

LawMatters

At your local public library

LawMatters At Your Local Public Library

A Report for Public Librarians

About LawMatters

- › LawMatters is a program of Courthouse Libraries BC. It began as a three-year project.
- › LawMatters provides grants to help you add new and updated legal resources to your collections in order to provide BC residents with increased access to information about the law.
- › It produces *Law Books for Libraries*, a list of recommended materials for small, medium and large size public libraries.
- › It provides legal reference training to help support your capacity to address the legal reference questions of library patrons.
- › It co-hosts Community Legal Information Forums with local public libraries.
- › More information about LawMatters may be found at www.bclawmatters.ca

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Providing legal information in local libraries is the ideal way to reach people with legal questions in a highly accessible and non-threatening environment.

Drew Jackson, Director, Client Services,
Courthouse Libraries BC



LawMatters works with you to provide all British Columbian residents with local access to basic legal information.

The LawMatters project ran from April 2007 to December 2009. It then became an ongoing Client Services program of Courthouse Libraries BC.

This report reviews the project's outcomes, summarizes current program activities, and discusses future priorities.

Project Activities Provided Valuable Information

The project activities provided valuable information about how we can help support you in your legal information work.

Part of the LawMatters project focused on how British Columbians are making use of public libraries to find answers to their legal information questions.

We asked you to tell us:

- › What kind of legal information do BC residents seek in public libraries?
- › How much do they use public libraries for legal information?
- › What type of library resources do they use?

- › Do you make referrals to other legal services, and if so, to whom?

To assist us in our investigation, public librarians took part in two focus groups that provided information about the experience of using and managing legal reference materials.

Building on your input, LawMatters developed a list of recommended materials for small, medium and large size public libraries.

In another part of the project we focused on providing training so that you can fully support your library's capacity to respond to the public's legal information questions.



Nancy Hannum, LawMatters Consultant and Johanne Blenkin, Executive Director, Courthouse Libraries BC.

To establish base-line data and to assess the project's overall impact, we hired Janet Currie of Focus Consultants. Focus Consultants is a leading BC expert in evaluations of public legal information and advice services. The evaluation and focus group reports for the project are available online at www.bclawmatters.ca.



Janet Freeman and Drew Jackson of Courthouse Libraries BC with Mary Mouat, Chair of the Law Foundation of BC. The BC Library Association awarded the Keith Sacré Library Champion Award to the Law Foundation in recognition of their long-term support in providing public legal information to the residents of BC and in particular for the Courthouse Libraries BC LawMatters project.

Focus Groups Share Experiences

During the project two focus groups were held with librarians from libraries of different sizes, and from different regions of the province. The first focus group in 2007 gave us feedback on the project's initial core funding phase and made recommendations for next steps. The second focus group in 2008 assisted the project to determine core collection priorities and plan for the future of LawMatters;

Suggestions for LawMatters that emerged from the focus groups included:

- › Develop a blog on legal reference materials. The blog could discuss the best resources and notify readers when materials are outdated and need to be replaced.
- › Include pamphlet-type resources from organizations like the People's Law School in the list of recommended titles, and include a list of multilingual titles.
- › Define "legal materials" for grant reporting purposes

Public Library Use of Legal Information

This section presents a summary of what LawMatters found when we gathered the data about public library patrons' use of print and electronic information legal resources.

Focus Consultants conducted two systematic seven-day legal reference surveys in January 2009 and January 2010.

135 of the 238 public library outlets were randomly selected. Libraries were of every size and type, both urban and rural, and ranged from the very tiny to the largest ones.

Responding to legal questions

Based on the average number of questions received at the libraries in the two years of the legal reference survey, it is estimated that public libraries in BC receive at least 35,000 legal reference questions per year.

The survey asked librarians to specify what legal areas patron questions addressed. The survey provided over 40 possible topic areas.

Topic areas that patrons most often asked questions about were:

- > real estate, property
- > building codes
- > housing and landlord tenant issues
- > strata title and neighbours
- > wills and estates
- > separation, divorce and family property

The research indicated that the legal reference questions are very broad. The scope of these questions is expanding continually and the questions are becoming increasingly complex.

- > Over 90% of the questions which required library resources used both print and online resources, with print used more frequently than online resources.
- > In about 40% of cases, the library's response to a legal reference question also included a referral to appropriate legal services.

High participation rate in the reference surveys

In the randomly selected libraries:

- > 85% completed the first survey in 2009
- > 98% of those who completed the 2009 survey also completed the second survey in 2010.

Without exception, all of you who participated in the surveys were positive about your involvement, undertook extra efforts to collect the data, and were open to reviewing the data.

The final sample size reflected a statistically significant sample of libraries across BC that is considered 90% accurate. The results of the surveys can therefore be taken to generally reflect the experiences of all types of public libraries in the province.

Size, opening hours matter

Larger libraries with most open hours per week were more likely to receive legal reference questions than smaller libraries with fewer hours and fewer staff.

Whether libraries had a professional librarian on staff or whether staff had taken part in LawMatters training were also significant factors.

Change in referral patterns

There was a significant change in library referrals to external legal services during the course of this research.

- In 2009 you reported that 57% of the referrals made to an outside legal resource were to government organizations.
- In 2010 you reported that 59% were made to community-based services.

This change may reflect the impact of LawMatters training workshops, which provide a broader scope of community referral options for libraries, as well as the late 2009 introduction of the Clicklaw website HelpMap search tool. The workshops include a review of local and provincial services with descriptions and a checklist for the reference desk. The change may also reflect reductions in the availability of government services.

It is worth noting that the arrival of the Clicklaw website in April 2009 showed a fast start in usage – from zero to 19%, even before much training or publicity on Clicklaw was provided to public library staff.

Number of legal questions may be under-estimated

The number of legal reference questions recorded for the surveys is likely an under-estimate of all the legal questions asked at all public libraries.

In a library setting in particular, there has always been a strong component of "government information," which has significant overlap with "legal information."

Example: Librarians recording the data may not categorize appeal of property assessments and building codes as "legal questions."

In this way, data about the number of legal questions received may be under-estimated.



Tatla Lake Branch of Cariboo Regional District Library

Impact of LawMatters

We have been able to satisfy our patrons' requests for material that may have been beyond our means. The essential list has been very helpful and we are able to keep "up to date" with the suggested materials for small - medium libraries.

Virginia Walker,
Invermere Public Library

The LawMatters At Your Public Library project has provided an unprecedented opportunity to develop and enhance access to legal information across the VPL system and in libraries all over the province. . .

Guy Cribdon, Assistant Manager
(Collections), Literature, Social Science
& Multicultural Services, Vancouver
Public Library

I appreciate being able to lean on the expertise of others in using the prepared lists as the basis of our selections. It saves time, but also allows me to have more confidence about the choices. With no legal background, and even with my umpteen years of public library experience, I am not sure that I would readily identify items appropriate for the general public.

Barbara Jo May,
Adult Collections Librarian,
Okanagan Regional Library

For a small and somewhat isolated community, the improved collection has even more value for patrons.

Eva Kelemen, Kaslo and District Public
Library

LawMatters Training

The training provided to BC public librarians aims to build capacity to respond to the public's legal information questions.

LawMatters provided 28 workshops or webinars between November 2007 and November 2009, involving a total of 407 participants. Most of the training took place in 2008, in the project's second year.

Three types of training sessions

LawMatters provided three types of legal reference training to public library staff:

- > **Introductory Legal Reference Training** – 13 in-person workshops that provided information on print and online legal reference materials, legal reference search strategies, and how to address legal reference questions.
- > **Searching QP LegalEze** – 13 two-hour webinar training sessions that introduced library staff to searching the QP LegalEze database. QP LegalEze is a web-based subscription service that provides access to BC statutes, regulations and legislative documents. QP LegalEze is available at all public libraries in BC. The webinars were developed and provided in collaboration with the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB) ongoing webinar training program.
- > **Legal Information Sources** – 2 eight-week, online elective courses that were held in collaboration with the Community Library Training Program for BC public libraries. PLSB managed the publicity, registration, software and technical assistance and the workshop was facilitated and updated by LawMatters.

Impact of training: dramatic rise in levels of confidence

Increased use of different types of legal resources at the libraries appears to be associated with LawMatters workshop training.

In the project's post-training follow up survey, staff who had received some type of LawMatters training reported they were more knowledgeable about resources available, used more types of reference materials, and were better able to identify the complexities involved in the legal issue.

In addition, the post training survey revealed that library staff who participated in the training showed a dramatic rise in confidence levels in their ability to address the legal reference questions of patrons.

Results were statistically significant for both the Introductory Legal Reference Training and the QP LegalEze participants.

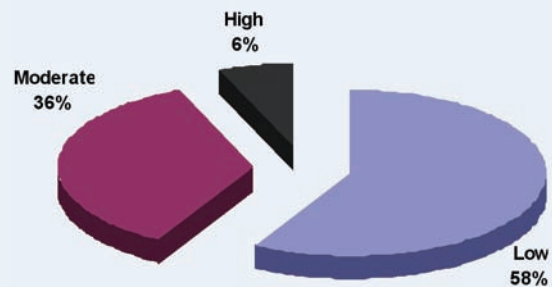
Prior to taking the Introductory Legal Reference Training, 58% of participants said that they had a low level of confidence in the legal reference area. After taking the training 83% reported a moderate to high level of confidence.

Prior to taking the QP LegalEze training, 75% of participants said that they had a low level of confidence in the legal reference area. After taking the training 92% reported a moderate to high level of confidence.

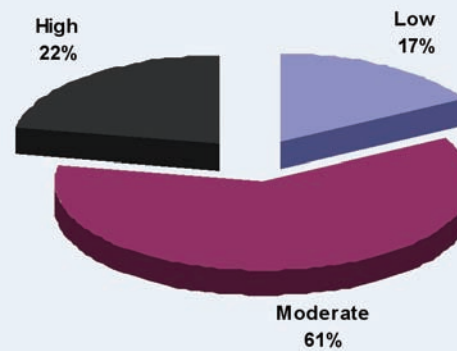
The surveys indicated that these confidence levels are maintained for at least 6 – 18 months after the training.

LawMatters Training Participant Confidence Levels

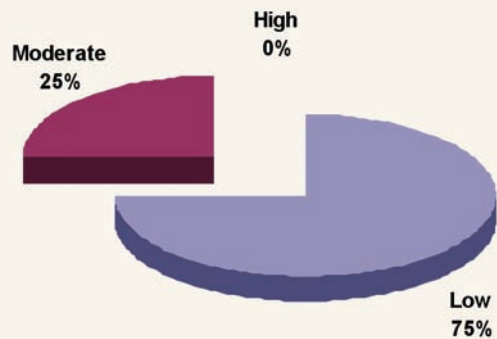
Participant Confidence Levels BEFORE
Introductory Legal Reference Training



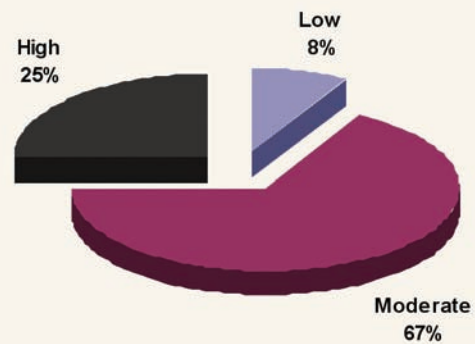
Participant Confidence Levels AFTER
Introductory Legal Reference Training



Participant Confidence Levels BEFORE
QP LegalEze Training



Participant Confidence Levels AFTER
QP LegalEze Training



Introductory Legal Reference Training Results

Who participated

248 library staff took part in the Introductory Legal Reference training.

Of those, 81% (135) completed the training assessment form.

- > 96% were public library staff.
- > Other participants included a college librarian, a library federation manager, and a student librarian.

Participants in the training came from libraries located in small, mid-sized and large communities. Many participants (39%) came from libraries in larger urban centres.

- > 56% percent of those attending the Introductory Training said that they receive legal reference questions from patrons frequently or very frequently (at least once a week or more).
- > Only 11% said that they rarely received questions.

These estimates closely match the results from the Legal Reference Survey.

What you said about the Introductory training

The majority of the participants were positive or very positive about all the major aspects of the Introductory Training.

- > 98% agreed that the training provided a good introduction to the legal reference area.
- > High ratings were also given for the clarity of the objectives and the quality of the facilitation.
- > Participants were somewhat less positive about the length of time allotted for the training, which was considered to be too short to sufficiently cover all the topic areas or to allow enough time for practice questions.

Ways to strengthen the training

Participants recommended:

- > lengthening the time for training,
- > providing more opportunities to explore online resources, and
- > including more time for case examples, practice questions and opportunities to use search strategies.

Participants said they would like to see refresher or updated training, and training related to specific areas of the law.

The Introduction to Legal Reference Training was...

A good basic insight into how to get started.

Great to have a 'refresher' of what resources are available. For those of us who don't answer legal questions everyday, it's important for us to revisit this information as often as possible.

Very helpful and knowledgeable facilitators.

Much more relevant than I ever believed!

Informative and challenging.

QP LegalEze Training Results

Who participated

138 participants took part in QP LegalEze training.

- > 90% of participants were public library staff.
- > 2 were library trustees.
- > 1 was a manager of a regional library system.

Participants were evenly drawn from libraries located in small, mid-sized and large urban communities.

- > 20% were from libraries located in small communities of less than 10,000 people
- > 40% (12/30) were from libraries located in communities from 10,000 to under 50,000
- > 23% (7/30) were from libraries located in communities of 50,000 to 100,000 people
- > 17% (5/30) were from libraries located in cities of over 100,000 people

What you said about the LegalEze training

90% of the training participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

- > the objectives of the training were clearly stated
- > enough time was available for the webinar
- > the facilitators were effective
- > the online component worked well
- > the training provided sufficient time to explore resources and practice handling specific legal reference questions

The highest ratings were given for the effectiveness of the facilitators. A somewhat lower rating was given for the opportunity to practice handling specific legal reference questions.

What participants found useful

The two most useful aspects of the training were considered to be:

- > the question and answer sessions and the practice questions that simulated legal reference searches, and
- > specific information about the content of QP LegalEze.

Ways to strengthen the training

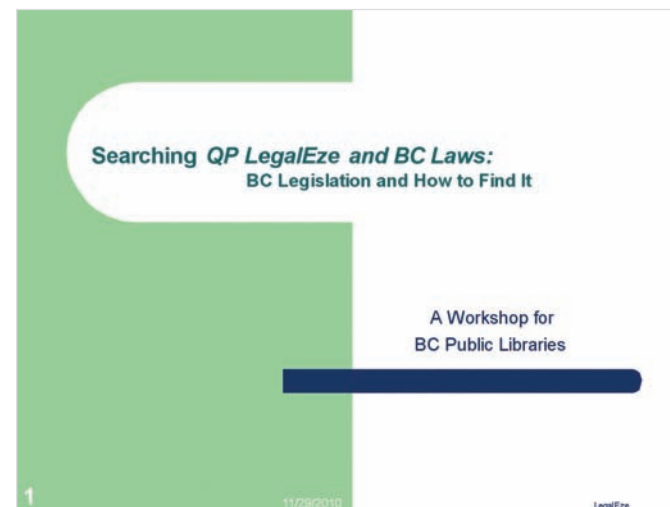
Participants recommended adding more question practice time in future training, and adding a section on the BC Laws website.

The online format and being able to watch the actual steps and screens were an invaluable part of training, along with the explanations of Bills, Acts, Regulations, and the practice questions. The entire program was enough for a beginner to start with.

QP LegalEze training participant

The Thompson-Nicola Regional District benefited greatly from the QP LegalEze webinar offered at the beginning of this year. Staff was able to modify the training session to be easily delivered to staff in our community branches that were not able to attend.

Kevin Keirans, Director of Libraries,
Thompson-Nicola Regional District
Library



From Legal Information Sources Participants

It was very helpful to see the work of others and learn.

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(The online training was) very good, private – could work at my own pace.

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I liked the hands-on approach. Even though I was aware of most of the resources, I hardly used them. It was a lot of fun.

.....

The assignments were relevant to the actual job I do.

.....

[I liked] the quick and relevant responses from Nancy. The great bookmarks I got out of it. A better understanding of the legal process. Really good practice questions.

.....

I liked the on-line learning and it wasn't all 'legaleze'.

Legal Information Sources Training Results

LawMatters facilitated two online Legal Information Sources training session in collaboration with the Public Library Service Branch's (PLSB) Community Library Training Program. This is an eight-week elective course.

Who participated

- > 18 participants attended.
- > 13 of the participants completed training assessment forms.

What you said about the Legal Information Sources training

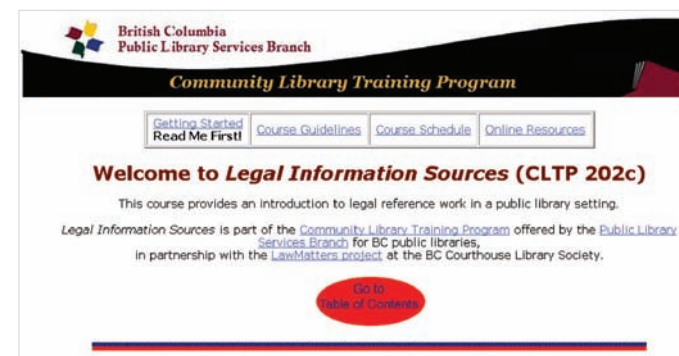
All of the participants rated the Legal Information Sources Training as worthwhile or very worthwhile (ratings were 4 or 5 out of a maximum rating of 5). The average rating of the training was 4.8/5.0.

The opportunity to learn more about legal resources was cited as the most useful component of the training.

Ways to strengthen the training

Recommendations for improving the Legal Information Sources Training included:

- > lengthening the time for the training, and
- > creating two training levels (basic and advanced).



Hosting Community Forums

In 2009 LawMatters began to work with public libraries to co-host local forums on access to legal information in their communities. Two pilot forums were held in Squamish and Chilliwack which were informative and well attended by local agencies. The purpose of the forums was to help libraries engage with other local service agencies to share information about library legal resources and to encourage inter-agency cooperation in identifying and meeting the legal information needs of the community.

The forums were just getting started when the survey was held and did not impact the survey. However, the initial feedback from the libraries and communities has been very positive. Several libraries have been engaged in follow-up resource sharing activities in their communities.



Squamish Community Legal Information Forum held at the Squamish Public Library.

Promoting LawMatters

While LawMatters developed promotional materials during the period of the legal reference surveys, we began our wider and more extensive publicity initiatives only in the project's final year.

Marketing materials included:

- > workshop kit covers
- > brochures
- > note pads, pens
- > posters, magnetic bookmarks

The LawMatters blog www.bclawmatters.blogspot.com also promoted the project. In addition, there were articles for local press and Law Day activities in several communities.

These promotion materials focused primarily on library staff awareness of the services, training, and new legal resources of LawMatters. Some of these materials, such as the reading guides by legal topic, posters and bookmarks, were also designed for public use in the libraries and for dissemination in the community, and are available at www.bclawmatters.ca.

In the surveys, none of these promotional activities showed a statistically significant impact on the legal reference questions received.

We are now actively promoting our outreach services

At Courthouse Libraries BC, we are now promoting our outreach services to public libraries and the public on a wider basis through a campaign called LawStartBC, which is described on p.16 of this report.

The legal information forum was a great way to bring community representatives together to share knowledge and information. The result was an online resource list of legal services in Squamish as well as stronger awareness and connections between local groups.

Marie Palmer,
Squamish Public Library

LawMatters Priorities 2010 - 2014

Priorities for the LawMatters program for 2010-2014 are informed by the project outcomes. They are as follows:

1. Continue to co-host Community Legal Information Forums

To accomplish this, LawMatters will:

- Continue to invite all public libraries to join with LawMatters in hosting a forum in their community.
- Distribute an invitation brochure to libraries, and continue to develop the *Community Legal Information Forums Planning Guide* for libraries
- In the *Guide*, include comments and suggestions from libraries that have held forums. Also include best practices for ongoing community networking and information sharing.
- Co-host up to four forums a year with public libraries.
- Continue to evaluate community forums.

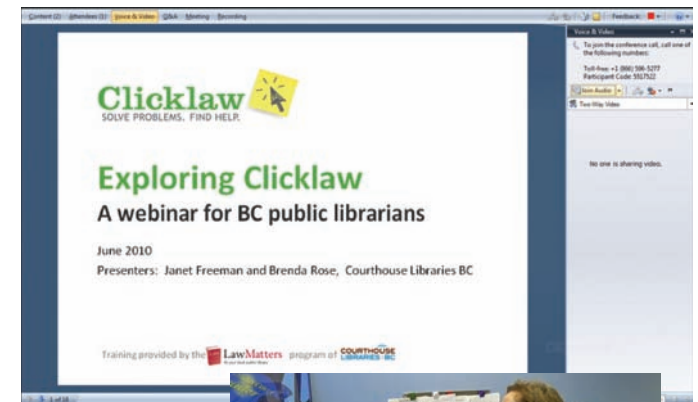


Library Manager Mari Martin facilitates the Courtenay Community Legal Information Forum held at the Courtenay Branch of Vancouver Island Regional Library.

2. Enhance Legal Reference Training to Librarians

To accomplish this, LawMatters will:

- Develop a refresher training course for librarians. The training will use either a workshop or online format.
- Where possible, extend the length of the introduction to legal reference workshop to 4 – 5 hours.
- Conduct further investigation into online training tools.
- Continue to evaluate all training sessions.



Janet Freeman and Brenda Rose presented the first Clicklaw webinar to public librarians.

3. Promote the legal reference resources

To accomplish this, LawMatters will:

- Highlight the use of legal reference materials at legal information community forums.
- Continue to coordinate promotion and training initiatives with LawStartBC and Clicklaw.
- Promote the LawStartBC prescription pad concept at community forums and with local bar associations and community groups.

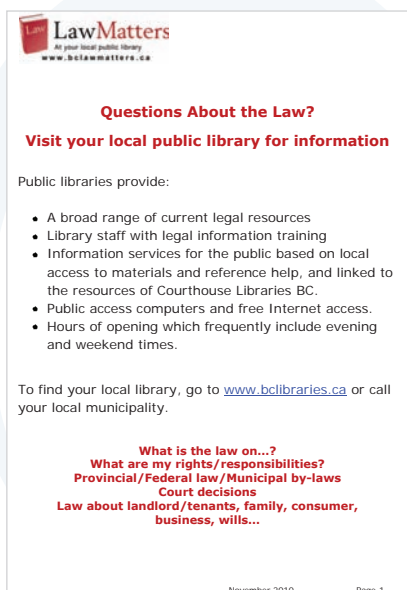


Williams Lake Branch of Cariboo Regional District Library
legal information display

4. Continue to evaluate the LawMatters program

To accomplish this, LawMatters will:

- In cooperation with public librarians, develop and refine best practices for delivering legal information to public library users.
- Collaborate with the LawStartBC team to develop evaluations of training and promotion activities.



LawMatters Handout for the public

Courthouse Libraries BC: change in focus

At Courthouse Libraries BC, we have moved from a "standby" role of being available in case clients ask for help finding information, to a more proactive model where we directly engage with clients where you are, connecting you with information tools and enhancing your skills in finding and managing information.

To use another metaphor, our role is shifting from lifeguard to swim coach.

To implement this new focus we have restructured some traditional library departments into new areas. The most dramatic change is in client services, which will now emphasize 4 key client communities:

1. sole practitioners and small firm lawyers;
2. articling students and new lawyers;
3. the public; and
4. public libraries.

Johanne Blenkin, Executive Director,
Courthouse Libraries BC

Providing Ongoing Support for Public Librarians

LawMatters continues as a program of Courthouse Libraries BC.

The LawMatters program works with public libraries in the province to provide all British Columbian residents with local access to basic legal information.

The purpose of the ongoing LawMatters program is to assist public libraries with:

- > grants to purchase law materials appropriate for members of the public who use your library
- > updated lists of current recommended law materials for library staff, both in print and online
- > consultation and advice about new materials and resources, and about discarding out-of-date materials
- > ongoing legal reference training
- > referral to available local legal services
- > reference back up support from Courthouse Libraries BC Client Services
- > distribution of legal guides such as *Legal Help for British Columbians: A Guide to Help Non-Legal Professionals Make Legal Referrals For Their Clients* and *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Legal Guide* to all public libraries

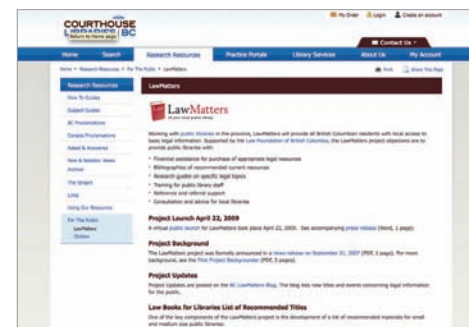
Take part in LawMatters

We invite you to participate in the LawMatters community. Here are some ways you can do this:

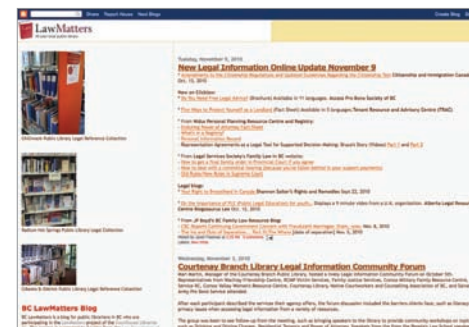
Bookmark LawMatters, participate in the blog

Stay in touch by using the LawMatters website and blog. Both the site and the blog are designed especially for your use.

- > Website: www.bclawmatters.ca



- > Blog: www.bclawmatters.blogspot.com



Both the site and the blog will alert you to the addition of new materials and upcoming events. To stay updated, subscribe to our blog via rss or by email.

Use Law Books for Libraries

One of the key components of the LawMatters project is the development of a list of recommended materials for small, medium and large size public libraries:

- › *Law Books for Libraries: Recommended Titles for Public Libraries* (March 2010)

Includes titles by library size, master title list and titles organized by subject headings list.

- › *Free Titles Order Form* (March 2010)
- › *Law Books for Libraries Update* (August 2010)
- › *Selection Guidelines for Law Books for Libraries* (February 2009)

We invite you to continue to contribute suggested titles to the recommended list, and to use the list to identify gaps in materials.

Use the toolkits and resources

LawMatters produces toolkits and resources for public libraries, and keeps them updated. Recent offerings include:

- › *BC Toll-Free Referral Phone Numbers* (June 2010)

Contains phone numbers and web sites for many BC legal information and advice services.

- › *A Brief Guide to Finding Court Documents* (April 2008)

Gives sample questions, possible responses and tips for searching court documents.

- › *Separation and Divorce in BC Research Guide Template* (June 2010)

Provides a listing of resources that libraries may adapt to reflect their collections and local resources.

- › *Multilingual Legal Information Titles* (March 2010)

Titles listed in 8 languages.

All of these legal information materials are available on the LawMatters website.

Consider hosting a Community Legal Information Forum

Community Legal Information Forums are a joint initiative of LawMatters, the local library and local community agencies. They provide a local event where providers and agencies can meet, consult, and inform each other. The information sharing that develops means that both library patrons and agency clients are better served. See the LawMatters blog for forum reports.

LawMatters will help you host a community forum in your community.

If you would like to host a forum in your community, contact LawMatters Coordinator Janet Freeman at jfreeman@courthouselibrary.ca.



Nanaimo Community Legal Information Forum held at the Harbourfront Branch of Vancouver Island Regional Library

LawStart BC: Helping the Public Access Legal Information and Assistance



www.lawstartbc.ca

LawStartBC is a website that directs users to LawMatters, the site for public librarians, to Clicklaw, the website that features legal information and education for the public in BC, and to the Courthouse Libraries BC site for further help with legal research.

LawMatters and Clicklaw are both part of the commitment of Courthouse Libraries BC to enhance public access to legal information.



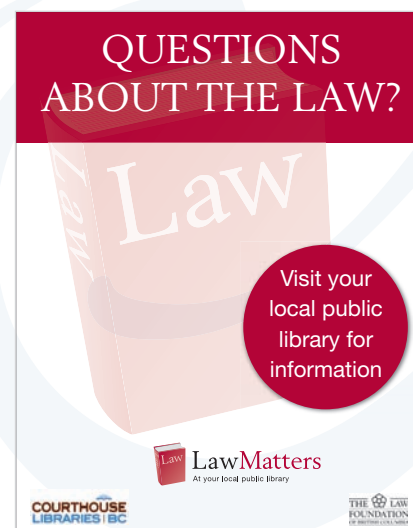
Deb Thomas, deputy chief librarian at Burnaby Public Library, with Janet Freeman of LawMatters.



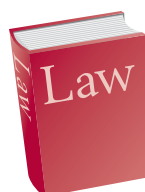
The Courthouse Libraries BC Community Outreach team: Nancy Hannum and Janet Freeman of LawMatters, Brenda Rose of Clicklaw, and Drew Jackson, Director, Client Services.

Acknowledgments

- **Writing and editing:** Gayla Reid
- **Photos:** Charles Boname, Drew Jackson, Jason Kuffler
- *LawMatters Public Library Legal Resources Project Final Training and Legal Reference Survey Findings Final Report April 2010* by Janet Currie, Focus Consultants [available at www.bclawmatters.ca]



LawMatters Poster



LawMatters

At your local public library

Contact LawMatters

We'd really appreciate hearing your feedback. Let us know how we can support your work.

Contact:

Janet Freeman, LawMatters Coordinator

jfreeman@courthouselibrary.ca

604.660.9204 or 1.800.665.2570

www.bclawmatters.ca

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