



50 YEARS OF
OPEN ACCESS
1975 - 2025

A half century as British Columbia's
public law library — thirty locations,
one hundred public computers, and
every question answered with care.

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Victoria Courthouse, circa 1869

*BC's first law library was founded here in 1869.
CLBC's Victoria branch remains one of its largest locations today.*

A message from the CEO

Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC) celebrated its 50th anniversary as a public law library in 2025, making it a very exciting year for us! It was a time when we focused on building community awareness about our services and resources; and we heard from many more people than usual about the difference our services have made in their lives.

The anniversary provided the perfect opportunity to hold public celebrations in courthouses around the province. We invited local community leaders, courthouse partners, and legal helpers to come together, meet one another, and get to know us better. We also highlighted the free tools on our newly updated public access computers (PACs), our librarian expertise, the Clicklaw digital service for basic legal research, and the CLBC website for more advanced research.

We also continued to invest in our Information and Technology (IT) infrastructure, thanks to special-purpose funds provided in 2023 and 2024 by the Law Foundation of BC and Notary Foundation of BC, respectively. IT is a critical factor in service quality and reliability in an information-driven business such as law libraries, particularly those with extensive digital services like ours.

The Ministry of Attorney General and CLBC completed a second-year pilot to test public demand for free features in Court Services Online (CSO), and by the end of the year had agreed to move forward with a long-term partnership to make CSO available on all 100 CLBC public computers. This removes a financial barrier to clients accessing publicly available court documents.

We also shared our expertise with other jurisdictions, presenting on Clicklaw and LawMatters services at multiple conferences. LawMatters continued to have significant impact in public libraries and local communities, with a strong focus this year on Indigenous and Children & Youth legal resources. For the first time, we partnered with a school in Ahousaht Nation to provide curated legal resources for their high school library, supporting legal knowledge-building and perhaps future lawyer-building too!

Please have a look at the rest of our 2025 annual report to learn more about how our employees' day-to-day contributions — and our funders' ongoing support — created a significant, positive impact across the province.

Caroline Nevin
CEO, CLBC

It all starts here

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

Our values

Accountability	Service	Adaptability
Excellence	Equity & Inclusion	Kindness

Our vision

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

Our mission

CLBC's mission is to support access to justice by providing the legal community and public with legal resources, librarian expertise and informed referrals, to help people research and manage their own or a client's 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.

Our strategic goals

CLBC's Strategic Plan guides the overall direction of the organization by outlining objectives and activities intended to achieve four goals:

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

The foundation

We continuously improve our business processes and governance.

2025 success stats

90K+

All-time high of
90,000+ information
requests to
our librarians.

11

Courthouse events
celebrating **CLBC's**
50th anniversary as
a public library.

30

CLBC delivered **30**
training sessions for
the legal community,
including 23 for
CPD credit.

53

Delivered 53 orientation sessions
to raise awareness about CLBC
services in communities across BC.

\$121,900

Distributed \$121,900 in funding
to BC public libraries for the
purchase of new books.

1,600+

Added 1,600+ print resources and
updates to the collection.

90

Over 90 new members joined the Family Law Organizer online
community hosted by CLBC, increasing to 760 in 2025.

400+

Fulfilled over 400 Book-in-a-Box
orders, circulated around BC.

12K+

Subscription database usage on
public access computers increased
to over 12,000.

40K+

The number of sessions on public
access computers increased to
over 40,000.

CLBC performance

This anniversary year saw remarkable opportunities to forge meaningful connections — with legal professionals, public librarians, and the individuals who turned to us for guidance on their legal research. This is reflected in our performance highlights for 2025.

Strategic goal

Providing **information services**: connecting clients to legal information and services.

Frontline legal information services

Whether by phone, email, or in-person, our clients appreciate the excellent frontline services delivered by our 8 full-time and 22 part-time locations.

In 2025, CLBC's law librarians received a record 90,000+ information requests. While the number of questions from the legal community remained steady, the number of questions from the public increased by 18 percent. (Page 7 - Figure 1)

Whether connecting clients to relevant legal resources or helping them make meaningful progress with their legal matters, in-person requests reached an all-time high in 2025. Almost 70 percent of those asking for assistance are members of the public. (Page 7 - Figure 2)

Community engagement activities

We delivered 53 orientation sessions to raise awareness about CLBC services in 2025. In communities across BC, we presented to people in the legal community, and to high school and post-secondary students whose studies included learning about the law.

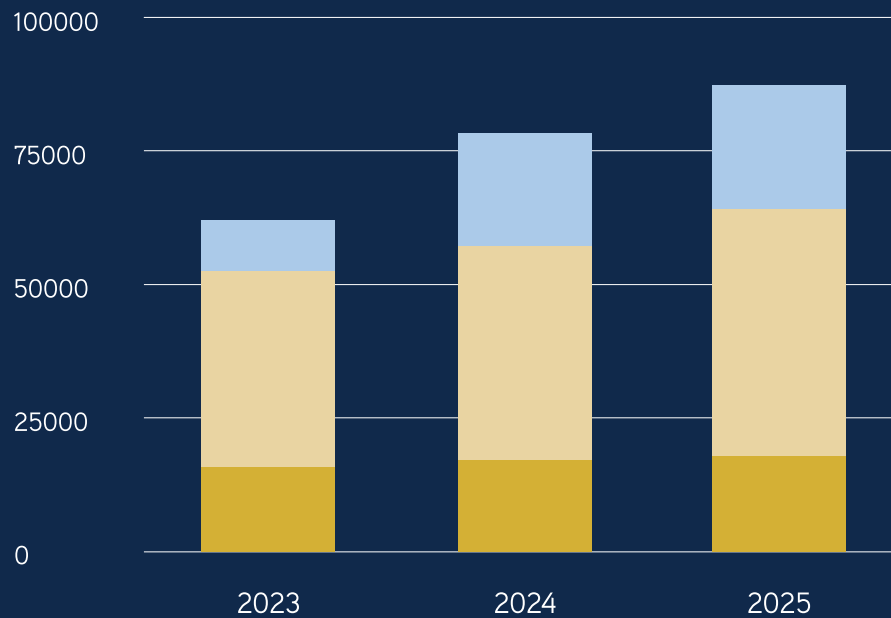
Staff also participated in 30 community outreach events, including CLBC's 50th anniversary celebrations, and open houses at the Indigenous Justice Centre in Nanaimo, the Okanagan Legal Clinic in Kamloops, and at the University of Victoria for law students.

LawMatters

LawMatters is CLBC's service for public librarians, which includes providing libraries with training opportunities and grants to purchase books on legal topics that address local community needs. Feedback is consistently positive for LawMatters.

We distributed \$121,900 in grants in 2025, representing an 83 percent library participation rate to purchase new books. The law books for kids were as popular as ever, accounting for over a third (36 percent) of titles purchased.

(continued on page 8)



Legal Information Requests

3-year trend

Number of requests has reached an all-time high, with an increase in the number of directional and complex questions.

- Directional
- Quick reference
- Complex

Figure 1: Volume of legal information requests in the eight full-time libraries, 2023-2025.

Legal Information Requests

By client type

We continue to see an increase in the percentage of members of the public requesting librarian assistance.

- Lawyers
- Public

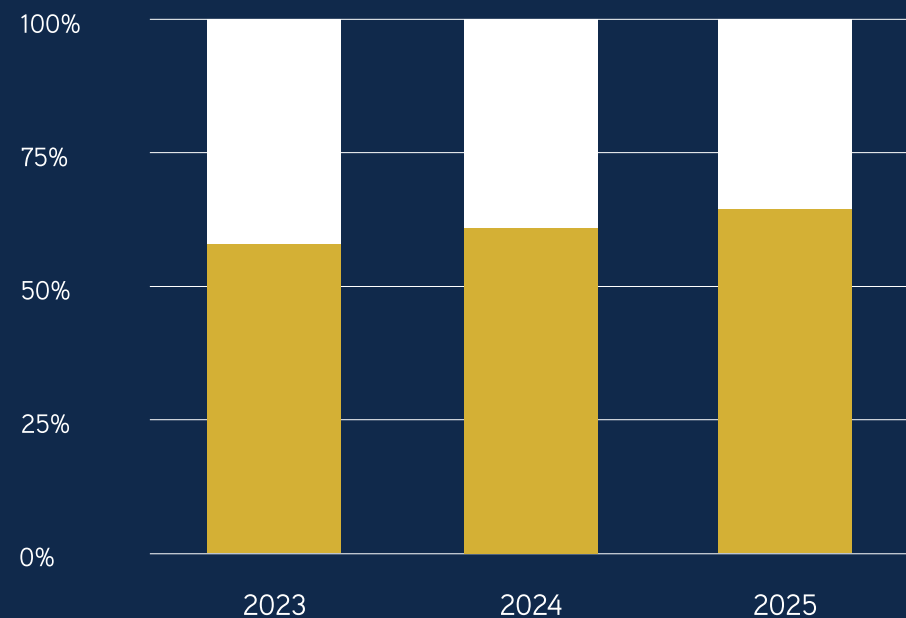


Figure 2: Legal information requests by client type, 2023-2025.

CLBC performance

(LawMatters continued)

Finally, we were gratified to complete a special project that began in 2024, when we responded to a request from Judge Alexander Wolf to support the Ahousaht Nation's local high school to establish a collection of legal resources for students. Working closely with the school to curate a set of relevant materials within a budget of \$1,500, the set was delivered and housed in the school library as of January 2025.

CLBC website

The Courthouse Libraries BC website is the main entryway for many people who want to learn about our services, begin their legal research, and connect with us.

There was a 42 percent drop in total users in 2025, much of which we attribute to the changing behaviour of internet users, who now get Google's AI Overview at the top of their search results and don't always click on the source website.

Another contributing factor is related to the modernization of CLBC's public access computers (PACs), which previously featured the website's homepage as the starting point for users. We changed this to a PAC-specific homepage with the new PAC rollout in August 2025, which contributed to a decrease in direct traffic from these computers to the website homepage.

We are keeping track of these trends.

Clicklaw website

This year marked the first year of our new Clicklaw service to provide online legal information to the public. Content work included our internal team reviewing around 350 resources and 100 services to ensure that the information is current and relevant to the legal information needs of people in BC. Development work included adding an exit button on pages where user safety is a concern.

We also compared data for the two months after the launch of the new Clicklaw in fall 2025, to the equivalent two months in 2024. It showed total users increased 17 percent, from about 15,000 to approximately 17,500. This data will be a new baseline for future analysis.

Clicklaw Wikibooks

In fall 2025, CLBC began a strategic review of Clicklaw Wikibooks, retaining a well-regarded consultant in the justice sector. The review is timely given the new technologies that have emerged and changes in the public legal education and information (PLEI) landscape since Clicklaw Wikibooks' founding in 2011.

We expect to have the consultant's recommendations by mid-2026, which will inform the future of Clicklaw Wikibooks and CLBC's role as a publisher of PLEI.

CLBC performance

Lawbster (online community platform)

Lawbster is an online platform created and administered by CLBC, where legal professionals can connect, organize, and share work ethically and for free.

Family Law Organizer (FLO) Community of Practice

Lawbster's largest Community of Practice, FLO, continues to appeal to new members. Over 90 new members joined in 2025, an increase of over 13 percent. User behaviour on Lawbster shifted in 2025 compared to the previous year, with users tending to visit and retrieve information, but contributing fewer comments.

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL) Community of Practice

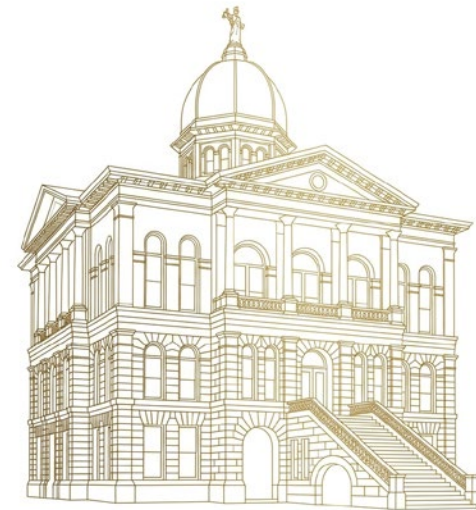
The VALL forum is a valuable and active platform for 74 local law librarians who share resources, employment opportunities, and explore practical issues related to the management of law libraries.

VALL community members greatly increased the number of comments they left on forum posts — from 64 in 2024 to 123 in 2025 (a 92 percent increase).

Prison Library Connection BC Community of Practice

Lawbster welcomed a new community of practice in 2025, the Prison Library Connection BC (PLC-BC). PLC-BC is a network of BC-based library workers providing support for those who are currently or formerly incarcerated. They

work to bridge the gap between library services and prisoners. It has 18 members, and activities include storing documents, sharing news and information, and supporting group members with conference applications.



Vancouver Courthouse, circa 1902

*Home to the main courthouse library by the early 1950s.
CLBC's headquarters and largest branch operate on Smithe Street today.*

50 years of open access: a timeline

In 1869, the founders of the Law Society of BC resolved to open the province's first law library, located in Victoria. This was quickly followed by New Westminster and Vancouver locations.

Over the years, the library system expanded throughout the province and by the early 1950s Vancouver was established as the main courthouse library.



Continued >

50 years of open access: a timeline

In 1975, the Law Society decided that law libraries were better managed by an independent organization, and the BC Law Library Foundation was born. In 1984, the foundation became the British Columbia Courthouse Library Society, which is still our legal name, but later became more commonly known as Courthouse Libraries BC.

Visit courthouselibrary.ca/about-us/our-history for more detail.



CLBC performance

Strategic goal

Curating **print and digital** materials: developing and maintaining legal information collections that meet our clients' needs.

Print collection

Our print circulation numbers were down slightly in 2025, across most of our locations. New Westminster stood out as a location where print usage increased.

Frontline staff in full-time locations contributed their expertise to collection development:

- Added 1,600+ print resources and updates to the collection from 26 legal publishers/distributors across 23 locations.
- Relocated 300+ books within the CLBC collection to improve the overall accessibility and currency of the print collection.

Collection renewal

The Collection Enhancement Project, funded by a Law Foundation grant to update/renew our collection, continued in 2025, including but not limited to the following work:

- Reviewed and revised collection development processes related to the print collection.

- Updated more Canadian print loose-leaf resources than usually permitted by budget.
- Began work to determine how the collections team can improve the frequency and relevance of communications about our collections.
- Completed setting up Indigenous Justice Centre libraries in 16 locations. (We continue to offer support and training to IJC staff as required.)

The project is expected to wrap up in 2026.

CLBC performance

Online and remote services

We added two new digital subscriptions to our collection this year: Canada Commons, a digital product that expands our ebook collection and provides access to government documents; and Lloyd's Law Reports, which provides access to maritime and commercial law from 1919 to the present.

In addition to curating new digital content, we focused on raising awareness among staff and clients regarding our digital subscription resources.

Court Services Online continued to see increased usage.

Public Access Computers (PACs)

In 2025, we saw the launch of a significant PAC upgrade, which included a new user interface to make finding CLBC resources more intuitive. Implemented on our 100 computers in all 30 courthouse library locations, the improvements increase the public's ability to research legal information.

Subscription database usage on the PACs significantly increased in 2025, with higher usage of Court Services Online and Lexis Advance Quicklaw.



Nanaimo Courthouse, 1895–96

*Designed by Francis Rattenbury, the architect behind BC's Parliament Buildings.
Still a working courthouse with a CLBC branch inside.*

CLBC performance

Strategic Goal

Delivering **training and outreach** programs: building the capacity of our clients to use legal information and services.

Legal community training

CLBC offers training for lawyers, advocates, law students, intermediaries, and others. We provide direct legal research training and library tours throughout the year, including for court clerks, legal research and library studies students, staff from legal organizations (including Indigenous Justice Centre staff), and on request.

Working with organizational partners and subject-matter experts, we delivered 30 online training sessions for the legal community in 2025, including 23 for CPD credit. Our partners presented on topics such as well-being and trauma-responsive practice, workplace sexual harassment, sexual assault, addiction as a sentencing factor, AI in criminal practice, and more.

We recorded, transcribed, and posted the webinars on our Vimeo channel for clients to view for CPD credit. The training is ever popular, with over 2,000 attendees at our live training sessions, and over 15,600 views of our recorded webinars, 5,806 of which were watched through to the end.

Public library staff training

The LawMatters service offers training to public library reference desk staff who often get legal information requests. In 2025, we worked in partnership with the BC Library Association and Community Legal Assistance Society to host a webinar for people at 13 library systems. The purpose was to promote the society's Stand Informed resources and raise awareness of CLBC services such as Clicklaw.

We also provided training for staff at Fernie Heritage Library and Okanagan Regional Library and presented a two-hour training workshop for staff from 18 northern and interior libraries at the Beyond Hope Conference in Prince George.

All training sessions were focused on the using the recently relaunched Clicklaw service to find resources relevant to practice case scenarios. Participant feedback showed this style of training is the most well received and useful for library staff responding to legal reference questions.

2025 financials

Financial highlights for the year ended December 31, 2025

SOURCES OF FUNDING (\$1000s)

Law Society of British Columbia	\$3,315
Law Foundation of British Columbia (Operating)	3,315
Law Foundation of British Columbia (Projects)	1,510
Notary Foundation of British Columbia	250
Fees, interest, and other income	534

Total	\$8,924
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USES OF FUNDING

Information resources (books, digital and print subscriptions)	\$2,201
Human Resources	4,265
Operating expenditures	2,458

Total	\$8,924
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Complete Financial Statements available upon request.



Nelson Courthouse, 1909

Also designed by Rattenbury, the Nelson Courthouse has served the Kootenays since 1909. CLBC's branch still operates on its upper floor.



Courthouse Libraries BC 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 x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk^wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səłílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

BC Courthouse Library Society

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