



2024

ANNUAL REPORT


COURTHOUSE
LIBRARIES | BC

Linking **people.**
Bridging barriers.

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A message from the CEO

2024 saw Courthouse Libraries BC (CLBC) focused on making significant improvements to our digital services and resources, while also meeting the needs of an increasing number of people who come into our libraries to access our computers, law librarians, and the resources to research and manage their legal issues.

We're grateful for the extra funding we received from the Law Foundation and Notary Foundation, with which we were able to expand our print and digital collections and move forward on IT modernization. We launched a new Clicklaw site for British Columbians looking for trustworthy information on a variety of legal topics. In addition, work started on designing a new, user-informed landing page for our 100 public computers, slated for a 2025 launch. The extra funding also opens up other exciting possibilities for future service improvements.

CLBC was very excited to partner with the leadership of BC's Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) this year. People from both organizations identified key legal titles to support legal research needs at IJC locations across the province. The CLBC team ordered, catalogued and shipped the resources requested for 14 IJC libraries that opened at the end of 2024. There will be a total of 16 IJC libraries, and we are pleased to be providing ongoing support and training.

Another highlight of the year was the successful completion of a pilot partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General to provide free public access on our computers to court documents through Court Services Online (CSO) E-Search. While searching CSO has always been free, people normally had to pay to see the case files and download documents. Thanks to our partnership

with the ministry, CLBC visitors don't have to pay for those features. An indicator of how well the pilot went: CSO E-Search was launched approximately 100 times a month across all CLBC locations in 2024, and the pilot project was extended for a second year.

In 2024, our employees enthusiastically embraced raising community awareness about CLBC. They held promotional and learning events in locations all around the province, inviting people to learn more about how we can help. These efforts were a good build-up to what we anticipate will be a super 50th anniversary of CLBC as "BC's Public Law Library" in 2025.

So, what's next? We expect to continue adapting to change and implementing new technologies to increase our ability to reach clients with excellent legal resources, no matter where they live.

As always, we couldn't do any of this without our funders. I'd like to thank the Law Foundation, the Law Society, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Notary Foundation. And, of course, nothing is possible without the exceptional effort of our employees.

Caroline Nevin
CEO, CLBC



A photograph of two cyclists riding a wooden bridge over a river. The bridge is made of light-colored wooden planks and has yellow-painted wooden railings. The cyclist in the foreground is wearing a red and white striped shirt and a helmet. The cyclist behind them is wearing a yellow shirt and a helmet. The river is blue and flows through a lush green forest. In the background, there are mountains under a blue sky with white clouds. The sun is shining from the top left, creating a lens flare effect.

Momentum
starts with
access.

From information to
action, CLBC helps
British Columbians
move forward.

It all **starts here**

Courthouse Libraries BC is a not-for-profit organization 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.

Our values

Accountability	Equity & Inclusion
Excellence	Adaptability
Service	Kindness

Our vision

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

Our strategic goals

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 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 client legal issues.

The foundation

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



2024 success stats

1

In 2024, information requests were **double** that of ten years ago. We answered almost **80,000** client questions, breaking all previous records.



2

We fulfilled over **550** Book-in-a-Box orders in 46 BC communities. That's **5 times** the number delivered 10 years ago.

3

CLBC purchased **1,300+** print resources and updates in 2024, and ordered **\$500K** worth of loose-leaf updates.



4

We now have nearly **340** law titles and over **3,000** journals in our online subscription databases.



5

People used our Public Access Computers over **39,000** times last year.



6

We delivered **28** training sessions for the legal profession; 12 of which provided continuing professional development credits.



7

We delivered **78** orientation sessions across BC to raise awareness of CLBC services.



8

CLBC trained **231** public library staff from 18 library systems last year.



9

CLBC's Family Law Organizer online community keeps growing and now totals **670** members.



10

CLBC grants to public libraries to buy legal resources have **doubled** over the last decade.

A group of people are walking across a suspension bridge that spans a deep, lush green forest. The bridge has a wooden deck and metal railings. The forest is dense with tall evergreen trees. The sky is visible in the distance, showing a hazy or overcast day. The bridge is anchored to a rocky cliff on the left side of the frame.

Change begins
with
connection.

Through tools,
support, and
trusted guidance,
CLBC bridges the
gap to justice.

CLBC performance

Whether virtually or in-person, it was an excellent year for connecting with people in the legal community, with public librarians, and with those who needed our help to do their legal research and manage their own legal issues. Here are some performance highlights from the year.

Strategic goal

Providing information services — connecting clients to legal information and services.

Frontline legal information services

Our law librarians and library staff are at the heart of CLBC services.

In 2024, CLBC received almost 80,000 questions across our 8 full time locations, a 20% increase over 2023 and higher than 2019, our previous record year. Since we went back to full drop-in services in 2022, we've seen a significant increase in the numbers of public clients. **(Figure 1)**

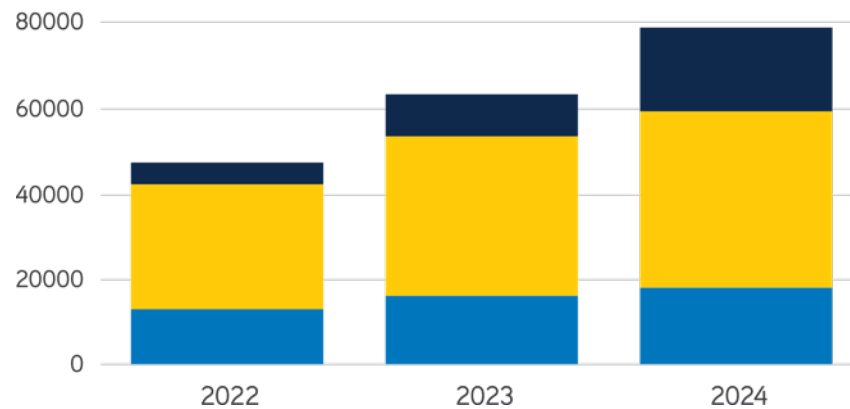
We've also seen a large increase in email questions. Ten years ago, we had just over a thousand. Last year, we had over 9,000. Most are from the legal community and often quite complex.

Whether sharing our expertise, connecting clients to relevant legal resources, or helping clients make meaningful progress with their legal matters, CLBC provides high-value services to people across BC. **(Figure 2)**

New editions of the popular Wikibook *JP Boyd on Family Law* were distributed to all BC libraries, Indigenous Justice Centers, Law Foundation-funded family law advocates, and all of our CLBC branches.

The demand for the Book-in-a-Box borrowing service remains high and reaches clients in communities beyond our 30 library locations.

Figure 1

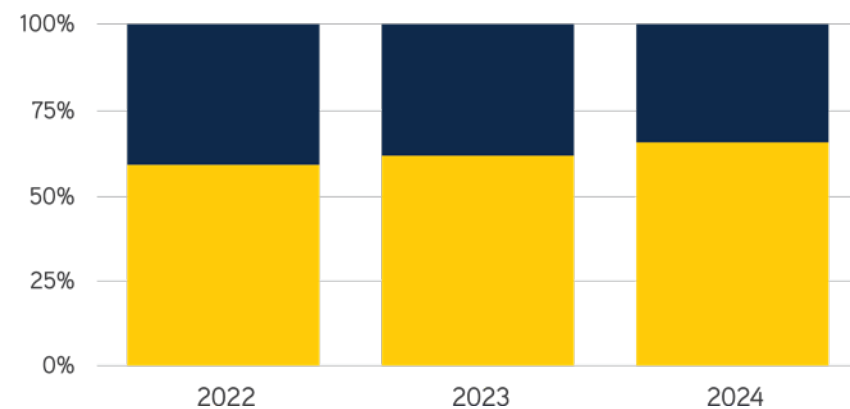


Legal Information Requests - 3 year trend

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 2



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

CLBC performance

Community engagement activities

In 2024, we delivered 78 orientation sessions to raise awareness about CLBC services in communities across BC. We presented to members of the legal community, as well as high school and post-secondary institutions whose studies included learning about the law.

Staff also participated in 41 community outreach events. These events gave us the opportunity to learn about local client needs and to connect with hundreds of people who refer clients to our services.

LawMatters program

LawMatters is CLBC's outreach program for public librarians, supported by the Law Foundation of BC.

With an enhanced program this year, we were able to focus on distributing healthy grants, reference tools, and highly valued training opportunities. Our relationships with public libraries remain strong, and feedback consistently shows appreciation and gratitude for this program.

CLBC distributed \$114,500 in grants to BC libraries in 2024, representing an 87% participation rate in our call for applications. This rate is higher than 2023 despite a particularly difficult fire season for the Interior and capacity concerns affecting small libraries (some interested libraries weren't able to opt in).

CLBC website

The CLBC website remains the reliable first point of contact for clients who would like to learn about our services, begin their legal research, and connect with us.

Our librarians across the province contribute to Our Legal Knowledge Base, which is housed on the site, and contains real questions and research-based answers.

To help make our collection more accessible, we added [Finding books on the shelf](#) to the CLBC website.

Clicklaw program

Clicklaw.bc.ca

2024 was a big year for Clicklaw, Courthouse Libraries' website that links the public (and their community helpers) to accessible and relevant legal resources. An exciting new Clicklaw website was launched based on client feedback. Content includes 120+ services, 790+ resources, 30+ common questions, 8 topic pages, and 37 subtopic pages. What's special about the site is the content is selected, evaluated and organized by our expert law librarians.

Clicklaw Wikibooks

Clicklaw Wikibooks has been CLBC's most visited domain name for many years, at least since 2013 when it launched the widely popular resource on family law, *JP Boyd on Family Law*.

In October 2024, Clicklaw Wikibooks collaborated with the Bella Coola Legal Advocacy Program to host an online version of Legal Information for Indigenous People: National Edition. This unique resource provides accessible legal information for Indigenous people across the continent who are facing legal issues.

CLBC performance

Lawbster: CLBC's online community platform

Lawbster is a digital forum created to connect legal professionals with one another. The site supports Communities of Practice, and helps lawyers, and other professionals who work closely with lawyers, connect, communicate, collaborate and educate one another.

Membership in Lawbster's largest Community of Practice, the Family Law Organizer ("FLO"), saw an increase of 40 new members in 2024 for a total of 670 members, and its steering committee programmed an even larger slate of webinars.

VALL (Vancouver Association of Law Libraries) forum is another active space on Lawbster, where its members ask questions, seek information about resources, get tips for dealing with vendors, post job opportunities, and discuss practical aspects of running a law library. VALL's community membership has now stabilized, as the majority of members who qualify to participate and are interested have joined the online community.

Strategic goal

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

Collection renewal

Our Collection Renewal Project work continued through 2024. In 2023, we received a \$2 million grant from the Law Foundation to update/renew our collection over three years. The project focuses not only on the currency and relevance of our legal information resources, but also accessibility to and awareness of legal information resources.

In many of our full-time locations, staff shifted and weeded the print collection to create room for new resources and to improve overall accessibility to resources.

Work included:

- Purchasing 1,300+ print resources and updates for the collection
- Ordering more than \$500K worth of updates to loose-leaf textbooks
- Relocating 400+ books within the CLBC collection to improve the overall currency of the print collection

Online and remote services

Our digital collection continued to expand this year as growth in demand for remote services remains high. In 2024, we evaluated several new electronic products and added UK and Irish Nominative Reports (HeinOnline) and Emond's Criminal and Immigration collections to our digital offerings. By making these available on computers in our library locations and through our remote-access subscription databases, we open up legal resources to lawyers across the province.

BC Wallet integration

CLBC was invited to join the Law Society and other early adopters of digital trust technology to provide simple sign-in options for lawyers looking to access services remotely. Clients are now able to access our remote subscription databases on the CLBC website using their lawyer credential in the BC Wallet application. This provides fast and easy access to valuable databases without the need to create an account with us.

CLBC performance

Public Access Computers (PACs)

We have 100 computers in 30 courthouse library locations that give the public the ability to research legal information. Use of CLBC's subscription databases from the PACs significantly increased in 2024.

Strategic Goal

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

Legal community training

CLBC continued to offer very well attended training for lawyers, advocates, law students, intermediaries, and others. Working with organizational partners and subject-matter experts, CLBC delivered 28 training sessions for the legal community, including 12 for CPD credit in 2024.

Our presenters covered a variety of topics, including legal research, court etiquette, strategies for negotiating settlements, and tips for working with self-represented litigants.

These webinars were recorded, transcribed and posted on our Vimeo channel for clients to view for CPD credit. There were over 1,152 attendees at our training sessions, and over 13,360 views of our recorded webinars, 5,054 of which were watched entirely.

Public library staff training

LawMatters offers training to public library reference desk staff who often get legal information requests. Between in-person workshops, virtual training sessions, and webinars, the program reached 231 library staff from 18 library systems in the province. We reached even more people by presenting at three large library conferences.

The star of the show for all our training workshops was the new Clicklaw website, which contains trusted legal resources selected by our law librarians. Participants worked through practice case scenarios to familiarize themselves with Clicklaw, and their feedback was tremendously positive for the site's content, structure, functionality and usability.

Considering the increasing number of book and programming challenges being levelled against public libraries, we partnered with the BC Library Association to host a three-part webinar series highlighting practical resources and tools related to intellectual freedom.



Progress is
possible when
pathways
are clear.

CLBC connects
people to the legal
help they need to
keep moving.



2024 financials

Financial Highlights for the year
ended December 31, 2024

Complete Financial Statements
available upon request.

SOURCES OF FUNDING (\$1000s)


Law Society of British Columbia	\$3,191
Law Foundation of British Columbia (Operating)	3,191
Law Foundation of British Columbia (Projects)	1,193
Fees, interest and other income	313

Total	\$7,888
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USES OF FUNDING

Information resources (books, digital and print subscriptions)	\$1,911
Human Resources	3,830
Operating expenditures	2,147

Total	\$7,888
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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 x̱məθḵwəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ḻḻwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

BC Courthouse Library Society

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