

**Western
Counties
Regional
Library**

Annual Report
April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

From Our Board



In *Palaces for the People*, author Eric Klinenberg suggests the future of democratic societies rests not simply on shared values but on shared spaces: the libraries, childcare centres, churches, and parks where crucial connections are formed.

We have our very own palaces right here in Southwestern Nova Scotia. Our library and administrative staff have been working diligently behind the scenes to provide ongoing services through a pandemic that has challenged and demanded flexibility of every single one of us.

Our libraries are publicly held, accessible spaces. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries have served on new frontiers never envisioned, supporting public health programs, such as providing COVID-19 rapid test kits and pulse oximeters, in addition to traditional services while adjusting to the reality of a pandemic.

As our citizens cautiously return to a nearly normal life, library in-person programming has returned and been strongly supported, as well as the renewal of other societal connections and community functions.

Despite the challenges faced by every organization, our libraries have pivoted, continuing to provide service and responding to community needs.

The library planned for a massive provincial initiative in partnership with seven other regional library systems to combine their individual catalogues and patron databases into one integrated library system to be launched in April 2022. Your Same Page library card awaits you, your passport to the world, as well as many other collaborative and community partnerships, unique to each community served by the library.

Western County Regional Library is here for you, to help you, and serve the community.

Yours in community,

Sherry Thorburn Irvine
Chair

From Our Executive Director

This year was yet another one of transition as we adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to support essential public health services.

As you read along, I encourage you to think about the people behind the stories and the services. Without them, none of what you read in this report would have been possible.

I am struck by how such a small team in 10 library branches and library headquarters spanning three counties was able to work together to overcome the many challenges brought on by the pandemic.

The team accomplished this while continuing to welcome new opportunities for library services in our region.



A message to Western Counties Regional Library staff

From the newest to the longest serving staff member: you did not skip a beat. Each one of you played a valuable part in ensuring that the needs of your patrons and the community were met.

For that, I thank you.

Erin Comeau
Executive Director

Library as Space & Place

“I was in receipt of this book via interlibrary services. I was most interested to see it came from Yarmouth library. My first book ever borrowed came from your library! I was eight years old and my aunt and I went to the library and got the whole basket full of books. We did this every two weeks. I think I read every book in the child’s section and then started on the adult ones. I was called a “bookworm.” I have been ever since.” — Jackie



11,810
Active Members



85,231
Items Borrowed



78,095 In-Person Visits
60,141 Virtual Visits

That’s 380 Per Day



42,727
Digital Loans



Library as Space & Place

Special Events & Programs

Fostering inclusion and understanding

Cultural Programming



Mi'kmaw Drum Beats
Mi'kmaq Stories with NS Museums
Mi'kmaq Cultural Heritage Curator
Roger Lewis
Got the Gaelic!
Ramadan-, Acadian Heritage-, Summer Solstice- and Winter Solstice-themed grab-&-go kits
The Maritime Centre for African Dance virtual workshop
Where to Start: Talking Systemic Racism with Emiliano Void

496

Children's & Adult Programs.*
Enjoyed by



5,865
People



* Includes passive programs such as Grab-&-Goes

Other Programs You Loved



Author readings, paint nights, science clubs, book clubs, fibre and needle craft clubs, story times, travel and historical presentations.



Justin Muise with his completed Ramadan lanterns from a Grab-&-Go kit.









Izaac Atwood and Jaylen Goodwin play a game of Shisima, a two-player abstract strategy game from Kenya created from a Grab-&-Go kit.

Branches by the Numbers

Barrington

1,163 Members
 414 Program Participants
 9,810 Visits
 7,292 Items Borrowed
 525 Computer Bookings
 6,965 Wireless Connection
Outreach & Book Deposits:
 Bay Side Home

Clare

 829 Members
 401 Program Participants
 5,233 Visits
 8,922 Items Borrowed
 537 Computer Bookings
 2,026 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
 Foyer Celeste









Participants create a reindeer ornament with a paper cup and other material in December.









Paint night programs such as this one on Oct. 7, 2021, proved very popular.

Clark's Harbour

 276 Members
 220 Program Participants
 3,659 Visits
 1,858 Items Borrowed
 106 Computer Bookings
 4,260 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
 Ready Set Learn Preschool
 Miss Bethany's Preschool Centre

Digby

 1,778 Members
 1,021 Program Participants
 10,861 Visits
 9,127 Items Borrowed
 638 Computer Bookings
 3,316 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
 Digby Preschool Co-Op

Lockeport



393 Members
441 Program Participants
3,224 Visits
5,855 Items Borrowed
407 Computer Bookings
2,463 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
The Fox and Hare Daycare

Pubnico



308 Members
93 Program Participants
2,910 Visits
1,785 Items Borrowed
92 Computer Bookings
1,710 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
Nakile Home for Special Care



Lockeport library staff got inventive with a curbside seed exchange program.



R.J. Muise placed second in the library's 2021 Summer Reading Club Trivia Challenge via Zoom taking home the card game Spot It!



Stocking up on reading material for the Christmas holidays at Shelburne library.

Shelburne









1,368 Members
1,080 Program Participants
8,656 Visits
12,634 Items Borrowed
1,145 Computer Bookings
3,971 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
Mary's Abide Awhile Home Limited
Roseway Manor Inc.

Westport



147 Members
116 Program Participants
1,516 Visits
1,474 Items Borrowed
7 Computer Bookings
647 Wireless Connections
Outreach & Book Deposits:
School Street Market in Freeport

Weymouth



 884 Members
 651 Program Participants
 6,589 Visits
 4,775 Items Borrowed
 372 Computer Bookings
 2,501 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:
Maison Jerome



Following Public Health protocols, Shelburne library clerk Debbie Perry reads a story as part of the library's Science Club program.

Yarmouth

 4,507 Members
 1,428 Program Participants
 25,172 Visits
 33,531 Items Borrowed
 3,254 Computer Bookings
 7,205 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:
12 local seniors residences



Printing from mobile devices became available at all 10 branches of the library in July 2021.



Participants create braided mats at Weymouth Waterfront Library on Sept. 14, 2021.



Yarmouth library clerk Carol Wing ran a regular arts and crafts programs in 2021-2022, including balloon painting in the library courtyard.

Working with the Community

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Western Counties Regional Library continued to work with community partners to enhance its services.

Supporting Public Health Programs

With help from municipal partners, library staff delivered thousands of COVID-19 rapid test kits on behalf of Nova Scotia Health to rural communities in the Tri-Counties.

Management staff distributed kits at pop-up sites in Freeport, Digby, St. Bernard, Saulnierville, Yarmouth, Pubnico, Barrington, Shelburne and Lockeport through late January, February and early March. In March, all library branches started distributing kits on site as restrictions eased and the library received a steady supply of kits.

The library continued to support the public health fight against COVID-19 by distributing free re-usable masks for adults and youth (provided by Nova Scotia Health), by printing and laminating people's proof of vaccination for free, and by acting as a drop-off site for pulse oximeters which measure blood oxygen levels.

Passive and Virtual Programs

In addition to a return of some in-person programming in early March, the library continued its successful passive and virtual programs such as grab-and-go kits, which comprised of themed creative activities neatly prepared for children and their caregivers to take home and enjoy; virtual story times, puppet shows, craft and science programs, workshops, author readings, seed exchanges and presentations by local and provincial sources on travel, history, gardening, and more.

The library branches in Clare, Digby and Weymouth hosted 15 in-person and virtual art exhibits in 2020-2021. Digby also put out a call for young artists which resulted in successful exhibits by artists as young as three years old.

Collaborative Programs and Community Partnerships

The library's partnership with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program enabled the library to offer free income tax return clinics, a well-used and important service for low-income earners, in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth

The library offered collaborative art projects (allowing community members to contribute pieces of art to a collective multi-media collage) at its Barrington and Pubnico branches and science/STEAM programs and clubs (some of these were in partnership with Dalhousie University's SuperNOVA and Ontario's Scientists in Schools) throughout the year.



Yvonne LeBlanc of the library management team hands out a COVID-19 rapid test kit.

Working with the Community

Supporting Writing, Literacy and Creativity

Shelburne library offered an apprenticeship and a journeyman writing workshop with E. Alex Pierce aimed at people who are either starting their manuscripts or facing writer's block as they work towards possible publication.

Several branches hosted local author readings throughout the year, including Bruce Bishop reading from his book *Uncommon Sons* and Marcia Pierce Harding reading from her book *Secrets of Sable Island*.

Supporting Healthy Communities and Development

Library projects and collections that encourage healthy living included the creation and promotion of multi-generational booklists related to physical and mental health, proper diet, exercise, and lifestyle.

The library partnered with TD Summer Reading Club and local municipalities to set-up story walks throughout the Tri-Counties that promoted literacy and exercise.

The Mid-Week Break programming at Yarmouth library included presentations on building a walipini, an in-ground greenhouse to provide year-round vegetables, the UNESCO designation of the region as a biosphere reserve.

Small Business Week

The Yarmouth library partnered with CBDC Yarmouth during Small Business Week, Oct. 17 to 23, by providing space in the library for CBDC to highlight its various supports and programs for small businesses and entrepreneurs.



Yarmouth library partnered with CBDC Yarmouth during Small Business Week.

Accessibility

The library completed its accessibility plan which is now available on the library website.

Refreshing & Reinventing



Connection



Learning



Create



Empower

Library launches new look, new website

On Monday, Jan. 17, Western Counties Regional Library launched a new look and website, part of a rebranding process after nearly 50 years with the same look.

District Design Co. was the creative team for the rebrand, and RockFort Media designed the new website.

The rebranding better reflects today's public libraries, what they stand for, and how they are used.



The library's new website blends in the vibrant colours of the library's new look with a user-friendly design.

The new look came after District Design did an extensive community survey to determine how the community viewed the library and what came to mind when people thought of the library.

The four dominant words coming out of the survey were connection, learning, create and empower.

District attached a symbol and a colour to each word and incorporated them into the new logo. The colour palette is a balance of warm and cool tones representing optimism, vibrancy, ocean and earth.

This was integrated into the new website which is vibrant, simple and user friendly.

The new website also incorporates coding and information to make it more accessible.

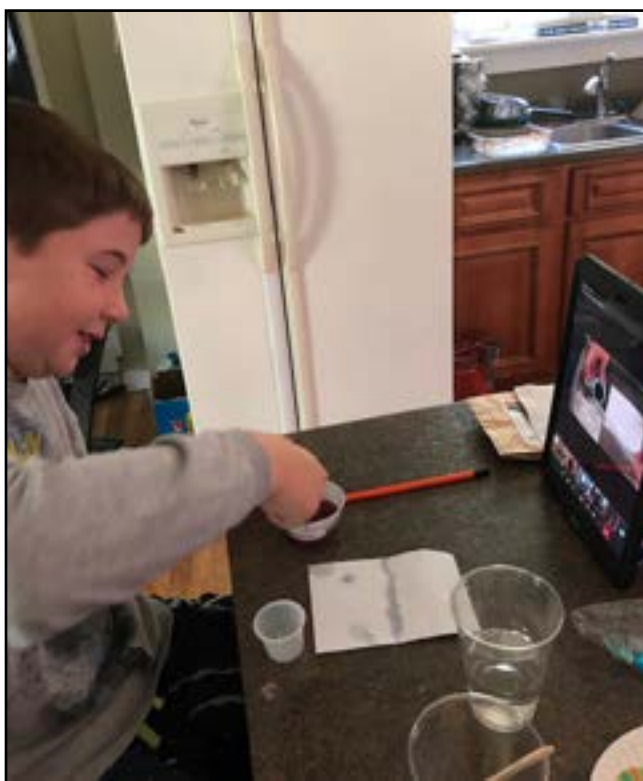
Library Support

The year was another challenging one because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses were supportive of the 2021 Summer Reading Club, providing prizes for the children's club for the first time in two years. No businesses were approached for prizes in 2020 because of the pandemic.

There was steady support by library donors which helped push the Literacy Legacy Fund well beyond the \$100,000 mark, allowing the library to use some of the interest generated by the fund to purchase new material in 2021.

REGIONAL LIBRARY FINANCES

Expenditures			Revenues		
	2020-2021	2021-2022		2020-2021	2021-2022
Salaries and Benefits	\$1,138,352	\$1,223,475	Province of Nova Scotia	\$1,360,500	\$1,360,500
Library Materials	\$ 200,176	\$ 190,517	Municipalities	\$ 373,500	\$ 400,013
Other Expenses	\$ 517,314	\$ 445,760	Other Revenues	\$ 121,842	\$ 99,239
Total Expenditures	\$1,855,842	\$1,859,752	Total Revenues	\$1,855,842	\$1,859,752



Roman Butler participates in the virtual Scientists in the School Investigate It! program in July 2021. Participants signed up for the program and then picked up their kit at their local library branch.



Staff demonstrated great flexibility and creativity throughout 2021-2022 by offering a variety of in-person and virtual programs to navigate pandemic-related health guidelines. Above, children and caregivers enjoy an in-person puppet show at Lillian B. Benham Library in Lockport in November 2021.