



Information for Prospective Vancouver Public Library Trustees

September 2024

DOC/2023/190711

Do you want to be more involved in your community?

Becoming a Library Trustee with the Vancouver Public Library can be a rewarding way to help shape this valued community service. This package offers information about the Library and how to become involved.

Contents

Vision, Mission and Values	3
About Vancouver Public Library	4
History of Vancouver Public Library.....	6
The Role of the Board	7
What does VPL need in a trustee?.....	8
Job Description – Library Board Trustee.....	9
BC Library Trustees Association	10
How to Proceed?.....	11

Online resources:

[City of Vancouver website](#)

[2023 VPL Annual Report](#)

[VPL 2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#)

[Library Locations and Hours](#)

[Information about the Library Board](#)

[VPL Board Policies](#)

[BC Library Trustees Association](#)

Vision, Mission and Values

Vancouver Public Library has been dedicated to meeting the lifelong learning, reading and information needs of Vancouver residents for more than 100 years. In 2019, VPL had nearly 6.5 million visits, with patrons borrowing nearly 9.5 million physical and digital items including books, ebooks, movies, music and magazines. Across 21 [locations](#), VPL is the most-visited major urban library per capita in Canada.

Vision

An informed, engaged, and connected city.

Mission

A free place for everyone to discover, create and share ideas and information.

Values

We value:

- diversity
- access for all
- intellectual freedom
- learning and curiosity
- patron-centred services
- community-led planning
- community partnerships
- innovation and creativity
- respectful spaces and communication
- staff development and collaboration
- effective use of resources
- sustainability

About Vancouver Public Library

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

Public libraries are dedicated to ensuring all community members — regardless of economic situation and social or other life circumstances — have free access to the information, knowledge and cultural expression that can enrich their lives, and have opportunities to create and share ideas and information. These ideas and information may be expressed through books, journal articles, websites, lectures, film, music or dialogue, and they may be presented through physical, interpersonal or digital platforms. Required by provincial legislation to provide services without any user fees, Vancouver Public Library is accessible to all Vancouver residents.

VPL has been dedicated to meeting the lifelong learning, reading and information needs of Vancouver residents for more than 100 years. We are the seventh-largest public library system in Canada and across 21 locations, we are the most visited Canadian urban library per capita.

Vancouver's residents believe in the value of the services that the Vancouver Public Library provides. 91% of Vancouver residents express satisfaction with VPL's services, and an equal number believe that VPL is important to the larger community.

Services of Vancouver Public Library include:

- **Collections and resources** — Providing access to physical and digital collections, such as books, music, online learning, film, television shows, newspapers and journals in multiple languages, and musical instruments; collecting these materials and managing them for the public.
- **Reference and information services** — Answering research and information questions for residents in person and by phone, email and chat; developing and supporting the VPL's digital branch (website).
- **Library public space** — Providing individual reading and study areas, group study and collaboration areas, recording studios and equipment, and multi-purpose rooms for free public use, library programs and rental.
- **Information technology access** — Providing free public access to computers, software and the Internet, including Wi-Fi.
- **Public programming** — Supporting lifelong learning, reading, cultural exchange and appreciation, and community connectedness; providing programs for early childhood literacy as well as information and digital literacy for different ages and demographics.

In addition to the library's branches and digital presence, VPL also offers specialized services include home delivery and access to alternative formats for vulnerable seniors and library users with mobility challenges and/or print disabilities who live in the City of Vancouver, through the Accessible Services department.

VPL has approximately 800 staff who deliver and support the wide range of library services, most of whom are members of CUPE Local 391. The Library's annual budget is \$58.9 million, with more than 90% funded by the City of Vancouver, and funding from the Province of British Columbia and library-generated and other revenues contributing the remainder.

Some of Vancouver Public Library's newest services, programs and spaces include:

- Meeting rooms, quiet reading room and rooftop garden on the top floors of Central Library;
- [SunLife Financial Musical instrument lending library](#);
- Recording studios and digital creation workstations at the [Inspiration Lab](#) in Central Library and [Bud Osborne Creation Lab](#) in náčá?mat ct Strathcona Branch enable free access to tools and equipment for creating video, audio, music and graphics;
- [Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence](#): created in 2008, this annual four-month residency recognizes Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the importance of oral storytelling as a way to learn about and from Indigenous communities in Vancouver;
- [Writer-in-Residence](#): created in 2005, this annual four-month residency promotes Canadian writing and literature through mentoring emerging writers and conducting workshops, as well as time to work on an individual project.

History of Vancouver Public Library

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) had its roots as a Mechanics Institute subscription library established at Hastings Mill in 1867. VPL was established as a free public library in 1887 in the upstairs of a waterfront building. In 1893, it moved to a second location, where it remained until moving to a larger purpose-built building at Main and Hastings Streets in 1903, the latter made possible by a grant from Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie Library served as the Central Library until it could no longer hold all the collection and provide all the services patrons requested. The Carnegie Branch continues as a location within the Carnegie Community Centre.

In 1957, the Central Library moved to the corner of Burrard and Robson Streets. The building was designed for a book capacity of 750,000 volumes and opened with six specialized subject divisions. By 1988, the Central Library's collection numbered close to one million items. In September 1990, Vancouver City Council unanimously approved \$35 million to build a new Central Library at 350 West Georgia. The new Central Library opened in May 1995, occupying an entire city block in downtown Vancouver, with nine stories, 398,000 square feet of space, and a seating capacity for more than 1,200 people. Each day, Central Library welcomes more than 5,000 members of the public.

Vancouver Public Library's oldest branch was Kitsilano, opened in 1927 on West 4th Avenue and relocated in 1963. This was followed by several branches in the 1940s and 1950s, including Kerrisdale, opened in 1940 (rebuilt in 1963); South Hill in 1943; Hastings in 1949 (rebuilt in 1989); Dunbar in 1950; Collingwood in 1951; and Oakridge in 1959.

The 1970s saw another phase of growth with the opening of Fraserview branch in 1971, Strathcona in 1972 (closed in 2017), Marpole in 1974, Britannia and South Granville in 1975, Joe Fortes in 1976 and West Point Grey in 1978.

Firehall branch opened in 1992 (replacing South Granville from 1975), Renfrew in 1994, Champlain in 2001 (replacing the previous branch built in 1980); and Kensington in 2008.

In the past 10 years, Vancouver Public Library has rebuilt Mount Pleasant branch, which opened in 2009; replaced the Riley Park branch with Terry Salman in 2011, and opened *náćaʔmat ct* Strathcona Branch, replacing Strathcona branch, in 2017.

In recognition of the land we are on, the Library Board consulted with the local Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to name *náćaʔmat ct* Strathcona Branch, establishing the first public institution in Vancouver named in an Indigenous language.

The Role of the Board

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) operates as a separate legal entity from other City of Vancouver services and is legislated under the provincial *Library Act*. The *Library Act* outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Vancouver Public Library Board, including governance and financial management requirements.

The Library Board is a volunteer body made up of 11 members, known as trustees, who are appointed by Vancouver City Council pursuant to the Library Act. Appointments are for two years and may be renewed up to three additional consecutive terms for a total of eight years. Ten of the trustees are volunteer members of the general public, and one is an elected official from City Council. The Chief Librarian & CEO is the ex officio Secretary of the Board. The Chairperson speaks on behalf of the Library Board.

The Library Board is responsible for developing library policy and service strategy, providing financial oversight and working with the Chief Librarian & CEO to oversee the provision of services. The Board's official connection to the operational organization, its achievement and its conduct is through the Chief Librarian & CEO. Communication between the Board and staff is carried out through the Chief Librarian & CEO or designate.

Board members contribute to the success of Vancouver Public Library by:

- sharing the library's vision, mission and values;
- providing leadership in establishing the strategic direction of the Library and monitoring progress and spending against the strategic plan and budget;
- upholding and strengthening the reputation of the Library in the community;
- maintaining an active interest in and awareness of issues affecting libraries generally and VPL in particular;
- listening to the views of library users, funders, sponsors, partner groups and others with an interest in the Library's work;
- ensuring that the Library maintains effective internal financial and management controls and has identified and managed major opportunities and risks.

What does VPL need in a trustee?

Personal experience with library use

Trustees need to understand the importance of public libraries and the services they provide to support lifelong learning, reading, and information needs; encourage creativity and innovation; and connect people with their communities.

Interest and commitment

Trustees should have commitment to the library and an active interest in public issues relating to literacy, learning and libraries, as well as commitment to advocating on behalf of the library.

Available time

Trustees are committed to investing personal time in preparing for board meetings, participating on Board committees, and supporting the library's vision and mission through involvement in library events. Board meetings are held eight times per year every 4th Wednesday of the month except in April, July, August and December, while committee meetings are held on the 3rd week of the month seven times per year. A minimum commitment is two evenings a month and preparatory reading, representing at least 12 hours per month.

A good team member

Trustees should be prepared to actively participate in the work and discussions of the Board in a way that supports the expression of a diversity of views and promotes informed and independent decision-making. Board members act in alignment with the values of the Library including fairness, openness, thoughtfulness and respect. [View the Board Governance Principles.](#)

A variety of experience

A balanced Board has members with a variety of personal, education, business and community involvement backgrounds.

Job Description – Library Board Trustee

The Board has a legal and fiduciary responsibility for the delivery of public library services in Vancouver. The position of Trustee is a volunteer commitment of service to the community.

Responsibilities:

- Adopt written policies to govern the operations, services and programs of the library.
- Hire a Chief Librarian & CEO as required to oversee management and day-to-day operations, and evaluate their performance and support their development.
- Participate in the strategic planning process.
- Oversee the development of an annual budget for presentation to public officials and participate in the capital planning process.
- Participate in facilities planning processes.

Duties:

- Regularly attend and participate in meetings of the Board and committees.
- Request information to ensure that issues are understood.
- Understand the library's vision, mission, values, policies and services.
- Attend special events and represent the library at VPL functions.
- Advocate for the library in the community and represent the community to the library.
- Advocate for the needs of the library with City Council and the provincial government.
- Participate in the British Columbia Library Trustees Association.
- Be committed to learning about libraries and trusteeship.

Qualifications and Experience:

Trustees must be Vancouver residents and may not be employed by the City of Vancouver or Vancouver Public Library.

An interest in library services, knowledge of the community, ability to work in a political environment, leadership abilities and teamwork skills are important attributes. Previous service on volunteer boards or committees is also useful.

BC Library Trustees Association

The BC Library Trustees Association, founded in 1977, represents the boards and trustees that govern local public libraries in British Columbia. This includes 71 library boards and more than 700 library trustees who volunteer their time to oversee the successful operations of public libraries throughout the province.

The BCLTA mission is “to support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries.” BCLTA provides a range of services to trustees and boards to help them become leaders in their communities. BCLTA also provides organized representation to local, provincial, and federal governments on behalf of library trustees. They undertake ongoing advocacy work to these levels of government and the public to raise the profile of – and resolve the issues facing – public libraries across British Columbia.

Membership in the BCLTA is based on one institutional membership for each library board, and includes membership privileges for each individual trustee on that board.

BCLTA provides a trustee orientation programs that Vancouver Public Library trustees attend, ideally early in their first year on the Board. This orientation explores the roles and responsibilities of library trustees in British Columbia. Participants are introduced to the provincial context for public library governance, effective board practices, current public library issues, and strategies for success.

BCLTA also organizes an annual governance forum or conference, usually in conjunction with the BC Libraries Conference in May. Members of the VPL Board are encouraged to attend the BCLTA governance forum and the BC Library Conference.

How to Proceed?

To learn more, contact:

board@vpl.ca

VPL offers an information session for prospective trustees during the application period in the fall of each year. The date can be found on the Library website at

<https://www.vpl.ca/about/board>

To apply:

Watch the City's website www.vancouver.ca or check the local newspapers in the fall for the notice about applications to City boards, commissions and committees, which will provide application deadline and details. Vacancies will be listed at: <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/vacancies-for-advisory-boards-committees.aspx>.

Appointments for 2025 will be made in November 2024.