



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

HIGHLIGHTS

Staff:

2017 brought into focus CLBC's strongest asset: the assistance and expertise of staff.

Training:

CLBC's reputation for CPD programs and other training programs has been firmly established.

Data-Driven Service Design:

Following years of improved and more methodical evaluation, CLBC has the data to make evidence-based decisions to improve service offerings.

Community Hubs:

CLBC is emerging as a vibrant hub for legal and library communities, both physically and online.

Innovation and Leadership:

CLBC's work with others on access to justice, PLEI, and legal technology initiatives has established our reputation for collaboration, innovation, expertise and leadership through service.

Refined Governance:

The Board's skills gap analysis has informed its recruitment priorities, and prepared CLBC for transition to the new Societies Act in 2018.

BACKGROUND

**COURTHOUSE
LIBRARIES BC
HAS ITS ROOTS
IN THE FOUNDING
OF THE LAW
SOCIETY AND ITS
FIRST LIBRARY,
ESTABLISHED IN
VICTORIA IN 1869.**

Courthouse Libraries BC (“CLBC”) has its roots in the founding of the Law Society and its first library, established in Victoria in 1869. Over the years the library has grown to 28 branches located throughout the Province, and has now established a significant virtual presence that serves the legal community and general public whenever and wherever needed.

CLBC is a not-for-profit registered charity under the BC Societies Act and is funded primarily through major contributions from the Law Foundation of British Columbia and the Law Society of British Columbia, as well as through operational revenue.

CLBC’s mission is to manage knowledge for justice in BC in collaboration with others, and we strive to meet this by providing the following **core services**:

1. **Providing information services:** connecting clients to legal information and services.
2. **Curating print and digital materials:** developing and maintaining legal information collections that meets our clients’ needs.
3. **Delivering training and outreach programs:** building the capacity of our clients to use legal information and services.

CLBC’s strategic plan guides the overall direction of the library by outlining objectives and activities intended to achieve **four goals**:

1. We continually identify and meet the legal information and service needs of our users.
2. We are a lead curator of legal information in BC.
3. We are a key part of a network that connects the public and the legal community to the legal resources and services they need.
4. We innovate, generating products, services, and approaches to curating, sharing and connecting legal information to keep up with a rapidly changing world.

Our highest priority is to use our expertise to deliver guidance, provide information and support access to justice in BC.

**“EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE
AND RESOURCES.
A SUBSTANTIAL
CONTRIBUTION AND
BENEFIT TO OUR
DEMOCRACY AND
CANADIAN IDEAS
AND CHARACTER.”**

2017 IN FOCUS

THE HUMAN FACTOR

In recent years CLBC’s annual reports have focused on the “digital shift”— a term describing the library’s transition from a print-primary collection to one with more digital databases and tools. We discussed upgrades to IT, our growing emphasis on knowledge management in contrast to conventional library curation, and our development for training for staff and clients on how to use digital products.

For 2017, our annual report has a different focus. In 2017 we highlight the humanness of CLBC. This is the true value of the organization, somewhat counterintuitively revealed over the course of the digital shift. For our clients, be they lawyers, self-represented litigants, students, or public librarians, CLBC has emerged as “an oasis of sanity and helpfulness” for the people accessing legal information who are finding its digitization and decentralization to be disorienting and, at times, chaotic.

Human beings are at the forefront of CLBC’s value and are CLBC’s best asset. In spite of—or even because of—the digital shift, the proliferation of digital information, and the pace of technological change, clients are turning to CLBC’s human experts more than ever. In 2017, our clients continued to increase their reliance on our frontline staff for support in answering complex questions. Clients consistently rank staff assistance as the most highly regarded service that CLBC offers.

The proliferation of digital data has resulted in an exponential increase in the volume and complexity of legal information. Digital databases are indispensable and drive the modern library’s collection strategy. But the challenge is this: not all people are digitally literate, so what do they do when digital literacy is mandatory?

The digital literacy gap cannot be bridged with more technology alone. Human assistance must factor in. 2017’s evidence supports the fact that knowledgeable, engaged, and understanding human staff is CLBC’s highest valued asset.

Our staff make the bridge for our clients: from print-based resources and legacy research skills, to electronic resources and digital literacy skills and habits. We help clients traverse the changing digital information landscape, but we also teach the digital-first generation about print-based research. Many resources are not digitized, so the bridge goes both ways.

As a result, frontline information services are highly valued by both the legal community and the public. We see this through survey responses, client feedback forms, and our ongoing tracking of information requests. Our evaluation framework tracks what types of questions our clients ask, how staff time is spent helping clients, and how staff assistance is received.

In 2017 we saw:

33% growth in complex questions

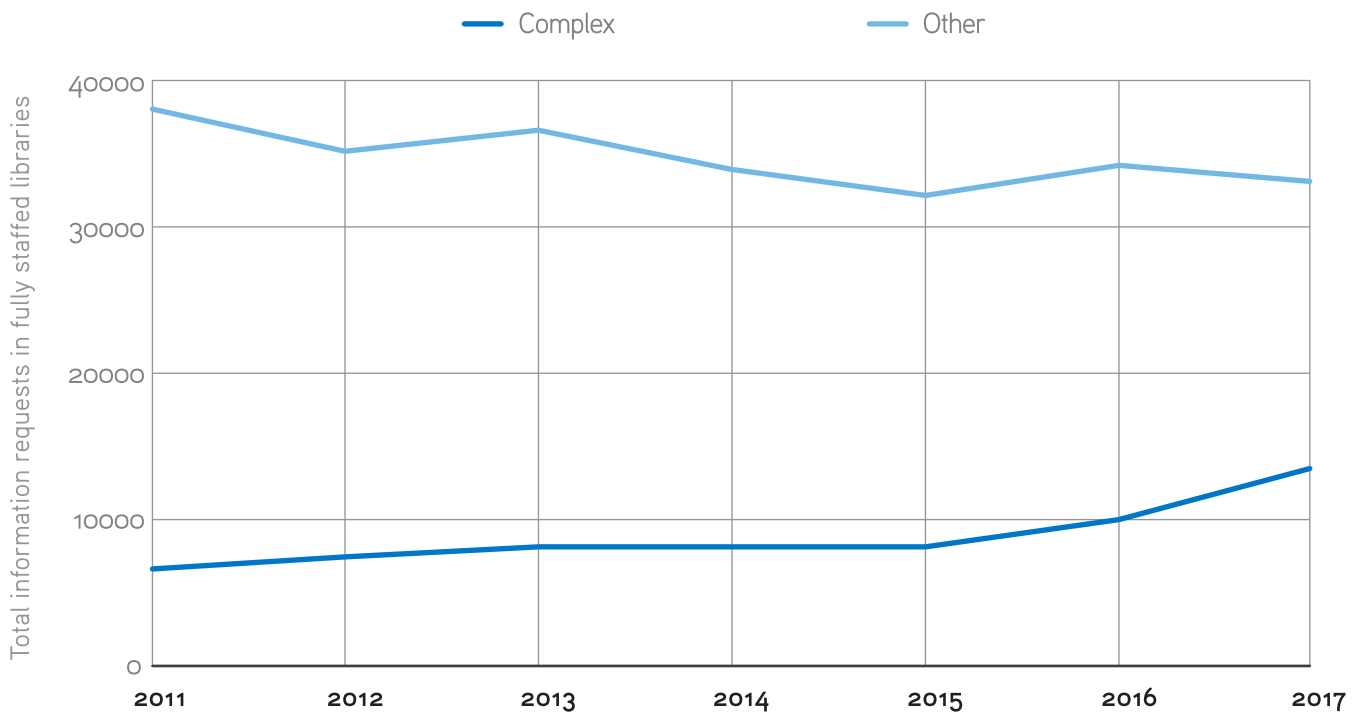
47,823 information requests of all types were handled in the seven larger branches. This is a 4% increase from 2016 overall, but complex questions in particular went up 33%.

66% of staff time spent on high value tasks

A high value task demands more specialized expertise with legal information compared to other tasks like selling copy cards, processing book loans, or sending documents to clients.

Praise for staff assistance:

We asked clients in an intercept survey to rate how well staff assistance met their needs on a 1-5 scale. For 2017 the weighted average was 4.93—up from 4.7 in 2015 and 2016.



Clients likened the library to an oasis, often commended staff personally, and emphasized the importance of on-site librarians. Frontline services earned a Net Promoter Score of +76 in our 2017 intercept survey. Scores greater than +50 are considered excellent, while those greater than +75 are considered world class.

**“AN OASIS OF
SANITY AND
HELPFULNESS”**

**“THE WEBINAR WAS REALLY
HELPFUL AND A SNAPPY
OVERVIEW... THANK YOU
COURTHOUSE LIBRARY YOU DO
A WONDERFUL JOB AND US
REMOTE/RURAL SOLE
PRACTITIONERS (ME) REALLY
APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!”**

COMMUNITY HUB OF TRAINING, COLLABORATION & INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Library Spaces

CLBC is a hub for legal communities, both physically and online. Our 28 branch locations give us a physical presence that spans BC. Meeting rooms and spaces in our facilities were booked 80 times in 2017 by a variety of law-related groups—CBA BC sections, judges and judicial administrators, Vancouver’s Legal Hackers chapter, C-DAS, Mediate BC, Access Pro Bono, and many others. We hosted 1,110 individuals from third party groups.

Training Academy

This year was another active one for training. We have emerged as a “plug-and-play” academy of sorts, connecting presenters to an audience of peers: lawyers, judges, law students, paralegals, legal advocates, community workers, and public librarians. CLBC develops training on legal information and practice management skills—but we partner with outside subject-matter experts to deliver webinars and in-person sessions on substantive and procedural law.

Partners provide subject expertise and CLBC moderates the courses, hosts the presenters and any in-person participants, runs the webinar software, promotes sessions, handles registration, and conducts evaluation.

Training highlights In 2017:

- 46 subject matter experts partnered with us to deliver courses.
- Course topics ranged from franchise law to manufactured home park tenancies, cross-border immigration to unbundled legal services.
- CLBC’s email list for course notifications grew to over 1,950 subscribers.
- 72 total training events (3,133 participants).
- 52 events aimed at the legal community (2,755 individuals).
- 30 CPD events at no cost (2,461 participants)
- Archive of training videos totalled 117 (5,811 views in aggregate).

- Subject matter confidence among participants increased from 2.5 to 3.7 (on a 5 point scale) after training.

Managing Online Communities

CLBC takes special care of BC’s lawyers, legal intermediaries and PLEI providers, as well as public librarians, and manages communities for each.

We launched the Online Community Platform in 2017, catering to two groups in its pilot phase: family law professionals (aligned under the Family Law Organizer initiative), and criminal defense lawyers (C-DAS). This members-only intranet allows individuals and working groups to exchange information, share document libraries, manage event calendars, and generally collaborate online. The platform prioritizes data sovereignty and privacy controls for BC legal professionals.

The Clicklaw program encompasses both the clicklaw.bc.ca portal (an online directory of PLEI since 2009), and broader efforts to connect the PLEI community. Clicklaw staff led community forums and training for intermediaries in 2017, and added three new contributor organizations. The Clicklaw portal’s user traffic increased by 6%, and the Clicklaw blog—a hub for news and stories from the PLEI community (blog.clicklaw.bc.ca)—increased user traffic by 30%. Clicklaw Wikibooks (wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca), our web-based publishing platform for PLEI, remains our highest traffic website. Clicklaw Wikibooks increased user traffic by 15% to serve an estimated 549,000 users in 2017 accessing 26 titles.

The LawMatters program links 241 public libraries to the world of legal information, providing grants, recommendations, training and printed copies of Clicklaw Wikibooks. In 2017, public librarians who took LawMatters training reported an 88% increase in confidence using legal information and answering legal information questions. The LawMatters coordinator started a newsletter in 2017, publishes a regular blog, and travels regularly to libraries across BC.

ANALYSIS, USER-DESIGN & EFFICIENCY

Two years into implementing our more data-driven approach to evaluating and improving service offerings and understanding clients, we began to see patterns and trends.

Data drove our overall collection strategy in 2017. Gradually declining print circulation statistics led to our decision to convert 4,966 “library use only” resources to circulating ones that can be loaned to clients across BC. Borrowers in remote locations can receive books by mail through our Book-in-a-Box service, which enjoys very low Canada Post fees. The majority of Vancouver’s print collection can now circulate for the benefit of lawyers across the Province. In 2017 we saw:

- A 34% increase in Book-in-a-Box mail-outs to lawyers in smaller communities.
- More connections by clients to our secure in-branch wifi, using their own devices.
- A plateau in use of public access computers (PACs).
- A 7% decrease in overall print circulation.

In 2017 we conducted a more detailed analysis of data from the lawyer survey we completed at the end of 2016. It gauged levels of client awareness, use, and user experience of CLBC’s services, and indicated where lawyers need more help.

- User satisfaction among lawyers was high for all services—and highest for staff assistance.
- Clients’ complaints about wifi reliability, on the other hand, was common and influenced our decision to upgrade the wireless network in early 2017.
- The wifi upgrade increased wifi usage from 103 average daily connections in February, to 164 in November.

Recent calls find everything more difficult, but outreach to law students, clerks and articling students ensures they understand the assistance we can offer them, and our outreach is working.

Thirty-four percent more articling students became new card holders in 2017 over 2016. Overall we saw a 3% growth in new cardholder registrations.

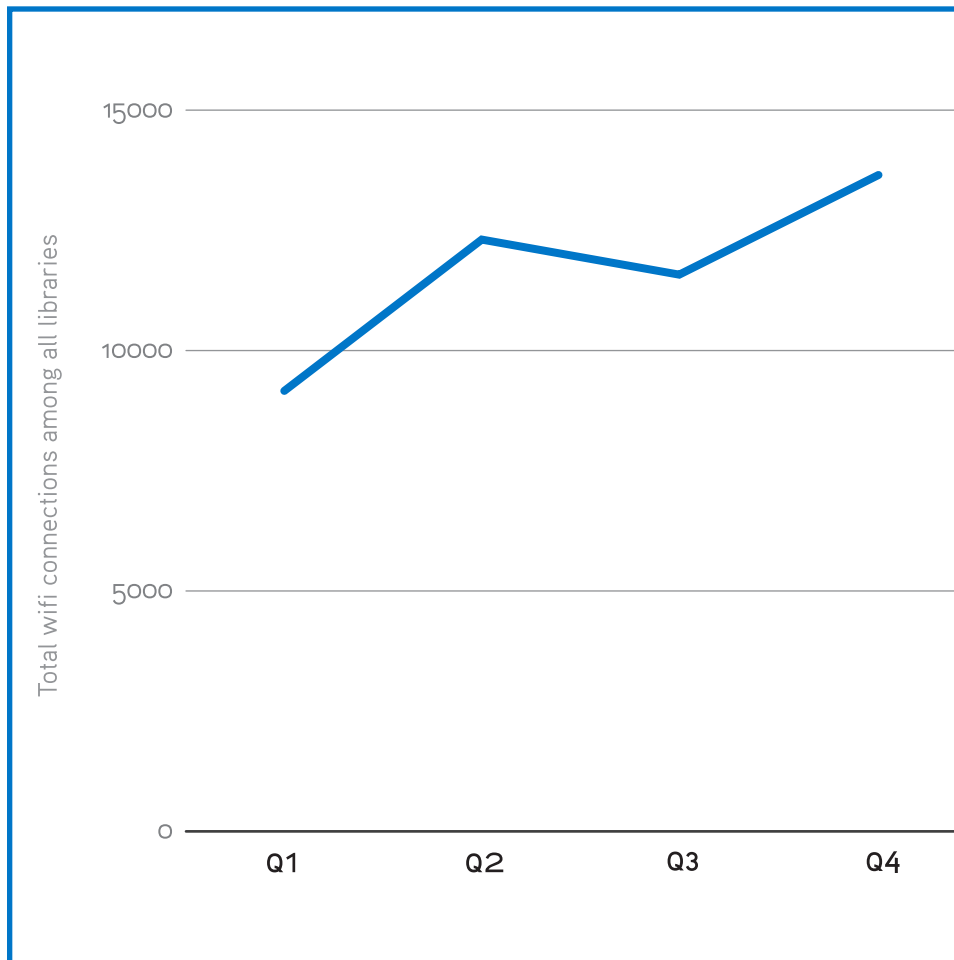
Analysis of the survey revealed ways to improve service value without necessarily increasing cost. The data shows a correlation between two factors: awareness levels for CLBC’s services and the likelihood of use. A 1% increase in awareness increases likelihood of use by .75%. A lesser known library service is less likely to be used even by those who know about it. The opposite is also true. The better known a service becomes, each individual (who does know about it) becomes more likely to use it.

In some cases the cost of delivering a CLBC service is relatively constant even with higher demand—as with any electronic database license. It appears we can drive down cost per use, and increase the conversion rate (i.e. more members using our services), merely by improving awareness.

In terms of new service offerings, our analysis revealed key areas where CLBC might ease some practice challenges for our clients.

- Lawyers find it very difficult to discover what initiatives their peers are working on.
- Sharing knowledge and resources with other lawyers and accessing templates and precedents for the sake of efficiency were ranked as the most important tasks.

We are addressing these challenges through our work on the Online Community Platform initiative.



EXPERTISE, INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

CLBC's vision of leadership is to show initiative and lead by example, serving and building the capacity of those around us. We strive for consensus and are motivated by core values of justice. In 2017 CLBC brought expertise, innovation, and leadership to external legal technology and access to justice initiatives:

We took an executive role in the Access to Justice BC committee, managing the funds on behalf of the committee, and serving on the metrics, family pathfinder, and engagement subcommittees.

We co-organized and hosted a number of Legal Hackers Vancouver chapter meetups.

We created the BC Family Unbundling Roster for Mediate BC, along with the website for its toolkits and resources.

We worked closely with the Government's Court Services Branch on their Online Divorce Assistant app.

We developed a new online legal research course for the Law Society of BC's Online Learning Centre.

We provided support for Thompson Rivers University Faculty of Law's course "Designing Legal Expert Systems—Apps for Access to Justice," helping to coach students and serving as a panel judge.

We supported the Civil Resolution Tribunal's June 2017 launch of the online Small Claims Court.

In 2017, we formed a CLBC Truth and Reconciliation Working Group and began networking with local Indigenous groups with the aim of developing a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Report that improves our own cultural competency as an organization.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

CLBC focused on creating a stable and efficient IT environment for staff and clients. The Board of Directors noted the increase in digital demand for CLBC's products, and engaged in its own skills gap analysis to recruit for new Board members with complementary skills to join in 2018. The Board also focused on transitioning to the new Societies Act, which is work that will extend into 2018.

FINANCIALS

	OPERATIONS	PROJECTS	TOTAL
FUNDING SOURCES			
Law Foundation of BC	2,062,563	-	2,062,563
Law Society of BC	1,860,677	-	1,860,677
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	228,430	-	228,430
Operating Revenue	148,306	-	148,306
Project Funding Grants	-	221,672	221,672
Total	4,299,976	221,672	4,521,648
EXPENDITURES			
Staff	2,324,883	-	2,324,883
Information Sources	797,432	38,505	835,937
Operations	831,782	183,167	1,014,949
Amortization of Capital Assets	258,708	-	258,708
Total	4,212,805	221,672	4,434,477
INFORMATION SOURCES EXPENDITURES			
Print Resources*	133,120	38,505	171,625
Digital Resources	629,895	-	629,895
Other Expenditures	34,417	-	34,417
Total	797,432	38,505	835,937

*does not include purchase of books considered capital assets, which was \$349,793 in 2017



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