81%	84%
CEH	142,597	109,380	77%	77%	78%	79%	79%	83%
CPL	64,999	46,508	72%	73%	74%	75%	78%	81%
ECR	106,118	82,499	78%	77%	75%	75%	75%	78%
HPL	968,903	647,288	67%	68%	69%	69%	67%	66%
PAR	134,125	103,820	77%	78%	79%	80%	80%	82%
SSP	82,039	35,786	44%	55%	58%	71%	81%	86%
WCR	148,203	108,320	73%	72%	71%	72%	71%	77%
Total	2,112,115	1,486,835	70%	71%	72%	74%	77%	80%

Item statistics generated Feb 16 - 17, 2013
Excludes magazines and OverDrive items

Region	# Items greater than 10 yrs old (Feb '13)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('12-'13)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('11-'12)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('10-'11)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('09-'10)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('08-'09)	% Items greater than 10 yrs old ('07-'08)
AVR	89,141	45%	49%	52%	55%	53%	60%
CBR	172,144	64%	65%	64%	64%	63%	64%
CEH	77,159	54%	55%	55%	56%	56%	61%
CPL	27,518	42%	45%	50%	52%	57%	61%
ECR	53,877	51%	49%	47%	48%	49%	54%
HPL	434,229	45%	47%	48%	49%	44%	43%
PAR	71,061	53%	53%	55%	56%	56%	61%
SSP	21,526	26%	38%	40%	50%	57%	67%
WCR	68,196	46%	46%	46%	48%	47%	55%
Total	1,014,851	48%	50%	51%	52%	54%	58%

Appendix E

Rural study request

Regional Library Boards Funding and Expenditures For period 2007-2012

Location	2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
	Total Funding	Total expenditures	Funding	Expenditures	Funding	Expenditures	Funding	Expenditures	Funding	Expenditures
Halifax Public Libraries	\$ 17,900,706	\$ 17,900,706	\$ 18,905,374	\$ 18,905,374	\$ 19,599,306	\$ 19,599,306	\$ 20,311,532	\$ 20,311,532	\$ 20,927,713	\$ 20,927,713
Cape Breton Regional Library	2,589,327	2,589,327	2,711,535	2,711,535	2,657,970	2,657,970	2,657,970	2,804,996	2,742,330	\$ 3,012,309
Annapolis Valley Regional Library	2,197,092	2,232,312	2,182,253	2,179,952	2,404,475	2,404,475	2,404,475	2,404,475	\$ 2,560,061	\$ 2,560,061
Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library	1,772,767	1,682,608	1,859,681	1,774,715	1,977,497	1,999,917	1,977,497	1,999,917	\$ 1,966,169	\$ 1,921,196
Western Counties Regional Library	1,575,082	1,575,083	1,621,296	1,621,296	1,648,513	1,648,513	1,648,513	1,648,513	\$ 1,720,822	\$ 1,720,822
Colchester-East Hants Public Library	1,524,128	1,520,402	1,641,309	1,591,744	1,860,347	1,706,716	1,860,347	1,706,716	\$ 1,974,332	\$ 1,955,596
South Shore Public Libraries	1,337,307	1,324,523	1,366,611	1,396,318	1,392,134	1,530,135	1,392,134	1,530,135	\$ 1,496,458	\$ 1,430,924
Eastern Counties Regional Library	969,166	963,748	995,131	995,131	994,576	999,302	994,576	999,302	\$ 1,064,829	\$ 1,200,160
Cumberland Public Libraries	769,138	747,902	803,454	790,869	840,616	831,453	840,616	831,453	\$ 854,055	\$ 849,967
Total	\$ 30,634,713	\$ 30,536,611	\$ 32,086,644	\$ 31,966,934	\$ 33,375,434	\$ 33,524,813	\$ 34,087,660	\$ 34,237,039	\$ 35,306,769	\$ 35,578,748

NOTE:

Total funding - Includes Provincial, Municipal and Board Funding

Total Expenditure - Actual expenses - Data provided from Audited reports

