GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

AGENDA

Greater Victoria Public Library Board
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2026
Time: 12:00-1:00 PM
Location: In Person: Community Room, Central Branch, 735 Broughton Street, Victoria, BC
Electronically: Microsoft Teams

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Territorial Acknowledgement**

   Greater Victoria Public Library's service area is located on the unceded traditional territories of the Songhees and Xwseps'əm (Esquimalt) Nations, the WSÁNEĆ Nations of SȾÁUTW̱(Tsawout) and W̱JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), and the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) Nation.
   Colonization and systemic racism still impact the lives of Indigenous Peoples today. Their historical and cultural relationship with the land and sea continues as they steward these sacred lands as they have since time immemorial.

3. **Welcome and Introductions**

4. **Consent Agenda** — Motion to Approve
   - 4.1. Approval of Agenda
   - 4.2. Approval of Minutes
     - 4.2.1. September 22, 2026 Attachment 4.2.1
   - 4.3. Chair Report Attachment 4.3
   - 4.4. CEO Report Attachment 4.4
   - 4.5. UNB Study: New Possibilities Using Linked Administrative Data Attachment 4.5

5. **Chair's Remarks** — For Information
6. **CEO Remarks** — For Information
7. **Committee Reports**
   - 7.1. Finance Committee- Oral Report — For Information
     - 7.1.1. Fiscal 2026 Memo: Use of Reserves Attachment 7.1.1 — For Information
     - 7.1.2. Fiscal 2027 Budget and Five-year plan Attachment 7.1.2 — For Approval

8. **New Business**
   - 8.1. Unattended Children Policy Update — For Information
   - 8.2. GVPL Staff Day-Dec 4, 2026 Staff Trade Show- Board information Table — For Information

9. **In-Camera** — Motion to Approve
10. **Next Meeting Date**
    November 24, 2026 12:00pm
11. **Adjournment**

Attachment 4.2.1

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
GVPL Central Branch, 735 Broughton Street
Community Meeting Room & MS Teams
September 22, 2026

A hybrid meeting of the Greater Victoria Public Library Board was held on the above date. The following individuals were in attendance:

Board Members:

Trustee K. Boehnert
Trustee D. Cavens (Chair)
Trustee S. Donaldson
Trustee D. Grove
Trustee R. Henderson
Trustee S. Kim
Trustee S. Lansdowne
Trustee G. Lemon
Trustee R. McClure
Trustee G. Newton
Trustee T. Phelps Bondaroff
Trustee R. Ranjan
Trustee K. Roessingh
Trustee R. Stromberg
Trustee M. Wey
Trustee N. White (Vice- Chair)

Regrets

Trustee A. Appleton
Trustee S. Khair
Trustee M. Morley

Staff:

S. Hall, CEO/Board Secretary
M. Collyer, Director Marketing, Communications & Development
D. Fergusson-Hirmer, Executive Director, Corporate Services
J. Gingera, Executive Director, Systems Integration, Risk Management and IT
D. Joyce, Executive Director, Library Services
E. Russell, Recording Secretary
R. Baugniet, President, CUPE 410

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   D. Cavens called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm.
2. **TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
   D. Cavens provided the Indigenous Acknowledgement.
3. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
   D. Cavens introduced S. Hall, GVPL's new CEO to the Board

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Trustee K. Roessingh; Seconded by Trustee S. Kim

THAT Items 4.1-4.2 be approved; 4.3- 4.5 be received for information

- 4.1 Approval of Agenda
- 4.2 Approval of Minutes
  - June 23, 2026
  - July 7, 2026
- 4.3 Chair Report
- 4.4 CEO Report
- 4.5 Correspondence
  - 4.5.1 Email from Patron received July 5, 2026 Attachment 4.5.1
  - 4.5.2 Public Library Grant Award Letter June 22, 2026 Attachment 4.5.2
  - 4.5.3 Letter from Minister Boyle August 13, 2026 Attachment 4.5.3
  - 4.5.4 Supplemental Grant Award Letter September 1, 2026 Attachment 4.5.4

MOTION CARRIED

5. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Board Chair D. Cavens recognized the retirement of former CEO Maureen Sawa on September 21 and welcomed GVPL's new CEO and Chief Librarian, Stephanie Hall, who began her role that same day. The Chair also introduced the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee, which will support the new CEO in her role.

D. Cavens advised the Board that, during its summer hiatus, the provincial government adjusted the funding formula for urban libraries, resulting in an overall funding reduction, as a result of considerable advocacy to the provincial government, funding was subsequently reinstated for 2026. Over the summer, the Planning and Policy Committee and the Finance Committee continued work on policy updates and conducted an initial review of the 2027 budget and five-year plan. The Chair thanked staff for their efforts to expand programming over the summer.

6. CEO REMARKS

S. Hall thanked trustees and staff for their welcome and support during the initial days of her transition as CEO.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1. Finance Committee- Oral Report

The Finance Committee met on August 29, 2026 to review the proposed draft budget for Fiscal 2027-and Five-year Financial Plan. The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet next on September 29 to review the final draft before it is presented to the GVPL Board at its October 27 Board Meeting.

7.2. Planning and Policy Committee- Oral Report

The committee met several times in July and August to review policy updates with staff. The Information Governance - Freedom of Information & Privacy policy requires further review and will be brought to a future meeting.

7.2.1. Board Policy O.11 Security Video Security Video

Board Policy O.11 Security Video was revised and updated as part of the planning and Policies work during the summer has been revised and updated.

Moved by Trustee R. McClure ; Seconded by Trustee K. Roessingh

THAT the Greater Victoria Public Library approve Board Policy O.11 Security Video MOTION CARRIED

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. Rise and Report

8.1.1. CEO Support and Evaluation Committee

D. Cavens introduced the Terms of Reference for the CEO Support and Evaluation that were previously shared and approved at the June 23, 2026 In-Camera meeting. The committee will be composed of a small group of 3-5 board members including both the GVPL Board Chair and Vice Chair.

8.1.1.1. Appointments

Nominations were sought for membership in the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee and the following Trustees were nominated: Susan Kim; Scott Landsdown; and Rhianon Stromberg.

Voting by general consent was conducted, Trustees Kim, Lansdowne, and Stromberg were appointed to the committee, alongside Board Chair Cavens and Vice Chair White

8.1.2. Chief Executive Officer/Chief Librarian Succession Planning Policy

The policy was developed as part of the search process for the new Chief Executive Officer/ Chief Librarian to establish guidelines and process for use in the event it is required.

Moved R. McClure; seconded by K. Roessingh

THAT the Greater Victoria Public Library approve Board Chief Executive Officer/Chief Librarian Succession Planning Policy MOTION CARRIED

8.1.3. Staff Presentation- GVPL.ca

GVPL Staff Michelle Collyer, and Jeff Gingera provided a high-level overview of the newly launched website GVPL.ca

9. IN CAMERA MEETING

Moved by Trustee K. Roessingh; seconded by Trustee N. White

THAT the Board of Trustees move in-camera. MOTION CARRIED

10. NEXT MEETING DATE:

October 27, 2026; 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

11. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Trustee D. Grove; seconded by Trustee K. Roessingh.

THAT the September 22, 2026 Regular Board Meeting be adjourned. MOTION CARRIED

_____ _____

Board Chair Board Secretary

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

4.3 Chair Report

October 27, 2026

I want to begin by recognizing the changes coming to our Board following the recent municipal election. We're going to miss a number of you and your contributions, especially Councillor Kim, who put a lot of work into chairing our Planning and Policy Committee. I know we'll continue to see you at GVPL branches and events, and your contributions to the Board have been valuable and important.

A big thanks as well to those who chose not to seek re-election, including Past Chair Appleton and Councillor Newton. We'll hear more from our member councils over the next month about who will be appointed to the Board, and I look forward to working with both new and returning Board members. I hope to see all of you, whether returning or retiring, at the December Gathering.

Thank you all for attending today. This is a critical meeting as we review the budget for approval. Thanks to everyone who attended Finance Committee meetings over the summer and fall for all their hard work, and to Melina and her team for putting the budget together and supporting the committee in their deliberations. Once the budget is approved, we'll send it to our member municipalities and start planning our presentations to member councils.

Our new CEO has been in place for just under a month, and I've been checking in with her every week as Chair. She has jumped into the role with enthusiasm, and I've enjoyed connecting her with key contacts around the region.

I'm sure many of you have noticed that a few library-related promises were made during recent election campaigns. Now that the elections are over, I look forward to meeting with those who made them, reminding them of their commitments, and seeing how we can help make them a reality.

We've had a big announcement for our patrons who are e-book readers. GVPL cardholders can now access e-books and audiobooks from Fraser Valley Regional Library and Okanagan Regional Library through Libby, thanks to a new reciprocal lending agreement. Thanks to the staff who worked hard to make this a reality.

Starting October 18, Sunday hours returned to the Central, Esquimalt, Juan de Fuca, and Saanich Centennial branches. We know how important Sunday service is for our patrons, especially families, and I want to thank staff for making this a priority. We expect more news on this front as staffing considerations get worked out.

Duncan

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

4.4 CEO Report

October 27, 2026

S. Hall for GVPL Board

CEO orientation and activities

I started work as our new CEO on Sept 21 and it's been a busy month of onboarding with much more to learn. Branch visits have been conducted at 9 of our 12 locations. Departmental orientations, Union-Management Committee, a manager/supervisor training series, Corporate Orientation session, and some community events have also helped to inform me about our challenges and opportunities. In November, I will attend a Community Learning Program series at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre.

Shortly after arriving, I attended the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in Fredericton. Key topics included AI and the role of libraries in public instruction to increase AI literacy, Safety and Security practices, and the developing situation in Alberta with Bill 28. The practical nature of sharing among large urban libraries is helpful, with an AI toolkit being a prime example. Some compelling research on the impact of public libraries in New Brunswick was shared and the report is included as an information item in your consent agenda. Use of libraries is associated with higher educational outcomes from the early years through to post-secondary.

I will be away on vacation in Newfoundland from November 5-12, but reachable via email.

Safety and Security updates

October is Cyber-Security Awareness Month, and the library has been sharing security tips with the public and staff. On a related topic, following the identification of a new global security vulnerability, our teams worked quickly to deploy any necessary patches or other measures.

Emergency preparedness is a whole community priority and GVPL participated in the Great BC Shakeout Earthquake event on October 15.

Branch updates

Central Library has some simple and low-cost updates happening – we are removing furniture storage and shelving from the public floor and will be looking to open up the **East Wing** for large programs and as a staff meeting area, which will create more availability for the community room. A more fulsome plan for the space is on the books for 2027, but for now, we are just looking to make the spaces usable.

As previously reported, on October 18, **Sunday hours** returned at long last at the Central, Esquimalt, Juan de Fuca, and Saanich Centennial branches.



Themed childrens' spaces have been popping up around the system. The themes are: Transportation (Central); Forest / Woodlands (Juan de Fuca); Camping / The Great Outdoors (Saanich Centennial); Let's Eat! Food Literacy (Bruce Hutchison); Farmer's Market (Central Saanich); Ocean / Salish Sea (Esquimalt); Fairytale Cottage (Oak Bay)

Service updates

Some changes are coming to colour printing, so stay tuned for an update as soon as public info is available. Oak Bay Branch closed for the remainder of the day on Friday, October 23 at approximately 3:20 pm due to an external situation. If any residents have questions about this, they can contact the District of Oak Bay.

Prior to the two elections, six branches hosted **pop-up voting displays** with non-partisan information on how to vote. As Duncan noted, we also introduced **reciprocal borrowing of ebooks** with two regional systems, expanding our selection for patrons. Available items (and only those) will display in each of the three system's catalogues. Comms staff were active in promoting the Library Month '**Loud for Libraries**' theme to collect patron stories and impact. We also began lending **board games** for all ages, which has been popular so far. Board games can advance literacy, numeracy, and social connection, apart from just being fun! Kudos to our GVPL cataloguing and processing staff, as it's much harder to catalogue these complex items than a typical book.

UNB EST. 1785 UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK | DataNB

Valuing Public Libraries in New Brunswick

New Possibilities Using Linked Administrative Data



Hugh Shiplett, PhD
Bethany Jones, PhD

Principal Investigator
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Research Team
Bethany Jones, Science Writer, DataNB

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We also wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS) to this work. Any errors or omissions are those of the authors alone. The views expressed in this study do not necessarily represent those of PETL, NBPLS, or their partners.

Project Data
Research analytic outputs were produced using platform data accessed through DataNB, including the Permanent Resident Database, provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

How to Cite This Product
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Executive Summary

New Brunswickers place high value on their public libraries, which are widely understood to support learning, connection, and community well-being. Yet the benefits these institutions provide are often hard to measure. While the costs of staffing, programming, and infrastructure can be tracked numerically, the positive impacts of library use tend to unfold across multiple sectors and in ways that are not always visible – making them difficult to capture using traditional measures. This study addresses that challenge by using linked administrative data to observe, in concrete and measurable ways, how library engagement relates to outcomes that matter for New Brunswick (NB).

More specifically, this study examines how effectively NB's public libraries are reaching key populations of interest and how library engagement relates to select developmental, educational, and retention outcomes, answering three key questions:

1. Who is using NB's public library services, and how do patterns of use vary across key demographic and geographic groups – including children, seniors, immigrants, low-income individuals, and those who live further from library branches?

2. To what extent does engagement with public library services relate to select developmental, educational, and retention outcomes among users?

3. How do changes in public library services and access to services affect library usership?

Taken together, these questions are intended to provide decision makers with a clearer understanding of the reach and potential impact of NB's public library services, supporting data-driven policies that strengthen the social and economic well-being of individuals and communities across NB.

Summary of Findings

Who Are New Brunswick's Public Library Users?

- Library usage (specifically, borrowing) in NB is slightly skewed towards higher income households.
    - Approximately 9% of households in the highest neighbourhood income quintile borrow from public libraries, compared to 6% of those in the lowest quintile.
- Households with children are much more likely to use the library than those without.

- Around 20% of households with children used the library in 2022, compared to less than 10% of households without children.

- In comparison, seniors are less likely to use the library. Around 9% of senior households borrowed public library materials in 2022, compared to 12% of households without a senior.

- Although immigrants represent a small share (4%) of the province's library users, recent immigrant households are more than twice as likely to use the library then non-immigrant households.

    - In 2022, 23% of recent immigrant households borrowed library materials, compared to 11% of non-immigrant households. They also tend to have a higher number of checkouts (38.64) than non-immigrant households (30.55).

Does Library Use Change When Access Becomes More Difficult?

- Likelihood of using the library declines modestly with distance.

    - Around 9% of households that live within 1 km of a public library are library users, with the proportion dropping to about 4% of households at the 35+ km mark.

- However, library users' checkouts do not appear to decline with distance.

- When a major library branch becomes temporarily unavailable, many of its users do not transfer their activity to other nearby branches.

    - When the Kennebecasis Public Library closed for repairs in 2022, library use among its regular patrons declined by around 43% – meaning a large share of its users did not visit other libraries in the region during the closure.

Are There Social or Educational Benefits to Using Public Libraries?

- Children and youth in library-using households perform markedly better on a range of academic and developmental measures than those in non-library households, with this difference most pronounced at the lower neighbourhood income quintiles.

    - Compared to non-users, children in library-using households show stronger signs of appropriate cognitive and social awareness development in Early Years Evaluations (EYEs), while library-using youth are more likely to graduate on time and earn slightly stronger course marks throughout high school than their non-library peers.

- After controlling for potential confounders that could influence these results (such as students' prior abilities), regression analyses confirm that library use has a positive effect on academic achievement.

- In general, students from library-using households score 0.089 points higher on their report cards than students from non-library households, which is a statistically significant difference. Although this difference shrinks to 0.050 points for grade 2-4 students after controlling for their previous EYE scores, the difference – though smaller – remains statistically significant.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, library-using students in grades 2-5 and grades 7-8 experienced a smaller decline in marks relative to their non-library-using peers, with these differences being statistically significant at each grade level.

- In general, university students from library-using families are 5.4 percentage points more likely to continue past their first year than students from non-library families. When we control for their grade 12 averages, this gap grows notably: among students with a high school average of 75-80, library-using students are 15 percentage points more likely to continue to their second year of university than their non-library counterparts.

- Regression analyses also suggest that immigrants who use the library are more likely to stay in the province, after controlling for demographic factors.

    - Although library-using immigrants are only 1.6 percentage points more likely than non-library-using immigrants to still be in NB one year after arriving (which is not statistically significant), the effect of library use grows over time. At the two-year mark, library-using immigrants are 3.2 percentage points more likely to stay, and at the three-year mark, they are 3.7 points more likely to stay – with both of these longer-term results being statistically significant.

Key Takeaways

New Brunswick's public libraries play a meaningful role in the lives of many residents, particularly families with children and recent immigrants. These households are among the most active borrowers of library materials – and the positive developmental, educational, and settlement outcomes observed among these library-using groups emphasize the value of library engagement during key stages of learning, settlement, and family life.

The regression analyses provide a valuable lens through which to interpret these results, as they control for factors that could be influencing outcomes – such as the possibility that higher performing students may simply be more likely to use the library. They reveal that while pre-existing ability does account for some of the association we see between library use and positive academic outcomes, the public library has a positive impact on its own.

Notably, the developmental and educational benefits observed among library-using children and youth are most pronounced at the lowest neighbourhood income quintiles. This suggests that engagement with library services may help mitigate some of the disadvantages often

associated with lower household income, especially in the early years, by providing access to educational programs and learning materials that lower-income families may otherwise lack. However, even though families in low-income neighbourhoods may have the most to gain from library use, they show the lowest levels of borrowing, with families in the highest income neighbourhoods exhibiting the most engagement. That being said, these patterns only reflect one dimension of library use: borrowing. Many users – especially those with higher needs or unstable housing – may rely on libraries' in-person services, such as public computers, Wi-Fi, and community supports, which are not reflected in borrowing data. As a result, some of NB's most vulnerable populations may be underrepresented in this study, making it difficult to understand how effectively libraries are reaching and supporting these groups.

Distance and accessibility further impact a household's likelihood of using the library, with usership declining with longer travel times and the inconvenience of temporary closures – as demonstrated in our Kennebecasis case study. Taken together, these patterns point to a library system that is broadly impactful but uneven in its reach, emphasizing the importance of accessible, community-based infrastructure that supports equitable engagement.

Although this study cannot establish causality, the evidence suggests that NB's public libraries contribute meaningfully to the educational and social fabric of the province. In addition, it demonstrates the value of cross-sector administrative data in understanding how public services intersect with long-term outcomes – an approach that can inform evidence-based policy and support the continued evolution of the NB Public Library Service as a vital public institution.

Introduction

Background

Canadians, including New Brunswickers, demonstrate a strong appreciation for their public libraries. To put this into perspective, a 2011 study by the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) showed just how often Canadians used their libraries by comparing library visits to other popular activities. At the time, Canadians were visiting public libraries nearly as often as they went to the movie theatre and 20 times more often than they attended NHL games.

Of course, much has changed since 2011, with incredible advancements in technology accelerating the availability of books and other free resources online. Some of the existing literature has identified these advancements as a threat to the continued support of public libraries, describing general perceptions that fewer people use public libraries in this evolving digital age (Berthiaume, 2017; Holt, 2009; Smith, 2014). However, these perceptions – in the province of New Brunswick (NB), at least – appear to be unfounded. A previous study by DataNB[1] shows that use of NB's public libraries grew between 2010 and 2018; and even in regions with slow population growth and a suffering economy, demand for public libraries remained constant (Emery et al., 2019).

As technology and social behaviours have shifted, public libraries have been shifting their services as well, becoming "more than just a portal into the book world" (Marfo, 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, public libraries across Canada helped governments fulfil core mandates. They acted as food bank distribution sites, gave out COVID-19 rapid test kits, hosted shelters, created free WiFi zones, and more – providing communities with access to knowledge and supporting overall health (Canadian Urban Institute, 2023). In NB, public library staff were awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee medal for their services during the pandemic, including their support through more than 75 temporary reassignments to assist the province with health and safety priorities (Government of NB [GNB], 2023).

In light of public libraries' expanding role as a community hub and service provider, library boards across NB are calling for enhanced staffing and programming levels to address increased community demand and to ensure libraries remain vital cultural and educational hubs for the province. As decision makers consider these requests, the issue of costs vs. benefits will likely be top of mind, given fiscal limitations and the need to balance community demands with other essential services and obligations. Yet while the costs of staffing and programming are straightforward to quantify, the benefits generated by these services are far more diffuse, often accruing indirectly across educational, social, and economic domains.

This study aims to support decision makers by providing a compelling, evidence-based value proposition demonstrating the results of library investments, which can be used to guide discussions around public library services in NB.

[1] DataNB was formerly known as the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT).

However, this goal presents a research conundrum: *assigning value to something deemed priceless.*

There is a growing, recognizable need for public libraries to demonstrate their value to earn financial and intellectual support (Chen & Ke, 2017; Ferguson, 2022). Yet how does one demonstrate outcomes or assign a monetary value to a space that was created not for consumers but for citizens – a place not designed to sell products and services but to help its citizens "connect, learn, read, play, and create" (GNB, 2024)? Unlike industrial or economic development projects – where financial returns are immediate and measurable – public libraries generate value through long-term, indirect, and often intangible benefits that are inherently harder to observe and evaluate.

Researchers often calculate value by measuring monetary returns on investment. However, libraries pose a unique challenge because their benefits do not easily translate into financial metrics. Libraries contribute to society through indirect impacts like fostering literacy, building community connections and enhancing cultural and intellectual engagement, which are difficult to quantify in dollar terms. Some efforts have been made to estimate the financial benefits of public libraries, such as cost savings from borrowing or economic contributions through job creation (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013), but – to quote Glen Holt and Donald Elliott (2003) – "*The difficulty with these statistical appliances is that they measure what libraries do, not the benefits their constituents derive from them.*"

Constituents, however, appear to recognize the benefits they derive from public libraries in their communities. After all, any attempts to reduce or modify library resources are met with widespread public opposition (Good news, 2018; Public libraries, 2016; Roberts & Ensing, 2016). As Tami Oliphant (2014) argues, "*No one wants to live in a community without a library, regardless of whether they are a library user*" (p. 359).

Because much of the value of public libraries comes from the provision of public services, spaces, and experiences that transcend simple monetary evaluation, measuring the value of public libraries requires a different, more complex approach. While still considering the costs and profits associated with public libraries' programs and services, there is a need to also measure the social and educational outcomes they foster in their communities. To do this effectively requires evidence that extends beyond what public libraries can observe internally, including outcomes that unfold in social and educational domains.

In NB, this challenge can be addressed through the use of linked administrative data made available through DataNB, which enables researchers to examine how library use relates to outcomes in education, early childhood development, immigration, and other domains that the NB Public Library Service cannot observe on its own.

On the one hand, these outcomes can be considered indicators of value in and of themselves. On the other, they can be explored further to estimate the extent to which each outcome contributes to the economic wellbeing of the province. Together, an exploration of the social benefits and economic value of these community outcomes provides a more comprehensive

approach to understanding the impact that investment in public library services may have for NB.

The Purpose of This Study

This project aims to provide information on how effectively the services provided by public libraries in NB are reaching populations of interest and how service use may be improving select outcomes in the province.

Our objective is to measure and evaluate the impact of public libraries on local communities' outcomes in terms of early childhood development, educational performance, post-secondary enrolment, and immigrant retention. These domains represent key indicators of social and economic wellbeing in NB and reflect areas where public libraries are expected to have meaningful, though often indirect, influence.

While the NBPLS maintains detailed usage records for library card holders, it cannot independently observe how library engagement relates to outcomes in other sectors, nor can it compare users to non-users – making linked administrative data essential for this analysis. Using a rich array of linked administrative data available through DataNB, this study addresses the following questions:

1) Who is using NB's public library services, and how do patterns of use vary across key demographic and geographic groups – including children, seniors, immigrants, low-income individuals, and those who live further from library branches?

2) To what extent does engagement with public library services relate to select developmental, educational, and retention outcomes among users?

3) How do changes in public library services and access to services affect library usership?

By providing valuable insights into the populations that NB's public library services are reaching, and how outcomes are and can be affected by the provision of public library services, this study aims to support data-driven policies that improve the economic and social wellbeing of communities across NB.

Literature Review

NB is not the first Canadian province to try to empirically measure the value of its public library services. Allison Ferguson (2022) writes of a growing "culture of assessment" as a preferred standard within Canada's public libraries – typically in response to threats of budget reductions and library closures. Although the existing literature tends to agree on the ways in which libraries provide value (including support for personal advancement, vulnerable populations, and community development) (Stenstrom et al., 2019), there is less agreement on how these factors

should be measured (Ferguson, 2022). To demonstrate the value and impact of public libraries, most researchers have turned to one of two approaches: economic evaluations (i.e., cost-benefit analyses) or qualitative measures of social and cultural contributions.

Economic Approaches to Valuing Libraries

In 2012, the Canadian Library Association urged Canadian libraries in all sectors to initiate comprehensive studies of their economic benefits and impact, arguing that very few such studies existed across the country (Schrader & Brundin, 2012). Previously, scholarly articles that argued for the economic value of Canadian libraries had explained *how* public libraries contributed to local economies, such as through the purchase of information products and building supplies, or by providing resources for local businesses. Yet while their value was described, it typically was not measured (Fitch & Warner, 1998; Sawyer, 1996).

One year after this call to action, the Toronto Public Library released a landmark cost-benefit analysis that calculated return on investment (ROI) by assigning monetary value to various library services (i.e., the dollar value of library staff answering questions, of free Wi-Fi usage, etc.) and considering direct and indirect economic benefits, such as staff wages and local 're-spending' (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013). At least 14 other public libraries across Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario have since adopted this model to conduct their own cost-benefit analyses, each demonstrating a positive ROI per dollar spent (ranging from $2.36 - $7.85) (Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, 2018). Many cost-benefit analyses are conducted for operational purposes rather than for academic publication, however, and at present there is only a small body of peer-reviewed literature detailing how countries around the world are conducting cost-benefit analyses of their public libraries (Ko et al., 2012; Linhartová & Stejskal, 2017).

Social Capital Approaches to Valuing Libraries

A much larger proportion of the existing literature focuses on the social, rather than strictly economic, value of public libraries by analysing the relationship between public libraries and social capital. Social capital refers to "*intangible community values available through a network of connections*" and serves as a key factor in societal wellbeing: "*It helps to remove economic inequalities and prevent poverty and social exclusion, stimulate social and regional development, civic attitudes and social engagement and build a civic society as well as local and regional identity*" (Wojciechowska, 2021).

In "*Palaces for the people," Mapping public libraries' capacity for social connection and inclusion*, a group of researchers from McMaster University reviewed 235 international studies on public libraries published between 2012-2022 (Dalmer et al., 2022). They found that the majority of studies acknowledge public libraries are increasingly operating as community hubs and argue that public libraries create social capital that can facilitate resilience in communities – helping communities withstand, endure, and potentially prosper during challenging times.

The social capital approach to valuing libraries often looks to the mission statements of public libraries – such as "building strong communities" (Vårheim, 2011) – and the capacity for libraries to promote tolerance, respect, civic pride, and social cohesion as the basis for determining their

value (Emery et al., 2019). Studies conducted in Canada (Griffis & Johnson, 2014; Johnson & Griffis, 2014), the US (Johnson, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Vårheim, 2014; Vårheim et al., 2008), South Australia (Hillenbrand, 2005) and Taiwan (Chen & Ke, 2017) have analysed the relationship between public libraries and social capital using interviews/questionnaires and, in some cases, quantitative data on library usership (Griffis & Johnson, 2014; Hillenbrand, 2005). Each study finds a correlation between library use and social capital – though, most acknowledge that the direction of causation is unclear.

Social Return on Investment: A More Balanced Approach

It is clear that researchers across Canada and beyond have spent years trying to demonstrate the value of public libraries – and yet, there is still more work to be done. As Ferguson (2022) points out in a review of library assessments conducted over the past 20 years, a tension exists between economic evaluation models and qualitative measures of libraries' more intangible social contributions, and there is a need for a more balanced approach. While calling for economic measures of libraries' benefits and impacts, the Canadian Library Association has also encouraged researchers to quantify libraries' more intangible cultural benefits and social dividends by incorporating the concept of "social return on investment" (Schrader & Brundin, 2012): assessing public libraries' broader social impacts alongside financial gains to assess and measure the value of initiatives that might not be immediately visible in financial terms.

By focusing on associations between library usership, education, and immigrant retention within NB, this study explores the social return on investment for priority outcomes for the province.

Studies overwhelmingly suggest a positive association exists between public library use and each of these outcomes. However, similar to the social capital approach to valuing libraries, much of this literature relies on qualitative self-reported data, presenting librarians' and library users' perceptions of public libraries' impact on education and social integration. These studies typically focus on *how* public libraries are believed to boost these outcomes, rather than empirically measuring libraries' impact on each of them in a quantitative way. While qualitative studies provide an important perspective on staff and users' needs and preferences, which can directly inform local service delivery, there is a need to supplement the literature with quantitative studies that rely on population data to quantify outcomes across large groups of public library users.

The Impact of Public Libraries on Education

Researchers have shown a good deal of interest in associations between library use and educational outcomes, with much of the existing literature focusing on programs offered by public libraries, (such as reading programs for families with preschool-aged children) rather than the impacts of public library use in general. Studies from Calgary and Ontario have focused on the capacity for public library programs to improve early literacy (Peterson et al., 2012; Ptacek, 2016), with Peterson et al. (2012) reporting (based on parent surveys) that children who participated in preschool reading programs at Ontario's public libraries demonstrated increased school readiness and motivation to read. These findings align with the international literature, which also argues that public libraries can nurture pre-reading skills and a love of reading,

preparing children for primary education with the tools and motivation to engage in learning and reading (Campbell-Hicks, 2016).

Two studies on the use of public libraries in general similarly report positive impacts on children's reading practices. A UK study by Christina Clark and Lucy Hawkins (2011) used survey data to analyze young people's reading habits and the relation between their public library use and school attainment. Respondents who did not use the public library were over three times more likely to only read when in class, whereas young people who used the public library were nearly twice as likely to read outside of class every day. Likewise, young people who read at or above the expected level for their age were twice as likely to be public library users, while those who read below the expected level were twice as likely not to be public library users (Clark & Hawkins, 2011). That being said, there can be no inferences made about causality.

An American study by Rachana Bhatt (2010) is even more granular and uses a mixed methods approach to estimate how much reading time increases due to public library use. Bhatt's study finds that, in households with children aged 0-14, public library use increased time spent reading by approximately 27 minutes a day, on average, and increased the time parents spent reading with young children by about 14 minutes a day – accompanied by nearly an hour decrease in watching television. Along with finding that public library use positively impacts homework completion rates, Bhatt (2010) used national education statistics to calculate correlations between daily reading time and test score achievement, as well as between improved test scores and wages. Findings suggest that the daily increase in reading (27 minutes/day) would translate to a $187 increase in wages per worker per year, based on the average wage across all occupation categories at the time of the study.

Immigrant Retention and Integration

Few empirical studies explore how newcomers in Canada use public libraries or examine the role public libraries play in their integration into Canadian society (Shuva, 2023). Of those that exist, the majority focus on which library services newcomers are using and how immigrant users perceive these services and the benefits they derive from them. Similar to the international literature (Audunson et al., 2011; Branyon, 2017; Delgado, 2020; Grossman et al., 2022; Johnston, 2018; Khoir et al., 2017; Kong, 2011; Sirikul & Dorner, 2016; Vårheim, 2014), Canadian research on immigrant library use finds that a large proportion of newcomers use public libraries in Canada (Shepherd et al., 2018; Shuva, 2023; van der Linden et al., 2014) and that public libraries play an important role in the stages of settlement and integration (Picco, 2008; Shuva, 2023) – specifically through the provision of spaces to study or prepare for job interviews, English language programs, and resources/experiences to learn about Canadian culture (Shepherd et al., 2018; Shuva, 2023).

While some mixed-methods studies on immigrant library use have been published (Delgado, 2020), the majority of research on this topic is qualitative, relying on surveys or questionnaires distributed to small samples of respondents (i.e., fewer than 20). To our knowledge, the current study is one of the few to quantitively examine immigrants' use of public library services – and the first in Canada to calculate the retention rates of immigrants in relation to their library use to measure whether an association exists.

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the experiences of library users, which can be used to help meet their needs going forward. However, the nature of qualitative research prevents it from representing the full population of public library patrons, due to the smaller sample sizes. Further, as research shows that changes in local service delivery models can impact public library access and use (Higgs et al., 2017), there is also an important need to consider outcomes across users of NB's various public libraries, with consideration given to the geographic location and accessibility of each library.

The unique capacity of DataNB to analyze population-level data allows for a more robust approach, with quantifiable results, than was possible in previous research. Using administrative data and quantitative methodologies, the current study offers insights into how the delivery of library services affects library use. It also enables more robust evidence of NB public libraries' contributions to early childhood development, education, and immigrant retention in the province – which has the capacity to inform policy decisions and guide future program development regarding NB's Public Library Service.

Data and Methodology

Data

To conduct this study, we used administrative data sets accessed through DataNB listed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Data Sets and Date Ranges Used in This Analysis

Data Sets	Start Date	End Date
NB Public Library Systems - Symphony Data	Jan 2009	Aug 2022
Citizen Data	Jan 2000	Dec 2022
Early Years Evaluation – Direct Assessment	2016-17 (Academic Years)	2018-19 (Academic Years)
Report Card Data (Anglophone Sector)	July 2016	Jun 2022
Graduate Identifiers	July 2007	Jun 2021
Student Enrolment (Non-Graduate)	Fall 2017	Fall 2021
Permanent Resident Data	Aug 2000	May 2022
Census of Population	2021	2021

Individually, most public institutions (like NBPLS) maintain detailed information about their own users, but they can observe only what occurs within their specific institutional context. This makes it difficult to understand how their services relate to outcomes in other domains or how their users compare to non-users. In principle, institutions could share data directly to build a more complete picture of population-level outcomes, but doing so would raise significant privacy, security, and ethical concerns. DataNB addresses this limitation.

DataNB is the product of a long-standing partnership between GNB, the University of New Brunswick, and a range of institutional parties that provide administrative data sets for secure, privacy-protected analysis. As the sole administrative data custodian for the province of NB, DataNB holds and manages pseudonymous (i.e., de-identified), person-level administrative data sets in its trusted research environment. All data sets are stripped of names, addresses, and other personal identifiers before being transferred to DataNB for analysis, and approved users must go through a rigorous application process before accessing pseudonymous data through DataNB. This structure enables population-level research while ensuring that privacy and confidentiality are safeguarded.

A key feature of DataNB is its ability to link administrative records across data sets while protecting individuals' privacy, using unique codes, or identifiers. This enables researchers to examine how individuals' interactions with one public system relate to outcomes observed in others – something that individual institutions cannot do on their own.

For example, for this project, NBPLS cardholders were matched to their provincial Medicare numbers using cardholder information such as name and address. The Medicare number then served as the linkage key to connect library users to data from other sectors, including health, education, immigration, and demographic records. These linked data were accessed within DataNB's secure labs, where all identifiers were replaced with anonymized codes.

In some cases, individuals cannot be matched between data sets. This occurs when values are missing from the identifying code fields in one or more of the source data sets, or possibly because of mismatched or incomplete information in one of the records (e.g., a different spelling of a name).

In this study, around 75% of public library users were able to be linked to Medicare records in 2022. The limitations associated with unmatched records, and their implications for analysis, are discussed in the Methodology section.

New Brunswick Public Library Systems – Symphony Data

Symphony is the library management system used by NBPLS. The Symphony database captures information on many of the administrative tasks conducted by the province's public libraries, including circulation (that is, lending materials to patrons and receiving them back).

The primary component files used for this report were the Checkout Table and Patron Stat Table. The Checkout Table contains time-stamped records of borrowing events, linked to the library cardholder who borrowed the resource. This allowed us to directly measure this major dimension of library usage, which was used to identify current library users, as well as the frequency and extent of their library use. The Checkout Table, however, does not record non-borrowing resource use or library visits during which no borrowing occurs. The Patron Stat Table provided supporting information on library cardholders, including their profile type (e.g. adult, child, institutional) and registration dates.

Citizen Data

The Citizen Data is a longitudinal administrative database that contains basic demographic and geographic information on all NB residents who have been issued a provincial Medicare card. NB Medicare cardholders are required to provide up-to-date address information for their provincial health coverage, which enables the Citizen Data to capture changes in place of residence. Because an individual's Medicare eligibility ends when they move out of NB, changes in eligibility status allow us to identify when someone has left the province.

The Citizen Data was used to identify household membership, defined as a group of individuals sharing the same primary household contact. It was also used to determine households' geographic location using the postal code of reference for the primary household contact, and these are used to assign neighbourhood-level socioeconomic and demographic characteristics from the 2021 Census of Canada.

Early Years Evaluation – Direct Assessment

In NB, families are encouraged to have their child attend an Early Years Evaluation (EYE) school readiness assessment before entering kindergarten. The EYE includes a variety of play-based activities intended to measure children's progress in five developmental domains: awareness of self and environment, cognitive skills, language and communication skills, and both fine and gross motor skills. Children are scored based on their performance and are placed into one of three colour-based categories for each domain:

- Green = appropriate development.
- Yellow = experiencing some difficulty.
- Red = experiencing significant difficulty.

EYE assessments are of interest both as a potential outcome of household library use in early childhood and as a means of controlling for cognitive ability among public school students observed in the Report Card Data.

Report Card Data

The Report Card Data provides academic information on students enrolled in public schools in NB. The database includes academic information such as course name and description, grade level, academic year, report card mark, and term, as well as whether a course was modified or individualized for a student. The Report Card Data was used to calculate average course marks for students, used both as an outcome potentially affected by library use, and as a control for prior academic performance in later years.

Graduate Identifiers

The Graduate Identifiers data set contains information on high school graduates from NB public schools, excluding individuals who obtained a General Educational Development Diploma (GED) or an Adult High School Diploma. These data were used to determine on-time graduation rates, one outcome that measures individual academic performance.

Student Enrolment (Non-Graduate)

The Student Enrolment (Non-Graduate) data set contains basic demographic and program information for every individual enrolled in a public university in NB, including information on gender, immigration status, and permanent province of residence at the time of enrolment. This data set was used to determine whether first-year students at NB public Universities successfully continued to their second year of study, which is used as a measure of academic persistence.

Permanent Resident Data

The Permanent Resident Data (also known as IRCC Landing Records) is a federal database provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It includes landing records for all individuals approved for permanent residency in Canada – both primary applicants and

their dependents. This data set was used to identify households containing recent immigrants for use in both the descriptive analysis of the library user base, and for the regression analysis aimed at measuring the impact of library use on immigrant retention.

Methodology

This study uses a combination of descriptive analysis and regression methods to examine patterns of public library use and their associations with developmental, educational, and retention outcomes in NB. All analyses draw on linked administrative data accessed through DataNB, as described in the preceding section. This section outlines the general analytic approach and then describes the specific methodology used for each component of the study.

General Approach

Library use is measured at the household level throughout this study. An individual is classified as being in a "library-using household" if any member of their household was observed making at least one checkout in the NBPLS Symphony data during the relevant time period. This household-level approach reflects the practical reality of how many families use public libraries: in many households, a single individual, often a parent, checks out materials on behalf of other household members, even though each individual is officially expected to use their own library card. Households are defined using household identifiers derived from provincial Medicare records (i.e., Citizen Data).

This approach has some limitations. Because Medicare-based household identifiers do not always correspond precisely to true household boundaries, they tend to overestimate the number of households in the province. However, they are well suited to capturing parent–child relationships, which are central to many of the analyses in this study. The implications of this measurement strategy are discussed further in the Limitations section.

Neighbourhood-level income is measured using income quintiles derived from dissemination area-level data in the 2021 Census of Canada, assigned to individuals based on their postal code of residence in the Citizen Data. It is important to note that these quintiles reflect the average income of a neighbourhood rather than the income of a specific individual or household.

The descriptive analyses in this study compare outcomes for individuals in library-using and non-library-using households across neighbourhood income quintiles and other demographic and geographic characteristics. While these comparisons reveal clear patterns, they cannot establish whether library use itself causes the observed differences in outcomes: households that use the library may differ from non-using households in ways that independently affect outcomes, such as parental engagement, family routines, or access to other learning supports.

To move beyond these descriptive associations, this study also employs ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with fixed effects. These models are designed to isolate the relationship

between library use and outcomes of interest by controlling for observable confounding factors. In each regression analysis, fixed effects absorb variation attributable to shared institutional or contextual characteristics (for example, all differences between schools, grades, programs, or countries of origin), ensuring that comparisons are made between individuals who share these characteristics. Additional controls are included as appropriate for each analysis and are described below.

A key concern in estimating the effect of library use on academic outcomes is the possibility of reverse causation: rather than library use improving performance, higher-performing or more academically motivated students may simply be more likely to use the library. To address this, several of the regression analyses include controls for prior academic performance or early developmental assessment scores. By holding prior ability constant, these models help rule out the possibility that the observed associations are driven by pre-existing differences in ability between library users and non-users, making a causal interpretation of the results more compelling.

Case Study: The 2022 Kennebecasis Library Branch Closure

The unexpected closure of the Kennebecasis Public Library in early 2022 is examined as a natural experiment using a dynamic difference-in-differences approach. This method compares changes in library usage over time between a treatment group (households whose most-visited library in 2021 was the Kennebecasis branch) and a control group of households whose most-visited library in 2021 was a Fredericton or Moncton branch. Outcomes of interest include visits per month, checkouts per month, and the number of active users per month. Because the closure was caused by building damage rather than changes in programming or staffing, it provides a relatively clean test of how changes in physical access alone influence library engagement.

The Impact of Library Usage on Children's Academic Performance

To assess the relationship between library use and children's academic performance, we estimate an OLS regression model using Report Card Data from the 2021–2022 school year for students in the Anglophone School District. The dependent variable is each student's average report card mark, measured on a scale of 1 to 4+ (where X+ grades are coded as X.5). The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the student's household used the library in 2019 – that is, whether any member of the household made at least one checkout that year. Library use is measured two years prior to the outcome to reduce the likelihood that the relationship captures short-term or coincidental associations.

The model includes school-by-grade fixed effects, which absorb all variation attributable to differences between schools and grade levels, including differences in teaching quality, grading standards, and local conditions. This ensures that comparisons are made between students within the same school and grade. Neighbourhood income quintile is included as an additional control. For students in grades 2 through 4, the model also controls for Early Years Evaluation (EYE) assessment scores. These prior measures of developmental ability are particularly important because they help address the possibility of reverse causation: by holding early ability constant,

the model can better isolate the association between library use and subsequent academic performance, rather than attributing differences in performance to pre-existing differences in ability.

The Impact of Library Usage on Mitigating COVID-19 Grade Shocks

This analysis examines whether prior library use was protective against the academic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The dependent variable is the change in a student's report card marks between the last pre-COVID term (2019, Term 2) and the COVID-affected terms (2020, Terms 1 and 2). The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the student's household used the library in 2018, measured before the pandemic to ensure that library use predates the disruption.

The model includes school-by-grade fixed effects, which account for the fact that different schools and grade levels were not equally affected by the pandemic. It also controls for prior academic performance using 2019 Term 1 marks, recognizing that higher- and lower-performing students may have experienced the disruption differently. By including this control for prior performance, the model helps distinguish the effect of library use from pre-existing differences in academic ability.

The Impact of Library Usage on Continued University Enrolment

To examine whether library use is associated with university persistence, we estimate an OLS model for the probability of continuing past the first year of university. The sample consists of first-year enrollees at NB universities who completed grade 12 in NB, drawn from the fall cohorts of 2017 through 2020. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for whether the student was enrolled in their second year. The key independent variable is whether the student checked out a library item in the two years prior to university enrolment.

The model includes program-by-institution-by-year fixed effects, which absorb all variation attributable to differences across university programs, institutions, and cohort years. This means that comparisons are made between students enrolled in the same program, at the same institution, in the same year. The model additionally controls for the students' average grade 12 marks. As with the earlier academic performance analyses, this control for prior achievement helps address reverse causation by ensuring that the estimated effect of library use is not driven by pre-existing differences in academic ability between library users and non-users.

The Impact of Library Usage on Immigrant Retention

To explore whether library use is associated with immigrant retention in NB, we estimate an OLS model for the probability that a recent immigrant leaves the province within one, two, or three years of arrival. The sample consists of immigrants who arrived in NB between mid-2015 and 2019. The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the immigrant checked out a library item within six months of their arrival date, capturing early engagement with library services during the initial settlement period.

The model includes country-of-origin fixed effects, which account for systematic differences in retention patterns across immigrant source countries. Additional controls include gender, age, and the presence of children at the time of arrival, interacted together to absorb demographic variation in settlement outcomes. Whether an immigrant has left the province is determined by changes in provincial Medicare eligibility, as described in the Data section above.

Limitations

While this study benefits from the breadth and depth of linked administrative data, several limitations should be noted when interpreting the findings.

First, the matching of library cardholders to provincial Medicare records is incomplete. Approximately 25% of library cards could not be matched to individual Medicare numbers and were therefore excluded from the analysis. These unmatched records are largely the result of incomplete or inconsistent name and address information across the two databases. Importantly, this group is likely to include most of the province's unhoused population, who lack permanent addresses and are often assigned only temporary library cards. As a result, some of the most vulnerable library users are systematically underrepresented in our data. That said, linked and unlinked users show similar visit and checkout rates, suggesting that the matched sample is broadly representative of overall borrowing behaviour. Nevertheless, the incomplete linkage introduces a downward bias in our estimates of library use across the population, and this bias may vary by income, distance from library branches, and household composition.

Second, the NBPLS Symphony data used in this study track only checkouts of physical resources. They do not capture the use of on-site facilities or services such as public computer labs, free Wi-Fi, community programming, or social and educational events. This means that our measure of library use is effectively an imperfect proxy for overall engagement with library services, based solely on borrowing activity. While most borrowing is done in person, meaning that most borrowers are indeed library visitors, the reverse is not necessarily true: not all visitors borrow materials. Even a frequent user of on-site services and resources may borrow only occasionally, if at all. This is one reason that many of the analyses in this study rely on a binary indicator of library use, defined as at least one checkout within a household during the relevant time period. Even a single borrowing event is likely to signal a broader pattern of library engagement, given the in-person nature of most checkouts. Nevertheless, this measurement approach means that the full extent of library use is not fully captured in our data.

Third, this study relies on observational data rather than experimental designs. Library access and use cannot be truly randomized, nor would it be ethical to do so, as it would require deliberately restricting individuals' access to public services. In the absence of randomization, we cannot fully rule out the possibility that unobserved factors drive both library use and the outcomes of interest. To address this, we control as aggressively as possible for demographic characteristics and other potential confounders across all regression analyses. Most importantly, in the education analyses, we control for prior scholastic ability using early developmental assessment scores and prior report card marks, which helps address the concern that higher-performing

students may simply be more likely to use the library. Where possible, interacted fixed effects and difference-in-differences approaches are used to ensure that comparisons are made between groups that are as similar as possible. While these strategies strengthen the basis for causal interpretation, readers should bear in mind that the findings reflect consistent and robust associations rather than experimentally established causal effects.

Results: Descriptive Statistics

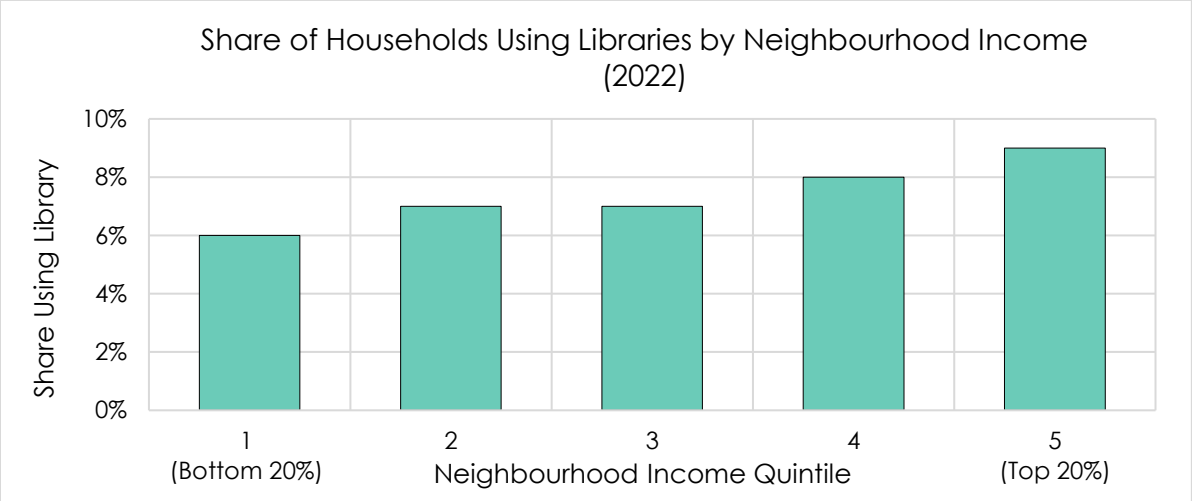
Demographic and Geographic Characteristics of Library Users

Neighbourhood-Level Income

Public libraries are some of the few public spaces that welcome patrons without the expectation that they spend money to be there. However, even in these no-cost environments, borrowing patterns vary by income level.

Figure 1 illustrates how library usage varies across neighbourhood-level income quintiles, with each bar representing the proportion of households in each quintile that borrowed materials from public libraries in 2022. It should be noted that these quintiles represent income by neighbourhood and not individual persons or households.

Figure 1: Share of Households Using Public Libraries by Neighbourhood Income Quintile



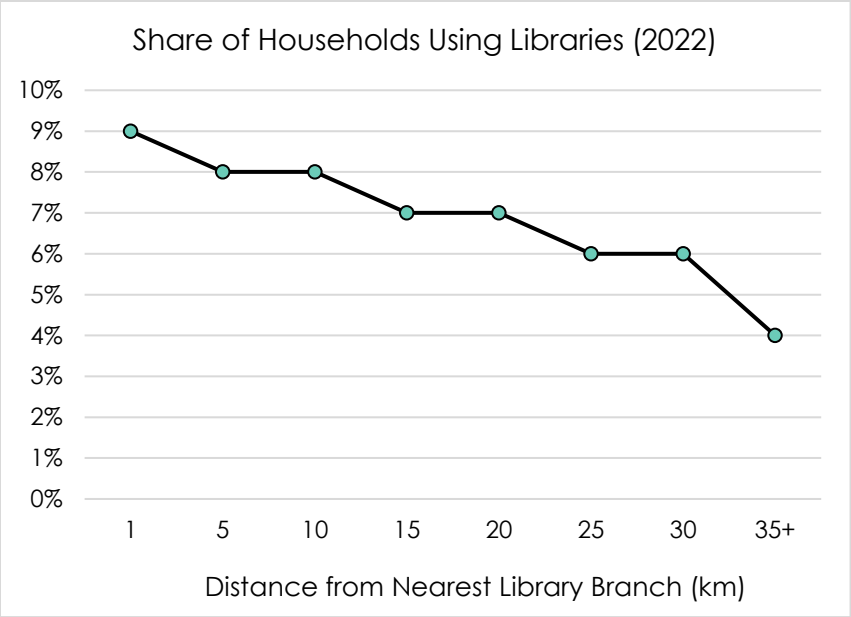
Households in high-income neighbourhoods appear the most likely to use public libraries, with usage decreasing among those in lower income quintiles. Approximately 9% of those from the 5th quintile (that is, the top-earning quintile) borrowed resources from public libraries in 2022, compared to 6% of those in the lowest quintile.

While these findings suggest that library usage in NB is slightly skewed toward higher-income neighbourhoods, it is important to remember that the results only reflect the act of borrowing. Public libraries offer many in-branch services not captured here – such as public computers, free Wi-Fi, community programs, events, and settlement supports. While higher-income families are the most likely to borrow from (i.e., "use") a public library, this does not necessarily mean they are the most likely to visit a public library. To assess whether these patterns extend to in-branch visits, additional data on library use would be needed. That being said, these patterns still gesture toward the importance of considering income-related barriers when assessing equitable access to library services across the province.

Distance from Nearest Public Library Branch

Figure 2 presents the library usage rates of households according to their distance from the nearest public library branch, measured in kilometres (from 1 km to 35+).

Figure 2: Household Library Usage Rates by Distance from Nearest Branch



The results show that library usage rates decline modestly with distance.

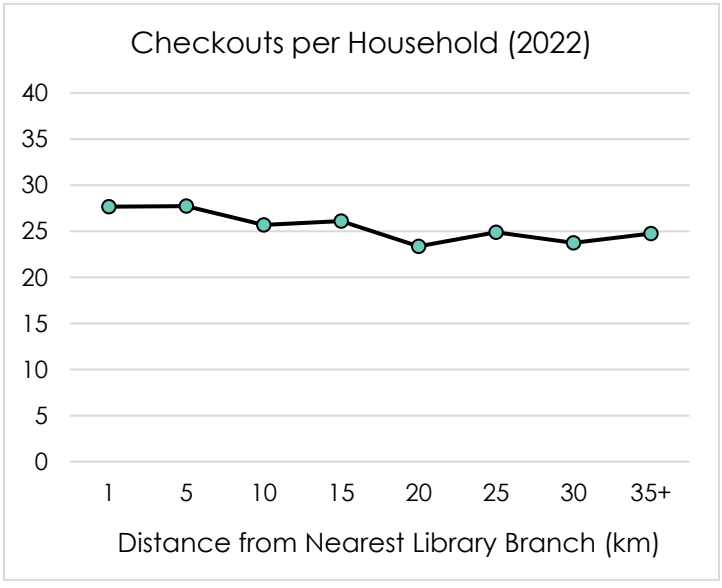
Around 9% of households that live within 1 km of a public library are shown to be library users (i.e., borrowers). However, usage drops by over 20% for those who live 15 km away (to approximately 7% of households using the library) and by half for those located over 35 km away (with only about 4% of households using the library).

These findings emphasize the importance of physical proximity when considering public library engagement.

Figure 3: Number of Checkouts per Household by Distance from Nearest Library Branch

Figure 3 considers whether distance from the nearest public library also impacts level of engagement – measured as the number of checkouts per library user.

Here, we see that library users checked out similar quantities of materials regardless of distance. This indicates that while distance primarily affects whether households engage with library services, it does not appear to impact how much they engage once they do.

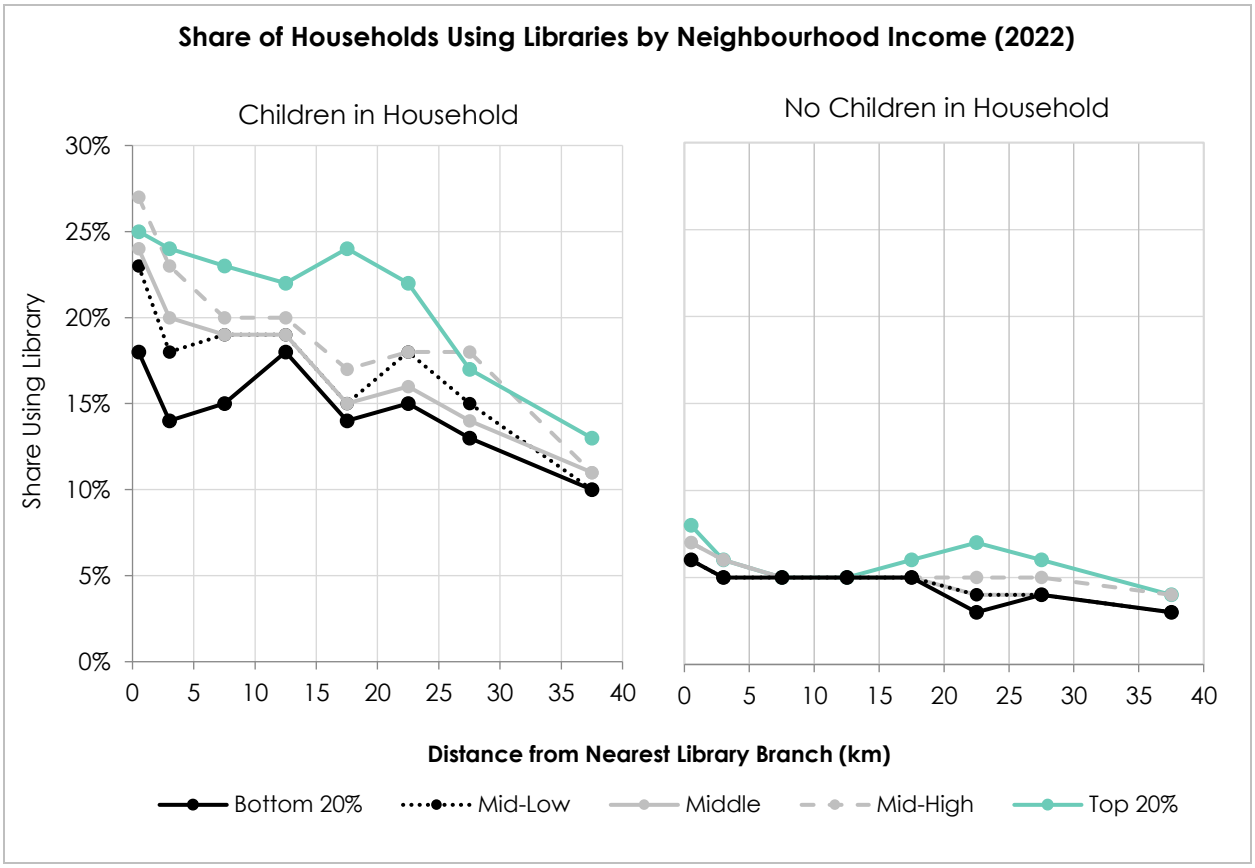


Household Composition

Anyone who has spent time in a public library has likely observed that families with children often make up a large share of visitors. The data reflect this pattern as well.

Figure 4 compares library usage between households with children and households without children. To account for the factors previously shown to impact library usage rates – specifically, income and distance from library – the two panels below also break down results according to neighbourhood income quintile and distance from the nearest library branch.

Figure 4: Library Usage by Neighbourhood Income, Distance from Nearest Branch, and Household Composition (Children vs. No Children)



The results show that households with children are much more likely to use the library regardless of income. At least 1 in 5 households with children (that is, 20%) used the library in 2022, compared to less than 10% of households without children.

This pattern holds across neighbourhood income quintiles, suggesting that the presence of children is a strong predictor of borrowing behaviour on its own. Households with children also appear more responsive to distance from the nearest branch, with usage declining more sharply as travel distance increases. This may reflect the added logistical considerations families face –

such as coordinating transportation, schedules, or multiple household members – when deciding whether to visit a library.

While households with children show consistently high borrowing rates, the pattern looks quite different for older adults. Seniors represent a growing share of the NB population, often have distinct service needs, and may also face unique access barriers, making it important to understand how frequently they use library services and how their borrowing patterns compare with other households.

Table 2 examines library usage among households with seniors (defined as individuals aged 65 and above), comparing their borrowing behaviour to households without seniors.

Table 2: Library Usage of Households With and Without Seniors

Senior in Household	Checkouts per Household	Share of all Checkouts	Share of Active Users	Share Using the Library
No	32.34	85%	81%	12%
Yes	24.28	15%	19%	9%

Households that include at least one senior show noticeably lower levels of library engagement. On average, these households have fewer checkouts per household (24.28 compared with 32.34) and account for a smaller share of overall borrowing activity (only 15% of all checkouts).

Seniors are also under-represented among active users: only 19% of active library users were from a household with a senior. Overall, 9% of households with seniors borrowed public library materials in 2022, compared with 12% of households without seniors.

These findings suggest that seniors are less likely to use the library than other households. One possible explanation for this could be that households with seniors are also much less likely to include children, and the presence of children is a strong predictor of library use. Because households with children consistently show higher borrowing rates (Figure 4), the absence of children in most senior households may help explain some of the lower usage observed. However, the data cannot determine the specific reasons for seniors' lower engagement; it simply shows that households with seniors borrow less often and borrow fewer items.

Immigrants represent another key group of interest, and their borrowing patterns provide a different perspective on how households interact with library services.

Table 3 compares measures of library use for both recent immigrant and non-immigrant households –the former defined as a household containing an immigrant with a landing year of 2012 or later.

Table 3: Library Usage of Recent Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Households

Recent Immigrant in Household	Checkouts per Household	Share of All Checkouts	Share of Active Users	Share Using the Library
No	30.55	96%	97%	11%
Yes	38.64	4%	3%	23%

Note: "Recent immigrant" refers to immigrants who landed in the year 2012 or later.

Recent immigrant households make up a small share of all library users (only 4%). This is not surprising, however, as immigrants make up a comparably small share of the NB population – only 5.8%, according to the 2021 Census of Population (Statistics Canada, 2025).

Notably, recent immigrant households are substantially more likely to use the library than non-immigrant households. In 2022, 23% of recent immigrant households borrowed library materials, compared to 11% of non-immigrant households, suggesting they are more than twice as likely to be library users.

Moreover, when they do use the library, recent immigrant households also tend to borrow more, with an average of 38.64 checkouts per household – which is higher than the 30.55 checkouts observed among non-immigrant households.

Taken together, these descriptive results show that library engagement varies widely across demographic groups. Households with children and recent immigrant households are among the most active users, while households with seniors show much lower levels of borrowing. Library use also increases with neighbourhood income and decreases with distance from the nearest branch, underscoring the role of both resources and accessibility in shaping participation.

These findings highlight the importance of considering household characteristics and local context when interpreting library use. The next section builds on this foundation by examining key outcomes among library users themselves, including early childhood assessment scores, high school grades, and graduation rates.

Outcomes Associated with Public Library Engagement

Understanding who is using NB's public library service is important, both for identifying which groups are most engaged and for highlighting where additional outreach or support may be beneficial. However, knowing who uses the library only tells part of the story.

To understand the benefits associated with public library use, this section examines a range of developmental and educational outcomes and compares results for children and youth in library-using and non-using households.

Early Childhood Development: Early Years Evaluation (EYE) Direct Assessment Scores

Early childhood is a formative period in shaping children's long-term wellbeing, and the years before kindergarten are especially important, as developmental gaps that emerge during this time can persist throughout schooling and into adulthood (Campbell-Hicks, 2016). Understanding whether children in library-using households show different developmental patterns at school entry can shed light on whether public library engagement may be associated with positive early developmental outcomes.

In the province of NB, families with a child preparing to enter kindergarten are encouraged to participate in an Early Years Evaluation (EYE), which assesses children's early developmental strengths and vulnerabilities. As mentioned earlier in the methodology, children are tested on their awareness of self and environment, cognitive skills, language and communication skills, and fine and gross motor skills; and they are placed into one of three colour-based categories for each domain:

- Green = appropriate development.
- Yellow = experiencing some difficulty.
- Red = experiencing significant difficulty.

Figures 5 and 6 compare the cognitive EYE scores of children in library-using households and those in non-library-using households, broken down by neighbourhood income quintile. They examine the share of children who scored green (appropriate development) and the share who scored red (experiencing significant difficulty) on their **cognitive skills performance.**

Figures 7 and 8 below similarly compare children's social awareness EYE scores across library-using and non-library-using households – also taking neighbourhood income quintile into account. These figures examine the share of children who scored green (appropriate development) and the share who scored red (experiencing significant difficulty) on their **awareness of self and environment.**

Figure 5: Share of Children in Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households Who Scored Green (Appropriate Development) on their Cognitive Skills EYE Assessment

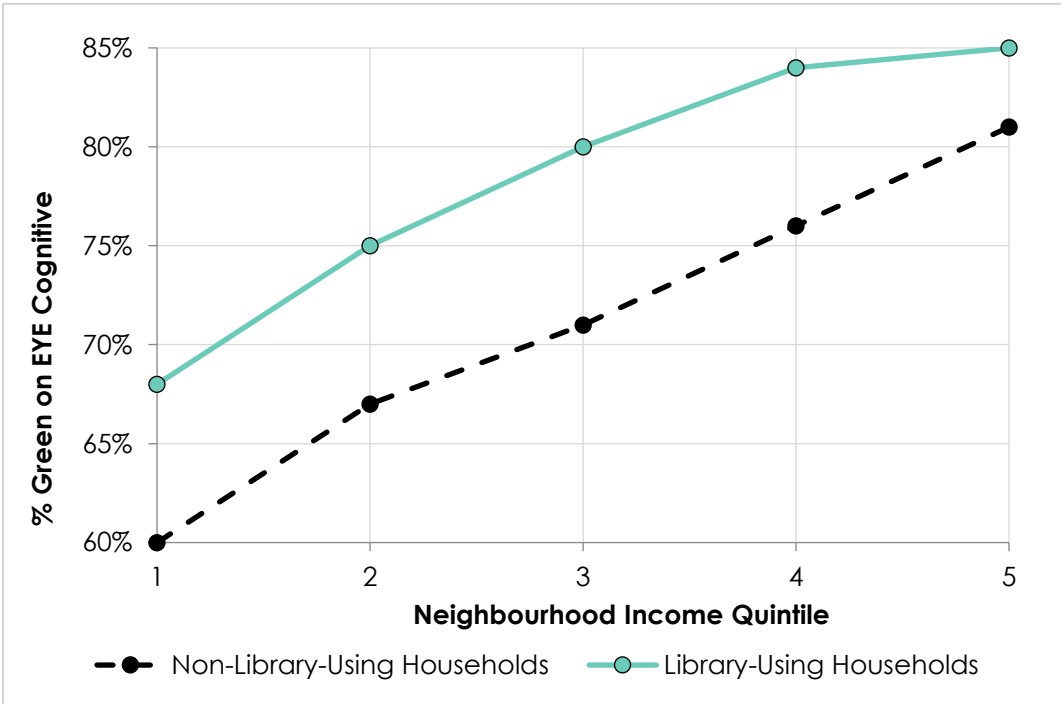
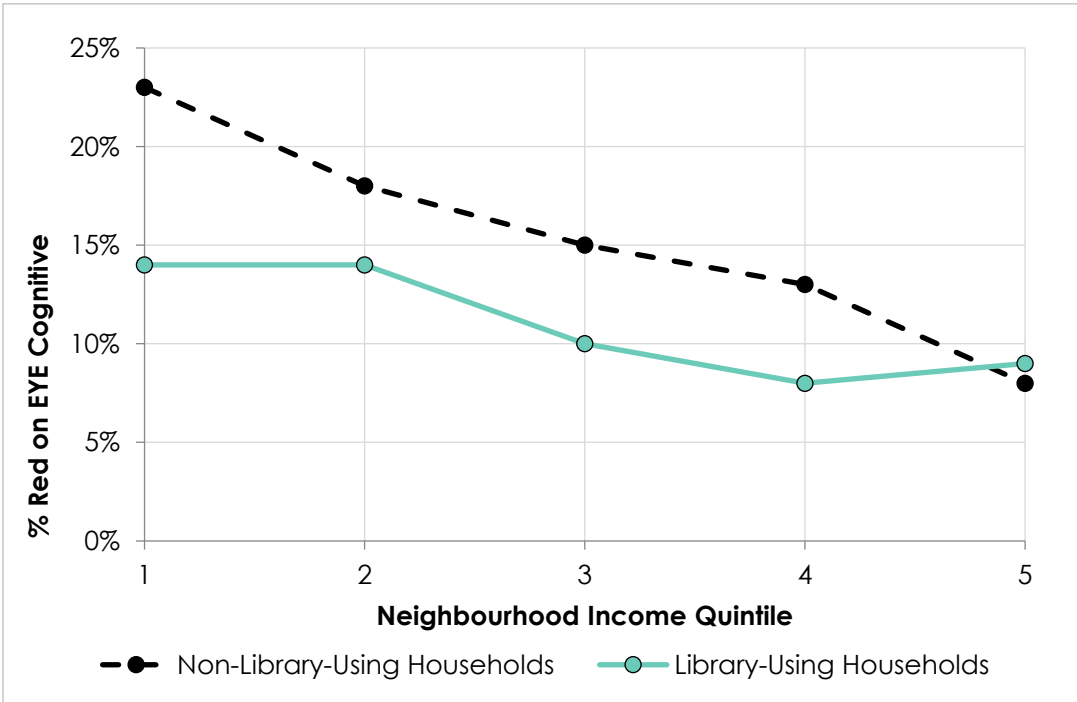


Figure 6: Share of Children in Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households Who Scored Red (Experiencing Significant Difficulty) on their Cognitive Skills EYE Assessment



In Figure 5, we see that the share of children who score "green" on their cognitive skills test increases with neighbourhood income level – for both library-using and non-using households. However, library-using households show higher rates of appropriate cognitive development at every income level.

This gap is visible even in the highest-income quintile – with 85% of library users scoring green, compared to 81% of non-users – though it is most pronounced in the lower-income quintiles (68% of library users vs. 60% of non-users).

Figure 6 shows the inverse pattern. Overall, the proportion of children scoring "red" decreases as neighbourhood income rises, with children in non-library-using households showing higher rates of significant difficulty. The pattern is similar to that of Figure 5 in that the largest differences again appear in the lower-income quintiles (with 14% of library-using children scoring red, compared to 23% of non-users).

However, this gap closes and even reverses slightly at the upper income quintiles, with a higher share of library-using children in the 5th quintile scoring red (9%) than their non-library-using counterparts (8%).

Figure 7: Share of Children in Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households Who Scored Green (Appropriate Development) on their Awareness of Self and Environment EYE Assessment

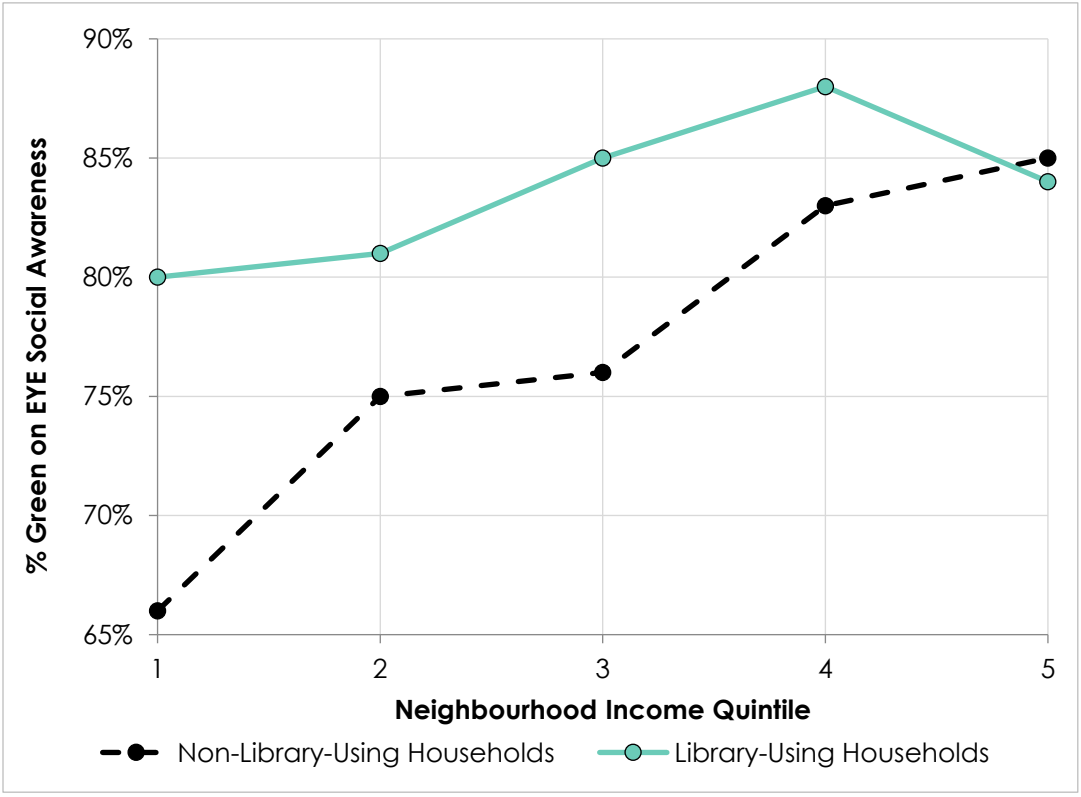
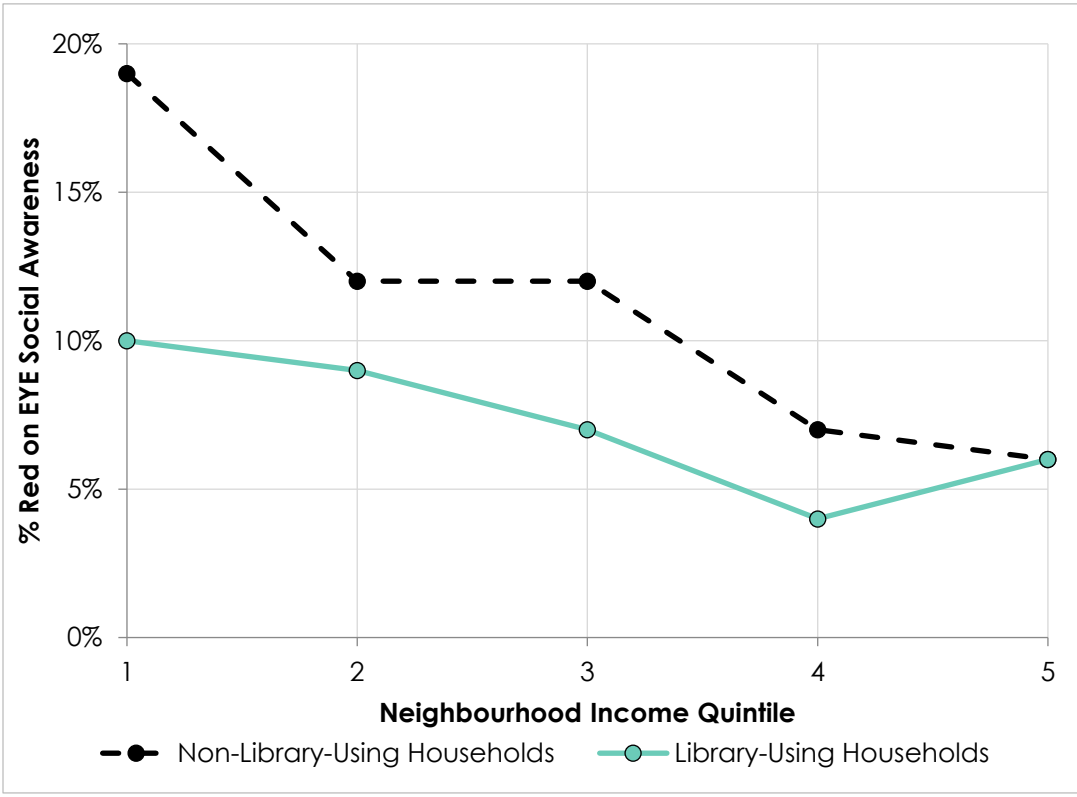


Figure 8: Share of Children in Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households Who Scored Red (Experiencing Significant Difficulty) on their Awareness of Self and Environment EYE Assessment



In Figure 7, the overall share of children scoring "green" on their EYE Social Awareness assessment increases with neighbourhood income – but the pattern differs for library-using and non-using households.

Among library-using households, the share of children scoring green rises across the income distribution and peaks in the fourth quintile (at 88%) before declining to 84% in the fifth quintile. In contrast, non-library-using households show a steady increase across all quintiles, with the highest share (85%) appearing in the top quintile. As a result, while library-using children have higher rates of appropriate social development in the lower- and middle-income quintiles, non-users slightly surpass them in the highest-income quintile.

Figure 8 shows the inverse pattern of Figure 7 – similar to the results for the cognitive skills assessment. Overall, the share of children experiencing significant difficulty in social awareness appears to decrease as neighbourhood income rises.

Among library-using households, the proportion of children scoring "red" declines steadily from the 1st quintile (10%) through the 4th quintile (4%) before increasing again in the 5th quintile (6%). Children in non-library-using households have higher rates of significant difficulty across most of the income distribution, with the largest differences appearing in the lower-income quintiles. However, in the top quintile, the gap narrows substantially and reverses slightly, with nearly equal shares of library-using and non-using children scoring red.

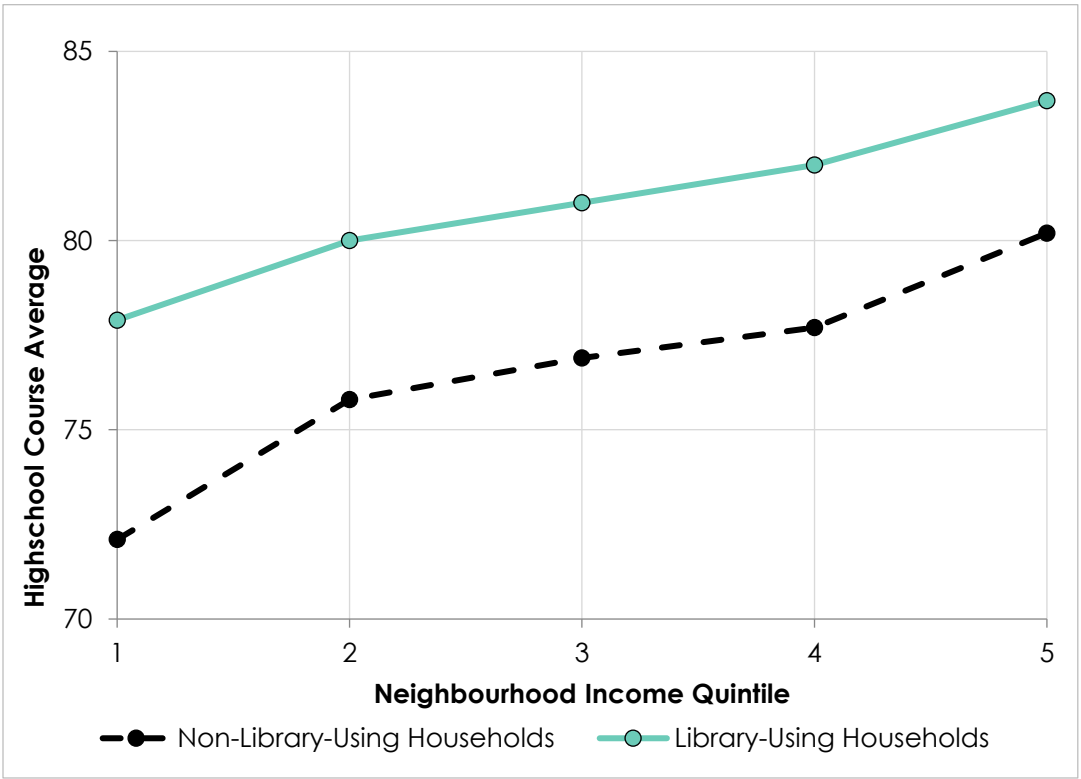
Looking across all four figures, a clear pattern emerges. In both the cognitive and social awareness domains, children in library-using households generally show stronger signs of appropriate early development than children in non-library-using households. These differences are especially noticeable in lower-income neighbourhoods, where library-using children are more likely to score in the appropriate development range and less likely to be rated as experiencing significant difficulty. As income increases, the gap between the two groups becomes smaller, and in the highest-income quintile the pattern reverses slightly, with non-users showing a small advantage on some measures. Even with this narrowing at the top of the income distribution, the overall trend suggests that children in library-using households tend to enter school with stronger early cognitive and social skills, particularly in communities facing greater socioeconomic challenges.

Educational Outcomes: High School Grades and Graduation

The early developmental patterns described above offer an important foundation for understanding children's later educational experiences. To explore whether these early outcomes may relate to educational outcomes further along, we also look at associations between library usership and high school outcomes.

Figure 9 explores the associations between library use and high school course averages, comparing results for students from households that use the library and those who do not – once again taking neighbourhood income quintile into consideration.

Figure 9: High School Course Averages of Students in Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households



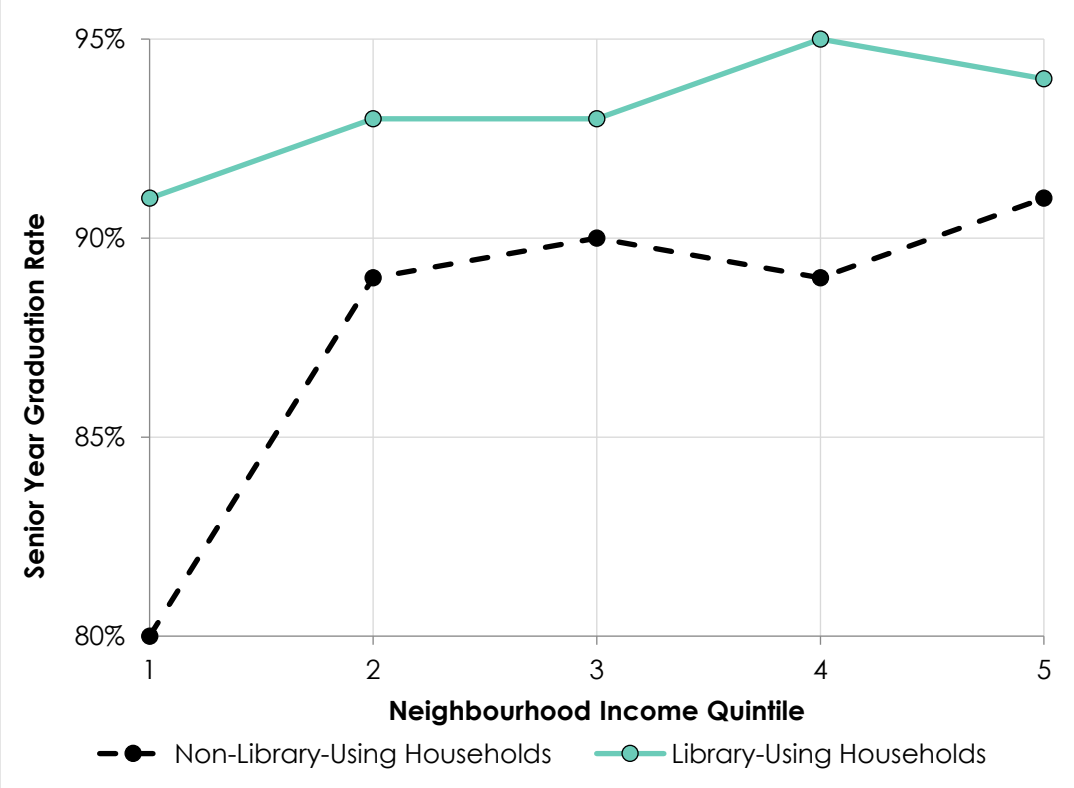
The results show that high school course marks rise steadily with neighbourhood income for both library-using and non-using households. However, students from library-using households consistently achieve higher average marks across all income quintiles.

The largest gap appears in the lower-income groups, with library-using students achieving a course average of 78% while their non-library counterparts achieve an average of 72%. Although this gap narrows as income increases, library-using students maintain a modest advantage even in the highest-income quintile (scoring 84% on average, while their non-library counterparts score 80%).

Overall, the pattern suggests that students from library-using households tend to earn slightly stronger course marks during high school, regardless of neighbourhood income.

Figure 10 continues to explore the potential impact of library usage on educational achievement by comparing the senior year graduation rates of high school students from households that use public libraries and households that do not.

Figure 10: Senior Year Graduation Rates of High School Students from Library-Using and Non-Library-Using Households



Overall, graduation rates rise with neighbourhood income level for both library-using and non-using households. However, rates remain consistently higher for library users – so much so that the lowest graduation rate for library users (91%, in the 1st income quintile) being approximately equal to the highest graduation rate for non-users (91%, in the 5th income quintile).

Graduation rates for library users only vary slightly across income quintiles, ranging from a low of approximately 91% in the 1st quintile to 95% in the 4th quintile. Non-users, by contrast, show a sharper increase in graduation rates between the 1st and 2nd quintiles (from 80% to 89%), after which variations are more modest.

Overall, these patterns suggest that students from library-using households are more likely to graduate on time and to earn slightly stronger course marks throughout high school, particularly in communities facing greater socioeconomic barriers.

Across early development indicators, high school course performance, and graduation, the patterns in this section point to consistent differences between students from library-using and non-using households. However, these findings reflect associations only – they do not show that library use itself causes stronger developmental or academic outcomes.

It is possible that these patterns may capture a range of underlying factors that differ between households, such as parental engagement, access to learning supports, family routines around reading, or broader socioeconomic conditions. Library use may be one part of a wider set of behaviours and resources that support children's learning, but the results here cannot disentangle these influences. What they do show, however, is a clear and persistent relationship between library-using households and more favourable outcomes across multiple stages of schooling.

Results: Case Study on Library Usage

2022 Kennebecasis Library Branch Closure

Our earlier descriptive statistics suggest that library accessibility matters. Households located closer to a public library branch were more likely to use library services, while those who lived further away tended to decrease their usage with distance (see Figure 2). To further explore the relationship between access and engagement, the following case study examines how a major service disruption affected usership.

In January of 2022, the Kennebecasis Public Library experienced some serious water damage – first from a cracked pipe in the building's sprinkler system and then from a flood. Overall, around 6,000 gallons of water ran through the building, soaking the top and bottom floors and damaging the library's drywall, bookshelves, electrical wiring, and furniture. The library remained closed for seven months after these events to conduct repairs (Hartai, 2022).

This closure serves as a natural experiment in which a sudden change in access allows us to observe how usership responds when a normally accessible branch becomes temporarily unavailable. Moreover, because the closure was caused by building damage rather than changes in programming or staffing, it provides a relatively clean test of how access alone influences usage.

To explore whether this change in accessibility impacted library use among households that were normally active users, we use a dynamic difference-in-differences approach that tracks changes in the gap between treated and control households over time. Households were assigned to a treatment or control group based on their "main" library, defined as the library they visited most frequently in 2019, where a "visit" is any day on which any member of the household was observed borrowing from that library. The treatment group consists of households whose main library was the Kennebecasis branch, while the control group consists of households whose main library was a main branch in either Fredericton or Moncton (chosen as comparable large urban branches).

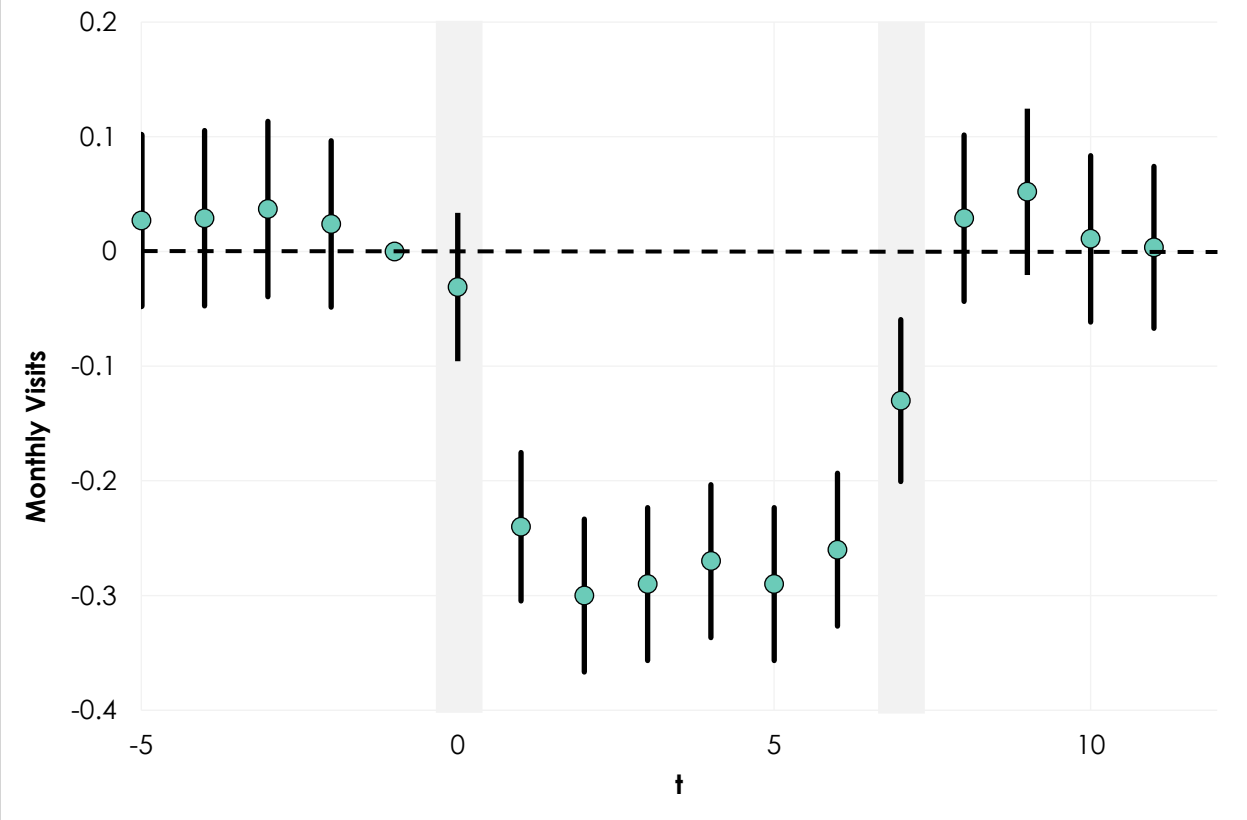
We examine three related outcomes: visits per month, checkouts per month, and usership per month. All three are measured across all libraries, not just the household's main branch. This means that any borrowing activity by treatment households during the months when Kennebecasis was closed (calendar months $t = 1$ through $t = 6$) was necessarily occurring at other branches. If outcomes were measured only at the household's main library, the effect of the closure would be purely mechanical; by measuring activity at any library, the analysis captures the extent to which affected households were able or unable to substitute toward other branches.

The results are presented in the three figures below. In each figure, the x-axis represents calendar months, with $t = 0$ corresponding to January 2022, the month in which the closure occurred. The y-axis is normalized so that the coefficient at $t = -1$ (December 2021, the last full month before the closure) is set to zero. All other coefficients are measured relative to this baseline. Because

this is a dynamic difference-in-differences design, the plotted coefficients represent changes in the difference between the treatment and control groups over time. Under the common trends assumption (that Kennebecasis households would have responded similarly to province-wide events as the control households), a value of zero on the y-axis represents the counterfactual scenario in which the closure never occurred. The shaded regions at t = 0 and t = 7 indicate transitional months, as both the closure and the reopening occurred partway through the calendar month, and these periods are therefore expected to show intermediate effects.

The first figure shows the effect of the closure on the number of visits per month. In the months leading up to the closure, the coefficients hover near zero, consistent with the common trends assumption. Following the closure, the number of visits drops sharply among treatment households relative to the control group, indicating a substantial reduction in library engagement. During the closure months, the estimated decline in visits among treatment households averaged approximately 0.27 visits per month relative to the control group. Compared to the treatment group's estimated pre-closure baseline of approximately 0.57 visits per month (calculated as the average of the control group's monthly visit rates plus the treatment group intercept), this represents a decline of roughly 47%.

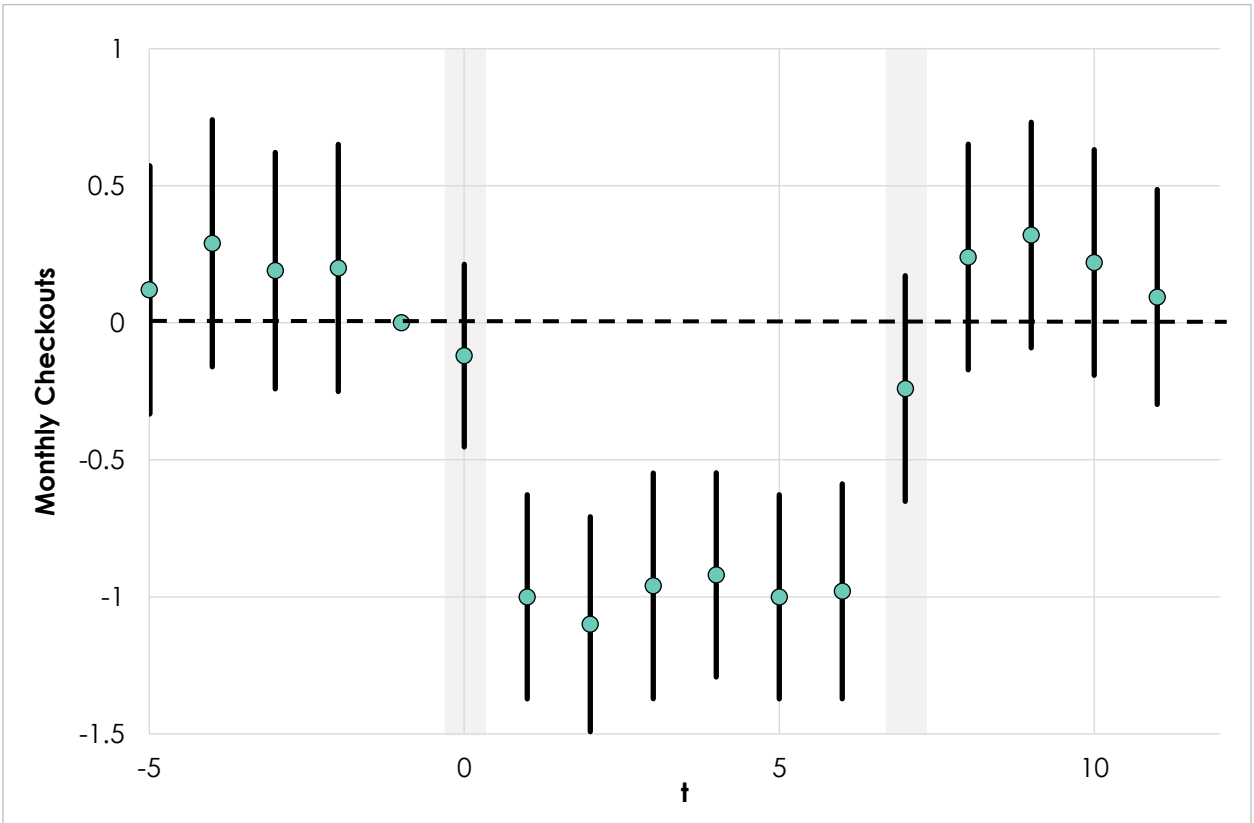
Figure 11: The Effect of Temporary Library Branch Closure on Number of Visits Per Month



The second figure shows the effect on the number of checkouts per month. The pattern closely mirrors the results for visits: checkouts among treatment households decline sharply following the closure relative to the control group. During the closure months, checkouts fell by an average of

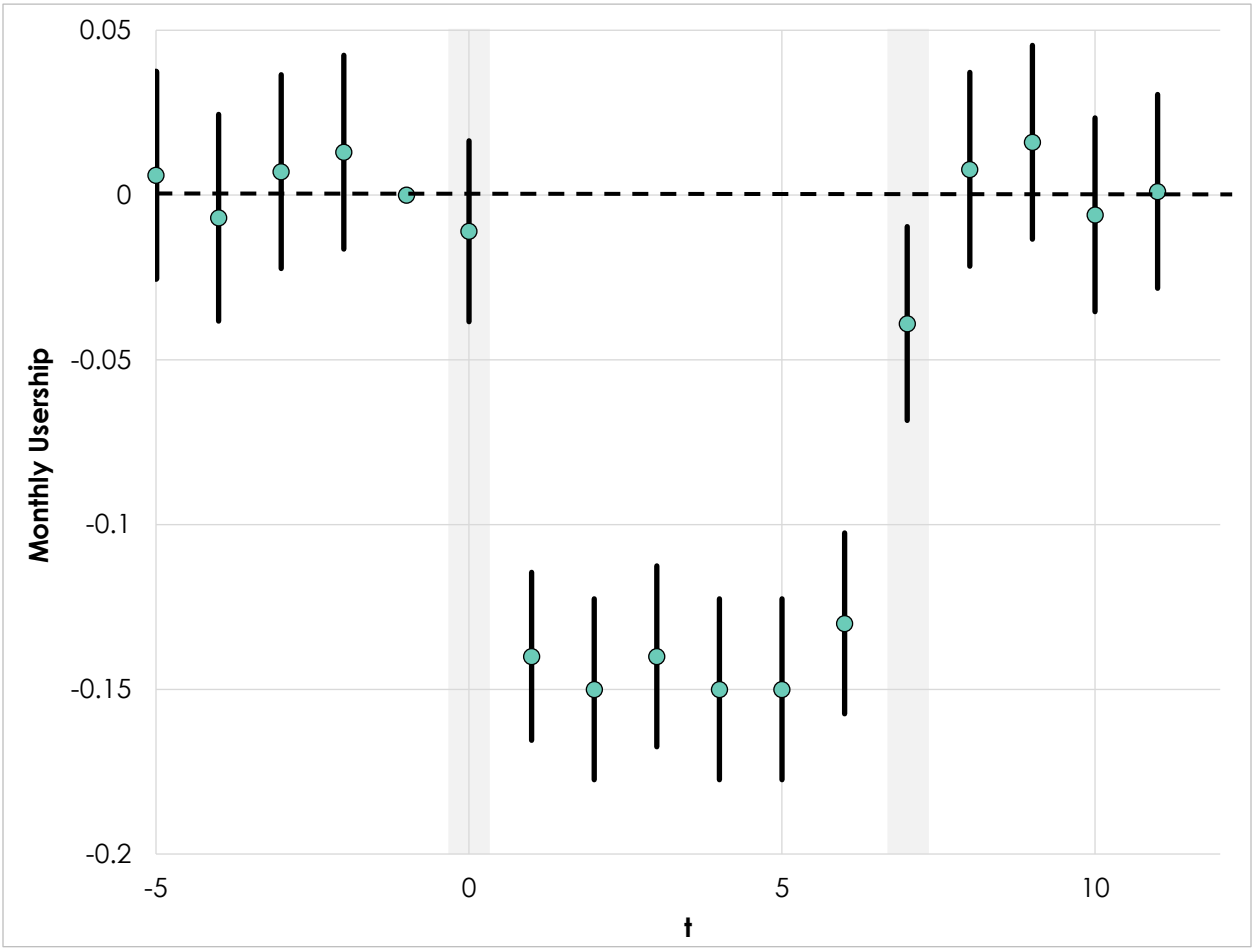
approximately 1.0 per month relative to the control group. Against an estimated pre-closure baseline of approximately 2.2 checkouts per month for the treatment group, this represents a decline of roughly 45%. As with visits, the coefficients in the pre-closure period remain close to zero, supporting the validity of the common trends assumption.

Figure 12: The Effect of Temporary Library Branch Closure on Number of Checkouts Per Month



The third figure shows the effect on usership, a binary indicator for whether any member of the household was observed borrowing from any library during a given month. Unlike the first two figures, which measure the volume of engagement (visits and checkouts), this figure captures whether affected households stopped engaging with public library services entirely. During the closure months, usership among treatment households declined by approximately 14 percentage points relative to the control group. With an estimated pre-closure baseline usership rate of approximately 32% for the treatment group, this represents a decline of roughly 43%.

Figure 13: The Effect of Temporary Library Branch Closure on Usership



Across all three outcomes, the pattern is consistent. In the pre-closure period, the coefficients remain close to zero, indicating that the treatment and control groups were following similar trends prior to the disruption. Following the closure, library engagement among Kennebecasis households drops substantially, even though other library branches in the region remained open and accessible. Upon reopening, usage begins to recover, though the transitional month (t = 7) shows intermediate effects as expected. Taken together, these results demonstrate that when a major library branch becomes temporarily unavailable, a large share of its users do not simply transfer their activity to other branches. Instead, many reduce or cease their library engagement altogether, underscoring the importance of local, accessible library infrastructure in sustaining community engagement with public library services.

Results: Regression Analyses

The Impact of Library Use on Children's Academic Performance

Earlier in the report, our descriptive results indicated that children from library-using households tend to have better academic outcomes (see Figures 9 and 10). However, as we mentioned in our previous caveat, these findings reflect associations rather than causal effects: those results alone cannot tell us whether library use itself contributes to stronger academic outcomes or whether other factors may be driving the relationship.

To explore this topic further, we estimate an OLS regression model that assesses whether the relationship between library use and academic performance persists after controlling for confounding factors. The analysis uses report card data from the 2021–2022 school year for students in the Anglophone School District. The Francophone District was excluded from this analysis due to missing grade data in the Francophone district file. The dependent variable is each student's average report card mark, measured on a scale of 1 to 4+ (where X+ grades are coded as X.5). The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the student's household used the library in 2019, defined as at least one checkout by any household member during that year.

The baseline model includes school-by-grade fixed effects, which absorb all variation attributable to differences between schools and grade levels, including differences in teaching quality, grading standards, and local conditions. This means that the estimated coefficient on library use represents the (weighted) average difference in report card marks between library users and non-users within the same school and grade, across all Anglophone schools. The results are presented separately for two broad groupings: elementary grades and middle school grades. Neighbourhood income quintile is included as an additional control.

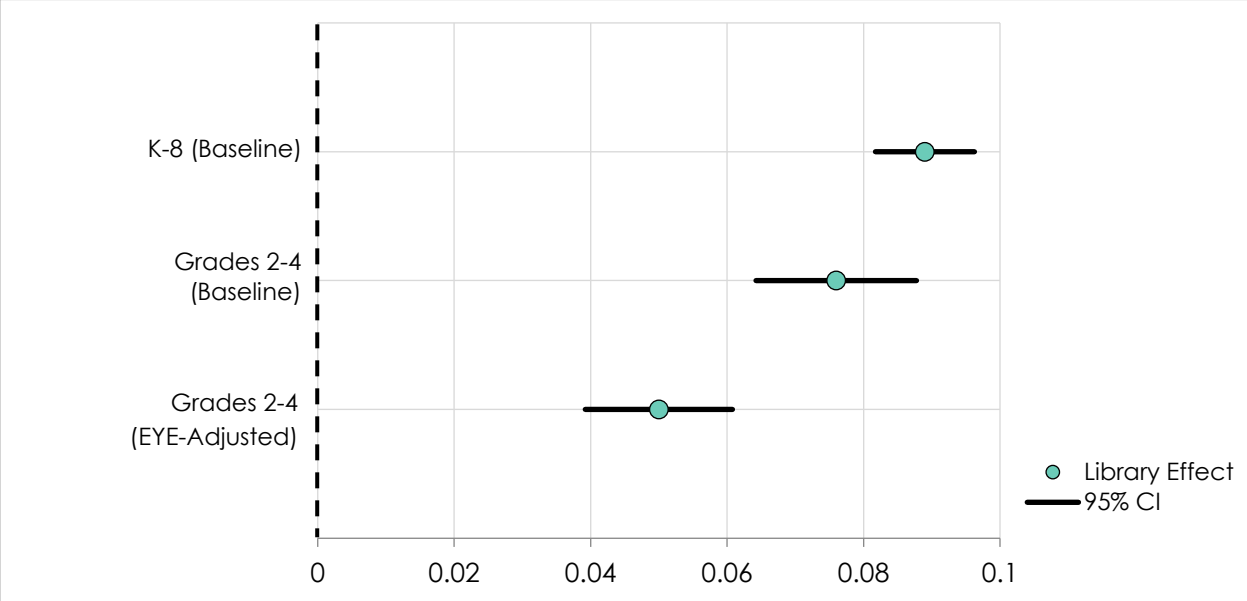
A key concern with the baseline model is the possibility of reverse causation: rather than library use improving academic performance, higher-performing or more academically motivated students may simply be more likely to use the library, rather than the library improving performance and/or motivation. To address this, a second set of models adds controls for Early Years Evaluation (EYE) assessment scores, entered as a set of indicator variables.

The EYE is a play-based developmental assessment administered to children in NB between the ages of 3 and 5, before they enter kindergarten. By holding these early measures of developmental ability constant, the model can better isolate the relationship between library use and subsequent academic performance, rather than attributing differences in marks to pre-existing differences in ability.

The EYE controls are only available for students in grades 2 through 4. This is because the EYE Direct Assessment data accessed for this study cover the 2016–2017 through 2018–2019 school years, which means that children assessed during those years (who would have been entering kindergarten at the time) had only reached grades 2 through 4 by the 2021–2022 outcome year. The EYE data do not extend far enough back to observe older students at the age when the

assessment is typically administered. Future analyses using more recent EYE data could extend this approach to additional grade levels.

Figure 14: Library Effects on Report Card Marks in Grades K-8 and Grades 2-4 (Baseline and EYE-Adjusted)



The figure above presents the results for both the baseline model and the model with EYE controls, by grade level. The baseline results show that students from library-using households score approximately 0.089 points higher on their report card marks (on the 1-to-4+ scale), on average, than students from non-library-using households within the same school and grade.

When the sample is restricted to grades 2–4 (the subsample for which EYE data are available), the baseline estimate is 0.076 points. When EYE controls are added for this grades 2–4 subsample, the estimated effect of library use decreases to 0.050 points, indicating that roughly one third of the baseline association is attributable to reverse causation: children with stronger early developmental profiles are both more likely to perform well academically and more likely to come from households that use the library. However, the effect remains statistically significant and qualitatively meaningful after controlling for EYE scores. This suggests that, while pre-existing ability does account for part of the observed association, library use retains an independent positive relationship with academic performance even after holding early ability constant.

Overall, these results provide multiple lines of evidence that library use is associated with stronger academic achievement across grade levels, and that this association is robust to controlling for prior performance and ability. The benefits appear to be particularly pronounced for primary-age students.

The Impact of Library Use on Mitigating COVID-19 Grade Shocks

The regression results above show that library use is consistently associated with stronger academic performance, even after accounting for prior ability and school-level differences, with particularly pronounced benefits for primary students (see Figure 14). A natural next question is whether this advantage extends to periods of disruption – specifically, whether the academic benefits associated with library use also make students more resilient when their schooling is severely disrupted.

The COVID-19 pandemic delivered a sharp and unexpected shock to schooling across NB, as schools transitioned to remote learning and students lost access to many of the supports and routines that typically structure their education. This disruption offers an opportunity to test whether students from library-using households experienced smaller declines in academic performance during this period.

There are at least two reasons to expect such an effect. First, if library engagement fosters habits of intellectual independence, such as regular reading, comfort with self-directed learning, and familiarity with seeking out information beyond what is assigned in the classroom, then students from library-using households may have been better equipped to sustain their learning when the scaffolding of in-person instruction fell away. Second, students from library-using households may have been more inclined to turn to the library itself as a supplementary educational resource during the disruptions, drawing on borrowing services, online resources, or other supports that remained accessible even when schools were closed.

To examine this possibility, we estimate an OLS regression model in which the dependent variable is the change in a student's report card marks between the last pre-COVID term and the COVID-affected terms.

We consider two outcome windows for each group of students:

(1) The change from 2019 Term 2 to 2020 Term 1, capturing the initial impact of the disruption.

(2) The change from 2019 Term 2 to 2020 Term 2, capturing the cumulative effect over two COVID-affected terms.

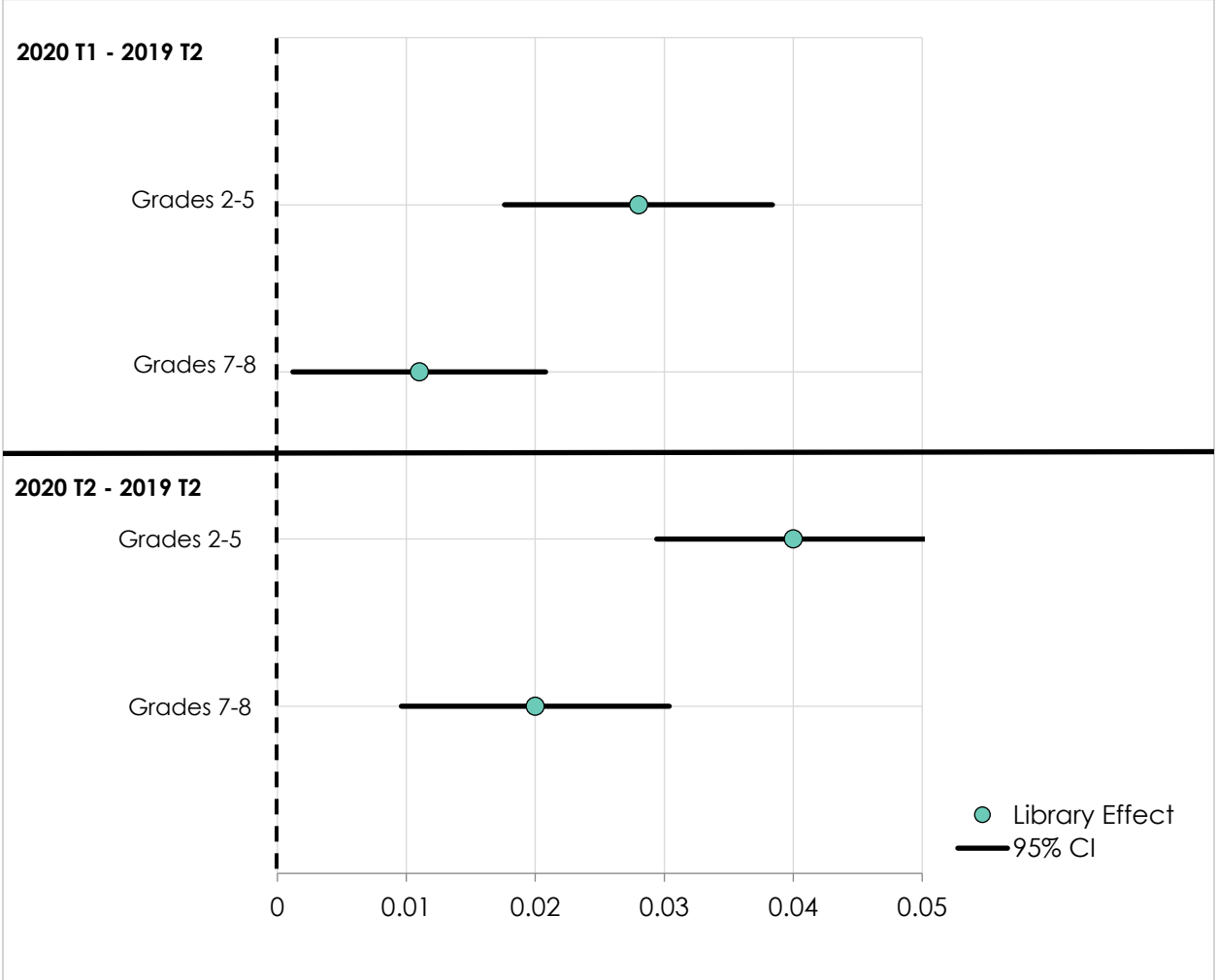
The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the student's household used the library in 2018, measured before the pandemic to ensure that library use predates the disruption. Measuring library use two years prior also reduces the likelihood that the relationship captures short-term or coincidental associations.

The model includes school-by-grade fixed effects, which account for the fact that different schools and grade levels were not equally affected by the pandemic. It also controls for prior academic performance using pre-COVID marks (2019 Term 1 for the one-term outcome; 2019 Term 1 lagged an additional term for the two-term outcome), recognizing that higher- and lower-performing students may have experienced the disruption differently. By including this

control, the model helps distinguish the effect of library use from pre-existing differences in academic ability.

Results are presented separately for two groups: students in grades 2–5 (elementary) and students in grades 7–8 (middle school). The figure below presents the estimated effect of household library use on the change in marks across both outcome windows.

Figure 15: Library Effects on Changes in Report Card Marks for Students in Grades 2-5 and 7-8 Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic



For elementary students (grades 2–5), the results show that students from library-using households experienced a smaller decline in marks relative to their non-library-using peers. The estimated effect is approximately 0.028 points on the 1-to-4+ grading scale for the one-term change (2019 Term 2 to 2020 Term 1) and approximately 0.040 points for the two-term change (2019 Term 2 to 2020 Term 2).

Both estimates are statistically significant, suggesting that elementary students from library-using households were meaningfully more resilient to the academic disruptions caused by the pandemic, even after controlling for prior performance and school-by-grade differences.

For middle school students (grades 7–8), the estimated effects are smaller in magnitude but remain statistically significant at the 95% level. Library-using students in this group show a difference of approximately 0.011 points for the one-term change and 0.020 points for the two-term change, relative to non-users.

The smaller effect size among middle school students may reflect differences in how the pandemic affected elementary and middle school students, or in how library-related resources and habits contribute to academic resilience at different developmental stages. Nevertheless, the fact that the effect remains statistically significant for this group provides additional confidence that the finding is not limited to younger children.

These findings complement the earlier results on academic performance by suggesting that the benefits of library use are not limited to average levels of achievement under normal conditions. Across both age groups and both outcome windows, prior library engagement appears to have been protective during a period of severe educational disruption, providing further evidence that library use supports academic outcomes through mechanisms that extend beyond the classroom.

The Impact of Library Use on Continued University Enrolment

Given the evidence that library use is associated with stronger academic achievement in primary and secondary school, we turn to the question of longer-term impacts – specifically, whether prior library use is associated with persistence at the university level. The transition from high school to university is a critical juncture in a student's educational trajectory, and first-year attrition is a significant challenge for post-secondary institutions across Canada.

If library engagement fosters skills that support independent learning, such as the ability to seek out and engage with information, manage time around self-directed study, or sustain motivation outside of structured classroom settings, then students with a history of library use may be better prepared for the demands of university life.

To examine this question, we estimate an OLS regression model for the probability of continuing past the first year of university. The sample consists of first-year enrollees at NB public universities who completed grade 12 in NB, drawn from the fall cohorts of 2017 through 2020. The sample is limited to students enrolled in four-year degree programs with fewer than 60 transfer credits. Students with fewer than five grade 12 courses are excluded to ensure a meaningful measure of prior academic performance. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for whether the student was enrolled in their second year. The key independent variable is whether the student,

or any member of their household, checked out a library item in the two years prior to university enrolment.

The model includes program-by-institution-by-year fixed effects, which absorb all variation attributable to differences across university programs, institutions, and cohort years. This means that comparisons are made between students enrolled in the same program, at the same institution, in the same year, ensuring that the estimated effect of library use is not confounded by differences in program difficulty, institutional culture, or cohort-specific factors. Gender is also included as a control.

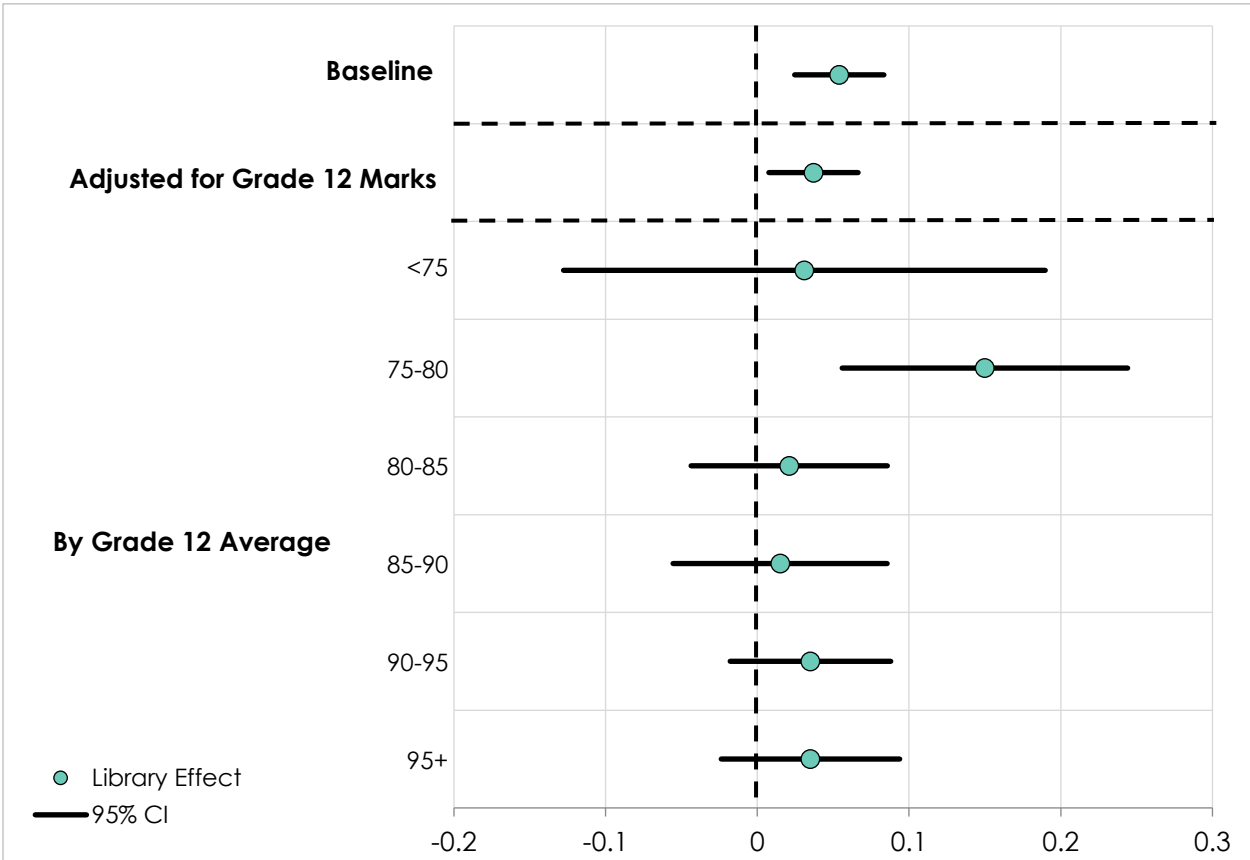
As with the earlier academic performance analyses, a key concern is the possibility of reverse causation: academically stronger students may be both more likely to persist at university and more likely to come from households that use the library.

To address this, a second specification adds controls for the student's average grade 12 marks, entered as categorical indicators. By holding prior academic achievement constant, this model helps ensure that the estimated effect of library use is not simply capturing pre-existing differences in academic ability.

A third specification takes this approach further by interacting library use with the grade 12 mark categories. Rather than estimating a single average effect of library use across all students, this model allows the effect to vary depending on the student's prior academic performance. This is informative because the relationship between library use and university persistence may not be uniform: for some students, library use may matter more than for others, depending on where they sit in the distribution of academic preparedness.

The figure below presents the results across all three specifications.

Figure 16: Library Effects on Continued University Enrolment (Baseline, by Grade 12 Average, and Adjusted for Grade 12 Marks)



The baseline results show that students from library-using households are 5.4 percentage points more likely to continue past their first year of university compared to students from non-library-using households within the same program, institution, and cohort year. This effect is statistically significant.

When grade 12 marks are added as a control, the estimated effect decreases modestly to 3.7 percentage points but remains statistically significant, indicating that the association between library use and university persistence is not simply a reflection of pre-existing differences in academic achievement.

The interacted model reveals that the effect of library use on persistence is not uniform across the distribution of prior academic performance. The estimated effect is concentrated among students with grade 12 averages in the 75–80 range, where library use is associated with a statistically significant increase of 15.0 percentage points in the probability of continuing to second year.

This is precisely the segment of the student population where we would expect to see the largest effect: students with averages in this range are academically qualified for university but may be closest to the margin between successfully completing their first year and dropping out. For

these students, the additional skills, habits, or resources associated with library engagement may be enough to tip the balance toward persistence. The estimated effects for all other grade 12 mark categories are positive but not statistically significant, suggesting that while library use may benefit students across the academic spectrum, its measurable impact on persistence is most pronounced for those in the range where the risk of first-year attrition is greatest.

Overall, these results indicate that students from library-using households are more likely to persist past their first year of university, and that this association is robust to controlling for prior academic performance. The finding that the effect is concentrated among students with moderate high school averages is consistent with the broader pattern observed throughout this study: library engagement appears to be most consequential for individuals who face greater challenges, whether socioeconomic (as in the descriptive and EYE results) or academic (as in this case).

While the analysis cannot establish causality, the consistency of this finding with the earlier results for primary and secondary students reinforces the broader pattern: library engagement is associated with stronger educational outcomes across multiple stages of schooling.

The Impact of Library Use on Immigrant Retention

Research highlights the important role public libraries can play in supporting newcomers to Canada, such as by offering English language programs, settlement resources, and opportunities for social connection and community integration (Picco, 2008; Shepherd et al., 2018; Shuva, 2023). It is anticipated that these and other services can help immigrants build a sense of belonging and navigate the early stages of settlement.

Our descriptive results show that immigrant households in NB are significantly more likely to use library services than non-immigrant households (see Table 3), and this strong pattern of engagement raises the question of whether library use is associated with longer-term outcomes for newcomers.

To explore this question, we estimate an OLS regression model for the probability that a recent immigrant remains in NB over one-, two-, and three-year time horizons. The sample consists of immigrants who arrived in NB between mid-2015 and 2019 and who were registered in the provincial Medicare system during that period.

Immigrants were identified using permanent resident landing records, but the timing of both library use and retention is measured relative to the date of Medicare registration rather than the official landing date. This is because the official date of permanent residence can be granted retroactively or well after an individual's physical arrival in the province, whereas registration in the provincial Medicare system provides a more reliable indicator of when an

immigrant was actually present and establishing themselves in NB. For clarity, this date is referred to as the arrival date throughout the remainder of this section.

The key independent variable is a binary indicator of whether the immigrant checked out a library item within six months of their arrival date, capturing early engagement with library services during the initial settlement period. Measuring library use within this early window is important for methodological reasons: if library use were measured over a longer or open-ended period, the results would be affected by survivorship bias, since only immigrants who remain in the province can continue to use the library. By restricting the measurement to the first six months after arrival, the analysis ensures that library use is observed during a period when nearly all immigrants in the sample are still present, regardless of whether they ultimately stay or leave.

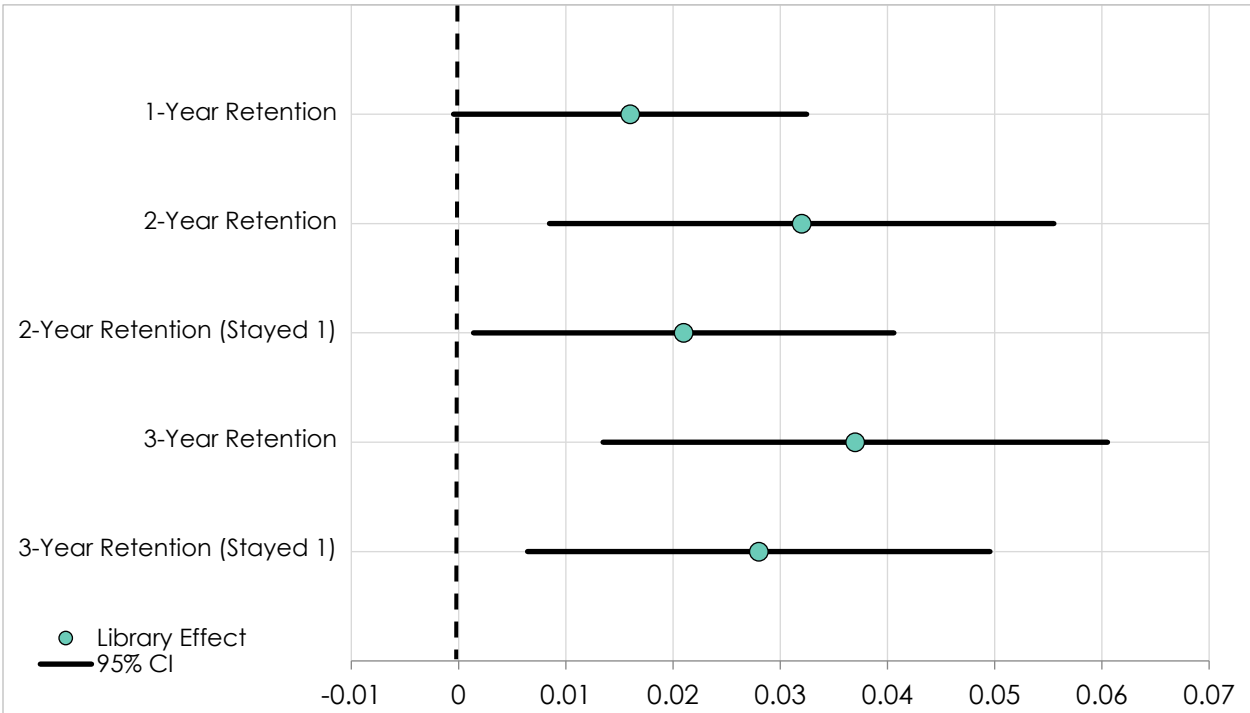
Whether an immigrant has left the province is determined by changes in provincial Medicare eligibility, as described in the Data and Methodology section above. Retention is also measured relative to the arrival date for consistency with the library use variable.

The model includes country-of-origin fixed effects, which account for systematic differences in retention patterns across immigrant source countries, recognizing that factors such as language, cultural proximity, diaspora networks, and immigration pathways can vary significantly by country and may independently influence whether an immigrant remains in NB. Additional controls include gender, age (entered as coarse categorical indicators), the presence of children aged 15 or under at the time of arrival, family size at arrival, and landing year. Gender, age, and the presence of children are fully interacted to absorb demographic variation in settlement outcomes.

Controlling for family composition and the presence of children is especially important in this context, given the descriptive results presented earlier in this report showing that families with children are substantially more likely to use the library in general. Without this control, the estimated effect of library use could partly reflect the fact that families with children both use libraries more and may have stronger incentives to remain in the province for reasons unrelated to library services, such as their children's schooling. Standard errors are clustered at the family level to account for the fact that members of the same family are likely to share similar retention outcomes.

The figure below presents the estimated effect of early library use on the probability of remaining in NB at each time horizon.

Figure 17: Library Effects on the Probability of Immigrant Retention One, Two, and Three Years After Arriving in NB



The results indicate that immigrants who used the library within six months of arrival are 1.6 percentage points more likely to still be residing in NB after one year, compared to immigrants who did not use the library during that initial period, after controlling for country of origin and demographic characteristics. However, this estimate is not statistically significant at the 95% level, meaning that the one-year effect cannot be distinguished from zero with confidence.

At the two-year mark, the estimated effect increases to 3.2 percentage points and is statistically significant. When the sample is restricted to immigrants who stayed at least one year, library use is still associated with a 2.1 percentage point increase in the probability of remaining through the second year, which is also statistically significant. This suggests that the association is not driven entirely by very early departures.

At three years, the estimated effect is 3.7 percentage points (statistically significant). Among immigrants who stayed at least one year, early library users are 2.8 percentage points more likely to remain through the third year than non-users (also statistically significant).

The fact that the estimated effect grows over time is noteworthy: while the one-year estimate is positive but imprecise, the association becomes both larger and more precisely estimated at the two- and three-year horizons, suggesting that the relationship between early library engagement and retention strengthens as the settlement period progresses.

These findings are consistent with the broader literature suggesting that libraries provide critical settlement supports, including access to language resources, community programming, and a

welcoming physical space that help newcomers feel anchored in their new environment (Shepherd et al., 2018; Shuva, 2023).

While the analysis cannot determine the specific mechanisms through which library use is associated with retention, the results are notable for several reasons. First, the association persists after controlling for country of origin, which absorbs much of the variation related to immigration pathways, language barriers, and cultural factors. Second, by controlling for gender, age, family size, and the presence of children, and their interactions, the model accounts for many of the demographic factors known to influence settlement outcomes, including those that are independently correlated with library use. Third, the fact that the association extends across multiple time horizons suggests that early library engagement may be a marker of, or contributor to, a broader pattern of community integration that supports longer-term settlement.

It is important to note that, as with the educational analyses, this finding reflects an association rather than a confirmed causal effect. Immigrants who use the library may differ from non-users in unobserved ways, such as language ability, prior education, or motivation to integrate, that also influence their decision to remain in NB. Nevertheless, the consistency and robustness of the finding, combined with the strong theoretical basis for libraries' role in settlement, provides meaningful evidence that NB's public library services may contribute to the province's broader immigration and retention goals.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine who uses the NB Public Library Service, how patterns of use vary across demographic and geographic groups, and how library engagement relates to key developmental, educational, and retention outcomes. Using linked administrative data from multiple sectors, we assessed both descriptive patterns of library use and statistical associations between prior library engagement and later outcomes for children, youth, and recent immigrants.

Factors Associated with Public Library Use

Patterns of library use vary across demographic and geographic groups in NB. Households with children are among the most engaged public library users: at least one in five households with children borrowed materials in 2022, a rate substantially higher than that of households without children. Recent immigrant households also demonstrate notably high levels of engagement. Although they represent a small share of all users, individuals in recent immigrant households are more than twice as likely to use the library as those in non-immigrant households (23% versus 11%). In contrast, seniors are less likely to use the library than other age groups, a pattern that may reflect lower rates of children in the household or different service needs.

Geography also plays a role in shaping library access and user engagement. The likelihood of using the library declines modestly with distance from a branch. However, among those who do use the library, the number of checkouts does not decline substantially with distance. This indicates that distance primarily affects whether households engage with library services, rather than how much they engage once they do.

The importance of physical access is further underscored by our case study of the closure of the Kennebecasis Library in 2022. After the closure, users from that branch reduced their borrowing by roughly half – even though other branches in the region remained open. Together, these findings highlight the continued importance of local, accessible library infrastructure in supporting equitable service use.

Public Library Use and its Association with Developmental and Educational Outcomes

Both our descriptive analyses and our regression models show that children and youth in library-using households demonstrate stronger academic and developmental outcomes than their non-library-using peers. These advantages appear across several domains, including early years assessments, primary and high school performance, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, many of these associations persist even after controlling for prior measures of performance, or ability. The benefits are often especially pronounced for children in lower-income neighbourhoods, suggesting that public libraries may help mitigate socioeconomic disparities by providing access to books, learning materials, and supportive environments that families may otherwise lack.

At the post-secondary level, university students who use the library exhibit a higher likelihood of continuing past their first year than students from non-library households, reinforcing the potential long-term educational value of library engagement. Importantly, this effect is greatest among students who had high school averages of 75-80. While these students' grades were high enough to qualify them for university, they are in the range where the risk of dropping out is the highest. While these analyses cannot establish causality, the consistency of the findings across age groups, outcomes, and analytic methods provides compelling evidence that public library services in the province are associated with meaningful educational advantages.

These findings take on added significance in the context of NB's broader educational landscape. The ability to read is foundational to an individual's life trajectory, affecting their later health, housing, education, employment opportunities, income levels, involvement with crime, and civic participation (Campbell-Hicks, 2016). The early years are an especially pivotal time for developing literacy levels. Research shows that children who enter primary education behind in early literacy skills often struggle to catch up throughout their schooling and into their adult lives (Campbell-Hicks, 2016). This is an important issue for NB, which ranked last in Canada for student reading levels in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment study (Hill & Whalen, 2021; O'Grady et al., 2019). Improving literacy and other early educational outcomes for children in NB has the potential to lead to both personal benefits, like higher wages, and broader economic competitiveness. Against this backdrop, the associations between library engagement and the academic outcomes of children and youth underscore the potential role of NB's Public Library Service in supporting early learning and contributing to positive long-term outcomes for children and youth.

The Impact of Public Library Use on Immigrant Retention

Our findings related to immigrant households are also particularly relevant, as immigration is widely viewed as a key strategy for addressing NB's population challenges and labour shortages. The province has set ambitious targets for newcomer retention, with its most recent population growth strategy including a target of retaining 85% of newcomers by 2024 (GNB, 2019). Research by DataNB shows that NB was close to reaching that target (with 83.4% retention of 2023 arrivals) – though, retention rates drop over time, with only around half of immigrant families remaining in NB 10 years after landing (Jones et al., 2026). With a quickly growing population of newcomers in NB, the province hopes to support and encourage the long-term settlement of immigrant families through services that promote community engagement and integration – such as those offered through NB's public libraries.

Within this context, our findings suggest that public libraries may play a meaningful role in supporting immigrant integration and retention. Recent immigrant households are substantially more likely to use the library than non-immigrant households, despite representing a small share of total users. Moreover, after controlling for demographic characteristics, immigrants who use the library appear more likely to remain in the province. Although this likelihood is not statistically significant one year after arriving, the association between library use and retention in NB becomes larger (and statistically significant) at the two- and three-year marks, suggesting that the impact of library use becomes stronger as immigrants spend more time settling in the province.

Although administrative data cannot reveal the reasons driving this association, it aligns with broader research showing that libraries provide critical settlement supports that help newcomers navigate and feel anchored in their new environment culture (Shepherd et al., 2018; Shuva, 2023). These results suggest the potential of NB's public libraries to contribute to the province's broader population and immigration goals by serving as an accessible, low-barrier point of connection for newcomer families.

Looking Forward

Several areas that were beyond the scope of the current study could be addressed in future work on this topic.

For example, existing administrative data sets at DataNB could be used to explore patterns of library use among populations of interest that were not fully considered in the current work – such as seniors. Existing resources could also support deeper analyses of how library use relates to a wider range of outcomes, including physical and mental health.

Future work could also address certain limitations facing the current study. For instance, many high-risk library users either do not have their own library card or lack a permanent address that could be used for data linkage. As such, high-risk users are likely underrepresented in administrative records, making it difficult to fully understand engagement among some of the province's most vulnerable populations.

It would also be valuable to expand our measure of library use beyond borrowing. Many library users may rely on in-branch services, such as public computers, free Wi-Fi, community programs, events, or settlement supports – none of which involve borrowing resources. Tracking library users' utilization of "non-borrowing resources" would provide a more complete picture of engagement and could facilitate evaluation of targeted programs.

Conclusion

Although this study cannot establish causality, the evidence suggests that NB's public libraries contribute meaningfully to the educational and social fabric of the province. The findings underscore the importance of maintaining accessible library services and highlight gaps in reaching groups with lower engagement, including seniors and households located farther from library infrastructure. More broadly, the study demonstrates the value of cross-sector administrative data in understanding how public services intersect with long-term outcomes – an approach that can inform evidence-based policy and support the continued evolution of NBPLS as a vital public institution.

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GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Attachment 7.1.1

MEMORANDUM

Date: 2026-10-27
To: GVPL Board of Trustees
From: S. Lansdowne- Chair, Finance Committee; and M. Barnes- Director, Finance
Subject: Use of Contingency Reserve

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to provide information on the decision of the Finance Committee to approve the use of $150,000 from the Contingency Reserve to offset an expected deficit due to a gap between projected and real staff vacancy rate for 2026.

Background:

The 2026 budget as approved by the GVPL Board and Councils allowed for a $437,080 use of the Contingency Reserve. Subsequently, the CEO search committee approved search costs of $55,000 to be funded from the Contingency Reserve.

At the Finance Committee meeting held on Sept 29, 2026 , the committee was informed of a projected deficit of $150,000 and approved Management's request to transfer up to an additional $150,000 from the Contingency Reserve at year end, if required.

Under Board Policy 3.6, the Finance Committee is empowered to make changes to the budget up to 2% of the approved operating budget for the year. In 2026, that would allow for changes of up to $533,000. Changes above this amount, would need to be approved by the GVPL Board and Councils. There is also a minimum balance requirement of 1% of the annual operating budget (Policy 3.7), and the remaining balance will be well above that threshold.

The biggest cost factor driving the projected deficit in 2026 is the library's success in recruitment. While an 8% vacancy was budgeted, this has been reduced, from 22% in the prior year, to 5% in the current year (2027 Budget uses the 5% figure). In October Finance staff projected a variance of $150,000 for staffing costs vs. budget in 2026. Management is looking to mitigate this variance through the reduction in other expenses and capital and will report back to Finance Committee members in November.

The updated schedule below includes the following as 2026 Planned costs from the Contingency Reserve:

Approved 2026 budget	$ 437,080
CEO search costs - Approved by the Board earlier in 2026	$ 55,000
Offset forecasted deficit - Approved by the Finance Committee Sept 29/26	$ 150,000
Total	**$ 642,080**

Recommendation:

That the GVPL Board of Trustees receive the report for information.

Relevant Policies:

GVPL Board Policy 3.6 – Purchasing and Signing Authority

… excerpt:

Authorizations

Budgeted Expenditures

1. Established Annual Operating Budgets, approved by the member municipalities by May 1st, and reserve fund budgets approved by the Library Board are the source of authority for all expenditures. The Library Operating Agreement sets out parameters for the Annual Operating Budget, including approval and appropriate use.

2. Budget Amendments – Individual lines within the budget may be amended (i.e. reallocated) within the following limits:

Approval requirement	**Criteria**	**Range**
CEO and Director, Finance	Within same budget category[1]	Up to $100,000
Finance Committee	From one budget category to another	Up to $100,000
Finance Committee		$100,000 up to 2% of operating budget
Board and Councils		Greater than 2% of operating budget[2]

3. The CEO authorizes certain staff members, as Budget Authorities, to make commitments and approve expenditures in accordance with approved budgets, this policy and other Board policies.

4. Budget Authority responsibilities and conditions for delegation of authority are outlined in the Budget Authority Guidelines.

GVPL Board Policy 3.7 – Reserve Funds

… excerpt:

Fund Balances

…

- Contingency Reserve

It is the policy of the Board to provide for unanticipated expenditures or shortfalls of revenue in the operating budget through the Contingency Reserve. Monies, as available, may be paid into the reserve. The balance of the reserve shall be at least 1% of the current year's operating budget. If this goal is not met, the Finance Manager will budget for an annual transfer from operations sufficient to achieve the goal within five (5) years.

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

2027 DRAFT Budget and 2027-2031 Five Year Financial Plan

Review / Approval Dates:

Review - Finance Committee: August 18, 2026

Review – Finance Committee: September 29, 2026

Approval – Board of Trustees: October 27, 2026

Version: 2026-10-27

2027 DRAFT Budget Executive Summary

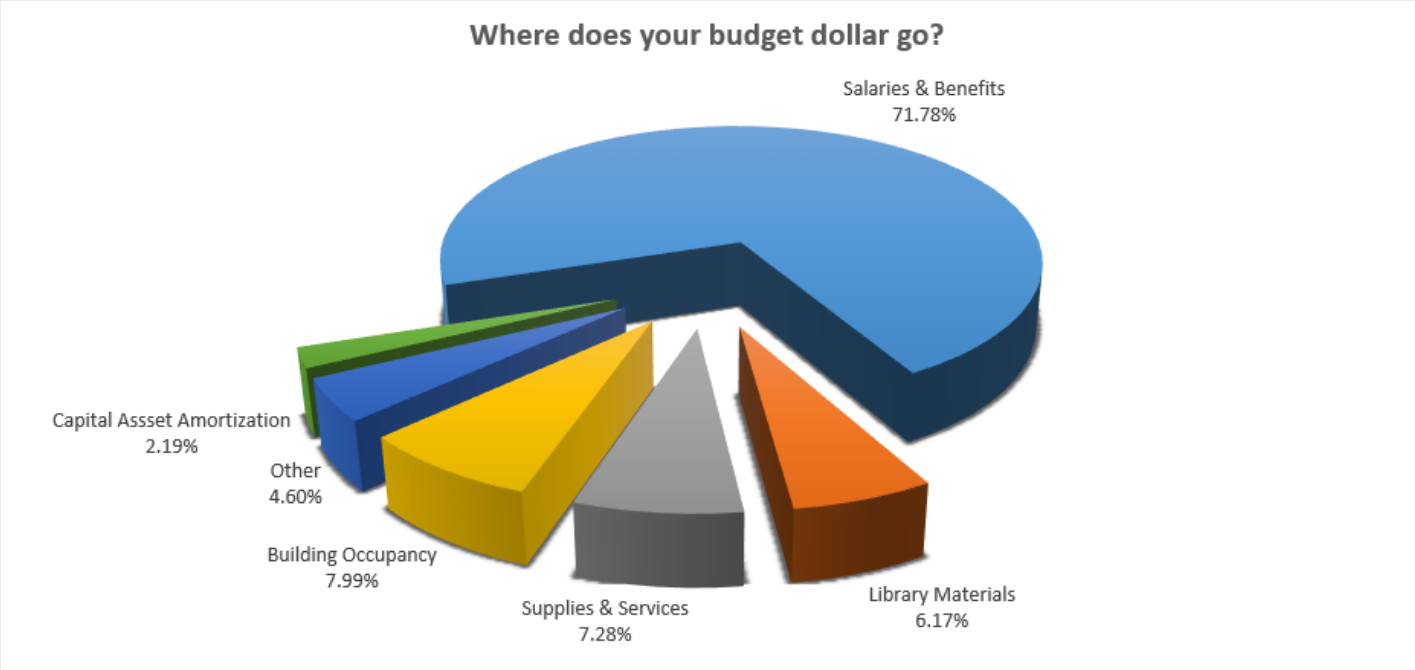
Public libraries are key social infrastructure, facilitating personal, economic, and community development. A vital part of vibrant communities, public libraries are indispensable community hubs. The Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) supports literacy and lifelong learning by providing free and equitable access to information, space, tools, and expertise. There are 12 branch locations within 10 local municipalities serving more than 389,000 residents. GVPL's digital library and services are available anytime, anywhere on our website at gvpl.ca.

GVPL's operating budget is funded primarily by our ten municipal partners, with remaining revenues from provincial grants, investment income and fees for services. A key objective is to maintain municipal contribution increases within an acceptable range. As the demand for public library services continues to grow, budget increases are necessary to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve. GVPL is committed to supporting the wellbeing of our community by providing welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.

Budget changes for 2027 are aligned with expanded offerings of library services, such as Sunday openings, programming and outreach. As well there are additional workload pressures due to increased patron usage, which continue to have an impact on our operating costs. We continue to look for savings and efficiencies whenever possible and are committed to achieving the Board's mandate to increase our programming and outreach activities outside of the physical walls of library branches. This service expansion work has already begun in 2026 and is reflected in our 2027 operational plan.

Provincial operating grant funding for public libraries in British Columbia is projected to be maintained at 2025 levels unless proposed per capita formula adjustments, which would reduce funding for B.C.'s urban library systems, are applied in 2027.

The Greater Victoria Public Library budget is allocated as illustrated below.



Staffing costs for the 2027 budget reflect a negotiated general wage increase and a projected reduction in the vacancy rate. Conservative staffing increases (+2.4 FTEs) support service expansion, staff availability for Sunday openings, greater program delivery, community outreach and expanded service points at the Central branch.

GVPL continuously reviews staffing levels to ensure alignment with GVPL's strategic and community needs. Staff investments are guided by GVPL's commitment to operational excellence, equitable service across communities, and a safe, sustainable work environment for all employees.

The five-year financial outlook anticipates additional salary and branch related costs to increase capacity for expanded services. As with any estimate, there are uncertainties related to timing and costs. Any changes to the assumptions used to create the original estimates may result in unanticipated increases.

The 2027 draft budget and future years costs are reflective of existing service delivery and facilities, except as noted. Support costs for providing library services continue to increase due to escalating costs of collections, safety and security requirements and system infrastructure costs.

As with the 2026 Budget, the 2027 Budget utilizes Reserve funds for system and infrastructure projects, security improvements, facility projects and funding the temporary positions and the first year of new FTEs.

Key increases:

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Total Budget – Funded (net of Reserves)	**6.1%**	**5.9%**	**5.3%**	**4.3%**	**3.4%**
Municipal Funding increase	6.5%	6.5%	5.5%	4.5%	3.5%

The cost drivers that result in the 6% increase for the 2027 Total Funded Budget are:

- Salaries inflation, new FTEs and decrease in estimated vacancy rate - $1.3M
- Non-salary inflation and costs - $245K

GVPL is committed to operating efficiently and effectively to deliver library services to our 10 member municipalities. The library system leverages more than 100 active community partnerships to expand programs and lifelong learning opportunities for Greater Victoria residents. The Cost per Capita in the 2027 Budget is $64.52, an increase from the 2027 Budget, $61.19.

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

DRAFT BUDGET AT A GLANCE

		2027		***2026***
Total Budget-Funded (net of Reserves) [1]	**$**	**26,335,826**	$	26,753,194
Increase %		**6.07%**		6.92%
Operating Budget [2]	**$**	**28,605,134**	$	26,645,078
Increase % [3]		**7.39%**		6.47%
Capital Budget	**$**	**2,236,466**	$	2,055,166
Increase %		**8.82%**		0.95%
Municipal Contribution - Total	**$**	**25,128,099**	$	23,594,459
Municipal Contribution - Increase	**$**	**1,533,640**	$	1,747,737
Increase (%)		**6.50%**		8.00%
Funded from Municipal Cont. (%)		**87.37%**		88.19%
Use of Reserves	**$**	**2,423,920**	$	1,924,080
Funded from Reserves (%)		**8.43%**		7.19%
Other sources of Revenues	**$**	**1,207,727**	$	1,234,655
Funded from Other Revenues (%)		**4.20%**		4.61%
Cost per Capita [4]	**$**	**64.52**	$	61.19
Cost per Capita Increase	**$**	**3.94**	$	4.53
Population (Member Municipalities) [5]		**389,434**		385,596

Note 1 – Total budget funded (net of Reserves) is equal to expenses (Operating budget) less amortization (non-funded expense) plus capital budget less Reserve funded expenses.

Note 2 – Operating budget consists of operating expenses only including Reserve funded.

Note 3 – Net of Amortization

Note 4 – Municipal Contribution Total divided by Population

Note 5 – As per BC Stats, 2025 Sub-Provincial Population Estimates

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GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

DRAFT 2027 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan

	2026	2027	Change	Change%	Notes	2028	2029	2030	2031
Revenues									
Municipal Contributions - Operating	$ 23,594,459	25,128,099	$ 1,533,640	6.50%	1	$ 26,761,426	$ 28,233,304	$ 29,503,803	$ 30,536,436
Municipal Contributions - Start-up	-	-	-		2	-	-	-	-
Provincial Grants	678,372	677,532	(840)	-0.1%	3	677,532	677,532	677,532	677,532
Federal Grants	-	-	-	0.0%		-	-	-	-
Fees and Misc.	29,400	33,900	4,500	15.3%	4	33,900	33,900	33,900	33,900
Contracts for Service	32,890	34,180	1,290	3.9%	5	34,180	34,180	34,180	34,180
Investment Income	400,000	325,000	(75,000)	-18.8%	6	240,000	240,000	240,000	240,000
Donations and Other Grants	93,993	137,115	43,122	45.9%	7	137,415	137,673	137,936	138,207
	24,829,114	26,335,826	1,506,712	6.1%		27,884,453	29,356,589	30,627,351	31,660,255
Expenses (Operating Budget)									
Salaries and Benefits	19,194,782	20,533,462	1,338,680	7.0%	8	21,234,926	22,143,128	22,696,707	23,264,124
Library Materials	1,671,447	1,764,544	93,097	5.6%	9	1,812,330	1,857,639	1,904,080	1,951,682
Amortization	1,947,000	2,081,853	134,853	6.9%	10	2,081,853	2,081,853	2,081,853	2,081,853
Supplies and Services	1,960,256	2,285,428	325,172	16.6%	11	1,789,963	1,834,712	1,880,580	1,927,595
Building Occupancy	1,274,241	1,314,469	40,228	3.2%	12	1,302,403	1,436,952	1,472,875	1,509,697
Other Expenses	597,352	625,378	28,026	4.7%	13	644,139	660,242	676,748	693,667
	26,645,078	28,605,134	1,960,055	7.4%		28,865,614	30,014,526	30,712,843	31,428,618
Annual Surplus/(Deficit)	(1,815,964)	(2,269,307)	(453,343)	25.0%		(981,161)	(657,938)	(85,492)	231,637
Add back: Unfunded Amortization	1,947,000	2,081,853	134,853	6.9%	11	2,081,853	2,081,853	2,081,853	2,081,853
	131,036	(187,454)	(318,490)			1,100,692	1,423,915	1,996,361	2,313,490

Total Budget - Funded (net of Reserves)	**24,829,114**	**26,335,826**	**27,884,452**	**29,356,589**	**30,627,351**	**31,660,254**
Total Budget - Funded (net of Reserves) increase		**6.07%**	**5.88%**	**5.28%**	**4.33%**	**3.37%**
Municipal Contributions-Operating Increase	**8.00%**	**6.50%**	**6.50%**	**5.50%**	**4.50%**	**3.50%**
Municipal Contributions-Estimated Increase from prior year		6.50%	6.50%	4.50%	3.50%	

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GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

DRAFT 2027 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan

	2026	2027	Change		Notes	2028	2029	2030	2031
Balance forward from Page 1	131,036	(187,454)	(318,490)			1,100,692	1,423,915	1,996,361	2,313,490
Capital Expenses									
Library Materials	1,398,541	1,412,544	14,003	1.0%	9	1,454,920	1,491,293	1,528,576	1,566,790
Hardware	345,000	385,000	40,000	11.6%	14	100,000	102,500	105,063	107,689
Shelving	82,400	84,872	2,472		14	87,418	89,604	91,844	94,140
Furniture and Equipment	151,410	155,952	4,542	3.0%	14	160,631	164,647	168,763	172,982
Building Improvement	77,765	80,098	2,333	3.0%	14	82,501	84,563	86,677	88,844
Vehicles	-	118,000	118,000		14	50,000	-	-	-
Branch Start-ups:									
Library Materials	-	-	-			-	-	-	-
	2,055,116	2,236,466	181,350	8.8%		1,935,470	1,932,607	1,980,922	2,030,445
Transfers									
Transfer to Replacement Reserve	-	-	-			-	-	530,388	810,867
Transfer from Replacement Reserve	(412,000)	(474,360)	(62,360)			(487,091)	(448,018)	(459,219)	(470,699)
Transfer from Contingency Reserve	(437,080)	(519,535)	(82,455)			(193,239)	(6,302)	-	-
Transfer from Personnel Contingency Reserve	(400,000)	(462,925)	(62,925)			(101,404)	-	-	-
Transfer from Consulting Reserve	(400,000)	(376,500)	23,500			(53,045)	(54,371)	(55,730)	(57,124)
Transfer from ITS Reserve	(275,000)	(480,000)	(205,000)			-	-	-	-
Transfer from Library Materials Reserve	-	-	-			-	-	-	-
Transfer from Enhancement Reserve	-	(68,000)	(68,000)			-	-	-	-
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(1,924,080)	(2,381,320)	(457,240)	23.8%	15	(834,779)	(508,691)	15,439	283,044
Transfer from Capital Improvement Fund	-	(42,600)	(42,600)			-	-	-	-
	(1,924,080)	(2,423,920)	(499,840)			(834,779)	(508,691)	15,439	283,044
Financial Plan Balance	**0**	**0**	**0**			**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Reserve Balance	**6,744,697**	**4,363,378**				**3,528,599**	**3,019,907**	**3,035,346**	**3,318,390**

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GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

DRAFT 2027 MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTIONS

	2026		2027					
	Share 2026 (*1)	Total Requisition 2026	Share 2027 (*3)	Operating Budget	Rent Adjustment (*2)	Total Requisition 2027	Increase (*4) $	Increase (*4) %
Central Saanich	5.05%	$1,200,459	5.01%	$1,258,918	$8,868	**$1,267,786**	$67,327	5.60%
Colwood	5.44%	1,290,846	5.60%	1,407,174	7,526	**1,414,700**	123,854	9.60%
Esquimalt	5.18%	1,217,374	5.18%	1,301,636	-4,878	**1,296,758**	79,384	6.50%
Highlands	0.71%	168,474	0.72%	180,922	967	**181,889**	13,416	8.00%
Langford	13.96%	3,312,700	14.20%	3,568,190	19,243	**3,587,433**	274,733	8.30%
Metchosin	1.50%	355,910	1.47%	369,383	1,952	**371,335**	15,425	4.30%
Oak Bay	5.93%	1,393,431	5.90%	1,482,558	-5,790	**1,476,768**	83,336	6.00%
Saanich	31.53%	7,413,138	31.41%	7,892,736	-26,515	**7,866,221**	453,083	6.10%
Victoria	27.64%	6,518,944	27.40%	6,885,099	-2,584	**6,882,515**	363,571	5.60%
View Royal	3.06%	723,182	3.11%	781,484	1,211	**782,695**	59,512	8.20%
Total	**100%**	**$23,594,459**	**100%**	**$25,128,099**	**$0**	**$25,128,099**	**$1,533,640**	**6.50%**

1 - % Share calculated before Rent Adjustment to be comparative to 2026

2 - The **Rent Adjustment** is calculated in accordance with Section 8.12 (a), (b) and (c) of the Library Operating Agreement and relates to portions of buildings used to benefit all member municipalities: the Collection and Technical Services section of the Juan de Fuca Branch building and the Administrative portion of the Central Branch building. Municipalities which did not contribute to the initial acquisition of such building or who did not subsequently purchase a portion of such building pays reasonable rent to those Municipalities that did.

3 - The 2027 Share %s may change inisginficantly as two Municipalities have not provided Property Value Assessment details at the time of the preparation.

4 - The two largest municipalities, Victoria and Saanich had lower than average increases or had decreases in Property Tax Assessment values. The impact is a larger increase to municipalites with larger than average increases in Property Tax Assessment and Populations values (Colwood, Langford and View Royal). The average cost per capita for these three municipalities is still lower than the average, as noted on the next page.

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

DRAFT 2027 MUNICIPAL PER CAPITA CONTRIBUTIONS

	2027				
	Total Requisition 2027	Population [1]	Cost Per Capita 2027	Increase per capita	increase
Central Saanich	$1,267,786	18,184	69.72	$3.70	$67,327
Colwood	$1,414,700	22,794	62.06	$5.43	$123,854
Esquimalt	$1,296,758	19,512	66.46	$4.07	$79,384
Highlands	$181,889	2,753	66.07	$4.87	$13,416
Langford	$3,587,433	59,664	60.13	$4.60	$274,733
Metchosin	$371,335	5,207	71.31	$2.96	$15,425
Oak Bay	$1,476,768	18,626	79.29	$4.47	$83,336
Saanich	$7,866,221	126,011	62.42	$3.60	$453,083
Victoria	$6,882,515	103,888	66.25	$3.50	$363,571
View Royal	$782,695	12,795	61.17	$4.65	$59,512
Total	**$25,128,099**	**389,434**	**$64.52**	**$3.94**	**$1,533,640**

[1] Source of population figures - BC Stats website: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates, 2025, accessed July 2026

General note: Percentage share of costs by municipality are determined based on 50% property assessment value and 50% population estimate. More detailed information on assessment values and population are available on request.

DRAFT Notes to the 2027 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan

Components of the 2027 budget include the following:

1. **Municipal Contributions – Operating**

   Increase $1,533,640 or 6.5%

2. **Municipal Contributions – Start-up**
   Nil

This line item represents any funds made available within the operating budget specifically identified for a new branch or relocation of an existing branch. No costs have been included for the start-up costs for the new Cedar Hill branch or any other alternative service delivery.

3. **Provincial Grants**
   - **No change**

Regular Provincial funding (operating) for public libraries in British Columbia is based on the base funding received in 2025.

* **Note** - This assumes funding for the Provincial Library Operating Grant will be restored to 2025 levels. The 2026 Provincial Per Capita Grant allocation was unexpectedly reduced for large urban library systems due to an unannounced funding formula adjustment. The 2026 adjustment resulted in a reduction of $55,000 for GVPL which was restored by the Province in September 2026 through one-time supplemental funding.

4. **Fees and Misc.**
   Increase $4,500

This revenue category included revenue relating to fees, meeting room rentals and printing. The 2027 Budget includes revenue related to fees only. Policies and procedures related to printing and meeting room rentals are under review.

5. **Contracts for Service**
   Increase $1,290

This is an annual payment from the Capital Regional District for service delivery relating to the Juan de Fuca Electoral District. (Willis Point, Durrance, Malahat).

6. **Investment Income**
   Decrease $75,000

Investment revenue is conservatively estimated to reflect projected continuation of modest earnings in the Municipal Finance Authority bond fund and returns for secured GIC's and operating bank interest that reflect current and anticipated interest rates. The decrease is related to investment income allocated to restricted funds.

7. **Donations and Other Grants**
   Increase $43,122

Donations and grants can vary from year to year and are dependent on specific funded programs and services planned during the year. Donations specific to collections are not included as the related collections cost is also excluded. The increase is related to a new donor that is anticipated to be recurring.

8. **Salaries and Benefits**
   Increase $1,338,680

Salaries and benefits are budgeted at full scheduled hours. Sunday openings included are based on the Central branch open year-round and five other branches open from September to May. Staff gapping or an estimation of vacancies is included in the budget. All costs include Salaries and Benefits.

- Increases relate to:
  - Contractually negotiated general wage increase of 3.25% - $606K.
  - Expansion of services - increase in Sunday operations and Outreach - $120K.
  - Additional budgeted permanent positions - $232K.
  - Additional budgeted temporary positions- $247K.
  - Planning for a lower vacancy rate - $405K.
- Offsetting these increases are savings resulting from a senior management team restructuring, which have funded additional Auxiliary staff support for training and leave management.
- Personnel Reserve is being utilized to fund the cost of the first year of the new permanent positions; $200K.
- Increased permanent positions are aligned with increased offerings of services, including programming and outreach as well as increased workload pressures due to the closure of the Nellie McClung branch.
  - Library Services
    - 1.6 FTEs – 2 Circulation Assistants to increase capacity for service delivery.
    - 0.8 FTE – 1 Circulation assistant for the Central branch to support expanded services.
- Temporary positions are required to support implementation of strategic plan initiatives and are funded by the Personnel Reserve.
    - 1.0 FTE – Resource Manager position to support: advancing the capability of a resource management framework within GVPL through implementation of processes, systems and training; Enterprise Application Management through establishing governance frameworks; Project leadership capabilities within existing GVPL staff.
    - 1.0 FTE – to support implementation of a Human Resource Information System (HRIS). Replacing GVPL's fragmented Human Resources (HR), Payroll, Scheduling and Leave Management processes and disconnected systems with a secure, centralized, and scalable HRIS platform will improve operational efficiency, workforce management, compliance, employee experience, and organizational decision-making.

9. **Library Materials (Collections) (Expense and Capital)**
   Increase Expense – eResources and Digital Assets $93,097
   Increase Capital – Physical Materials $14,003

The library materials(collections) budget comprises of both expenses for digital and eResources and capital for books, audio visual and other physical formats which are capitalized as assets and amortized over 7 years. The budget ratio is 55.5% (2026 54.5%) for digital and 44.5% (2026 45.5%) for physical collections.

10. **Amortization**
    Increase $134,853

This is the estimated amortization expense for tangible capital assets, in accordance with the Board's Tangible Capital Asset policy. The increase is related to high asset additions in 2025 related to the Nellie McClung express branch. Since this is an unfunded expense, it is added back to the budgeted annual surplus and does vary year over year depending on capital asset purchases and disposals.

11. **Supplies and Services**
    Increase $325,172

$200K of the increase is related to specific one-time initiatives, funded by Reserves. $150K is an estimate for the implementation of a Human Resource Information System. This project is dependent on review of business requirements and RFP process that will ensure a new system is viable both operationally and financially. $50K is for continued investment in security initiatives.

The remaining $125K or 6% increase relates to inflationary increases for all services. Some supplies and services have higher inflationary pressure than the generally applied inflation of 3%. These include vehicle, furniture and equipment maintenance (18%), fuel (15%), application licensing costs (4%) and professional services (7%). Vehicle maintenance has increased with an aging fleet. Operating costs for a new HRIS system ($25K) have been included.

Ongoing supplies and services costs that are funded by Municipalities include general and office supplies, telephone, networks, subscription and licensing, professional fees, advertising, printer paper, moving costs and vehicle fuel and maintenance.

12. **Building Occupancy**
    Increase $40,228

Building occupancy includes building maintenance, security, recycling and refuse collection and utilities. The increase in this category is inflationary.

13. **Other Expenses**
    Increase $28,026

Other expenses include insurance, employee recruitment costs, training, and business travel expenses. Printer lease, copy costs and paper are also included in this category. The increase in this category is inflationary. Insurance costs are anticipated to increase by 5%.

14. **Capital Expenditures (Library Materials, Hardware, Shelving, Furniture and Equipment, Building Improvement, Vehicles)**
    Increase $181,350

Capital expenditure increases are due to an Outreach vehicle replacement and IT hardware replacement costs, which are mainly funded by Reserves.

15. **Transfer to/(from) Reserves**
    Change in Net Transfer from Reserves ($457,240)

The 2027 budget continues to utilize Reserve balances to augment funding for facilities upgrades, implementation of security initiatives, information technology infrastructure and temporary support for strategic plan initiatives. Transfers to and from reserves are approved by the Board of Trustees through the Budget approval process or specific briefing notes.

2027 - Municipal Contributions Formula, Population and Assessment Values

Municipal Funding formula is calculated:

- 50% Population (BC Statistics-2025)
- 50% BC Assessment property tax valuations (roll totals by jurisdiction and property class report 2025 less exemptions provided from Municipalities
- Per the Library Operating Agreement; sec 6 Municipal Contributions to Net Operating Cost

Changes: Four municipalities Funding Formula changed by more than 0.05%

- Langford – 0.24% (2026 increase 0.58%)
- Colwood – 0.16% (2026 increase 0.11%)
- Saanich - (0.12%) (2026 decrease 0.38%)
- Victoria – (0.24%) (2026 decrease 0.09%)

Population changes – average increase 1.12%	Assessment changes – overall increase 1.02%
• Highlands 5.16% • Colwood 2.9% • Langford 2.3% • Metchosin (2.33%)	• Colwood 5.22% • View Royal 4.14% • Lanford 3.23%

Population change	Current Year	Prior Year	Change	
Central Saanich	18,184	18,150	34	0.19%
Colwood	22,794	22,151	643	2.90%
Esquimalt	19,512	19,302	210	1.09%
Highlands	2,753	2,618	135	5.16%
Langford	59,664	58,320	1,344	2.30%
Metchosin	5,207	5,331	(124)	-2.33%
Oak Bay	18,626	18,813	(187)	-0.99%
Saanich	126,011	125,436	575	0.46%
Victoria	103,888	102,856	1,032	1.00%
View Royal	12,795	12,619	176	1.39%
Total	389,434	385,596	3,838	1.00%
			Average	1.12%

Assessment change	Current Year	Prior Year	Change	
Central Saanich	972,826,580	971,648,142	1,178,438	0.12%
Colwood	974,936,151	926,587,380	48,348,771	5.22%
Esquimalt	974,328,274	966,390,833	7,937,441	0.82%
Highlands	132,030,969	133,730,534	(1,699,565)	-1.27%
Langford	2,381,311,433	2,306,766,196	74,545,237	3.23%
Metchosin	289,925,171	291,191,273	(1,266,102)	-0.43%
Oak Bay	1,278,726,315	1,257,613,123	21,113,192	1.68%
Saanich	5,541,525,321	5,499,214,557	42,310,764	0.77%
Victoria	5,119,684,264	5,152,945,702	(33,261,438)	-0.65%
View Royal	535,224,818	513,948,501	21,276,317	4.14%
Total	17,665,294,478	17,506,087,741	159,206,737	0.91%
			Average	1.05%

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Reserve Fund Balances

Reserve Fund	Dec 2025 Balance	2025 Surplus Alloc	Jan 1/26 Balance	Planned 2026	Forecasted Balance December 2026	Planned 2027-2031	Forecasted Balance 2031	Estimated Balance to 2030 (in 2026 Budget Package)
Replacement	1,888,375	125,000	2,013,375	(312,000)	1,701,375	(998,132)	703,243	(98,925)
Personnel	1,429,462	-	1,429,462	(455,731)	973,731	(564,329)	409,402	829,462
Library Material	736,304	28,871	765,175	-	765,175	-	765,175	736,304
ITS Replacement	762,169	275,000	1,037,169	(275,000)	762,169	(480,000)	282,169	79,255
Consulting Reserve	771,121	250,000	1,021,121	(400,000)	621,121	(596,770)	24,351	33,794
Contingency (*1)	2,299,834	195,372	2,495,206	(642,080)	1,853,126	(719,076)	1,134,050	695,931
Enhancement Reserve	335,567	-	335,567	(267,567)	68,000	(68,000)	0	-
Total Reserve Funds	**8,222,832**	**874,243**	**9,097,075**	**(2,352,378)**	**6,744,697**	**(3,426,307)**	**3,318,390**	**2,275,821**
Capital Improvement Fund	2,186,445	93,200	2,279,645	(50,600)	2,229,045	(42,600)	2,186,445	2,093,245
Total Reserve and Unrestricted Funds	**10,409,277**	**967,443**	**11,376,720**	**(2,402,978)**	**8,973,742**	**(3,468,907)**	**5,504,835**	**4,369,066**

(*1) The Contingency Reserve balances presented to the Finance Committee on Sept 29/26 included $55K of Planned 2026 expenses. This represented $55,000 related to CEO search costs. The Planned 2026 value did not include the approved budget of $437,080. Also included is $150K, the additional amount approved at the Sept. 29/26 Finance Committee meeting required to offset the 2026 deficit forecasted at September 2026.

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 27, 2026
To: GVPL Board of Trustees
From: Stephanie Hall, CEO
Subject: Unattended Children in the Library Policy Rollout Plan progress to date

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to provide requested information on the plan to roll out the Unattended Child Policy passed on June 23, 2026. Some slight delays have occurred due to key staff vacancies, CEO transition, and communication process with external agencies, however the project is almost ready to roll out.

Background:

The Unattended Child policy sets out the requirement for all children 10 or under to be accompanied and actively supervised by a caregiver. Unlike in a school environment, library staff do not act in loco parentis. Upon approval of this policy, the following next steps were to be initiated:

- *"Senior staff will work with a representative of the Ministry of Children and Family Services to review staff processes and procedures and provide training for staff to support the appropriate implementation of the policy"*
    - Library staff did initiate the meeting, but found the training was more appropriate to social work professionals and not that of library staff, who are merely required to be aware of reporting procedures when a child appears at risk
    - Subsequently, Staff developed in house training which will be delivered to frontline staff by year end. In short, the approach in this training is lower-intervention – staff are to intervene in the case of an obvious problem, but not to check the age of all children. If a child appears worried or is unattended 15 minutes before closing, unattended child procedures will be followed by staff. If a parent cannot be contacted within 15 minutes, police will be notified. Staff will stay with the child until police arrive.
    - Additional training by Westshore Recreation will be provided.
- *A communications plan will be developed for staff and patrons*
    - A draft has been created, but there is a need for coordination and resolution of a number of points.
- *Policy 1.8 Responsibilities of Library Users will be updated to reference the new Unattended Children policy.*
    - This appears to have been delayed until such time as the communications plan can be activated.

Next steps:

Given this is an item of concern to the board, the CEO should convene a meeting of management stakeholders to resolve outstanding issues to enable rollout by year end.