# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ............................................................................................................................... 4  

0. **Executive Summary** ............................................................................................................ 5  

1. **The Continued Relevance of Public Libraries** ................................................................. 12  
   The Future of Public Libraries ........................................................................................................ 12  
   Evolving Trends and Impact on Public Libraries ........................................................................ 13  
   Future Clusters of Excellence for Public Libraries ..................................................................... 17  

2. **The User’s Take: Behaviours, Needs, and Aspirations** .................................................. 19  
   User Behaviour at the Richmond Public Library ........................................................................ 19  
   User-Tailored Public Consultation Process ............................................................................... 20  

3. **The Vision for Richmond’s ‘Library of the Future’** ......................................................... 26  
   A Library That Evolves ................................................................................................................. 26  
   A Library That Acts as Interface .................................................................................................. 26  
   A Library That Builds Community ............................................................................................. 26  
   A Library That Shapes City Vision ............................................................................................ 27  

4. **Key Roles for the Library**.................................................................................................... 28  
   Three Key Current and User-supported Roles ......................................................................... 29  
   Five Key Strategic / Evolving Roles ......................................................................................... 29  

5. **Future Initiatives and Actions** .......................................................................................... 31  
   Objectives and Guiding Principles ............................................................................................ 31  
   Recommended Initiatives and Actions ...................................................................................... 31  
   Linking Initiatives and Actions to Objectives .......................................................................... 34  
   Implementation Plan .................................................................................................................. 35  

6. **Key Short-term Action 1: Library Performance Measurement** ...................................... 37  
   How Library Performance Should be Measured ........................................................................ 37  
   Quantitative Indicators ............................................................................................................ 39  
   Qualitative Indicators ............................................................................................................... 40  

7. **Key Short-term Action 2: Proof-of-Concept Services** ..................................................... 41  
   Proof-of-Concept Services Ideas ............................................................................................... 41  
   Alignment with Library Roles .................................................................................................... 43  
   Implementation of Proof-of-Concept Ideas ............................................................................... 44
8. **Library Facilities: An Initial Outlook**

Current Facilities

Future Space Requirements

Recommended Long-term Facility Location and Expansion Concept

Internal Facility Design Strategies

Preliminary Facility Spatial Program

Development of Conceptual Design Ideas
Richmond Public Library
Strategic Planning Insights

Introduction

In October 2012, the City of Richmond issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consulting team to assist in undertaking a community public consultation process and recommending strategic future planning initiatives for the Richmond Public Library (RPL).

The Richmond Public Library contracted IBI Group, a multi-national planning, architecture and engineering consulting firm, teamed with sub-consultant OrangeBoy, library planners, to conduct the consultancy, which took place from January 2013 to February 2014.

The desired outcomes, as stated by the RFP, were:

- The development of a common vision for library services
- Recommendations for library services, programs, and facilities that best meet community needs
- A suggested action plan for future library development, including a list of strategic and long range planning initiatives.

This Final Report summarizes the insights, findings, and recommendations of the study. After the Executive Summary, the document goes from the general to the particular, starting with the trends that will impact public libraries in the next decades, and ending with visual design ideas of how the “library of the future” will look like. These conceptual images are the final result of the consultant’s research, the close interaction with library staff, and, importantly, the users’ own perspective of what they will need from RPL and what they aspire it to be in the future.

Section 1 of the report lays out the future of public libraries; the evolving demographic, consumer, and technological trends affecting libraries; and the identification of ‘clusters of excellence’ where public libraries will have an edge over other channels of communication or learning. Section 2 focuses on the user: An analysis of user behaviour patterns is followed by the results of the highly successful user-tailored public consultation process, which depended mainly on a specialized public participation crowdsourcing platform. Sections 3 and 4, respectively, propose the vision for RPL’s library of the future and the eight key roles that define how it should be known for in the decades to come. Section 5 then moves to the list of recommended modular initiatives and actions – the core deliverable of the consultancy – prioritized in terms of time and ease of implementation. Sections 6 and 7 describe in greater detail two key actions that could happen in the short term: The implementation of user-centered library performance metrics and the realization of a series of low-cost, real-life, experimental prototypes of new service/facility models for the library, which the planning team called “proof-of-concept services.” The final Section wraps up the project with an initial outlook regarding the long-term library facility plan, quantifying current and future space needs, a recommended facility location and expansion concept, and a series of architectural schematic ideas of how the future space program of the library could “look and feel.”

This consultancy sets the base for strategic future decisions by the Library Board and the City of Richmond; as such, it provides valuable insights from consultants, staff, and users on how the road ahead can look like.
0. Executive Summary

The Continued Relevance of Public Libraries

Evolving Trends and Impact on Public Libraries

Three groups of trends were identified by library staff and consultants as critical for the future of public libraries in terms of the impacts they would have on the latter:

- **Society and Consumer Trends.** In the future, people will be more demanding of the products and services they consume – and they expect to drive the boat. Specific trends like convenience, personalization, choice and variety, and entertainment will be key to keep a substantial user base at public libraries. In addition, users want involvement; they want to contribute and shape the outcomes of public services and consumer goods.

- **Demographic Trends.** Richmond will grow and become older in the decades to come. There will be three main demographic trends moving into the future: A reduction in the number and proportion of children, a spiking of the mid-age population (35-50 years old) and a significant increase of senior population. Population growth will be concentrated in Richmond’s City Centre, which will see its population double by 2041.

- **Technology Trends.** The computer – and increasingly, the smartphone – is supplanting the car as the most desirable technology device. An increasingly mobile world and pervasive web access and use imply a paradigm shift on how users access and use information. Consumers of information have evolved to producers and shapers of content; one-way communication/marketing has evolved to (digital) two-way conversations.

The implication: Public libraries will need to coexist with a new social and media landscape and provide new forms of access, consumption, production, and sharing of knowledge. Web-based products and services will increasingly compete with functions traditionally performed by libraries. Users will increasingly expect customer-centric experiences when visiting the real (and virtual) public library. Increasingly, public libraries will act as virtual ‘portals’ to access a large range of media resources not directly owned by the library, guiding the user to these external resources. In addition, the public library’s role as a venue for community building will be strengthened by the need for the cross-pollination of ideas of the post-industrial economy.

Future Clusters of Excellence for Public Libraries

There are four main areas or niches where public libraries can excel in the future, even if a substantial portion of users shift to the Internet to access information, knowledge, and entertainment:

- **Space.** While new media allows for multiple connections with no space or time limitations, people prefer to deepen meaningful social connections face-to-face. Not everyone owns or has access to space to study, meet, read, or relax. Space is an ingredient every library has and that the Web cannot provide.

- **Community anchoring.** Public libraries have always been public places of social interaction, of community building, and local identity – not unlike a public park. This role will be gaining momentum because of the trend towards localism, which sees cities, towns, and neighbourhoods as the best vehicles for citizen involvement and action.

- **Two-way learning hub.** Lifelong learning has always been a core competency of public libraries, and this role will be strengthened as they evolve from dispensers of information to user-driven learning laboratories, where the flow of information is increasingly two-way rather than one-way and many-to-many rather than one-to-many.
• **Co-creation and co-curation.** Space, community, and knowledge also allow libraries to be laboratories for collective creation and curation. Libraries can provide the space, the tools, and the information to inform, create, modify, and share products and information, fostering learning opportunities and nurturing peer-to-peer exchanges.

**The User’s Take: Behaviours, Needs, and Aspirations**

**User Behaviour at the Richmond Public Library**

Ten user clusters or ‘types’ were identified by the consultants at RPL, based on behavioural traits derived from market assessment, ethnographic observation at the different library branches, and cardholder data analysis. 2 out of 5 library users come to the library to use the space itself (indicated with * in the list below); the rest use it as a place to borrow material. The identified library user types are:

- **Digitarians (4%).** The digital user who primarily downloads eBooks from the library website.
- **In-Betweens (12%).** The transitional user who borrows adult print but also downloads eBooks.
- **Browse & Borrow (7%).** Users who browse collections and borrow print/audiovisual materials.
- **Page-Turners (26%).** Traditional users that borrow adult print materials and pick up hold items.
- **New Wave (6%).** Young readers who borrow teen materials and conduct research.
- **Double Feature (7%).** Users who focus on borrowing audiovisual materials.
- **Head Starters (16%)*.** Family members who attend kids’ programs/borrow children’s materials.
- **Snippets (6%)*.** Users who browse material and read books or periodicals at the library.
- **Grinders (15%)*.** Purpose-oriented users who come to work, study, and connect to Wi-Fi.
- **Staying Connected (2%)*.** Usually older users who come primarily to use a library computer.

Some key behavioural user insights gained at the library include the following:

- Most users circulate material, but there is also a substantial non-circulating behaviour.
- In comparison to other libraries, people like to browse materials at RPL.
- Digital media is the only type of material that has substantially increased its user share.
- Digital connectivity is sought after.
- Language diversity is high; Chinese is the most popular foreign language.
- Programs for children and kids’ literacy are successful, while adult program attendance is varied.
- Brighouse is the most popular facility; it is used by many as a destination facility for study and work.
- The most mentioned reason for not using the library is a busy lifestyle.

**Public Consultation Activities**

The user-tailored public consultation process included a web-based survey (for both users and ex-users); a ‘crowdsourcing’ online consultation webpage; and a physical display space and interaction opportunity in the Brighouse Main Library. From 70,000 emails sent, over 12,000 users/ex-users answered the initial surveys and over 2,600 participants actively contributed in the online consultation webpage.

The highly-engaging process conducted during a six-month period produced the following insights:

- **General user feedback.** People commented positively on RPL, but most say they would want at least some improvement. Two thirds of all suggested improvements and enhancements have to do with operations, not facilities.
Use characteristics. People come regularly to the library: Almost half of all users come a couple of times a week or every day. More than half of users come to borrow material, but 40% come to make use of the space of the library. While half the people continue to use the library as before, the other half does use the library less than they used to, primarily because of convenience reasons.

Branch location/expansion. The majority of users would not expand the current number of branches – and some would even reduce them. However, most agree that current branches need improvements, especially regarding available space.

Design-related concerns. The “top-of-mind” issues in terms of facility design are noise concerns, overcrowding of facilities, more seating, the need (or not) for more parking, café/food service in the library, aspirations for natural lighting, and increase of power outlets (listed in descending order of importance).

Facility design themes. Three visual themes dominated the user’s virtual visual post boards: People want generous, well-lit spaces with ample, comfortable seating; buildings with green, eco-friendly, and energy-efficient features; and thoughtful and detailed design of the kids’ areas.

The Vision for Richmond’s ‘Library of the Future’

In order to respond to the challenges lying ahead and make the most of the opportunities at hand, the “Library of the Future” for Richmond is envisioned along four key organizing principles:

A Library That Evolves. The Richmond Public Library will build on its strengths, respond to current user needs, and anticipate evolving trends. RPL does not need to reinvent itself from the ground up; it only needs to be flexible and adapt to current and future conditions as they evolve. Flexibility, adaptability, and versatility are key concepts for the library of the future.

A Library That Acts as Interface. The Richmond Public Library will facilitate interaction between users, provide resources for lifelong learning, and improve access to and production of information. RPL should become a hub for people, information, and cultures. No longer is information stored in one place; thus the library is no longer only a depository of knowledge but rather a conduit to access, share, modify, and produce information.

A Library That Builds Community. The Richmond Public Library will be key to activate the public realm, nurture local activities and initiatives, and bring together the community; it will be the “community’s living room.” RPL will look beyond its walls towards the broader context; it will become an extension of the public realm, rather than just a facility that lends out books.

A Library That Shapes City Vision. Richmond Public Library’s central library will be a catalyst to achieve the vision of a vibrant, active, and inclusive Richmond City Centre. RPL will be a symbol for the new Richmond City Centre that represents public pride. It will anchor downtown development, send the signal that Richmond is serious about public commitment to sustainable development, and spur even more private investment in the City Centre.

Key Roles for the Library

The library’s future roles, which should be aligned with RPL’s vision, are the raison d’être of the library, or, as described to users during the public consultation stage, “what RPL should be known for.” Three of the recommended roles are performed currently by the library and are supported widely by users, while the other five are included to align the library with evolving technology, lifestyle, and social trends and particular social functions library staff and consultants felt RPL should perform.
Three Key Current and User-supported Roles

- **The Refocused Traditional Library.** A place to borrow physical objects beyond books for free.
- **The Living Room Library.** A place to read, study, or relax in a nice and quiet environment.
- **The Learning Hub Library.** A place to study and get guidance and support for lifelong learning.

Five Key Strategic / Evolving Roles

- **The Gathering Place Library.** A place where groups of people can get together informally.
- **The Activity Library.** A place to come together as a community through programs and events.
- **The Creative Library.** A place to work together on group projects with like-minded people.
- **The Digital Library.** A virtual place to access a wide range of electronic and virtual materials.
- **The Multicultural Library.** A place for special collections that reflect Richmond’s multiculturalism.

Future Initiatives and Actions

**Strategic Initiatives and Actions**

In order to advance the library vision and make the roles attainable, the following initiatives and actions were developed based on principles of cost effectiveness, modularity, and implementability:

- **Short-Term (2014-2015)**
  - Continue web-based public consultation.
  - Improve operations and customer service.
  - Improve seating and reading corners.
  - Improve/expand printers and computers.
  - Implement ‘Learning Hubs.’
  - Implement refocused library performance metrics.
  - Implement ‘Interactive Entrance Area.’

- **Short-/Mid-Term (2014-2018)**
  - Experiment with/implement ‘Proof-of-Concept Services.’
  - Develop synergies and partnerships.
  - Refocus and/or expand collections.
  - Targeted programming.

- **Mid-term (2016-2018)**
  - Implement flexible rentable rooms.
  - Develop personalized digital services apps.
  - Build first replicable branch prototype.
  - Improve pedestrian/bike/ transit access.
  - Plan to build City Centre Library.

- **Long-term (2019-2041)**
  - Build City Centre Library.
  - Build and/or expand other branches.
Key Short-term Action 1: Library Performance Measurement

As a key short-term action, it is recommended that library performance should be based on user-oriented, outcome-based indicators rather than on current library-focused, circulation-based parameters. This implies the development of a set of both quantitative and qualitative indicators:

- **Quantitative indicators.** RPL should implement quantitative indicators that measure the advancement of the library’s vision, creating a link between what is measured and what RPL is aiming for.
- **Qualitative indicators.** RPL should measure qualitative traits that are related to the identified user trends, needs, and aspirations, such as convenience, usefulness, personalization, diversity, engagement, and involvement.

Key Short-term Action 2: Proof-of-Concept Services

Because of the evolving role for public libraries in the digital age, no proven precedents exist for the new product/service concepts demanded by users. Instead of relying on experience and expertise, these concepts and ideas have to evolve.

To do this in an effective and efficient manner, the consultants recommend the development of a series of “Proof-of-Concept Services.” These are low-cost, short-term collective experiments or prototypes that allow improved mid/long-term solutions to develop. The body of the Report identifies twelve initial ideas of what these concepts could look like, ranging from “The Creation Spot” to “The Inter-Active Kid.”

The rationale for proof-of-concept services is fivefold: (1) Refinement of the optimal solution, (2) Interventions that are small-scale and low cost, (3) Momentum-building with users, (4) Conveyance of concepts to the public, and (5) Involvement and community-building.

The experimental prototypes could be implemented in the same location for public visibility, identification, and branding reasons; a space that always showcases new ideas for library users to “test-drive” them.

Library Facilities: An Initial Outlook

Current Space Conditions and Future Projections

Currently, RPL operates four branches and the Hamilton community outreach service. Except for the latter, branches are usually between 4 and 6 kilometres away from each other.

Richmond’s public library system currently has a deficit of 68,000 sq. ft., based on the multiplier to regional average approach. Projections based on the expected population growth show that this deficit will grow to 125,000 sq. ft. in about 25 years. Five other projection methods, such as the detailed space planning approach, yielded similar or higher space deficits.

Recommended Long-term Facility Location and Expansion Concept

Based on the space deficit figures, the trend research, and the feedback obtained from users through the public consultation process, the consultants recommend a long-term strategy of consolidation and selective expansion that rests on three components:

- **Keep but expand existing branches.** Branches should stay in their current neighbourhood location and be remodeled/expanded to meet evolving needs. Hamilton should get its own branch.
• **Build a new City Centre Library.** The main library should move in the long term to a new facility in a key City Centre location, to accommodate the new spatial program and become a visible public statement that supports the City Centre’s vision.

• **Downsize/relocate Brighouse Branch.** Once the main library branch moves to the new City Centre Library, the Brighouse facility can be downsized or relocated. Vacated space can be reused for other purposes.

This location and expansion concept is justified by multiple reasons, including no strong support by users to add new library locations, the increasingly complex and varied functional program of libraries in the future, alignment with municipal policy, and current and future concentration of library users.

**Internal Facility Design Strategies**

It is recommended that the future library facilities’ spaces are designed with a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to future needs. Key strategies for this include:

• **Separation by noise areas.** Noise issues can be addressed through noise level areas along a continuum ranging from ‘very noisy’ (younger patrons, community activities) to ‘very quiet’ (older patrons, individual activities).

• **Increasing levels of privacy.** To ensure openness and functionality the design should proceed from areas public and open to all (the lobby / café / expo area), to semi-public (the check-out and stack areas) to private and enclosed (specialized spaces).

• **Linking collections to user areas.** The library needs to relate the activities of a group of patrons – coming to study, to a community program, or to a talk – with the resources of the library through ‘functional bands’ aimed at each customer segment.

• **Flexible overlapping of specialized spaces.** To minimize the requirement of specialized spaces and to increase spatial adaptability of rooms over time, these should be located nearby and designed with flexibility in mind.

**Preliminary Facility Spatial Program**

On the basis of space needs projections and adjustments linked to the trends identified by the planning team and expressed by RPL’s users, the consultants produced an estimation of the breakdown of spaces for a new 90,000 square feet City Centre Library and a typical 25,000 square feet branch library:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Main Library</th>
<th>Branch Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Realm</td>
<td>67,800 sq. ft.</td>
<td>20,800 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Spaces</td>
<td>19,800 sq. ft.</td>
<td>6,900 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Collection Spaces</td>
<td>15,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>6,400 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming / Specialized Spaces</td>
<td>33,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>7,500 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Realm</td>
<td>22,200 sq. ft.</td>
<td>4,200 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90,000 sq. ft.</strong></td>
<td><strong>25,000 sq. ft.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These figures contrast with the current space breakdown in the following ways:

- **Public spaces.** Public spaces of main and branch libraries were increased proportionally, in order to accommodate evolving public community interaction spaces such as lobbies, cafés, stages, exposition areas, and collection merchandising.
- **Library collection spaces.** Although they were expanded in actual square footage, collection stacks were reduced as a share of the total area, reflecting the shift to digital material and the need for a variety of other library spaces.
- **Specialized spaces.** The proportion of specialized spaces such as kids’ activity rooms, program rooms, computer/audiovisual rooms, study/work rooms, and reading rooms were expanded to respond to the multi-use needs of users.
- **Staff spaces.** The proportion of staff areas – offices, circulation workrooms, IT rooms, lunch rooms – were reduced under the assumption that operations would become more efficient, particularly in library branches.

**Conceptual Design Ideas**

Based on trend analysis, public consultation insights, and assessment of future needs, a series of schematic library space designs were produced to convey visually the “look and feel” and the various elements that would make up the library of the future for Richmond. The studied areas include:

- **The Interactive Entrance Area.** The welcome lobby to the library where users can visually explore what’s new, ‘check in’ to review their personalized accounts, and engage with library staff.
- **The Public Living Room.** A social area for informal gathering, where the exchange of ideas can happen naturally while attending an exhibition or having a coffee and a snack with friends.
- **The Reading Corner.** An ample, quiet, and comfortable space for individual activities such as reading, listening to music and relaxing, well lit and connected to the outside context.
- **The Flexible Activity Rooms.** Adaptable spaces where a whole range of activities – meetings, presentations, programs, study groups – take place, all linked to the library’s resources.
- **The Learning Hub.** An area to access, transmit, modify, and advance knowledge, with individual spaces such as private study rooms and collective creation/curation spaces such as labs and workshops.

See pages 56-60 for visual images of these concepts.
1. The Continued Relevance of Public Libraries

The Future of Public Libraries

In an increasingly mobile and interconnected world, where information is literally at the fingertips of every citizen, it can be argued that the role of the public library as the great “equalizer” of society – in other words the provider of free education and information – has ended. Why, goes the argument, should money be spent on physical buildings and public collections if people can get it all from the Internet?

While these questions are valid, one must consider the broader picture. First, people look for more than just access to and consumption of information at public libraries. Second, the public library performs a social role beyond the services it offers to cardholders. Third, there are niches other than book collections where public libraries are at a competitive advantage over the evolving digital market.

The broader understanding of public library functions and the re-focusing of its products and services in this evolving digital landscape should be based on a simple premise: libraries should focus on what they do best and where they have a competitive advantage – all from the user’s point of view.

We strongly believe there are many niches or clusters of excellence where public libraries can grow and excel, some of them already well established, and some of them still emerging.

Stressing new niches does not mean that the traditional role of libraries as depositories of physical collections is no longer relevant. In fact, most people still come to libraries to check out books and other physical material (78% of users in Richmond, according to the study’s user surveys). But relying solely on the traditional role of libraries is probably neither desirable nor meaningful, given the general gradual trend of decline in print material circulation.

The re-imagination of how the public library provides products and services should leave unaltered its raison d’être; what needs to change is the form of engagement with the public, not the essence of its being. This essence corresponds to the century-long public library core missions:1

1. Creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age;
2. Supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
3. Providing opportunities for personal creative development;
4. Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
5. Promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;
6. Providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
7. Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
8. Supporting the oral tradition;
9. Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
10. Providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
11. Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills; and
12. Supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all ages, and initiating such activities if necessary.

Evolving Trends and Impact on Public Libraries

Society and Consumer Trends

In the future, people will be more demanding of the products and services they consume – and they expect to drive the boat. This has many reasons and implications on library facilities and services:

- **Convenience.** Convenience is the number one trend identified by the consultants – and the reason why new business models are substituting traditional forms of product and service delivery, particularly if these can be accessed in any place and at any time.
- **Entertainment.** People are increasingly looking for enjoyable, gratifying, and entertaining experiences – both in their spare time and on day-to-day chores.
- **Placemaking.** Urban quality of life and its basic characteristic – walkability – is demanded by all generation brackets; people want to meet in physical places.
- **Personalization.** Personalization is a large driver for consumers. Each user will increasingly expect products and services tailored to his/her needs – without the fuss of selection.
- **Choice and Variety.** Because of personalization, users expect choice and variety; the web is driving this trend providing large amounts of products, services, and information beyond traditional outlets.
- **Unbundling.** People do not want to be constrained in their choice by having to buy products and services they don’t want to get those that they want; think of iTunes songs versus CD albums.
- **Involvement.** Users want involvement and participation; they want to contribute to the conversation and shape the outcomes – be it a public service or a consumer good.

Demographic Trends

The composition of Richmond’s population will change in the future – and this has implications on the user needs RPL has and will have to respond to. The current conditions and projected future demographic trends include:

- **Overall population.** The population of Richmond in 2009 was 190,479 inhabitants; half live in Central Richmond and one quarter in the City Centre.
- **Diversity.** Richmond has a visible minority population of 66.5% with 45.2% of the population being of Chinese origin. 63% of the population speaks a language other than English or French.
- **Current age distribution.** The population has two current peak user age groups: young adults (20-30 years old) and mature adults (45-60 years old).
- **Future age distribution.** Three main trends: a reduction in the number and proportion of children, a spiking of the mid-age population (35-50 years old) and a significant increase of senior population.
- **Population growth.** Richmond’s population is expected to grow by 80,000 inhabitants in the next 30 years (+50% of current population); 2/3 of this growth is projected to happen in the City Centre.
Technology Trends

The computer – and increasingly, the smartphone – is progressively supplanting the car as the most desirable technology device, particularly for young people. Specifically, these are some of the technology trends that may affect or are already affecting public libraries:

- **An increasingly mobile world.** Mobile technology gadgets are on the rise; cellphone usage is pervasive. Most growth has occurred in the smartphone market; by 2012, almost half of Canadians owned a smartphone. An emerging growth market is e-book readers and tablets.

- **Web access and use.** Online use in Canada is amongst the highest in the world. Internet usage has picked up also in the older population segments in Canada, reducing the initial age divide caused by the Web.

- **A digital shift.** The change from analog to digital culture is not only a change of technology (the book being supplanted by the e-book) but a true paradigm shift: reduced costs; increased convenience; more choice and variety; and unbundling of products and services.

- **Social (and graphic) media.** Internet usage is continually going up – and social networking is increasing at twice that rate. Visual content channels are rising even faster: most growth has happened in visual social media sites such as Pinterest or Tumblr.

- **Two-way conversations.** Consumers of information have evolved to producers and shapers of content; one-way communication/marketing has evolved to (mainly) digital two-way communication channels, where users expect to be part of the conversation.

**Figure 1:** Current and projected age distribution for Richmond, 2013-2033. Source: BC Stats.
There is wide agreement that public libraries will need to coexist with a new social and media landscape and provide new forms of access, consumption, production, and sharing of knowledge. Some key conditions that will impact public libraries in the future include:

- **Digital media and technology.** New materials will primarily be available in digital form. New media genres, cloud-based storage, faster network connections, user apps, etc. will result in the disruption of the traditional ecosystem of media production, distribution, and access.

- **Competition.** Web-based products and services will increasingly compete with functions traditionally performed by libraries. New and innovative business models for the delivery of published materials will provide convenience, personalization, and choice/variety for consumers.

- **Customer-centric experience.** The form people access, consume, and interact with information will be changing. Users will increasingly expect engaging, sophisticated, and personalized visiting experiences to the real (and virtual) public library.

- **Creation, in addition to consumption.** Citizens will increasingly expect the ability to interact, edit, and manipulate existing materials, alone or in groups, expanding the library’s traditional functions of assimilating information, acquiring knowledge, and providing enjoyment/entertainment.

- **Community needs.** The need for the cross-pollination of ideas of the post-industrial economy and the trend towards the discussion of society’s challenges at the local rather than national level increases the public library’s role as a venue for community building.

- **A portal to the world.** Increasingly, public libraries will act as virtual ‘portals’ to access a large range of media resources not directly owned by the library. The function of the library will increasingly be to guide the user to these external resources.
Focus Areas for Public Libraries in the Future

The American Library Association (ALA) determined four dimensions of focus for future libraries that will drive their vision. Based on this understanding and the insights of the public consultation process, the consultants reached the following conclusions as to the focus areas that will need to be emphasized for RPL’s future:

- In terms of **media type**, the library will still need to focus on physical material, although in the medium to long term a strong shift to electronic material will happen, a process already underway. This means that stacks of physical collections will be here to stay for a long time.

- In terms of **user type**, the library will continue to be community oriented, but it is likely that this will be complemented by a higher demand for personalized products and services. This means that community facilities, such as program rooms will be needed, but will also have to be able to be converted to be specialized for individual use, such as studying spaces.

- In terms of **function**, the library, as in the past, will need to focus on consumers of information, something that is not bound to change strongly in the future. However, some consumers will shift to co-creation or co-curation of information, which will increase the need for spaces such as workshops and digital labs.

- In terms of **information type**, the library will continue to be a portal to global information, but the focus will also include the library as a depository of local information. Spaces dedicated to local collections will be limited in comparison to general topics, and the need for more stack space in the future will be reduced, given the overall shift to electronic media.

Figure 3 below shows graphically the results of the analysis, which contrasted opposite concepts at each end of the four library dimensions of ALA’s framework. An index was generated, ranging from -1 to +1, which allowed the comparison between community sentiment (stemming from the public consultation process) and generally acknowledged expert’s opinion (stemming from bibliographical research).

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Future Clusters of Excellence for Public Libraries

Our research of library, technology, societal, and consumer trends show that there are four main intrinsic areas where public libraries can excel in the future, even if a substantial portion of users shift to the Internet to access information, knowledge, and entertainment. They are:

- **The importance of space.** At first glance, this idea seems counterintuitive: Why should physical space matter in a virtual interconnected era? Haven’t the Web, mobile phones, and Google made the need for physical book stacks irrelevant? It turns out to be not necessarily so. While new media allows for multiple connections with no space or time limitations, we still live in a physical world, and we prefer to deepen meaningful social connections face-to-face. Moreover, proximity for human interaction is a precondition for the cross-pollination of ideas, which is what drives the post-industrial economy, best exemplified in the trend to seek diverse and dense urban places as described by experts Richard Florida, Chris Leinberger, and Edward Glaeser. Certainly, space can be provided at semi-public places such as cafés, but they are not adequate for every need. Not everyone owns or has access to space to study, to meet, to read, or to relax – especially as residential unit size keeps getting smaller. Space is an ingredient every library has and that the Web cannot provide. It may need to be reorganized to appeal to user needs rather than merely to house book stacks, but it exists already.

- **The importance of community anchoring.** Beyond space as a concrete component, libraries also provide a sense of place – not from the personal perspective as in one’s home, but a collective, communal sense of place. Public libraries have always been public places of social interaction, of community building, and local identity. Public libraries are the archetypical democratic institution where communities – especially those with people from very different backgrounds – come together as one. This role will be gaining momentum because of the world-wide trend towards localism, which sees cities, towns, and neighbourhoods as the best vehicles for citizen involvement and action. The public library plays a key role in this; it is both a space where people from all walks of life and all parts of the world come together, as well as a stage for public dialogue and debate between cultures and points of view. In short, the public library is an extension of the public space – not unlike a park or a public square – where multiple community-building activities take place.

- **The importance of two-way learning.** Lifelong learning has always been a core competency of public libraries. Yet the traditional concept of a public library was built on the notion of transmitting knowledge from experts to lay audiences (i.e., from books to library users). This is no longer the case in our post-industrial society. Users are demanding not only to participate in the dialogue, but also to shape the information; the paradigm is shifting from consumer to participant. Libraries need to gradually evolve from dispensers of information to user-driven learning laboratories, where the flow of information is increasingly two-way rather than one-way and many-to-many rather than one-to-many. Public libraries are especially well situated to become a community’s unbiased knowledge

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and learning hub. The library is not only a destination, but a place, both virtual and physical, to get to other places.

- **The importance of co-creation and co-curation.** The combination of the three areas of excellence listed above (space + community + knowledge) also opens up a fourth opportunity: the library as a laboratory for co-creation and co-curation. Co-creation is more than just cooperation; it implies working on a common outcome – be it a school project, a digital product, or a community development project – while being mutually reliant on the different participants. Curation means pulling together, organizing, and filtering knowledge, sometimes adding, sometimes modifying it. Libraries can provide the physical setting, the tools, and the information to inform, develop, create, modify, and share the products and information, fostering informal learning opportunities and nurturing peer-to-peer exchanges. This purposeful collective creating and curating is not likely to be provided virtually through the Web or physically through private entrepreneurs. While this function is the least developed in current libraries and still is not top-of-mind for users, social trends that favour creation over consumption, cooperation over individualism, and sharing over owning all show that this is a very plausible extension of the public library’s mandate of collective integration and informal learning.
2. The User’s Take: Behaviours, Needs, and Aspirations

User Behaviour at the Richmond Public Library

User Types

Sub-consultant OrangeBoy conducted, early in the process, a segmentation analysis of the Richmond Public Library’s users. Instead of doing this analysis by age, income, and other demographic criteria, OrangeBoy’s approach was to segment users into groups based on shared behaviours, as a way to provide the library a tool for future allocation of resources.

This ‘clustering’ process relied heavily on analytical techniques based on user and ex-user surveys, as well as knowledge derived from market assessment, ethnographic observation at the different library branches, and cardholder data analysis. Ten distinct user types or clusters were identified; Figure 4 below shows the breakdown between the different user groups. In general terms, about 60% of library cardholders use the library to borrow material (either physically or virtually), while the other 40% primarily uses the library as a place to do different activities.

- **Digitarians.** The digital user who primarily downloads eBooks from the library website.
- **In-Betweens.** The transitional user who borrows adult print but also downloads eBooks.
- **Browse & Borrow.** Users who browse collections and borrow adult print/audiovisual materials.
- **Page-Turners.** The traditional user who borrows adult print materials and picks up items on hold.
- **New Wave.** Young readers who borrow teen materials, look something up, and conduct research.
- **Double Feature.** Users who focus on borrowing audiovisual materials.
- **Head Starters.** Family members who borrow children’s materials or attend kid’s programs.
- **Snippets.** Destination users who browse material and reads books or periodicals at the library.
- **Grinders.** The purpose-oriented user who comes to work, study, and connect to Wi-Fi.
- **Staying Connected.** Usually older users who come primarily to use a library computer.
User Behaviour Findings and Insights

Beyond the individual cluster behaviours, the consultant team identified a series of key behavioural patterns (some unique to RPL) that need to be understood and taken into account for future library facility and service planning. In general terms, the user analysis shows the divide between traditional library patrons and evolving digital/destination trends.

- Most users circulate material. A majority of users circulate library materials, a traditional library function – even those that use the library as a destination.
- Substantial non-circulating behaviour. About 40% of all library users use the library for non-circulating activities such as browsing, reading, work, or study.
- Users like to browse. In comparison to other libraries, people like to browse materials at RPL, independently if they circulate material or not.
- Shift to digital material. While still small in terms of total circulation, digital media is the only type of material that has substantially increased its user share.
- Digital connectivity is sought after. There is a desire for the library to have an app to connect to online services and to improve Wi-Fi service.
- Language diversity is high. RPL users are diverse – only 35% has English as mother tongue. Chinese is the most popular foreign language; these users borrow children’s materials or read at the library.
- Not all programs are equally popular. Programs for children and kids’ literacy are successful, while adult program attendance is varied. Library programs should ideally connect programs to library’s resources.
- Brighouse is the most popular facility. The most widely used library branch is the Brighouse Main Library. While used for browsing and material circulation, it is also being used as a destination facility for study and work.
- Ex-users. In the ex-user survey, the most mentioned reason for not using the library is a busy lifestyle (29%), followed by users that have moved and prefer to use another library (26%).

User-Tailored Public Consultation Process

Public Consultation Activities

A fundamental component for the consultancy was the carefully conceived and orchestrated public consultation process, designed around the potential participant in order to maximize relevant and meaningful input, feedback, and interaction opportunities. The process included a web-based survey (for both users and ex-users); a ‘crowdsourcing’ online consultation webpage; and a physical display space and interaction opportunity in the Brighouse Main Library. The public consultation activities extended from May to October 2013, and was integrated visually through a project-specific branding around the tag-line “Your Library Your Future” and visually through the image of a girl reaching to an iPad and books placed on a shelf (see Figure 5 on next page).

Here are some key figures and outcomes of the highly engaging and representative consultation process:

- Total active cardholders. In May 2013 there were 117,290 active Richmond Public Library cardholders, meaning cardholders that had circulated material in the previous two years. In addition, there were also thousands of inactive users, i.e., cardholders that had not circulated library material in the last two years.
• **Emails sent.** 70,229 emails were sent to library users that had registered email addresses (removing duplicates), asking them to participate in an initial user survey. In a second wave of emails, 5,496 ex-users were asked to participate in a separate survey.

• **Survey respondents.** Over 12,000 email recipients answered the initial surveys: 11,195 answered the English user survey version; 1,180 answered the Chinese user survey version; and 597 answered the ex-user survey. For users, this corresponds to about a 17% response rate, while for ex-users the response rate was slightly over 10%.

• **Online participation.** Of the initial survey respondents, eventually 2,676 users signed up for the online outreach platform selected for the consultation, MindMixer®. The results of this highly interactive process: Over 5,800 written comments, over 1,700 distinct user ideas, over 2,100 individual respondents to a series of surveys and short polls, and over 450 photo or image uploads.

• **Physical participation.** A physical space devoted to the visioning of the future of the Richmond Public Library and integrated in terms of content and visual branding to the web-based activities was implemented at the Brighouse Main Library (see Figure 5 below). In the end, 6,250 people participated in this form, 497 of these also signing in to the online outreach platform.

The online portion turned out to be the most important component of the public consultation process, allowing for an in-depth conversation to evolve between the consultants and the participants on the different topics, issues, and insights that were surfacing. IBI Group chose to use the MindMixer® online outreach platform because it allowed multiple forms of interaction—from quick polls to idea proposal and refinement—through a graphically intuitive and fun website. Important for this assignment was the ability of immediate translation of all content into dozens of languages, something required by Richmond’s multicultural context.
Some interesting insights of using the chosen online crowdsourcing platform were:

- **Increasing participation.** Starting with 108 participants, the number of active participants always rose as the six-month public consultation progressed. By October 2013, when the process ended, there were over 2,600 users.

- **New topics every two weeks.** Part of the reason of this increase in usership was the availability of new material every two weeks, which was provided in three formats: Quick polls, longer calls for ideas, and photo/image uploading.

- **Interest spikes.** Discernible interest spikes in website traffic could be observed when new topics were posted online, particularly if the content was visual or design-oriented which shows interest of users in graphic and proposal-oriented rather than written and survey-based content.

- **Incentives.** Participation was also sustained by offering perks or prizes in exchange for participation points accumulated. Most of the incentives were not monetary in nature; e.g., the ability to exchange fines for points, celebrate a birthday at the library, or exhibit user-produced artwork.

- **Self-policing.** Users identified abuse of the online platform by a minority of users and ensured, on their own, that the online conversation remained positive and constructive.

![Figure 6: Online participation through the MindMixer® platform: Graphic interphase and website participants.](image)

**Public Consultation Process Insights**

Overall, the public consultation process provided the following insights from the user’s point of view:

- **Overall positive attitude.** People commented positively on how RPL contributes to their quality of life; positive comments outnumber negative ones 2 to 1.

- **Some need for improvement.** However, only 20% say that they are satisfied with the current level of service and condition of facilities; most people say they would want at least some improvement.

- **Improvement ideas.** Two thirds of all suggested improvements and enhancements have to do with operations, not facilities, which allows RPL to focus on smaller, short-term actions while still considering the long term.
• **Different needs.** People come for a variety of reasons to the library. While more than half come to borrow physical or electronic material, 40% come to make use of the space of the library for reading, browsing, studying, etc.

• **Frequency of visit.** People come regularly to the library: Almost half of all users come a couple of times a week or every day. Recurrent clients mean satisfaction – but also increased expectations.

• **Competing interests.** While half the people continue to use the library as before, the other half does use the library less than they used to. The main reason: convenience, followed by choice/variety.

• **No new branches.** The majority of users would not expand the current number of branches – and some would even reduce them. However, most agree that current branches need improvements.

**Design-Related User Concerns**

RPL users commented extensively on issues that concern them most; about a third of all comments have recurring themes. The design-related issues that are on the “top of mind” of library users and will need to be addressed in the future are the following (listed in descending order of importance):

• **Noise.** By far, the most repeated issue in the user comments is the problem of noise – for some, it is not quiet enough, but for others, it should be even noisier and full of activity. Spatial segregation of noisy vs. quiet library functions is, therefore, a must for the new library’s design.

• **Overcrowding / Expansion.** There is a generalized feeling that RPL is always full of people and that there is not enough space for studying, reading, or just relaxing. This issue can be primarily dealt with through library facility expansion, but an open / uncluttered design could also contribute to address this issue.

• **Seating.** People express a lot of frustration by the lack of comfortable seating throughout the library, particularly in the reading areas. The design should incorporate as much seating of different types – chairs, sofas, couches, reading nooks, floor cushions – as possible.

• **Parking.** Car parking is a contentious issue. For some patrons, there is not enough parking, while others recognize the solution is in walking, bicycle, and transit accessibility.

• **Café / Food service.** Several users have highlighted the symbiotic relationship of food and books and expressed that informal, but quality, non-institutional food alternatives should be available at the library.

• **Natural lighting.** An issue supported across the board by all users is the need to incorporate natural lighting in the design of new facilities – particularly in the areas devoted for public gathering, reading, and studying.

• **Power outlets.** A rather straightforward, yet collectively missed aspect for many RPL users is the short supply of power outlets throughout the library, especially in the study areas, which illustrates the evolving needs to recharge the batteries of electronic devices.
**Visual Facility Design Themes**

Three visual themes dominated the virtual visual post boards of how users envisioned Richmond’s ‘library of the future (all pictures from uploads by library users):

**Ample.** People want generous, well-lit spaces with ample, comfortable seating.

*Figure 7:* Spatial ‘feel’ and lighting conditions for the future library as expressed by participants.

**Green.** People like buildings with green, eco-friendly, and energy-efficient features.

*Figure 8:* Visual ideas for sustainable components and green features envisioned for a library building.
**Kid-friendly.** People want thoughtful and detailed design of the kids’ areas.

*Figure 9:* Interior design ideas to enhance spaces destined for children.
3. The Vision for Richmond’s ‘Library of the Future’

The trend research and the public consultation process showed clearly that the public library landscape is at a crossroads now. In order to respond to the challenges lying ahead and make the most of the opportunities at hand, the “Library of the Future” for Richmond is envisioned along four key organizing principles:

A Library That Evolves

The Richmond Public Library will build on its strengths, respond to current user needs, and anticipate evolving trends.

RPL does not need to reinvent itself from the ground up. It only needs to be flexible and adapt to current and future conditions as they evolve. This means continuing with most of what works well now, maintaining established library services and improving present shortfalls. It is no wonder that the overwhelming majority of users expressed that they would support a “refocused traditional library” built around physical collections and quiet, comfortable reading areas. That said, the library needs to progressively but steadily incorporate new spaces and services that continue making the library relevant for new ways of engaging with information, moving increasingly towards a user-driven, interactive, and personalized library experience. This evolution should be conceived as a continuous creative exploration process between users and library staff, where different concepts are tested with and experimented by the users themselves. Flexibility, adaptability, and versatility are key concepts for the library of the future.

A Library That Acts as Interface

The Richmond Public Library will facilitate interaction between users, provide resources for lifelong learning, and improve access to and production of information.

RPL should be conceived as the hub for people, information, and cultures. No longer is information stored just in one place; thus the library is no longer just a depository of knowledge but rather a conduit to access, share, modify, and produce information. Richmond residents are keen on the concept of the library as a learning hub. After the traditional library concept, they overwhelmingly support a library that helps them with lifelong learning – from homework to wellness, from reading to computer literacy. Library spaces are already used daily for formal and informal learning; however, as the library evolves, this role will increasingly be directed towards connecting the dots, rather than only being a place to access educational resources.

A Library That Builds Community

The Richmond Public Library will be a key component to activate the public realm, nurture local activities and initiatives, and bring together the community.

RPL will look beyond its walls towards the broader community. More than just providing traditional access to collections, the library will increasingly need to devote space to fulfill the needs of Richmond citizens – from programmed activities to study rooms to public exhibition areas, all linked to the wider library knowledge base and potentially in partnership with other City facilities or other community-driven institutions. About forty percent of activities at the library already focus on these uses – and this trend is only going to continue. As such, the library has to be thought of as an extension of the public realm, rather than just a facility that lends out books. In other words, the library of the future should be understood as the “community’s living room,” a place that the citizens of Richmond can call home.
A Library That Shapes City Vision

Richmond Public Library’s central library will be a catalyst to achieve the vision of a vibrant, active, and inclusive Richmond City Centre.

The evolving RPL should be more than a public facility: it should be a symbol for the new Richmond City Centre that represents public pride. Richmond is rapidly changing from a suburban satellite community within the Greater Vancouver area, to that of a self-sustaining and vibrant global community with its own discernible urban character. City policy stresses the creation of a world-class urban centre as a key ingredient to meet its vision as the “most appealing, livable, and well-managed community in Canada.” A strategic component to attaining this vision in the longer term will be future strategic and capital expenditure decisions regarding a new central library; one that could anchor downtown development, send the signal that Richmond is serious about public commitment to sustainable development, and spur even more private investment in the City Centre. A new central library has a one-time opportunity to become a catalyst for urban and social transformation in the years ahead.
4. Key Roles for the Library

The library’s future role(s) should be aligned with the library’s vision. A library role corresponds to the official and informal functions a library performs for its users – in other words, its raison d’être. Library roles were described to users during the public consultation stage as “what RPL should be known for.”

As the consultation progressed, it became clear that there were some roles, primarily linked to the traditional notion of a public library, which had strong support by current users. These roles revolved around the notions of material circulation, reading rooms, and informal learning, all functions that public libraries have been providing for over a century. Newer roles explored during the online public consultation process did not, comparatively, garner that much attention by current users (see Figure 10 below), which underscores the importance of continuing to provide traditional library services well.

![Figure 10: User responses regarding potential future library roles for RPL](image)

This information notwithstanding, the consultant team and the library staff feel that technology, lifestyle, and social trends warrant the extension of library roles to include other functions in order to better adapt to evolving conditions and continue to be relevant to users in the future. Another reason to include additional library roles independent of evolving use is the recognition of the social functions a public library must perform, for example, to foster multiculturalism, to provide a repository for locally significant material, or to offer a place for activities that bring the community together and are not or cannot be provided by other City institutions or facilities.

These new roles would, by no means, supplant the current/favoured roles, but would actually enhance them in order for the library to continue to be relevant to an increasingly varied, rich, and personalized group of users.
Three Key Current and User-supported Roles

- **The Refocused Traditional Library.** A place to borrow physical objects for free – not only books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs and CDs, but other learning materials such as early education literacy kits and tools to consume and create information (e-readers, tablets, digital production equipment, etc.). It could, in addition, be a place that serves as a depository for research and user-produced content generated by RPL users. This library role implies partly physical and partly electronic storage areas, and is currently the main focus of RPL that needs to be maintained moving forward.

- **The Living Room Library.** A place to read, study, or relax in a nice, quiet, comfortable environment. In terms of space and function, this should be understood as “the living room” of the library, which is well-lit, ample, and open, but at the same time cozy and comfortable, offering a variety of seating and configuration options. This role consistently came up in the public consultation process as being one of the services that, while already provided by RPL, needs improvement and expansion.

- **The Learning Hub Library.** A place to study, to share information, and to look for guidance and support for lifelong learning—from homework assignments to Internet literacy. In spatial terms, this type of library will need open study areas with computers and wired desks, as well as flexible study/presentation rooms that can be reserved for group work, large group instruction, virtual tutoring, independent practice, or small group collaboration—plus a reference kiosk and library staff help desk. The RPL is currently used by students and other users looking for school-enhancing or informal learning opportunities. It is expected that this function is going to continue in the future, also for those users struggling to make sense of evolving technology.

Five Key Strategic / Evolving Roles

- **The Gathering Place Library.** A place where groups of people can get together informally to talk, learn and share ideas. This implies publicly accessible spaces that can be separated physically from the rest of the library and be adapted to different types of settings. These spaces will likely have access to food-related facilities, such as a public café. This role is warranted because there is a need to supplement the quiet, individual activities of the “Living Room Library” with an informal library space for users where noise is not a concern.

- **The Activity Library.** A place to come together as a community through programs and events, bolstered by knowledge and information that supports each activity. Spatially, this would require flexible activity rooms with storage areas and one or more public areas for performance presentation, such as a stair theater. Movable stacks would allow RPL staff to locate program/event-specific material near the community activity for supplemental information on the topic. This role responds to the increasing need of library users to participate in library- and community-organized programs that are enhanced by the library’s resources.
- **The Creative Library.** A place to work together on group projects with like-minded people – from actual collaborative physical work spaces to digital studios where users can produce, edit, and curate digital material. This would necessitate open and very flexible collaborative workspaces and digital labs that can be customized by RPL as specific interest groups develop. This role, although still in its incipient phase in public libraries across North America, is widely seen as an opportunity to leverage the community’s assets and foster social interaction.

- **The Digital Library.** A virtual place to access a wide range of electronic and virtual materials. While not requiring physical space for the collections and information, it does require individual and group workstations with high speed Internet and a variety of digital tools connected to staff supported instruction and orientation. In addition, this role implies the use of digitally interactive activities that help/guide/spark the users’ curiosity. Although dedicated digital library users still comprise a small fraction of all RPL members, it is the only user group whose resources have seen a sharp increase in circulation. Moreover, there is widespread agreement that this is the predominant form in which information and knowledge will be accessed, shared, and modified in the future.

- **The Multicultural Library.** A place that provides space for special collections that reflect Richmond’s multiculturalism – based on the Dr. Lee collection of Chinese language books and the Ben and Esther Dayson Collection of Judaica. This concept implies the location of traditional stack space to hold special collections with closely adjacent seminar and programming rooms. This role, while low on the priority list of day-to-day users, is justified because of Richmond’s unique position as one of Canada’s most diverse communities and its responsibility to maintain the collective memory of the past for future generations.
5. Future Initiatives and Actions

Objectives and Guiding Principles

In order to advance the library vision and make the roles outlined above attainable, the consultant team produced a list of future initiatives and actions for RPL to consider moving forward. Some of these have the form of specific actions, while others are more general in intent. Some are intended as short-term measures, while others are expected to be implemented in the long run.

The list of recommended initiatives and actions was based on ten objectives and four guiding principles. The objectives spell out the end results that are expected from the execution of each recommendation. The guiding principles provide the determining characteristics that each proposed initiative/action should embody in order to make the objectives viable.

Objectives. The ten objectives are:

1. To continue the momentum of the strategic planning process.
2. To respond to current user needs and aspirations.
3. To respond to future trends with flexibility and adaptability.
4. To respond to increased convenience demanded by users.
5. To provide greater choice/variety of products and services.
6. To provide personalized products and services relevant to each user.
7. To foster meaningful two-way communication and participation with users.
8. To make RPL a comfortable and useful place, especially for destination users.
9. To respond to Richmond City Centre population and redevelopment needs.
10. To make RPL more accessible and community-oriented.

Guiding Principles. The guiding principles are:

- The initiatives shall be cost-effective and a catalyst for larger changes, so the largest net benefit is accrued with the least investment in time, effort, and/or money.
- The initiatives shall further the library’s long-term vision and many have to be achievable in the short-term, so library users will experience tangible results right away without losing sight of the larger purpose for the library.
- They initiatives shall be incremental and build on each other modularly, so that they can be implemented independently of each other while also having a large synergy potential.
- They initiatives shall rise in complexity as time progresses. Simpler interventions – usually easier and faster to implement and less costly – shall be placed upfront.

Recommended Initiatives and Actions

Action 1. Continue web-based public consultation. The “Your Library Your Future” website was, by all accounts, a successful public engagement tool for RPL users. The momentum of this initiative should be carried forward, e.g. by informing and asking for participant input in regard to all other actions below.

Action 2. Improve operations and customer service. The public consultation process provided, beyond the future-of-the-library visioning process, a large amount of very useful and practical ideas and suggestions for day-to-day implementation. The easiest short-term action by RPL is to implement the most viable of the administrative/operational proposals, making it known that the ideas came from the users themselves.
**Action 3. Improve seating and reading corners.** Beyond noise concerns, the most often expressed issue that affects RPL users is the lack of seating inside the library. This should be an easy action to implement, and it lends itself well to promoting the change through a proof-of-concept service (see Action 8 below).

**Action 4. Improve/expand printers and computers.** Since the library is heavily used for learning functions, particularly for after-school studying and homework, it is necessary to keep up with the quantity and quality of the computing equipment at the library, another often-cited user concern. Since more and more users bring in their own equipment, having enough power outlets is also becoming increasingly important.

**Action 5. Implement ‘Learning Hubs.’** As a follow-up to the previous action, more in-depth reconfiguration of library study areas may be performed, including new furniture and state-of-the-art equipment for virtual learning, such as Smart TVs and web-conferencing tools. To test the different configurations and user needs, implementing first a proof-of-concept service (see Action 8 below) may be useful.

**Action 6. Implement refocused library performance metrics.** It will become increasingly important for RPL to measure performance and success in target-oriented quantitative and qualitative ways. This means further investigating alternative public library performance measures, selecting those that are relevant to RPL, implementing the new metrics, and informing users and public stakeholders of results and progress.

For an expanded discussion of this action, please see Section 6 of this Report.

**Action 7. Implement ‘Interactive Entrance Area.’** Users will be increasingly expecting a more personalized and participatory library experience. A way to improve the customer’s experience is to implement an interactive entrance area, where users can ‘check-in’ to find user-relevant library information. Here, information such as holds, website links, reading suggestions, new incoming material, etc. would be provided, based on each user’s interests and past circulation history. This may imply IT work to develop a tailored RPL algorithm that best serves users.

**Action 8. Experiment with and implement ‘Proof-of-Concept Services.’** Many of the changes that need to happen in the library to adapt to evolving technology, society, and consumer trends are still unproven. As a quick way to explore the different solutions, involve the end users, minimize cost, and gather improvement feedback, RPL could implement small-scale working prototypes.

Section 7 of this Report examines in detail some ideas for proof-of-concept services.

**Action 9. Develop synergies and partnerships.** It goes without saying, but RPL is best advised to develop synergies and partnerships with other organizations, both public and private. As libraries expand the services they provide and fulfill increasingly more complex roles, working together with other institutions and groups of people can provide substantial mutual benefits and cost-sharing opportunities.

**Action 10. Refocus and/or expand collections.** Although the proportional importance of collection space will likely decrease in the future, there is still a need to increase the actual space devoted to stacks, given current space constraints in comparison to other public libraries (see Section 8 of the Report). Moreover, there is a need to focus collection expansion strategically on those user clusters that will grow in the future.
**Action 11. Targeted programming.** Library programs have, to a certain extent, offset the decrease in physical material circulation. This study has established, however, that programs are attended predominantly by certain groups of users, such as families with small children. Current figures show that while the number of programs has increased, the average participation rate in the programs has gone down. It is recommended that RPL focus strategically on those demographics that consistently demand programs, expanding popular activities while curtailing less successful ones.

**Action 12. Implement flexible rentable rooms.** Major internal remodeling as well as the implementation of rentable rooms with adaptable size, furnishings, and equipment configurations is essential to efficiently use space that is at a premium at the library. Allowing the rooms to be reserved or rented for multiple community-enhancing activities will provide users with space they cannot find or afford elsewhere, to study, socialize, play, or work.

**Action 13. Develop personalized digital services apps.** Possibly as an extension of Action 7, RPL will need to think in the medium term about the improvement of virtual/digital services for its users, including the development of a library-specific app. The need to have convenient, personalized, and simple access to the library’s resources is important now and will likely be more so in the future.

**Action 14. Build first replicable branch prototype.** With the insights gained by the implementation of most of the actions above – particularly the proof-of-concept services – it is recommended that a compact version of the library of the future is planned, built, and put into operation in the medium to long term. This is the first large endeavor by RPL, and, given existing needs and physical conditions, will most likely target the Steveston Branch. Beyond responding to local needs, the new library prototype should be expandable, i.e. easy to duplicate for future facilities.

A more in-depth discussion on facilities and their spatial location can be found in Section 8.

**Action 15. Improve pedestrian/bike/transit access.** Working together with the City of Richmond, improvements for library accessibility by foot, bike, and transit should be implemented. While some enhancements may happen at the library itself, e.g. better bicycle parking facilities, most of them will need to be planned in the public realm of open spaces and streets’ rights-of-way. Analogous to the “first mile – last mile” concept of public transit, special emphasis should be placed on the largest impediments for getting to the library from nearby residential areas, bike routes, and transit stops.

**Action 16. Plan building the City Centre Library.** The building of the branch prototype (Action 14) will expose challenges and opportunities for the implementation of different library-of-the-future concepts. These insights, plus a participative public consultation process, a strong partnership with the City’s different departments and, if needed, with private partners, should inform and direct the long-term planning process for the new main branch in Richmond’s City Centre.

**Action 17. Build the City Centre Library.** The most complex and significant action in this recommended action list is the building of the new City Centre Main Library – admittedly a long term project. This initiative should build on the holistic planning process of Action 16. While not absolutely essential to fulfill the library’s vision, many of its aims will be curtailed if the main library stays at its current location and/or maintains its current size, even if it is substantially renovated. Although library users would undoubtedly benefit from a new central library, the residents of Richmond’s City Centre would be the main beneficiaries of this civic endeavor, furthering the area’s growth, attractiveness, and quality of life.
Action 18. Build and/or expand other branches. After the City Centre library is built, RPL could focus on the expansion and/or building of the other branches. At this point, further study of user place-of-residence, trend analysis, and customer expectations may be warranted.

Linking Initiatives and Actions to Objectives

The individual actions listed above are all geared towards the attainment of at least one of the ten objectives established for this Plan; Table 1 below shows the alignment between actions and objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative / Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Continue web-based public consultation</td>
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<td>2 Improve operations and customer service</td>
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<td>3 Improve seating and reading corners</td>
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<td>5 Implement ‘Learning Hubs’</td>
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<td>6 Implement refocused library performance metrics</td>
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<td>7 Implement ‘Interactive Entrance Area’</td>
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<td>8 Experiment/implement ‘Proof-of-Concept Services’</td>
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<td>10 Refocus and/or expand collections</td>
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<td>11 Targeted programming</td>
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<td>12 Implement flexible rentable rooms</td>
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<td>13 Develop personalized digital services apps</td>
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<td>14 Build first replicable branch prototype</td>
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<td>15 Improve pedestrian/bike/transit access</td>
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<td>16 Plan to build the City Centre Library</td>
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<td>17 Build the City Centre Library</td>
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<td>18 Build and/or expand other branches</td>
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Table 1: Correspondence between initiatives/actions and envisioned objectives.
**Implementation Plan**

With only a few exceptions, the list of initiatives and actions developed above are independent, and not necessarily prerequisites for the implementation of other items. This means that each initiative / action may be implemented on its own, which increases flexibility, and allows for timing changes due to budgetary or other reasons. This is not to say that there is no preferred order of implementation. According to the guiding principles that were used to develop the list of actions, less costly, easier-to-implement, smaller, and less-complex interventions should precede pricier, less viable to implement, larger and more complex interventions in order to keep the momentum of the process moving.

The conceptual matrix of Figure 11 depicts the recommended order of implementation of the different initiatives, where the horizontal axis shows the temporal dimension, while the vertical axis shows the cost-ease-complexity-size dimension. Grey arrows show how actions can continue in time after the action is first implemented or flexible implementation timeframes.

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<td>Continue web-based public consultation</td>
<td>Implement flexible rentable rooms</td>
<td>Build City Centre Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve operations &amp; customer service</td>
<td>Develop personalized digital services apps</td>
<td>Build/expand other branches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve seating and reading corners</td>
<td>Build first expanded branch prototype</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve/expand printers &amp; computers</td>
<td>Improve pedestrian/bike/transit access</td>
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<td>Implement learning hubs</td>
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<td>Implement community creation corner</td>
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<td>Implement new metrics</td>
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<td>Implement interactive entrance area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiment with &amp; implement proof of concept services</td>
<td>Develop synergies and partnerships</td>
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<td>Refocus/expand collections</td>
<td>Refocus/expand collections</td>
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<td>Targeted programming</td>
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</table>

*Figure 11:* Conceptual timeframe for the implementation of the different initiatives/actions.
6. Key Short-term Action 1: Library Performance Measurement

This section expands on the previous section’s Action #6, “Implement refocused library performance metrics,” given its importance in the changing landscape of public library products and services.

How Library Performance Should be Measured

Much of the disconnect between perceived and real performance of public libraries has to do with how success is defined and measured. Traditionally, libraries have measured those traits that are linked to the management of their collections. That is, the indicators have measured how well a library is working internally, rather than how well it advances its mission or serves its users. The issue at stake may not be the things that have been measured, but rather things that have not.

Collection-based measures worked well for the 20th century public library, which revolved around the concept of a physical repository of knowledge. Knowing how big a collection was and how many books circulated was a good approximation of the success of a library. In addition, a library’s responsibility to prove its efficiency and effectiveness to the taxpayer, added a set of measurements related to accountability, budgeting, and staffing. These are largely the indicators collected by the BC Ministry of Education, which do a good job of measuring a library’s performance from the internal operations perspective.

Nonetheless, users are now expecting their library to perform more than the single, one-size-fits-all function of a depository of books. This is most evident in the gradual decline in print material circulation observed across North American public libraries, but it is also present in the trends towards more personalization, involvement, choice, convenience, and enjoyment, described in Sections 1 and 2 of this Report. Together with these heightened expectations comes an increased complexity of the products and services the public library needs to provide – even though the core mission of the library remains unaltered. This increase in complexity also implies the need to measure new service elements in order to assess holistically and appropriately how well a library is performing. In other words, a decline in circulation is not necessarily a sign of declining performance if other indicators, more relevant to users, are substantially improving.

Because of the evolving social and technological landscape, since the late 1990s the trend in library performance measurement has shifted from inputs, process, and output indicators to outcome indicators. The focus is now on measuring the impacts the library has on its users and on society at large, rather than only on measuring internal resources and measuring the products and services offered. Said another way, measuring has moved to a customer-centric approach. This shift implies an added emphasis on the user (the demand side) rather than on the library operation (the supply side) – but it also results in more qualitative, difficult-to-measure, and subjective indicators (see Figure 12 below).
The issue at stake is how to move to the right of the chart, without getting into territory where measurement is all subjective and biased, proving unreliable to chart the road ahead and assess successes. A balanced approach appears to be measuring outcome performance using both (1) **quantitative data** that responds to users’ needs and aspirations and (2) **qualitative data** that uncovers users’ perception of quality. This balanced approach, when measured consistently over time, would allow the library to define milestones, determine benchmarks, and track progress – the value-added element of performance measuring.

Therefore, as one of the next steps of the strategic planning process, we recommend the library plan and implement a new metrics package. RPL should think about outlining which indicators best serve the purpose of measuring the products and services it offers to its users *from the customer’s perspective.* While the selection of individual indicators and their definition, methodology, and interpretation is outside the scope of this project, the consultant team recommends that they be chosen with the aim of measuring the attainment of the target library roles and meeting user expectations.

The next two passages outline how the indicators could be grouped to strategically measure what is important moving forward. Figure 13 below summarizes this suggested measurement concept for RPL.

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**Figure 12:** Diagram illustrating the trends in library performance measurement.
Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators are easy to measure for inputs and outputs, but these are usually related to internal operations rather than library users. The challenge here will be to identify those measurable traits that serve as correlation proxies for qualitative outcomes from the user’s point of view. Some existing publications and studies already provide some guidance as to typical indicators that would fit this description. ⁴

To provide some rigor to the analysis and define what to measure, it is advisable that the indicators be linked to overall recommended direction for RPL. While the library’s future vision (outlined in Section 2 above) gives a good sense of direction of where the library should be going, it is a bit too general and vague to ascribe a set of indicators to it. We recommend, instead, that the eight target library roles outlined in Section 4 of this Report form the base of the quantitative indicators. This way, there would be a link between what is measured (the indicators) and what RPL is aiming for (fulfilling the roles).

For example, for the role “Living Room Library,” quantitative indicators to measure performance may include:

- Reading room user area per capita;
- Seats per capita;
- Seat occupancy rate;
- Average time per visit spent in the library; and
- Total in-house circulation of material.

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Qualitative Indicators

Although the measurement, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative indicators is much more subjective and exposed to staff bias than quantitative measures, it can target user-related outcomes in a more direct way than through proxy quantitative measurements. Moreover, since from the user’s perspective, his/her perception is a reflection of reality, the customer’s opinion is also important to consider for policymakers.

Qualitative methods such as surveys, interviews, or discussion groups have been extensively used in libraries in the past. It is, however, during the last decade that the development of standardized definitions and protocols, larger and more detailed datasets, better statistical data analysis tools, and newer library quality assessment tools such as LibQUAL+® have enabled a more systematic assessment of qualitative data. Combined with quantitative indicators, it has the potential to complement and provide a more holistic performance evaluation than only using one of these types of indicators.

We recommend RPL measures those qualitative traits that are related to the societal trends, needs, and aspirations identified through conducting this study. The rationale for this comes from the insight that, if RPL is going to move to customer-centered performance measures, these have to be aligned with customer expectations. Key areas to measure are:

- **Useful.** RPL should be in sync with the evolving user’s needs and requirements. This qualitative assessment may change over time; what is relevant for users now may not necessarily be in the future.
- **Convenient.** Convenience is the number one trend identified by the consultants – and the reason why new business models are substituting traditional forms of product and service delivery, particularly if these can be accessed in unbundled form, in any place, and at any time.
- **Personalized.** Personalization is also a large driver for consumers. Each user will increasingly expect products and services tailored to his/her needs – without the fuss of selection. How well RPL makes each physical or virtual visit a personal experience will be increasingly important.
- **Diverse.** Because of personalization, a large choice and variety of products and services is required; collection materials and other activities offered by the Library need to carefully be tracked against the supply of online digital content and market-offered services.
- **Engaging.** Users are increasingly looking for enjoyable, gratifying, and entertaining experience – both in their spare time and on day-to-day chores.
- **Involving.** Finally, users want involvement and participation; they want to shape the conversation, as the online outreach component of this project amply showed. How much they can contribute defines to a large degree how successful RPL is perceived by its users.
7. Key Short-term Action 2: Proof-of-Concept Services

This section expands on Action # 8, “Experiment with and implement ‘Proof-of-Concept Services’,” contained in the list of initiatives of Section 5 above.

The evolving role for public libraries in the digital age implies that, in many instances, no proven precedents exist for the new product and service concepts that are demanded by users. This means that instead of relying on experience and expertise, these new concepts and ideas have to evolve in order to implement them formally. Thus it is probably wiser to experiment with them on a smaller scale, test them with the users, and produce the insights required for their formal implementation. There are five major reasons for this:

- **Solution refinement.** The approaches to meet future technology trends and consumer needs require an ongoing feedback mechanism to improve, refine, and grow solutions that can be scaled-up and respond efficiently and effectively to the challenge.

- **Low cost.** Implementing a new service or product formally across the library system can be costly. Small-scale, informal experiments allow for making and learning from mistakes at a fraction of the cost. Once the learning process is advanced, it can be incorporated in larger-scaled facility planning.

- **Momentum.** The planning process generated significant momentum from RPL users. Small-scale and easy-to-implement pilot projects or prototypes will allow this energy to move forward and show participants how some of their own ideas are being considered for implementation.

- **Comprehension.** Sometimes it is difficult for people to understand an abstract concept, particularly when it has never been tested or experienced before. Setting up actual, hands-on prototypes that users can touch and try out allows for an easier transmission of ideas than through verbal descriptions.

- **Community-building.** A by-product of implementing prototypes is that the library users will be engaged in a collective activity. Moreover, users are an essential piece in the identification of the challenges facing RPL in the future, and the proposal of solutions to meet these challenges.

We have termed these prototypes ‘Proof-of-Concept Services’ – low-cost, short-term collective experiments that will allow formal and improved mid/long-term solutions to evolve. In other words, the proof-of-concept services are beta versions of new services and products to be offered at RPL.

**Proof-of-Concept Services Ideas**

While the contents of the experiments will evolve through user feedback and evolving user needs, some initial themes or concepts to test may include the following:

**Idea 1.** “The sitting room.” An experimental reading room with all kinds of seating (which could be loaned from different furniture vendors) where library members can go, try them out, and read/study/relax – and then rate the different options for their suitability for the future library.

**Idea 2.** “The work-in-room.” A bookable space with high quality and fully wired work cubicles and a common central table with office supplies and equipment (photocopier, colour printer, etc.).

**Idea 3.** “The comfy living room.” All that makes a comfortable and traditional living room: leather sofas, coffee tables, fireplace, thick rugs, wooden bookshelves – and even a robotic cat. This should be combined with plenty of new book arrivals, current magazines, and same-day newspapers to make it relevant to destination users.

**Idea 4.** “The virtual classroom.” A space with new tables, pod chairs, Smart TV and other state-of-the-art equipment that would transform the learning experience for the After School Drop-In
program. Khan Academy, TED talks, MOOC courses, and other tutoring programs could be featured here.

**Idea 5.**  
**“The digital genius bar.”** A walk-up counter for informal tutoring on new media, software, and technology, equipped with different devices (e-book readers, smartphones, laptops, iPads, etc.) and new media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.). In addition, the following services should be available: Wi-Fi, multiple power outlets, and adjacent comfy seats to read an e-book, listen to music on an iPod, or watch a movie on an iPad.

**Idea 6.**  
**“The local database.”** A space that, over a specific period of time, collects, catalogues, and projects on a screen, all work produced by RPL patrons using library spaces or collections – homework, research, community programs, children’s activities, art, etc. Users could be given a button labeled “I contributed to RPL’s local database.” The aim is to show the quantity and variety of material produced at the library.

**Idea 7.**  
**“Your photo lab.”** A place where RPL users can download, modify, and print photographs at low cost allowing them to share pictures of themselves or their community. Some photographs (with prior owner consent) could be projected on an ever-increasing photo collage called “My Richmond.”

**Idea 8.**  
**“The (un)traditional library.”** A place where objects other than books (e.g. musical instruments, art pieces, e-readers, laptops, sports equipment, expensive tools, etc.) can be checked out for a few hours or days. It may be useful to have other library members loan these things to the library for the time the experiment goes on. Some libraries, local and abroad, are even experimenting with “loaning out” library members for a short period of time.

**Idea 9.**  
**“The inter-active kid.”** A series of interactive installations for children, linking participation with library material. The Aarhus library in Denmark has an extensive list of experimental prototypes for interactive kids’ installations. See: https://www.aakb.dk/files/file_attachments/29._juni_2010_-_1438/childrensinteractive_web.pdf for more information.

**Idea 10.**  
**“The incurable curator.”** A series of blogs called “What you should know about...” or “How to...” where users write small posts, upload pictures, vote on ideas, etc. At library branches, a walk-up counter with tablets, one for each of the topics, would also be available. These should be compelling topics, like “What you should know about taxes” or “What is the best way to find a good teen book at RPL?,” which could showcase how crowdsourcing can filter and curate meaningful material.

**Idea 11.**  
**“The world in Richmond.”** A space to showcase the multiculturalism of Richmond through an interactive map where users can pinpoint their family’s origin and/or the languages spoken in Richmond, centered around featured pieces of the Dr. Lee collection, and surrounded by multilingual collections that would be housed in this single place. Potentially, this space should also include a place for community-led multicultural programming.

**Idea 12.**  
**“The creation spot.”** A space to learn, share, create, and display community creations, which would include flexible seating and workshop furniture; hardware such as computers, scanners, 3D printers; arts and crafts supplies; and physical/digital display units.

Other ideas can be mined from the RPL community using the web-based public consultation platform (Action #1), which would also contribute to sustaining the public’s interest in the future visioning process.
### Alignment with Library Roles

Each Proof-of-Concept idea outlined above coincides with at least one of the targeted library roles, as Table 2 below illustrates:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proof-of-concept idea</th>
<th>Refocused collection</th>
<th>Living room</th>
<th>Learning hub</th>
<th>Gathering place</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Digital</th>
<th>Multicultural</th>
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<td>The sitting room</td>
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**Table 2:** Relationship between proof-of-concept ideas and envisioned library role
Implementation of Proof-of-Concept Ideas

The different experimental prototype ideas could be implemented in a single location that would make sense functionally and programmatically. This has the advantage that the public knows that a particular space at the library always showcases new ideas, analogous to the successful “Your Library Your Future” display space set up during the public consultation. Library users would be curious to check out what’s going on in the ‘ideas corner’ each time they visit the library. In this scheme, the space would be located in a key, central location at the Brighouse branch to optimize traffic flow and ensure relevance, and ideally be surrounded on all sides by glass for visibility and sound concerns.

The proof-of-concept service prototypes should be easily identified as such by RPL users. Therefore, a coherent branding strategy is a must. Further, to ensure this, it is recommended:

- That users are fully aware that proof-of-concept services are being implemented through a targeted information and awareness campaign;
- That users clearly understand what is being tested;
- That there is a mechanism for users to record their feedback; and
- That there is plenty of activity and “buzz” surrounding the experiment.
8. Library Facilities: An Initial Outlook

Current Facilities

Currently, RPL operates four branches and the Hamilton community outreach service. The Brighouse branch serves as the main library facility. The locations of the five service points are shown on the Figure 14 below, which also spatially locates the place of residence of all registered RPL users (one dot per user):

![Figure 14: Place-of-residence of RPL users (multiple users at a single location appear as one dot).](image)

Branches are usually between 4 and 6 kilometres away from each other, with the exception of the Hamilton service to the east, which is physically separated by the Agricultural Land Reserve and only consists of a weekly library service without a fixed facility. This 4- to 6-kilometre distance is still substantial to travel on foot (more than an hour), but readily accessible by transit and bicycle (between 10 and 20 minutes, depending on the place of residence). Theoretically, these distances between branches could support a branch expansion policy in order to bring library services closer to the users, particularly for children, teenagers, and the elderly. Nonetheless, the consultant team recommends pursuing consolidation and strengthening the existing branches with minimal increase in the number of branches for the reasons outlined further on in this section.
**Future Space Requirements**

During the consultancy, the planning team calculated future library space requirements based on different space projection approaches. Table 3 below shows the projected figures for the Brighouse (Main) Branch, which currently has a size of 49,328 square feet. These calculations are also based on the expected downtown population for the year 2041, which the Official Community Plan estimates at 100,000 inhabitants.\(^5\) (In 2011, the City Centre population was 50,000.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Required size (2041)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detailed space planning approach</td>
<td>Specific space calculations for collections, seating, staff, meeting room, special use, and other areas (Alberta Public Library Standards, 2010)</td>
<td>119,688 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served population standard-based approach</td>
<td>Based on the population served (Southern Ontario Library Service Development Guide, 2010)</td>
<td>121,875 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area-per-capita standard-based approach</td>
<td>Based on a standard area per inhabitant figure (Southern Ontario Library Service Development Guide, 2010)</td>
<td>127,000 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison to other BC libraries approach</td>
<td>Projection of library size based on average square feet per capita of BC libraries (Consultants’ own calculations based on BC Public Library Statistics, 2012)</td>
<td>114,000 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplier to regional average approach</td>
<td>Projection of library size to bring it up to Lower Mainland area-per-capita standard (Consultants’ own calculations based on BC Public Library Statistics, 2012)</td>
<td>83,660 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Brighouse Main Branch size</td>
<td></td>
<td>49,328 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3:** Estimations of required main branch size for the year 2041 using different approaches.

In addition, the consultants produced an analysis of how the current space allocated for each of the eight target roles would change over time as user expectations shift from the traditional library role to the others. The result of this analysis is similar to the ones above – even under the assumption that no new book stack space is added – as Figure 15 below shows:

---

What all these figures show is that RPL already has a space deficiency that will grow even wider as population increases – particularly in the City Centre, where most of the future growth is expected.

**Recommended Long-term Facility Location and Expansion Concept**

Based on the above figures, the consultants recommended a broad location and expansion direction. It rests on three key components:

1. **Keep but expand existing branches in current neighbourhoods.** The Ironwood, Steveston, and Cambie branches should stay in their current general location and be progressively remodeled and expanded to accommodate current and expected space requirements, as well as the evolving spatial program to meet future user expectations. This could mean the refurbishment and expansion of existing facilities or the move to a new facility nearby, depending on the individual conditions of each branch. In addition, the Hamilton branch should change its weekly library service into a permanent branch facility, albeit smaller in size than the other branches.

2. **Build a new City Centre Library.** As a long-term objective, the Library’s main branch should move from Brighouse to a new facility to be located at a key City Centre location, which will not only serve to accommodate physical space needs and the new spatial program linked to the library of the future notion, but will also make a visible public statement supporting the development of Richmond’s City Centre. For physical accessibility and to make the new library a truly public institution, it is recommended that it be placed at walking distance (i.e. 400 metres or less) from a major transit stop, ideally a downtown Richmond Canada Line station and, ideally, be integrated with other City facilities/public amenities.

3. **Downsize or relocate current Brighouse Branch.** Once the main library branch moves to the new City Centre library, the Brighouse facility can be downsized to the standard secondary branch size, with the remaining space given back to the City for other activities that fit well with the public
amenities currently present at Minoru Plaza. Alternatively, when this move is considered, further analysis may warrant relocating the Brighouse Branch to an area with a higher concentration of users that does not have library facilities nearby. From current library user distribution, a location between the neighbourhoods of Seafair and Blundell seems plausible, but needs to be weighed against future population growth near Brighouse.

Table 4 below summarizes current and future recommended areas, consistent with the spatial program determined in Stage 3 of the consultancy and largely aligned with the Library’s Strategic Plan 2008-2010. The full build out of facilities at 195,000 sq. ft. would be accomplished over time stretching to 2041 in order to meet the long term population growth of Richmond.

### Table 4: Long-term estimation of library facility expansion requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Current facility size</th>
<th>Population 2011⁶</th>
<th>Long-term expanded/new facility size</th>
<th>Population 2041⁶</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New City Centre Main Library</td>
<td>0 sq. ft.</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>90,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighouse Library Branch (or new location near Seafair/Blundell)</td>
<td>49,352 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steveston Library Branch</td>
<td>3,919 sq. ft.</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>25,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td>180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambie Library Branch</td>
<td>4,712 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironwood Library Branch</td>
<td>11,775 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Library Branch</td>
<td>0 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,000 sq. ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69,758 sq. ft.</strong></td>
<td><strong>200,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>195,000 sq. ft.</strong></td>
<td><strong>280,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recommended strategy of consolidation and selective expansion is justified for multiple reasons:

**User opinion and needs.** When asked during the online public consultation, users by far favoured keeping (or even reducing) the number of branches. Only 16% of users thought it was a good idea to expand the number of branches, with the knowledge that the trade-off would be smaller branches with smaller collection sizes (see Figure 16).

---

No strong support for added locations. The online consultation process also asked users about specific locations where they would like to see new public library facilities. The actual number of proposals was low and there were only a small number of participants supporting the different location ideas.

Current space deficit. The 2008-2010 Library Strategic Plan includes a detailed assessment of the library space shortfalls of current library locations, which was calculated at 75,000 square feet for the year 2007, with an additional shortfall of about 35,000 square feet by 2021. These figures coincide with the consultant’s calculations described above. The issue of overcrowding was one of the main recurring themes in the user online outreach, which is a reflection of the limited space of all library facilities. In our view, RPL would be much better served to expand the current branches rather than embarking on an ambitious small-scale branch expansion that would duplicate many spaces and would be more costly to operate overall.

More complex programming. The facilities’ spatial program analysis (see below) concluded that the library needs to meet an increasingly complex and varied functional program, something that is further highlighted in the assessment of library roles in this report. This complex programming would require
proportionally larger facility sizes in a decentralized branch scenario, since the individual spaces required for each function cannot be reduced at the same rate as overall branch size would justify.

**Alignment with City Policy.** The shift towards building a new main library facility in Richmond’s City Centre is a main public policy contained in the City Centre Area Plan (CCAP), approved by Council in September 2009 (see image below). Although the Plan also calls for four 2,000 sq. ft. neighbourhood library lending services and three 20-25,000 sq. ft. branch libraries, we believe that only the main library is warranted for the reasons outlined in this list. The CCAP proposes the location of the new library around the Canada Line Lansdowne station area, which is designated as the “Centre of the City Centre.”

![Library Facilities Map](image)

**Figure 18:** Library Facilities Map, from the 2009 City Centre Area Plan.

**Current and future City Centre density.** A reason to focus on a new main library that is substantially bigger than the current Brighouse facility is the rate of population increase that is expected for the Richmond City Centre. Both the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the CCAP expect about two thirds of new citywide
population growth to happen in the City Centre (about 50,000 additional people from 2011 to 2041, an increase of 100% over current levels). But even with present population levels, it makes sense to invest in a large facility downtown. Figure 19 below shows that the concentration of current active library cardholders is highest in the two census tract locations within the City Centre area.

![Figure 19: Density of library cardholders, Richmond.](image)

**Ability to address accessibility concerns otherwise.** The main argument for a decentralized library branch strategy is to bring library services near people’s homes. For the reasons outlined above, it may not make sense from a financial perspective to follow this direction, yet accessibility is a valid concern that needs to be addressed. While physical accessibility is an important part of this – and the reason why the new central library should be near mass transit – centralized library services can be made accessible at a fraction of the cost of smaller library branches. Currently, the library already operates a Home Services program as well as a weekly library service in Hamilton that can be expanded in frequency and location if demand increases. The introduction and rising circulation of digital material will, however, most likely reduce the need for physical services in the long run, while at the same time increasing the choices for readers.

**Internal Facility Design Strategies**

As a response to future trends and user needs highlighted in Sections 1 and 2 of the Report, the consultant believes that spatial distribution of the library should be based on four basic design strategies, all of which respond to the overall principles of flexibility in use and adaptability to different functions:

- **Separation by noise areas.** The issue of noise can be addressed through noise level areas linked to the activities bound to happen in each sector of the library, along a continuum ranging from ‘very noisy’ to ‘very quiet,’ the former related to younger patrons and community activities, while the latter related to older patrons and individual activities. The design could even include components that tell users in what noise level they are, e.g., through colour-coding walls, columns, bookcases, etc. The
separation could be horizontal, i.e., on the same level, or vertical, i.e., on levels with different assigned noise levels.

- **Increasing levels of privacy.** To ensure openness and functionality alike, the design should proceed along levels of privacy and spatial openness, from public and open to all (e.g., the check-out area) to semi-public (the stack areas) to private and enclosed (e.g., bookable meeting rooms). This both makes the library a vibrant public space and addresses the increasingly diverse needs of library patrons without negative effects on the adjacent activity.

- **Linking collections to user areas.** Since the library is not a community centre, it needs to relate the varied activities of users – coming to study, to a community program, or to a talk, for example – with the resources of the library. Therefore, the relevant collections to the participants in a particular program, event, or age group should be located between the entrance and the specialized user areas. The stacks could, in addition, be movable to appeal to different audiences as programs change during the day or the week.

- **Flexible overlapping of specialized spaces.** To minimize the requirement of spaces and to increase the adaptability of spaces over time (be it on an hourly basis or to respond to long-term consumer-based shifts), the specialized library spaces should be located in spatial proximity and designed flexibly so that they allow for polyfunctionality, e.g., that program rooms can also be shared by kids, or that audiovisual rooms can also be used for business meetings.

![Figure 20: Conceptual distribution of spaces in a RPL facility in the future.](image-url)
**Preliminary Facility Spatial Program**

**Main Library Spatial Program**

The unknowns of a very concrete and specific building program notwithstanding, the consultants made some projections of current library spaces to inform, in general terms, the architectural program for the conceptual design of a model future main library. These estimated areas take as a base the current Brighouse main branch with an area of approximately 49,000 square feet. This base area was projected to 90,000 square feet – the surface of the future facility – and adjusted according to the trends identified by the planning team and expressed by RPL’s users.

At a broad, summarized level (see Figure 20 below), the proportional breakdown of spatial areas will reduce somewhat staff spaces and collection stack areas, while increasing specialized spaces and public spaces, responding to the need of converting the library into an extended public realm that incorporates a variety of new roles besides that of a traditional library. (Note that, even though the percentage figure is going down on some space areas, this does not mean that the area devoted to a particular use is decreasing; actually, since the overall size of the facility will be doubling, all areas will increase in size, although at a different rate.)

![Space breakdown, current vs. projected](image)

**Figure 20:** Conceptual distribution of spaces in a RPL facility in the future.

Table 5 next page presents, at a more detailed level and loosely categorizing spaces according to the conceptual diagram of Figure 20, all areas and sub-areas that should inform the architectural program of the new building.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Existing areas based on 49k SF</th>
<th>Simple projection to 90k SF</th>
<th>Space need trends (up/down)</th>
<th>Suggested project area (SF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. PUBLIC REALM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1. PUBLIC SPACES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby/Checkout</td>
<td>5,018</td>
<td>9,155</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foyer/Expo/Stage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>new space</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café/Bistro</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>new space</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals/New arrivals</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>3,525</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical circulation spaces</td>
<td>1,165</td>
<td>2,126</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. LIBRARY COLLECTION SPACES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid’s stacks</td>
<td>3,135</td>
<td>5,720</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference stacks</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiovisual stacks</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult non-fiction stacks</td>
<td>2,321</td>
<td>4,235</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult fiction stacks</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese collection stacks</td>
<td>1,816</td>
<td>3,313</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lee’s collection stacks</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1,031</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3 SPECIALIZED SPACES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid’s reading/play/activity rooms</td>
<td>4,716</td>
<td>8,604</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program/event rooms</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>3,357</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/audiovisual rooms</td>
<td>2,615</td>
<td>4,771</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/meeting rooms</td>
<td>4,587</td>
<td>8,369</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult reading rooms</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>4,291</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total A</td>
<td>34,745</td>
<td>63,393</td>
<td></td>
<td>67,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. STAFF REALM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checkout area</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation workroom</td>
<td>5,071</td>
<td>9,252</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office space</td>
<td>4,028</td>
<td>7,349</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board/Meeting/Training rooms</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>2,277</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT spaces</td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>2,629</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff rest/lunch areas</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>2,120</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical circulation spaces</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total B</td>
<td>14,583</td>
<td>26,607</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total A+B</td>
<td>49,328</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5:** Estimation of a high-level architectural program for RPL’s main library branch.

**Branch Library Spatial Program**

Having the projection for a main library, the consultants produced, with RPL staff input, a projection for a hypothetical branch library. Current branch sizes range from about 4,000 to 12,000 square feet, but it was felt by the library’s staff – and confirmed by the users through the public consultation process – that branch size needs to be larger to accommodate a sizeable collection and other spaces that respond to minimum user expectations. The Library Facilities Plan 2008-2010 had anticipated a typical branch size of 25,000 square feet, which was confirmed by the long-term estimation of library facility expansion requirements, (see Table 4). Table 6 below shows the projected figures; they were calculated using a simple projection down
from 90,000 to 25,000 square feet, and then up or down adjustments due to particular design conditions or branch library operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Main Library project areas (90k SF)</th>
<th>Simple projection to Branch Library (25k SF)</th>
<th>Space need trends (up/down)</th>
<th>Adjusted estimation for Branch Library (SF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. PUBLIC REALM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1. PUBLIC SPACES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby/Checkout</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foyer/Expo/Stage</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafe/Bistro</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals/New arrivals</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical circulation spaces</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2. LIBRARY COLLECTION SPACES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid’s stacks</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference stacks</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiovisual stacks</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult non-fiction stacks</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult fiction stacks</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese collection stacks</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lee’s collection stacks</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>eliminate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.3 SPECIALIZED SPACES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid’s reading/play/activity rooms</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>2,083</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program/event rooms</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer/audiovisual rooms</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study/meeting rooms</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>2,778</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>2,200</td>
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<td>Adult reading rooms</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total A</strong></td>
<td>67,800</td>
<td>18,833</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. STAFF REALM</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checkout area</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation workroom</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>2,083</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office space</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board/Meeting/Training rooms</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>eliminate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT spaces</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff rest/lunch areas</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical circulation spaces</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total B</strong></td>
<td>22,200</td>
<td>6,167</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total A+B</strong></td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Estimation of a high-level architectural program for a typical secondary branch for RPL.

The reasons for adjustments were multiple, but included the following:

- Requirement to keep a sizeable enough collection at each library, which implies a less-than-proportional reduction of these spaces.
- Need to increase size of particular spaces, e.g., washrooms and café, given minimum standards for these spaces, which means that they cannot be reduced proportionally.
• Reduction of staff areas, because central administrative areas would only be present at the main library.
• Overlap of certain specialized spaces, e.g., combination of all activity rooms or sporadic use of some activity rooms for staff training, which reduces the spatial need for individualized rooms.
• Elimination of some areas, be it because of overlaps mentioned above, or because that specific space would only be present at the main library, e.g., the Dr. Lee collection.

This has an implication on the spatial breakdown of branch libraries vis-à-vis the main library as the image below shows. Basically, staff areas and specialized spaces will likely need to be smaller at branches, while public spaces and collection stacks will need to increase. Figure 21 compares the two facilities’ area breakdown.

![Space breakdown by type of Library](image)

**Figure 21:** Space breakdown, future main library versus typical branch library.

**Development of Conceptual Design Ideas**

All information and insights of the previous sections were given to the consultants’ architects, who produced five schematic or conceptual ideas of how the different spaces that respond to trends, needs, and aspiration would “look and feel.” These concepts are shown on Figures 22-26 in the following pages. They are the following, loosely corresponding to some of the library roles discussed in Section 4 of the Report:

• **The Interactive Entrance Area.** The welcome lobby to the library where users can visually explore what’s new, ‘check in’ to review their personalized accounts, and engage with library staff.

• **The Public Living Room.** A social area for informal gathering, where the exchange of ideas can happen naturally while attending an exhibition or having a coffee and a snack with friends.

• **The Reading Corner.** An ample, quiet, and comfortable space for individual activities such as reading, listening to music and relaxing, well lit and connected to the outside context.

• **The Flexible Activity Rooms.** Adaptable spaces where a whole range of activities – meetings, presentations, programs, study groups – linked to the library’s resources take place.

• **The Learning Hub.** An area to access, transmit, modify, and advance knowledge, with individual spaces such as private study rooms and collective creation/curation spaces such as labs and workshops.
**Figure 22:** The ‘Interactive Entrance Area.’
Figure 23: The ‘Public Living Room.’
Figure 24: The ‘Reading Corner.’
Figure 25: The ‘Flexible Activity Rooms.’
Figure 26: The ‘Learning Hub.’
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