

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

ELEVATING EXCELLENCE:
A YEAR OF GROWTH AND COLLABORATION




**COURTHOUSE
LIBRARIES | BC**



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EXPANDING OUR REACH AND IMPACT

2023: A Year of Exploring New Paths

2023 marked another period of significant progress for Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC), as we continued to expand our reach and enhance our service capacity. Our efforts were driven by a focused commitment to our mission of providing accessible legal information and resources to the legal community and the public.

The year saw a continued increase in client inquiries since the downturn of the pandemic, with our team handling both an increase in overall volumes and a greater range of complex questions. This new demand and existing capacity requirements led to the addition of three full-time librarians and an expansion of our casual staff across key regions, ensuring that we could continue to meet the growing needs of our community effectively.

We expanded our partnerships within the legal information ecosystem, including the Courts, Ministry of Attorney General, First Nations Justice Council, BC Ombudsperson, RISE Women's Legal Centre, Everyone Legal Clinic, Legal Aid BC, PovNet, Amici Curiae Friends of

Court, the Criminal Defence Advocacy Society and hundreds of public libraries throughout the province. Together, we helped increase knowledge about - and competency in using - legal information and resources.

Highlights of 2023 included:

- Securing no-fee access to Court Services Online E-Search on all 100 Public Access Computers (PACs) in our libraries, removing a financial and technological barrier for members of the public and legal service providers who need to access court documents.
- Obtaining an infusion of \$3M from the Law Foundation of BC for IT modernization and Collection resource revitalization, marking a pivotal point in our ability to serve our users more effectively in the future.
- Bringing a user-informed, transformative approach to the CLBC Clicklaw website to significantly improve public access to online and local legal resources - with financial support from the Notary Foundation.
- Improving staff onboarding systems, compensation structure and professional

development opportunities. These measures not only enhance our operational strength but also affirm our commitment to providing a supportive and enriching work environment that attracts excellent staff.

- Publishing a new edition of JP Boyd on Family Law, one of BC's most-used family law resources - a wiki-edited book and online publication incorporating the last four years of significant changes to family law and processes in BC.

As we move forward, CLBC remains dedicated to its vision of ensuring everyone in BC has access to the legal information they need, and the capacity to use it. The achievements of 2023 lay a sound foundation for future initiatives aimed at expanding our impact and continuing to serve as a central resource for legal information and support.

Our progress this year is a direct result of the support from our funders, the hard work of our staff, and the trust of our clients and partners. We are, as always, very grateful for this collective effort and look forward to building on these accomplishments in the years to come.

BACKGROUND

Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC) is a not-for-profit registered charity under the BC Societies Act and is funded primarily through major contributions from the Law Foundation of British Columbia and the Law Society of British Columbia, with additional project funding from the Notary Foundation. The Ministry of Attorney General provides physical space for law libraries in 30 courthouses throughout the Province, and we work closely with Court Services to support our shared clients.

CLBC Values

Accountability
Excellence
Service
Equity & Inclusion
Adaptability
Kindness

CLBC Vision

Everyone in BC has ready access to the legal information & resources they need.

CLBC's mission is to support access to justice by providing the legal community and public with legal resources, Librarian

expertise & informed referrals, to help people research and manage their own or client legal issues. We strive to deliver on this by providing the following core services:

- 1. Providing information services:** connecting clients to legal information and services.
- 2. Curating print and digital materials:** developing and maintaining legal information collections that meet our clients' needs.
- 3. Delivering training and outreach programs:** building the capacity of our clients to use legal information and services.

CLBC's strategic plan guides the overall direction of the library by outlining objectives and activities intended to achieve **four goals:**

1. Expertly curate and protect the quality of our legal information & resources.
2. Invest in the acquisition & sharing of staff expertise.
3. Reduce barriers to accessing high quality legal information & resources.
4. Empower people to effectively research and manage their own or client legal issues.

Foundation

We continuously improve our business processes & governance to support this work.





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2023 SERVICE STATS



Training

There were over 2500 attendees at our training sessions in 2023, and over 14,000 views of our recorded webinars.



Remote services

Main website users and sessions remained steady over last year, but as expected, Clicklaw Wikibooks usage declined due to ongoing content freshness issues.



Book-in-a-Box

Book-in-a-Box requests increased 15% over 2022, reaching a 5-year high.



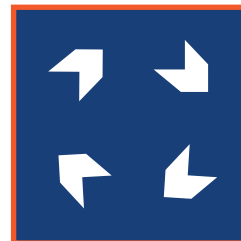
Database subscriptions

PAC accessed database subscriptions increased, continuing a 4 year recovery but remaining far below pre-pandemic levels.



Front-line reference information requests

In 2023 information requests recovered to 97% of pre-pandemic levels, with the public holding the highest ratio of those seen in 5 years.



Print circulation, Public Access Computers, WIFI

Onsite PAC sessions grew by 32%, and print circulation dropped slightly in 2023.

Information services

Our library staff continued to deliver legal information services to our clients virtually through our phone and email services, and in-person through our onsite services.

The LawMatters program distributed \$120,000 in grants to public libraries across BC to support legal information collections in communities across BC. Libraries selected titles aimed at children and youth, Indigenous

legal topics, civil law, criminal law and social justice. LawMatters also delivered legal information training to library staff throughout Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley.

In person

We continued to see large numbers of self-represented clients coming to our libraries looking for support with forms and needing

access to our public technology, legal resources and librarian expertise.

Online

CLBC provides a variety of information services and repositories online, hosted across several web properties. Demand for these services has fluctuated, with some areas seeing increases and others decline.

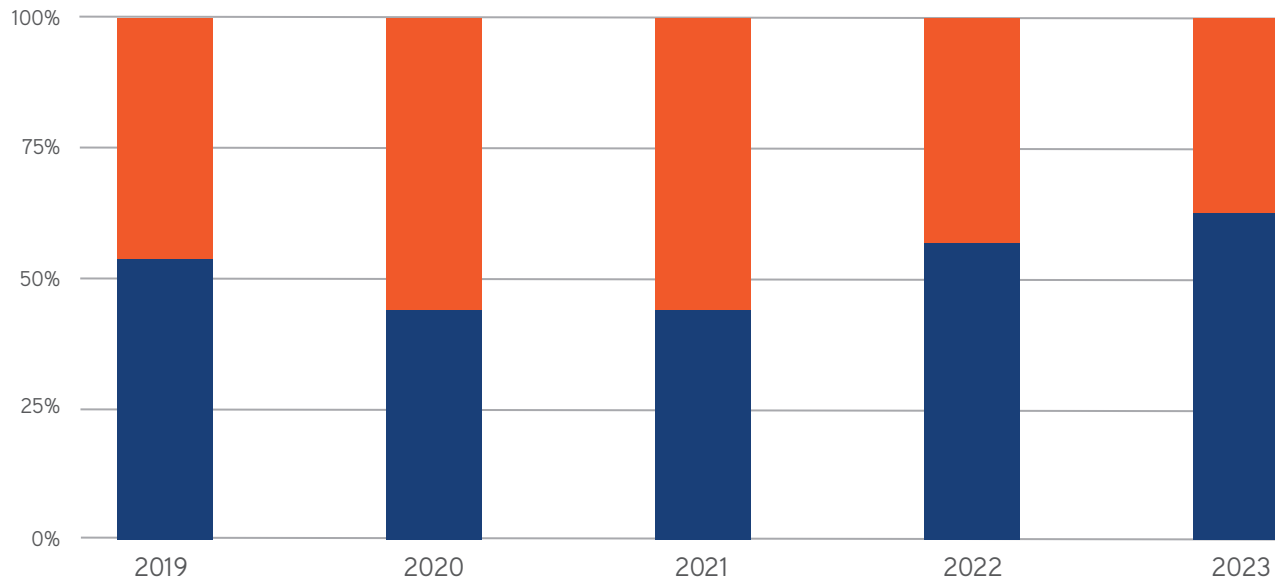


Figure 1:
The ratio of public user information requests continues to increase.

Lawyers Public

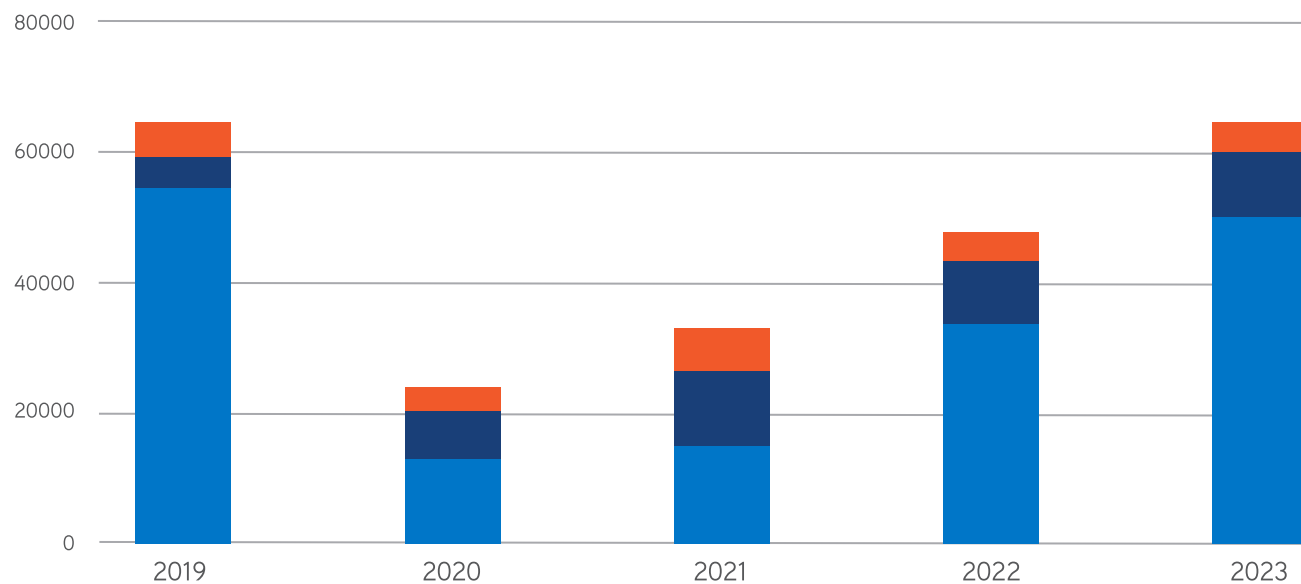


Figure 2:
Front desk traffic continues to drive the pandemic recovery. Email inquiries remain consistently higher than pre-pandemic.

Phone Email Desk

In addition to the main website, CLBC curates and manages:

Clicklaw Wikibooks

Clicklaw Wikibooks, CLBC’s highest traffic online site, is a web-based publishing platform that makes available public legal education to BC residents. Resources updated this year include the Law Students’ Legal Advice Manual and JP Boyd on Family Law. Legal Information for Indigenous People, published by the Bella Coola Legal Advocacy Program was also added to the platform.

Lawbster.net

(online group discussion and collaboration platform)
In 2023, Lawbster’s largest online Community of Practice, the Family Law Organizer (“FLO”) community, grew another 13% to a total of 635 members. FLO Working Groups included collaborative family lawyers, paralegals who work in family law, parenting coordinators, and practitioners (lawyers and paralegals) who have practice-oriented and procedural questions.

Lawbster also hosts the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (“VALL”) forum

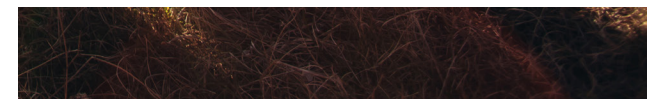
that supports local law librarians, primarily in private law firms. The VALL forum group on Lawbster grew to 95 members, growth of 17% over the previous year.

Clicklaw.bc.ca

The Clicklaw re-envisioning team completed the design phase and created the plan for the development and implementation phase. The re-envisioning project is defining a new model for Clicklaw to provide a better user experience, make legal information more accessible and provide better integration with CLBC’s reference services for the public.



We expanded our partnerships within the legal information ecosystem, including the Courts, Ministry of Attorney General, First Nations Justice Council, BC Ombudsperson, RISE Women's Legal Centre, Everyone Legal Clinic, Legal Aid BC, PovNet, Amici Curiae Friends of Court, the Criminal Defence Advocacy Society and hundreds of public libraries throughout the province.



Curating print and digital materials

The collection development team continued to make updates to processes to make resources more findable and accessible across the province.

Book-in-a-Box orders increased by 15% over last year, illustrating the need in remote

communities and with lawyers and notaries unable to come into the branches.

In 2023, working in partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General, we negotiated a MOU to have Court Services Online E-Search available on all Public Access Computers

in our 30 locations. This reduces barriers for clients and supports Registry staff. The technical implementation was completed in 2023, and the one year pilot will start in early 2024.

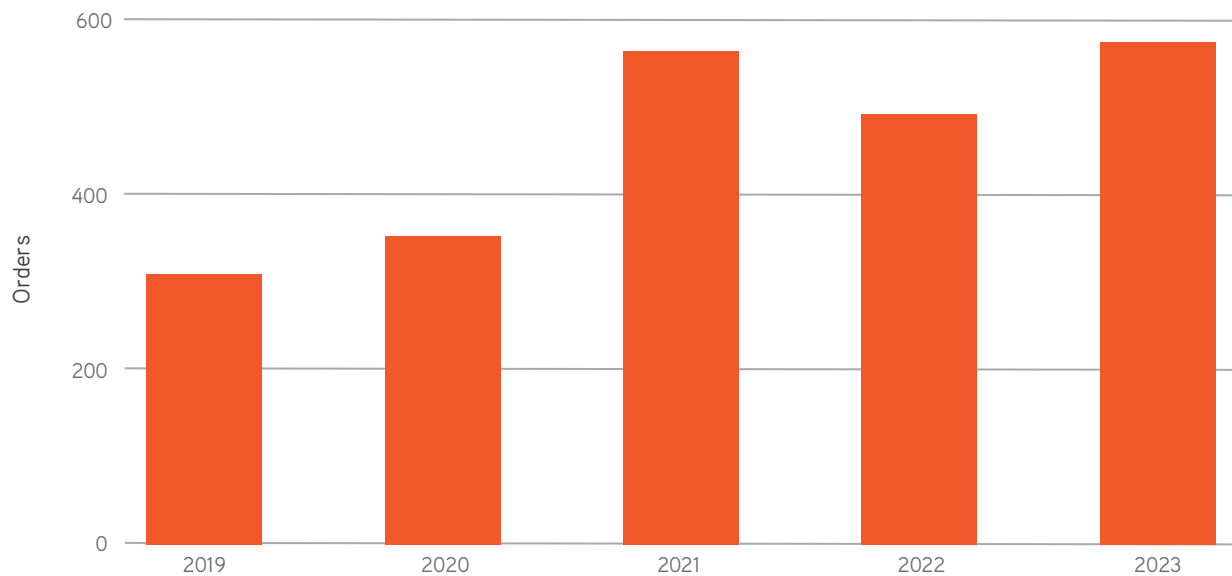


Figure 3:
Book-in-a-Box
orders, 2019 - 2023

Delivering training and outreach programs

CLBC provides training on the use of legal information tools and practice management skills, and works in partnership with subject matter experts to deliver training on substantive and procedural law. Training is aimed at the legal community, including lawyers, judges, law students, paralegals, as well as frontline intermediaries including legal advocates, community workers and public librarians.

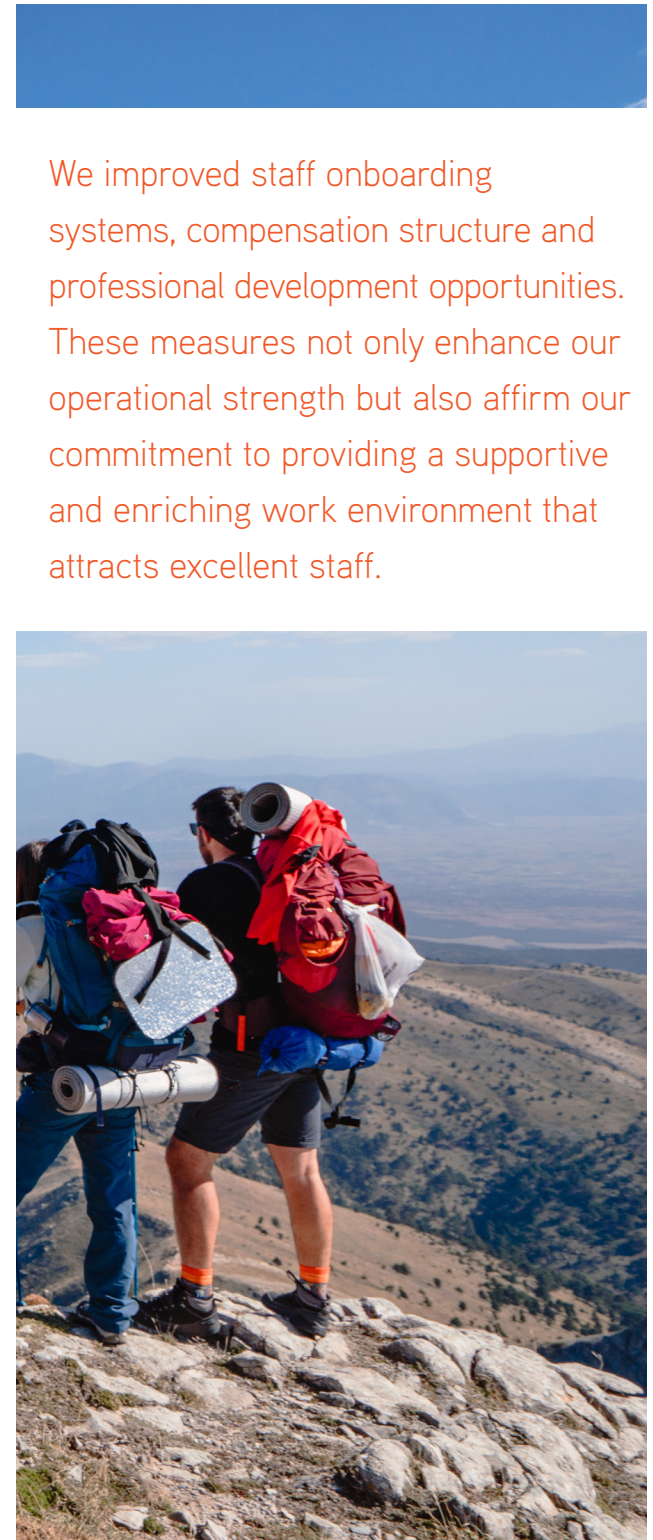
In 2023, we partnered with 10 organizations and dozens of subject-matter experts to deliver 60 training sessions for the legal community. Our presenters covered a variety of topics, including legal research, gender inclusive legal writing, court etiquette, strategies for negotiating settlements, and tips for working with self-represented litigants. There were over 2500 attendees at our training sessions, and over 14,000 views of our recorded webinars. We delivered 47 orientation sessions, providing presentations and tours to raise awareness about CLBC services in communities across BC. A majority of these sessions were delivered to law students taking advanced legal research classes, clerks working at all three levels of court, and newly hired articling students in private law firms and community-based legal service organizations. This illustrates that, for those who are early in their careers, there is both a strong interest in and willingness to engage with Courthouse Libraries BC and its

resources to help ensure legal professional competence.

Access to Justice Initiatives

Our involvement in Access to Justice BC initiatives and partnerships across the province continued to reflect our dedication to improving legal access and user experiences. This includes our ongoing leadership and roles with the A2JBC Steering Committee, Leadership Group, and the Support-Finder Community of Practice amongst others.

Our CEO has been hosting monthly Zoom meetings for Canadian and American law librarians since 2020, to share operational news and provide important learning and support to a network of North American libraries. In 2023, this continued to be a key contributor to actively scanning the law library environment and being aware of trends and best practices.



We improved staff onboarding systems, compensation structure and professional development opportunities. These measures not only enhance our operational strength but also affirm our commitment to providing a supportive and enriching work environment that attracts excellent staff.

2023 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Highlights for the year ended
December 31, 2023

Complete Financial Statements
available upon request.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Law Society of British Columbia	2,985,000
Law Foundation of British Columbia	3,247,963
Notary Foundation of British Columbia	100,000
Fees, interest and other income	220,711
Total	6,553,674

USES OF FUNDING

Information resources (including capital)	1,524,198
Human Resources	3,449,618
Operating expenditures	1,579,858
Total	6,553,674

CLBC has branches across the lands now known as British Columbia. These lands are the ancestral home of a diverse population of Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge and respect the continued connection between the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous peoples within our local communities. We are thankful to live and work on these lands. This report was authored on the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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www.courthouselibrary.ca




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