



**VANCOUVER ISLAND  
REGIONAL LIBRARY**

**Vancouver Island Regional Library**

# **Strategic Plan**

**2011 - 2015**

Collection

Communications

Facilities & Operations

Information Technology

Quality Service

**Strong Libraries ■ Strong Communities**



# Table of Content

- Message from the Library Board Chair 1
- Message from the Executive Director 2
- The Planning Process 3
- Our Mission, Vision, Values 4
- Our Strategic Priorities 5
  - Collection 5
  - Communications with our Stakeholders 6
  - Facilities & Operations 7
  - Information Technology 8
  - Delivery of Quality Service 9

## About Vancouver Island Regional Library

Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) comprises 38 branch libraries and a ‘virtual branch’ ([www.virl.bc.ca](http://www.virl.bc.ca)), and serves more than 413,000 people living in the region that stretches from north of Victoria to Haida Gwaii and Bella Coola on the Central Coast. Founded in 1936 as Vancouver Island Union Library, it was the second regional library to be established in North America.

VIRL is governed by the British Columbia *Library Act* and is funded with taxes levied through municipalities and regional districts, and an operating grant from the Government of British Columbia. VIRL’s Board of Trustees consists of elected officials representing 38 member municipalities and regional districts.

Bella Coola, Bowen, Campbell River, Chemainus, Comox, Courtenay, Cowichan, Cowichan Lake, Cumberland, Gabriola Island, Gold River, Hornby Island, Ladysmith, Masset, Nanaimo Harbourfront, Nanaimo Whittington, Parksville, Port Alberni, Port Alice, Port Clements, Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Renfrew, Quadra Island, Qualicum Beach, Queen Charlotte, Sandspit, Seymour, Sidney/North Saanich, Sooke, South Cowichan, Tahsis, Tofino, Ucluelet, Union Bay, West

# Message from the Library Board Chair



**William J. Holdom**  
Chair, Board of Trustees

With pleasure and honour I present the Strategic Plan that will help guide the Board of Trustees in charting directions, funding and facilities decisions for Vancouver Island Regional Library in the next five years.

Public libraries are vital to our democratic society; they are unique because they provide free, universal access to information, and citizens participate voluntarily in the services and programs that libraries offer. In a society where not everyone has equal access to technology and the Internet, libraries help to level the playing field.

During the strategic planning process you told us how important the library is to you and to your communities, and how you value our staff and the services they provide. You also recognized that the role of the library within your communities is changing as a result of technology, and how the quiet buildings once devoted solely to reading and research have now become busy gathering places and community hubs. Simply put: you said you want more of what we do and provide.

Vancouver Island Regional Library has served the information needs of citizens for almost 75 years. The information age has encouraged us to embrace new technologies that have allowed us to computerize our collection catalogues, streamline checkout procedures, provide electronic delivery of information, and offer public access to the Internet. Smart use of technology has freed up staff to provide customers with more personalized service and increased access to our resources.

As a regional library district, one of the challenges we face as a Board is balancing the increased need for our services, the reality of decreased provincial funding, and the importance of equalizing access to information and services, especially in our rural and economically challenged communities. The provincial government has significantly decreased funding for libraries, and municipalities and regional districts have become the primary funders of regional libraries. On behalf of the Board, I thank these local governments for recognizing the importance of libraries to their communities and providing the funding required for this important public service.



## Message from the Executive Director



**Rosemary Bonanno**, BA, MLS  
Executive Director

This Strategic Plan represents a lot of hard work and a powerful process that galvanized the organization and brought together our library customers, community members, staff, and Board of Trustees to share their hopes and dreams for their library branches and for Vancouver Island Regional Library in general. Together we shaped a common mission, vision, and goals.

The shared views described in this 5-year Strategic Plan represent another milestone in an internal process started in January 2009 and known as Strategic Realignment: Managing for Today and

Tomorrow. We restructured our human and financial resources to unite the various parts of our organization to deliver effective 21<sup>st</sup> century library services. This strategic realignment allows us to be flexible, adapt to change, and meet the evolving needs and expectations of our customers as a result of emerging technological advances.

Throughout the strategic planning process you gave our staff and services high ratings. You also said that you want larger facilities, increased hours of operations, and greater access to an expanded collection. You want your library to be a welcoming place for all citizens from every walk to life, regardless of background or the circumstances in which they may find themselves. Best of all, you told us that the library is the heartbeat of your communities, is an important resource for the information age, and that excellent service and trustworthy information provided by knowledgeable professionals is what sets the library apart from the Internet.

As we implement this strategic plan, we know there will be many challenges ahead but we can face them with confidence, knowing that we are building on a solid foundation of customer satisfaction that is already in place.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to participate in our public consultation sessions, complete written questionnaires, and contribute valuable comments during the shaping of this plan. We thank you for telling us about your experiences and expectations, and the many ways the library contributes to your life. We particularly thank our Board of Trustees, our facilitator Dr. Neil Smith, and the Strategic Planning Working Group whose continued support, advice and participation underpin the development of this plan.

This is your plan.

### Strategic Planning Working Group

- Ben Kason
- Debbie Main
- Diane Maxted
- Harold Kamikawaji
- Kate Morley
- Kevin Coates
- Lorelee Parker
- Lorraine Plouffe
- Lynda Colbeck
- Michael de Leur
- Patricia Nuttall
- Pippa Warhurst
- Rosemary Bonanno
- Stephen Warren
- Virginia MacLeod

- Consultants:
- Dr. Neil Smith
- Deirdre Bjornson

## The Planning Process

In the fall of 2009, a working group was tasked with development of the process to create a five-year strategic plan that will guide long-range planning and funding decisions for Vancouver Island Regional Library's 38 branches and a 'virtual branch' ([www.virl.bc.ca](http://www.virl.bc.ca)).

The strategic planning process commenced with the selection of a methodology to be used during public consultation sessions, followed by preparation and training of the facilitation team in the chosen methodology – Appreciative Inquiry.

Members of the public, Board of Trustees, and library staff were invited to participate in the consultation sessions conducted in 17 communities and to present written feedback through a print and online survey. More than 500 people attended our public sessions and over 4,000 people completed our questionnaire.

After the public sessions, participants were able to view their comments and provide further input online through Moodle (modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment), which is frequently used in teaching in post-secondary educational institutions.

At their Annual General Meeting in January 2010, members of the Board of Trustees were given an overview of the consultation process, and they had an opportunity to review 'your voices' – your words, concepts and ideas – that fall into five themes: Collection, Communications, Facilities and Operations, Information Technology, and Sustaining Delivery of Quality Service. Equipped with this information, Trustees reviewed the existing mission and vision statements and drafted new statements for Vancouver Island Regional Library.

Simultaneously, staff conducted research on emerging trends and issues – from social and demographic factors, to economic and political realities, and technological advances – that are expected to impact public libraries in the coming decade.

Vancouver Island Regional Library will report to the community on progress and achievements through our Annual Report and Annual Service Plans that will be available in library branches and on the website at [www.virl.bc.ca](http://www.virl.bc.ca) (About the Library/Library Board of Trustees).



## Our Mission, Vision, Values

### Mission (our purpose)

To enrich lives and communities through universal access to knowledge, lifelong learning, and literacy.

### Vision (our dream)

To develop strong library branches that are vital community destinations for knowledge, inspiration, innovation, and renewal.

### Values (our core beliefs)

#### Leadership & Innovation

Vancouver Island Regional Library and its staff provide excellence in library services through open communication, teamwork and cooperation, respect and recognition, education and learning, and by incorporating innovative solutions in a quality library environment.

#### Stewardship & Accountability

We have been entrusted with public resources, and we optimize these resources through responsible and effective management and fiscal integrity.

#### Information & Literacy

We believe in the importance of informed and literate communities, and we provide services and programs to support lifelong learning.

#### Intellectual Freedom

We advocate for the right to free expression and free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society, within the laws of Canada. VIRL endorses the Canadian Library Association's Statements of Intellectual Freedom.

#### Collaboration & Partnerships

We foster collaboration and partnerships in our communities to promote lifelong learning and universal access to increase the library's capacity and diversity.

#### Tradition & Technology

We value the tradition of the library and the legacy of the printed word, and we embrace the benefits that modern technology provide.

*"The library is my lifeline as I cannot afford to buy many books."*

*"I wish our library had a larger selection."*

*"It excites me to have access to so many books, DVDs and magazines."*

## Our Strategic Priorities

During our strategic planning process, residents told us how important libraries are in their lives and how much they value us. We reviewed the feedback and captured it into five main themes.

In the next five years, we plan to address these priorities and find creative and innovative ways to balance the needs and expectations of our customers with the reality of decreasing financial resources.

### Strategic Priority 1

#### Collection

##### Goal

Vancouver Island Regional Library will continue to develop its collection, enhance access to its collection, and build a maximum degree of diversity in the collection to provide the greatest choices possible for customers in both small and large branches.

These are just some of the ways we plan to reach our goal:

- Expand the variety of genres, formats, and modes in the library collection to maximize choices – from the classics to new releases.
- Examine ways to optimize availability and ease of access to the collection – traditional and electronic – in all the library branches.
- Evaluate new materials and formats in response to changing needs of the diverse population represented in the VIRL region.
- Investigate emerging formats and replace popular materials in outmoded formats.
- Explore ways to refresh children's materials.
- Examine creative ways to enhance and access the collection for populations such as seniors, busy families, teens, child care workers, small business operators, and others.
- Investigate opportunities to develop unique collections.





Strategic Priority 2

■ **Communications with our Stakeholders**

**Goal**

Vancouver Island Regional Library will foster strong external and internal communications and promote a broad awareness of the library and its diverse range of resources, services and programs to ensure their optimal use.

These are just some of the ways we plan to reach our goal:

- Develop and implement an external integrated marketing/communications plan to promote Vancouver Island Regional Library and all it has to offer.
- Increase public awareness of the knowledgeable and resourceful library staff available to help customers.
- Review and strengthen functionality of the library website.
- Develop effective methods of ongoing feedback and follow-up to maintain public commitment to their regional library.
- Develop and implement pro-active internal communications strategies to provide Board members and staff with timely and relevant information that may affect them and customers.

*“The library is the best kept secret in town.”*

*“I had no idea VIRL covered such a large area of the West Coast.”*

*“We need more promotion of all that the library offers.”*

*“Local libraries are central to a sense of community.”*

*“The library has significantly improved quality of life in our community.”*

*“North Nanaimo desperately needs a new library.”*

Strategic Priority 3

■ **Facilities & Operations**

**Goal**

Vancouver Island Regional Library branches will be welcoming places and community hubs for the informational, inspirational, cultural, and recreational needs and interests of our diverse customers and communities.

These are just some of the ways we plan to reach our goal:

- Investigate ways to create larger, fully accessible and welcoming library branches.
- Examine ways and means in future design and renovation decisions to develop library branches that are adequately sized, flexible in function, universally accessible, environmentally friendly, and with designated areas of activities.
- Consider ways in future design and renovation decisions to integrate green technologies into library facilities.
- Explore possibilities to provide spaces that are designed for multiple needs and usages.
- Collaborate and partner with municipalities, regional districts and other organizations to explore ways to accommodate library branches in multi-functional community facilities.
- Examine ways to provide increased hours of operations that meet local needs in a fair and equitable manner.



Strategic Priority 4

Information Technology

Goal

Vancouver Island Regional Library will optimize the use and benefits of technology to enhance the library experience for customers, and develop library branches as learning facilities for information technology.

These are just some of the ways we plan to reach our goal:

- Investigate ways to expand and enhance public access to computers.
Explore opportunities to purchase newer and faster computers.
Examine ways to provide faster Internet service, especially in rural areas.
Improve functionality and user-friendliness of the website.
Facilitate more productive and user-friendly search capabilities of the online catalogue and online library resources.
Investigate customer needs for additional online services.
Provide customers with choices to access a variety of self-service opportunities, both on-site and online.
Investigate ways to provide training for customers in the use of computers, and ensure staff is adequately trained to provide this service.
Continue to investigate ways to utilize technology to minimize repetitive and time-consuming tasks for staff.

Having computer access at the library is important as I don't own a computer.

I like the self-checkout so that staff can be free to assist us with our requests.

I like reserving books online and receiving an email when they're in.

Strategic Priority 5

Delivery of Quality Service

Goal

Vancouver Island Regional Library will have a supportive work environment that embraces a culture of continuous improvement and enables all staff to provide high-quality, cost-effective service that meets customers' constantly changing needs for library services.

These are just some of the ways we plan to reach our goal:

- Embrace an internal culture of continuous improvement and customer service.
Attract, develop and retain qualified employees dedicated to meeting the needs of library customers.
Identify the gaps between customer needs and expectations, and what the library delivers.
Conduct a review of resource allocation and utilization, and compare the findings to the resources required to meet customer needs and expectations.
Investigate efficient and effective ways to deliver access to materials.
Explore ways to better serve the needs of homebound and visually impaired customers.
Examine ways to enhance services for an aging population through assistive technology devices and other means.
Offer creative and innovative programs at convenient times and places.
Develop effective and mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations to enhance delivery of programs and services.
Develop effective methods of ongoing feedback and follow-up to assess customer satisfaction with quality of service.

Staff make my weekly trip to the library a pleasant and rewarding experience.

The library is vital for a healthy community.

I appreciate the dedication and hard work of the staff.

VANCOUVER ISLAND REGIONAL LIBRARY

Central Services

Box 3333 | 6250 Hammond Bay Road

Nanaimo, BC Canada V9R 5N3

T: 250 • 758 • 4697 | F: 250 • 758 • 2482

E: [info@virl.bc.ca](mailto:info@virl.bc.ca) | W: [www.virl.bc.ca](http://www.virl.bc.ca)

**Strong Libraries ■ Strong Communities**

**Ballis Cools Bowser Campbell River Chemainus Cowichan Courtenay Cowichan Lake Cumberland  
Gabriola Island Gold River Hornby Island Ladysmith Masset Nanaimo Harbourfront Nanaimo Whalington Parksville  
Port Alberni Port Alice Port Clements Port Hardy Port McNall Port Renfrew Quadra Island Qualicum Beach Queen Charlotte  
Sandspit Seaway Sidney/North Saanich Sooke South Cowichan Tahsis Tolino Ucluelet Union Bay Woss**