



whatcom county
library system

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Whatcom County Library System
January 16, 2024

Via Teams and Administrative Services
5205 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

WCLS Vision: *An engaged community where curiosity is cultivated, literacy flourishes and democratic ideals thrive.*

1. 9:00 a.m. **Call to Order.** Quorum determined. Land Acknowledgement.
We are on the ancestral territory of the Lummi and Nooksack people. They are the original inhabitants of this place. They are fishers, hunters, gatherers and harvesters of nature's abundance, and have been so since time immemorial. We are neighbors and friends, and we are grateful for our numerous opportunities to learn, live and grow together, building lasting relationships so that all may prosper.

2. 9:05 a.m. **Open Public Comment Opportunity**
This period is set aside for persons wishing to address the Board. Each person may have up to three minutes for this purpose. Written comments may be submitted to rheannan.pfnister@wcls.org prior to the meeting.

3. 9:10 a.m. **Service Anniversary Recognition – Jake Johnson**

4. 9:15 a.m. **Consent Agenda**
 - a. Meeting Minutes
 - b. Expenditures

5. 9:20 a.m. **Financial Report and Resolutions**
 - a. Finance Committee Report

6. 9:25 a.m. **Review of 2023 Incident Reports**

7. 9:45 a.m. **Policy Updates**
 - a. Communications Policy

8. 10:00 a.m. **Staff Reports**
 - a. Executive Director
 - b. Deputy Director
 - c. Youth Services Manager
 - d. Community Relations Manager

9. 10:20 a.m. **BREAK**

10. 10:45 a.m. **Agreement Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System**

(continued on next page)

Board of Trustees Meetings are open to the public in accordance with RCW 42.30. The Board is currently holding meetings with options for in-person or remote participation. Persons wishing to be provided with an internet link or telephone number to access the meeting are asked to please email Rheannan.Pfnister@wcls.org before 4:00 p.m. Monday, January 15, 2024. Written comments may be submitted to Rheannan.Pfnister@wcls.org prior to the meeting.

11. 10:55 a.m. **Performance Measures and Committee Reports**
 - a. Performance Measures
 - b. IT Services Committee
 - c. Personnel Committee
 - d. Whatcom County Library Foundation
12. 11:05 a.m. **WA State Auditor’s Office Entrance Conference**
13. 11:25 a.m. **Trustee Recognition**
14. 11:35 a.m. **Announcements and Adjourn**
 - a. IT Services Committee Meeting 1/25 at 10:00 a.m., Administrative Services

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Board Meeting Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Meeting Date:	1/16/2024
Committee or Department:	Administration Department
Subject:	Consent Agenda – Board Meeting Minutes, Monthly Expenditures
Prepared By:	Jackie Saul
Impact upon Budget?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Supporting Documents:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Recommendation or Request: Approval of consent agenda items

Suggested Motion for Consideration: Move approval of consent agenda items as presented

Summary:

Meeting Minutes:

- December 19, 2023 Regular Board Meeting

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- November 16-30, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036724673- 1036724675 and voucher nos. 557123-557271 totaling \$214,933.48 and December 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036896920-1036896921 and voucher nos. 557278-557428 totaling \$ 223,065.15.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$96,898.37; \$36,793.84 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, state paid family medical leave and long-term care fund premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-47G: warrant nos. 1181157-1181166 totaling \$6,064.82
- Claim 2023-48G: warrant nos. 1181334-1181357 totaling \$247,546.62
- Claim 2023-49G: warrant nos. 1181586-1181605 totaling \$44,692.74
- Claim 2023-50G: warrant nos. 1182370-1182395 totaling \$119,022.93

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-24C: warrant nos. 1182633-1182634 totaling \$3,444.52

Alternatives: N/A

Fiscal Impact: Expenditures for approval paid from available 2023 budgeted funds.

Comments: The Finance Committee has reviewed the General and Capital Fund claims listed above. They reviewed that there were 5 General Journal entries in December.



UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

December 19, 2023

Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Microsoft Teams and in-person attendance at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

In Attendance

Trustees: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Matthew Santos. Absent: Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Holly Robinson.

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Ryan Cullup, Facilities Services Manager; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Katrina Carabba, Deming Library Branch Manager; Erin Suda, Deming Library Public Services Assistant; Rheannan Pfnister, Lynden Library Clerk; Ruth Nail, Minutes Recorder.

Guests: FOBBL Board of Directors Members Brian Bell and Ruth Higgins.

Call to Order

Rodney determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

On the behalf of Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL), FOBBL President Dianne Marrs-Smith presented a \$40,000 check to the WCLS trustees as a contribution toward the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express (BBX) project costs. She expressed gratitude to Michael for being the project manager and Ryan for his facilities input this year.

Christine expressed appreciation to the Whatcom County Council for granting WCLS \$315,000 of pass-through ARPA funds for the project. Christine thanked Dianne, Brian Bell, Ruth Higgins and FOBBL for their persistence in communicating with the County Council and Executive Sidhu. She extended kudos to FOBBL's Doralee Booth, who spoke directly with Councilmember Kaylee Galloway to secure this additional funding for the BBX project. Dianne added thanks to Sen. Sharon Shewmake, who introduced Dianne and Doralee to Kaylee. This grant is a culmination of years of many people working together for the common goal of securing a library for the Birch Bay community.

Dianne invited the trustees to join in a photo opportunity with the County Council, Executive Sidhu and FOBBL members after the January 16 board meeting. Michael confirmed availability with the BBX Design team.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The Board recognized Erin Suda, Deming Library Public Services Assistant for her 20-year service anniversary. Katrina introduced Erin and commended Erin's superstar customer service, which is based in empathy and compassion. Katrina highlighted Erin's continuing work collecting, digitizing, and uploading collections of local historical photos to the [Washington Rural Heritage](#) website, headquartered at the Washington State Library. In addition to her archival work, Erin enjoys cultivating local poets throughout the community and organizing programs and events, including co-hosting three Whatcom READS author interviews.

Thanking Katrina for her incredible support as a manager, Erin shared some moments in her journey with WCLS and the Deming Library. Erin expressed her gratitude for being able to do work that is so fulfilling.

Christine noted Erin's ease in exchanging skills and information with other library staff and professionals, attending library conferences to share presentations and facilitating conversations with authors.

Rod spoke of his many opportunities to chat with Erin at the Deming Library and experience her stellar customer service.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 21, 2023, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- October 16-31, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036320851-1036320855 and voucher nos. 556809-556956 totaling \$229,347.21 and November 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036507380-1036507383 and voucher nos. 556964-557116 totaling \$225,846.69.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$219,303.52; \$116,887.86 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, state paid family medical leave and long-term care fund premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-43G: warrant nos. 1179807-1179824 totaling \$112,077.16
- Claim 2023-44G: warrant nos. 1179852-1179883 totaling \$46,711.10
- Claim 2023-45G: warrant nos. 1180387-1180408 totaling \$22,089.34
- Claim 2023-46G: warrant nos. 1180684-1180713 totaling \$152,536.88

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-21C: warrant nos. 1179836-1179838 totaling \$1,861.69
- Claim 2023-22C: warrant no. 1179884 totaling \$9,360.00
- Claim 2023-23C: warrant no. 1180714 totaling \$981.80

Rod moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report and Resolutions

Jackie reviewed her report, including the November Notes and Highlights section. She reported that we have collected most of our annual levy but are behind on intergovernmental revenue, such as local grants and entitlements. Jackie noted that our collection materials spending is currently at 85% and is expected to end the year close to budget.

Jackie reported that our biennial audit begins in early January. The team from the State Auditor's Office offers an audit entrance conference for the Board prior to the onset of the audit, and Jackie asked the trustees if they wished to accept that invitation in January. The trustees answered affirmatively.

Jackie reported that the 2024 preliminary budget has been approved by Whatcom County Council and our levy is set for next year. She reviewed the 2024 Final General and Capital Fund Budgets, highlighting what has been updated since the Preliminary General and Capital Budgets were presented at the November 21 regular meeting and public hearing. Jackie recapped the updates made to the Preliminary 5-year Capital Plan for 2024-2028, following last month's meeting. The roughly \$625,000 deficit in the General Fund Budget and need to begin planning for a levy lid lift were briefly discussed. There were no further questions.

Jackie presented Resolution 12/19/23-13 Adopting the 2024 General and Capital Fund Budgets and Resolution 12/19/23-14 Adopting the 2024-2028 Capital Plan.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 12/19/23-13 Adopting the 2024 General and Capital Fund Budgets, as presented. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Matthew moved approval of Resolution 12/19/23-14 Adopting the 2024-2028 Capital Plan. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Executive Session to Discuss the Executive Director's Annual Review per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)

At 9:40 a.m., Board Chair Rod Lofdahl moved the meeting to Executive Session, as per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to discuss the Executive Director's annual performance review. He announced that the Executive Session would end at 10:00 a.m.

At 10:00 a.m., Rod briefly reconvened Open Session to announce the Executive Session would be extended until 10:05 a.m.

At 10:05 a.m., Rod reconvened Open Session.

Executive Director's Annual Performance Review

Rod reported that the Board has completed the Executive Director's 2023 annual performance review and provided recommendations for her 2024 leadership goals, as well as approved a 3.2% COLA and a 2% performance increase in the Executive Director's annual salary. It was noted that the Personnel Committee had discussed these items at the November board meeting with trustees Erika and Holly, who were absent from today's meeting.

Matthew moved to approve the Executive Director's 2023 annual performance evaluation and salary increase as discussed during today's Executive Session. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

BREAK

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:10-10:15 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine expressed appreciation to our Facilities Services Manager, Ryan Cullup, especially for the emergency support required lately at the North Fork Library due to water pipe issues. Fortunately, WCLS had assumed ownership of that facility a few years ago from the Friends of the North Fork Library (FONFL), because WCLS is better positioned to provide the funding and expertise for this repair.

Christine highlighted two new additions to our Library of Things, non-book items that can be checked out by library patrons. She thanked Thom for donating picture book illustrations that have been framed for display and thanked Lisa for her generosity in sewing the custom bags to protect these items during transportation. Christine noted that ukeles also joined our collection this month, a novel expansion in the items available to check out from WCLS.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that we are in the Request for Qualification process for an architectural design firm for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express. After a recent site visit, at least three design firms have indicated their intent to apply. There is an upcoming Q&A session and investigation period for the BBX Design Team, with plans to present a design firm recommendation at the February board meeting.

Michael added some insights into the annual tabulation of reference questions and congratulated Mariya Farmagey on her new position as Branch Manager there. Mariya, who is fluent in Ukrainian and Russian, has worked at the North Fork Library for 18 years and was ready to transition into a leadership role at the branch.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted booklists for three segmented youth categories. He noted that BiblioCommons is a great tool for making lists, and the Youth Services team has made these lists easier to find and more searchable. The team is able to introduce themselves through their staff shelf. In addition to staff shelves, these booklists are displayed in calendar entries for the programs, expanding opportunities for patron interface. Thom noted that previously the team often started with a program and built booklists around it. Now, they can curate booklists and build programs around them.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary presented her written report and invited the group to read the embedded media links and listen to the latest WCLS podcasts. Mary encouraged everyone to read [Red Paint: The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk](#), the selection for Whatcom READS' 16th season, if they have not already done so.

Mary offered gratitude to the Friends of the Library groups and thanked the members of FOBBL for their extensive fundraising work. She shared a photo from the farewell celebration of Friends of Ferndale Library's Norine Amend. With so many people there—friends, community members, a former mayor-- and coverage by *The Ferndale Record* newspaper—the event highlighted the difference a person can make in a community and in the library. Christine added that Norine's husband was a WCLS Trustee, and that the artwork featured in the photo that Mary shared was created by Ferndale Library Clerk Catherine Watson.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that our physical collection size has remained within a designated target window, constantly in flux and staying fresh, as we add and prune items. While we have seen a downward trend in physical DVD and CD circulation, increases in electronic circulation offset these reductions. Michael reviewed door counts, highlighting the high-water mark of 2019 and noting that South Whatcom Library has exceeded their 2019 count. In January, the statistics will reflect 2023's full year of activity and he asked trustees if they wished to retain the 2019 column going forward.

This year's new borrowers started off slow in the first half of the year but are coming back strong in the second half. Michael reported that he had to go back to June of 2018 to find any number as high as the 611 registered in November 2023. Volunteer hours and program and activities attendance are strong.

Michael referred to Lisa’s digital and database usage report for a deeper dive into statistics on our online resources. Christine noted that Lisa is not joining us today because she and other Collection Services team members are covering for each other while a couple of their team members are out on parental leave.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

On behalf of the Personnel Committee, Rod reported that the committee has met with several trustee candidates and is making recommendations for two candidates. One candidate will fill the position being vacated by Vice Chair Lori Jump, whose second term expires January 31, 2024. The second candidate will assume the remainder of Secretary Erika Lautenbach’s term, allowing her to step away from this commitment.

Rod recapped the two candidates’ background and experience. The trustees briefly discussed which candidate would likely fill each of the positions being vacated by exiting trustees Jump and Lautenbach.

Rod moved approval of the two recommendations for trustee candidates. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

It was requested that Christine forward these recommendations to County Executive Sidhu. Both positions would start in February if approved by the County Executive and Council.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jenn shared the Foundation had two positions open and had two candidates apply. They will join the January meeting, awaiting the vote to accept their applications. Jenn is working on closing fiscal year 2023 and is encouraged by year-end contributions still being received.

Announcements and Adjourn

All Staff Learning Day is scheduled for Friday, March 8, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Trustees are encouraged to attend all or part of the event. This year, it will again be held at Cornwall Church on Northwest Drive. Registration deadline is January 3, 2024. Attendees may register using this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ASLD2024>.

Christine shared management absences and coverage for the holidays. The group recalled the treacherous snowy and icy weather for last year’s December board meeting and hoped for clear conditions this winter.

Rod adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be January 16, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services. Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham.

Rodney Lofdahl, Board Chair	01/16/2024 Date	Ruth Nail, Minutes Recorder
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2023 Tax Collections

Although fiscal year 2023 is not yet closed, initial reports from the County Treasurer’s Office indicate that we collected \$9,827,509 in property tax revenue in 2023, which is approximately \$166,588 more than our 2023 levy and \$66,412 shy of our budgeted revenue.

We added \$230,000 to the property tax revenue budget in October 2023, after receiving an additional amount in July. At the time this additional amount was anticipated to be in abatement for 2024. I will confirm the refund and abatement amounts with the County Assessor’s Office and amend the 2024 budget accordingly.

Pending 2024 Budget Amendment

Each February the annual budget is amended to reflect the prior year’s final ending fund balance and current year’s beginning balance. This year’s amendment will also include revenue and expenses budgeted for 2023 that will carry forward into 2024 and the property tax adjustment mentioned above.

2023 Debt Write-Off

In accordance with policy 20.13 Write-off of Uncollectable Debts, a summary of debts written off in 2023 is provided below.

2023 Debt Write Off	
\$ 50,031.76	Removal of debt older than six years
\$ 195.58	ConnectEd accounts cleared annually
\$ 246.90	Deceased patron accounts cleared
\$ 50,474.24	Total

2023 Small Works Awards

In accordance with Purchasing and Contracting Policy 20.04, a list of public works contracts awarded under the Small Works Roster Process is provided to the Board of Trustees annually.

2023 Small Works Awards			
Contractor	Amount	Date	Project Description
Scott Electric	\$84,598.51	1/30/23	Deming Library Lighting retrofit



2023 Incident Report Summary
January 16, 2024

- Total of 70 incidents reported in 2023, up from 57 in 2022 and 43 in 2021. Pre-pandemic, there were 56 incidents reported in 2019 and 47 reported in 2018.
- Most incidents occurred at Ferndale (46), Lynden (8) and Everson (6). All other locations had 2 or fewer incidents.
- Most recurring incidents were graffiti/damage to buildings not owned by WCLS (19), other/trespassed patrons in the library (11), disruptive behavior (10) and patron accident/injury/illness (10).
- Twelve suspensions and two trespasses were issued in 2023, all of which were related to recurring graffiti and disruptive behavior incidents at Ferndale.

	AS	BB	BL	DE	EV	FE	LY	MS	NF	SW	SU	Total
Staff Injury or Illness	1							1				2
Vehicle Accident												0
Damage/Theft of Patron Property						1	1					2
Damage/Theft of WCLS Property	1	1			1	2						5
Disruptive Behavior					1	8	1					10
Graffiti/Damage to Building Not Owned by WCLS					2	15	2					19
Harassment/Threat to Individual						3						3
Harassment/Threat to Staff			1									1
Minor Left After Closing				1								1
Patron Accident/Injury/Illness					1	4	4		1			10
Suspicious Activity/Object			1		1	1						3
Other (see detail below)						12				1	1	14
Total	2	1	2	1	6	46	8	1	1	1	1	70

No incidents were reported at Island or Point Roberts Libraries

Other	FE	SW	SU
Suspended/Trespassed Patron in the Library	11		
False Fire Alarm	1		1
Fire Alarm/Smoke in the Building		1	



Board Meeting Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Meeting Date:	1/16/2024
Committee or Department:	Community Relations
Subject:	Public Communication Policy 12.57
Prepared By:	Mary Vermillion
Impact upon Budget?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Supporting Documents:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Recommendation or Request: Approval of Public Communication Policy 12.57

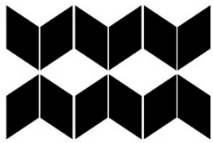
Suggested Motion for Consideration: Move approval of Public Communication Policy 12.57 as presented.

Summary: Whatcom County Library System is committed to transparent and consistent external communication regarding resources and services it provides to the community and the importance of intellectual freedom. The objective of this policy is to ensure WCLS external communications are accurate, thorough, timely and representative of the library system's brand.

Alternatives: N/A

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Comments: The policy has been reviewed by WCLS's leadership team, diversity committee and marketing committee.



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PUBLIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY NUMBER: 12.57

SCOPE: This policy applies to all WCLS employees, Trustees and Friends of the Library.

Whatcom County Library System is committed to transparent and consistent external communication regarding resources and services it provides to the community and the importance of intellectual freedom. The Executive Director designates specific WCLS staff to create and manage effective public communication with a high degree of professionalism. The objective of this policy is to ensure WCLS external communications are accurate, thorough, timely and representative of the library system's brand. Staff who manage public communication preserve the organization's reputation while increasing awareness of the value of public libraries.

Definitions

- **Communication:** the act or process of providing or exchanging thoughts, opinions or information through various written, spoken, visual or other collaborative forms.
- **Public:** the people who constitute a community.
- **Internal communications:** material that is internal to the organization for operational purposes, such as operational planning, marketing plans, technology plans, personnel documents, etc., especially draft documents, which staff are not authorized to communicate without prior approval.
- **Communication channels:** WCLS uses a variety of communication channels, including written materials, email, online content, videos, podcasts, advertising, and in-person or online presentations.

Public Audience

- WCLS communicates and collaborates with individuals and groups of people living in its service area, as well as those who influence or support people in its service area.
- WCLS communicates and collaborates with people who use or who may use its services, as well as individuals who have an opportunity to support the use of library services.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Community Relations Manager establishes an annual communication plan to be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director and the Marketing Committee. The Community Relations Department executes this plan and is responsible for the coordination and release of information to the public. To develop the communication plan and materials, the Community Relations Manager solicits advice and opinions from the WCLS Marketing Committee, Friends of the Library groups, the Whatcom County Library Foundation, WCLS staff, and people living in the communities it serves.

The Community Relations Manager, Executive Director and Deputy Director (or their designees) serve as primary media contacts for WCLS. Generally, other staff, trustees and Friends of the Library must refer all media inquiries to one of these point people. Following review of Procedure 12.57.01 and completion of affiliated training, staff members, trustees and Friends representatives may communicate with the media as described in the procedure and training. See Procedure 12.57.01 for details.

WCLS values local journalism and our partnerships with local media as a channel to keep our community informed about library news. We respond to queries on a timely basis and to the best of our abilities provide information on or before a reporter's stated deadline.

The Community Relations Manager and the Executive Director determine whether WCLS will reply to specific public comments regarding library services or intellectual freedom that may appear in traditional or social media or other public forums. This deliberation is guided by considerations such as the scope and visibility of the public comments, the need to correct inaccuracies, whether a response would amplify a negative message or prolong its duration, and the potential for further harm to WCLS.

The Community Relations Manager and the Executive Director determine if WCLS will make statements not directly related to promoting WCLS resources and services or intellectual freedom. Generally, WCLS public communications focus on WCLS business or on topics related to public libraries and the communities we serve. WCLS may amplify messages from other local organizations to pass along information about events or services available to Whatcom County residents.

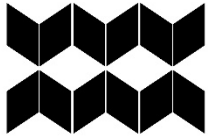
WCLS staff at all levels, members of the Board of Trustees and Friends of the Library groups may interact one-on-one with the public. All are expected to communicate with professionalism and courtesy and may not release internal communications to the public without prior authorization from the Executive Director.

WCLS staff not authorized to communicate broadly to the public on behalf of WCLS should avoid identifying themselves as a WCLS employee in public statements or must clearly state they are speaking in their personal capacity and not in their official capacity as a WCLS employee. Use of personal social media to conduct WCLS business can trigger application of the Public Records Act and other laws. Staff should refer to Social Networking and Social Media Policy 12.09. Further, staff must follow Political Activities and Expression by WCLS Employees and Trustees Policy 12.31.

WCLS's external social media and other public information channels are intended for authorized WCLS communications to the public. Staff should use internal communication resources for internal questions, concerns or other communication.

RELATED POLICIES: Mission, Vision and Values 1.01; Social Networking and Social Media Policy; 12.09; Social Networking Procedure 12.09.01; Political Activities and Expression by WCLS Employees and Trustees 12.31; Posting, Petitions and Exhibits Policy, 7.04; Meeting Rooms and Facilities Use Policy, 7.03.

ADOPTED by the Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees January 16, 2024.



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Executive Director's Report

January 2024

COMMUNITY

On January 11, Human Resources Manager Beth Andrews and I collaborated on our first Branch Manager Deep Dive Discussion, which focused on building workplace culture. We'll be meeting every other month throughout the year to give our Public Services leaders a chance to dig into broad topics, share best practices, and learn together.

ACCESS

Bookmobile staff received a sweet card from a regular patron: "Thanks to all the Library Truck Drivers and all Library employees. My life would be so boring and lonely without the terrific job all of you do." Our Bookmobile team (Greta Haas, Rika Lee Reuble, and Candice Munson) deliver a valuable service to corners of the county that have limited access to one of our branch libraries: Glenhaven, Wickersham, Lake Samish and Birch Bay.

RESOURCES

Collection Services Manager Lisa Gresham noticed that our colleagues at Bellingham Public Library recently added UV light therapy lamps to the collection and there are already 182 holds on 23 lamps! We will be purchasing more for our Library of Things since these are obviously in high demand. [According to the Mayo Clinic](#) and other medical experts, Seasonal Affective Disorder is real, and light therapy can help.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mary Vermillion and I met with our Diversity Advisory Committee recently to review our Diversity Committee Procedures and Public Communication Policy. We'll discuss the policy at today's meeting.

STEWARDSHIP

When it rains...the Friends of Birch Bay Library and WCLS recently received word from Whatcom Community Foundation that an anonymous donor has come forward with \$100,000 in unrestricted funds to be used on the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express project! We are grateful to the folks at WCF for facilitating this gift, and to our anonymous donors for their generosity and interest in this project.

Christine Perkins, Executive Director

A library of the ‘future’: Can it make the world a better place?

Each year from 2014 to 2114, a manuscript is sealed in the Silent Room of Norway’s ‘Future Library’. The goal: Greater hope for humankind.



Anne Beate Hovind, chairwoman of the Future Library Trust, stands in the The Silent Room of Norway's public library, the Deichman Bjorvika [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

By **Anna Pivovarchuk**

Published On 31 Dec 2023 31 Dec 2023

Oslo, Norway — Every May, literature lovers from all over the world walk 40 minutes through the hilly Nordmarka Forest outside of Norway’s capital Oslo and stop at a place where 1,000 Norwegian spruce, planted in 2014, are slowly growing. Here, the foresters make coffee on a fire and people gather around as a writer hands over a manuscript that will not be read until 2114.

This is the site of the Future Library, a century-long project conceived by Scottish artist Katie Paterson.

The vision is to get 100 carefully chosen authors to submit a manuscript each, one a year, and safeguard the works, unread, for a century, when they will be unsealed and published as a testament to the passage of time, mankind’s endurance and the hope that was imbued in the project by the generations that came before.

The manuscripts are sealed inside the “Silent Room” at the city’s spectacular public library, the Deichman Bjorvika. Designed by artists and architects Atelier Oslo and Lund Hagem alongside Paterson, the Silent Room is hidden away on Deichman’s top floor, where Norway’s oldest book is being kept similarly safe from a possible flood.

One hundred layers – one for each year and author – line the undulating walls of the Silent Room, folding on top of each other in soft, asymmetric curves from floor to ceiling. They resemble tree rings and are made from the wood of older trees that have been felled to make

space for the Future Library forest – a process of continuous regeneration carried out as part of the maintenance of the managed forests around the city.

The works can be any length, in any language and style, but all we will know of them, in our lifetime, is the title. There is little danger of a sneak-peak: Each manuscript is encased in a steel box embedded deep within a “tree ring” and hidden behind a glass panel emanating a soft but bright light. It reveals nothing but the author’s name, alongside their year, and is secured by an alarm.

Together, these works will create a literary time capsule of each passing year, with future generations – so is the hope – taking over the project’s legacy.

The Silent Room has a temple-like calm. No shoes are allowed inside and the room’s soft smell of wood serves as an umbilical cord to the forest outside that will help bring the books to life – today’s saplings that will provide the paper for about 3,000 copies of the anthology.

Planted on a slope surrounded by the verdant forest, these young trees form a living amphitheatre around the wooden bench where the handover ceremonies take place. The trees, lit by a soft October sunshine on our visit, look like an audience. It is hard to shake the feeling that they are watching. “But they are!” Anne Beate Hovind, the chairwoman of the Future Library Trust, exclaims.



A signpost in Norway’s Nordmarka Forest directs the way to the Future Library. The official agreement for the Future Library forest was signed in May 2022 [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

A 100-year plan

The idea of the Future Library came to Paterson on a train journey while she was drawing tree rings on a napkin. Paterson, who has recently unveiled an interactive installation at Apple’s HQ, is known for artworks that challenge our perceptions and ideas of fundamental principles around us, like time, space and our place in them. She has [mapped](#) all of the dead stars, outfitted a grand piano to [play](#) a Morse-coded version of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata, bounced off the surface of the moon and set up a direct phone line to a melting iceberg. It was never going to stop at tree rings.

Paterson became fascinated with the notion of [deep time](#) in the primordial landscapes of Iceland’s far north where she took on a job as a chambermaid after completing her art degree. She’s since dedicated her career to exploring the profound connection she senses between humans and the planet.

It has fostered her love of forests and their sense of timelessness, with trees carrying the memory of an era long before ours. “Books are trees, libraries are forests,” Paterson explains. “Every book you pick up has its origin in a tree somewhere – it was alive.”

“It’s actually the shortest time span of all my work. It’s only 100 years,” Paterson laughs, as she speaks of the project over a video call from her home in Fife, Scotland.

As the Future Library is about to enter its 10th year, Paterson says the biggest change in the way the project is perceived has been the shift in perspective towards climate and ecology. At the start, she was mostly queried about the physicality of the book and whether books will still exist in 100 years. Now, she says, the questions are turning to the extinction crisis and whether there will be anyone left to read the books.

“It’s just horrendous to watch and learn about new oil fields and ... the profits going up, still, which is just unthinkable,” Paterson says, frustrated. It’s totally depressing, she admits. But, on the other hand, she sees that change is happening.

“I guess artists have always, always responded to that particular moment in time, whatever it might be. And now, this is absolutely our moment,” she insists.



Manuscripts are slotted into the walls of the Silent Room. There are one hundred layers – one for each year and author — resembling the rings of a tree [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

Leap of faith

With the climate catastrophe and the trajectory of our species at the core of the Future Library project, words like “trust,” “hope” and “optimism” come up incessantly in discussions around the project.

It was “such a leap of faith”, Paterson admits – one that found a soft landing in the capable hands of Hovind, who is also the project’s producer.

Hovind initially met Paterson in 2011, in her role as art director in charge of commissioning public artworks at the development firm Bjorvika Utvikling, which was behind the now-iconic rejuvenation of the Oslo waterfront and originally commissioned the Future Library.

Given Hovind’s CV, it may be surprising to find her laughing, rubber gloves on and trowel in hand, scraping gum off the Silent Room floor after she had spent a good hour explaining the project to curious visitors: “Commitment. ... Oh my god, life! This is why it’s succeeded, you know. I know what it takes.”

“I thought, OK, the forest. How do I get a forest?” Hovind recalls the early conversations about the Future Library with Paterson. To sell the out-of-the-box idea to the funders, Hovind started with concrete practicalities. First, in 2013, she brought the concept of dedicating a suitable area to the initiative to the director of forestry for Oslo’s municipality – it had been buying forest land around the city since 1889 as protection against urban expansion. To her surprise, he met the proposal with a “Why not?”

Having secured the space, Hovind waited until the project felt viable before asking for a 100-year contract. The official agreement for the Future Library forest was signed in May 2022; by then, the saplings had also physically taken root.

Then there was the tricky question of persuading writers to commit to a piece of work that will not be published in their lifetime. Hovind admits she was unsure whether authors would even want to be part of another artist’s project. “We didn’t know anything about the literature field. So we were like, what’s gonna happen?” she says.

Paterson and Hovind reached out to Margaret Atwood, an award-winning author and the closest the world may have to an oracle, known for getting the future eerily right. Indeed, Atwood may as well have been looking into a crystal ball when, in a 2010 essay, *Literature and the Environment*, she asked: “Will we ourselves soon be a lost civilization? Will our own books and stories ultimately become time capsules for some future archaeologist or space explorer? ... Should we all put our novels into lead-lined boxes and bury them in a hole in the backyard?”

Paterson says Atwood was a natural fit to the Future Library’s themes of time and imagination and she was taken with the idea that whatever Atwood wrote might have materialised by the time the project concludes.

Atwood said yes almost immediately, becoming the Future Library’s first inductee, to Hovind and Paterson’s excitement – and tears of relief.

Since Atwood handed over her manuscript, *Scribbler Moon*, in May 2014, the project has grown organically. It feels, Paterson says, like a big family tree.

Now more authors, far from being sceptical, hope to be invited to participate. Hovind, for instance, was unsure about whether Karl Ove Knausgard, a famous Norwegian author, would be interested in the project. To her surprise, he told her that he always wanted to be

part of it and never thought he would be asked, she recalls. And it's not just authors who are increasingly drawn to the project. Norway's [crown princess](#) joined other literature fans at the manuscript ceremony in the forest last year.

The seven-member trust, which includes Hovind and Paterson as well as publishers from Norway and the United Kingdom, and a US museum director, considers writers based on their contributions to literature and poetry. The selection process itself is based on serendipity and gut feeling. Unlike book prizes, there is no initial shortlist or goal to pick the "best". The trust pays attention to the discussion around the authors' work and aims for a truly global representation.

The project also receives unsolicited nominations from around the world, which the trust relies on to discover new writers, whose work is evaluated for its ability to capture the imaginations of current and future generations.



There's a temple-like calm within the soft, circular walls of the Silent Room [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

Tree children

"You see these little trees and they look like children," says Ocean Vuong, a New York Times best-selling poet and novelist who is the Future Library's seventh contributor. "We often think of trees as these foreboding, old ... rings of knowledge ... But then it's such a shock, I think, a very fruitful shock, to see a tree that's just a sapling. And your heart breaks for it, you know, and you think, My goodness, what, what are you going to see? I hope you see the best of us," he tells Al Jazeera over a call from his home in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Vuong, who splits his time between Northampton and New York, where he is a tenured professor of literature at NYU, came to the US from Vietnam as a child and has grown up in a busy intergenerational household. At 35, Vuong is the Future Library's youngest author to date.

"We need everyone at the table. We need everyone's perspective," he insists. While he may be of the last generation to cross from analogue into digital – he got his first iPhone when he was 23 – he finds himself surprised at how young people have mobilised in the digital age: "My generation certainly did not talk about the pressing matters of the world the same way my students now talk about it."

He is cautiously optimistic about this new trajectory.

“I’m really interested in seeing what are the material manifestations of the awareness coming from young people in their 20s now using technology as a way to create their own epistemological traditions.”

For Vuong, the Future Library feels very much like the family he grew up in, and hopes that even younger people will continue to join the project. The stillness and the sense of hope among those attending the handover ceremony were very emotional for him.

“Very rarely, if at all, am I concerned that I would make a tree proud,” he laughs softly. “But that’s what I felt. I said, ‘Oh, my goodness, I hope these trees will be proud of me for using them to print my work’, you know.”

Sacred places

Zimbabwean novelist and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga, winner of the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Nervous Conditions, who joined the Future Library in 2021, thinks the project’s success lies in its connection to something fundamental and archetypal within us.

“We are not holding the Earth’s produce sacred,” she says over a call from her home in Harare. “We are only holding ourselves and our desires and cognitions sacred, forgetting that the whole system that we live in is sacred. And so I think that this forest is actually a sacred forest. And I think as it grows and people visit it, they will be touched by the spirit of it.”

Dangarembga – who was born in what was then colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and had witnessed her country transition from the oppression of white-majority rule to the hope of independence, and then begin to sink yet again, this time under homegrown repression – is critical of the systems of power in place.

What is often referred to as “modernity” is, for her, simply a version of doing things that allows a certain group to define itself as elite – a set-up that has destroyed indigenous knowledge as well as a sense of community.

“I think that perhaps, those of us who have a vision of a different future for humankind might have been naive. Because we always knew, theoretically, that power is never given up willingly, but I don’t think that we really thought about what that means in the areas that generate power,” she says of those in the creative economy who challenge the status quo. “I think we need to strategise better going forward.”

Dangarembga, who has been actively engaged in political protests in Zimbabwe and was handed a [suspended prison sentence](#) in 2022 for protesting against the government of Emmerson Mnangagwa, has witnessed a lot of change in her lifetime. It is perhaps because of it, Dangarembga says, that she sees no reason to lose faith in humanity.

She believes there are many people who are beginning to understand that we need to do things differently and who will be inspired by projects like the Future Library – which pushes

against the system of expropriation and appropriation – to detach from the hubbub around us and tap into a different source of knowledge.

“Can you imagine if a hundred other countries decided to have such a forward-looking project? ... That could change the world.”



At the site of the Future Library, located in the Nordmarka Forest outside of Oslo, 1,000 Norwegian spruce, planted in 2014, are slowly growing [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

Stories as bridges

“I do passionately... sincerely believe in the power of books to help us, to save us. And why do I say this? Because it happened to me,” says Elif Shafak, the Future Library’s 2017 author. She is sitting in front of a colourful and busy bookshelf in her home in London, where she has been based for more than 14 years.

An introverted only child, Shafak grew up with a single mother in a conservative society in Turkey, and it was books, she tells Al Jazeera over a video call, that “showed me there were other possibilities, that there were other... worlds beyond the world that I had known, that had been given to me.” With it came a sense of freedom, possibility, connectivity and, perhaps most importantly, empathy.

“As human beings, if we learn anything in this life, we learn from difference,” Shafak insists. “We are not going to learn anything from echoes.”

Shafak, an award-winning author of 19 books, with another one out next summer, is a scholar as well as a storyteller (she has a PhD in political philosophy) known for exploring difficult subjects like sexual harassment, gender violence, child abuse, child brides and homophobia – even when she has faced pushback and legal challenges.

Shafak has spoken out against echo chambers as well as the power of stories to punch holes through the walls of difference. “I really think books change us in so many ways but they don’t do this by lecturing, preaching – nothing like that. They shift something in us in a very delicate way. In a very human way, in a very egalitarian way. You know, not from above, but that change comes from within, from the heart... Otherwise, we all have very high egos,

inflated egos. We're surrounded by our own habits, needs, desires, and we don't see much beyond that."

Like Dangarembga, Shafak is critical of modern capitalist society and its emphasis on individual needs above nature. Humankind has also, she believes, lost the humility of intellectual exchange, the "sincerity of saying, 'I don't know'." But there is a big difference between information, knowledge and wisdom, she says.

"We live in an age in which we're bombarded by information. But we have very little knowledge and even less wisdom."

She wishes more politicians read fiction. This is what makes projects like the Future Library critical – today more than ever, Shafak says.

"This is a project of faith, faith that... our words today will matter to people of future generations, that there will be a need for literature, there will be a need for poetry, for novels, for ideas... for emotional connections."

She believes that bridges only appear when we are ready to cross them and this is, in her view, a time for crucial global conversations. "For global sisterhood," she continues, "for connections beyond borders. And at the heart of this, I think, is a longing, a faith in humanity that is very much shared by the Future Library... as a bridge-building project."

For Shafak, it is all about solidarity and how we connect the dots. "I passionately believe that silences keep us apart," she says, "silences create walls between us, but stories bring us together".



Each manuscript is encased in a steel box embedded in the wall and placed behind a glass panel that reveals the author's name and year. By 2114, the Silent Room will house 100 manuscripts [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

Possible futures

"It's not possible to predict 'the future', as there are many possible futures," Margaret Atwood writes in an email, adding: "There are also many wild cards – unexpected and unpredictable events."

If her roguish imagination is anything to go on, however, the very few of us who survive our self-destruction might be living in a tree, fighting off mutant animals and forgetting basic words, like the characters in her MaddAddam Trilogy.

What does that mean for the library? Will the manuscripts or the forest endure the next 100 years? After all, as Jorge Luis Borges famously wrote, man is an imperfect librarian.

There are contingency plans in place. The paper copies of the manuscripts are secured and the tree roots have been treated against possible insect infestations. But there have already been fires both in the Deichman and near the Future Library forest.

With the Future Library becoming a pilgrimage destination, its guardians are embracing uncertainty, even if it means having to replant or rebuild. If something were to happen to the Silent Room, “there will be grief”, Hovind says. “But we have to handle it, and we have to rebuild it. But if it’s a copy or if it’s something else – I think we will deal with [it] and that will be part of the story.”

Forests have long held a spiritual significance when it comes to mankind’s hope for a better future. After all, before the founding of the United Nations, delegates were taken to the [Muir Forest](#) outside San Francisco to contemplate the ancient redwood trees as they envisioned strategies for a lasting world peace.

But the significance of the Future Library goes far beyond being a sacred site where humanity consecrates its hopes. According to Dangarembga, “It’s important that we begin to try to think of other scenarios that we could live in. This project seemed to be one of those that was aiming at a different vision of what it could be to be a human community.”

As Atwood writes, “If we manage to turn our disastrous lifestyle around, we have a chance.”

“I feel like if I really wanted to create concrete change, I wouldn’t be doing this, I’d be doing something else,” Paterson admits. “But what it does allow you to do is kind of work with emotion... to create things in situations that can allow these thoughts to penetrate in a really different way, you know, than the news headlines... artwork can take you into... a different way of thinking or feeling or being.”

To everyone involved, the project represents, above all else, hope.

In the face of making decisions about the future, Shafak insists, we cannot afford apathy. But, warns Dangarembga, we have to act in ways that perpetuate and increase hope, because hope alone won’t do the job for us. In her view, the Future Library sustains this decisive momentum: “It keeps the hope in the possibility of good alive,” she says.

Hovind has a dream that the library could do precisely that – prod people into action by serving as an example.

“Maybe the concrete project is that people are inspired to imagine and do concrete things in their world,” she says. “If people could do that ... I think we can change the world for the better.”



Margaret Atwood's manuscript at the Future Library [Anna Pivovarchuk/Al Jazeera]

[A library of the 'future': Can it make the world a better place? | Features | Al Jazeera](#)

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA

RESOURCES



The Community Resources webpage has been active since November 2021 following a major flooding event. Resources were selected to help people monitor conditions, connect with services, and support verified coordinated efforts. Trustee Lori Jump voiced support for expanding this effort to include curating resources related to other needs important to those living in Whatcom County. A staff team led by Liz Andre and Neil McKay worked to define a project scope, develop the tool, and create a process to maintain integrity and relevance of information.

Currently, 180 resources are included informing topics such as Aging & Disability, Education, Emergencies, Employment, Money, Food, Health, Housing, Legal, and Weather. Each month, staff review suggested resources and consider topics that need additional information.

At the same time, WCLS staff have been working in an advisory capacity with the Whatcom Information Resource Collective, described as, “a community governed guide to the services & information you need to navigate life in Whatcom County.” In the coming weeks, WCLS curated content will be merged into this effort, and the <https://whatcomresources.org> website will be integrated into the WCLS Community Resources webpage. Public Services Assistant staff Jasper Contreras and Tasia Ross will work weekly to help review records. Liz and Neil will continue participation in the WRIC Advisory Committee.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A hiring process for a newly developed Punjabi Cultural Liaison position is currently underway. After working with two community stakeholders to review the position description and discuss the knowledge and skills needed to qualify for this work, this position was posted in November. Based on feedback from these discussions, the position will work at three WCLS locations including Blaine, Ferndale, and Lynden. Interviews with the top candidates have been scheduled, and we are excited by the interest that has been expressed in this work.

Michael Cox
Deputy Director

COMMUNITY

The 2024 edition of Whatcomics is out and once again features a record number of submissions and a record number of accepted pieces of art. This year's anthology of original art by teens includes entries from all six public school districts in Whatcom County, as well as the Bellingham Public Schools. So much goes into the production of this anthology, from careful consideration of each submitted piece to sensitive communications with artists whose work is not included. We're grateful for our ongoing partnership with the Whatcom Transit Authority, who again have dedicated one of the buses in their fleet to Whatcomics art, inside and out. Many thanks to Tamar Clarke, Teen Services Coordinator; Ollie Holm, Youth Services Librarian; Bibi Brown, Teen Intern; and Cynthia French, Communications Specialist, for all their work reviewing submissions, notifying artists, designing and producing the publication and bus boards, and celebrating the accepted artists.



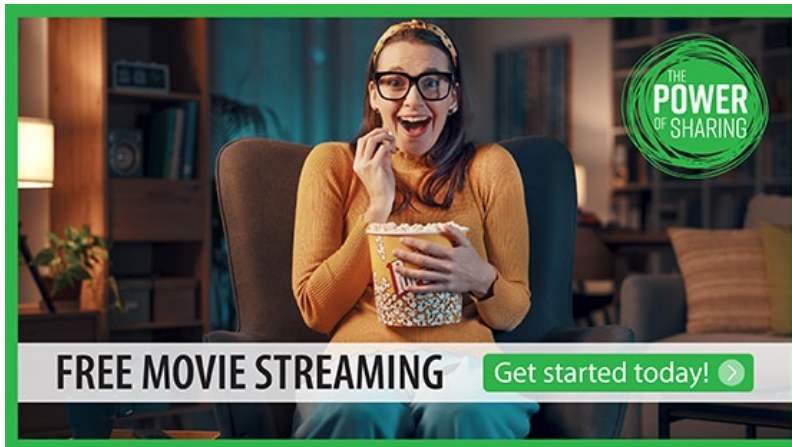
ACCESS

We are convening a ConnectED Council to advise and support our efforts to bring a full range of public library services to young people at school. The council includes a representative from each participating school district, and those representatives reflect a variety of roles in their schools, including teachers, librarians, administrators, and IT staff. Some of the council's work will be pointed at mechanics, helping us know and respond to technical issues and roadblocks as they show up. The council will also support stronger relationships with schools, helping us facilitate meetings and presentations with students, teachers, staff, and families.

Thom Barthelmess

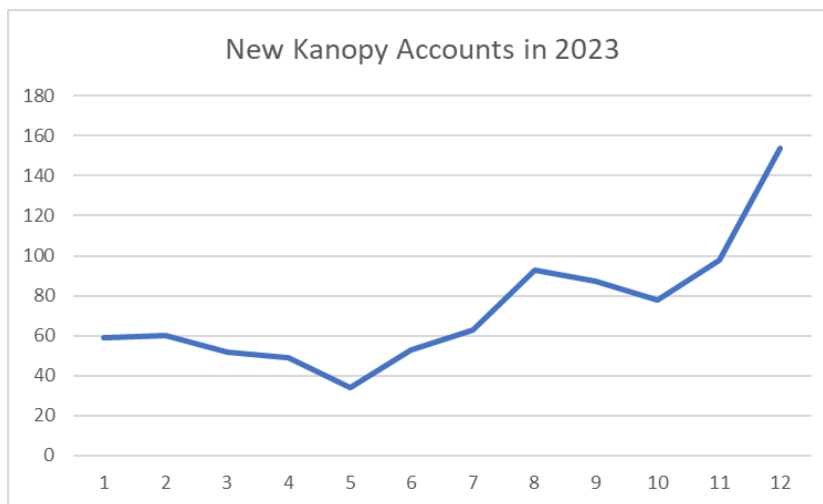
Youth Services Manager

COMMUNITY/RESOURCES



From December through early March, our Power of Sharing campaign features Kanopy, the library system’s streaming movie service. Ads are running across digital channels (display, video and audio ads) and on bus boards. Results so far are impressive: social media 573 clicks/3.61% click-thru rate (a person clicks on the ad to learn more at the linked site).

In December, 3,144 people saw a digital ad and visited the website later (known as a view-thru conversion). The result? A record number of new Kanopy accounts.



New Kanopy Accounts 2023

January, 59. February, 60. March, 52. April, 49. May, 34. June, 53. July, 63. August, 93. September, 87. October, 78. November, 98. December, 154.

News Releases

- [Whatcom READS announces 2024 programs](#)
- [Whatcom County Council allocates \\$315,000 in ARPA funding to support Birch Bay Vogt Library Express](#)

Podcast: wcls.org/podcast or subscribe on your favorite podcast platform

- [Episode 42: 2023 wrap-up with Christine Perkins](#)

Book Reviews

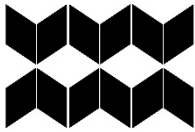
- *Cascadia Daily News*, Dec. 2, 2023, [The Wok: Recipes and Techniques](#) by J Kenji Lopez-Alt
- *Cascadia Daily News*, Dec. 9, 2023, [Literary Gift Guide for All Ages](#)
- *Cascadia Daily News*, Dec. 11, 2023, [Working Boats](#) by Tom Crestodina

Media Coverage

- *Lynden Tribune*, Dec. 21, 2023, [2023 IN REVIEW: Sumas continues to rebuild after 2021 flood](#)
- *All Point Bulletin*, Dec. 22, 2023, [Year in Review: Point Roberts Library](#)
- *Lynden Tribune*, Dec. 27, 2023, [2023 Lynden: A Year In Review](#)
- *Cascadia Daily News*, Dec. 28, 2023, [Amy's picks: Pollinators, doomsday bunkers, art events and drag](#) (mentions South Whatcom patron appreciation)
- KGMI, Dec. 30, 2023, [\\$2.3 mil dedicated to new express library in Birch Bay](#)
- *The Northern Light*, Jan. 3, 2024, [Birch Bay Vogt Library Express reaches funding goal](#)

Mary Vermillion

Community Relations Manager



whatcom county
library system

Board Meeting Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Meeting Date:	1/16/2024
Committee or Department:	Administration/Collection Services
Subject:	Agreement Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System
Prepared By:	Christine Perkins
Impact upon Budget?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Supporting Documents:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Recommendation or Request: Approve updated Agreement Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System .

Suggested Motion for Consideration: Move approval of the updated Agreement Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System.

Summary:

WCLS and Bellingham Public Library have partnered on the costs to operate and maintain an Integrated Library System since we first automated in the 1990s. Not only does sharing an ILS result in cost savings for both library systems, it facilitates cross-use of each system’s materials by our respective borrowers, making it easy to place holds on materials that are delivered to the locations chosen by our patrons.

Alternatives: As discussed.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement will provide WCLS with increased remuneration for our work done to distribute paper notices on behalf of Bellingham Public Library, accounting for staff time as well as increased postage rates.

Comments: None.

Agreement
Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System
for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System

This Agreement, effective February 1, 2024, is made by and between the Bellingham Public Library (“BPL”), a department of the City of Bellingham, a Washington first class city, and Whatcom County Rural Library District, doing business as Whatcom County Library System (“WCLS”), a Washington rural county library district.

WHEREAS, BPL and WCLS (collectively, the “Parties” and each, a “Party”) have shared an Integrated Library System (“ILS”) since 1991; and

WHEREAS, both Parties mutually extend the full range of services available from its ILS to all borrowers according to the respective policies of each Party; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, both Parties conducted a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) process to select a new ILS; and

WHEREAS, both Parties have agreed on a new ILS, Polaris, from Innovative Interfaces, Incorporated (“Innovative”); and

WHEREAS, both Parties have entered into an agreement with Innovative as of August 1, 2018 to license the Polaris ILS, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit A hereto and incorporated by this reference; and

WHEREAS, this Agreement supersedes the “Agreement Between Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library System for the Operation and Maintenance of an Integrated Library System” established in 2019;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE WHATCOM COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

1. The ILS: The ILS that the Parties have licensed, the related services that the Parties subscribe to, and the costs of the services are all described in the “Agreement for Consultant Services Bellingham/Whatcom County Library Consortium – Innovative Interfaces Incorporated” (“Services Agreement”), Exhibit A.
2. Term: This Agreement shall be in effect as of the date set forth above and shall continue as long as the Services Agreement is in effect, unless either Party elects to update or terminate this agreement.

3. Data Ownership and Access:

- a. The ILS, including all software, records, and data stored in the ILS, other than patron information, is owned on an equal basis by BPL and WCLS as tenants in common.
- b. Each Party owns its own patron information. Ownership is determined based on a patron's primary address. Primary addresses within the city limits of Bellingham designate patron records that are owned by BPL. Primary addresses outside the city limits of Bellingham designate records that are owned by WCLS. Each Party agrees to release such patron information maintained on the System only in accordance with its written confidentiality policy (Exhibit B). For third party requests for confidential patron information (including court records and subpoenas), to the extent allowed by law, each Party agrees to communicate the request to the other Party's administration immediately and to give the other Party the opportunity to contest the disclosure of information.

4. Management of the ILS: Innovative holds primary responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the hardware and software for the hosted portions of the ILS. The records and data stored on the ILS are managed mutually by BPL and WCLS. Agreement of both BPL and WCLS is required for changes in system management and policies that affect both Parties. Each Party will confer with all involved Parties in a timely manner prior to making changes to local control system settings that could impact service at either Party, particularly during library open hours.

- a. Both libraries will share the primary responsibility for the following tasks:
 - i. Adding and maintaining records for digital content.
- b. WCLS will have the primary responsibility for the following tasks with the cooperation and assistance of BPL:
 - i. Delivery of patron notices via printed letters via the U.S. Postal Service, billing BPL quarterly for the cost of envelopes, postage, and labor per notice, rate to be reviewed annually, unless BPL takes over its own print notice processing.
 - ii. Maintaining vendor relationship with OCLC for hosted EZProxy server
 - iii. Deletion of digital content records
- c. Both Parties will designate a system administrator. The designated administrators will be jointly responsible for the operation, maintenance, and configuration of the system. In an emergency requiring immediate action, either administrator or their delegate is authorized to act independently but the corresponding administrator will be informed and consulted as soon as practicable.

5. Termination: This Agreement may be terminated by either Party, as follows:
- a. For the duration of the Services Agreement, the non-terminating Party's violation of the terms of, or failure to adequately perform the responsibilities and duties of, this Agreement, following written notice from the terminating Party and reasonable opportunity to correct such violation or failure, or 2) illegal acts or bad faith on the part of the non-terminating Party; or
 - b. With or without cause, upon notice from the terminating Party to the non-terminating Party delivered fifteen months prior to the proposed termination date.
 - c. In the event of termination of this Agreement, each Party shall retain ownership of its own collection and patron information, and the other Party will allow reasonable access to it.
 - d. The value of the respective ownership interests of the Parties will be determined upon the termination of this Agreement, taking into consideration the value (if any) of the ILS, costs and inconvenience to the Parties resulting from the termination, whether the termination is for cause, and any other relevant factors. This determination shall be made in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures set forth in paragraph 8, below.
6. Payment of maintenance and other costs:
- a. BPL and WCLS will jointly be responsible for ongoing maintenance costs of the ILS according to the formula set forth in Exhibit C, attached and incorporated by this reference.
 - b. Population percentages in Exhibit C may be recalculated annually according to population estimates from the Washington State Office of Financial Management or the U.S. Census.
 - c. Each Party will be individually responsible for any applicable sales/use tax on their respective costs.
7. Upgrades: Upgrades or additions may be added by agreement of the Parties.
- i. The cost of such upgrades or additions for the exclusive use of one Party will be the responsibility of that Party.
 - ii. The cost of upgrades or additions for shared use and primarily intended for patron ease-of-use will be borne by the Parties based on population ratio.
 - iii. The cost of upgrades or additions for shared use and not primarily related to patron use will be borne by the Parties on an equal basis.

- iv. Maintenance costs for upgrades will be apportioned as set forth in Exhibit C.
- 8. Amendment: This Agreement may be amended by written agreement signed by authorized representatives of each of the Parties.
- 9. Dispute Resolution: The respective directors of the Parties will use their best efforts, including mediation, to resolve disagreements between the Parties arising out of this Agreement. In the event they cannot do so within thirty (30) days of written notice by one to the other that such a disagreement exists, they will submit the matter to arbitration by an arbitrator agreed to as follows: Either Party will submit to the other a list of three persons acceptable to it who have agreed to act in such capacity and the other shall promptly select one from the list. If none are acceptable to the other Party, subsequent list(s) shall be submitted. If the Parties are unable to agree upon an impartial arbitrator within thirty (30) days of submittal of the first list of prospective arbitrators, the dispute shall be resolved by available legal means.
- 10. Assignment: This Agreement may not be assigned by either Party without the express written consent of the other. Other parties may be added by agreement of the Parties.

11. Exhibits:

Exhibit A

- i. Agreement for Consultant Services Bellingham / Whatcom County Consortium – Innovative Interfaces

Exhibit B

- i. Confidentiality Policy: Bellingham Public Library
- ii. Confidentiality of Patron Records Policy: Whatcom County Library System

Exhibit C – Cost Sharing Breakdown

EXHIBIT A

[Agreement for Consultant Services Bellingham / Whatcom County Consortium – Innovative Interfaces]

EXHIBIT B

Relevant Policies	Public document location
Confidentiality Policy: Bellingham Public Library	https://bellingshampubliclibrary.org/about/library-policies/confidentiality-policy
Confidentiality Policy: Whatcom County Library System	https://www.wcls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/5.01-Confidentiality-of-Patron-Records-Policy.pdf

EXHIBIT C: COST SHARING BREAKDOWN

Where the costs below are estimates from the vendor (as with Polaris migration and training) or are subject to annual increases, as with other shared services, the breakdown percentage will apply to the amount billed, regardless of the actual costs shown below.

2024 Cost Estimates	Whatcom County		City of Bellingham	WCLS
2022 Estimated Population (ACS)	230,677	41/59	93,899	136,778
Estimated Percentage of Population			41%	59%
Estimated charges for 2024	Cost	Breakdown	BPL	WCLS
ILS Database	\$62,104.55	40/60	\$24,841.82	\$37,262.73
ILS SaaS Hosting	\$23,737.73	40/60	\$9,495.09	\$14,242.64
Staff user licenses	\$26,497.93	50/50	\$13,248.96	\$13,248.96
Other -VPN (BPL only)	\$5,520.40		\$5,520.40	
Other - Syndetics	\$10,849.81	40/60	\$4,339.92	\$6,509.88
Total System	\$128,710.42		\$57,446.20	\$71,264.22
Other Shared Services				
Printed letter notifications via U.S. Postal Service	TBD			
Database auth. through OCLC Ezproxy	\$7,246.56	40/60	\$2,898.63	\$4,347.94
MessageBee notifications	variable			
Biblicommons Total	\$36,496.65		\$11,732.42	\$24,764.23
BiblioCore	\$26,575.05	40/60	\$10,630.02	\$15,945.03
Spanish Language Support	\$2,204.80	50/50	\$1,102.40	\$1,102.40
Russian Language Support (WCLS only)	\$2,204.80			\$2,204.80
BiblioFines (WCLS only)	\$5,512.00			\$5,512.00

Estimated % increase over 2023

 Polaris: 2%

 OCLC: 4.25%

 Biblicommons: 4%

The Parties indicate their acknowledgement and acceptance of the terms and conditions stated in this Agreement as evidenced by the following signatures of their duly authorized

representatives. It is the intent of the Parties that this Agreement shall be in effect as of the day and year first indicated above.

EXECUTED, this ____ of _____, 2024 for the **WHATCOM COUNTY RURAL LIBRARY DISTRICT**

By: _____
Rodney Lofdahl, *Chair, Board of Trustees*

Departmental Approval:

By: _____
Christine Perkins, *Executive Director*

EXECUTED, this _____ day of _____, 2024, for the **CITY OF BELLINGHAM:**

Kimberley J. Lund, *Mayor*

Rick Osen, *Chair, BPL Board of Trustees*

Departmental Approval:

Rebecca Judd, *Director*

Attest:

Approved as to Form:

Andrew D. Asbjornsen, *Finance Director*

Office of the City Attorney

Collection Size	December				
	Physical	Electronic	Total		
	310,834	316,826	627,660		
Circulation<	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Physical Circulation					
Blaine	12,404	3,170	163,928	140,749	-14.1%
Bookmobile & Outreach	4,601	11,875	56,673	55,447	-2.2%
Deming	8,064	7,522	110,071	93,573	-15.0%
Everson	9,230	9,206	120,225	110,060	-8.5%
Ferndale	29,515	31,600	404,390	388,410	-4.0%
Island	2,076	1,742	25,168	22,420	-10.9%
Lynden	35,113	35,162	479,766	456,120	-4.9%
North Fork	4,209	4,134	54,167	52,924	-2.3%
NWIC	14	8	139	115	-17.3%
Point Roberts + PRX	2,198	1,974	29,360	29,087	-0.9%
Sumas + SLX	85	2,117	3,218	24,185	651.6%
South Whatcom	7,000	7,468	92,218	92,443	0.2%
NDX	3,334	3,371	42,367	36,793	-13.2%
Total	117,843	119,349	1,581,690	1,502,326	-5.02%
Disc materials: DVDs and CDs	27,198	29,531	399,201	330,562	-17.2%
All other materials	89,495	89,818	1,167,930	1,169,614	0.1%
Electronic Circulation					
eBooks/eAudiobooks	30,201	33,013	345,553	388,128	12.3%
eMusic	8,847	10,003	105,533	140,739	33.4%
Streaming Video	1,515	2,629	22,975	23,221	1.1%
eMagazines	1,525	5,899	19,189	34,092	77.7%
Total	42,088	51,544	493,250	586,180	18.84%
Total Circulation	159,931	170,893	2,074,940	2,088,506	0.65%

< Sumas Library closed 11/20/21 to 2/11/23.

< Sumas Library Express opened 2/11/23.

Visitors (Door Counts)	December			Year to Date		% Chg
	2019	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Blaine	8,332	5,536	6,128	74,621	78,030	4.6%
Deming	4,038	2,044	2,441	28,295	30,134	6.5%
Everson	4,923	2,560	3,050	26,376	36,879	39.8%
Ferndale	13,450	9,994	9,825	123,953	150,913	21.8%
Island	1,412	701	1,079	14,349	12,626	-12.0%
Lynden	13,788	7,784	9,725	125,049	124,120	-0.7%
Northwest Drive Express		258	287	3,983	3,471	-12.9%
North Fork	1,993	1,299	1,740	19,809	21,084	6.4%
Point Roberts + PRX	1,271	1,196	1,413	14,814	17,995	21.5%
Sumas + SLX	2,271	0	918	0	12,574	
South Whatcom	1,968	1,644	2,685	27,715	28,206	1.8%
Total	53,446	33,016	39,291	458,964	516,032	12.43%

* Sumas door counter installed on March 1, 2023.

New Borrowers	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Registered	326	488	5,021	7,634	52.04%

Patron Service	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Interlibrary Loan					
Borrowed from BPL	10,725	11,667	140,559	138,891	-1.2%
Lent to BPL	20,844	23,167	267,777	264,377	-1.3%
Borrowed from other libraries	548	623	7,003	6,725	-4.0%
Lent to other libraries	472	547	6,036	5,796	-4.0%

Electronic Resources	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
WCLS.org Sessions	31,014	34,886	433,915	447,617	3.2%
Bibliocommons Sessions	47,317	79,503	612,471	778,620	27.1%
Internet Sessions	2,405	3,223	29,078	39,211	34.8%
Wifi Clients / Sessions	5,787	6,134	71,219	84,788	19.1%

Volunteers	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Volunteer Hours	653.00	792.00	9,116.50	10,253.25	12.5%

Activities	December		Year to Date		% Chg
	2022	2023	2022	2023	
Programs					
Adults	25	34	371	674	81.7%
Teens	11	9	226	217	-4.0%
Children	51	59	571	919	60.9%
Total	87	102	1,168	1,810	55.0%

Attendance					
Adults	246	547	4329	7952	83.7%
Teens	106	32	5414	8393	55.0%
Children	1,573	956	25032	28243	12.8%
Total	1,925	1,535	34,775	44,588	28.2%

Corrections:

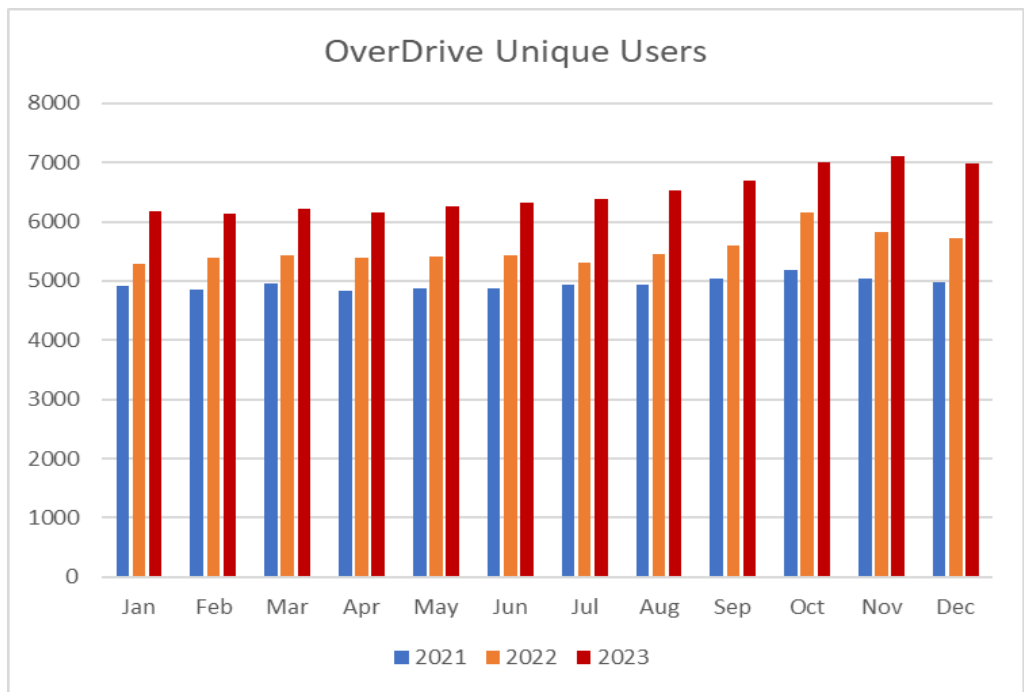
As of July 2023, WCLS.org and Bibliocommons are now tracking Sessions rather than Entrances due to a Google Analytics platform update.

As of mid-September 2023, OverDrive changed the way it counts magazine circulations.

Stats for streaming video for 2022 and 2023 have been updated to "Plays" rather than "Credits" due to a Kanopy platform update.

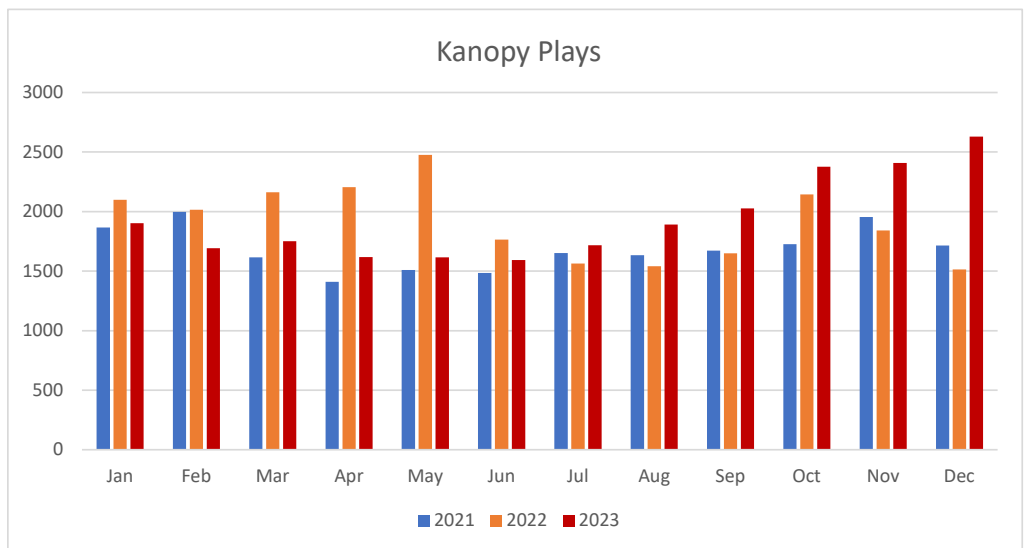
OVERDRIVE UNIQUE USERS

Use of eMaterials continues to grow steadily with hundreds of new WCLS users each month creating OverDrive accounts to access eMaterials provided by our consortium - 414 new users in November and 333 in December. Of the 38,912 checkouts in December, 45% were eAudiobooks, 40% were eBooks, and 15% were eMagazines. Although eMagazines are the smallest percentage, 9 of the top 10 circulating items in December were eMagazines indicating that there are very compelling, coveted titles being offered.



KANOPY PLAYS - JANUARY TO DECEMBER COMPARISON

The current Community Relations campaign focusing on Kanopy is paying off - Kanopy Plays for October, November and December are three of our highest usage months ever. There were 30,976 Visits to the WCLS Kanopy website in December, an increase of 32% over November, showing that users responded to the campaign by visiting Kanopy and perusing what is available. WCLS users accessed Kanopy from 17 countries in December, including Japan, Ecuador, Senegal and Sweden.



DATABASE USAGE

December is typically a slow month for database use and December 2023 was no exception. Databases used by school-age patrons had low use in December; with people busy with holidays, other databases were also accessed less. Chiltons, Mango Language and Newsbank all enjoyed good statistics in December and helped stabilize overall usage at slightly higher than December 2022.

