

VALL Luncheon
Thursday, October 21, 2004
Speaker Notes

Topic: Vancouver Public Library, the first 10 years

Presented by: Paul Whitney, Director, Vancouver Public Library

Speaker Profile: Paul Whitney joined the Vancouver Public Library in 2003. He is well respected as a dedicated and effective leader at local, regional, national and international levels in both library and public circles. He played a leadership role in the evolution of the Lower Mainland library federation, InterLINK, which allows open access to library services for all residents of the area. He has served as president of the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and chaired the Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries. He is the Canadian appointee to the Copyright and Other Legal Matters Committee (CLM) of the International Federation of Library Associations.

In 2002 he received the Canadian Library Association Outstanding Service to Librarianship Award, and the British Columbia Library Association President's Award for contributions to the Association. In 2001, he received the UBC School of Library, Archival and Information Studies Alumni Service and Leadership Award.

Notes:

The new library board has been addressing the following issues:

- Inadequate hours of operation. To address this, library hours have been extended, not only by the number of hours the libraries are open during the day but also by the number of days a week and how many months a year many of the libraries are open.
- Improve service to inner-city areas. Many inner-city libraries are being examined for improved service and new library sites are being investigated. Strathcona is the priority at the moment.
- Service to children. There is agreement that early childhood education and literacy are key initiatives and a top priority. Staffing to outreach programs has been increased as one means of improving this service.
- Service to multi-cultural communities. The library is increasing the number of positions with language requirements and increasing direct service and resources for multi-cultural groups.
- The library as a civic space. The downtown library in particular is developing into a place where people meet and express ideas. It is becoming an anchor within the community, architecturally, emotionally and intellectually. The library board is working to ensure the library serves the changing community for years to come. Incorporating technology and reviewing the development and use of space are some of the issues under consideration.

The downtown library has seen a change in its role over recent years because there has been a sharp increase in urban development. As a result, the library is not only a reference library but also an urban residential library. It is having to become all things to all people. The demands and expectations of the library are different than they used to be. For example, one third of the borrowed materials are for children. The community

still values the core services the library has always provided and that will remain a priority for the library.

InfoAction is a fee based service available through the library. It began in 1995. There will be a new manager soon as Maureen Matthews is retiring. Those familiar with the service will agree that some of the benefits of the service include the ability to draw on a full range of resources within the library as well as services that are outside the library. The service is quick and effective.

What's in store for the future?

- Changes to the building in order to adapt to the changing demands and expectations placed on it.
- RFID (Radio Frequency ID)
- Increasing the quality of service as well as training library users on electronic services to increase self-service.
- Increasing access to collections and the licensing of collections
- Maintaining the core collections and services

"Vancouver is a learning city". Civil institutions can make a difference to the development of a city. Vancouver will see the World Urban Forum and the Olympics in the coming years and the library will actively participate in those events

Q&A

Will corporate accounts have greater access to databases?

There is consideration of licensing some services to VPL card holders

Is there a depository for Government Publications?

There is but less and less is monitored and saved because so much of it is electronic and URL's just disappear without anyone knowing. There is a need for someone to monitor these sites and save them.