



SURREY LIBRARIES
discover·connect·inspire

REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

2023



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Surrey Libraries recognizes that our work takes place on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), q̓ic̓əy̓ (Katzie), kw̓ik̓w̓əł̓əm (Kwikwetlem), q̓w̓ɑ:ń̓ł̓əń̓ (Kwantlen), q̓iq̓éyt (Qayqayt), x̓w̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations and on the ancestral and traditional territory of the s̓c̓əw̓aθ̓ən m̓əstey̓əx̓w̓ (Tsawwassen) First Nation.



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MISSION AND VISION

Our mission is to connect **people**, spark **curiosity**, and inspire **lifelong learning** to enhance the lives of Surrey residents, with the vision of creating a literate, **inclusive**, thriving city.

VALUES

Values serve as our guiding principles, shaping our culture and behaviour. They help define our identity and purpose, influencing decision-making and actions. By aligning with these values, the Library creates a cohesive and ethical environment, fostering long-term success.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

We champion the right for different voices and ideas to be heard, and the right for questions to be asked without censorship.

INNOVATION

We continuously explore and pursue new ideas to improve services, remaining flexible to find creative solutions.

COMMUNITY FOCUS

We care about the well-being of our community and work to foster a sense of belonging and connection.

COLLABORATION

We work with each other, our city, our community, and our patrons to support common goals and provide excellent service.

EQUITABLE ACCESS

We strive for our services to be accessible to all members of our community.

SUSTAINABILITY

We strive to be a leader in environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY (EDIA) VISION STATEMENT

Our Library is the heart of our community.

To fully realize our values and vision of a literate, inclusive and thriving city, the Library is dedicated to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA). We strive to provide equitable access to services and resources that enhance the experience of all our patrons.

Diversity can be seen, read, heard, and felt at the Library. From our shelves lined with various genres, to our unique displays and artwork, to our patrons from all walks of life, and to our staff members offering unique insights and expertise. Our diversity is encouraged to live and breathe here. It is a reflection of our dynamic city, and is essential to our cross-cultural environment.

Everyone is welcome at the Library to share in a sense of community and belonging. We envision the Library as a cohesive space where our differences are embraced and celebrated as strengths. Our backgrounds, identities and voices come together in a central hub of knowledge, innovation and collaboration. Together, we can foster an environment where we all feel safe to gather, play, work, learn, and be ourselves.

We approach our EDIA efforts the way we approach a new book—with curiosity, open-mindedness, and an eagerness to learn. We value the insights and knowledge of our community and its partners who help guide us on this collaborative journey.



Community members in Challenging Stigma Program talked about their experiences with mental health, Indigenous experience, cultural oppression, and other topics.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND CHIEF LIBRARIAN

We are delighted to share with you some of the highlights of 2023, a year that marked a significant milestone for Surrey Libraries: celebrating our 40th anniversary.



Marilyn Herrmann
Board Chair

As our current strategic plan came to an end, we embarked on a comprehensive engagement process to shape our future direction and vision. We conducted in-person and online consultations with staff, community groups, partners, and Indigenous people to gather feedback and input for our new strategic plan. Participants shared their hopes, needs, and aspirations for the Library and the community with enthusiasm.



Surinder Bhogal
Chief Librarian

In 2023, we were honoured to be elected as a member of the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee, a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations working together to advance reconciliation and social justice. We are proud to be part of this initiative and to support the Indigenous community through our programs, services, and collections.

Another achievement was welcoming a record-breaking 32,985 new library members, reflecting a growing demand and appreciation for our services! We strive to meet the diverse and evolving needs of our community by providing access to information, education, and entertainment for all ages and backgrounds.

Surrey continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the country and attracts a large number of immigrants and refugees. We supported these newcomers by translating our key brochures into five languages and producing 600 refugee and newcomer bags to welcome them to the community.

We want to express our gratitude to the City of Surrey and the Province of British Columbia for their ongoing funding and support. We also thank our generous donors, volunteers, community partners, and patrons for their invaluable contributions and collaboration. Finally, we thank our dedicated Library Board and staff for their hard work and commitment to making Surrey Libraries a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone.

BASED ON AN INTERNAL REVIEW AND REPORT:

\$822

was the annual value library membership provided to the average cardholder in 2023

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

On behalf of City Council, I extend my congratulations to Surrey Libraries for another successful year in serving our diverse and growing community.



Brenda Locke
Mayor

On behalf of the City Council, I congratulate Surrey Libraries for yet another successful year that saw a record number of electronic library materials lent out. In 2023, over four million books and eBooks were borrowed from Surrey Libraries. Another record was set with more than 17,100 children signing up for the Summer Reading Club.

Always looking to improve and innovate, I look forward to the new projects for 2024 such as the Mobile Library service – a library on wheels that will travel to areas that are underserved by library services and to people who cannot easily access their local branch.

The materials, programs and services provided by Surrey Libraries are truly top notch. Through its extensive array of resources and opportunities for literacy and lifelong learning, the Library also plays a pivotal role in supporting the personal and professional growth of our residents, as well as their overall health and well-being. A hub for continuous learning, creativity, and leisure, Surrey Libraries is a major contributor to the enrichment of our city.

With over 170,000 active members in our community, I hope to see every Surrey resident making use of the Library's offerings, enabling everyone to benefit from the wealth of information, knowledge, and inspiration that our libraries provide.

In addition to a vast collection of books and eBooks, Surrey Libraries offers a variety of online resources including streaming video, educational programs, and career development tools. Surrey Libraries plays a key role in bridging the 'digital divide' by providing essential access to technology for members of our community who may not have it otherwise.

On behalf of Surrey City Council, I commend the Board, staff, and volunteers of Surrey Libraries for their unwavering commitment to excellence. There truly is something for everyone at the library. I invite you to take full advantage of all that Surrey Libraries has to offer by visiting one of the branches or online at surreylibraries.ca.

For each dollar invested in Surrey Libraries,
\$5.46 of value was generated for the community in 2023

YEAR IN REVIEW

40th

**SURREY LIBRARIES
CELEBRATED 40 YEARS
OF ENHANCING LITERACY**



We supported **special literacy and learning events** such as the Challenging Stigma program, CBC Kid's Book Live event, Word Vancouver festival, and hosted the Reading Link Challenge.



To make sure Surrey Libraries is continuing to meet the demands of our changing community, we conducted a **strategic plan review** that included in-person and online engagement with staff, community groups, partners, and Indigenous people to gather feedback for the new plan.



We installed an **Everbright Light Wall** and many other children’s active play items using donor funds to enhance early childhood education through play.



To support and welcome the many immigrants and refugees settling in Surrey, we produced **600 newcomer bags** to let them know about Library services available.

“Your Tech-to-Go equipment is fantastic! I borrowed both the audio and VHS/DVD converters and took them to a presentation I gave for the BC Genealogical Society on Digitizing your Family History.”

~ Margaret Sharon, BCGS



We launched **Bee-bots** to help support digital literacy in young children.



To support our patron’s growing use and requests, we significantly expanded eBook, eAudio, and eMagazine collections to **over 112,000 titles**. Circulation of these collections increased by 16% over the previous year.

LITERACY AND LEARNING

As a public library, literacy and learning is a cornerstone of Surrey Libraries' work.

From support of English language learners, to storytimes for children, to one-on-one technology support, our programs support life-long learning and a range of literacies. We continued to provide many programs both online and in our branches.

WHAT YOU TOLD US



81%

Agree or Strongly Agree that Surrey Libraries is the go-to place for literacy and learning

TOP LOANED TITLES

Fiction



It Starts With Us

Non-Fiction



Cambridge IELTS 14
General Training

eBook



Happy Place

eAudiobook



Fourth Wing

Young Adult



The Summer
I Turned Pretty

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

OVER 2.9 MILLION
PHYSICAL ITEMS BORROWED

OVER 1.1 MILLION eBOOKS
AND eAUDIO BORROWED

127,382
CHILDREN PARTICIPATED
IN PROGRAMS

ADDED NEW ONLINE
RESOURCES:

Cantook
CODE COMBAT

30,890
ADULTS PARTICIPATED
IN PROGRAMS

341,315 REFERENCE
QUESTIONS ANSWERED

17,128
KIDS JOINED THE SUMMER
READING CLUB



CONNECTIONS

In an increasingly connected and busy world, Surrey Libraries plays an important role as one of the few remaining democratic public spaces in our community.

The Library connects Surrey residents with resources and services that help enrich their lives and also connects people to others with similar interests.

Our commitment to connection also means supporting efforts of reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

We work with partners to leverage resources for greater community benefit. We continue to prioritize professional development for staff and provided funding for credentialed courses, workshops, and conferences.

I value how Surrey Libraries is always changing and adapting with the times. The team has done a really good job of supporting newcomers in the community and acting as a hub for information as well as providing programs/services to support integration.

~ Feedback from the Patron Satisfaction Survey



TRACKING OUR PROGRESS

Staff visits in the Community



681

staff visits in the community in 2023



458 in 2022

399 in 2021

We Welcomed:



2,081,576

in-person visits



2,160,345

visits to website

Increase over 2022:



31%
Branch
Visits



15%
Digital
Visits

GAYLE HARRIS MEMORIAL EDUCATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

This fund was established by Barbara E. Harris in memory of Gayle Harris, a beloved children's librarian at Surrey Libraries. The award is provided to staff who are studying to obtain their Master of Library and Information Science degree.



Left to right: Robyn Sundar and Sarah Cryderman, Gayle Harris Memorial Education Fund Award Recipients for 2023.

WHAT YOU TOLD US



87%

Agree or Strongly Agree that Surrey Libraries consistently provides good service



87%

Agree or Strongly Agree that Surrey Libraries staff are knowledgeable & helpful



67%

Agree or Strongly Agree that they are satisfied with the range of services offered to the community

After signing up for his Library card, Visar felt more connected to his new home.



SHARE YOUR STORY

Submit your story at surreylibraries.ca/share-your-story

When I arrived in Canada in 2019, I felt overwhelmed and isolated. As a newcomer, I felt a language barrier and cultural divide. I wanted to learn English faster, so I opened an account at Surrey Libraries – Guildford branch.

As soon as I stepped into the Library, I was greeted with a friendly atmosphere and a sense of belonging. Staff showed me how to use my library card and access newcomer programs. I immediately registered for the English Conversation Circle program. This was my first connection with Canadian society.

“As soon as I stepped into the Library, I was greeted with a friendly atmosphere and a sense of belonging.”

Through the program, I met new people. I started to feel more confident and comfortable speaking English. The Facilitators helped me improve my language skills and

learn about Canadian culture. They also introduced me to volunteer opportunities at the Library, such as delivering books to seniors through Accessibility Services.

I loved volunteering because I could help people who couldn't visit the Library themselves. I saw how much it meant to them to receive books. The smiles and thanks from the seniors warmed my heart.

When I applied for a job, the Accessibility Services Manager at Surrey Libraries gave me a reference. With this help, I got my dream job. I felt grateful to the Library for the opportunities it provided. Surrey Libraries has become an essential part of my life in Canada, and I am proud to share my story to show others how important the Library is to our community.

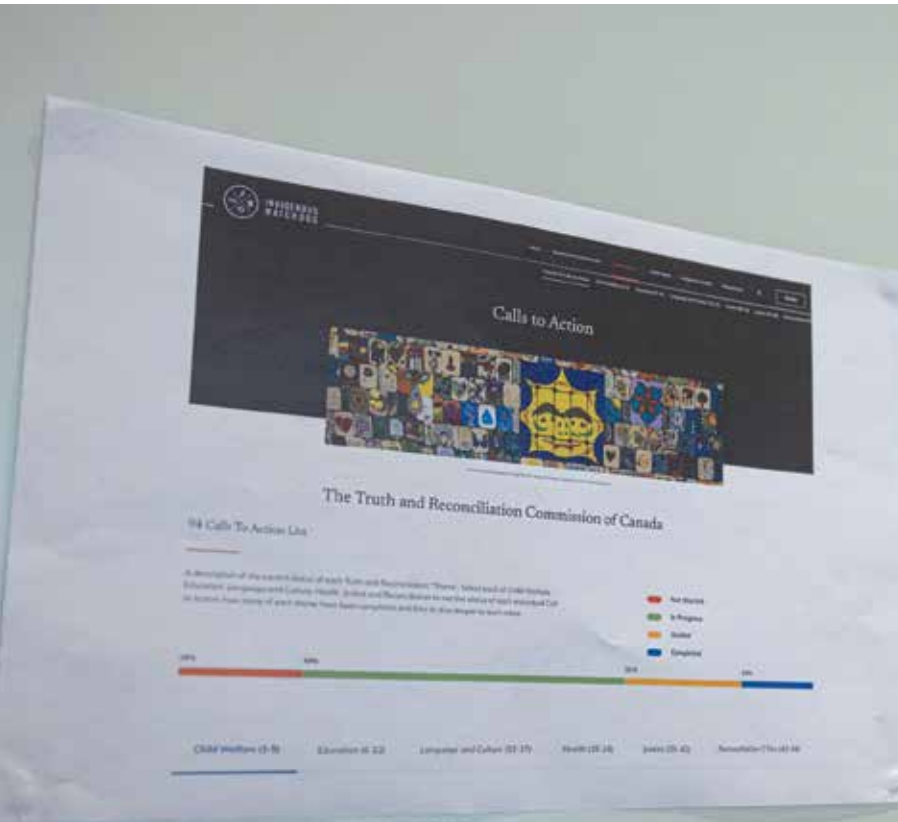
~ Visar Alimehaj

■ Read other stories shared at surreylibraries.ca/shared-stories

OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

Surrey Libraries is committed to Reconciliation and is working to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Through programming and other initiatives, we are working to build more meaningful connections between the Library, the Indigenous community, and the citizens of Surrey. Our aim is to grow understanding of the rich cultural fabric of the Indigenous history of these lands, to showcase Indigenous culture, and to also listen and learn from our Indigenous communities.



Surrey Libraries was honoured to be voted in as a member of the **Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee**.

The Library acknowledged National Indigenous People's Day by **featuring Indigenous resources and collections**, and participating in the City's National Indigenous People's Day event.



WE HIRED OUR FIRST EVER INDIGENOUS SERVICES COORDINATOR

to help develop deeper connections with our Indigenous community and to develop programs for them. Some of the highlights of the Indigenous Services Coordinator's work included:

- Established an **Indigenous Book Distribution initiative** for outreach visits.
- Initiated **Indigenous Public Art** project for City Centre branch.
- Created and signed a **partnership with Waceyá Métis Society**.
- Visited 14 organizations for **outreach**: Olive Branch, The Welcome Hub, Littles Place, Koomseh House, FRAFCA, Waceyá Metis Society, Métis Family Services, Phoenix Recovery Centre, Surrey Women's Shelter, Foxglove Shelter, Rosewood Housing, Kekinow Housing Society, Awahsuk Preschool, and the Surrey Food Bank.
- Reached out to **Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House**.
- Co-hosted a session with Skookum Surrey to **listen to Indigenous community's ideas** on updating our strategic plan.



WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

Our branches are vital community hubs, welcoming everyone from newborns to seniors.

We work to ensure individuals and families feel welcomed and can easily access library services. We offer multilingual services and materials to accommodate the diverse language needs of our community.

We work to provide our services to those with disabilities by offering accessibility services such as assistive technology and adaptive equipment. We host programs and events that celebrate diversity and promote cultural understanding.

WHAT YOU TOLD US



91%

Agree or Strongly Agree that Surrey Libraries is welcoming and inclusive



“Surrey Libraries has been a lifeline for me during my PhD studies. The library has provided me with everything I need to succeed, from books and articles to computers and study spaces. I love the fact that the library is free and open to everyone. It’s a place where people from all walks of life can come together to learn and grow. This is more than just a place to find books. It’s a community hub where people of all ages can come to learn, explore, and connect with others. The library is a place where I can be myself and pursue my interests without judgment.”

~ Frank Obi

Library Board members, Balbir Gurm and John Gillies welcomed the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable Anne Kang, and MLA Mike Starchuk for a tour of Cloverdale branch and the Family History department.

From left to right: Mike Starchuk, Anne Kang, Balbir Gurm, John Gillies



Thanks to the generosity of donors, Surrey Libraries was able to add many new play-to-learn items at our branches.



2023

LIBRARY BOARD

The Library Board is made up of community volunteers who are appointed by City Council. Its main responsibilities include setting strategic direction, developing policies, and financial oversight.



Dulce Amba Cuenca



Kiran Dhese



John Gillies



Dr. Balbir Gurm



Louise Hearty



Marilyn Herrmann



Pardeep Kooner



Darius Maze



Gordon Powell



Dupinder Kaur Saran



Rachel Smith



Tanveer Sohal



Lisa Werring



FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2023

REVENUES	
City of Surrey Transfers	22,094,789
Provincial & Federal Grants	2,898,050
Fees	403,631
Neighbourhood Development Contributions	100,000
Donations & Other	111,485
EXPENDITURES	
Human Resources	18,236,808
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	4,173,549
Branch Operations	2,527,980
Other	649,585

Library services cost

just **\$3.49**

per month per citizen*

*2023 expenses: \$25,587,922
divided by Surrey's population
based on City's planning
department projection for 2023
610,480 = \$41.91 per citizen/
year/12 = \$3.49

It is a peaceful, clean and organized place to sit and read. I believe reading connects us to our inner real self. I find my solace in the library and this is one of the most beautiful things about Canada that fills my heart with Hope and Joy.

~ Feedback from the Patron Satisfaction Survey


Full financial statements can be found at surreylibraries.ca/about-us

Participants in a SingAloud program for newcomers



TRACKING OUR PROGRESS

We welcomed **32,985** new library members in 2023, up from **25,921** in 2022.

 **27%**
New
Cardholders

THANK YOU

TO OUR GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

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CUPE 402 | Surrey City Workers
CUPE 402-02 | Surrey Library Workers
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FortisBC
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Gulf & Fraser
Hamber Foundation
Homelife Benchmark Realty Corp.

Imperial Hobbies
Khalsa Credit Union
Kidsbooks
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Microsoft Rewards | Give with Bing
Neena Deol Services Inc.
North Surrey Lions Club
OverDrive
PCI Developments
Prospera Credit Union
RBC Employees
Scott Road Productions (S1) Inc.
SSR Roof Supply Ltd.
Staples Professional
Surrey Fire Fighters' Charitable Society
Surrey International Writers' Conference
TELUS Employees
United Way
WBTV Canada Productions Services Inc.
Whitehots Inc.

THANK YOU

TO OUR DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

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Brenda Storey
Karen Thayer
Dianne Warner
Donald Weisner
John Wilson

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Shu-Yung Yang

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SILVER LEVEL DONORS (2–5 years of giving)

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Nancy Welsh
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Frances Wong
Misako Yoshizawa
Cindy Zaklan
Greyson Zhang
Helen Zhu

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Gurpreet Banwait
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