

Annual Report 2009



Message from the Chair.

2009 saw Courthouse Libraries BC successfully launch two major initiatives—both online—that are positively shaping the organization’s role as a leader in British Columbia’s legal, library, and public user communities for the decade ahead.

In April, we launched Clicklaw (www.clicklaw.bc.ca), a portal website designed for the general public. Clicklaw was developed in collaboration with 24 BC organizations that produce public legal education and information. The resulting cohesive, content-rich resource has proven to be an instant success.

CLBC was the organizational lead in Clicklaw’s development, and the collaborative approach we piloted on this project has attracted attention both nationally and internationally, extending even to the U.K. where the Attorney General has expressed a keen interest.

The success of Clicklaw can be attributed in part to the positive relationships we have fostered with stakeholder groups around the province. This model of partnering in a positive, solutions-oriented way with other legal organizations represents a fundamental and enduring shift in our approach to new initiatives, one that we anticipate will contribute to our ongoing strength in a climate of rapidly evolving technology and limited fiscal resources.

In November, we launched a completely redeveloped Courthouse Libraries website (www.courthouselibrary.ca), our flagship online destination for the legal community.

Increasingly, BC lawyers conduct the majority of their legal research and

information-gathering tasks directly from their desktops—a now pervasive trend that is only expected to grow over time. A powerful online access point to the library’s resources, expertise, and personnel is therefore a critical component of our mandate to directly serve the legal community.

With the earlier launch of Clicklaw for the general public, we were able to focus the new Courthouse Libraries website more explicitly on the needs of practicing lawyers. The website now includes an array of new features built with the practitioner in mind, including comprehensive search tools, information feeds organized by practice area, user accounts, and online ordering capabilities.

Evidence of the new site’s increased value to the profession can be found in:

Increased site use

- +35% page views Nov-Dec 2009 / Nov-Dec 2008

Broader online reach

- Linkages to our website on such dynamic online sources as www.slw.ca, Canada’s pre-eminent legal blog and LexMonitor, an American daily review of law blogs and journals

User Feedback

- Multiple citations and references in Canadian online legal media
- Finalist recognition for our new blog “The Stream” in the 2009 Canadian law blog awards
- User testimonials

Training in legal research skills was also a growing component of our work in 2009. CLBC led numerous sessions throughout the year customized for particular audiences including lawyers, court clerks, students, legal advocates and librarians. These sessions have proven invaluable in allowing us to engage in greater depth with stakeholder communities and other legal organizations. We anticipate that training will also play an increasing role in our efforts in the years ahead, as the methodology of legal research continues to rapidly evolve and users turn to CLBC for guidance from a trusted source.

As the quantity of online legal information and the number of different content producers both proliferate, and lawyers look first for answers to their questions online, CLBC increasingly takes on a vital role as an information curator. Identifying, vetting and making accessible to lawyers the most valuable content for their particular needs—irrespective of its source format (whether that be in print, in a blog, or via an online database)—is at the core of our organizational mandate.

The technology with which we gather and distribute information to our audiences is changing. But our role as curators who identify, gather and deliver relevant information to our key audiences is very much in keeping with the best traditions of library stewardship and reference services, and with the high standards of quality and reliability that have characterized our organization since its inception.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the continued support of the Law Foundation of BC, the Law Society of British Columbia and the Ministry of the Attorney General, as well as the invaluable contributions of our Board of Directors and staff. All have worked together with dedication and commitment towards a common goal: to ensure the best possible service to the legal community and to all BC citizens.

William Everett

Chair, Board of Directors



Client Services.

Summary of selected key statistics

40,909
(+1,763)



CLBC staff service requests

1,077



Number of copies of new book titles added system-wide

181,282
(+4,913)



In-person visits (Vancouver)

42,392
(+1,270)



Books used in-branch (Vancouver)

458,696



Annual Courthouse Library website page views*

259,062



Annual Courthouse Library website visits*

+35%



Percentage increase in visits to new website
Nov-Dec 2009 over same period in 2008

152,240



Clicklaw website page views (April launch - Dec)

38,764



Clicklaw website visits (April launch - Dec)

* Combined statistics for www.bccls.bc.ca (Jan-Oct) and www.courthouselibrary.ca (Nov-Dec)

Hats off to the BC Courthouse Library Society for moving legal research and law libraries a quantum leap forward in terms of web site design, functionality and appeal.

David Bilinsky,
Thoughtful Legal Management blog

The website is terrific. Well-organized and easy to access.
The search tools are fabulous. Thanks for the great tools.

John L. McConchie, McConchie & Company

Community Outreach.

During 2009, the library continued to work on initiatives aimed at making the law more accessible to the public and to engage directly with the legal community.

Clicklaw

We led the development and launch of Clicklaw, a portal website aimed at the public, guiding them to information and services that can help people with legal problems.

Highlights:

- **Collaboration:** Clicklaw is a collaboration featuring 24 organizations in BC that produce public legal education and information. Each of these organizations was set up to contribute their information directly to the Clicklaw website, increasing their sense of ownership of the site and establishing a model that will help with keeping the site up-to-date.
- **Launch:** We launched the Clicklaw website during Law Week, at www.clicklaw.bc.ca. The site was launched as a beta site, meaning that while it was fully functional, there were improvements and additional content coming after launch. Launch activities included participating in Law Week, hands-on training sessions for the public at Vancouver Public Library, a CBC radio interview, and presentations at public library conferences and to the Law Society Benchers.
- **HelpMap:** In December 2009, the HelpMap was launched as a new section of Clicklaw, featuring a searchable map to find free

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I've been using Clicklaw to help clients a lot today. With one caller, I was able to guide him and his wife through Clicklaw, looking at Dial-A-Law scripts, the UBC LSLAP Manual, and small claims information. This couple was going through a very distressing time, and it really helped to point them to such a clear and useful resource like Clicklaw. They felt much more in control of their situation by the end of the call.

Cathy Sostad, Legal Services Society

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and low-cost legal services in communities around British Columbia. Integrated with Google Maps, the HelpMap allows the public to find someone in their community who can provide assistance with legal problems.

LawMatters

We continued collaborating with public libraries on the LawMatters project, developed to place legal materials written for the general public in every public library in the province.

Highlights:

- **Grants to libraries:** 71 public libraries representing 243 branch locations received LawMatters grants to add legal information titles to their collections.
- **Training:** We held 10 training events to help public librarians gain enhanced legal reference skills. The training events reached 110 participants representing 60 library branches.

“ The LawMatters funding has continued to have an impact on our library system. Patrons are often able to have many of their legal questions answered directly with resources in their own communities. The free publications from the People's Law School and Legal Services Society further enhanced all of the branch collections by offering topical and up-to-date resources in accessible language.

Kevin Kierans, Thompson-Nicola Regional District Library System

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- **Community forums:** We worked with the public libraries in Chilliwack and Squamish to organize two legal information community forums. With these forums, we brought together legal information providers in the community and coordinated an information sharing/networking workshop held at the local public library. These two “pilot” forums featured representatives from over 25 community groups. More legal information forums are planned for other communities in 2010.

Within the legal community

CLBC staff provided legal research training and library orientation sessions for broad segments of the legal community, including:

- Practicing lawyers;
- Supreme Court and Court of Appeal clerks;
- Articling students;
- Paralegal students;
- Provincial Court interns; and
- Legal advocates.

Staff members also:

- Taught a three-month legal information course for UBC library students;
- Commenced development of a free online legal research course for Continuing Professional Development Credit (CPD) for lawyers seeking to update their research skills;
- Presented to a Canadian Bar Association-BC Small Firm & Sole Practitioner subsection meeting; and
- Presented to a BCIT law class.

All of these activities have helped us to elevate our profile, promote our services, rejuvenate our client base and ultimately, to reinforce our role as a prime resource and information mentor for the general public, for other stakeholders, and for the legal community.

“The legal information forum was a great way to bring community representatives together to share knowledge and information. The result was an online resource list of legal services in Squamish as well as stronger awareness and connections between local groups.

Marie Palmer, Squamish Public Library”



Infrastructure + Technology.

The benefits of past investments and continued expansion of the Library's technological platform were realized in 2009 with the development of several key initiatives:

- The Aqua Browser search interface introduced in 2008 was launched as the library catalogue's main search platform in 2009, providing users with a more Google-like search experience and the ability to perform integrated searches of both the catalogue and our website.
- In June 2009 the online book circulation system was installed in Nanaimo regional library, marking the completion of our circulation automation project for Vancouver and all six regional libraries.
- Scanning capabilities were added in all of the regional libraries, providing clients of these regional branches with the option of receiving material in electronic format rather than hard copy.
- Our staff conducted the first automated inventory of the Vancouver collection. This automated system significantly reduced the time needed to complete the project and was much less disruptive for clients than the previous methodology. The Vancouver library was last inventoried in 1997.
- Further development of our intranet site has brought improved communication to the entire organization.
- Construction of a web-based application for our Rural Lawyer Credit Programme has provided an efficient administrative tool for library staff throughout the province.
- Increased capacity allowed the construction and support of our two major website initiatives: Clicklaw and our new Courthouse Libraries website.

Facilities + Collections.

Facilities

Victoria:

- The Victoria Courthouse Library was extensively renovated and now features more private computer workstations and a self-checkout station. A seating area, more shelving, and new staff offices have combined to create an open, modern space while re-positioning of the information/circulation desk has facilitated additional interaction with library patrons. As a result, there has been a marked increase in use of the library, as measured in both the numbers of books used in-house and the number of reference questions.

Vancouver:

- In Vancouver, two staff department work areas were upgraded to comply with current ergonomic standards.

Port Coquitlam:

- The Port Coquitlam library moved to a smaller space in the courthouse in July 2009. As a result the physical collection was reduced.

Collections

As in recent years, budget constraints and rising costs have challenged our ability to maintain our physical collections. While some retrenchment is unavoidable, careful management has allowed us to continue to add new titles: 311 new books were purchased for the Vancouver library in 2009 while 1,077 copies of new titles were placed in branches.

Several more copies of frequently used texts were added to the system and new contents were purchased for 30 Vancouver looseleaf publications and over 200 branch copies.

We were also able to update several bound volume sets: American Jurisprudence Legal Forms, Atkin's Encyclopaedia of Court Forms in Civil Proceedings, Corpus Juris Secundum and the Encyclopaedia of Forms and Precedents.

Courthouse Libraries BC is fortunate to receive a number of book donations per year. In 2009, we received a most generous gift of 690 volumes of the Law Reports Reprint [Butterworths (UK)], which will be used to replace many existing volumes worn beyond repair. Any materials we are unable to use are made available to the law library community and other organizations.

In December 2008, we subscribed to the LLMC Digital collection, a database of historical material including Canadian and BC legislation as well as US and Canadian case law. This type of historical material from other sources is typically expensive or difficult to access, or both. To help with improving access to this material, we also acquired catalogue records which allow clients using a computer in the library to link directly from the library catalogue into the LLMC Digital database. In 2009, we added 1190 linked records to our catalogue.

Financial Highlights 2009.

	Operations	Projects	Total
Funding Sources			
Law Foundation of BC	2,747,750	857,182	3,604,932
Law Society of BC	1,695,599	—	1,695,599
Operating Revenue	412,640	—	412,640
Amortization of deferred contributions related to capital assets	—	65,813	65,813
Total	4,855,989	922,995	5,778,984
Expenditures			
Staff	2,418,217	—	2,418,217
Information sources	1,630,453	144,225	1,774,678
Operations	641,523	712,957	1,354,480
Amortization of capital assets	98,177	65,813	163,990
Total	4,788,370	922,995	5,711,365
Information Sources Expenditures			
Print subscriptions	1,071,463	—	1,071,463
New information materials	282,998	144,129	427,127
Electronic subscriptions	226,583	—	226,583
Other expenditures	49,409	96	49,505
Total	1,630,453	144,225	1,774,678

Board of Directors (2009).



In this photograph: Gene Jamieson, the Honourable Madam Justice Susan Griffin, Johanne Blenkin (Executive Director), Michael Roman, Alane Wilson, Gregory Pun, Alex Sweezy, William Everett, Q.C., the Honourable Madam Justice Pamela Kirkpatrick, Joost Blom, Q.C.

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British Columbia Courthouse Library Society
Executive Director: Johanne Blenkin

800 Smithe Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2E1

604.660.2910
www.courthouselibrary.ca