



# Public Library InterLINK

## 2016-2019 Strategic Plan

## Message from the Board Chair



I am pleased to present Public Library InterLINK's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan. As Public Library InterLINK continues its fifth decade of serving the public through its member libraries, the Board has worked to develop a strategic plan that strengthens the supportive role that the Federation has always played, while actively seeking to develop new programs and services that reflect the innovative work being done in libraries.

InterLINK's member libraries are the lynchpins in their communities. They are forward-looking, innovative hubs of activity. As the Chair of the InterLINK Board, I see that activity not just in my library, but also across the entire InterLINK service area. As a federation that encompasses two-thirds of the population of British Columbia, InterLINK has the capacity to do impactful work that supports our member libraries, whether through the provision of resource sharing, developing collaborative programs that bring benefit to member libraries, or by organizing cost-saving purchasing programs that free up funding for local priorities. That support is InterLINK's mission and is something the Federation is proud to provide.

Working through this strategic planning process has reaffirmed my belief that InterLINK remains well positioned to deliver on its mission. The InterLINK Board shares this belief. The strategies identified in this plan, building on the strength of our member libraries, will ensure that the InterLINK vision of vibrant communities supported by strong public libraries continues to be a reality.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Board, Administrators and staff who have contributed to this strategic plan. Since the first meetings that established the need to go through the process, to the development of an RFP that provided an excellent opportunity to consider what the Board needed to look at, to the many sessions (both by the Board and the Administrators) with Michael Shoop, to the final touches that have resulted in this document, the process has been collaborative and invigorating.

As our member libraries continue to evolve, InterLINK will evolve in tandem. Together, we will work to benefit the communities we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Schaub".

John Schaub  
InterLINK Board Chair

# Executive Summary

Since 1994, Public Library InterLINK has provided programs that support the delivery of excellent service in our communities. Through InterLINK, member libraries have worked collaboratively to provide open access to collections, develop programs that build capacity through shared expertise, and leveraged buying power through economies of scale. InterLINK has facilitated partnerships with outside agencies and organizations, including the Ministry of Education, BC Libraries Co-op, BC Electronic Library Network, other BC library federations, the BC Library Association, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, to extend the reach of the Federation and bring additional benefit to members and their communities.

While public libraries remain a fundamental community institution, profound changes in the way those communities interact with their libraries make it imperative for Public Library InterLINK to regularly revisit the manner in which we support the work of those member libraries. InterLINK must continually evolve to ensure its relevancy and that it continues to best serve the needs of our unique communities. InterLINK provides leadership and encourages innovation by providing a forum for member libraries to share local successes and expertise as well as providing a conduit to developments in the broader library community both in BC and in other jurisdictions.

This strategic plan outlines the path InterLINK will take in that evolutionary process over the next three years. The plan looks forward, anticipating where InterLINK can be most effective by examining those factors that significantly impact the Federation and its members. The development of the plan included an environmental scan and an analysis of InterLINK's strengths and opportunities, while seeking to understand the risk factors that could impact the Federation's ability to deliver on its strategic directions. This process is a vital step in developing a shared vision for InterLINK and confirms that InterLINK is more than a service. It is the manifestation of the belief, as stated in InterLINK's first value statement, that working together increases the reach and effectiveness of libraries.

InterLINK's core services are supporting resource sharing and providing collaborative programs and services of benefit to member libraries. These core services are reflected in the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan. InterLINK supports the aspirations of its membership by harnessing the strengths of those members, drawing on the expertise of library staff and celebrating the diversity around the InterLINK table to maximize the Federation's impact.

## InterLINK's strategic directions are:



Specific actions have been identified that InterLINK will carry out in pursuit of its mission. Those action items will be augmented by annual operational plans that guide the work of the Federation. This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to reflect the strategic directions of its membership. Through this review process, the InterLINK Board, member libraries and the Federation's partners and funders will have a clear accounting of the impact of Public Library InterLINK.

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# INTRODUCTION

A Strategic Plan provides the high-level direction needed by an organization to successfully carry out its Vision and Mission. This Strategic Plan is the primary expression of the direction that Public Library InterLINK (InterLINK) intends to pursue and will provide guidance to the Board and staff.

For over 40 years InterLINK has worked with member libraries in a spirit of collaboration and shared expertise. This Strategic Plan builds on past successes and will guide InterLINK for the next three years. Things will change over this time frame and the plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure its continued relevance.

To be effective, a Strategic Plan needs to be reflected in an organization's other planning and monitoring documents including Operational Plans, Budgets, Risk Management Plans and Individual Performance Plans. InterLINK is committed to doing this.

## 1. Public Library InterLINK

### 1.1 Organizational Overview

Public Library InterLINK and its predecessor, the Greater Vancouver Library Federation (GVLF), have been serving the citizens of the southwest corner of British Columbia for over four decades. The first, and largest, library federation in the province, the GVLF was established by an Order-In-Council in October 1975. In 1994, the GVLF became Public Library InterLINK (InterLINK). In 2007 InterLINK's membership grew to eighteen libraries and that remains the size today.

From the early days of InterLINK's existence, when 70,000 books were delivered amongst the member libraries, to today, when nearly four million items move from library to library each year, Public Library InterLINK's member libraries have worked collaboratively to:

- **provide seamless access to member library resources**
- **develop shared programs and service efficiencies**
- **provide a forum for member libraries to share local expertise**

InterLINK is primarily funded by its member libraries and the provincial Ministry of Education through the Libraries Branch. InterLINK is accountable to funders and works closely with them to ensure that the investment made in the Federation brings benefit to member libraries and beyond.

InterLINK has a proven track record of innovation and leadership. Since its inception, InterLINK has pioneered programs and partnerships that have become models for the rest of the province. The Youth Services Committee is an excellent example of how dedicated library staff have pooled their efforts and expertise for the benefit of all. The Summer Reading Program and consortial purchasing of online databases are examples of InterLINK projects that have now grown into provincial programs.

As InterLINK enters its fifth decade of serving its member libraries, it remains well positioned to continue to provide programs and services that assist member libraries in fulfilling their mission to serve their communities.

## 1.2 InterLINK Membership

The 18 member public libraries are the core clients of InterLINK. The original 12 member libraries include Bowen Island; Burnaby; Coquitlam; Fraser Valley; New Westminster; North Vancouver City; North Vancouver District; Port Moody; Richmond; Surrey; Vancouver and West Vancouver. Since 1994, the following libraries have joined InterLINK: Squamish and Whistler (January 1997); Pemberton and District (May 1998); Gibsons and District, and Sechelt (January 1999); Lillooet (May 2007). InterLINK's membership includes thirteen municipal libraries, four public library associations and one regional library system.

## 1.3 InterLINK Partners

As part of its service to member libraries, InterLINK maintains a number of partnerships with outside agencies and organizations. The Ministry of Education, BC Libraries Co-op, BC Electronic Library Network, other BC library federations and the BC Library Association are examples of organizations that InterLINK has partnered with on projects that bring benefit to member libraries.

InterLINK has also sought out new partnerships that extend the reach of its member libraries. InterLINK's partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in delivering the NewToBC program is one example of those new partnerships.

## 2. Planning Context



“ If InterLINK did not exist, we would have to invent it.”

This quote from a Board member during InterLINK's 2009-2011 strategic planning process remains as relevant in 2016 as it was in 2009.

The need for effective collaboration is even more pronounced today. Public libraries face increasing pressure to provide programs and services to their communities, and to do so with little or no extra funding. Public libraries have responded to this new reality with the innovative and collaborative spirit that has always been their hallmark.

InterLINK, as well, has been tasked with being increasingly responsive to the needs of its member libraries. In order to remain effective, InterLINK must provide programs and services that help their members move forward. InterLINK's strategic planning process has included a review of the strategic plans of member libraries. Those strategic plans reveal a number of common themes that provide opportunities for InterLINK to offer support. The need for space, staff development and effective use of collections are examples of themes that resonate with member libraries.

A major aspect of any strategic planning process is undertaking an environmental scan to better understand the needs of the community an organization serves. InterLINK's community is the eighteen public libraries that comprise its membership. InterLINK also has accountability to the Province of British Columbia, which, along with member libraries, provides the bulk of InterLINK's funding.

Throughout the strategic planning process, InterLINK has continually referenced its mission and values to ensure that the Federation's strategic directions support those foundational statements.

## 2.1 Changes in the Library Sector

Public libraries face increasing pressure to adapt to change. These include technological change, change in how the public make use of libraries and change in the level of accountability demanded by funders. There is also an evolving need to engage staff at all levels of our libraries to best prepare them to provide high level library service in the face of those changes. These changes are not unique to InterLINK member libraries and member libraries do not experience the changes in identical ways.

InterLINK is positioned to support member libraries as they listen to their constituents and see the changes taking place around them as opportunities to remain responsive to community needs. InterLINK brings libraries together, enhancing their effectiveness, building member libraries' capacity, and allowing them to share expertise and strategies so member libraries can demonstrate the impact they have in their communities.



## 2.2 Changes in Government Policy Legislation or Regulatory Perspective

InterLINK must be cognizant of the impact of changes to legislation and regulations at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. The InterLINK Board needs to be informed of how developments impact the Federation's ability to carry out its strategic plan.

## 2.3 Environmental Factors

All strategic plans must consider the world in which an organization operates. An environmental scan was conducted as a key part of the strategic planning process. This scan identified a number of factors that directly influence the direction that InterLINK will take over the next three years.

### **2.3.1 Demographic and Population Trends**

The environmental scan clearly reflects that “change” is not homogenous and does not impact member libraries in the same way or at the same time. The survey completed as part of the scan reveals that none of the communities that are served by member libraries are shrinking. They continue to grow. How that growth occurs impacts library services. The impact of real estate price increases in Metro Vancouver and the accompanying movement of young families to outlying areas not only impact who is using the library, but also the staff working at those libraries. The continued influx of immigrants enriches our communities and also increases the need for diversity in services and collections. Demographic trends continue to impact libraries, making the need for cooperation even more pronounced. InterLINK provides both a forum for information sharing and developing programs that build the capacity of libraries to adapt to the new reality.

### **2.3.2 Economic Trends**

InterLINK faces many of the same economic challenges as its member libraries. Static budgets, rising costs and a weak Canadian dollar against its U.S. counterpart are all examples. There is increasing pressure by funders to see a return on their investments.

Those challenges provide opportunities for InterLINK to build upon the relationships and trust established over forty plus years of collaboration to develop cost effective programs and services.



### **2.3.3 Technological Trends**

The rapid pace of technology also generates challenges and opportunities. Patrons have increased expectations of what they expect from their library. How do libraries meet these increased expectations? How can libraries keep up to the pace of change? How do libraries take advantage of emerging technology? How do these changes impact the privacy of our patrons? How do we prepare our staff to meet these challenges and take advantage of opportunities? By working collaboratively, member libraries are better positioned to answer these questions. InterLINK provides a vital forum for discussion to take place as well as mechanisms for libraries to develop shared approaches to meeting the challenges and opportunities presented.

### 3. Vision, Mission and Values

As Public Library InterLINK works to support the work of member libraries, who we are, what we provide and the values that guide our actions remain keys to our success. The mission and values have been reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving direction of the Federation.

#### **3.1 Vision: What are we trying to achieve?**

Vibrant communities supported by strong public libraries.

#### **3.2 Mission: How are we going to achieve our vision?**

Supporting public libraries through resource sharing and collaborative programs.

#### **3.3 Values: What will guide our actions?**

Values are the building blocks of human behaviour. They provide a focus for how we approach our work. They can inspire behaviour that creates a dynamic and performance oriented organization. We will strive to achieve the following in everything we do:

##### **Collaboration**

We believe that working together increases the reach and effectiveness of libraries.

##### **Equality**

We believe that member libraries have equal voice in the decision making process at the InterLINK table.

##### **Innovation**

We encourage creativity, experimentation and the generation of new ideas.

##### **Stewardship**

We manage our resources in a manner that brings maximum benefit to member libraries.

##### **Accountability**

We are open, transparent and committed to demonstrating our impact to members and funders.



## 4. Strategic Direction Framework



InterLINK's strategic planning process reflects foundational work undertaken to ensure that the Federation has the appropriate governance structure to support the strategic priorities set by the Board. The InterLINK Board identified the development of a governance manual and a review of InterLINK's financial structure as a key piece of "planning the plan." Through a process of clarifying roles and responsibilities, the Board is better positioned to deliver on the Federation's strategic goals.

The strategic planning process also acknowledges that member libraries invest in the Federation beyond what they provide through member levies. The expertise and commitment of member library management and staff are key components in InterLINK fulfilling its mission. Without this member library commitment, InterLINK's effectiveness and impact would be severely limited.

At the core of the strategic plan are three Key Directions that focus our energies over the next three years.

The graphic below illustrates how the components of the strategic plan are linked.



## 4.1 Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

Public Library InterLINK operates according to Section 49 of the Library Act of British Columbia (1994), and is governed by a Board of Directors constituted in accordance with that Act and the InterLINK Agreement.

As a legal entity, InterLINK must ensure that proper mechanisms are in place that allow the Federation to fulfill obligations set out in those two foundational documents. The Federation must also ensure that its strategic plan supports the aspirations of the member libraries and the province. As the priorities of its funders evolve in response to changes in the library landscape, InterLINK must be positioned to support those evolving priorities.

InterLINK must be transparent and accountable in its reporting. Communication should focus on InterLINK's impact both within the Federation and as a provincial partner.

## 4.2 InterLINK Governance

In order for a strategic plan to have an impact, an appropriate governance structure must be in place. That governance structure must be supported by appropriate policies and procedures that define roles and responsibilities and assign accountability.

InterLINK is governed by a Board comprised of one member from the Boards of each of the 18 member libraries. In 2015, in anticipation of a renewed focus on strategic planning, the InterLINK Board undertook a review of the Federation's governance structure and accompanying policies. Only when the governance work was substantially underway did the InterLINK Board begin the "planning to plan" phase of the strategic planning process.

The InterLINK Board adopted the Governance Manual in February 2016. The process of implementation will continue through 2016. The focus will be on policy development and reinforcing identified roles and responsibilities. Successful implementation of the Governance Manual is a critical factor in delivering on InterLINK's strategic directions.



## 4.3 Organizational Capacity

In order to be successful, InterLINK's strategic plan needs to reflect the capacity of the Federation to carry out the action items identified in the plan.

InterLINK, with a small staff contingent, is fortunate to have the support of member libraries as it carries out Federation priorities. Member libraries have seconded staff to the Federation and appointed management and staff to serve on numerous working groups, committees and sub-committees.

As the Board considers the strategic plan, it must also consider the impact of that plan on InterLINK staff and the staff at member libraries.

InterLINK finds itself at a crossroads with the recent changes to its staffing contingent. The Federation will must examine current job descriptions and align staffing with strategic priorities. This foundational work will maximize InterLINK's ability to successfully deliver on this strategic plan.

## 5. Strategic Directions



This section includes the three strategic directions on which InterLINK will focus its efforts and resources over the next three years.

Each Strategic Direction includes a number of objectives along with a series of actions that highlight how the objective will be achieved. These actions will form the basis of InterLINK's annual operations planning process.

Three strategic directions have been identified:



### Strategic Direction #1 - Enhancing Patron Experience

InterLINK's member libraries are focused, responsive organizations serving diverse communities with diverse needs. Through the provision of programs and services, InterLINK supports the vision of each member library. InterLINK strives to be nimble and resourceful as it responds to the needs of member libraries.

Seamless access to the wealth of materials held by member libraries through the sharing of physical collections has been a core strategic direction of InterLINK since the Federation's inception. As resource sharing increasingly evolves to include programs that move beyond the physical collection, InterLINK will maintain its core service while seeking new opportunities to assist member libraries in providing excellent service to their communities.

Opportunities to expand resource sharing with other public and post-secondary libraries across the province will also be explored. InterLINK's experience in this area and the size of the Federation's service area provide not just a strategic imperative, but a recognition of our capacity to provide leadership in this area.

#### Objective

Improved resource sharing among member libraries

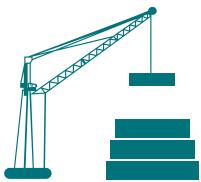
Improved resource sharing with libraries across the province

#### Action

- Identify and review opportunities to improve resource sharing among member libraries, including the delivery service
- Explore the desirability of centrally located collections

- Identify and review opportunities to improve resource sharing with post-secondary libraries
- Support improvements to resource sharing with other public libraries across the Province
- Monitor provincial resource sharing initiatives and their impact on member libraries. Adjust InterLINK's resource sharing strategies as appropriate



## Strategic Direction #2 – Building Member Library Capacity

The need to be responsive and cost effective is a reality faced by InterLINK's member libraries. To meet this reality our capacity for innovation will be crucial. Embracing change is a key to everyone's continued success. InterLINK supports the work of member libraries by providing mechanisms that leverage work at the local community level to provide benefits across the Federation while serving as a conduit for sharing information on developments in the broader library community.

Building library capacity is accomplished through two major approaches: the cooperative sharing of collection and staff resources in an effective and purposeful manner, and the development and extension of collaborative programs that benefit member libraries. In some cases programs are developed for the benefit of a subset of the membership with the understanding that additional members may opt in at a later date if desired.

### Objective

Library staff receive training appropriate to contribute to their library's success

Realize cost efficiencies through consortial purchasing programs

Enhanced library capacity achieved through collaborative programs and the sharing of best practices and expertise

### Action

- Identify, coordinate and evaluate development opportunities for member libraries
- Provide a clearing-house for the sharing of member library and partner development opportunities available to InterLINK libraries
- Facilitate and support opportunities for libraries to develop leadership capacity among staff

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- Develop additional collaborative projects of value to libraries
- Manage additional consortial purchasing projects resulting in cost efficiencies for participating libraries

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- Explore opportunities to expand existing InterLINK programs across the Federation
- Provide appropriate information sharing tools and strategies to assist member libraries in their decision-making



## Strategic Direction #3 - Increasing Awareness of the Impact of Public Libraries

Public libraries are expected to demonstrate the impact of their services to their communities and funders. Funders in particular are looking for evidence of a return on the investment made in public libraries. InterLINK is positioned to support member libraries by providing a forum for sharing expertise, sharing research on topics such as assessment and key performance indicators, and delivering programs that build capacity among member libraries to identify impact.

Similarly, Public Library InterLINK must also effectively demonstrate its impact to member libraries and funders. In order to accomplish this, the InterLINK Board requires appropriate measures and strategies to report to home boards and other stakeholders that demonstrate how InterLINK benefits member libraries.

### Objective

Communities have an increased awareness of the impact of public libraries

Funders have increased awareness of the impact of Public Library InterLINK

### Action

- Provide mechanisms for member libraries to share local expertise that enhances the ability to communicate the impact of their library as well as their accomplishments and successes
- Provide access to tools and templates that can be customized for local community needs and utilized to communicate library impact
- Support the Libraries Branch in the development of its strategic plan and other projects that support the increased awareness of the role public libraries play within communities

- Develop common language for reporting on InterLINK's impact on improving library service across the region and Province
- Provide InterLINK Board members with information that highlights InterLINK's impact and facilitates the sharing of that information with funders

## 6. Next Steps – Implementing the Strategic Plan

Public Library InterLINK is committed to the following steps to achieve the goals and actions contained in this plan.

1

### **We will:**

Share this strategic plan widely with both direct and indirect partners to ensure they are immediately aware of the path we have charted. The plan will be distributed to member libraries and partners, and posted to the InterLINK website by June 2016.

2

Review our strategic plan annually to ensure its continued relevance and make any necessary changes. This process will be undertaken at the September Board meeting.

3

Renew our operational plan, budget and other planning documents annually to ensure they all reflect the three Strategic Directions set out in this plan. This process will be undertaken at the November Board meeting.

4

Work with our partners to ensure this strategic plan is pursued in a meaningful and productive manner. Ensure regular communication between InterLINK and its partners (including the Ministry of Education-Libraries Branch, BC Libraries Co-operative, other Federations and the BC Electronic Library Network).

5

Communicate progress on our three Strategic Directions widely, including issuing annual progress reports in the first quarter of the year.





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