

Preliminary Report of LawMatters Research:  
The Role of Rural Public Libraries in providing PLEI Services

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## Preface

This research study looks at Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) in British Columbia through the lens of public libraries (PLs). Public libraries are a necessary factor in providing fair and equitable access to quality information to the public. With thanks to the committed staff at Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC), and particularly Megan Smiley (LawMatters Program Coordinator), we connected with 57 individual librarians in B.C. in the matter of weeks. We also recognize the Law Foundation for its support of LawMatters and dedication to seeking more effective delivery of PLEI through this study.

As a researcher, I understand that PLEI delivery is done through a relatively complex system of social-purpose organizations, PLEI specialized organizations, independent professionals, and governmental groups. Specialist PLEI services rely on a network of established community organizations (such as public libraries) to reach members of the public effectively. To that end, in studying how LawMatters, and by extension PLEI organizations, could work with public libraries to further extend their reach, it was critical to consider the mission-based priorities of public libraries. A key question I considered was “How are public libraries, with their own resource challenges, able to be invested in supporting PLEI in B.C. and how can LawMatters better support libraries?”

This study, I hope, offers the Law Foundation, CLBC and other PLEI-focused organizations insight into the day-to-day demands of PLs in rural and remote communities. Ultimately, it can help design PLEI activities that better fit the needs and constraints of public libraries; to fill gaps where necessary, offer training and expertise where needed, resources to develop tools, and the understanding required to clarify the range of questions that fall under legal issues.

LawMatters and CLBC have established productive relationships with 71 library systems throughout the province. This model is a leader in Canada and has had great success in getting legal resources into underserved communities. A testament to this is the fact that during a very difficult wildfire season for many of them, around 80% of non-urban libraries took time from demanding schedules to give us feedback. They are committed to offering the best to their patrons, and I hope this study allows for them to be supported to further achieve that goal.

## Executive Summary

Public libraries have broad and aspirational social goals to meet - building communities, providing fair and equitable access to quality information, and inspiring the populace to engage in lifelong learning. As they are widely dispersed and offer a fair, open and non-judgmental service, they are natural partners in expanding the reach of PLEI. The LawMatters program at CLBC, made possible with funding from the Law Foundation, has been working directly with public libraries (PLs) in BC since 2007.<sup>1</sup> Having worked with all 71 library systems in BC, LawMatters offers a unique perspective on public library needs (within the PLEI sector). This research study looks at the PLEI needs of British Columbians through the lens of public libraries that support the legal information needs of rural and remote communities.

In addition to training and collection support and guidance, LawMatters (in part funded through the Law Foundation) offers grants to libraries to purchase legal materials (mainly in printed formats) to update their collection annually. From program feedback, we know that larger library systems (usually urban) use these grants to diversify their collection. It is important to note that they would still be able to purchase some legal materials without this grant funding. This is not true of smaller libraries: no grant funding would mean no legal print materials in their collection.

Most rural and remote libraries operate on very constrained budgets, with limited space and personnel to manage diverse community needs. It is accurate to say that public libraries are community-first organizations, striving to meet many information needs as they emerge. It is however necessary to understand their limitations, and that they are part of an information service continuum in communities, directing more specialized and in-depth questions to other subject matter experts.

Building on LawMatters program evaluations and original insights this study reviewed a variety of data from:

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<sup>1</sup> Legal information service outreach to public libraries in British Columbia has been active since 1975 with the “Legal Information Services Program” (LISP) launched by the Legal Services Society. In 2002, this program was disbanded due to governmental cuts. In 2007, CLBC was successful in applying for funding and re-establishing a similar program through LawMatters (pp. 1-4, Janet Freeman & Nancy Hannum. *LawMatters at your local public library: A history of BC's program for public legal information and education in public libraries*. CFCJ: 2015. Available online: <http://www.cfcj-fcjc.org/sites/default/files/A%20History%20of%20LawMatters%20at%20your%20local%20public%20library.pdf> [last accessed Oct 10, 2018.]

- an online survey of, and direct interviews with, rural libraries,
- a review of public library data gathered by the Province of British Columbia,
- and an environmental scan of PLEI organizations.

Two previous evaluations<sup>2</sup> of LawMatters point to fundamental capacity challenges of public libraries, mainly: space, technology, staffing, and outreach. We knew that the grant program LawMatters offers, to bolster collections in legal topics, was highly valued. Our new line of research sought to learn more about public library capacity in delivering PLEI.

- What are the relative rate and type of legal information questions being asked?
- What other community constraints/barriers are they facing?
- How could LawMatters better support their community’s legal information needs?

We also considered the priorities of public libraries and their business models, to hold in context the relative importance of PLEI in their work. Libraries are accountable to and funded by their municipalities, and most often report success on metrics (circulation, questions asked, program attendance, visits, and cardholders) that indicate the library is well-used by the community. Public libraries are serving highly diverse needs and the more frequent demands are for “everyday” issues – meaningful recreation, supporting literacy development, and in many regions providing the only internet connection and digital information services.

We know from previous research that public librarians in small communities do not have a large frequency of legal information requests (overall). We find it meaningful alone that libraries perceive this to be the case (when the PLEI sector understands need to be high). This study considers that it could be due to a different understanding of what constitutes legal information (i.e. librarians are only thinking of complex and life-altering issues); they could be answering more questions than they know. Another consideration is that the public does not look to their public library as a resource on these

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<sup>2</sup> Brewin, Alison and Aspinwall, Emily. “Evaluation Report. LawMatters Program, BC Courthouse Libraries.” February, 2017.  
 Hannum, Nancy. “Talking to Librarians about Law Matters: Promising Practices” 2011, 2016 – Evaluation of program.

matters and are using other avenues to find help.<sup>3</sup> There appears to be a polarization of understanding on what might be “legal” information and who is able to help at what stage. A key finding of this study, for those in the legal information sector, is that there is not a common definition of a “legal issue.” Consequently, the instances of the public uses of the local library for legal information might be underreported. Without this definition clearly outlined and championed by the PLEI sector, it is difficult libraries to know how to report on their support of legal questions.

While professionally librarians will strive to meet all the diverse needs of their community, frequent needs tend to get the most attention. However, they also recognize how important it is to support legal issues (reporting life-changing interactions), and they value providing the best legal information possible. Inquiring about “frequency” of legal questions in BC communities is a typical metric to understand the PLEI needs in communities. However, in public libraries we question how significant that measure is when it is based mainly on perception and comparatives to other uses. Given over 50% of rural libraries serve less than 7,500 individuals each, irregular life events, such as legal issues, would be comparatively small in perceived need to everyday recreational library uses. Instead, this study moves toward knowing more about where the public go when a legal need arises and where the public library sits in that service continuum.

We know that the library is one of several places that can provide support for legal information. They are certainly not hearing “all” the public legal need from members of the public. Quite the contrary, we would assume that only a very specific self-selected group of individuals approach the library for help. The selection biases could be many, the first principle being that “library users” are only a segment of population; someone unfamiliar with the library for general needs would likely not approach it for a legal need. There is a suspicion on the part of many surveyed librarians that the public library is not “seen as *the place* to go for this kind of help.” With online information becoming increasingly prominent, we can also assume that many individuals are asking and answering straightforward questions themselves. This could filter out many users and questions early and then front-line services are only hearing the most complex of cases.

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<sup>3</sup> “Everyday Legal Problems.” *Legal Services Society*. 2018, pp. 22-27  
[https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07\\_2018.pdf](https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07_2018.pdf)

“*Everyday Legal Problems*” - a recent report by LSS - examines low-income British Columbians and provides further insight into where people go for legal *and* non-legal assistance. While they did not ask about libraries specifically, the 13% that sought non-legal assistance, after “Friends or relatives” (59%), the “Internet” (37%) is a significant source of information for this group.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, for the 14% that sought legal assistance, ranked “Lawyer” (56%) and the second choice was the Internet at 21%.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, those using the Internet reported the highest level of success (89%) in getting the legal assistance they needed.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we must account for how the Internet impacts the way the public will seek help in the LawMatters collection development activities. It would impact how average British Columbians use online tools from PLEI organizations, for example Clicklaw.bc.ca (an online information hub if legal information, education, curated by a community of legal organizations). Knowing about and using these resources is critical for public librarians in providing further service to the public.

It appears that public libraries play their strongest role as part of a PLEI service continuum rather than being a singular information-point for legal information. To expect libraries to deliver legal information on a parallel level to more specialized legal organizations or professionals is going against several grains: 1) public information seeking dynamics, 2) professional expertise and service, and 3) organizational resourcing and mandates. What librarians can do is learn from and use the tools of other information specialists. PLEI-specialized programs, like LawMatters, have a role in guiding public librarians about legal information topics, trends, and what sources help answer these issues. This will allow LawMatters to offer a sharp set of tools to increase public librarian confidence and knowledge about legal information for British Columbians.

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<sup>4</sup> “Everyday Legal Problems.” *Legal Services Society*. 2018 pp. 22  
[https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07\\_2018.pdf](https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07_2018.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. (pp. 26.)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. (pp. 27.)

## Key Findings & Recommendations

*The most significant finding from this research is that legal information (online and in print) needs to be further “brokered” and promoted by PLEI specialists to public librarians.*

We have learned that more flexible funding, diverse self-selected program offerings, and a wide range of knowledge brokering “tools” for libraries would work further to support the knowledge of and use of PLEI collection items, resources and organizations. There is an opportunity for LawMatters to increase outreach, tools libraries can use, and support further connections to PLEI organizations that similarly provide useful resources.

PLEI resources are available to anyone in various locations and formats (online and in print), but many present user barriers for non-legal specialists. For example, Clicklaw offers a wide range of material (such as: FAQs, website links, documents, etc.), however barriers emerge around what is useful under what circumstance. We see an opportunity to provide further training on these tools to inform public library service providers of their uses. Information professionals typically facilitate the navigation of more complex subject matter by locating, gathering and reviewing resources, and packaging it in a user-friendly format. Librarians in smaller communities do not typically have the time to dedicate to this activity when they perceive patron need is low.

While public librarians are juggling busy branches, they are responding in the moment. Typically, librarians create their own “help guides” on a special topic when they see enough demand (as we see in larger urban libraries focusing on developing their own user guides and how-to’s to respond to demand). We learned that it is possible smaller community librarians will never be able to allocate their own research time to learn about what is available.

In considering the core challenges of libraries, “resources, time, staff, and space” all rise to the top. Below are some guiding principles for any PLEI organization seeking to use public libraries as knowledge mobilization channels:

- 1) Public Libraries are coping with a very diverse range of community information priorities. Legal information questions while infrequent, are very important.**



- 2) A “one-size fits all” granting/program model will not address the unique PLEI needs in small communities. Rather offering a range of training and support options that can be selected by individual libraries will address this diversity.
- 3) Libraries are highly connected to other community agencies, but not necessarily around the point of legal services and/or information.
- 4) Legal information needs might be underestimated because the concept of “legal” public librarians hold is different from PLEI-specialists and legal professionals.
- 5) Public libraries are being called upon to fill the gap of shuttered government and professional services and are not further resourced by these services to help.
- 6) Public libraries are not necessarily aware of all the services offered by the range of PLEI organizations and when they are helpful to access.

There are several activities that the Law Foundation can support through LawMatters, CLBC, and other PLEI organizations. Our overarching research question asked:

**“What would it take to provide robust training and support to public library staff so they can help the public with their legal information questions?”**

The single most impactful activity to help librarians we learned is that: knowledge translation (modifying specialized/academic knowledge for a general audience<sup>7</sup>), curation, and education will help public librarians leverage the collection resources. This comes via information specialists who understand both the information services and the legal subject matter. Some of these activities look like:

- curate meaningful content,
- communicate regularly in accessible language,
- develop materials that offer guidance, explanations, and road maps,
- coach librarians through difficult transactions,
- offer training through online options and occasionally, in-person.

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Knowledge translation." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 Aug. 2018. Web. 5 Oct. 2018.

Another critical piece is building in time to monitor and change the usability, design and creation of training, promotional, and online material.

Therefore, a longer-term funding commitment (core funding) rather than a single grant, would likely offer more impactful results. The Law Books for Libraries collections (and online tools such as Clicklaw Wikibooks and Clicklaw) are the necessary foundation for PLEI in BC libraries. Public library staff need support from subject-matter experts to design the framework for legal service. To enhance and facilitate public library provision of legal information we recommend **increasing core funding to LawMatters to allow the program to:**

- 1) Increase LawMatters staff resources to liaise more actively with public libraries:
  - a) Curate and create meaningful content
  - b) Communicate regularly about legal topics and scenarios.
  - c) Develop professional guides to support legal reference questions.
  - d) Provide training through online and occasional in person options.
- 2) Continue the collection grants adding more options about how to apply the grants to public libraries. Include site visits from CLBC representatives (where possible).
- 3) Promote online resources and integrate the use of Clicklaw more heavily into the LawMatters activities. Fund activities to mobilize and curate online resources, as these offer a different option and flexibility of use.
- 4) Develop and provide: Education, Outreach and Knowledge Translation.
  - a) Promote legal resources for the “layperson.”
  - b) Develop a digital communication strategy to maintain a clear, user-friendly online presence, e.g. a web hub for resources, sending bi-monthly/monthly newsletters). This would incur up front and ongoing costs.
  - c) Engage in more usability testing of web resources and communication documents to develop more publicly accessible tools.
  - d) Produce short and flexible online training.
- 5) LawMatters can be a leader in coordinating other PLEI organizations in BC to provide a coherent outreach framework of services to public libraries.

## Introduction and summary

This research study looking at the PLEI needs of British Columbians through the lens of public libraries was commissioned by Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC) to respond to the Law Foundation's interest to understand and support the legal information needs of people in rural and remote communities. LawMatters sits in the context of a greater PLEI system of several organizations providing legal information to the public in different ways (topic specialties, differing services and modes of outreach). The LawMatters program at CLBC has been working directly with public libraries (PLs) in BC since 2007. Having worked with all 71 library systems in BC, LawMatters offers a unique perspective on public library needs (within the PLEI sector).

As the most robust connector between the PLEI community and public libraries, the LawMatters program provides a framework to help us further understand how libraries serve PLEI needs in B.C. We have been asked to frame this research study to provide insights into the broader question "What are the public's needs for legal information in BC?" through the following research inquiries:

- 1) How can we revitalize legal collections in public libraries? What can be added to make their collections more comprehensive and meet local community needs?
- 2) What resources are required to continue to develop and maintain a well-resourced legal collection (print and digital) in all public library systems?
- 3) What legal information is missing/doesn't exist? What are the PLEI gaps for communities?
- 4) What would it take to provide robust training and support to public library staff so they can help the public with their legal information questions?

Public libraries are critical in providing fair and equitable access to quality information on the widest range of topics. With the complexity and variability of public library service, legal information is one of hundreds of topic areas they support. Most rural and remote libraries operate on very constrained budgets, with limited space and personnel to manage diverse community needs. In addition to training and collection support and guidance, LawMatters (in part funded through the Law Foundation) offers grants to libraries to purchase legal materials (mainly in printed formats) to update their collection annually. From program feedback, we know that larger library systems (usually urban) use these grants to diversify their collection. It's important to note that they would still be able to purchase legal

materials without this grant funding. This is not true of smaller libraries: no grant funding would mean no legal print materials in their collection.

Beyond financial resources, for the collection to be useful, information professionals require a certain topic matter specialty. Recognizing that public librarians will not be legal topic specialists, LawMatters provides collection guidance such as a curated “Law Books for Libraries” list, a guide to a range of legal materials on different topics and collection maintenance guidelines. The program has slightly modified aspects of these offerings based on feedback from the PLs, though the core offerings have remained the same. This research study builds on program evaluations, to further understand what organizational resources are required to maintain and mobilize legal information, what specialized knowledge/skills are needed to both mobilize and promote it, and what is the actual legal need public libraries are supporting. This study will inform recommended changes to the LawMatters program considering the following:

- 1) How can the LawMatters program change to meet PLEI needs in rural regions?
- 2) What are the systemic limitations of PLs in rural and remote regions?
- 3) What supports do they need to effectively refer the public to appropriate legal information resources (be they printed materials, online resources or organizations)?
- 4) What would the resourcing of these proposed activities look like?

### **How This Report is Structured**

The body of this report will summarize key findings, insights and recommendations, tying together various data points. Key information points will be extracted to support findings in the body of the narrative; however, due to volume, more detailed descriptions of the data and information is in the appendices. Please refer to that section to further understand our conclusions. We are drawing on multiple data sources including:

- primary population survey results
- previous evaluations
- program output evaluation and information
- organizational service data
- information gathered from and about other PLEI services.

## Previous findings on Law Matters and PLEI in Public Libraries

Two previous evaluations<sup>8</sup> of LawMatters point to fundamental capacity challenges of public libraries, mainly: space, technology, staffing, and outreach. These are more pronounced for small, rural PLs to be further explored in this study. We were working with the assumption that collection development grants are only the start of providing PLEI to underserved regions in B.C. Another critical factor is helping public librarians increase their facility with and understanding of specialized legal information.

With the most recent LawMatters evaluation conducted in late 2016, findings delivered in 2017, and recommended program changes currently being implemented, we know that:

- Public libraries value the grants and the smaller systems rely heavily on this funding to collect this subject area.

*“When asked about a change in the grants program most librarians expressed concern. Notably, some small libraries said they might not be able to purchase anything without the grant. The impact of reduced grants would be much greater on smaller libraries than on larger libraries.”<sup>9</sup>*

- Additional resources such as the recommendations on the Law Books for Libraries list, weeding guides, and webinars are critical for smaller libraries to select what they have the capacity to hold (based on need, space constraints and budget limitations).
- Despite a perceived need for PLEI in rural regions, some PLs report having a low rate of questions. Reasons why the rate at which smaller rural public libraries receive legal questions varies (either a great deal or very few) are opaque. As previously stated, this could be due to a lack of a common definition of a “legal problem.”
- This study offered a recommendation to significantly change the program and invest in “...specialized support and services for small libraries.”<sup>10</sup> Help in where to look, what to look for, and where there are significant information gaps, more training as LawMatters is the only source of training on legal resources.

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<sup>8</sup> Brewin, Alison and Aspinwall, Emily. “Evaluation Report. LawMatters Program, BC Courthouse Libraries” February 2017. Hannum, Nancy. “Talking to Librarians about Law Matters: Promising Practices” 2011, 2016 – Evaluation of program.

<sup>9</sup> Brewin, Alison and Aspinwall, Emily. “Evaluation Report. LawMatters Program, BC Courthouse Libraries” February 2017. Pg 3

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

LawMatters program staff have also learned that grant-size and annual funding patterns do not often meet the needs of smaller libraries. Previous studies explored the option of larger collections grants, however it was met with a mixed sense of having positive impact. For example it, wouldn't help with other space and or staffing challenges. The evaluation found that the collection-size did not seem to correlate to information service provider confidence:

*“Resources and confidence are not correlated in the PL’s opinion i.e. having more resources will not solve this issue from the service provider perspective.”<sup>11</sup>*

This evidence underpinned our assumption that the legal collection is only a start at helping librarians provide PLEI to their communities and there are other needs to mobilize the resources.

## Research Design & Methodology

The research design is focused intentionally on gathering insight from libraries serving small populations and those further away from major city centres. To gain insight into the above questions we gathered information from various sources:

### 1. Surveying Small to Medium-sized rural and remote public libraries

Using a cluster sampling we isolated the very-small to medium-sized libraries in BC working off the public library dataset (ibid.).

**Larger libraries:** We also interviewed library staff of various larger systems in the Lower Mainland (Richmond PL, Surrey PL, North Van City PL, Vancouver PL), to confirm differences in these systems due to their size, population service, and operational scale.

#### a. Interviews

The interviewing process was two phased. The initial set of interviews tested a wider range of questions, allowing us to gather insights for a survey to gather more feedback.

#### b. Online survey

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

An online survey launched to 50 of the small and medium libraries and select branches of regional systems serving rural communities (Thompson-Nicola, Vancouver Is., Cariboo, Okanagan) was in the field for 15 days.

**c. Review of BC Libraries Data**

The province of BC offers an open data set of public libraries from 2002-2016 with insights into staffing resources, space, funding, population service number and area, numbers of programs offered, etc.

**2. Review of LawMatters activities, evaluations, and tracking reports**

LawMatters gathers data as part of their regular program evaluations.

**a. Evaluations from outreach tour delivered by Liaison Lawyer**

CLBC provided in-person workshops for over 12 rural/remote libraries in the summer of 2018.

**b. Online Resources Use Metrics (CLBC website, LM Blog, Clicklaw & CL Wikibooks)**

**c. 2018 LawMatters Participant Reports**

**3. Review other PLEI Organizations**

We interviewed particularly People's Law School and the Law Services Society as these programs engage public libraries.

## Findings

Below is a listing of some key findings about public libraries in BC regarding their capacity to provide legal information. They can be used as guiding principles in developing programs to work with them as intermediaries in PLEI service.

***1) Public Libraries are coping with a very diverse range of community information priorities. Legal information is an infrequent demand, but it is considered very important.***

From the results of these previous studies (Brewin & Aspinwall 2017, Hannum 2015) we know that small rural libraries are compromised to leverage the LawMatters grants and collection because of

resourcing and community constraints. Looking at high-level data from BC Public Libraries<sup>12</sup> these limitations become apparent. Of the 71 library systems, more than half serve populations of under 10,000 individuals and maintain branches with very low staffing ratios.

- 21 serve populations of less than 2,000 and fewer than 2 FTEs (with the lowest having .5 of an FTE) and 18 serve populations less than 7,500 with on average 4 FTEs.
- On average, these very small to small libraries run 213 programs a year, (with the very small libraries maintaining an equal to higher number than some of those that are larger).

Bearing this in mind, public libraries are mandated to be generalists and their community demands are incredibly diverse. Very specialized questions, such as legal questions would be a very small number – especially when 2/3 are serving communities that have less than 4,000 individuals.

A typical single-branch librarian wears many hats – their day to day might include all of the following: selecting new books before opening hours, serving at a reference desk from 10 a.m. -5 p.m. balancing information questions with locating the next book for their “Mystery Book Club,” delivering a storytime to 20 parents and children, helping a patron use a genealogy database to find family records, then helping someone locate a welfare application, finally completing a quarterly board report for their meeting that evening (see other examples below)<sup>13</sup>.

Municipalities are most often the primary drivers of public library oversight and funding<sup>14</sup>. Libraries most often report success on metrics that indicate the library is well used, because funding is dependent on demonstrating community relevance, usually through output metrics. These output measures track use: **circulation, questions asked, program attendance, visits, and cardholders**. These metrics are not weighted and it is not ethical in the information professional’s role to place

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<sup>12</sup> “BC Public Library Statistics 2002-Present” Public Libraries Planning and Funding. British Columbia. Published 2017, accessed Sept. 28, 2018

[http://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset?=&q=public+library+data&sort=score+desc%2C+record\\_publish\\_date+desc](http://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset?=&q=public+library+data&sort=score+desc%2C+record_publish_date+desc)

<sup>13</sup> “Day in the Life: Reference Librarian at a Public Library” by Oleg Kagan. Source: everylibrary: Stories about libraries and librarians around America.

<https://medium.com/everylibrary/a-day-in-the-life-reference-librarian-at-a-public-library-70999119a909>

“A Day in the Life of a Public Librarian.” Carleton Place Public Library

<https://talesfromanopenbook.wordpress.com/2016/10/17/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-public-librarian/>

<sup>14</sup> A municipal library system as defined under the BC Library Act means they are led by a municipally appointed board and funded through the municipality’s budget (primarily). While they usually operate at an “arm’s length” to the municipality, a public library is tied intrinsically to its board, the needs of the community as understood by the city council.



value on these uses. More difficult and possibly infrequent subject-matter takes time and expertise, there is currently no mechanism to recognize this,<sup>15</sup> unless a certain subject matter has high demand.

Despite this, librarians continue to strive to provide the best information to everyone, as much as they can, regardless of demand, because they know it is important to individuals. When asked about frequency vs. importance in interviews, librarians all said that legal information is very important and when they can help it is extremely impactful for the patron. Judgement likewise should not be placed on public libraries that are simply not resourced to maintain specialty knowledge. Instead, LawMatters staffed by PLEI specialists can provide guidance to public libraries to work with the legal body of knowledge to solve the issues they most often encounter.

### **What this means for PLEI and LawMatters?**

This model perhaps explains why it is so important to provide funding to smaller libraries with low rates of questions. The current LawMatters program offerings however do require “in kind” work of a participating PL in terms of:

- Selecting the resources - reviewing their collection, order, process, and house.
- Managing the collection – mainly-updating and weeding the collection.
- Provide reference services – requiring a general subject matter knowledge.
- Stay informed of topic specifics – read communications and updates about topic area changes and changes to the program.
- Professional development to other staff– ensure those working in the library system are knowledgeable (within their role scope) of the availability of PLEI.

From our interviews, librarians never expressed concern about these activity requirements. They do express that they have difficulty keeping up with collection weeding and promotion activities. This can be an indicator that the “in kind” demands are perhaps somewhat greater than library capacity to meet an external standard required in legal information.

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<sup>15</sup> The field of library science is seeking new ways to report value through social impact measures. However, until that shift is made, libraries continue to demonstrate community need through supply and demand oriented metrics (Irwin, pp. 214).

**Recommendation:** Focus on training that orients librarians to the spectrum of legal knowledge resources and the PLEI system. Their work specializes in supporting patrons to frame/clarify research questions, search for good and useful information, and appraise the information quality. Giving in-depth support, broaching the realm of advocacy work, is outside their professional scope. This is backed-up with results from the training delivered by a CBLC liaison Lawyer in the summer of 2018, where librarians were made aware of a few critical online resources – such as Clicklaw (see appendix C). This alone doubled their confidence level in answering legal questions (and some survey comments indicate an uptick in promoting legal information because of this knowledge).

**2) Modify the “one-size fits all” model to serving PLEI needs in small communities to offer a range of grant options, support services and options will allow individual libraries to participate in PLEI in a way that works for them.**

Rural/remote PLs are all facing similar challenges in terms of capacity e.g. space, time, money and other overarching barriers, however they do not all uniformly affect every community. The top 3 listed in order of prevalence are:

- 1) Geographic isolation
- 2) Digital literacy
- 3) Connectivity

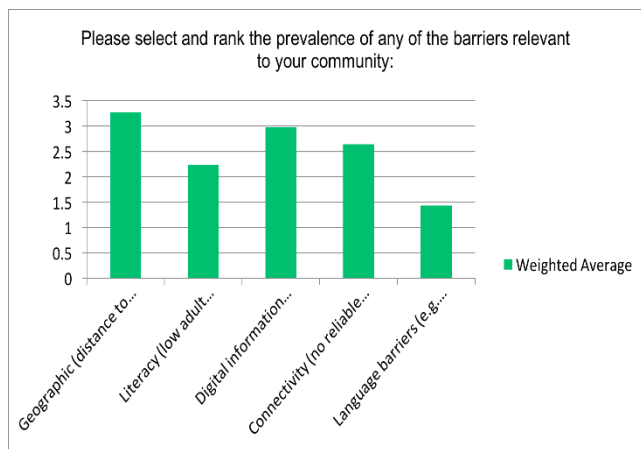


Figure 1 Chart indicating community barriers

The barriers of geographic distance and connectivity are the most prevalent and would indicate a well-stocked local library is important. Digital literacy and adult literacy levels are also reported as barriers and would certainly impact how easily and readily online resources can be used by patrons.

The impact of “individual” events seems to have a very intense impact on individual communities. From interviews, we heard the actions of a single influential individual, a single industry collapse, a single environmental problem, shuttering of a service, a closure of a bus line, can impact the whole much more intensely and dramatically.

*“... [all the] main street businesses...are shutting, people aren’t getting paid.”*

*“There is low rental vacancy and the few landlords act with impunity.”*

*“The community is changing a lot - a lot of services have been centralized and moved ... (about 25 minute drive away). Library is in a residential area that used to have other services nearby - RCMP detachment, hardware store etc., but now those things are gone.”*

Interviews also indicate that the connection between these issues and any potential need for PLEI is not always linear. For example, perhaps withheld wages would result in legal related needs, but that was not necessarily reported in this case. What is reported however, is how certain barriers impact the entire library’s operation, ability to serve needs outside of their professional skill set, creating a cascading effect of impacts.

Because of the diversity, there is no one trend to note. The way the current grants system is structured is likely effective because it allows librarians the freedom to choose based on community needs.

Purchasing materials on the libraries’ behalves might not circumvent some of their capacity challenges.

**Recommendations:** Program feedback suggests a more flexible use of the grant funding (alternating years without losing base funds) could allow for even more choice. Offer further resources for promotion of online materials, curated topic guides, offer a guide to what local agencies can help with certain legal and advocacy issues.

***3) Libraries are highly connected to other community agencies, but not necessarily around the point of legal services and/or information.***

We asked librarians about other community organizations they know of and work with. We heard that most communities are likely to have: Childhood/family centres, Employment services, and Seniors Centres. Additionally, 74% of librarians reported that they connect with these centres through a range of points, mostly promotion/advertising and referrals, some do joint programming. However, we see that a significant minority do not have local services in many domains.

Not all these services are present at once in one town, and the larger the town, the more services exist. We also learned from the outreach training that there are legal advocates in communities that the Liaison Lawyer knew to connect with librarians, but they would have otherwise not been aware of these supports.

	Locally, in town	
Women's Centre/Shelter	51.85%	14
Business services	26.92%	7
Community Centre	18.52%	5
Childhood and family resource centre	62.96%	17
Employment services	59.26%	16
Seniors' Centre	59.26%	16
First Nations education/friendship centre	44.44%	12

To be noted, the Liaison Lawyer providing training for libraries in various remote locations, remarked that few of them knew of legal advocates in their communities (or neighbouring town) and she offered that connection (as she met with advocates as well). In interviews and online surveying, we never heard librarians refer to legal advocates as a resource (except one comment that the Legal Aid lawyer in town was overwhelmed). The observation is that this is an aspect of legal professional help that is little known or understood by those unfamiliar with the scope of legal service.

**Recommendation:** There might be an opportunity in learning more about what exactly the smallest, most remote towns have for agencies and where they may need specific PLEI topic support. LawMatters could additionally act as a connector between advocates and public libraries, strengthening their mutual understanding of range of service and resources available.

**4) *Legal information questions are reported as “infrequent” by public librarians despite the fact the need is reported in other studies.<sup>16</sup> Though uncertain, one explanation could be that the concept of “legal” public librarians hold is different from PLEI specialist organizations and they do not promote themselves as sources for legal information.***

From initial interviews, LawMatters feedback and evaluations, rural and remote libraries have a low rate of legal information questions (despite perhaps the actual need felt in the legal system). This assessment changed, however, when asked if they help individuals with form completion &

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<sup>16</sup> “Everyday Legal Problems.” *Legal Services Society*. 2018 pp. 14  
[https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07\\_2018.pdf](https://lss.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/legalAid/lssEverydayLegalProblems07_2018.pdf)

applications for licenses and benefits. As we learned from 2018 outreach activities, that librarians were getting a significant number of questions about forms (and confirmed with the survey), we hypothesized that perhaps these requests were not perceived as a “legal” question.

***The “continuum” of legal information (and the ancillary benefits of early legal intervention) is not well understood by those outside the legal information field.***

There is also some indication<sup>17</sup> that the more knowledge a librarian has of legal resources, the more attuned they are to a legal need and likely they are to direct their public to a resource. This again points to the fact that knowledge, awareness and demand are tied in an indirect way.

***“If not the library, where are people going?”***

After talking to other provincial PLEI organizations, there appears to be an assumption that public librarians are frequently engaged in legal information requests and have clear insight into the broad-range of public legal needs. Our research, indicates quite the contrary. We asked librarians to “best guess” or explain why there is a low frequency of questions. They offered a range of options:

- 1) The public is unaware that the library can help them. (31%)
- 2) The public is using other legal agencies. (16%)
- 3) Legal needs are infrequent life events (16%)
- 4) People are reluctant to bring their legal issues to the library (13%)

A few librarians (7%) disagreed that they were infrequent and that they were asked frequently for help with form selection and completion. While we cannot be sure any of these hypotheses are the actual reason, it does confirm a sense among librarians that they are getting a subset of the actual need and really aren’t sure where people are going instead. The insight we can gather from this question is that there are numerous professional and public biases about where to go to find help. It could be explained that librarians are under-reporting, not fully realizing they are meeting need through less critical legal questions. Another could be a “selection bias” in the first place, if a librarian is not confident they can help, they do not promote their resources. Once they are oriented to a collection,

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<sup>17</sup> Previous reference to the results of the Outreach training on Clicklaw creating opportunities for a librarian to further educate a patron the day after training.

suddenly the need arises because they unconsciously are promoting the resources more (as we have started to hear after the outreach training in the summer).

**Recommendation:** LawMatters can act in a leadership role among PLEI organizations to address and set standards of what a “legal issue” is and offer more insight into the social impacts of helping a patron solve the most basic legal issue. Further training for librarians as to how they, as information brokers, might work with the collections, increase visibility, promotion, and hence public understanding that the library is a source for legal information.

***5) Public libraries are called upon to fill the gap of shuttered government and professional services in their communities and this could indicate a longer-term trend.***

Organizations & governmental groups advocating for better PLEI, if expecting a gap to be filled, must partner with PLs more fully in terms of offering more time, money and expertise to change access for British Columbians. As mentioned earlier, librarians might suspect that their public could be better informed of their PLEI resources and services. There may be an opportunity present to improve communications, to improve outreach to members of the public, however, in the scope of the demand placed on public libraries for a range of community service, their capacity to support an increased demand is already likely compromised.

A very clear trend emerging from our initial interviews and the in-person workshops is that government services (particularly federal) are off-loading locating and completing their forms on libraries. Reports indicate that federal agencies were deliberately sending people to public libraries to locate and print their forms (at one time, the government agency would provide these).

*“As there are no Government Agencies in town and no law offices we are used for general information on all topics.”*

*“Patrons ask for clarity around which legal resource in community should be accessed...They are often referred to the library to complete forms (mostly federal) but not told how to access these (ex. Citizenship, Employment Insurance, Vital Statistics)”*

This is further supported by the two respondents who disagreed that legal questions were infrequent:

*“Forms finding filling scanning emailing” (from a medium sized library)*

*“we get at least a few patrons every week who are looking for forms online or who are filling out paperwork for family maintenance or other issues.”*

***6. Because the system of PLEI service providers is varied and complex, public libraries are not necessarily aware of where they sit in the range of PLEI organizations and even the extent of how PLEI organizations are useful to support front-line library service.***

A more coordinated effort of the PLEI organizations to reach out to public libraries could have a greater impact. There have been efforts made by LawMatters, LSS and People’s Law School to work together with public libraries on an ad hoc basis when it made sense. These seemed to be request driven. Exploring other ways to align and tailor activities to scenarios public libraries face may raise the profile of these organizations’ services, offer more options for libraries, and share the load of PLEI knowledge translation.

## **LawMatters Specific Feedback**

Generally, we know librarians appreciate (in addition to the collections budget) the knowledge services provided by the LawMatters coordinator and CLBC staff. The most valuable are curated guides and explanations (advising on the “best” material), notes on materials to help manage collections, and weeding. Not surprisingly a greater number of respondents from branches of regional systems<sup>18</sup> (community locations of regional libraries) indicated a lower overall familiarity with aspects of LawMatters. While our survey did not target larger regional library systems, those that responded indicated that they receive some information about LawMatters.

### **1) What aspects of LawMatters are public librarians most familiar with?**

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<sup>18</sup> A branch of a regional library system is overseen and managed by a centralized administration. They would be governed by certain universal policies and practices established through their central library administration. We surveyed this group separately because they are structured differently from single-site libraries, but some serve more rural communities.

The following aspects of LawMatters were best known to public librarians (in order):

- A. “Collection support - Law Books list & weeding lists” was by far the best-known program offering for all.
- B. Printed Clicklaw Wikibooks were well known by single-site libraries.
- C. Webinar and in-person training options were the lesser known offering, particularly among the Branches of Regional library systems.

We know from larger systems with a decentralized branch structure that internal communications of programs can be challenging and that often roles are more specific to function - for example LawMatters communications might go to a collections librarian vs. a front-line service librarian.

## **2) How might LawMatters help public library staff work with legal resources:**

Very clearly “Quick ‘short-cut’ guides on the legal resources available to the public” was ranked as the most helpful item by librarians. Followed by “Training Videos for Online resources” and “Quarterly webinars”. The only option ranked as “not helpful” in a few instances were “Annual in-person training sessions” – though they were still rated more positive than negative and outreach training feedback indicates that in person trainings are very well received.



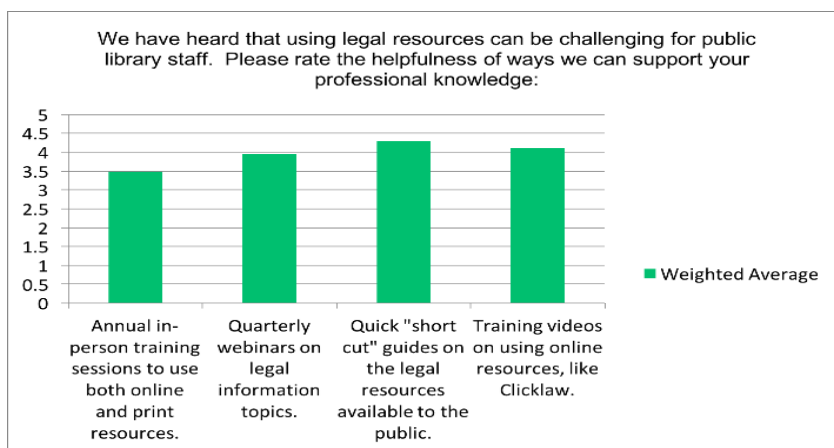


Figure 2 Responses of Librarians – Support from LawMatters

### 3) What are the most useful aspects of LawMatters to sustain and develop?

Weeding supports for collection management were rated by a strong majority as “effective to very effective.” In order of effectiveness:

1. Weeding list (rated as very effective by a strong majority)
2. Notes fields in the “Law Books for Libraries”
3. Webinar “Intro to Legal Collections”

To note, about half the respondents did not know the webinar “Intro to Legal Collections” existed possibly because it is only relevant to those ordering books and several respondents would not do this task. It could also indicate a point of feedback about how trainings like this are promoted and/or usable by the audience.

### 4) How can libraries be supported to promote legal collections to the public?

#### Promotional materials to help communicate with the public:

All responses indicate a certain neutrality to negative effectiveness of any suggested options to promote to the public. **Brochures were rated as the most useful.**

Based on weighted averages of the promotional materials (for the public) as rated to be “effective” the top three:

1. Brochures
2. Community Roundtables (showcasing what community groups provide)
3. Display notices on shelves for “online” resources (“shelf talkers” industry term)

Less “effective” were:

1. Display notices on shelves for print materials (a.k.a. Shelf talkers)
2. Posters
3. Webinars (very low rating).

Some public library suggested successes were:

- Brochures – constantly needing to be restocked
- Working with people at the computer terminals – navigating the web of online information.
- Legal “Skype” sessions (from an expert) or a call-in webinar on wills for seniors
- The Legal Starter Kit
- Staff knowledge – other agencies, how to help, directing and connecting.
- General community information training – pointing it out for when they need it.

Libraries report the most challenges in promoting legal material in the following ways:

- Knowing what people don’t ask for - tracking of use of the “reference” legal collection.
- Hours limitations, space limitations, staffing limitations (part-time, understaffed).
- Priority of topic (changing aspects of topic) and competing need for space and promotional time.

*“We are the smallest per capita library in the province ...Space is always a challenge when it comes to simultaneous promotion of our services.”*

- Lack of awareness that the library can help with this subject matter – getting the word out with infrequent library users.
- Volunteer driven library – lack of knowledge on part of volunteers.

## 5) How they would like to hear from LawMatters:

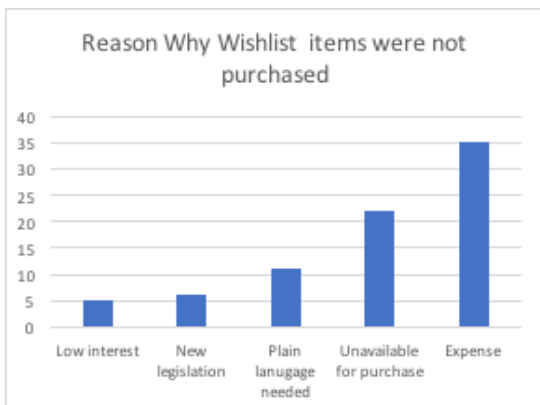
In the regional branch replies, 67% stated that they would like the option to hear directly from LawMatters through an email newsletter. Single-location libraries overwhelmingly rated “personal emails” followed by “email newsletters” as the best way to stay in touch with them. Rated lower were: phone calls, website or blog updates, annual in-person visits (this is not correlative to what we heard from the outreach tour, anecdotally from interviews many librarians were concerned about the resourcing of this option – many said “a visit would be great, but we know how expensive that is”).

## Law Matters Collection Analysis and Gaps

Librarians are pleased with the grants program to develop their legal collections and many small libraries rely on this funding to purchase legal resources. Yet they report collection gaps due to several factors, some that could be solved with additional funding or a modified granting cycle, and others that are more systemic. We narrowed librarians’ reports to three major factors for gaps:

- a) Anticipating demand & new areas of need (i.e. new legislation, Truth & Reconciliation)
- b) Formats and usability of materials (i.e. plain language, practical applied tools, print vs. online)
- c) Budget and Management of materials (i.e. expense, space, availability from book seller).

Responses indicate these factors are somewhat contingent on one another. For example, an area might be a gap because demand is currently low but it is emerging. If budgets and space are limited, the decision to collect is not justified until the demand is present. Or similarly there might be a high community demand, but the materials available are technical and not patron-accessible. The librarian might choose to save the budget for something more accessible.



However, in considering the reasons for these gaps, we see that “expense,” “limited availability” and “user-friendly/plain language” are cited as the top reasons why librarians feel they cannot fill their collection needs. More frequently we hear that material on Aboriginal Law and Truth and Reconciliation are stated to be “too expensive.” New legislation issues such as:

cannabis, blockchain, and medically assisted dying are listed as gaps. Finally, regarding “user friendly” materials, we heard a desire for resources like the “Self-Counsel Press” kits, many of which are no longer for sale to libraries.

Below is a view of the major topic gap areas cross referenced with the reasons for the gaps<sup>19</sup>.

If we look at some of the subject categories and sort by reasons why librarians have not been able to build their collections in these areas of interest, we can learn more about the contingencies that make legal collection development difficult.

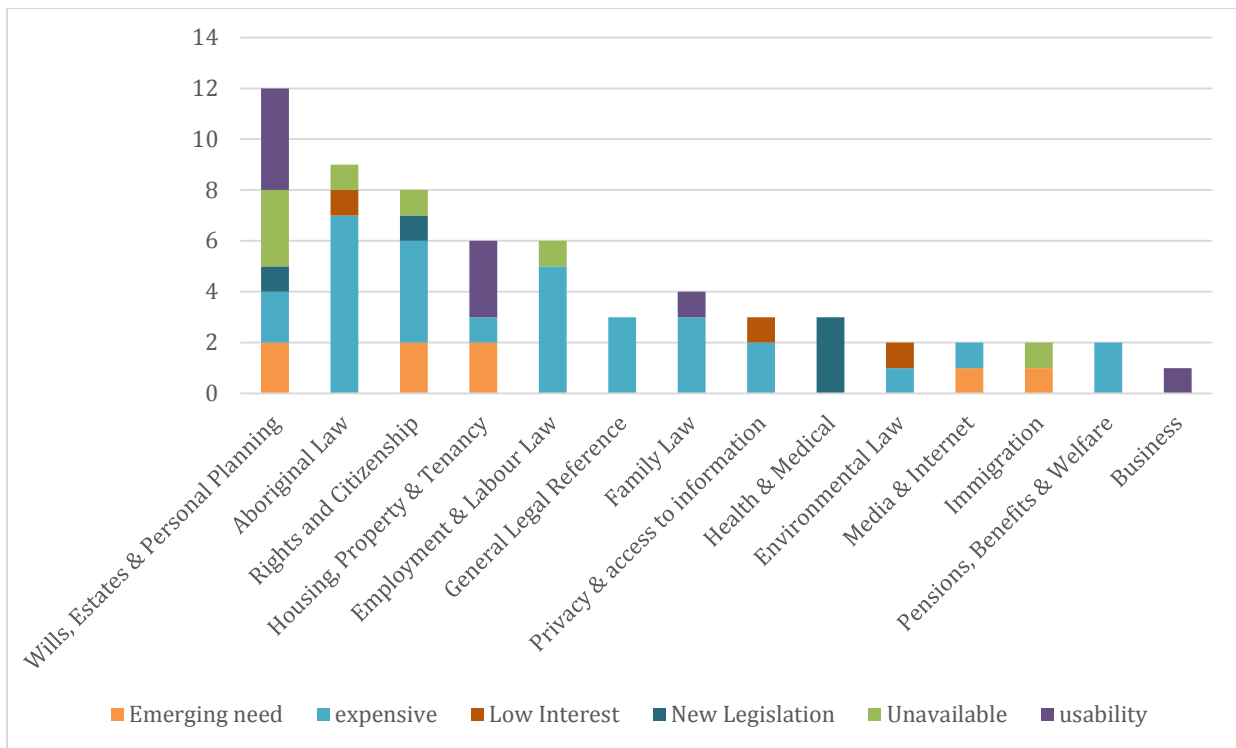


Figure 3 Reasons for Gaps Law Matters collections

- **Wills and Estates**

The major barriers for this topic are listed as – usability and unavailability. Comments indicate that these two issues are somewhat linked in that publicly accessible information is “unavailable” for purchase.

<sup>19</sup> For further information on LawMatters participant collection gap reports, see Appendix B.

- **Aboriginal Law**

Very clearly this topic is under-collected because of the cost of materials. This tends to be linked with a perceived lower demand, however more libraries are recognizing this topic as emerging and important. Several libraries in remote and rural regions cite Aboriginal law as an interest of their communities.

- **Rights and Citizenship**

This topic was noted to be “too expensive,” again likely tied to demand being somewhat low, but possibly emerging more.

- **Housing, property and tenancy**

Notably a greater concern in urban centres, many smaller centres note that these issues are overflowing into their communities. Usability is the key barrier to acquiring material on this topic.

## Recommendations

The most significant finding of all this feedback is that libraries require more than grants to purchase books to deliver legal information more effectively to their patrons. The primary recommendation emerging from this research is:

***Increase the funding of LawMatters to expand activities to move beyond “the collection” to knowledge translation and brokering services related to legal materials (in print and online).***

The next set of recommendations will be highlighted in answers to our original research questions.

- 1) **How can we revitalize legal collections in public libraries? What can be added to make their collections more comprehensive and meet local community needs?**

- Funding for LawMatters should be increased to continue to support the collection grants, but add more human-resource knowledge translation, communications and educational outreach for rural librarians.

- Offer more options of how to apply the grants to libraries. Feedback indicates that offering more variety and flexibility in the granting options allows libraries to choose legal resources that work for their community when they need it. Some libraries could use double the grant money annually, while others do not require it every year. Many small libraries would like a larger grant every other year because they lack the capacity to review their collection annually.
- Online resources – Fund activities to mobilize and curate online resources, as these offer a different option and flexibility of use. Integrate the use of Clicklaw more heavily into the LawMatters activities – while it was always available to librarians – they report extreme value in the training sessions provided in August 2018. Scenario-based training was further identified as a need.
- Knowledge Translation – Librarians report a lack of legal resources written for the “layperson”, creating a barrier to access:
  - Several LawMatters collection reports cite “accessibility” (user-friendliness) as a reason for having a gap in “Wills and Estates” & “Housing and Tenancy.”
  - Explanatory tools about the legal system in BC and other PLEI organizations would be useful. One of the urban libraries interviewed stated they created their own guides to the “legal system” and “where to go when” and they have been effective.
- Help small libraries with weeding, possibly with site visits from CLBC representatives (where possible) at least once in a few years.

**2) What resources are required to continue to develop and maintain a well-resourced legal collection (print and digital) in all public library systems?**

All of the above would require more funding for human capital, the activities of brokering information (through knowledge translation, training and communication).

- Investment in developing a digital communication strategy would incur up front and ongoing costs to maintain a clear, user-friendly online presence (email newsletters, blog/web hub to store guides,
- Engage in more usability testing of web resources, communication documents to develop more publicly accessible tools.

- Time and technology to support more online training, preferably topical, short, and flexibly viewed.
- Funding to work with other PLEI organizations to liaise around a more integrated strategy to serve public libraries.

### **3) What legal information is missing/doesn't exist? What are the PLEI gaps for communities?**

This is a very challenging question to answer when the respondents are not topic experts since it is difficult for someone to comment on what they do not know. LawMatters has heard feedback that librarians expect the legal experts to tell them where there are knowledge gaps in the literature, not vice versa. Libraries were asked to report on topics most needed by the community (based on a list of predefined topics). The top two: Family Law and Wills/Estates correlates to our survey and interview results. The long-tail distribution shows that all types of needs may present themselves in communities. However, we can say that librarians wish that legal materials had the following characteristics or functions:

- More material written for the “lay person” – especially in common topic areas.
- Step-by-step guides on filling out forms.
- Simple walk through guides of “What to do when? Where to look? Who can help with...”
- LawMatters collections reports indicate a gap in Aboriginal/Indigenous topics covering reconciliation. The comments are that it is too expensive compared to use.
- More training for librarians on scenarios and how to break down a legal information question into parts.

### **4) What would it take to provide robust training and support to public library staff so they can help the public with their legal information questions?**

As mentioned above adding more staff resources (such as another FTE) to account for several activities: curate meaningful content, communicate regularly, develop guide materials, be available to coach librarians through difficult transactions and offer training through online options and occasional in person options. However, another critical piece is having enough time to monitor and change the usability and design of training, promotional, and online material.

Therefore, a longer-term core funding commitment, rather than a single grant, would likely offer more impactful results. Finally, LawMatters has engaged libraries successfully in this program for several years and these changes are only to increase its success. As lessons are learned and the program is further developed, this model will likely be of use to provinces throughout Canada. As we see in Ontario, there is a push to develop its own unique version of a similar program. With increased core funding, the LawMatters program (with the CLBC and Law Foundation) could potentially position itself as a model and leader in the country, offering its methods and tools to other provinces.

## Next Steps

Further to these findings there are many opportunities to leverage programs and organizations that are already active in the PLEI community. To develop a sound plan and resource projection will need to consider more specifically what some of these activities look like and what other CLBC activities dovetail into them, so as not to create a program silo, but to support PLEI further. Some first steps for CLBC would be:

- Developing a set of activities, desired outcomes and estimated costs associated with these activities over several years.
- Completing a digital strategy review and content audit to create an online presence geared to third party information professionals (public librarians and possibly community agencies).
- Understand the outcome and impact needs of the PLEI sector and create an evaluative framework to include how the work of various organizations, starting with the Law Foundation's funded initiatives, work together to change the public's interaction with PLEI.



## Appendix A – Survey Methodology, Questions and Data Points

Our primary research group for this study were the 54 small-medium non-regional library systems in British Columbia to focus on the rural and remote community needs in BC. This included direct contact with 54 libraries to engage in either an interview or a survey. In total, we heard from 57 individuals, representing 49 library systems (of 71 total systems in BC). Of the 54 non-regional rural/remote libraries we heard from 44 library systems (82% of the primary sample group) through:

- 15 interviews of librarians from very small to medium sized libraries
- 29 online survey responses.

We isolated libraries by clusters based on number of staff and the size of the service population.

Interested in very small and small libraries the clustered groupings were as follows:

Library size	Population served	Number of staff (FT & PT)
Very small	<1,001	<5
Small	1,001=<>15,000	5=< 13
Medium	15,000=< >30,000	13<>30

We noted that certain regional library systems (Thompson-Nicola, Cariboo, Okanagan, Vancouver-Island and Fraser Valley) served similar kinds of communities, but given the differences in operating models, we chose to survey these libraries slightly differently (through an online survey circulated to branches).

### **Interviews:**

In total, we interviewed 15 individual library representatives (phase one = 8 libraries, phase two = 7 libraries). To address a non-response bias from previous evaluations and reporting, we deliberately targeted libraries with low previous participation.

### **Online surveys:**

An online survey launched to 50 of the small and medium libraries and select branches of regional systems serving rural communities (Thomson-Nicola, Vancouver Is., Cariboo, Okanagan) was in the field for 15 days.

They were comprised of a combination of closed and open ended questions that focused on areas of PLEI service other LawMatters data could not answer. We developed the questions based on interviews and focused on information LawMatters program staff did not yet have a good sense of. Conversely, we chose not to ask further about areas that were well known, and initial surveys reflected saturation (e.g. when asked about program improvements, responses were no different than those previously suggested to the program). The survey was in the field for 16 days and was sent to the same clustered sample groups of very small, small, and medium libraries. We did not double-up on interviews and survey responses; individuals were asked to participate in one or the other.

### **Preliminary Interview Questions**

We interviewed 8 libraries: 7 very small to small from rural and remote regions in BC, and 1 larger urban library system. These preliminary interviews were used to understand where the findings from the 2016 survey were still applicable, what questions would be useful to include in an online survey, and what information would be novel and useful to this research study.

- 1) How familiar are you with the Law Matters program?
- 2) Are there any major characteristics of your community that impact your patron's demands on library's primary services? (e.g. is there a primary employer/industry, a large commuter population, dominant demographic groups such as: large senior population, First Nations, migrant workers, new Canadians/immigrants)

### **Legal information questions**

We are most interested in the legal information needs of your community and how you support your patrons in getting answers to these kinds of questions. To clarify what we mean by 'legal' - it can be a range of topics. It could be questions related to dealing with a government agency (like filing a license

application, registering a status or land title, applying for benefits, etc.) ranging to court processes like how to register a court case, or attending a tribunal, for example.

- 3) How has your understanding of 'legal information' changed after hearing this definition?
  - 4) Are you properly resourced from to deal with this broad scope of "legal questions"?
- What more would you need?

Here are what we know as some of the more common areas of legal information need in public libraries: Wills and Estates (executing a will, purchasing property), family law (separation, divorce, custody), housing (rights, tenancy), applying for government benefits.

- 5) Are there any other topics you are asked to help with that doesn't fall under these categories?
- 6) What resources do you access/use to help them find the information they need?
- 7) How much do you use online sources to answer questions compared to print resources? (e.g. ClickLaw, government websites, Legal Services Society, etc.)
- 8) Are there any barriers for you or your patrons in using certain resources?
- 9) What are legal information questions you find challenging to support/answer and why?
- 10) Have you worked with any other legal education or advocacy supports available in your community or provincially?
- 11) How would you rank the importance of legal information (compared to other kinds of information) in your library service?

### **Working with the Law Matters Legal Books for Libraries**

- 12) How effectively does the LawMatters program offerings meet your library's needs?
- 13) What changes would improve your ability to serve the legal information needs in your community?
- 14) LawMatters/CLBC currently provides a weeding list. What other supports would be helpful to you in keeping the collection weeded and properly maintained?

### **Training and Other supports**

We have been working on various ideas to help support you and your staff to serve the public's legal information needs.

- 15) How does your library typically train staff to know about the LawMatters program?
- 16) What would motivate you to seek more training on these matters?
- 17) If you were to have any additional legal expertise or support for your library - what would that be?
- 18) What would an ideal workshop for public librarians about legal information cover?
- 19) What kinds of training formats are the most effective to your library?
- 20) Finally, it is a long term goal for us to understand what patrons end up doing with the information they receive. We are hoping to understand how to best do this, without it being too onerous. What would you need from us to make that work?

## LawMatters Survey 2018 Questions

### Online Survey Questions

- 1) About how long have you worked at your library? (Pick one 0-4 yrs, 5-9 years, 10-15 yrs., over 15 yrs.)
- 2) What best describes the work you do most of the time at your library:
  - a) Reference or front-line information services
  - b) Management and administration
  - c) Collection development (selection, weeding, ordering)
  - d) Community Outreach
  - e) I do it all relatively equally
  - f) Other (please specify)
- 3) Please select the most common types of legal information requests you receive:
  - a) License applications (e.g. drivers, hunting, fishing).
  - b) Court forms (e.g. family, civil, small claims)
  - c) Applying for benefits (e.g. disability, EI, welfare, etc.)
  - d) Bankruptcy and financial disputes
  - e) Estate issues (e.g. wills, property registration)
  - f) I don't know
  - g) Other (please specify)
- 4) Thinking of the topics you previously chose, please tell us the ways in which patrons are asking for your help?
  - a) To locate the forms needed to complete a process.
  - b) For support in completing the forms.
  - c) For information on what to do to next.
  - d) To find more information to help their own case.

- e) To find legal advice (e.g. a community organization, an advocate, a lawyer)
- f) Other (please specify)

→ [Question presented to branches of regional systems only: Are you aware that your library receives grants to purchase legal materials through a program called LawMatters? Yes, No, Unsure. ]

- 5) On a scale from 1 (extremely unfamiliar) to 5 (extremely familiar), please rate how familiar you are with the following services from the LawMatters program:
- a) Printed Clicklaw Wikibooks
  - b) Webinars and training (recorded or live)
  - c) Collection support ("Law Books for Libraries" list, weeding guidelines, etc.)
  - d) In-person training
  - e) Other (please specify)

- 6) We have heard from most rural and remote libraries that legal questions are rather infrequent. Please select the statement below that best represents your opinion as to why (choose only one):
- a) The Public doesn't know the library can help them.
  - b) The public is using other legal agencies (e.g. Legal Service Society or government offices).
  - c) Legal needs are just infrequent life events.
  - d) People are reluctant to bring their personal issues to the public library.
  - e) I don't agree they are "infrequent"

(6 e. skip to →You stated that legal questions are more frequent than we understand. Please tell us more about what you hear more frequently)

- f) Other (please specify)

- 7) We have heard that using legal resources can be challenging for public library staff. Please rate the helpfulness of ways we can support your professional knowledge.
- a) Annual in-person training sessions to use print and online resources
  - b) Quarterly webinars on legal information topics
  - c) Quick "short cut" guides on the legal resources available to the public
  - d) Training videos on using online resources like Clicklaw
  - e) Other (please specify)

- 8) Please rate the following statement: "In general, I feel confident directing patrons to 'the best' resource to help answer their question."

Strongly agree -----Agree-----Somewhat agree-----Neither----Somewhat disagree----Disagree---  
Strongly Disagree

- 9) We would like to know more about barriers your patrons may experience accessing legal resources. Please select and rank the prevalence of any of the barriers relevant to your community.

- a) Geographic distance to get to services
  - b) Literacy (low adult literacy levels)
  - c) Digital Information literacy (challenges using computers and the internet)
  - d) Connectivity (no reliable cell or internet service)
  - e) Language barriers (e.g. limited English )
- 10) Often special service organizations like nonprofits, churches or community organizations can be a source of information for people. Please select any other organizations that may be offering legal information in your community:
- a) Women’s Centre/shelter
  - b) Business Services
  - c) Community Centre
  - d) Employment Services
  - e) Senior’s Centres
  - f) First Nations/ Friendship Centres
  - g) Other (please specify)
- 11) Is your library connected to any of these service providers (i.e. through referrals, shared programs, displays, etc.)? Please describe how you are connected to these services:
- 12) How convenient would it be for your patrons to visit a larger town or city centre to access legal information services?  
 Very convenient ----Convenient---Moderately convenient----Inconvenient---Extremely inconvenient
- 13) LawMatters would like to help you promote legal resources in your community. Please rate how effective the following tools would be for your library:
- a) Display notices on shelf directing patrons to resources
  - b) Posters
  - c) Webinars
  - d) Community roundtable
  - e) Brochures
- 14) To help you weed the LawMatters collection, we have provided some supports. Please rate how useful the following supports are for weeding:
- a) Weeding
  - b) Notes field in the “Law Books for Libraries” list
  - c) Webinar “intro to legal collections”
- 15) Please tell us more about your successes in promoting legal information in your community (please leave blank if none):
- 16) Please tell us more about your challenges in promoting legal information in your community (please leave blank if none):
- 17) Please rank the best ways for LawMatters to keep in touch with you (most preferred on top to least preferred at the bottom).

- 18) Finally, what is the biggest challenge you are facing in serving your community right now?  
(open ended)

## Secondary Interview Questions

These interviews were conducted in parallel with the online survey to gather further information on key questions.

- 1) About how long have you worked at your library?
- 2) What best describes the work you do most of the time at your library:
- 3) Could you tell us more about your familiarity with LawMatters and any aspect of what it provides (e.g. grants for books, Clicklaw Wikibooks, webinars, Law Books for Libraries list)?
- 4) What have been some of the barriers for you in participating in the LawMatters program in the past?
- 5) How do patrons typically ask for help with these legal topics?
- 6) We have heard from most rural and remote libraries that legal questions are rather infrequent.
- 7) Would you say it is the same for you and if so, what is your best guess as to why?
- 8) We have heard that using legal resources can be challenging for public library staff. If you agree with this, what is the most challenging aspect of it?
- 9) What do you do when you really do not know how to help someone with their legal information question?
- 10) What are some of the major barriers your community faces in accessing services from the library in general? (could be things like distance to travel, literacy rates, digital literacy, language/communication, etc.)
- 11) What is the biggest challenge you are facing in serving your community right now? (in any area, not just legal information)
- 12) We are interested in knowing more about how library staff learns about new subject matter and materials. How does professional development work at your library?
- 13) We would like to help you promote legal resources in your community.
- 14) What tools would help you the most in promoting these resources to your community?
- 15) What are some of the community organizations or NGOs that might be helping with legal services in your area or neighbouring town(s)?
- 16) How convenient would it be for your patrons to visit a larger town or city centre to access legal information services ?
- 17) Finally, what are the top service priorities in your library right now? Where does legal information fit into that?

## Interviews of Large Urban Public Libraries

Questions for Urban libraries

- 1) How prominent are legal information questions in your reference work?
  - 1.a) What kinds of legal information needs do your patrons typically have?
  - 1.b) How would you go about finding other legal information services in your community?
- 2) How are staff trained in this specialized topic (if at all)?

3) Do you offer any specialized programs or services in legal information (either in partnership with an external organization or of your own staff)?

The following map shows all the regions covered, with the North Central absent because of the Wildfire crisis occurring during the survey period. The orange points indicate those who answered the survey, the yellow show those who provided interviews, and the green were involved in the Outreach training (along with many others that are included here).



Figure 4 : Libraries responded to survey activities

### 1) Experience Level of Librarians:

Librarians working in rural regions are relatively evenly distributed between four categories of experience level: 0-4 years, 5-10 years, 11-15 years and over 15 years. Experience level is important to gauge, as it informs what kind of support they may potentially need from LawMatters, their engagement in the program, and their experience with PLEI service in general. We also sought to compare experience level with confidence in delivering PLEI, asked in this question: ***“Please rate the following statement: “In general, I feel confident directing patrons to ‘the best’ resource to help answer their question.”***



The below chart compares the two data points (from the non-regional rural systems), and there seems to be no correlation between experience level and confidence level in answering legal questions. Most librarians are somewhat confident to confident in answering legal questions. Interestingly, most experienced staff state a lower than mid-range confidence. The following chart represents smaller, single site libraries:

### About how long have you worked at your library?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0

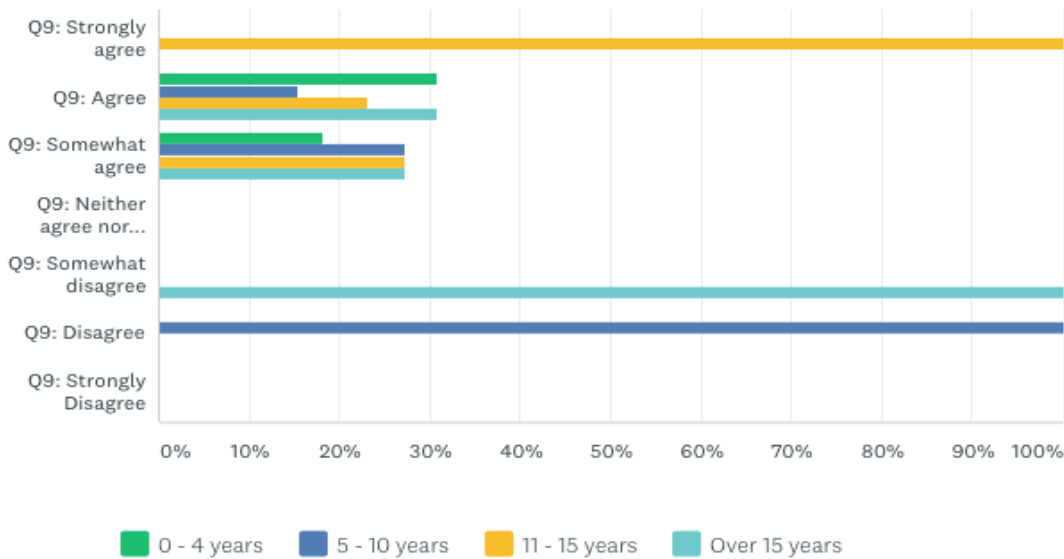


Figure 5 : Correlation between confidence and experience Single site libraries

Similarly, we see in the branches of regional libraries that experience level does not dictate a librarian's sense of confidence in answering legal questions:

## About how long have you worked at your library?



Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

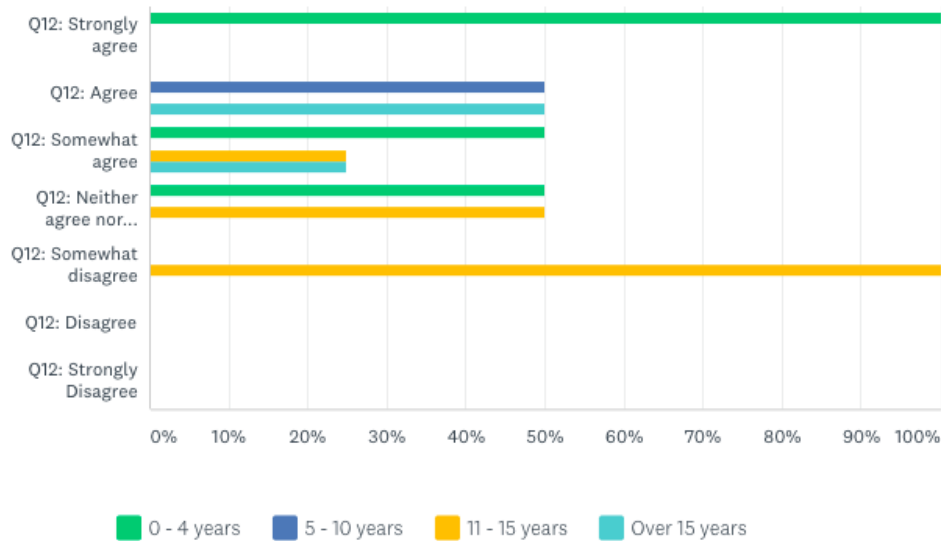


Figure 6 Correlation between confidence and experience - Branches of regional libraries

### 2) Role of librarians:

We also wanted to understand what respondents “do” primarily in their library system as it may impact how they can comment on the public’s need and their experience of day to day interactions. The majority of respondents were equally divided between management roles and a multi-purpose role (typical in smaller libraries). We can assume that most respondents are interacting with the public regularly, and can comment on community need. In smaller libraries, it is also typical for managers to provide front-line service on a regular basis (however, for larger library systems this is not the case, and being “out of touch” would be a concern).

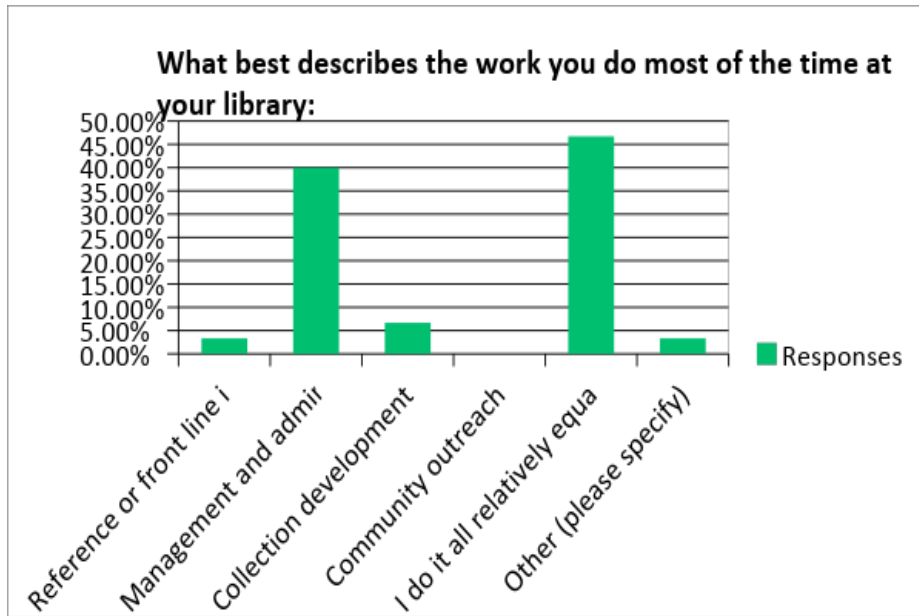


Figure 7 Roles Very small - Med single branch libraries

We do see differences in our survey of regional systems, where we asked management to forward it to front line staff. Roles reflect a more diverse range of reference, collection development, and community outreach.

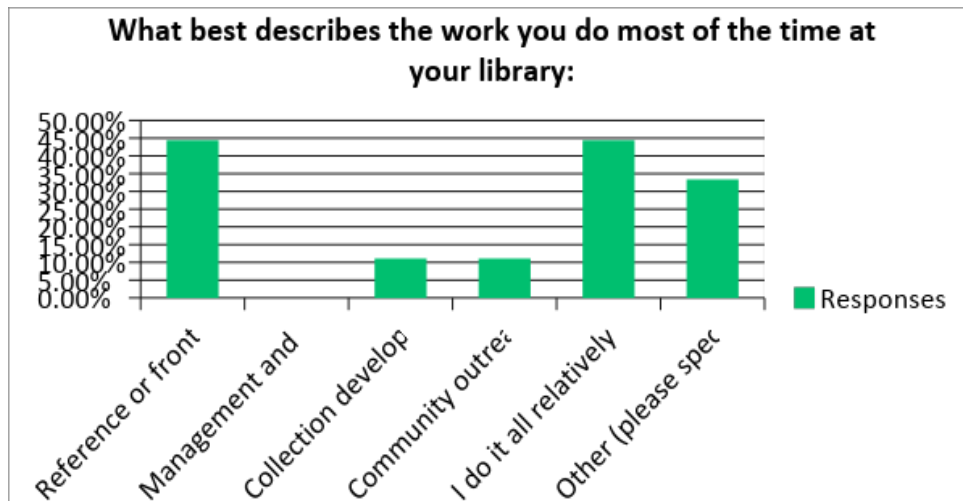


Figure 8 Roles Regional Branch Respondents

### 3) Topics & Formats

Though LawMatters has other ways of tracking the topic needs from their partner libraries, we sought to understand if there were any differences from what survey groups say and the previous LawMatters

evaluations. We also wanted to start prompting for and including topics we understood might be not considered “legal” by librarians, such as government applications and forms.

Because we have not asked about benefit and license applications before, there is no comparative data, however certainly the prominence of Estate Law is often referenced as the top request (see Appendix B for a breakdown of topics included within the LawMatters collection).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Applying for benefits (e.g. disability, EI, welfare, etc.)	22	56.41 %
License applications (e.g. drivers, hunting, fishing).	20	51.28 %
Estate issues (e.g. wills, property registration)	20	51.28 %
Court forms (e.g. family, civil, small claims)	11	28.21 %
Other (please specify)	10	25.64 %
Bankruptcy and financial disputes	1	2.56%
I don't know	5	12.82 %
	Answered	39

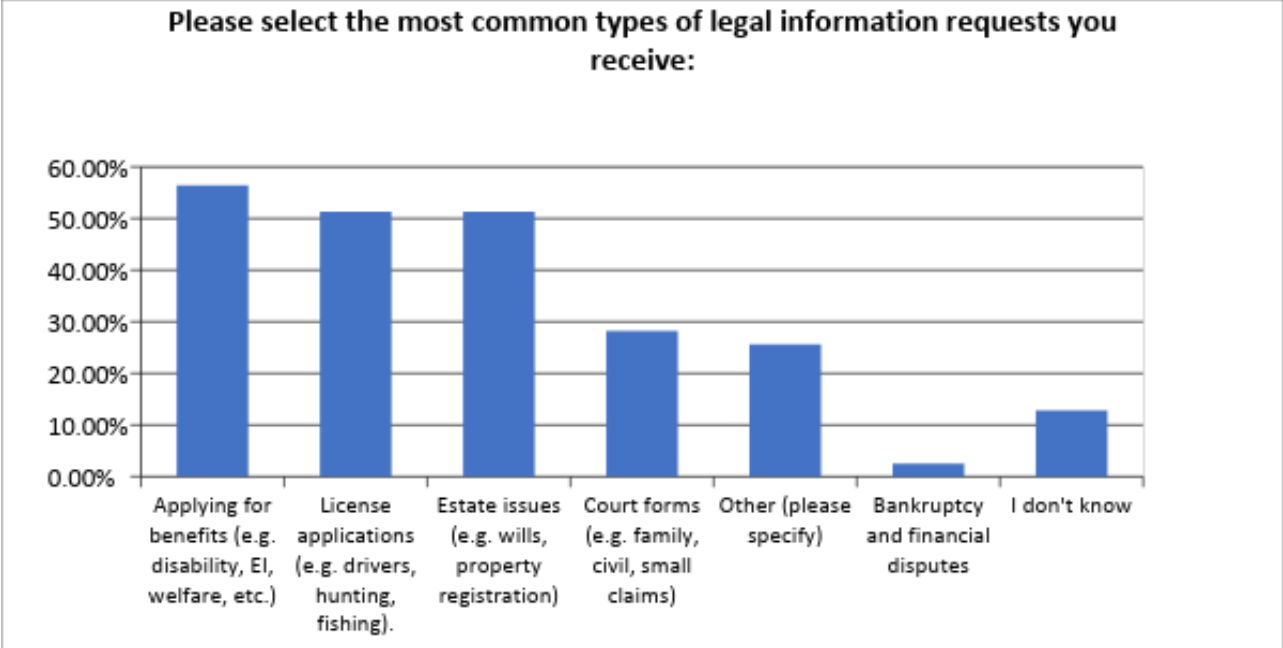


Figure 9 Frequency of legal questions all respondents

To understand more the way a reference transaction might take place, we asked librarians to choose what kind of help is requested. An overwhelming 83% (34 respondents of 39) stated that forms, and then completing the forms (64%), were the most frequently asked questions. The other three options were to understand how many questions were about “what to do next” and “finding legal advice” - though harder to articulate these concerns point to some of the discomforts we have continued to hear from general librarians.

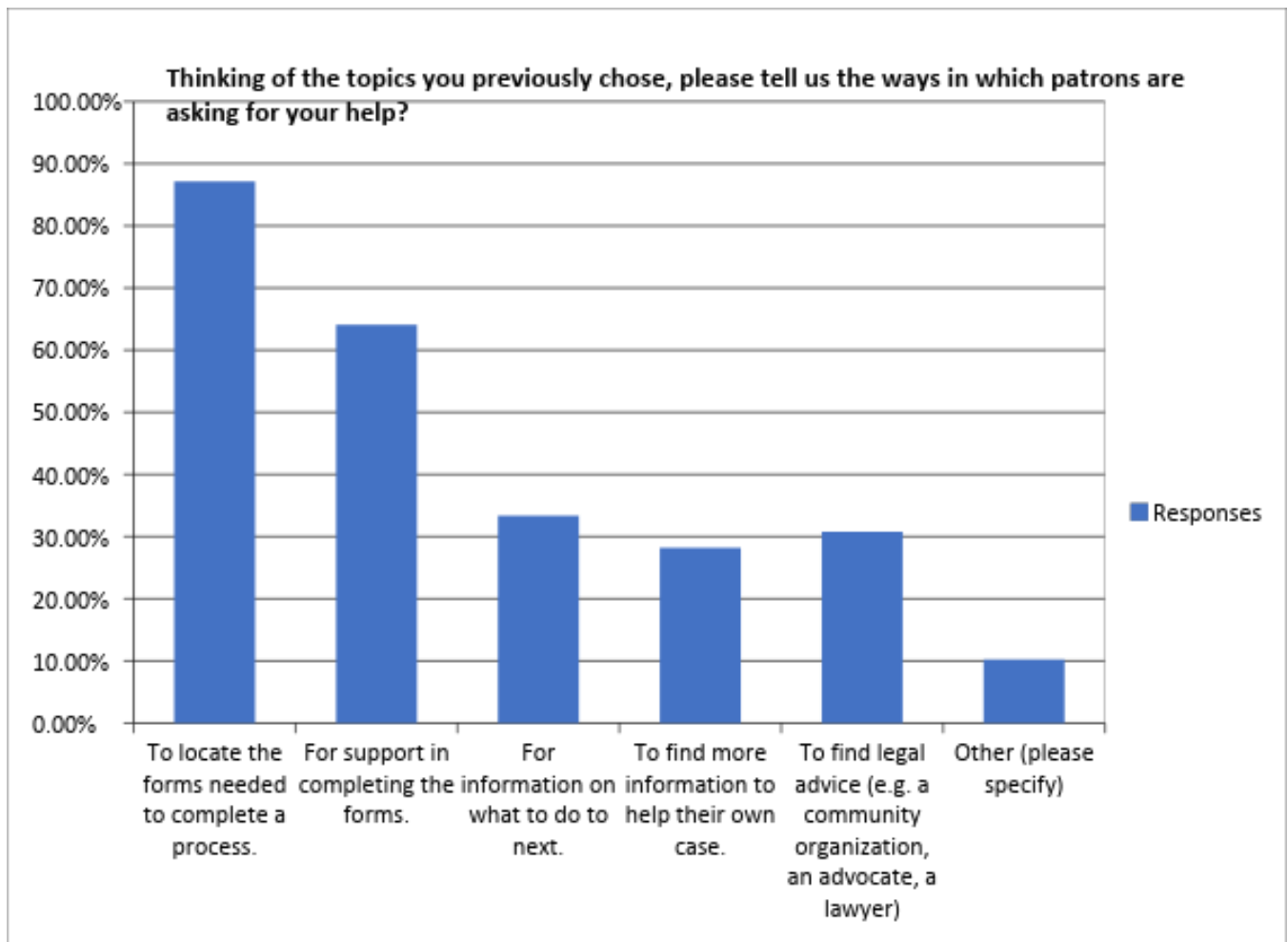


Figure 10 Help needed with legal questions all respondents

#### 4) Reasons for low rate of legal questions at public libraries

We asked librarians their opinions as to why they are experiencing a low rate of legal questions. The purpose of the question was to understand further how librarians perceive the relationship the library has with its community on this subject matter. Please note that these are not the actual reasons members of the public gave.

The categorical majority (31%, N=38) suspect that it is because of the *public's lack of knowledge that questions like these can be answered at the library*. More equally rated (between 13-15% of respondents) are that: a) the public are relying on other agencies for help; b) Legal needs are by fact infrequent; and c) people are reluctant to bring legal needs to public library. This final option was supported by additional comments suggesting that in smaller towns, privacy and confidentiality are real concerns for people. With the option to disagree with our assertion, 3 of 38 respondents stated they didn't agree.

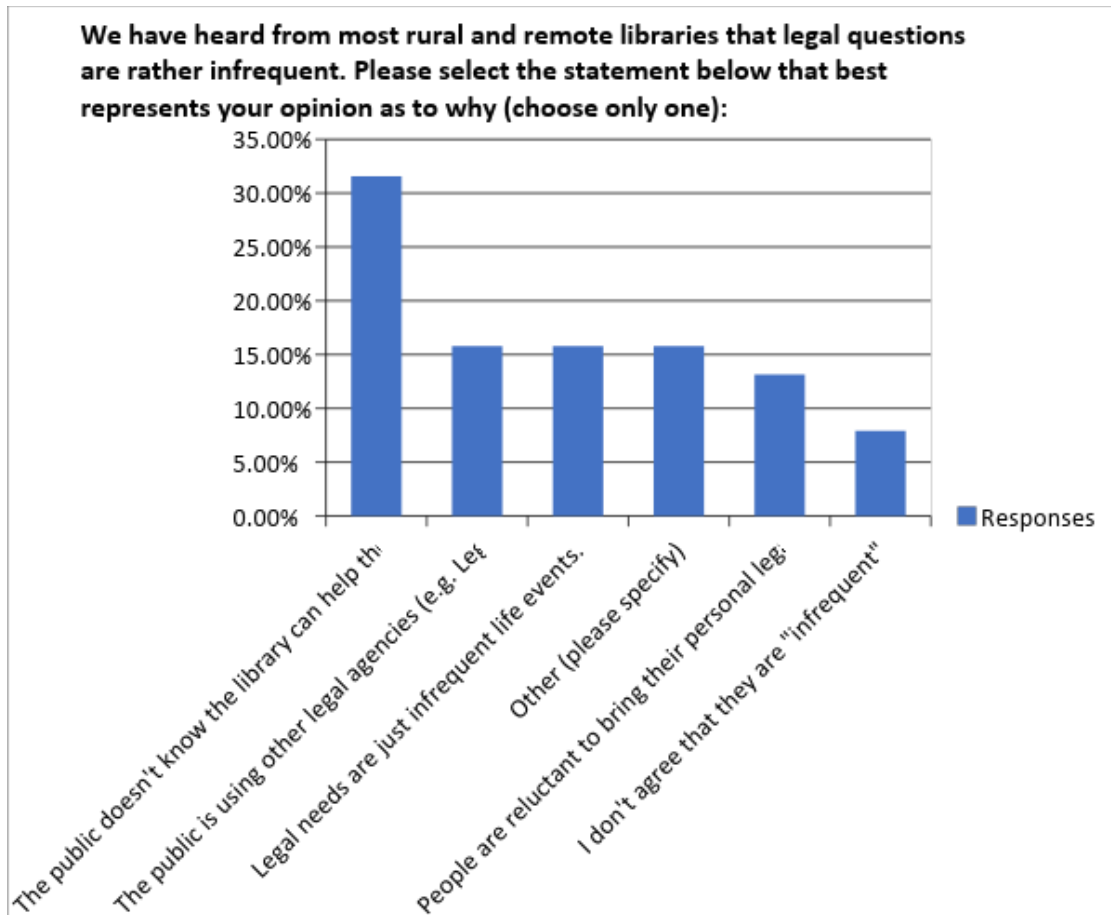


Figure 11 Reasons why legal questions are infrequent

**5) Barriers to information; Access to more professional services.**

We wanted to understand what other impacts and barriers might be contributing to the access, awareness and use of legal resources at the public library. We asked respondents to rank the following commonly cited barriers in their communities (Geographic distance, Adult Literacy, Digital Information literacy, Connectivity and Language barriers). Ranking was chosen because an open “select all” picklist might result in every reason being selected as it was plausible that most public librarians would encounter all these issues at some point. We wanted to know what was most impactful. Geography, digital information literacy and connectivity are all very close in weighting, with geography as the primary barrier. To be noted is a barrier of adult literacy level that would pose a massive obstacle for anyone being able to self-educate on legal issues.

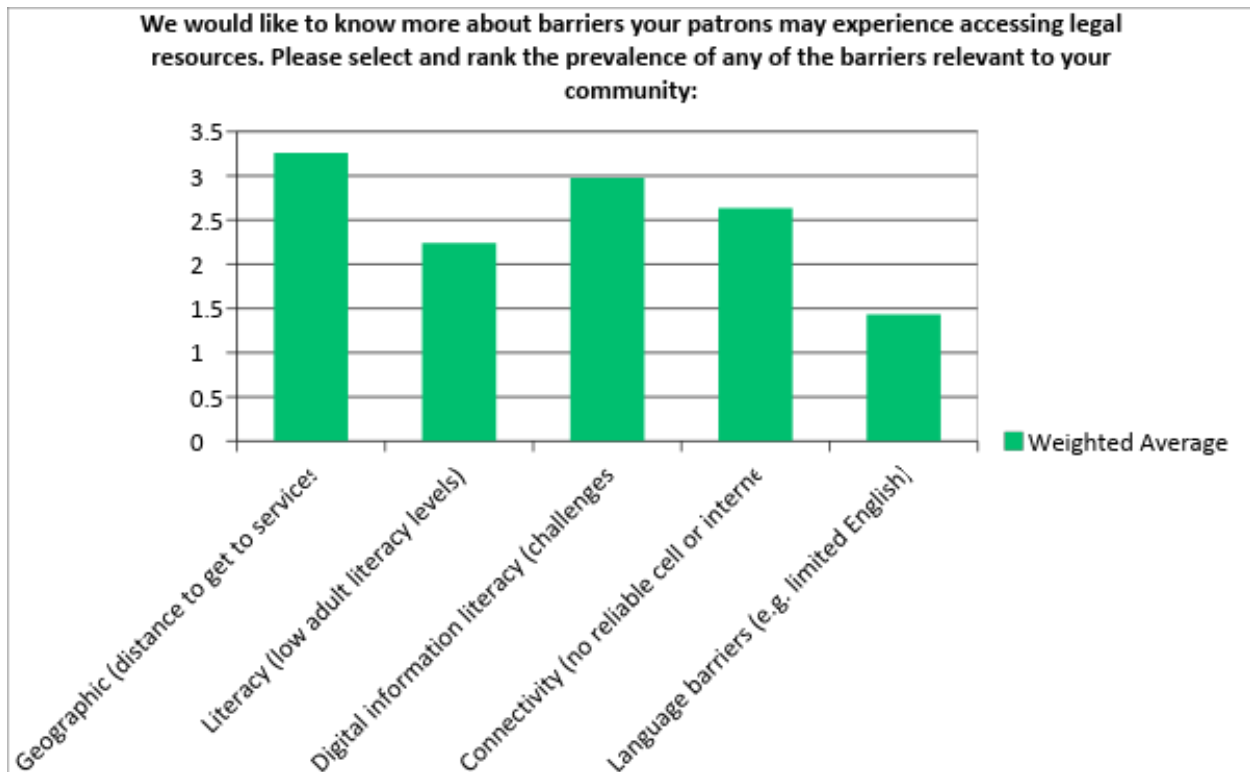


Figure 12 Barriers in accessing the library and legal resources

In order to understand how critical the local public library as a PLEI resource may be, we were interested in knowing if visiting a larger, possibly better resourced community would be a option for communities. Respondents told us that accessing other communities is more “inconvenient – to extremely inconvenient (62% N=36 of respondents combined) as compared to 30% of respondents replying moderately to extremely convenient. ***It is unlikely that a significant number of rural and remote residents could visit a larger neighbouring community for help, even if it were available.***



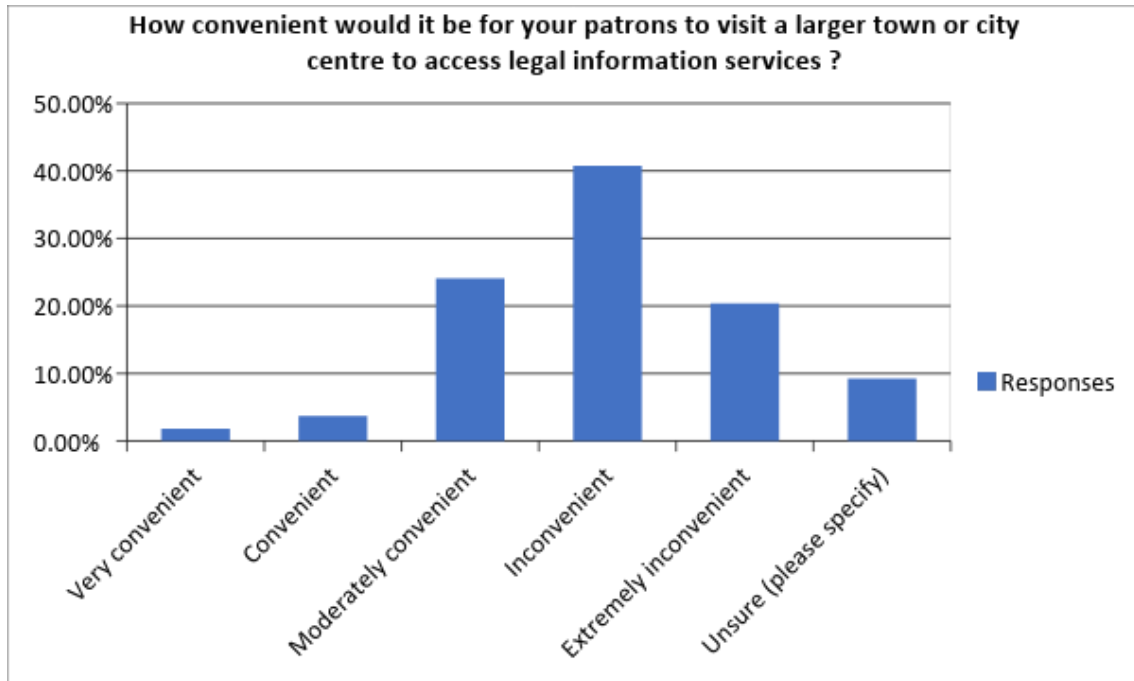


Figure 13 Convenience to access other libraries/regions

Finally, we were interested in knowing what other community supports and resources there may be in these regions. We asked what other agencies they may know of or engage with more formally to: a) understand if individuals may be seeking help from other agencies; b) if any other PLEI organization e.g. Legal Aid or People’s Law School, would emerge here (interviews indicated that only Legal Aid was known of the two groups); and c) understand how libraries may collaborate further on mobilizing their LawMatters resources and collections.

Community Centres were the least likely to be available nearby or in town (48% rated unavailable). The most likely to be available were Childhood and Family resource centres, Seniors’ Centres, Employment Services, First Nations education/friendship centres and Women’s centre/shelters. Where available, 18 respondents indicated some type of professional connection, with the lowest touch being referral and the highest being joint programs.

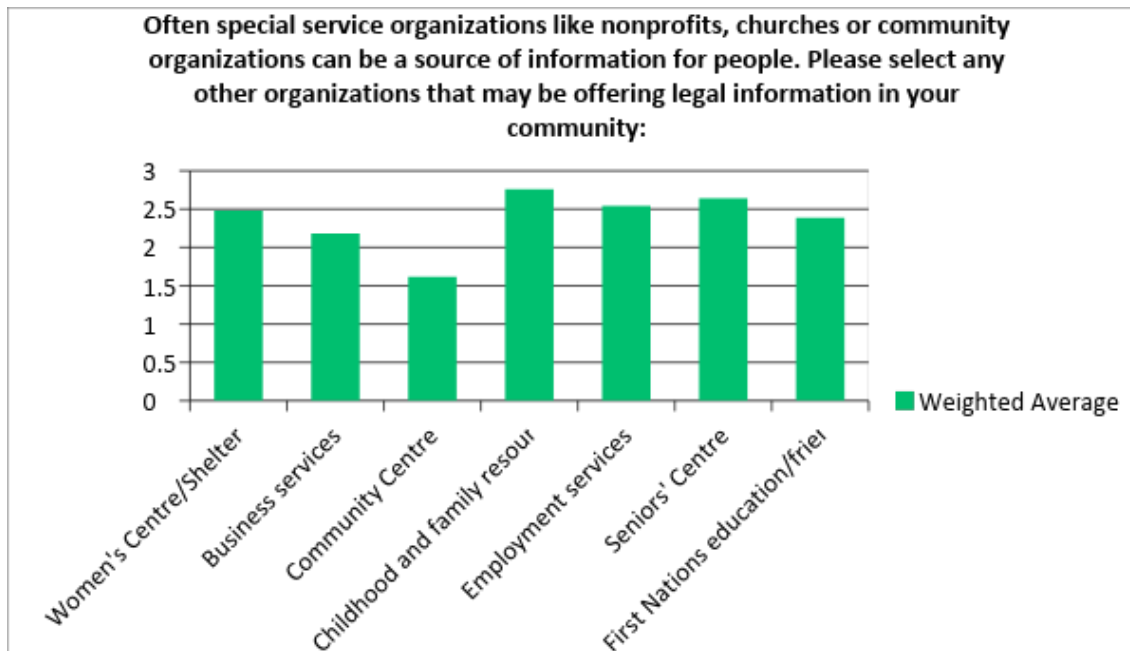


Figure 14 Other Community Resources

Please describe how you are connected to these services:
Joint programs. Communication
Career support offered from neighbouring community in our library. Member of a local Early Childhood Table that has a representative from the neighbouring larger community.
small town - referrals are easy. Regular community literacy meetings include various groups not necessarily considered "literacy based" services such as food bank/city council/ individuals attend to get a 360 degree perspective.
We partner with the Family Services, the Senior's Centre as well as our First Nations office through shared programs and advertising.
We advertise any programmes being offered.
We partner with the local community services, immigrant settlement services and employment services agencies to offer their services in the library once a week. We also attend monthly meetings of service providers in our community. These service organizations also present annually at a staff meeting about their services. We also do workshops hosted in partnership with the local municipality and the Residential Tenancy Branch, as well as the local seniors group (no seniors center but there is an advocacy group) on estate planning.

Know enough about their services to refer clients to them.
Shared information and displays of resources.
We host their brochures, posters, sometimes displays
The library provides pamphlets & info from other service providers & referrals when appropriate[sic]. Some networking & inter-agency meetings take place on an ad hoc basis.
We liaise with these organizations.
in partnership with local support services we offer free online legal sessions
We run programs together with the local seniors group.
Leaflets, information brochures, local newspaper
Referrals.[sic]If we don't have it, we suggest bigger library in neighbouring town or specific phone numbers and/or places to go for information.
Referral program between Women's Resource Centre, Friendship Centre, Employment Connections, and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Informal referrals only.
advertise programs at other locations. Other agencies advertise their services and programs with us. We have run joint programs in the past. We are aware of the other agencies and the services and programs they provide and refer our patrons to them. Other agencies also refer patrons to us.
We share advertising with them.

## Appendix B - LawMatters Library collection reports:

### Feedback on topic needs and collection barriers

Participating libraries were asked to complete a more in depth report form in 2018 to provide a better understanding of their needs, inform us how their collections were being used, and to provide insight into any existing subject gaps. Interestingly this report form asked more about why those gaps were (possibly) not being filled by asking what libraries wished they had, and what prevented them from purchasing it.

51 of 71 participating systems (70%) responded to date (though the deadline for reports is not until November 2018).

### Topic trends:

Libraries were asked to report on topics most needed by the community (based on a list of pre-defined topics). The top two (Family Law and Wills/Estates) corresponds to our survey and interview results. Interestingly, but significantly lower, is the 4<sup>th</sup> topic of “Abuse and Victims of Crime” – this is an area that previous studies have not highlighted. The long-tail distribution shows that all types of needs may present themselves in communities.

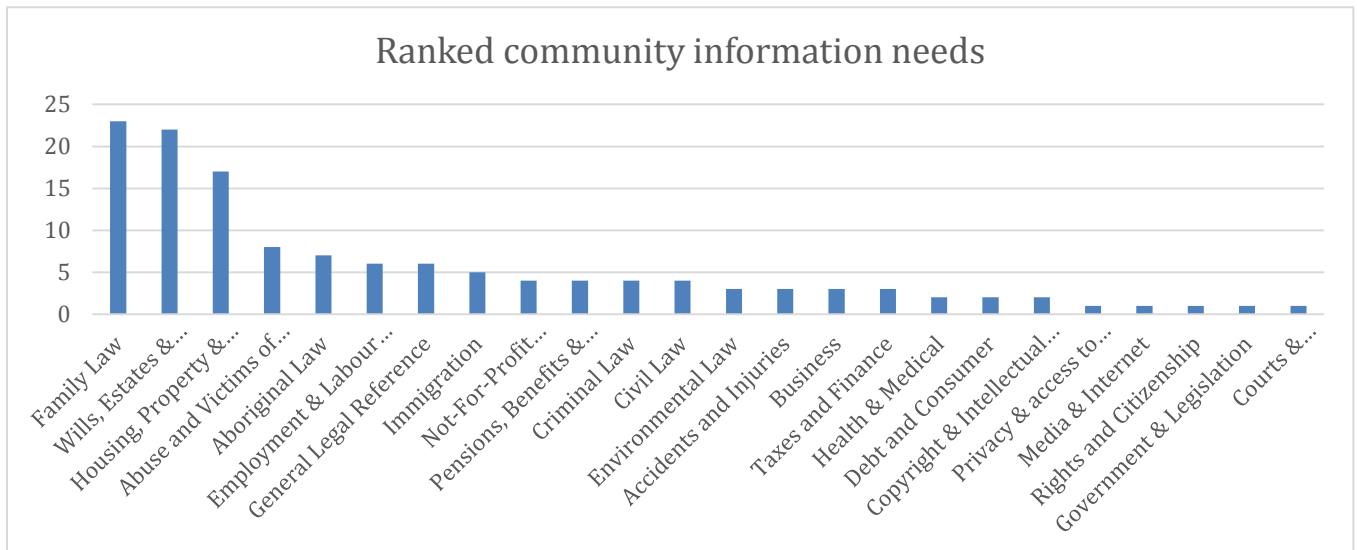


Figure 15 LawMatters Collection Topic Gaps Reported by Public Libraries

Curious to know if there are differences between the smaller more remote/rural regions of BC and larger urban libraries, we isolated the respondents in more populated regions.

1. Vancouver Public Library
2. Burnaby
3. North Vancouver City Library
4. West Vancouver
5. Greater Victoria
6. Richmond Public Library
7. Fraser Valley Regional

Though such a small sample group might not be representative, topic trends are somewhat different, with housing taking the top spot. From interviews, we certainly heard that housing is a major issue in not just the lower mainland, but in smaller centres a few hours out (e.g. Squamish) and in the interior (Nelson, Lillooet, Penticton, for example). Note that topics receiving 1 or fewer notes of gaps have been removed from this chart to illuminate the area of greater need.

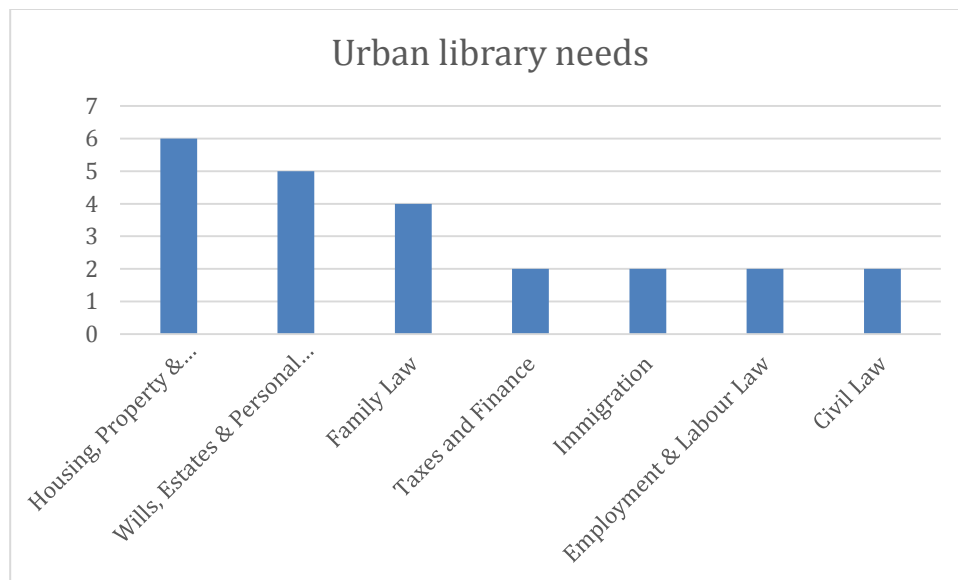


Figure 16 Most needed topics Urban Libraries

Looking at the remaining rural/remote or remote regional libraries, the top subjects of Family Law, Wills & Estates, and Housing/property rights emerge. The chart presented below removes topics with a count of 2 or lower, to provide focus on the area of need. The full range of data in Figure 12 reflects

the extensive range of topics, which indicates each library has very individual collection needs beyond the top five topic areas.

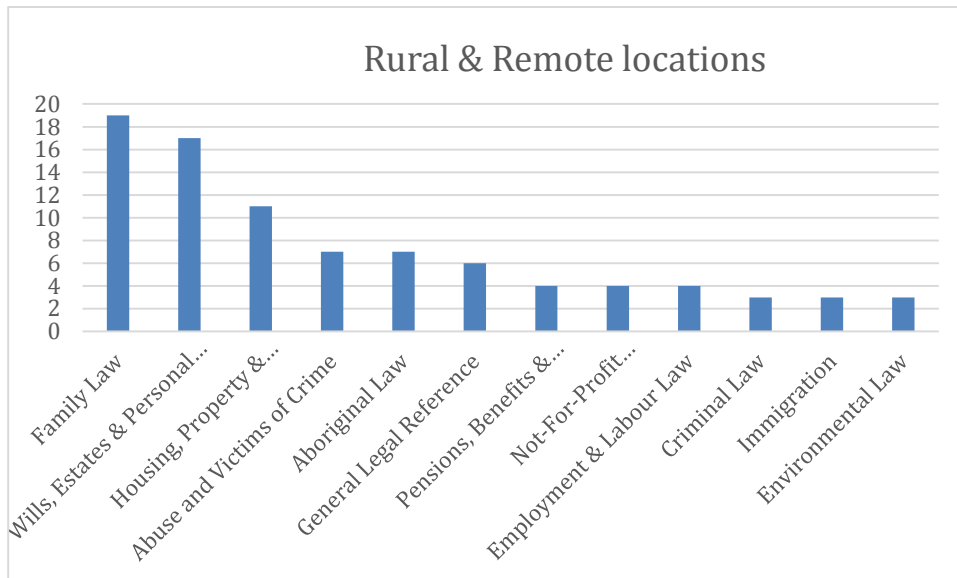
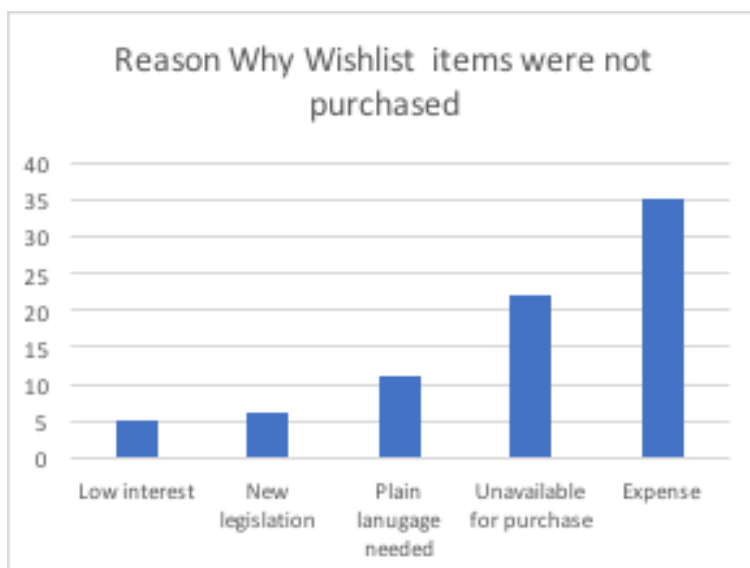


Figure 17 Most needed topics Rural, Remote and Small Centre Libraries

**The Wish List provides further explanations about why gaps occur (despite LawMatters grants) and where to develop alternate supports.** In considering comments from the “Wish List Category,” most respondents didn’t have any comment.



The most cited reason to not acquire certain material was “Expense” followed by “Usability” and low availability of subject matter (the other two areas were mentioned very few times in comparison). In qualitative responses “expense” was often taken in the context of perceived need or use (i.e. demand did not warrant expense).

Below is a view of the major topic gap areas cross referenced with the reasons for the gaps.

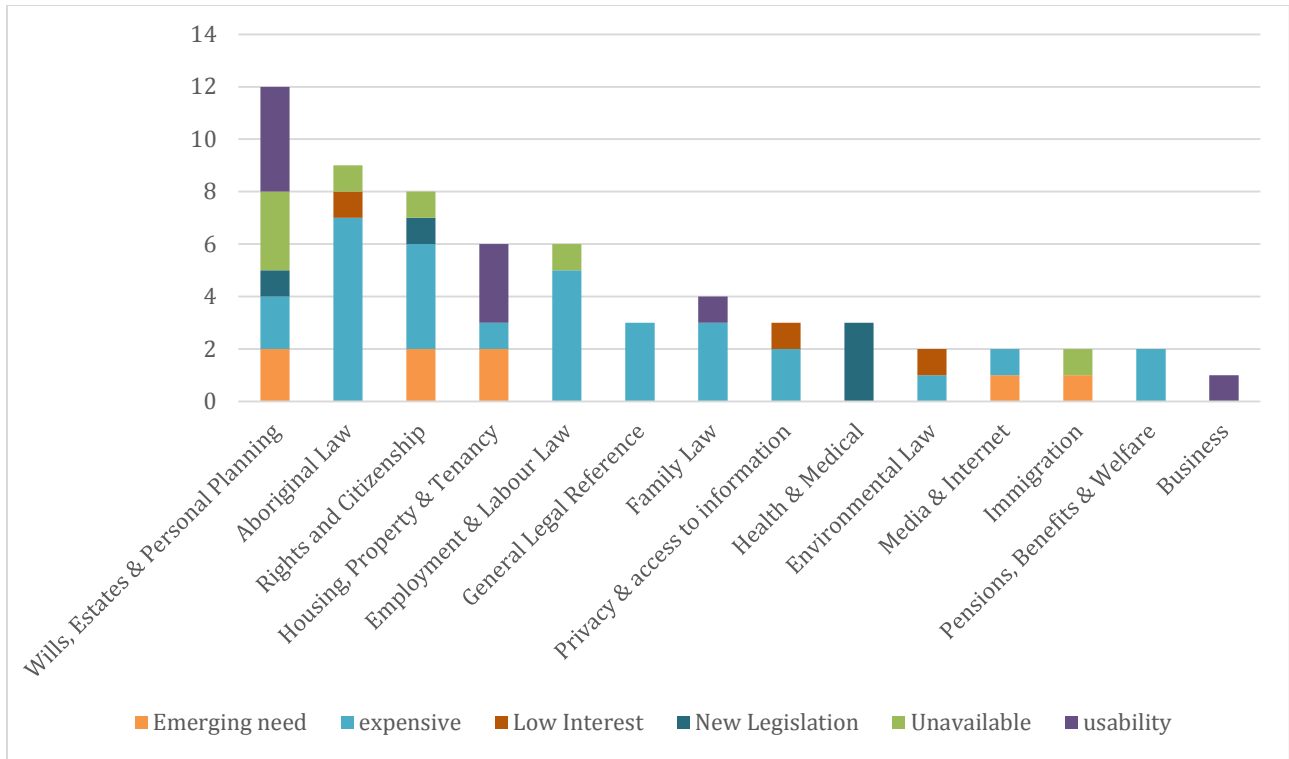


Figure 18 Reasons for Gaps - LawMatters Collections

## Appendix C – Law Matters Outreach

### A summary of outreach conducted with public libraries by Megan Vis-Dunbar in 2018

Between June and September 2018, Megan Vis Dunbar (CLBC Liaison Lawyer) delivered in-person training on legal resources to public librarians around BC. This report is a summary of the extent of the outreach work, the legal resources covered, anecdotal feedback, and some recommendations based on feedback.

#### Extent of Outreach

Location	Number of Attendees	Where they attended
Penticton	7	Penticton Branch
Kelowna	5	Kelowna Branch
Dawson Creek	5	Dawson Creek Branch
Taylor	2	Dawson Creek Branch
Fort St. John	1	Dawson Creek Branch
Pouce Coupe	1	Dawson Creek Branch
Tumbler Ridge	6	Tumbler Ridge Branch
Chetwynd	5	Chetwynd Branch
Hudson's Hope	2	Chetwynd Branch
Mackenzie	3	Mackenzie Branch
Yarrow (Chilliwack)	1	Yarrow Branch
Parksville	1	Courtenay Branch
Courtenay and Comox	3	Courtenay Branch
Campbell River	1	Courtenay Branch
Port McNeill and Port Hardy	1	Port McNeill Branch
Alert Bay	1	Alert Bay Branch
Chilliwack	6	Chilliwack Branch
Sardis	2	Chilliwack Branch
Abbotsford	8	Abbotsford Branch



**Total number of library branches reached: 21**

**Total number of attendees: 61**

### Topics Covered

- The difference between legal information and legal advice
- The importance of weeding a print collection
- Where to access free print resources
- Using Clicklaw, including general searches, the HelpMap, and Wikibooks
- Using digital LSS resources, including the LSS family law website, the Aboriginal legal aid website, and MyLawBC

Feedback on my presentations revealed the kind of legal questions librarians received and demonstrations included:

- PovNet's Find an Advocate tool
- The CRT Solution Explorer
- Atira's publication entitled *Your Rights on Reserve: A legal tool-kit for Aboriginal women in BC*
- Print copies of certain LSS publications including: *Emily's Choice: A Child Protection Story*, *Clear Skies*, *A Guide to Aboriginal Harvesting Rights*, *Gladue Submission Guide*, and *Your Gladue Rights*

### Trends, Feedback and Observations

#### Appearing in Person

- Several comments from participants that the in-person format was greatly preferred to a webinar format for this type of training.
- Many of the branches made an effort to ensure that as many of their staff as possible could attend the in-person sessions.
- The liaison lawyer also became aware of local advocates who the library staff were not aware of. Creating these types of connections can result in more effective referrals for clients.

#### Trends: Forms!

One trend ...in all of the locations ...was that many members of the public are turning to their libraries for assistance with forms. In many locations, this was not recognized as a legal issue. In locations where there is also a courthouse, some patrons were coming to their public library looking

for assistance with completing court forms. In particular, in locations with large courthouses but limited access to a Courthouse Library location, such as Chilliwack and Abbotsford, patrons reported being directed to their local public library by court registry staff for assistance locating and completing court forms.

However, across all locations, librarians reported significant numbers of patrons were being directed to their public library from Service Canada Offices to locate forms and for assistance in completing them, including employment assistance applications and CPP applications. This was happening in locations where Service Canada has a physical office as well as locations where there is only access to a Service Canada call centre. This was overwhelmingly not recognized as a legal issue and many of the librarians reported spending large amounts of time helping clients to locate information on the forms they need to complete. In some locations where there is a low adult literacy rate and library staff were providing a very high level of assistance to the public in this area.

### **Reaching the Branches**

In locations where a larger regional library has a number of smaller branches, for example the Fraser Valley Regional Library and the Vancouver Island Regional Library, it became apparent that many of the branches were unaware of our resources. For example, while a number of these branches maintain print collections of legal resources, they were unaware of our weeding list and the support we can offer in this regard.

### **Remote locations need more help:**

In the more remote branches, where there is only circuit court and no physical CLBC location or local advocacy center, librarians were dealing with a large volume and breadth of legal questions from members of the public. These librarians were also generally less aware of resources such as Clicklaw and free print publications.

While the number of attendees may have been lower in these locations, there was a high level of enthusiasm in acquiring more knowledge about legal resources for the public.

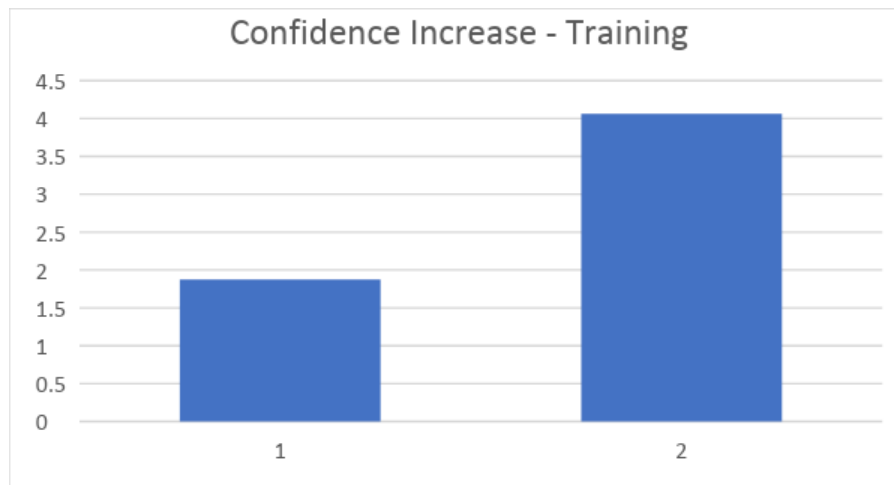
## Recommendations

- An ongoing effort be made to provide in-person training and outreach to public libraries in BC, particularly in remote locations and with smaller branches which may fall under the umbrella of a larger regional library.
- Practice questions be converted into role play examples.
- An effort is made by CLBC to increase awareness of webinars to aimed at front line workers and advocates to public librarians.

## Respondent Feedback:

The chart below shows a doubling of the feeling of confidence from public librarians after training.

- Question 1: How confident did you feel responding to legal information questions before this training?
- Question 2: How confident did you feel responding to legal information questions after this training?



## Appendix D – Online Resources Uses Analysis

As an added point of information, we wanted to understand the use of various online resources CLBC operates to mobilize legal information for British Columbians. This does not include every online resource CLBC offers, rather it focuses on tools public librarians may be using as part of, or in addition to, the resources provided by LawMatters. It also might offer some insight into the reach these tools have as public resources independently accessed by members of the public.

### Clicklaw Wikibooks [https://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](https://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php?title=Main_Page)

This online resource acts as an online publishing platform for complete published works. An end-user can then also print and bind publications from this resource. It is maintained by CLBC, but the content is created by a range of independent legal professionals as well as PLEI organizations. An end-user (be they a member of the public or an information service professional) can print and bind material from this site. LawMatters offers participating libraries printed editions of the most popular items, of particular interest is *JP Boyd on Family Law*<sup>20</sup>.

We used Google analytics to look at use over a two year period from: Sept. 22, 2016 - Sept. 25, 2018

- There were **813,123 visits** over 2 years; **~400,000 users per year**. The site has seen roughly a 33% increase in traffic compared to the previous two-year period.
- Most come from “organic searches” using search terms that directed them to the site. The top three user regions are below, however this site has reach throughout the world.
  - British Columbia 35% = 287,806 (prev 2 year period 223,203 = 30%)
  - Ontario 19% = 157,463 (118,869 = 33% increase)
  - Alberta 7% = 60,503 (45,010 = 36% increase)
- **Direct links** – A smaller traffic source are direct links – meaning an end-user has saved a link to their browser or bookmarking system – with 97,754 (10% of total) visits.
- **Referrals** – 42,512 visits generated from links on other sites. This is where direct links from other agencies, libraries for example, are pointing to the site. It is imperfect to understand

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<sup>20</sup> *JP Boyd on Family Law*. John-Paul Boyd and Courthouse Libraries BC. 2017. Accessed online: September 28, 2018 [https://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php?title=JP\\_Boyd\\_on\\_Family\\_Law](https://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php?title=JP_Boyd_on_Family_Law)

how frequently people access materials from libraries' websites (due to differences in URLs), however a rough search suggests that a small number of visits (~120-150) are direct user visits from public library websites. This is not to say however, that librarians are not supporting searches that would return this site. It might help us understand how many librarians or users are digging into the library sites and finding the link themselves.

- **The top referrers are:**

1	familylaw.lss.bc.ca	<b>14,865(34.25%)</b>
2	tenants.bc.ca	<b>7,148(16.47%)</b>
3	clicklaw.bc.ca	<b>6,337(14.60%)</b>
4	lawfornonprofits.ca	<b>2,011(4.63%)</b>

**Clicklaw <https://www.clicklaw.bc.ca/>**

This online resource is more of what information professionals call a “clearinghouse” with a series of “pathfinders” for various kinds of resources to help with PLEI. **It receives about 200,000 annual visits in one year with ~130,000 from British Columbians.** Including a searchable interface for resources to links from websites, to services, to full published works along with FAQs, an end-user can use this site to find a range of self-help PLEI resources or services. It is maintained by CLBC, but the content is uploaded and contributed by a range of legal professionals and PLEI organizations (about 54 contributors). Recently (with the outreach training provided in August 2018), LawMatters has included training on Clicklaw as a research tool; prior to that training it was included as a resource in the LawMatters collection. As we see with the Wikibooks collection this site is also accessed predominantly by searches, however, direct links and referrals make up a larger percentage of their traffic.

- Visits over a two year period: 347,422
- Directed from:
  - Organic Search 227,983
  - Direct 68,623
  - Referral 50,816

## **LawMatters specific**

### **LawMatters Blog**

The LawMatters program has maintained a blog as its main communication point for the program. It provides both updates on materials and legal information as well as changes in program personnel, program process and links to training material. These posts are circulated through an email update as needed. To be noted, the website usage tracking system is significantly different from Google analytics and we cannot assume they are representing the same user counts exactly. Traffic shows a moderate use of the blog (with ~20 visits a week), with a few visits a day and more with each update. We also see that certain individuals will have linked to specific posts and revisited that post for further reference.

### **CLBC website pages**

For an ongoing access point, LawMatters offers links to tools for their program on a section of the CLBC website. We would not expect large numbers of visitors to this section of the site given it acts as a reference point for LM participants (of which there are only 71) and the need for such items such as a Weeding list or the Law Books for Libraries list would be infrequent. They are also possibly using the Blog for this information.

## Works Cited

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