Embracing the Future: The Greater Victoria Public Library’s Strategic Plan

Our 20-Year Strategic Objectives and 5-Year Action Plan

Approved September 20, 2005
Welcome

Public libraries are special places. They are gathering spaces that create connections between citizens and their communities and engage people in the exchange of information and ideas. They encourage cultural and economic development and enable citizens to grow, learn and discover. Public libraries foster participation and inclusiveness. They are one of the cornerstones of democracy, enabling free and equitable access to information for all citizens. In our changing world, public libraries help people keep pace with new ideas, new technologies and new ways of learning.

The Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) is one such special place, with a long history of providing library services to the people of Victoria and the Greater Victoria region. In 1889, a free Victoria Public Library was created to serve residents in the city of Victoria. The Greater Victoria Public Library was incorporated in 1966 to serve the four municipalities of Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt, and service was extended in 1996 to the Western Communities of Colwood, Langford, Highlands District and Metchosin. In 2002, service was extended to Central Saanich and View Royal. Today, our library system includes eight branch libraries and serves a diverse and vibrant population of more than 290,000 people in ten municipalities in the Greater Victoria region.

The GVPL received more than 2.5 million visits last year — parents came to the library with their young children to participate in story time programs; students used the library to access our print and electronic resources to find information for their homework assignments; adults who share a love of reading participated in our book club programs; business people looking for up-to-date information used our electronic databases to conduct research; and many users came to the library to access the Internet and search for information online. These are just a few examples of how the GVPL serves our communities, and there are many more.

“Our libraries are a great investment in community, learning and literacy. They open doors of opportunity for minds hungry for knowledge and adventure. They are the front lines of the effort to make British Columbia the most literate place in the world.”

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The GVPL is your library, and this strategic plan has been developed to provide clear objectives and strategies for moving forward to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of the people and communities we serve. Building on the strengths and traditions of the GVPL, and using our vision and mission as guideposts in our planning, this strategic plan — our first — will help us embrace the future, and the anticipated changes that will come with our growing and increasingly diverse and complex communities.

"Libraries cultivate minds. They are central to educating and informing the citizens of our country. They preserve our rich and diverse culture and history and transmit it from one generation to the next. They are cornerstones of community engagement and help us find connections to each other and the world in which we live."³

We invite you to read and explore “Embracing the Future: The Greater Victoria Public Library’s Strategic Plan”, and to continue with us on our journey as we embrace an exciting and dynamic future for your library.

**Quick facts about your library**

- The GVPL serves approximately 291,000 people in ten municipalities in the Greater Victoria region and operates eight branches
- The library’s collections include almost one million items
- Close to 4.7 million items were borrowed in 2004 and GVPL now ranks fourth in Canada for number of items borrowed per capita
- The GVPL is governed by a 21-member Board of Trustees that represents the municipalities it serves
- The Board is comprised of nine elected officials and 12 appointed citizen representatives
- The services of the GVPL are provided by 285 staff and 8 managers
- In 2004, there were over 167,000 active users of the GVPL in Greater Victoria, representing approximately 58% of the population of our service area
- The GVPL operates with an annual budget of just over $11 million, which translates to $38 per person or $2.18 per item borrowed
The following Board and staff members from the GVPL participated in the development of the strategic plan:

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<th>Board participants:</th>
<th>Staff participants:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ms. Martha Anslow (Chair)</td>
<td>• Ilka Abbott</td>
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<td>• Mr. John Barton</td>
<td>• Sandra Anderson</td>
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<td>• Mr. Patrick Chénier</td>
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<td>• Ms. Linda Foubister</td>
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<td>• Audrey Driscoll</td>
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<td>• Councillor Christopher Graham</td>
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<td>• Councillor Ron Mattson</td>
<td>• Cheryl Osborn</td>
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<td>• Mr. Robert McConnell (to June 2005)</td>
<td>• Anne Parker</td>
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<td>• Councillor Jackie Ngai</td>
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<td>• Mrs. Noel Pemberton-Billing</td>
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<td>• Mayor Darwin Robinson</td>
<td>• Colleen Stewart</td>
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<td>• Mayor Karel Roessingh (Vice-Chair)</td>
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<td>• Mrs. Dianna Seaton</td>
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<td>• Councillor Lillian Szpak</td>
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<td>• Ms. Charlotte Woeckener</td>
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<td>• Ms. Michelle Wong (from July 2005)</td>
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The Process: Developing the Strategic Plan

When we set out to develop the strategic plan for the GVPL, two key factors influenced our approach. Firstly, understanding the importance of beginning with a focus on the long-range planning horizon was key. Given the size and complexity of our library, and recognizing the need to be inclusive in our vision for the future, we considered a 20-year planning horizon. Secondly, we wanted to make sure we had relevant and complete information about current and future community service needs to facilitate evidenced-based decision-making throughout the planning process. This was accomplished through extensive research, including an online survey to gather input to the strategic plan from our library users.

The Research: Understanding the Planning Context

Our first task in the strategic planning process was to understand our environment, including the trends and forces that will shape the demand for library services in our communities in the years to come. The research to gather this information was divided into two main streams: we considered the ‘regional planning context’ and the ‘library planning context’.

To understand the regional planning context, we looked at the trends and forces that will shape the region over the next 20 years. Toward this end, we explored the following areas:

- “Who we will be…” which focused on the composition and age of the population
- “How we will live…” which focused on the growth and location of the population
- “How we will work…” which focused on changes in the structure of the regional economy and the impact of the emerging knowledge and information society
- “How we will learn and use information…” which focused on the growing emphasis on lifelong learning and the impact of technology on the way we learn

To better understand the library planning context, we examined the trends and forces that will shape library services in the years to come. This research explored trends and forces in the public library sector generally, and looked at those affecting our library specifically.
The library planning context research took a multi-faceted approach involving the components outlined below.

- **Online User Survey:** We asked library users to tell us what their priorities and satisfaction levels were for library resources, services, programs and facilities. The survey was administered online over a five-day period and was promoted at all branches of the library. Paper copies of the survey were also made available. Through the survey, we heard from 2,052 library users.

- **Analysis of GVPL Administrative Data:** We conducted an analysis of GVPL administrative data collected by the library, with a focus on patterns of use related to resources, programs, services and facilities.

- **Survey of Public Library Trends:** We conducted a survey of trends in public library service, including higher service expectations, changing patterns of library use and user groups with special needs, and considered how these forces might influence the strategic planning process.

- **Survey of Public Library Systems:** We also conducted a survey of public library systems, which highlighted a range of service delivery models that we considered in the planning process.

**The Plan: Our 20-Year Strategic Objectives and Five-Year Action Plan**

**Designing the Strategic Approach**

In developing the strategic plan, we worked with a two-staged approach that focused on two key time frames: a 20-year time frame and a five-year time frame.

Considering the 20-year time frame was very important to the strategic planning process. It encouraged us to look at the ‘big picture’ and to be visionary and inclusive in our thinking and planning around meeting the needs of our communities. In this phase, we established the long-range strategic objectives for the GVPL.

To identify ways of achieving the strategic objectives, we considered a five-year time frame. This allowed us to develop realistic and measurable actions for each objective.

**Defining the Long-Range Strategic Objectives**

The strategic planning exercise was conducted through planning workshops, the first of which focused on defining the long-range strategic objectives for the GVPL. In developing the strategic objectives we were guided by a strategic framework, which was based on information gathered through the research phase.
This framework identified five key strategic areas for consideration:
1. Lifelong learning and individual well-being
2. Community, economic and cultural development
3. Accessibility
4. Partnerships
5. Organizational development

Through a collaborative process, we identified 12 long-range strategic objectives. These strategic objectives set the direction for the five-year planning exercise, and should also continue to guide us as we move into and through the next five-year strategic planning cycle.

**Achieving the Long-Range Strategic Objectives: Our First Five-Year Plan**

Another strategic planning workshop focused on identifying actions to be initiated over the next five years, 2005–2010, to move toward achieving the long-range strategic objectives for the GVPL. We identified actions for each of the 12 strategic objectives.

**“Embracing the Future: The Greater Victoria Public Library’s Strategic Plan”**

“Embracing the Future: The Greater Victoria Public Library’s Strategic Plan” outlines the library’s plan for the future. This document is the culmination of the planning process. It presents the strategic objectives for the library for the next 20 years, and the actions for 2005–2010, which will start us on our journey toward achieving these objectives. “Embracing the Future” will be shared with the library’s key stakeholders and distributed widely by the GVPL.
The Research: Understanding The Planning Context

Understanding our Environment

In order to plan for the future, we recognized that we would have to first understand our environment. This meant not only examining our communities as they are today, but also exploring some of the key forces and trends that will shape our environment in the years to come. In our planning, we recognized the importance of making sure that the strategic plan and future role of the library be informed by relevant and complete information about current and anticipated service needs, as well as an understanding of the broader trends impacting the library sector.

For the purposes of the GVPL strategic planning process, we collected background information in two main streams:

- We looked at the regional planning context to consider how we live today and how we will live 20 years into the future; and,
- We looked at the library planning context to examine the forces and trends affecting libraries in general and our library specifically.

We compiled this information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including:

- Relevant literature, qualitative reports and quantitative studies;
- Regional and city-level plans and statistics;
- GVPL statistics and administrative data collected by the library; and,
- An online survey promoted at all branches of the GVPL to gather input from library users regarding their priorities and satisfaction levels with library resources, programs, services and facilities.

The information gathered through the research components described above helped shape our thinking throughout the planning process and inform our discussions during the planning workshops. A summary of the research results is outlined below, and further highlights of the research, as well as the user survey, are provided in Appendices 1-3.
The Regional Planning Context

Libraries provide services to people and communities that are dynamic and changing. Therefore, as the population and communities we serve grow, change and acquire new interests and ways of living, we too must evolve. Considering the shifting needs of the community was an important focus of the strategic planning process and we looked to research on the regional context to inform our discussions.

The information we gathered about the region today and in the future is summarized in the four streams outlined below.

Who we will be...

In analyzing the information gathered about “who we will be,” we learned that the most significant trends to affect the size and make up of the GVPL’s communities will be related to changes in the age and composition of the population.

Between 2005 and 2015, the Capital Regional District (CRD) is expected to grow from a population of 341,316 to 360,017 people. By 2025, the region is forecast to be 11% larger than its current size, and 13% larger than its current size by 2030. In 25 years, Greater Victoria will be home to an additional 46,000 people, which is more than the combined populations of Langford, Esquimalt, View Royal and the Highlands. Although this rate of growth is considerable, it is below the provincial average and far lower than the rates of growth experienced by the Greater Victoria region in the late 1980s.

The far more significant changes in the region will result from the aging of the baby boom population and increasing rates of immigration.

- Between 1996 and 2001, while the BC working age population increased by 21%, those over 65 grew by 12% and those over 85 increased by 33%.
- By 2031, approximately one in four British Columbians will be over 65 years old. Given that the median age in the CRD is higher than average, we will see an even greater proportion locally.
• By 2020, population growth in Canada will solely be through immigration, and by 2017, BC is expected to have the largest proportion of visible minorities of any province.
• Within 12 years, one in three BC residents will be a member of a visible minority and the population of visible minorities in Victoria will increase by 60% from 26,900 in 2001 to 43,000 in 2017.\(^5\)

These changes in the demographics of our region hold major economic and social implications for our communities. They will also have a significant impact on the nature and scope of library services.

**How we will live...**
Examining “how we will live” enabled us to understand how our communities will grow and where the population will be concentrated within the region. Currently 87% of the CRD population lives within the ten municipalities served by the GVPL, with 54% residing in Victoria and Saanich. As mentioned previously, the region as a whole is expected to grow by approximately 13% over the next 25 years.

While this is not overly significant at the regional level, this growth will vary widely across the different municipalities in our service area, with the greatest growth occurring in the Western Communities, specifically Langford and Colwood.

How this growth is accommodated, how the increasing population is provided with housing and services, and how services are distributed, will have a fundamental impact on the quality of life in the CRD. These considerations should also have a significant influence on decisions about the future location of library services throughout the region.
A number of principles have been adopted to guide and manage growth in the future. As outlined in the CRD Regional Growth Strategy, these include:

- Creating walkable, transit-focused “complete communities” with a dense mix of businesses, housing, services and public open space. “Complete communities” have been defined as those offering “housing, employment, shopping and services within walking distance, about 500m or 1/3 mile.”
- Focusing new growth primarily in eight Major Centres, including Downtown Victoria; Langford; Colwood; Mayfair Mall Area; Tillicum; Hillside; Shelbourne–MacKenzie; and Royal Oak.

The exact location of these major growth centres will be determined by each of the respective municipalities through their Regional Context Statements. Once decided upon, the aim will be to create “complete communities” in these areas.

It is meaningful to note that the GVPL does not currently have a physical presence in all of these areas, and specifically not in Langford, which exhibits among the highest rates of growth in the region.

**How we will work...**

Considering “how we will work” in our research enabled us to gain a better understanding of anticipated changes in the structure of the regional economy and the impact of the emerging knowledge and information society.

The CRD currently enjoys the benefits of a strong economy, a record low unemployment rate of 5.3%, and positive future Gross Domestic Product (GDP) projections. At the same time, however, as noted in the CRD Regional Economic Development Strategy (2003), “it is becoming increasingly obvious that the region can not be complacent about the continuing health of the economy”. Continued strength of the economy in the CRD will depend on the region’s ability to attract and retain a vibrant labour force and respond to changes in the way people work and jobs are structured.
These changes, as revealed through the research, are related in part to a large and increasing component of small businesses in the region. More people are working for themselves and in micro-businesses (companies with less than five employees). Small businesses already represent 98% of all businesses in the province and this sector is growing faster in BC than anywhere else in Canada.

The ways that we work have also been fundamentally transformed by the broader shift from an industrial economy to one centered on information, knowledge and innovation; globalized networks of digital communication; and "virtual" organizational structures. Advances in communications technology have enabled people to work in new capacities, from a distance and from home. This shift has also increased the rate of change and placed a much greater emphasis on intellectual capital, flexibility and innovation. Skills, technology and jobs are evolving much more rapidly than in the past.

As a result, the time horizon of our careers has been shortened and we are seeing increasing demands among employers for higher levels of skill and education and for ongoing, continuous training and upgrading to remain current. Research in this area revealed that:

- Between 2001 and 2011, 29% of job openings in the province will require a university degree and 44% will require other post-secondary training; and,
- In the next five years, 73% of new jobs in BC will require post-secondary education, which only 58% of BC workers currently have.

As stated in the Greater Victoria Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint (2003): “A sustainable economy is one that exhibits diverse and viable economic opportunities and is resilient and responsive to changing circumstances.” Creating a library system that supports this diversity of employment and the demand for continuous training and upgrading was a challenge for our consideration during the planning process.

How we will learn and use information...

The final relevant set of trends and circumstances we considered related to “how we will learn and use information.” In this area, we examined the library’s role in supporting both formal learning — learning through formal education programs, classes or workshops; and informal learning — learning through self-directed study, research and discovery.

As outlined above, we learned that there are increasing demands and requirements for people to engage in continuous learning in order to remain current in their fields. The growing importance of lifelong learning is also evidenced in research findings that reveal that two-thirds of adult Canadians spend an average of six hours on informal learning per week, acquiring employment-related knowledge and skills. In 2002, one in three adult workers in Canada participated in some type of formal job-related training.
Adding complexity to this, we know that the definition of literacy has been expanded beyond the basic competencies of reading, writing and numeracy. Literacy now encompasses an understanding and proficiency in information literacy, social or civic literacy, cultural literacy and environmental literacy.

The ways in which we access information and learn have also changed. Trends suggest that we are moving away from traditional methods of reading and study toward models that rely heavily on electronic sources of information, and that cater to a diverse range of group and individual learning styles and environments. For example:

- Between 1992 and 1996, the proportion of Canadian adults reading books dropped from 66% to 61%; those reading newspapers as a form of leisure dropped from 92% to 82%; and those reading magazines dropped from 80% to 71%.
- At the same time, usage and connectivity rates to the Internet have increased significantly, such that 64% of Canadian households have at least one member who uses the Internet regularly and growing numbers report using the Internet to obtain information related to health, to do research and for school work.

"Literacy skills are the essential building blocks for the development of a vibrant society and economy. There is a continuum of development ranging from learning to read through to reading to learn a variety of other skills and perspectives on life. The end of this continuum is the complex set of skills necessary for daily life, employment, citizenship, and personal advancement and enjoyment in our modern and diverse society. Today, the broad definition of literacy includes a variety of skills: reading text, document use, writing, oral communications, numeracy, thinking skills, computer use, working with others and continuous learning."
The Library Planning Context

Over and above the evolution that is occurring and anticipated in the communities served by the GVPL, the future of our library will be shaped by shifts and transformations taking place in the library sector. Some of these trends are being experienced by libraries in many regions, while others relate specifically to the GVPL and reflect the needs and priorities of the users in our communities. Understanding the library planning context, both generally and specifically, was essential to the development of our strategic plan.

General Library Trends

Our research revealed that public libraries throughout North America are experiencing a mix of challenges and opportunities related to higher service expectations, changing patterns of use, and user groups with special needs. As a result, there is a growing trend towards providing 24-hour electronic access to public libraries. This has led to some innovative and exciting service models, such as libraries from around the world in different time zones collaborating to provide services to their users around the clock.

Another important trend is that libraries are increasingly being seen as comfortable and safe community gathering places, where users come to access the information and resources available, and to engage and share ideas with other members of the community. We are seeing that library users are combining the electronic and physical functions of the library, often searching for resources from home before visiting the library in person.

Our research also showed that in our dynamic age of information, public libraries are constantly challenged to maintain current and up-to-date popular books and research information. Libraries are having to respond to the burgeoning host of online resources and to new ways of accessing information.

In addition:

- Interlibrary loans and services have become more popular, and users are expecting faster and more convenient service.
- As cutbacks see diminishing resources for libraries in schools, the public library system is being utilized by a growing number of school-age children and youth.
- Public libraries are challenged to accommodate the service needs and priorities of user groups with special needs, including people with limited mobility and people with visual impairment.
- Public libraries are also challenged to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the population, including providing services to Aboriginal people and immigrant communities.
In recognition of the vast array of services that libraries are expected to provide, libraries in British Columbia and Canada have gained formal acknowledgement and increased support in recent years. Provincially, $12 million has been provided to improve library services across the province as part of a strategy to make BC the most literate place in North America by 2010. Nationally, millions of dollars in contributions have been made to support a National Literacy Secretariat, an Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy Initiative, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, and the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network.

The combined increase in public expectations and the growing acknowledgement of library systems from the provincial and federal government represents a rich mix of challenges and opportunities. Different systems are dealing with these forces in different ways, and considering their impact on the GVPL informed the development of our strategic plan.

**GVPL Trends**

Every library system is unique and therefore, while each system may be exposed to many of the same forces, an additional and essential layer of information of relevance to our library system is that related to — and drawn from — local users of the GVPL.

Through an online survey, we heard from 2,052 users of the GVPL. Our users provided us with information in terms of how they view and use the library, what they value, and their levels of satisfaction with the GVPL’s resources, services, programs and facilities. What they told us helped us develop a strategic plan to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

In looking at GVPL trends, we also examined the administrative data collected by the library. This information helped shape our thinking and inform our discussions in the development of the strategic plan.

Research highlights from the user survey and from the analysis of the library data are organized below in relation to five categories: resources, services, programs, facilities and library use.
Resources

Library resources are the materials available through the library, either in print, or electronically. These include books (adult, children’s, fiction, and non-fiction), magazines, newspapers, CDs, videos, audiotapes, print reference materials, and electronic resources, such as databases and online journals.

Through our research, we learned that GVPL continues to see positive increases in the number of items borrowed on an annual basis. We rank fourth in Canada in terms of borrowing per capita. Between 2003 and 2004, the rate of borrowing increased by 6.9%, which is slightly lower than the rates of 7.1% and 7.9% in previous years, but still well above the average in Canada, which saw an increase of less than 1% between 2002 and 2003.8

Use of our online materials showed even higher growth, increasing by 200% between 2002 and 2004.

In the user survey, we asked respondents to tell us what their “top three most important resources to maintain or develop in the future” were. In response, survey respondents indicated: print fiction (23%), print non-fiction (21%), and sound and video materials (15%). In relation to the “most important resource to maintain or develop in the future”, respondents indicated: print fiction (30%), print non-fiction (24%), and sound and video materials (15%). With the exception of electronic reference materials, few respondents rated electronic resources among their top priorities. Significantly, however, we noticed that respondents aged 45-64 were most likely to indicate that electronic resources were most important.
The user survey showed us that there were generally high levels of satisfaction with all resources, with over 70% of respondents being either “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with the print fiction, non-fiction and sound and video materials. In consideration of future immigration trends, we noted with interest that the survey revealed the lowest satisfaction rating was given with respect to “resources in other languages”.

**Services**
Library services refer to the library’s transactions, such as loans, renewals, holds, returns, interlibrary loans and responding to reference questions. The library’s services are available in person, with many being offered electronically, as well.

In examining the research and information gathered in relation to library services, we saw that trends in services illustrated the shift towards our online/electronic presence most dramatically. For example, while in-person reference questions dropped by 14% between 2002 and 2004, our research revealed the following:
- Website visits increased by over 700% between 1998 and 2004;
- Externally placed holds increased by 227% between 2001 and 2004; and,
- Electronic renewals increased by 57% between 2001 and 2004.

The results of the user survey showed us that the services most commonly rated among respondents’ “top three most important services to maintain or develop in the future” were: days of operation (24%), electronic access (22%), and hours of operation (22%). However, when we asked respondents to indicate which service was “most important”, a clear majority (37%) chose electronic access over both days of operation (28%) and hours of operation (16%).

![Top 10 services listed as "most important to maintain or develop in the future":](image-url)
As with resources, the survey showed us that levels of satisfaction were generally high with respect to services, with close to 80% of respondents indicating that they were either “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with the top three priority services. Again, however, with a view to future trends, we noted that the category receiving the highest dissatisfaction rating was “services in other languages”.

**Programs**

Library programs refer to programs offered by the library such as story times for children, book clubs for adults, summer reading clubs for kids and small group training programs for library users to learn how to use computers, develop research skills or search for information on the Internet, among others.

Our research showed that attendance at library programs has risen by 168% over the last decade. However, in looking at more recent trends, we saw that between 2003 and 2004, the number of programs offered dropped by 2%, and program attendance dropped by 30%.
In examining the results of the user survey, we saw that the programs rated most commonly among the “top three most important to maintain or develop in the future” were: children’s programs (24%), teen programs (18%), and adult programs (16%). These were also the three single most important programs indicated, with the majority of respondents (38%) choosing children’s programs as their top priority.

Unlike the high satisfaction ratings for resources and services, however, we learned that satisfaction ratings for programs were relatively low. Satisfaction was highest for children’s programs with approximately 28% of respondents being “very satisfied” and an additional 38% being “somewhat satisfied”. Less than 50% of respondents were satisfied with the other programs.

**Facilities**

In the area of facilities, we looked at the physical characteristics of our facilities, such as the computer labs and Internet terminals available; the areas for quiet or group study or socializing; coffee and drink service, and space for meetings.

Our research revealed that the square footage of library space in the GVPL has increased by 52% over the past decade through the expansion of existing libraries and the addition of three new branches.
In the user survey, we asked respondents to tell us what their priorities were for library facilities. The facility characteristics most commonly rated in respondents’ top three choices were: areas for quiet study (23%), Internet terminals (16%), and a new or expanded Central Library (15%). However, the single most important characteristic (selected by over 33% of respondents) was a new or expanded Central Library.

In examining the survey results, we saw that this choice was generally consistent across member municipalities. We also saw that those communities such as View Royal, Metchosin, Langford and the Highlands, which currently do not have a library in their community, assigned an equal or higher priority to a new community branch within their top three choices. However, when asked to select the “most important facility characteristic to maintain or develop in the future”, the desire for a new or expanded Central Library prevailed. The results of the user survey clearly indicated to us that there is a need to look at facilities planning both in relation to branch libraries and to a new or expanded Central Library.

The survey results showed us that satisfaction ratings were relatively low for all of the facility characteristics. The highest levels of satisfaction were given to Internet terminals (22% very satisfied), followed by areas for quiet study (18% very satisfied). The lowest levels of satisfaction were with areas for socializing and coffee and drink service (less than 25% very or somewhat satisfied), both of which were higher priorities among respondents 19 and younger.
**Library Use**
Our research revealed that both the population served and the number of items borrowed per capita in the GVPL saw significant increases between 1993 and 2003, with the population served growing by 34% and the number of items borrowed per capita increasing from 12.2 to 15.3.

Significantly, our research showed us that despite the phenomenal increase in online or electronic usage of the library, in-person visits to the library have also increased — rising by 25% from 2.0 to 2.5 million between 2000 and 2004. These statistics told us that our users are not using the library electronically or physically; rather, they are taking advantage of both options for access.

Our research showed us that the greatest proportion of library users is found in the municipalities of Oak Bay and Esquimalt, where 70% of the populations were active library users in 2004. In contrast, only 33% and 40% of the populations of View Royal and the Highlands were active library users. In considering these figures, we did note that neither of these communities has a local library branch.

In the user survey, we asked respondents to think about library services in relation to other services offered in their community, and to rank the importance of public libraries on a ten-point scale. In answer to this question, we found that while rates of patrons and borrowers vary by municipality, respondents from all municipalities placed an exceptionally high value on the GVPL as a community service. 95% of respondents indicated that the library was important or very important in relation to other community services and, on a ten-point scale of increasing importance, 75% indicated that the library was a “10”.

“Libraries now have two front doors — the traditional front door, which leads people to a library branch filled with books and other resources, and a new, virtual front door, which invites people to access the library online to take advantage of electronic resources, programs and services 24-hours a day, seven days a week. Library users today are entering their library through both front doors.”
Strategic Objectives and Actions

In developing the strategic objectives, we were guided by a strategic framework, which was developed based on the information gathered through the research phase. This framework identified five key strategic areas for our consideration:

1. Lifelong learning and individual well-being
2. Community, economic and cultural development
3. Accessibility
4. Partnerships
5. Organizational development

Through a collaborative process, we identified 12 long-range strategic objectives for the next 20 years. These set the direction for the five-year planning exercise, which determined the actions we will take to begin working toward achieving each objective.

The strategic objectives and actions on the following pages are the culmination of the strategic planning process. They provide us with a clear path moving forward as we embrace a dynamic and exciting future characterized by growth and change.
Strategic Objective
*Provide comprehensive and current resources, programs and services to support lifelong learning and formal learning.*

**Actions**

- Develop a vibrant, accessible collection of adult and youth World Languages materials (resources in languages other than English and French) that mirrors the cultural mix of the region.

- Achieve a relevant and accessible collection of English as a Second Language and French language resources to meet the growing demands for material to support learning.

- Deliver an array of user education programs that enhance the library’s role as a lifelong learning centre.

- Combine the high school outreach program and other school outreach to create an integrated, ongoing program and service to engage youth and increase library use.

- Deliver a variety of adult general interest programs to stimulate awareness of the library as a source of lifelong learning through adult programming.

- Pilot an exciting outreach program and service at the new Pearkes/Tillicum branch and use the experience to enhance our programs and services system-wide.

Strategic Objective
*Provide comprehensive and current resources, programs and services to support businesses and individuals to actively engage in the economy.*

**Actions**

- Pilot a tutorial or virtual visit to the business resources and services at the Central Library.

- Build relationships between Branch Heads and their local business community members and/or groups to support and enhance our role as a community partner.
Strategic Objective

Support a broad definition of literacy with resources, programs and services that are appropriate to different levels and ages.

Actions
- Pilot the use of teen students as computer buddies to assist those less familiar with computer technology.
- Champion literacy initiatives and the role of public libraries and librarians in providing resources, programs and services to support the community.
- Enhance the resources and services provided in support of social literacy by expanding access to government information, in print or electronic format.

Strategic Objective

Ensure that GVPL libraries are welcoming and inclusive community gathering places that recognize and serve the diverse needs of the community.

Actions
- Audit current space, activity and service levels in our branches in order to reflect user preference for space.
- Survey local organizations to identify areas of cooperation and then pilot one new community partnership in a specifically targeted area.

Strategic Objective

Take advantage of changing technology to deliver library resources, programs and services and expand access to other learning opportunities.

Actions
- Conduct an audit or technology needs assessment at all service points, followed by action plans to address shortages.
- Develop an e-branch to facilitate electronic/virtual access to the library’s resources, programs and services.
Strategic Objective

*Ensure that the GVPL’s system of branches serves all citizens and communities fairly and equitably, has the flexibility to meet local needs, is in keeping with the regional growth and transportation strategies, is developed in consultation with municipal partners and includes citizen input.*

Action

- Design a process for planning library facilities that will result in a Facilities Master Plan for the GVPL.

As a first step, pilot the development of a long-range facilities plan for the Western Communities and use this experience to develop the Facilities Master Plan while pursuing options for the development of a new Central Library.

Strategic Objective

*Ensure that the GVPL’s organizational and operational structure serves all citizens and communities fairly and equitably, has the flexibility to meet local needs and supports the system of branches.*

Action

- Refine our “Guidelines for Service” to reflect new activities and services as indicated in the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Objective

*Develop partnerships with other organizations for mutual development and enrichment.*

Actions

- Review and create an inventory of potential partnerships that would enhance the services and programs of the library.

- Develop partnerships with formal learning institutions.
Strategic Objective
Ensure that awareness of the library, including its resources, programs and services and its contributions to the quality of life in the region is high in the community and among 'decision-makers'.

Actions
- Develop an advocacy strategy to increase awareness of the library.
- Engage in outreach with selected groups by targeting our resources to their needs.
- Develop a stronger corporate identity.

Strategic Objective
Support a flexible and innovative library culture.

Actions
- Expand on existing operational assessments that identify what is being done now that has lesser value, and eliminate or streamline those activities to free up time for new initiatives.
- Explore opportunities for pilot projects.
- Encourage job exchanges.
- Expand our contact and communication with other libraries.

Strategic Objective
Develop new sources of funding and revenue for the library.

Actions
- Conduct a professional feasibility study to determine the opportunity for an effective fundraising program.
- Review revenue generation activities and opportunities within the library setting.
Strategic Objective

Ensure a well-functioning governance structure and Board for the library.

Actions

- Hold Board meetings in the branch locations to provide an opportunity for Board members to get to know the branch and to have the public more aware of the Board’s role as a governing body.

- Review and implement the KPMG report.\textsuperscript{10}

- Initiate a meeting with new Mayors and Councils to present the KPMG report.

- Encourage the provincial government to change the Library Act to create a legal framework for changes in the governance structure, to enable an inter-municipal library system.

- Initiate Board workshops, separate from business meetings, to explore governance models.

- Address and explore solutions to the budget and voting issues.

- Hold an annual, unstructured “big picture” session to build trust and common understanding among the Board.
Next Steps

To begin putting our strategic plan into action, our next steps will include:

- Developing detailed action plans for the implementation of the actions identified;
- Using these action plans as the basis for our annual budget planning;
- Developing performance measures for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating our progress in achieving our five-year action plan; and,
- Providing an annual report to Municipal Councils and the public on our progress and achievements.

The development of our first strategic plan was an energizing and positive experience, which revealed a number of opportunities and challenges for the library. We are on our way to an exciting future, and we look forward to sharing the journey with you!
Endnotes

1KPMG. Consultation on Governance. 2004.


4BC Stats (People 29 Forecast), www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca


6CRD Regional Growth Strategy.

7www.councilofthefederation.ca.

8This average is based on the circulation statistics from the 2002 and 2003 Canadian Public Library Statistics surveys and reflects the rates of circulation for the 71 libraries that responded to the survey in 2003 and the 65 libraries that responded in 2004.

9Morris, Marleen. Strategic Planning Session with GVPL Board Members, June 12, 2005.

10KPMG. Consultation on Governance. 2004.