



Administration
Box 3333 | 6250 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, BC Canada V9R 5N3
t: 250.758.4697 f: 250.758.2482
e: info@virl.bc.ca w: www.virl.bc.ca

October 11, 2019

Chair Michele Babchuk
Strathcona Regional District
301 - 990 Cedar Street
Campbell River, BC V9W 7Z8

Original sent via: schair@strathconard.ca

Dear Chair Babchuk,

Re: Letter of Support for Canadian Libraries Access to Digital Content

As a member of Vancouver Island Regional Library, we are asking you to send a letter supporting the right of Canadian libraries to access digital content for our communities. Major publishing companies are placing severe restrictions on the ability for libraries in Canada to lend digital content, such as ebooks and e-audiobooks, to our customers.

These restrictions have a direct impact on the residents of your city.

Across the country, libraries are uniting in their fight against these harmful restrictions, including unsustainably high prices and embargoes on content, with campaigns targeting governments at every level. These efforts are being led by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), a national organization supporting large Canadian libraries.

You can show your support by signing the letter attached to this email. By doing so, you are standing up for equitable access, and advocating for ebook and e-audiobook publishers to institute fair, transparent and flexible lending models for public libraries.

The timeline is tight and CULC is hoping to have all signed letters returned to them by next Wednesday (October 16). If you would like to support this important cause, please email your signed letter to Mariah Patterson (mpatterson@virl.bc.ca) by Wednesday afternoon.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me any time.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Bonanno".

Rosemary Bonanno

cc: Brenda Leigh, VIRL Board Chair, Strathcona Regional District
Executive Leadership Group

Strong Libraries ■ Strong Communities

Bella Coola Bowser Campbell River Chemainus Comox Cortes Island Courtenay Cowichan Cowichan Lake Cumberland Gabriola Island Gold River Hornby Island Ladysmith Masset Nanaimo Harbourfront Nanaimo North Nanaimo Wellington Parksville Port Alberni Port Alice Port Clements Port Hardy Port McNeill Port Renfrew Quadra Island Qualicum Beach Queen Charlotte Sandspit Sayward Sidney/North Saanich Sointula Sooke South Cowichan Tahsis Tofino Ucluelet Union Bay Woss



Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books

Major publishers have introduced severe restrictions to e-book and e-audiobook lending for public libraries, including embargoes on the sales of new titles and unreasonably high prices, which far exceed the prices offered for print books. As a result, libraries will be unable to fulfill their core functions in building educated, literate communities. These restrictions will be most harmful for populations who already face significant barriers to equitable knowledge and information access in our communities – including youth, people living with disabilities and those with limited financial means.

Public libraries play an essential role in levelling the playing field and strengthening the foundation of our communities. As digital technologies become increasingly inseparable from the ways that people learn, work and interact, the library's unique ability to create onramps for information and knowledge access is more important than ever. There is significant, rising demand for e-books and e-audiobooks from public library users – overall, digital content circulation is increasing by 30% per year.

As elected public officials and trusted leaders in our communities, we are committed to protecting and supporting the capacity of public libraries to:

- Provide equitable access for individuals to gain knowledge and become proficient with digital tools, regardless of their income, physical abilities, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, citizenship status or religion.
- Support lifelong learning and foster empathy, curiosity, civic engagement and a love of reading among community members.
- Educate community members about the rights, responsibilities and implications of their lives online, including data privacy risks when accessing online learning resources and digital content.
- Serve as valued partners to local government in advancing city outcomes for digital inclusion and as institutions that support informed citizens.

Our cities are strongest when all individuals have the same opportunities to further their personal, educational and professional goals. Our democracy is non-negotiable. We stand with all who are urging e-book and e-audiobook publishers to institute fair, transparent and flexible lending models for public libraries.