

Report to City Council

THE NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY

The First Six Months

In June 2016 the Calgary Public Library began to develop a plan of service for the first six months of operations for the New Central Library [NCL]. The plan was completed in October 2016. The goals of the project were to:

- Ensure transformative patron experiences at the NCL and to ensure these experiences are similarly realized throughout the entire library system.
- Ensure that the NCL patron experience will create life-long Library users.
- Fulfill the goals and priorities of the Library's Strategic Plan and support imagineCalgary aspirations in transformative ways.
- Demonstrate the Library's expertise and innovation in library services to the community, highlighting the impact of investment in Library services.

NCL Service Plan: Focused Innovation

The Service Plan development team was comprised of creative and imaginative individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, including specialists in early learning, museum studies, international relations, education, art, and of course, libraries. This innovative group was stewarded through a creative process by a consultant with a strong background in large scale new central library projects, including in New York, Seattle, Ottawa, and Vancouver. The result is a transformative and bold plan of service for operating Calgary's largest civic project in a generation.

Reflective of Calgary's diverse population, the more than 80 services identified are targeted to meet the needs of diverse audiences including priority populations identified in the Library's Strategic Plan and imagineCalgary aspirations.

The new services identified represent four main themes:

- Learning and Education,
- Delight and Play,
- Social Connection, and
- Personalized Empowerment.

Each also includes a clear statement about the specific benefits which will be realized, highlighting the direct impact for individuals and the community. For example a plan to actively recruit newcomers as library volunteers; the benefits realized will be to increase the employability of those new to our city and their prosperity. Also, a plan for a space where silence is a service and the transformative power of words, books, and writing is celebrated; the benefits realized will be an often requested formal and quiet space for the community to engage in research, contemplation, and reading.

Also identified, are capacity building initiatives which will continue to stretch and develop Library staff skills and opportunities to expand and enhance the contributions made by the Library's more than 2900 volunteers (half of whom are youth). A third of the new services will involve collaboration with community partners, reflecting the Library's commitment to community development through joint endeavours.

Other highlights of the planned new services at the NCL include the Questionarium (an Idea Lab for students that sparks imagination and inquiry based learning), a Campus Calgary/Open Minds classroom in partnership with the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District, and community programming in the auditorium in partnership with post-secondary institutions.

In 2017, more than 40 of these new services will be trialed and tested in community libraries throughout the library system to ensure that when the Calgary Public Library opens the doors of the NCL, the services offered will result in the greatest possible impact on the community and will be an integrated part of the daily fabric of the library experience for patrons.

The Service Plan also identifies how the NCL will be activated by the wide variety of programs, activities, and special events already offered by the Library at every location throughout the city, focused on young children and families, newcomers, and lifelong learning. The NCL will host the full spectrum of Library programming which currently animates 19 community library locations across the city with over 230,000 program participants at over 12,000 programs in 2016.

Operational Readiness

With the completion of the Service Plan, the Library has turned attention to operational readiness for the building. In March 2017, from within existing resources, staff were redeployed to ensure that the necessary expertise was dedicated to this important phase of the project. This includes coordinating and facilitating project teams focused on change management, facilities, security, digital and IT initiatives, service plan implementation, and staffing. To facilitate the preparation of staff and materials for the move, the Library has also hired a move consultant.

Key to the opening of the New Central Library is the development of a synchronous CMLC / Library marketing plan that bridges the evolution between the construction and the transition-to-turnover phases of the project. The Plan will include construction milestone marketing, as well as the promotion of key Library messages and activities leading to the Grand Opening in Q4 2018. CMLC and the Library's Marketing & Communications teams are already at work on the creation of the Plan. The Library is developing a sister plan for ongoing marketing of the New Central Library, including the Grand Opening celebration and beyond.

In order to better serve patrons, in 2016 the Calgary Public Library relocated two community libraries (Nicholls Family Library and Quarry Park Library at the Remington YMCA), renovated one location (Nose Hill Library), and installed Early Learning Centres in two locations (Fish Creek Library and Village Square Library). The results of these efforts significantly increased use of each location (more than double the visits), and also increased Library memberships (150,000+ new Library members in 2016). This track record of successfully enhancing the patron experience provides a solid road map for the Library as we prepare for the highly anticipated opening of the NCL.

The Library is confident that the expectations Calgarians have for the NCL will be more than met by the highly accessible and vital resources, as well as the extensive programming and animation of the building, that will create a destination for Calgarians and visitors from around the globe and showcase Calgary Public Library as the Best Public Library System For the World.