

Minutes of the VPL Board Meeting held on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 5:45 p.m. at the Level 8 Morris J. Wosk Boardroom, 350 West Georgia St., Vancouver, BC.

Present:

Tim Bottomer		
Victor Huang		
Emily Lapper		
Kevin Lowe	—	Chair
Melody Ma		
Raji Mangat	—	Vice Chair
Clr. Peter Meiszner	—	Vancouver City Councillor
Karen Spears		
Ziming Yang		
Abeer Yusuf		

Absent: Harlan Pruden

Management

Present:

Christina de Castell	—	Chief Librarian & CEO
Kay Cahill	—	Director, Information Technology & Collections
Maryn Ashdown	—	Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
Dawn Ibey	—	Director, Central Library & Public Service
Julia Morrison	—	Director, Corporate Services & CFO
Carol Nelson	—	Director, Planning & Communications
Balwinder Rai	—	Director, Human Resources

Staff: Scott Fraser — Manager, Marketing & Communications

Guests:

Victoria Jung	—	Chair, Vancouver Board of Education
Jenny Marsh	—	Executive Director, VPL Foundation
Jamie Broadhurst	—	Board member, VPL Foundation (left at 6:30 pm)

Recording

Secretary: Chrysalyn Tolentino — Executive Assistant

INAUGURAL MEETING:

Chief Librarian & CEO Christina de Castell acknowledged that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. She shared that she had the pleasure of attending a welcome event for Michelle Bryant-Gravelle, the new Senior Director of Indigenous Relations for the City of Vancouver. During this event, Elders from the Nations shared words of wisdom and their commitment to support the work in implementing the

UNDRIP Strategy, and their support for all the Indigenous staff working in the City, and expressed hope, trust and pride in Michelle. Christina reflected that there is a renewed and invigorating feeling of moving forward to a new phase of working together. She added that VPL is hosting an event “*Conversations with Khahtsahlano: As We Knew Him*” in the Alice Mackay Room on January 26, 2023. She welcomed Victoria Jung, the Vancouver School Board liaison, and our newly appointed Library Board trustees Emily Lapper and Ziming Yang.

1. Election of Chair

Chief Librarian & CEO Christina de Castell, acting as Chair, called the 2023 Inaugural Meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. The Chief Librarian & CEO then called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Library Board.

Moved by Raji Mangat

THAT Kevin Lowe be nominated as Chair of the VPL Board for 2023.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

There being no other nominations, the Chief Librarian & CEO declared Trustee Kevin Lowe elected to the office of Chair by acclamation.

2. Election of Vice Chair

Trustee Lowe assumed the position of Chair and called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

Moved by Tim Bottomer and Victor Huang

THAT Raji Mangat be nominated as Vice-Chair of the VPL Board for 2023.

There being no other nominations, Board Chair Lowe declared Trustee Raji Mangat elected to the office of Vice-Chair by acclamation.

PRESENTATION

3. Public Survey Result

Carol Nelson, Director of Planning & Communications, provided an overview of the 2022 VPL Public Survey findings. VPL contracted with Leger, a Canadian market research firm, to undertake the public survey amongst City of Vancouver residents in November 2022. The survey was conducted to measure progress on key performance indicators identified for the VPL Strategic Plan, to measure current library usage and familiarity, to assess interest in and future use of library services, to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on behaviors and attitudes, and to identify differences by key demographics.

Clr. Meiszner asked if, with the push to promote digital offerings at VPL, there is a concern about the rights for those digital publications. Director Cahill agreed that digital licensing is a significant concern as we do not own content as we did with print, it is exponentially more expensive and it is hard for us to satisfy the demand. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell added that the most visible impact of the higher costs of digital is the longer waitlists for popular items, noting that because of the higher costs per item, we maintain a longer waiting list before we buy additional copies of the book for digital content than we would for print. She added that Canadian publishers have much more reasonable pricing than multinational publishers, and that these longer waiting lists may encourage people to borrow lesser known Canadian content.

Trustee Ma asked whether staff are seeing any impact at Central because of organizations that do not maintain physical offices downtown, or post secondary schools in the downtown core, and whether there off-loading of infrastructure costs to VPL. Director Nelson responded that Central is seeing people who are students and people doing remote work, but that we have no reason to see this as intentional offloading. Director Ibey added that the use of Levels 8 & 9 is a success, since VPL built these floors without books, for programming, meeting, and community use.

Clr. Meiszner asked whether this survey is conducted by Leger in other cities, for other libraries. He noted that VPL's perception numbers are phenomenal, and wondered how much of this is specific to Vancouver and how much is general perception of libraries. Director Nelson shared that we have participated in brand benchmarks in the past and the VPL brand is ranked very high. It is fair to say that all libraries in major cities have very strong support. Chief Librarian & CEO added that some libraries had expressed interest in VPL's results in 2019 and pursuing similar surveys.

Trustee Ma asked if we have any hypothesis on why physical book borrowing has gone down. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the physical collections included DVDs and CDs and there has been a substantial impact on these formats due to the shift to streaming media that happened during the pandemic. Director Cahill confirmed that DVDs have not rebounded from COVID and people who have shifted to streaming have not gone back to DVDs. Director Nelson added that even prior to the pandemic we were seeing that physical circulation was declining and people were shifting to digital.

ADMINISTRATION

4. Consent Agenda - Removal of Items and Approval

Moved by Raji Mangat and seconded by Clr. Peter Meiszner

THAT the following Board reports be approved on consent:

- 2023 InterLINK Provisional Budget

THAT the Library Board receive the report for information.

- Annual Privacy Update Report
THAT the Library Board receive the report for information.
- 2023 Operating Budget Decision - November 23, 2022
THAT the Library Board receive the report for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Abeer Yusuf and seconded by Clr. Peter Meiszner

THAT the Board approve the regular meeting agenda as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. Minutes

The draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held November 23, 2022 were presented to the Board for approval.

Moved by Raji Mangat and seconded by Karen Spears

THAT the draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held November 23, 2022 be approved as received.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. Trustee Roundtable

Board Chair Lowe welcomed trustees to the 2023 Vancouver Public Library Board. He noted that this is a relatively new Board and half of the trustees have served on the Board for less than two years. He asked trustees to introduce themselves, and share why they chose to volunteer for the Library Board. Trustees shared information about themselves and personal reflections about their connections to libraries and VPL.

8. Chair's Remarks

Board Chair Lowe acknowledged the unceded, ancestral and present homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, where our institution is situated within the colonial construct of Vancouver. He is proud of the work that has happened over the course of his tenure on the Board as it relates to advancing Truth and Reconciliation and UNDRIP, and of the Board approving VPL's Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy in 2022. He is excited about the work that will be coming forward to make this into reality and would like to challenge the Board this year to continue individually and collectively to increase their understanding of Truth and Reconciliation and to eradicate Indigenous systemic racism from our system and structures. He acknowledged VPL's amazing staff at all levels, in the front lines and those who work behind the scenes, the Directors Group and Chief Librarian & CEO for her role in guiding trustees through these challenging years. He also acknowledged the work of CUPE 391 for advocating for staff to make this a safe place

to work, and our partners, the VPL Foundation and the Friends of VPL, for raising the Library's profile, raising funds and bringing people to the Library. He thanked the Board of the VPL Foundation for the innovative work they are doing. He thanked all Board members as he is reminded that this is a volunteer group using their own time in advocating on behalf of the Library. He commented that the collegiality of this Board is amazing as we respect each other, and respect the discourse. He welcomed new trustees Emily Lapper and Ziming Yang and thanked them for joining the Board. He noted that we live in a city that has a number of challenges and what happens to our city happens in our libraries. We are really proud that VPL is in the forefront, supporting people through climate change, addressing diversity and inclusion and addressing Indigenous rights. Our focus this year is to support staff as they work in these challenging times. It will be an exciting year ahead, more work will happen on the revitalization of the Children's Library, the construction of the Oakridge Branch is really exciting, lots of innovative work will take place and we have lots of opportunities to celebrate all the wonderful things happening. Libraries continue to shift to becoming a town square. A place that people come, congregate, interact in spaces, and access information in different ways. Our challenge is to stay true to our values, continue to reduce barriers and make this an institution that we are all proud of. Board Chair Lowe also thanked Administrative Assistant Joan Brookes and Executive Assistant Chrystalyn Tolentino for their role in helping organize the Board meetings.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

➤ **Vancouver Board of Education**

Victoria Jung, Chair of the Vancouver School Board, is very aware of the connection between VPL and the Vancouver School Board and very appreciative of the role the library plays outside of the school hours and their support to children and families. She asked for more information about her role as liaison and her responsibilities.

➤ **CUPE Local 391**

CUPE 391 did not provide a report at this meeting.

➤ **Friends of VPL**

Friends of VPL did not provide a report at this meeting.

➤ **VPL Foundation**

Jenny Marsh, Executive Director of the VPL Foundation introduced VPL Foundation Board member Jamie Broadhurst, who had left the meeting earlier. Jenny reported that the VPL Foundation Board held their first meeting of the year on January 24 and welcomed five new board members. The Foundation is planning for the second series of the Rooftop Remix and they are looking for sponsors. This is a great tool for employee engagement, recruitment, retention and a wonderful tool for increasing brand perception. Jenny thanked trustees for their participation at the Board Challenge Campaign where they raised

a total of \$85K. She noted that the Cardholder Acquisition Campaign declined a bit in 2022 since people had already joined as library supporters in prior years, however, they are meeting their goals. They will be focusing their attention in the next few months on the Capital Campaign and fundraising to make sure that the Children's Library Revitalization Project stays on track. The Foundation is looking for small libraries to serve on the planning committee for the 6th Annual International Public Library Fundraising Conference. This is Jenny's second year on the planning committee and they are having their first live conference after several years, which will be in Austin, Texas. Trustee Ma suggested that Jenny connect with BCLTA and Public Library InterLINK. Vice Chair Mangat is the InterLINK representative and will bring this information to them.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

9. Endorsement and Advocacy Policy

Carol Nelson, Director of Planning & Communications noted that the draft revised Endorsement and Advocacy policy incorporates key elements from the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee's discussion in February 2022 about a draft Advocacy Policy. Following discussion, in consultation with the Committee Chair, the decision was made not to pursue a standalone Advocacy Policy and instead to think about the continuum from endorsement to advocacy and incorporate this in the existing Endorsement policy. The revised draft Endorsement and Advocacy policy is based on the former Endorsement policy, and incorporates Indigenous Considerations, as this section was not a required part of VPL policies when the Board last considered the Endorsement Policy. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell added that the substantial content that was added was section 5 on advocacy. She noted that the Library is not an advocacy organization.

Trustee Yusuf referred to section 5 and asked if we need to define what we mean by VPL, for example does it mean the institution itself, the Board or staff members? Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that VPL should be defined as activities undertaken by the Library Board members and staff, on behalf of the institution.

Trustee Ma asked if the policy extends to the inclusion or exclusion of specific items in the collection and whether we should be explicit about this. She noted that the Collection Development policy states that inclusion does not equal endorsement, so perhaps this should be reflected in this policy. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell referred to the scope section, which states that the policy applies to activities related to a public position or issue that, if acted upon, have the potential to engage VPL staff, patron or trustees, or impact the reputation of VPL in the community. Materials and collections or programs are covered by other policies so she was uncertain whether it was necessary to state that items in the collection are out of scope and would be interested in hearing other trustees' reflections. Trustee Ma added that it specifically draws out purchase of products in the general guidelines.

Trustee Bottomer suggested that in the definition of endorsement, the phrase “often one time” be moved after the word “medium” for clarity. On Trustee Yusuf’s point, he noted that we need to be conscious about terminology among VPL or Vancouver Public Library or Library, and that this varies in VPL policies. Trustee Spears suggested that under general guidelines, “Library” be replaced with “VPL” to be consistent with this suggestion, in bullets 1 and 3.

Trustee Huang sought clarification about allocation of responsibilities. He asked if endorsement requests come to the CRPD Committee rather than the Board. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that once a request is approved by the CRPD Committee then it goes to the Board. If it is not approved by the Committee, it would not be forwarded to the Board. Board Chair Lowe confirmed that the CRPD Committee could make the recommendation but ultimately it is the decision of the Board, and this should be amended in the policy.

Trustee Yang asked if there is a list of library services. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that there are core services that are included in the Library Act and VPL identifies core services in five areas, which we report on to the City of Vancouver: providing collections, public space, technology, information services, and delivering public programs.

Trustee Bottomer sought clarification around the 3rd bullet under general guidelines, which specified that VPL would not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not affect library services, and asked if there is a difference between library services versus VPL services in this case. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell agreed that this was not clear, and could be understood to mean VPL services or library services broadly. Trustee Bottomer suggested to change the wording to VPL services.

After discussion, there was general consensus to include under definitions that VPL includes the Board and staff activities on behalf of the institution, as well as the amendment to the definition of endorsement, to replace Library with VPL under section 3 General Guidelines and section 4 Endorsement Requests, as suggested by trustees, and to replace CRPD with Board in the allocation of responsibilities.

Moved by Victor Huang and seconded by Emily Lapper

THAT the Board approve the Endorsement and Advocacy policy as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

10. Collection Development Policy

Kay Cahill, Director of IT and Collections provided an overview of the draft revised Collection Development Policy with the addition of an Indigenous Considerations section, a statement on VPL’s approach to collections for children, minor wording updates based

on the current policy template and language use, the removal of an outdated statement on donations, and reflection of the change for the national library body from CLA to CFLA. Staff is also recommending that the Board separately endorse the CFLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom, which is referenced in the policy, as it is not clear when it was last formally endorsed by the Board. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell shared that she attended the Canadian Urban Libraries Council meetings in the fall, and they had a presentation from EveryLibrary, a library advocacy organization, about the collection challenges that have been occurring in the United States, and steps that libraries in Canada could take to prepare for similar challenges. They identified that having an up-to-date collection development policy that provides clarity that the Board does not make decisions on individual items would be valuable. This clarification that library staff address item level challenges, and the inclusion of a statement about children's material are prompted by their learning. Director Cahill noted that a related report will be coming to the Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee in February that provides process for challenges related to historical materials.

Trustee Huang asked about the deletion of the section about gifts of books. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that we still accept gifts of cash but no longer accept gifts of materials. This decision was made because it was costing VPL over \$100K per year to process materials donations, and many were recycled rather than sold or added to the collection. Going forward, the Friends of VPL will accept book donations and hold sales to raise funds for VPL, and this will provide an opportunity for people to donate books to support VPL with lower costs. Trustee Huang asked if we need to specify in the policy that we accept cash donations. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that this would best be covered in other policies, as it is not directly related to collection development.

Trustee Ma referred to section 1.9 around appropriate reading level and asked how this is determined, and about how patron's concerns are handled. Director Ashdown explained that VPL staff use developmental research as their foundation for understanding how children learn and grow, and their reading levels. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell added that conversations about reading levels and appropriate content happen between staff and patrons on a regular basis and this is part of working in public service at libraries. Director Ashdown provided further clarification around reading and comprehension levels in response to follow up questions from trustees.

Vice Chair Mangat extended her gratitude to everyone who contributed to the policy. She noted that it is wise to reflect on what other libraries have learned. Attacks on the library and library materials are shocking and she is grateful that we are being proactive about this.

Trustee Lapper asked about section 1.9 and what "interest" means. Director Ashdown explained that children's interests are related to their experiences of the world.

Trustee Spears referred to the first paragraph under Indigenous Considerations and suggested that this be separated into two sentences. She also commented on working with the local Nations and asked if we have a process for this now or if it is more aspirational. Director Cahill responded that when we established the Indigenous collection several years ago, we had strong input from Indigenous community members and organizations. We made a commitment to be community-led in these collections, working with them on the policy that would guide the development of the collection.

Trustee Yang asked how we define providing strong collections. Director Cahill explained that we proactively manage the collection, and emphasized that we are a community-led library, which means we define our policy and approach to collections and services on basis of what is needed and asked for by the community.

Trustee Bottomer suggested that we should be consistent in terminology for referring to VPL, and suggested using the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) the first time we use the name, and VPL or the Library thereafter.

Trustee Lapper referred to Indigenous Considerations' second paragraph, and the reference to involving local Indigenous groups in materials that are selected. She asked if we want to consider involving them in deselection of collections. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that the consultation with Indigenous groups for the Indigenous collection also included deselection guidelines, and agreed that selection and deselection should be in the 2nd paragraph.

There was extensive discussion around deselection of materials following a question from Trustee Ma about adding a comment related to the library's endorsement or non-endorsement of materials that are not included in the library's collection. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell and Director Cahill provided additional context advising that they did not recommend commenting on content from excluded materials in the policy, because there are too many materials published that are not part of VPL's collection, and many reasons for deselection. We have operational guidelines and clear criteria on how deselection happens and it is typically based on usage, age and condition. In the context of content challenges, it is very rare that we take something out of the collection. They reiterated that inclusion does not mean we endorse content, and deselection is not normally a judgment on the content.

Trustee Bottomer asked for clarification around the second paragraph of the Indigenous Considerations and noted a potential tension with section 3.3. He would like to understand the relationship with Nations and could they veto items in VPL's collection. Director Cahill noted that the relationship with the Nations was focused on the consultation that enabled staff to develop profiles that support the work on an ongoing basis without giving undue burden to our community partners, creating a guideline rather than engaging people in item level decisions. It seems that the collection protocol has served staff well and feedback

that we have had on the collection is excellent. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that feedback from the local Nations would not necessarily stop us from including specific items in the VPL collection as a whole, and could mean that we don't include the materials in the Indigenous collection section.

Board Chair Lowe directed the Board's attention to the recommendation that the Board endorse the CFLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries and asked for trustees' discussion. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the Board reviewed this CFLA Statement last year in the context of a digital licensing workshop. The Board did not discuss it fully at that time and since it is part of the existing Collection Development policy, trustees are now asked to review and confirm that they endorse it. The Board has likely endorsed the Statement before, when it was originally included in the policy, but not recently, and the change is the organization's name from CLA to CFLA and not the Statement content itself.

Trustee Ma asked if there has been public push back around any issues in the Statement. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that the concept of Intellectual Freedom is disputed and the broad concept is under debate in Canada and in the United States in the library field. She noted that the VPL Board is not in a position to edit the CFLA Statement's language, as it belongs to associations across the country collectively. Board Chair Lowe noted that this is a broad statement that encompasses a range of services including collections. He encouraged trustees to view this as a statement that encompasses all forms of services and spaces within the Library and has broad implications. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell reminded trustees that the Board recently also included this as a referred policy in the Inclusive Library Services Policy, where it is listed in the related policies. She explained that the CFLA Statement is referring to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and UN Declaration of Human Rights, including for example that aspects of an individual's identity, or religion, cannot be a reason for denying access to the library or its services. Trustee Spears noted that the end of the CFLA Statement links to a statement about meeting rooms. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that this link is not a part of the CFLA Statement itself, but is a link to another related policy on the CFLA website, and asked that trustees disregard that paragraph as it is not part of the content under discussion for endorsement.

Trustee Yusuf asked why this CFLA Statement is within this policy. Director Cahill noted that it has been a practice to include this CFLA Statement as part of the Collection Development policy as a commitment to intellectual freedom. Board Chair Lowe suggested that the CFLA Intellectual Freedom Statement be considered separately in future as it impacts more than the Collection Development policy, and asked if there are any changes to the Statement since the last time the Board reviewed it. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell identified that there have been no changes to the content of the CFLA Intellectual Freedom Statement since 2015, and that VPL links directly to the Statement on the CFLA website. It is not clear when the Board last actually separately endorsed the CFLA Intellectual Freedom statement,

because it has been included within the Collection Development Policy but not as a separate motion. We don't have a historical record that clearly says that it was separately endorsed.

Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell encouraged trustees to consider that the CFLA Statement is about Charter rights in Canada, and about not discriminating on the basis of identity and collecting materials broadly, which is not a change in position. She noted that the CFLA statement is consistent with past Board decisions, including those related to meeting room use. Vice Chair Mangat asked if the CFLA Statement was endorsed by other libraries. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell confirmed this and noted that some library boards endorse the CFLA Statement every year as a way of confirming that intellectual freedom is foundational to the work of public libraries. Trustee Yusuf asked if the Board will see this statement again. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the Board would see this Statement again in five years when the Collection Development policy is reviewed, and the Board could see the CFLA Intellectual Freedom Statement earlier if CFLA makes changes to the statement, or if the Board makes a decision to write their own statement. Some Trustees commented that they have no interest in developing a separate VPL statement on intellectual freedom.

Moved by Tim Bottomer and seconded by Victor Huang

THAT the Board endorse the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' statement on Intellectual Freedom; and

THAT the Board approve the updated Collection Development Policy as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION/INFORMATION

11. Library Associations and Organizations

Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the Board self-evaluation in 2022 identified that Board members do not all have a clear understanding of the roles and activities of the BCLTA, and other Library-related organizations, including InterLINK, Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), BC Library Association, and the Canadian Federation of Library Associations. The report provides a summary of the various library associations and library bodies and VPL's relationship to them, to support trustees understanding of their roles. Board Chair Lowe will send an email to trustees asking them to volunteer as liaisons to library partners. The Governance Committee will discuss how to reinvigorate trustee liaison reports during board meetings. Trustee Ma expressed interest in hearing more about the advocacy work of library associations at future meetings.

Moved by Raji Mangat and seconded by Clr. Peter Meiszner

THAT the Board receive the report for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

12. Chief Librarian & CEO Review

Board Chair Lowe confirmed that the performance evaluation of the Chief Librarian & CEO was completed and thanked trustees Spears and Huang for leading this process. The Board Governance Committee will update the performance review policy and framework based on recent practice, and add time for a Board in camera discussion around November so that additional feedback can be provided as part of the review.

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

13. Presentation to Council

Board Chair Lowe provided an overview of his presentation during the November 29, 2022 Special Council meeting on the 2023 operating budget. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the next round of public presentations to Council will be held on February 28 and Council's decision on the budget is set for March 7. Staff requested that trustees connect with their Council liaisons in the next couple of weeks.

ADJOURN

Moved by Tim Bottomer and seconded by Victor Huang

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Kevin Lowe, Chair

Christina de Castell, Secretary