



Frequently Asked Questions for Students of MLIS and Library Technician Programs

About the Library

Courthouse Libraries BC is a unique library system because we serve the public, the judiciary and the legal community of BC. We are funded by the [Law Foundation of BC](#), a non-profit foundation that funds legal projects and programs that benefit the BC public, as well as the [Law Society of BC](#), the organization that regulates lawyers in our province. Although the B.C. Government provides us with space in 28 courthouses across British Columbia, we are classified as a not-for-profit registered charity, not a government library.

Serving the Public

Ways we serve the public:

- Free reference service by:
 - email
 - phone
 - in-person
- [Clicklaw](#)
 - developed by the Courthouse Library in 2009
 - explains common legal issues in plain language
 - authored by more than 30 [contributing organizations](#)
 - new content is uploaded as it's developed
 - promotes staff selected resources
- [LawMatters](#)
 - works with public libraries to provide all residents of British Columbia with local access to basic legal information
 - provides training for library staff
 - publishes lists of recommended purchases for public libraries
 - provides financial assistance for legal materials
- [Legal Help for British Columbians](#)
 - written to help non-legal professionals make legal referrals for their clients
 - covers common legal questions in more depth than Clicklaw
 - third edition was published as a wiki / print-on-demand book

For more information on these services please see our most recent [Annual Report](#).

Serving the Legal Community

The legal community consists of lawyers, judges, law students, law librarians, paralegals and other support staff. We support this community in a number of ways:

- accredited training sessions, online and in-person (see [Training & Tutorials](#))
- maintenance of practice-oriented print and electronic collections
- free reference services by email, in-person and by telephone
- remote access to select legal databases through the [Lawyer's Reading Room](#)
- document delivery and reference services
- computer, study and meeting room spaces

Mission

Our mission is to manage knowledge for justice in BC in collaboration with others. Our [2015-19 Strategic Plan](#) features key initiatives to fulfill that mission.

Locations and Collections

We have libraries in 28 courthouses around the province, providing access to digital and print legal information. Each library is equipped with public computers providing access to the internet, legal databases, and word processing software.

[Our libraries](#) occupy three categories: Resource Libraries, Regional Libraries, and Local Libraries. Each category has its own staffing and collection model.

Local Libraries

Our local libraries are staffed either one day per week or one day per month.

All local libraries offer access to:

- online access to current and comprehensive BC and federal legislation, Canadian reported case law, forms & precedents, reference sources, and law journals on topics including civil litigation, criminal law, family law, personal injury, wills & estates, and practice management & technology
- practice manuals
- materials purchased for individual libraries to meet local needs

Regional Libraries

Regional libraries are open a minimum 4 days a week.

In addition to the core materials available at all local courthouse libraries, regional libraries in larger population centres offer access to more resources to support a larger numbers of local lawyers and a wider variety of practice areas.

Resource Libraries

Our largest libraries are in Vancouver and Victoria. The Vancouver library is the central library and acts as the administrative seat. Collection and staffing decisions for all branches are made in conjunction with Vancouver and our regional libraries.

The resource libraries offer the following types of materials in addition to the regional core collection:

- historical legislation and case law from other Canadian provinces and territories
- selected case law and legislation from US, UK and other Commonwealth countries, both historic resources in print and current material online
- specialized practice areas such as entertainment law and international law
- selected resources from the US, the UK and other jurisdictions, particularly in subject areas where Canadian law has been modeled on the law in another country

Staffing

We have 22 staff in our Vancouver library and 52 employees province-wide. Of our 28 libraries, 7 are staffed full-time, including Victoria with 2 full-time Librarians, our remaining locations are staffed (for the most part) 4 to 6 hours per week.

Our Vancouver location has the largest complement of staff. In addition to being our biggest library with the most information requests, Vancouver also:

- staffs our province-wide client services, such as:
 - telephone and email reference
 - LawMatters program for public libraries
 - Clicklaw website for the public
 - home office for the two liaison lawyers
- offers administrative support for the whole system – accounting, HR, etc.
- home of the knowledge management team who are responsible for our website and digital collections

In Vancouver, we have:

- 8 Librarians (Front line services, Website Manager, Community Outreach, Digital Resources & Systems)
- 1 Library Technician
- 3 Library Assistants
- 2 Liaison Lawyers
- 8 staff with other backgrounds (Community Outreach, Finance, Human Resources, Administration Support & Knowledge Management).

You can view some of the job postings we have published in the last few years:

- [Circulation Clerk](#)
- [Librarian](#)

Collections

Our collection includes digital content and print materials. It is a practice-oriented collection rather than a research collection, with a focus on the practice areas of interest to most lawyers in BC. We primarily collect BC and Canadian legal resources, including case law, legislation, practice manuals, textbooks, forms & precedents, continuing legal education, and practice management & technology resources. The collection is supplemented with resources that support specialized practice areas and selected US, UK, and other foreign and international resources. We license a number of legal databases for clients to use on public computers in our libraries.

We have over 300,000 items in our physical collection. Of that, 53,000 items are on microform. Our Vancouver library houses our largest collection, including all of our microform materials and 85,000 print volumes.

View our [collection policy](#).

Usage

Information requests:

- 80 per day in Vancouver
- 35 per day in Victoria
- 20 per day in Kelowna and New Westminister
- 15 per day in Kamloops and Prince George

Further Reading for Aspiring Law Librarians

[SLAW](#) is a Canadian legal blog written by a large group of contributors that includes law librarians and lawyers. See their [Open Letter to a New Grad](#) for tips on good programs for aspiring law librarians.

[Vancouver Association of Law Librarians](#) – VALL

Additional questions?

Contact us at librarian@courthouselibrary.ca . We are happy to talk to you, but please keep in mind that we are working and our clients are our top priority. Please keep your questions succinct and professional.