

AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY TRENDS

**Prepared for the
CANADIAN URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL
www.culc.ca**



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Executive Summary

The library environment has undergone substantial change over the course of the past decade, and libraries are meeting new challenges. To help assist libraries and library stakeholders in understanding their operating environment, Lumos Research conducted an analysis of data compiled over the period from 2000 to 2009 by members of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council and some long-term subscribing data contributors. The following are some highlights of our findings:

- The **per capita number of library usage transactions was up sharply in the past decade**, rising 45% from 16.6 to 24.1 transactions on average.
- Much of this increase in transactions was driven by digital information. For example, **use of electronic databases** (library Internet subscriptions or stand-alone or networked CD-ROM databases) **more than doubled, and Internet visits to library websites and catalogues grew five-fold in the period**. Nevertheless, the number of items circulated per capita had also increased a substantial 16% over the past decade, while per capita in-person visits have remained stable.
- Compared with the rapid rise of website visits, electronic database transactions are still in their nascence, at just 0.71 uses per capita in 2009, or fewer than 3% of all transactions. **Libraries should be prepared to expect strong growth in database transactions**, which will contribute added momentum to library use.
- Libraries are providing better value than ever to their stakeholders. Although library expenses have increased overall, **the expansion in number of user transactions means that cost per use has declined by nearly 27%** from 2000-2001 to 2008-2009.
- Although spending on library materials has increased in the decade, pressure from higher overhead costs means that **materials make up a smaller percentage of libraries' expenses than in 2000**, decreasing from 13% to 11% of total library expenses.
- Among materials expenditures, **a smaller percentage is being spent on books and periodicals, while strong increases have been seen over the past decade in spending on electronic and audiovisual materials**. The percentage of materials expense devoted to these latter items had increased from 18% in 2000-01 to 31% in 2008-09.
- Spending on materials has a strong role in increasing library use. **Libraries whose per capita spending on materials is in the top third register nearly twice the number of usage transactions as do libraries whose materials spending is in the bottom third**. The impact of materials on usage is so great that libraries which are among the top per capita spenders on materials realize the lowest costs per usage transaction.
- The **increased revenue needs of libraries for the most part have been filled by the municipal level of government**. Provincial funding has not kept pace with libraries' needs over the past 10 years, and Federal funding makes up only a fraction of a percent of all revenue.

Introduction

This report comprises an analysis of library data collected by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) for annual periods from 2000 to 2009. The CULC database contains over 200 variables covering a range of issues such as funding, expenses, staffing, library use, and service levels. This analysis covers a subset of these variables where noteworthy trends were identified.

To allow year-to-year comparability, findings are included for the 44 libraries which contributed to all 10 years of data collection. A list of respondent libraries appears in the appendix. Missing data, and data deemed to be outside a reasonable range for each variable, were excluded from the calculations. To help reduce year-to-year variability in the observations, trend data from the 10 years has been combined into five, two-year periods.

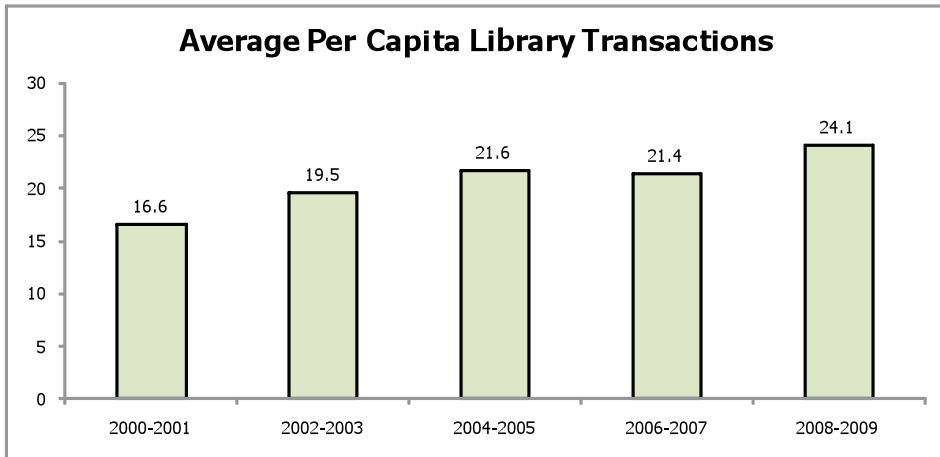
Fast Public Library Facts

Canadian Urban Libraries Council members comprise most of Canada's largest libraries. Here are a few facts about the 35 member libraries and 9 subscribers who have contributed data to this report (figures are averages for 2009):

- They serve a population of 17,589,000 Canadians in urban centres across Canada
- They serve 8,221,000 active borrowers currently registered with library cards
- They operate 609 branch locations, and have total facilities with close to 10,000,000 square feet of floor space, the equivalent of 200 large supermarkets
- They employ over 13,000 staff in full and part-time positions
- They host approximately 108,000,000 in-person visits each year
- They have circulation of about 211,000,000 items each year, including 71,000,000 items for children
- They operate programs for 4,184,000 participants each year, including 2,964,000 children
- They hold approximately 51,000,000 items in their collections

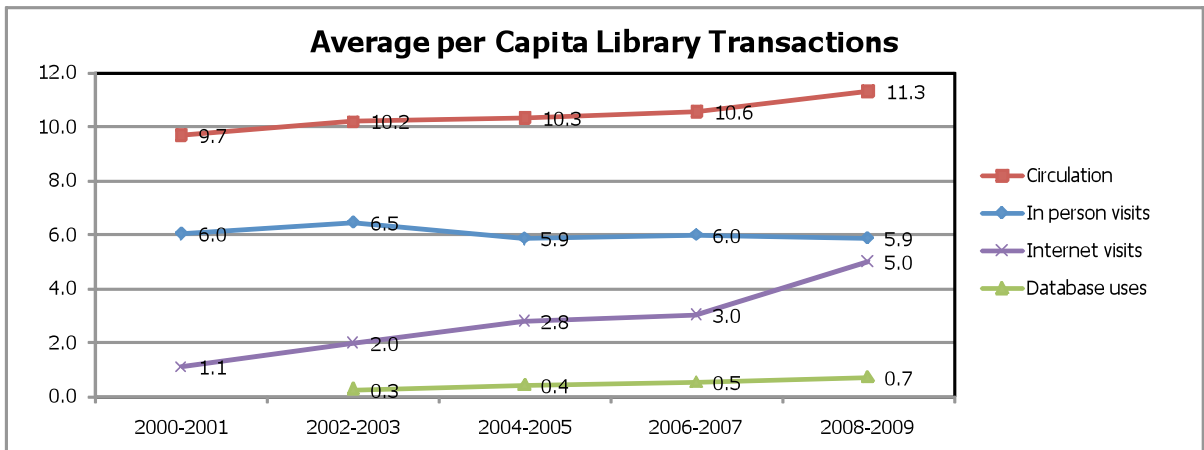
Library Use Has Increased

Library use has been increasing steadily over the past decade, with the average annual number of library transactions per capita increasing 45%, from 16.6 events in 2000-2001 to 24.1 events in 2008-2009. Per capita transactions include all in-person visits, circulation, program attendance, electronic database uses, and Internet visits.



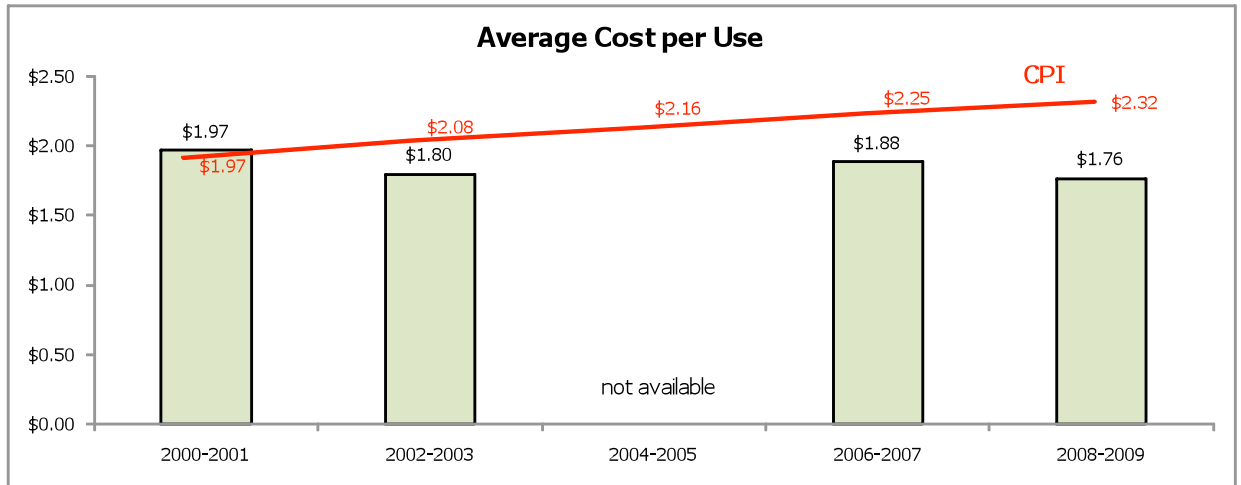
Although electronic transactions have clearly accounted for a large part of the overall increase in library use, other types of library transactions have also grown on a per capita basis over the past decade:

- Items circulated per capita have increased by 16%, from 9.7 items in 2000-2001 to 11.3 annual items per capita in 2008-2009. Items circulated include any materials checked out for use outside the library.
- Number of in-person visits per capita have essentially been stable over this period, at approximately 6.0 annual visits.
- Internet visits, consisting of the annual number of unique visits to library websites including the library catalogue by visitors have increased substantially from 1.1 per capita in 2000-2001 to 5.0 in 2008-2009.
- Database uses, including uses of library Internet subscriptions or stand-alone or networked CD-ROM databases, accessed either from inside or outside the library, have increased from 0.3 annual transactions in 2002-2003 to 0.7 in 2008-2009.



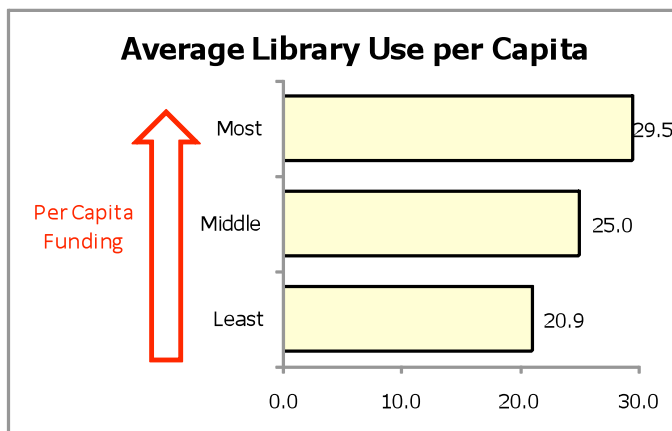
Library Cost per Use Has Declined

The steep increase in the number of transactions per capita has resulted in a lower library cost per use over the decade, declining from \$1.97 per use in 2000-01 to \$1.76 per use in the 2008-09 period. This decrease in cost per use is more apparent when plotted against the rising CPI, and has fallen nearly 32% from its 2000-01 level in real dollar terms.



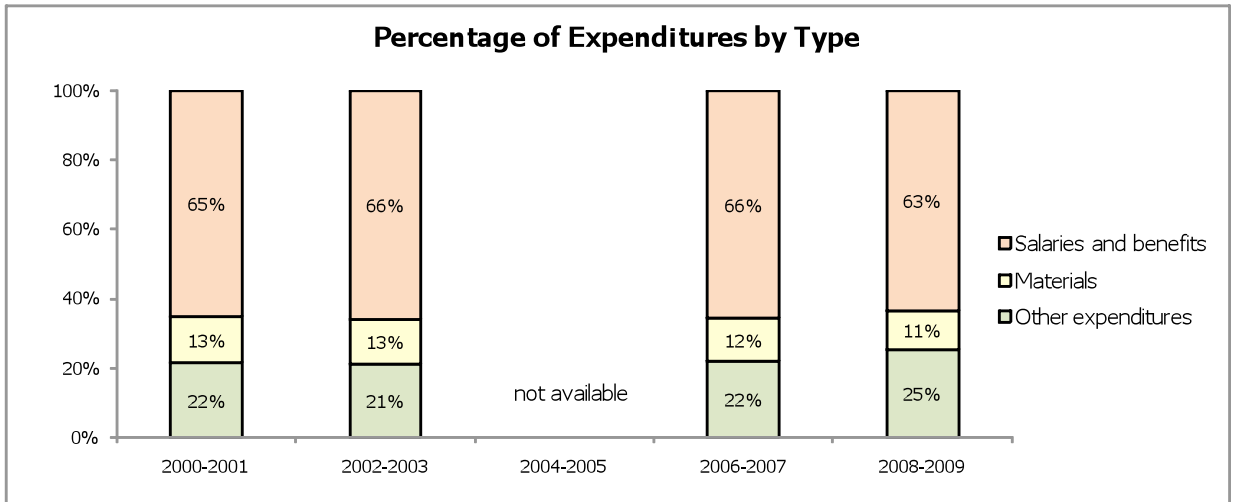
Library Use Increases with Funding

As per capita funding increases, so do the average number of library transactions per capita. The figure below shows libraries grouped according to the amount of funding they receive per capita, with those in the top third of funding shown at the top. The number of library transactions per capita increases from an average of 20.9 among those libraries with the lowest funding, to 29.5 occasions among those with the most funding.



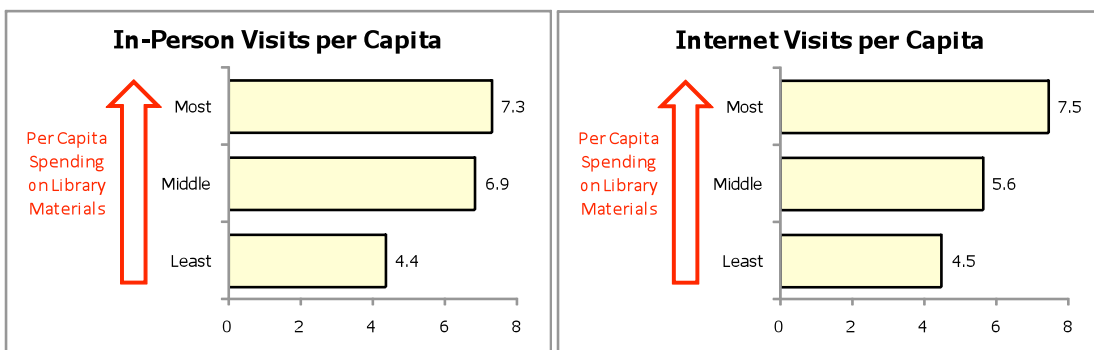
Spending on Library Materials Has Declined Relative to Other Costs

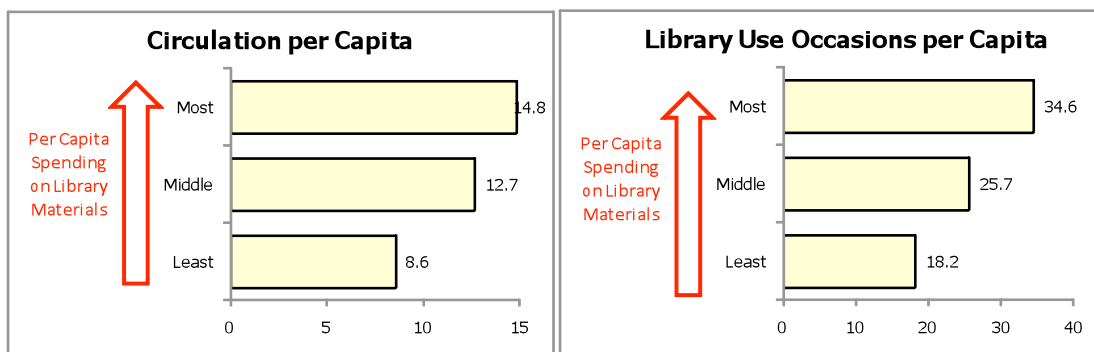
Major components of library expenditures are shown below. The proportion of costs accounted for by salaries and benefits has declined over the past decade, from 65% to 63%. Similarly, the percentage accounted for by materials has declined from 13% to 11%. Other expenditures including overhead, have increased from 22% to 25% over the period.



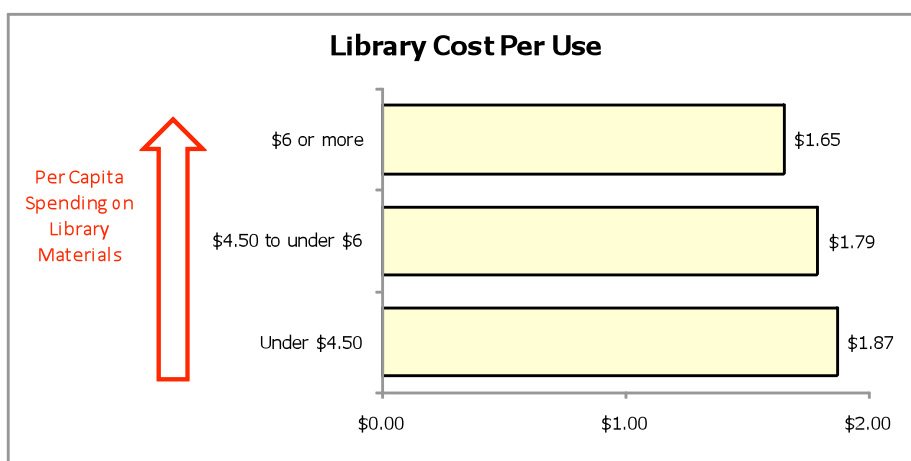
Spending on Materials Drives Library Use

Library spending on materials emerges as a very important factor contributing to library use. The graphs below group libraries according to their per capita levels of spending on materials. Those which spend the most per capita on materials also have the highest levels of in-person visits, Internet visits, and circulation. From the lowest to highest third of spending on materials, total per capita library use nearly doubles from an average of 18.2 to 34.6 annual transactions.





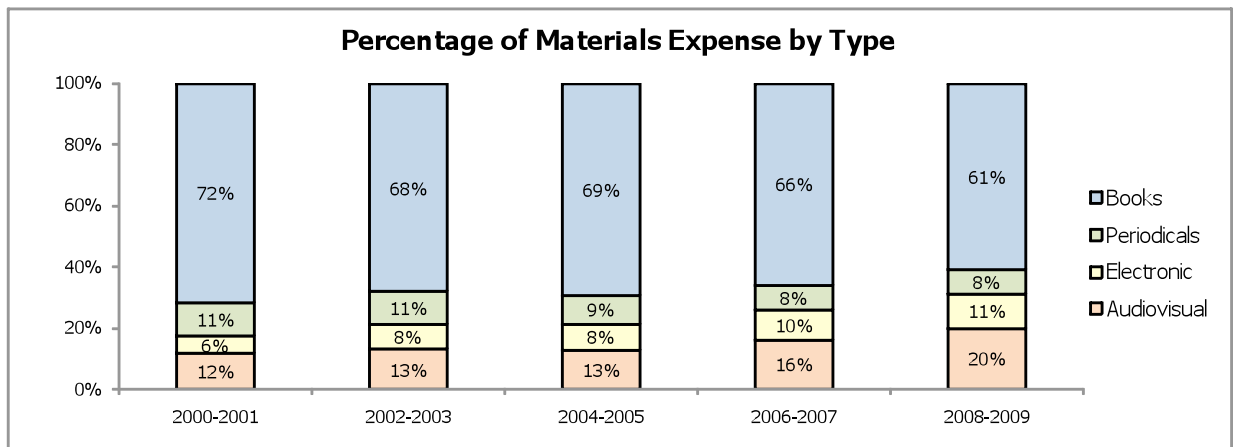
Spending on library materials is so important to use that as libraries spend more per capita on materials their average cost per use declines. As shown below, the average cost per transaction is \$1.87 for libraries spending under \$4.50 per capita annually on materials, but declines to \$1.65 for those spending \$6 or more per capita on materials. This is due to the doubling in user transactions realized by libraries with the highest funding for materials.



Audio Video and Electronics Outpace Other Materials Spending

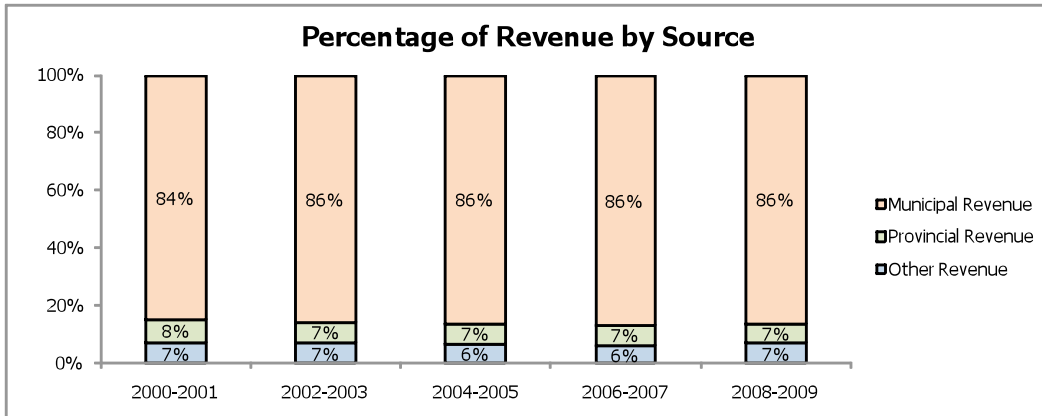
The proportion of library expenses accounted for by printed media has been dropping steadily, while spending on electronic and audiovisual media is taking its place:

- Books, which accounted for 72% of materials expenditures in 2000-2001, have declined to 61% in 2008-2009. Nevertheless, book expenditures still represent by far the largest single category of materials expenditures.
- Periodicals expenditures have dropped from 11% in 2000-2001 to just 8% of all materials expenditures in 2008-2009.
- Expenditure on electronic materials includes e-books, e-serials (including journals), government documents, databases, electronic files, reference tools, scores, maps, or pictures in electronic or digital format, including materials digitized by the library. In the last decade, the proportion of materials expenditures on these items nearly doubled, from 6% to 11%.
- Expenditures on audiovisual materials including CDs and DVDs increased from 12% of the total in 2000-2001 to 20% in 2008-2009.

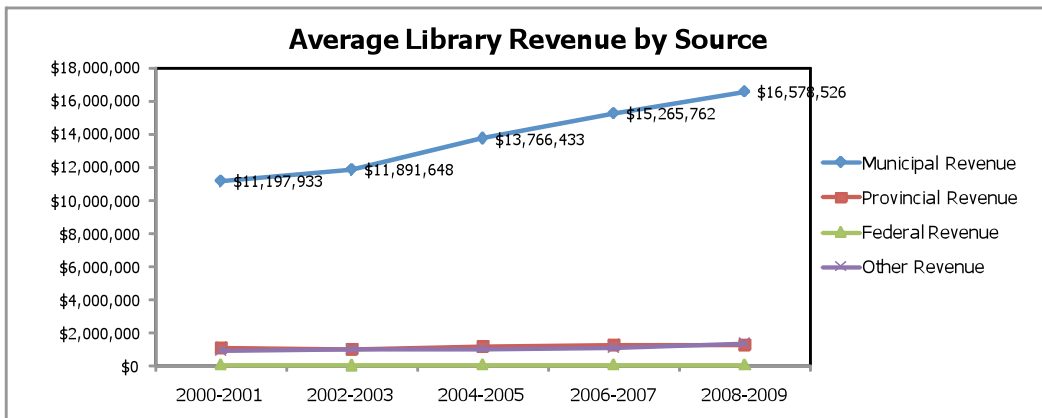


Sources of Library Revenue

Percentage of library revenue by source has changed relatively little over the past decade. The vast majority of library funding is from municipal sources, with the proportion of having increased from 84% to 86%.



Because so much library funding comes from the municipality, municipalities have supplied most of needed increases in revenue. Municipal revenue has increased 48% from 2000-01 to 2008-09, from an average of 11.2 million to \$16.6 million in the most recent period. In the same time period, Provincial sources of revenue increased just 18%, and Federal revenue, which accounts for just one-third of one percent of all library funding, declined by 22% from 2000-01 levels.



Appendix A: List of Participating Libraries

CULC/CBUC Members

Barrie Public Library
Bibliothèque municipale de Gatineau
Brampton Library
Burlington Public Library
Burnaby Public Library
Calgary Public Library
Cambridge Libraries & Galleries
Coquitlam Public Library
Edmonton Public Library
Fraser Valley Regional Library
Greater Victoria Public Library
Halifax Public Libraries
Hamilton Public Library
Kingston Frontenac Public Library
Kitchener Public Library
London Public Library
Markham Public Library
Mississauga Library System
Montréal Public Library
Oakville Public Library
Oshawa Public Library
Ottawa Public Library
Regina Public Library
Richmond Hill Public Library
Richmond Public Library
Saskatoon Public Library
Service de la Bibliothèque de Ville de Laval
St. Catharines Public Library
Surrey Public Library
Thunder Bay Public Library
Toronto Public Library
Vancouver Island Regional Library
Vancouver Public Library
Vaughan Public Libraries
Windsor Public Library
Winnipeg Public Library

Data Contributors

Albert-Westmorland-Kent Library Region/Région de bibliothèques Albert-Westmorland-Kent
Annapolis Valley Regional Library
Cape Breton Regional Library
Chaleur Library Region/Région de bibliothèques Chaleur
Fundy Library Region/Région de bibliothèques de Fundy
Pickering Public Library
Red Deer Public Library