Vancouver Public Library

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date:	June 22, 2017
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Meeting Date:	June 28, 2017
TO:	Library Board
FROM:	Dawn Ibey, Director, Library Experience
SUBJECT:	**New Digital Literacy Instruction Program**

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the work underway to revitalize VPL's digital literacy instruction.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive the report for information.

POLICY

This initiative falls under Goal 1 - *21st Century Learning* - action 1.2 *Provide access to engaging materials to support literacy development for the 21st century.* It began as 2016 operational goal 2.10 in response to VPL's 2014-2016 Digital Strategy. This initiative also aligns with and supports the City's Digital Strategy and its commitment to digital inclusion.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

VPL continues to play a strong role in bridging the digital divide and supporting learners in developing the skills required to participate fully in a society where increasingly information is only available online. A significant number of Vancouver residents do not have personal connectivity, and the library plays an important role in providing free computers and wifi to those who may not otherwise have access to the Internet. VPL continues to maintain a strong

role in the City's digital strategy as a key player in ensuring digital inclusion as the City continues to its own digital evolution.

The research undertaken in this project will be further enhanced by community research to be undertaken in 2018 under Goal 1 - *21st Century Learning* - action 1.1 *Bridge the Digital Divide.*

BACKGROUND

For well over a decade VPL has taught regular digital literacy instructional sessions to the public. The majority of classes have been offered at the Central Library and are supplemented by local branch classes. Classes are also offered in 3 languages at the Central Library and in branches, as funding permits.

In 2015, enrollment in the Central Library's digital literacy classes had dropped to 50% of available seats. While the content of individual classes had been kept up to date, only a few new classes had been developed. Staff concluded that our digital literacy instruction was not keeping pace with the interests and needs of the Vancouver public, nor the research on digital literacy. Furthermore, access to digital literacy instruction across the city was inconsistent, with the most resources concentrated at Central Library.

The opening of the Inspiration Lab in May 2015 also highlighted some gaps in VPL's digital literacy instruction. Course offerings providing opportunities for new digital users (instruction on how to use a mouse, set up an email account, get online for the first time) were contrasted with advanced digital creation topics (how to shoot and edit your first film, design resumes in Illustrator, podcasting, etc). It was difficult for learners to bridge from early to advanced classes.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Research

The project began with targeted research on Demographics & Digital Literacy Standards, and found the following:

- High-need groups include labour market entrants, professional learners with job-related skills gaps, low-income individuals, newcomers, young adults, entrepreneurs, and aboriginal groups/individuals.
- Instruction is needed for mobile device skills, network services and privacy, and for those who have received free or low-cost hardware, but do not know how to get started.
- VPL course content must be regularly updated to reflect recent technology trends. We are not on the leading edge of technology but we seek to support the broad based needs of our service population which are continuously evolving.

- Learners need formalized learning pathways to help them move from one class to another to build their skills in related areas.
- A review of several digital literacy, media literacy, and related standards highlighted the need for VPL to document and share a defined set of digital skills that VPL instruction could actively support.

VPL Digital Literacy Skills Framework

Staff reviewed several important standards and frameworks and used them to develop a VPL specific framework that reflects our learners' needs and a public library setting. Some of the foundational documents include:

- [Learner at the Center of a Networked World](#). The Aspen Institute Task Force on Learning and the Internet. 2013.
- [Digital Literacy Fundamentals](#). Media Smarts, Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy. 2016
- "[Attention, and other 21st Century Social Media Literacies.](#)" Howard Rheingold. 2010.
- [Mozilla Web Literacy 2.0. Mozilla Foundation](#). 2016.
- [BC's Digital Literacy Framework](#). British Columbia Ministry of Education. 2016.

The VPL Digital Literacy Framework identifies three levels of digital literacy: proficiency, fluency, and empowerment. Within each level, there are several components and desired outcomes, which have been used to create a map of courses.

VPL's Instructional Approach

The next phase of the project focused on adult education, learning behaviours, instructional methods, and instructional design. Based on this research, a statement of VPL's instructional philosophy has been developed, which includes the following elements:

- Acknowledge, respect, and respond to learners' context, experiences, and prior knowledge.
- Centre the learner, providing opportunities for engagement and hands on practice.
- Explore, respect, and support learners' personal, professional, and community goals.
- Support autonomous, self-regulated learning.
- Empower learners to build adaptive skills for life-long learning.
- Focus on clearly defined learning goals mapped to the identified areas of digital literacy.

These principles are the foundation for new content design. A staff training course "How to Teach at VPL" has been developed and offered to two cohorts of staff involved in adult instruction to ensure that all VPL instructors have instructional methods and approaches that are pedagogically sound and evidence-based.

New Class Content and Learning Pathways

Staff mapped VPL's existing course content against the VPL Digital Literacy Skills Framework and found significant gaps.

New classes will be presented in series, which provide each learner with a specific pathway to develop key digital literacies. Each series contains 3-4 individual classes, workshops or drop-ins. The six series are:

- Computer Essentials
- Internet Essentials
- Mobile Device Essentials
- Social Media Essentials
- Web Design Essentials
- Open Data Essentials

Patrons who complete all the classes in a series will receive a completion certificate to acknowledge their participation. This is a way of rewarding learners who progress through the classes and providing evidence of their participation. It is not a formal accreditation process.

In addition to the instructional series, there will be an annual speaker series on technology, which will feature topics such as digital trends, the impact of digital technologies, new privacy research, etc. These will be interesting, timely and thought provoking sessions that complement our other digital literacy programming.

VPL will continue to offer Tech Cafe drop in instruction. These sessions will not conflict with the new curriculum or time slots, and are intended to support learners in a variety of technology questions with a particular focus on early digital learners. ISV and branch staff hosting Tech Cafe drop-ins will provide referrals to the appropriate class and series for learners' needs, and learners in the early series can be referred to Tech Cafes for extra hands-on assistance.

Lesson Plans and Supporting Materials

Based on the research into adult education, instructional design and best practices, a standardized lesson plan has been developed. The lesson plan template provides a snapshot of the instructional content and specific lesson components of each class. This lesson plan can be used by multiple instructors to deliver standardized course content that can be adapted to meet specific learners' needs.

To ensure that all VPL classes share a common visual brand, Marketing & Communications have produced standard templates.

- A standard slide deck (branded and includes standard slides highlighting VPL's social media accounts and common slides such as how to access resources online, how to sign onto wifi, etc)
- A branded template for class handouts
- VPL completion certificates

Launching new curriculum

- Staff have been trained on VPL's new instructional approach
- New classes are being developed now and are being soft launched in waves
- There will be a public launch when all courses are ready in September 2017

As the new curriculum rolls out, care will be taken to schedule compelling digital literacy learning opportunities across the city and to offer regular opportunities for each series. Series will be scheduled in consecutive waves to allow learners to bridge between them.

<u>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</u>

$25,000 of the provincial literacy grant has been allocated to develop, test, and promote these new classes. $4,400 has been provided by the VPL Friends of the Library to expand the branch availability of these new classes in 2017.

FINAL REMARKS

This project represents a major revitalization of VPL's digital literacy instruction. The new classes and series are responsive to the evolving needs of our community and provide a broader range of skills needed to participate fully in the digital environment.