

BEYOND WORDS

BC'S PUBLIC
LIBRARIES
ARE
CHANGING
LIVES

*The library is a place
which grows and changes;
it is the beating heart of
any community.*

– CHRIS OLSEN, CRANBROOK

Learning. Growing. Living.

Every visit to our beautiful library is an occasion to celebrate our gifts of literacy and learning and the lending system of this public institution. ... We truly value this Service and consider the impact to be positively enriching, enlightening, and invigorating as we nourish our hands, eyes and souls on the words and pictures found in the many wondrous volumes that reside in the Hazelton Public Library.

– LORRAINE SMITH-KENDALL, HAZELTON



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Vancouver Public Library



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Introduction

What role do public libraries play in our lives and in our communities? Why are public libraries important to the development of a strong, caring, and compassionate community? Why do we need public libraries, anyway?

These are the questions we set out to answer in February 2005 with *Beyond Words*, British Columbia's first province-wide public library essay contest. BC's 68 public libraries invited people from every corner of the province to share their personal stories of how public libraries in BC have made a difference.

The contest celebrated and highlighted how public libraries have made a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities in this province. The response we received from the public was overwhelming, with 350 entries from every part of the province, and even one entry from Sweden. Every story was funny, touching, or moving in its own way.

The essays were judged by CBC Radio's Sheryl MacKay, Raincoast Books President and CEO, Allan MacDougall, and UBC Associate Professor of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, Ann Curry.

The top three winning essays – *A Library in Motion* by Patricia Cook, *The Cure* by M.P. Jorgensen, and *Untitled* by Anju Kalra – won cash prizes and read their essays on air on CBC Radio One's *North by Northwest*. This booklet features their eloquent and moving stories, along with excerpts of several other stories from around the province.

In these pages, we're pleased to share some of the moving, funny, and engaging stories and comments we received that illustrate – in creative, intellectual and emotional ways – how BC libraries have changed lives. We only wish we had room for all 350 of them.

We hope you enjoy these stories as much as we did.

Lawrence Lavender

President, British Columbia
Library Trustees Association

Melanie Houlden

President, British Columbia
Library Association

Learning. Growing. Living.

These activities weave together to form the fabric of our lives. And creating a place where every member of our community can learn, grow, and enrich their lives is what BC's public libraries are all about.

A library may look like a single building, but please don't be misled by the walls. It's a single link in an enormous chain. It's a single being in a gigantic ecosystem of words and thoughts and ideas. It's connected in a million different ways to the subtleties and complexities of many, many lives, [and] friendships.

– SHULA KLINGER, RICHMOND

Where can you borrow a book, CD, DVD, and more for free? Where can you bring your children to learn, play, and discover the joys of reading in the years before they reach school age? Where can you attend a reading by your favourite author? Where can you get broadband Internet access to a world of information with just a library card? At your public library, that's where.

Learning



Public libraries play a crucial role in bringing almost every member of our community together at some time in their lives. The public library is one of the few public places left where services are offered to citizens free of charge – whether you’re young or old, wealthy or low-income, a new immigrant or a British Columbian who’s lived here for generations.

We offer research support, computer access, public lectures and events, and opportunities for learning through local branches in every part of the province. No other public institution offers the same opportunities for learning – at no additional cost to our citizens.

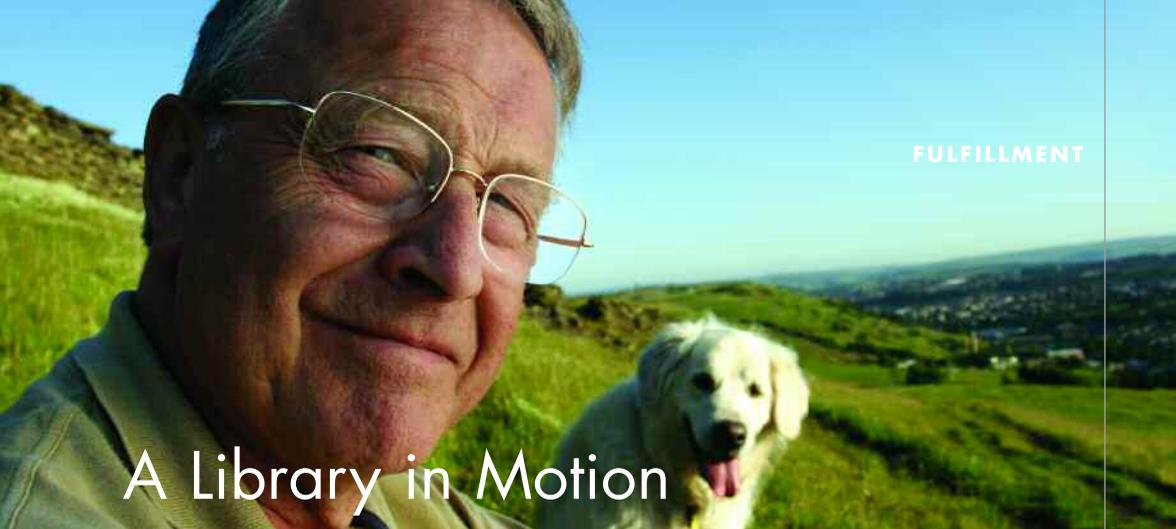


September 27, 1996, was my first time ever to enter a Library. ...To me everything was amazing, you can take a book and read it for free as long as you return on time. I mean where I am from you put the money on the table then you may take the book home with you. ...The public library has made me a better person today. So thank you all Librarians for your help.

– GBARNJAN NGENDA, CHEMAINUS

It was summer when I read that first special library book. I was living in Victoria, though I don't recall much about flowers or sky-larks. Perhaps I was too anxious to notice them. I only remember the book and, after reading it, the decision to study cougars. That was thirty-five years ago, when I was twenty-one. After reading that book I left the city, moved into the woods, and spent most of the rest of my twenties following North America's largest wildcat. It was the first book from a BC public library that changed by life.

– PENELOPE L. DEWAR, NAKUSP



A Library in Motion

By **Patricia Cook**, North Vancouver, BC
Vancouver Island Regional Library - Cumberland

My first experience with a library happened during my sixth year. It certainly is not what you would experience today in this day and age with a library because ours came on wheels. A library in motion caused me to question other peoples' notions.

My father was a fireman in the Armed Forces and we had been transferred to Downsview, Ottawa, during the summer. My older sister Cathy and I were warily watching a group of kids play *Red Rover, Red Rover* when a big blue bus pulled up to the curb. The kids went nuts screaming and rushing towards it, pushing each other out of the line they were trying to form in front of its doors. Cathy and I had no idea what was going on and because we had plenty of experience being the "new kids on the block" we were sticking close to the safety of our home, so close, in fact, that we wouldn't leave our doorstep.

The doors to the bus opened and a few children at a time entered. When they came out, they had books in their hands. Eventually, a lady climbed off the bus and the kids began to sit in a circle. That was when she motioned for my sister and I to come over. We felt safer with an adult around so after a little whispered discussion it was decided we'd creep closer. The lady began to read us *Curious George*, changing her voice from character to character and showing us the pictures as she read. That was the first time, I believe, we had ever been read too. Sure, we had picture books, but neither of us could read so this was quite a treat and we were enthralled with this monkey. After the story, we were taken on the bus and our shock deepened: we had no idea what a library was and to see all those books – it was really mind-boggling. The man made us special cards with our names and addresses on it – 152 Deniverville Drive – I still remember. Those cards were left on the bus until the next week and this made us feel important and a part of something magical. *(CONT.)*

When we moved again, our library on wheels was what I missed the most, and that caused me to find the nearest library in each new place we lived. I was indeed shocked the first time I found out that most libraries are held in buildings and not on wheels. I was disappointed at first – until I realized the full volume of books a library can lend when it's not rolling around. Wow.

I also have to admit that I never read even one book, not one book, in any of the libraries I adopted in each new place we lived. I just listened to the librarians and a lot of parents read the most fantastic stories to their children. I did try to learn to read and I really wanted to learn, but I couldn't get anything to stick in my head. I found out later in adulthood that when a child lives in chaos and fear, learning is next to impossible because you are only trying to survive and that took up all of my mental facilities at the time. But not knowing this as a child, I felt I was to blame and that my brain was broken and this affected my life in every direction. I felt that the library was my safe zone – friendly, supervised territory. Being new to the base made the kids dangerous and being at home was dangerous so I would sneak to the library.

The librarians would never kick you out because you were allowed to sit around and read. I didn't have to worry about any kids bothering me too much because most bullies wouldn't go to the library and if they did the librarian kept them in check. Most of the time I was able to go unnoticed altogether by finding a little spot hidden from view, by moving slowly and being very, very quiet.

I have to take a moment to explain a little before I go on to this next part.

Since our father was transferred so often I had learned to become a very quiet shadow everywhere I went, especially at the library. At the library, I was an aloof stranger in a place I considered home. I did not want to know people because quite quickly we would have to move again and each time I felt my heart break it was very painful. (CONT.)

....Edward Abbey once said of wilderness "...we may need it someday not only as a refuge from excessive industrialism but also as a refuge from authoritarian government, from political oppression." I think we need public libraries in the same way we need wilderness. Both are sanctuaries of a kind. Both are storehouses of diversity.

ANNA KIRKPATRICK,
QUESNEL



QUESTION

I transferred my feelings from library to library because it never changed. *Curious George* was at each place and so was *Clifford*. Every home had a library of some kind. Big ones, smelly ones (I loved these ones), dark or bright, each place would welcome me, would anchor me with the sameness of itself. It sounds crazy but so true.

It is hard to say exactly how much my life has been impacted by the library as I don't know what my life would be without it, and I really couldn't envision it at all.

– CATHLEEN A. BUSCH,
REVELSTOKE

A life of constant upheaval and extreme living circumstances caused me such fear and nervousness that throughout my elementary years I was unable to retain the simplest instructions. By grade five, a doctor was called in to evaluate me. I was considered stupid by everyone and was receiving daily physical punishment at school and at home because they said I wouldn't try. The final analysis by the doctor was that I would never be able to read a book cover to cover and my English comprehension was nonexistent – all due to my hyperactivity. I remember this so vividly – the pain, desperation I felt. I wanted to read so badly, but I knew what the doctor had said was true: I couldn't even retain Sesame Street for goodness sake.

So I was failed in grade five, reaffirming every negative description of myself that I had heard. By 1981, I was 14 years old living in Cumberland. I was called into an extreme meeting with every teacher involved with me, including my parents. We were told that I would never be able to pass any of my courses because my marks were so poor. I was halfway through the school year and failing every subject. That it was best for all parties if I continued my education at home. I became enraged and left the school immediately. I was very distraught and found myself back at my safe haven the library – I was hiding in the back.

I'm a little embarrassed to admit this, but I was actually hiding under one of the back tables. Yes, I know, I was 14 years old, but I felt 5. Instead of questions or asking me to get out from under the table, the librarian found a book and began to read it aloud. I think that today she read herself into my heart because the next thing I knew I was laying my problems down. I told her everything the teachers said, what the doctors said, I told her everything. The librarian told me very seriously that everyone was wrong. If I could learn a little, I could learn more and that she would help me. That is exactly what my librarian went on to do. I received my very first certificate of reading achievement that summer, awarded to me by Ellen Wise, my librarian, which I still have today.

Three years ago I found that certificate and I was overcome with such blessed gratitude towards Ellen that I immediately started looking on the internet for the Cumberland Library and found it right away. I wrote her a letter thanking her, letting her know what a truly profound effect she's had on my life. My letter was intercepted by another librarian who emailed me with the news of Ellen's retirement party being held in two weeks. I was asked if my letter could be read aloud during their ceremonies. I was truly touched by this and immediately agreed, but I wanted to be able to expand just a little more on what a change I had made with my life. I had to tell Ellen that I don't read just a little, I read a lot of books. I became a great student with an A+ in English every time. I joined band and sports, which are a huge part of my life now. One poem and two short stories of mine were published in grade 10. By grade 11, I was working part time for the *Comox District Free Press*. Reading opened an entirely new world and having a hang out all your life of a library gave me one huge advantage over many people even to this day.

I learnt how to research and find knowledge on any subject and I could find it quick. When I became single in 2000, I had no clue about credit or budgeting so I went to the library. I found the adult section too confusing so I'd head off to the children's section and read books like "How to teach your child about money." With that knowledge, I was able to graduate back to my own age-appropriate adult section and upgrade until I had the tools I needed.

Also, as a single parent of three children money is always tight, so when the van needed minor maintenance I'd borrow the how to maintain your vehicle [book] and do it myself. I was very grateful for the huge selection of computer books when my computer crashed because I save hundreds of dollars fixing it myself. I can tear that puppy apart, upgrade anything and put it back together working again. Even I was shocked and I must say none of these things have been an overnight project – some are months in the works.

I read to my children most nights, inserting special character voices and emotion, puppets and figurines to match our stories. I do what I love and I am grateful. I hope I've been able to instill in my own children that nothing is impossible. That to grow and be

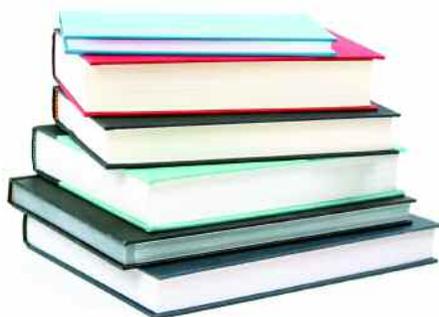
(CONT.)

DREAM



strong you must learn something new each and every day so that you can stand on your own two feet and hold your head high. That people should never take just one written book as law but to read everything so an informed opinion can be made. That the library is one place you will be able to find anywhere, in one form or another to satisfy many different needs. Even if it's just for a safe haven or to escape into a grand adventure.

Thank you for letting me share a piece of my life. Libraries started a thirst inside me that I know will never be quenched. The thirst for knowledge and, while I was reading, my self-esteem and confidence grew and that can never be taken. — END



In the comfort of my own home, I can order books and music online through our inter-library loan program (I'm regularly cut-off at 50 books!). The orders arrive quickly or trickle in over months, depending on their popularity in other branches. Every library day is like a present day.... The library has definitely impacted my world and how I see myself in it.... I never stop appreciating this free and ready access to the whole wide world through my books, magazines, music and videos.

– PATRICIA JONES, QUEEN CHARLOTTE CITY



Read to Me



By **Carolyn Thomas**, Victoria, BC
Greater Victoria Public Library - Oak Bay

The old man was there again.

He was sitting in the same seat, at the same table. In fact, every time I visited the library, there he was.

He did not seem to fit, this old man, into the clean, sunny space of our library. Stringy yellow-gray hair, a tremor of frail fingers stained tobacco brown tap-tap-tapping wearily against the table. A black suit hung lifeless on his thin frame, one seam torn open from collar to shoulder, a wound announcing that its owner no longer cared much about wearing suits.

During the hour or so that I liked to spend at the library each week browsing garden books, I observed him, in his usual place, one hand resting lightly on the upper right corner of the open *Times Colonist* as if he were just about to turn the page. But in fact, he seemed to be dozing with his eyes open. And because of this, I sometimes allowed myself to stare openly at him from the anonymous safety of my favourite seat nearby.

I began to wonder about the old man amid the subdued library murmur of pleasant-faced seniors and earnest students and young mothers with chubby pink babes in Bergen packs. What was his story? Did he spend every day in the library? Did the librarians have to kick him out at closing time? Was he homeless, perhaps living in one of the Sally Ann rooms overlooking Wharf Street? Was he a widower, empty now after the tragic death of his darling wife? Or was he floating in a fog of dementia where the library was his only known harbour? And what about his family? What had he done in his other life, his younger life, before he ended up here, just an old man in the library? I assessed the expensive cut of his worn suit jacket. (CONT.)

Had he once worn this suit to birthday dinners, to board meetings, to his daughter's wedding? Who was this old man?

One sunny spring morning, I arrived at the library and noticed again that he was there in his regular place as I settled in with a copy of the newest Anne Lovejoy.

I had barely finished scanning the contents page when I noticed the boy approaching the old man's table. A small child about four years of age, he hoisted himself onto the big chair and slammed three picture books onto the table right next to the old man. The man did not move, nor even glance upward from his newspaper, even though the boy's three books were now resting on part of the sports section.

The boy opened the top book. He began to read, in that engaging fashion of very young children who have been read to all their lives, and who can thus convincingly pretend to read aloud. The nonsensical rhythms began, in his pure little boy's voice: "I-do-not-like-green-eggs-and-ham-I-do-not-like-them-Sam-I-Am..."

I looked around the library for the boy's mother. There were several mothers and a few dads milling about, as the regular pre-schooler Story Time had just ended. Oh, there she was, half-kneeling at the end of a row nearby, one wary eye on her boy sitting at the big table. "Matthew, Mummy's right here - I'll be ready to go in a second," she called out softly. The small boy nodded as he continued his singsong recital.

I watched the unlikely seatmates for a moment or two: the old man, staring blindly down at a newspaper page that would not be turned and the small boy chattering away next to him. What a curious pairing of humanity, I thought. I tried to picture this man as a small boy himself, sitting next to a frail old man in a long ago library. And I saw this little boy one day all grown up, but old and vacant like his elderly companion today.

"Mister, what does this word say?" chirped the boy suddenly. He pointed a pudgy finger at his open book, looking up at the wrinkled face. The old man said nothing, did nothing. "Mister?" Matthew repeated, louder this time, sliding his picture book under the man's nose. Matthew's mother heard, and stepped forward. "Don't bother people, Matthew," she whispered, her glance sizing up the silent old man with the expert



radar common to mothers everywhere. “People are trying to read in peace,” she said, taking Matthew’s hand and guiding him towards the exit doors.

The next week, there was the old man again, and there was little Matthew sitting next to him with his pile of library books. Again, the boy began to read softly, pausing occasionally to chat to the old man, who paid absolutely no attention.

I began, I think unconsciously at first, to time my previously random weekly library visits to coincide with the end of Story Time. And each week, I watched little Matthew take up his position in the big chair next to the old man’s. Week after week, I saw not even a glimmer of reaction on the man’s face. Yet this lack of response did not seem to deter the child, who kept up his cheerful commentary about each book until his mother would finally signal the end of another library morning.

On the day when things changed, I arrived at the library to see the old man and the small boy already in their usual places. As always, Matthew was ‘reading’ aloud to the old man from the storybooks that he knew by heart. But suddenly, as I watched them, the old man coughed harshly, then blinked hard twice and very slowly turned his face towards Matthew’s little blonde head. His dark eyes were wide open, looking down upon the reading child as if he had never noticed this small human being before. He slowly raised his hand from the corner of his newspaper and moved it as if in slow motion towards the boy. I sat up straight and looked around for the boy’s mother. I spotted her nearby, but her back was turned. What was the old man going to do to this child? Little Matthew, reading, oblivious, seemed unaware of the thin hand moving towards him.

I stood up unbidden then, the opened copy of *Western Garden* sliding to the floor as I rose. I was about to rush forward instinctively to grab the boy, or push the man away, when I saw one old gnarled finger drop suddenly to the open storybook page below. “Dr. Seuss!” the man croaked. “I used to read this one to my grandson.” Matthew looked up at the wrinkled face and beamed a pure sweet smile as only four-years old can beam. “Read to me?” he asked.

The old man paused for a long moment, as if caught up in a far-off place, but then nodded his head. The little boy slid his book closer, on top of the *Times Colonist* below. His mother, smiling, walked over to the table and sat next to Matthew as the old man, his eyes moist, began reading to them both in a slow, gentle whisper:

“I do not like green eggs and ham...”

— END

CONNECT



Growing



Our libraries are also public spaces that – more than any other public institution – invite citizens to spend time with us to learn more about themselves, their neighbours, and the world around them.

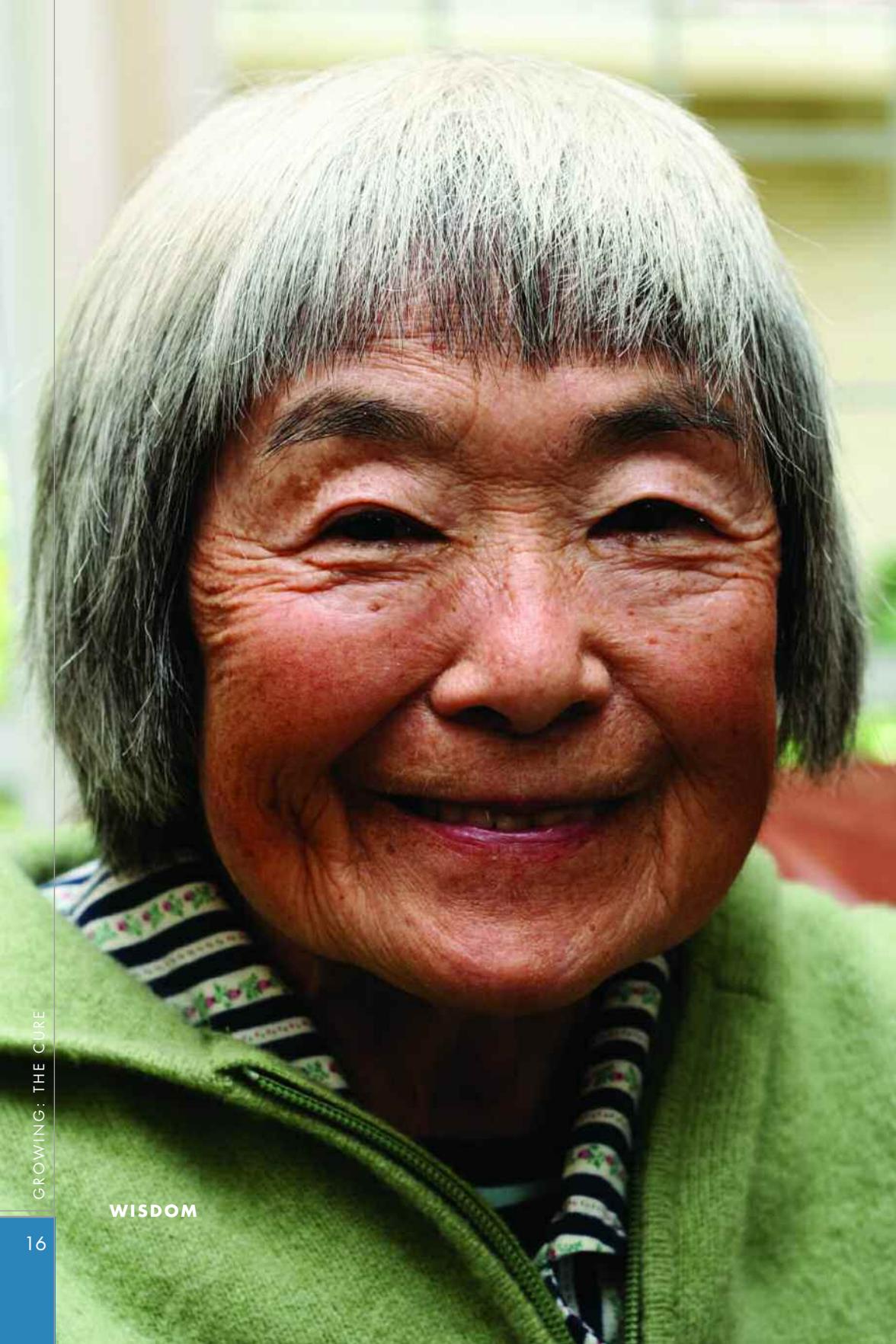
Together with other community service providers, BC public libraries play a key role in community development, by providing individuals, children and families with the tools and resources they need to develop their skills, advance their education, and connect with other people who share their values and interests.

I have a daughter, just turned three, who loves to read as much as I do. After a nearly hour-long storytime at the Mission branch, we sign out a big bag full of books and read every single one as soon as we get home. Her bed is 10 per cent blankets and 90 per cent books. She can't quite read on her own yet, but she can memorize a book in no time and 'reads' it to herself over and over. Or she just makes up a new story to go with the pictures. When she draws, she usually forgoes stick people in favour of letters.

– CAMILLE ATEBE, MISSION



CONTEMPLATE



WISDOM

A young woman with her hair tied back, wearing a green jacket, is smiling and looking down at an open book she is holding. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting like a library or a public space.

The Cure

By **MP Jorgensen**, Vancouver, BC
Vancouver Public Library

Trying to appear invisible and nondescript, while hiding behind the corner of the stack of bookshelves, I waited for the library patron to leave. He was searching for a specific Dewey decimal number, pointing at the printed numbers on the books' spines.

Adrenaline raced through me and my senses were heightened. My face was flushed and I tried to keep my breathing shallow. Finally, he found the book he needed and left, so I quickly moved to the section further down from where he had been, labelled "homosexuality."

I was going to cure myself.

I scanned through the first few books and slid one thick volume from the shelf, hiding it under my arm, with the blank back cover facing outward. I walked quickly to a private, partitioned reading table, avoiding the gaze of other people whom I walked past.

I opened the book and began reading about clinical case studies of homosexual patients, written in a dry, academic and psychoanalytical viewpoint. I was sixteen years old and struggled to understand the terminology. What I read was that homosexuality was a mental illness and various techniques had been used to cure it, including electroshock therapy and behavioural modification methods. My heart collapsed, because it confirmed what I already believed – I have a mental illness, and drastic methods must be taken. Determined to find a cure, I read on.

Being the son of a Lutheran minister and having been raised in a small BC town, I'd known for at least a year that I was sexually attracted to males. I enjoyed being raised in the church, attending youth group, singing in the choir and participating in events. While I didn't understand all the theology behind church rituals, I loved the feeling of belonging and being part of a community that, until now, had loved me. But being gay was a sin, and I not only felt great guilt, but a self-repulsion knowing that God condemned me.

(CONT.)

I must find a cure. I prayed daily on my hands and knees, begging God to change me, but to no avail. I still wanted to be with a man – it felt like it was a part of my soul. A part that needed to be severed.

When I graduated a year early and was accepted at a local college, I moved to Vancouver where I had access to the Vancouver Public Library and a large collection of books. I was determined to read every book on homosexuality available to find a way to heal myself. I was too afraid to see a therapist and needed to do it on my own.

This was over 20 years ago, before being gay was widely discussed in the media, and before the Internet had been invented. I was too naïve and ‘in the closet’ to search out other forms of assistance. The library was to be my saviour.

Three evenings a week for a year, I visited the library, going through the same ritual of stalking the bookshelves for a new book, spending three to four hours reading it front-to-back in a private reading stall (I was too fearful to sign it out). I began to change my mind.

Eventually, I realized that there was a large range of viewpoints on homosexuality, depending on when the book was published and who wrote it. I learned that homosexuality was no longer considered a mental illness since the 1970s by the American Psychiatric Association. I discovered that Alfred Kinsey had developed a new model of sexuality and preference, based on a scale that may shift over an individual’s life. I read radical/political essays – mostly from San Francisco – by gay, lesbian, transsexual and transgender peoples who believed that homophobia was the problem: not being gay.

I read personal accounts from gay men who had suffered electroshock and behavioural modification therapies, lithium psychiatric interventions and more, who had learned to heal by loving themselves. And I researched a wide variety of theological interpretations of the bible, from diverse religious viewpoints, toward homosexuality.

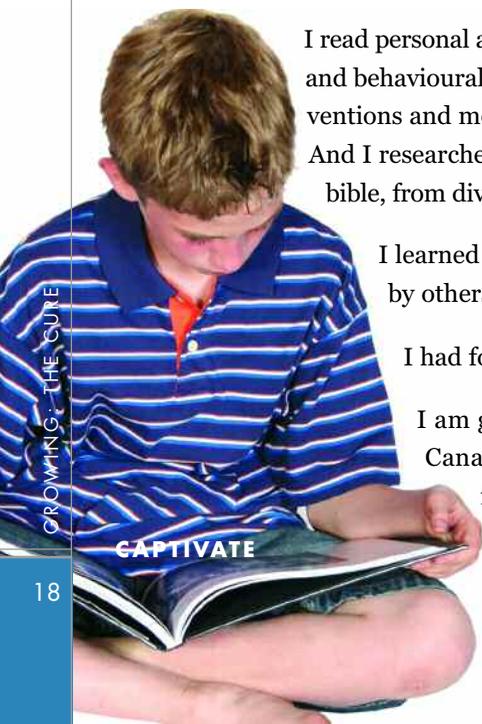
I learned that I could love and be loved as a gay man, not only by others and myself, but also by my creator.

I had found my cure.

I am grateful, and perhaps owe my life, to the BC and Canadian library system, that allows freedom of information and makes it available to all, at no cost.

I thank you. I’m certain that I’m not the first, and will not be the last, to benefit from your services.

— END



Living



I am sincerely grateful to the people at our public library, who not only gave me the opportunity to discover my capabilities but also played an integral role in helping me to become the person I was always meant to be.

– ELEANOR MOYER, NAKUSP



UNDERSTAND

Public libraries matter, and few of us can imagine our village, town, or city without them. Libraries are about much more than books and resources – they are places of hope and endless possibility, where human potential can be realized. Libraries enhance the quality of life and culture in our communities the way few other public services can.



CURIOSITY

Untitled

The Houston Library had provided me with my architect, plumber, shrink, electrician, doctor, counsellor, comedian, home decorator, educator and entertainer, all for free, from one convenient location.

– DEE MCRAE, HOUSTON

By **Anju Kalra**, Surrey, BC
Surrey Public Library - Whalley

I am writing my story and my story starts from the time when I was least interested in reading books. The books never fascinated me. Just going through the magazines and reading a few articles, whose titles were really tempting, was the only reading I did. One fine day I reached Canada and my husband got his library card. There was no excitement and the news was just overlooked. One day, while passing by the library and having lots of time to spend, my husband offered all of the family members to go and get some books issued for general reading.

We went to the library and just wandered through the aisles. Somehow, out of curiosity, I took one book and got it issued. We came back home and after we finished reading we went back to the library some other day to return the books. Now I had some books in my mind which I always wanted to read. But as I was in India, and there we don't have well developed facility of public libraries, the craving for books died. Moreover, buying books for fun reading was not within our reach. In Whalley library, I asked about those books on the front desk and to my surprise, I got those books without any hazards. I got so excited that my visits to the library became more frequent.

Further, I found that employees in the library were very cooperative and always ready to help. Whenever I needed assistance, the lady from the front desk would leave her seat without any hesitation and would come along with me and help me find my choice of books. Now I would like to tell that the Whalley library has a wonderful choice of books. Books are properly arranged and put in order. Different sections are so orderly arranged that anyone can just walk in the library and can find the books.

About me, I have become so addicted to taking books from the library that, whenever I leave the library, both of my hands are full of books. One day, my

addiction crossed the limits and I selected more than forty books. At that moment, I was having the idea of getting any number of books on one card. I realized my mistake when I went to the desk and took all the books to be issued. Now, the lady at the desk told me that on one card there was limit of thirty-five books. So, I had to leave some books, which was really hard as I had spent so much time on selecting the books. But the lady at the desk was really kind and she could make out from my face, as to what was troubling me. She gave me the idea that I could have one card in my own name too. Hearing this, I heaved a sigh of relief and thanked her for solving my problem.

That very moment, she took my two identification cards and within no time, she issued me a new card in my name. After I got the new card, I was able to bring home all the books I had selected. This incident exhilarated my love for library and encouraged me to be their member for lifetime.

Since then, my first-born too has got a card in his name. The situation currently at my home is that every nook and corner is full of books. The corner tables, the racks, and the study tables, all look full of books. I feel so busy and every time I look at the books, which are still unread, I feel the time is so short. I have to take out time for reading from my household chores. There is no day when I sleep without reading a few pages from some book.

My children too are influenced by my reading habits and they, to some extent, follow it. Another advantage,
(CONT.)

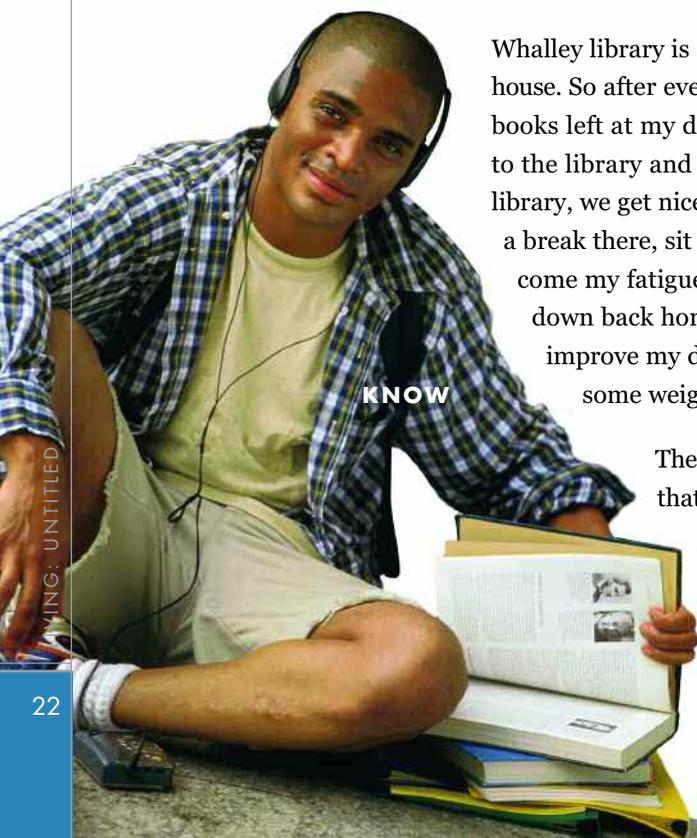


which I would like to mention, is that my reading has broadened my attitude towards life. I have gained confidence and also learned so many ways to tackle the family problems. Moreover, my cooking skills have improved as I bring lots of books with recipes of nutritional and healthy foods for all ages.

Earlier, I was confined to reading books on my religion. But now, since I became a member of the library, I have started bringing books on other religions too. I have realized that I am learning about other religions. Irrespective of all the religions having the same fundamentals, they have different customs, different notions about life and death, and different ways of worshipping god. My perspective towards life has broadened.

The sudden loss of my young husband in 1996 brought me to the library. I haunted the shelves for books on grieving. With the help of our librarian Sandy and through interlibrary loans, I'm sure I read every book in BC on coping with the death of a spouse. Since I was grieving I at least wanted to do it right, and was hoping maybe there were some instructions. My quest for information eventually lead me to new topics and on occasion I sat on the floor and read to a little fellow while his dad did some looking on the shelves. It was a quiet place, comforting and yet welcoming.

– DARLENE NEUMAN, STEWART



KNOW

Whalley library is at walking distance from my house. So after every other day, when I have no books left at my disposal to read, I walk down to the library and bring the books. There in the library, we get nice sitting arrangement too. I take a break there, sit down for some time, till I overcome my fatigue, then with my books, I walk down back home. This walking has helped me improve my digestion and I have shunned some weight too.

The library has given me so much that I feel words are less to express my gratitude. Moreover, the employees' welcoming attitude, and the smiles on their faces are so alluring, that they win the hearts of everyone they meet.



LIVE

They are so attentive, observant, and alert, that they can make out what the customer's needs are, even if the customers are not able to express their requirements in proper words.

The formalities to become a member of library are so simple that even an illiterate person, or one who has a communication problem can become a member of the library. Also, there is no limit for any age. I have seen people of all ages visiting the library. There is no discrimination of cast and creed; people from all walks of life are the members of the library. This encourages unity and multiculturalism among all. The rights and responsibilities towards the library are same for all. The best gift the library has endowed to me is the friend I have made there. I was always looking for like-minded friends and coincidentally, I met my friend in the library who too was searching and exploring the library like me.

Now, I would like to focus on the section of the library where the books are kept on sale. These are like blessings in disguise. Many times I find books which are really valuable and also beneficial, but at the throw away price. I got one math book which had lots of exercises for practicing. My son learned many topics from that book. Later, my husband too used the same book for his exam.

Unfortunately, sometimes I am careless and tend to forget to return the library books in time so as a punishment, many times, I owe to the library a few dollars as fine. But the employees at the libraries are courteous and do not ask for the immediate payment. Even if my dues are pending with them for many days, *(CONT.)*

I keep getting my books. This makes me comfortable and at my convenience I get my dues cleared whenever I have sufficient funds. This punishment is really very significant; otherwise in the absence of fines, people can take undue advantage and misuse the library. On my part, I don't mind paying a few dollars, as this reminds me to be punctual and to return the books in time.

Online service is another blessing for the library users which is indispensable. Sometimes, before sleeping, I check my stock of library books and the ones I want to renew, I do it online. This has enhanced our use of library and taught me the use of computer of which I was kind of ignorant. I do bring DVDs and videos from the library. Sometimes the text in the books is not clear. So videos are more live and give a vivid picture of the subject matter.

So to conclude, I must say that Whalley library has given me a lot. Words are insufficient to relate the gifts of the library. No doubt we are fortunate to be dwelling near such libraries. I would suggest everybody to have a sense of library. We should be thankful to the government of Canada to provide us with free education enhancement institution where not only we get knowledge, but also understanding, creativeness, etiquette, socializing, and many more things. The love for library is must to be confident and to achieve something incredible. My due regards are for the employees of the Whalley library for their sincerity, cooperativeness, and humble behaviour. — END

No one calls for you. No bells ring. No one is asking for anything. You are given what you need by the choices you make as your eyes slide over a thousand words, as you are moved by writers who speak to you from the heart. Pick up a book. Black ink, white paper, become magically disturbed atoms of thought whizzing into your brain, worlds and destinies in your hands! A library invites you to find your life's joy - your passions, your purpose. Books come to you as guides when you need them.... The book your questing spirit seeks is the one you hold by your own lamp. You've brought it home because that small voice has whispered "This one!"

— JUDY WINTER, PENTICTON

FREEDOM

Pay us a visit sometime

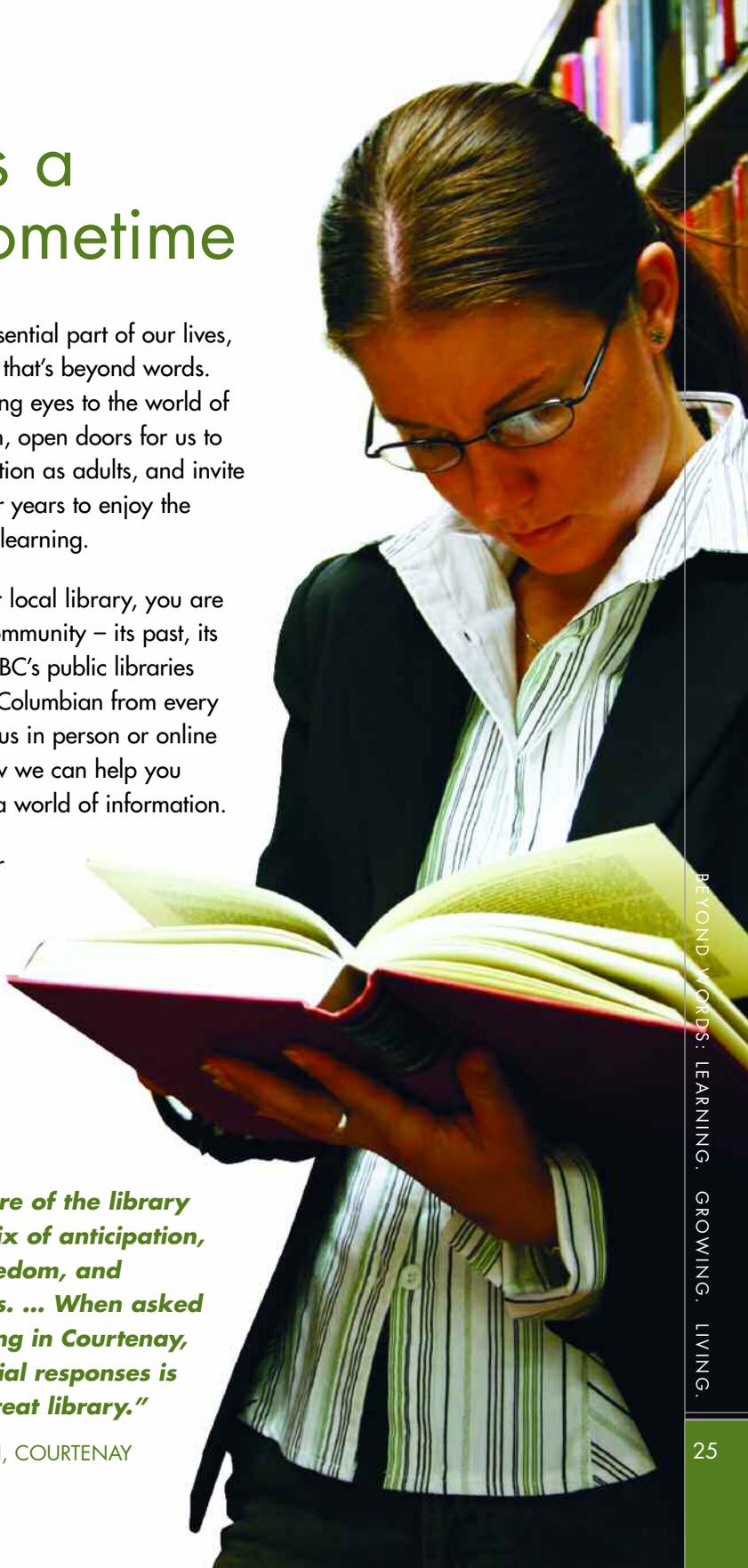
Libraries are an essential part of our lives, with a significance that's beyond words. They open our young eyes to the world of reading as children, open doors for us to a world of information as adults, and invite us back in our later years to enjoy the benefits of lifelong learning.

By supporting your local library, you are supporting your community – its past, its present, its future. BC's public libraries invite every British Columbian from every walk of life to visit us in person or online and to find out how we can help you open the doors to a world of information.

Come on in to your local public library today. Your library belongs to you, and you're always welcome here.

The atmosphere of the library is a unique mix of anticipation, quietness, freedom, and thoughtfulness. ... When asked why I like living in Courtenay, one of my initial responses is always, "A great library."

– ANDREA BURCH, COURTENAY



B.C. Public Libraries at a Glance

Items in BC public libraries in circulation (2004): 51,616,837

Children's programs in BC public libraries (2004): 26,059

Number of participants in library children's programs (2004): 766,585

Children who participated in BC's Summer Reading Clubs (2004): 80,626

Internet sessions used at BC libraries (2004): 1,696,695

Number of library branches across BC (2004): 238

The first public library opened in New Westminster in 1865 with
"four or five hundred volumes."

Estimated number of online databases patrons have access to through public
libraries (2004): 437 subscriptions through all the libraries in the province

Number of people working for public libraries province-wide (2004):
3,568 staff and 1,291 volunteers

www.beyondwords.ca

We live in a delightful village on top of a mountain, and every morning I gaze from my window at the magnificent Panorama spread before me, and appreciate the helpful service that changed my life. Our village doesn't have many shops, but it does have one thing that I just couldn't live without....A LIBRARY !!

– JOAN BENGE, LOGAN LAKE