Library Director Zoom Call – Meeting Minutes

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Watch the recording

- (00:01) Welcome and Introduction

o Heather welcomed attendees to the meeting and acknowledged Paula Coutts in Tumbler Ridge for keeping her library open during challenging times and for supporting her community.

o Heather welcomed new Library Directors Geneva Blair from Midway Public Library, Mandy Furro from Grand Forks Public Library, Rose Meulenbroeks from Hazelton Public Library and Julie Balenzano from Surrey Public Library.

- (02:33) Hitting the Limit: Trauma and Library Workers - Mark Reinelt, ORL

o Mark Reinelt, Director of Public Services for the Okanagan Region Library (ORL), presented about difficult topics including suicidal ideations and toxic drug poisonings. He emphasized the importance of participant well-being and encouraged interactive engagement during the session.

o Mark presented on trauma management in libraries, sharing experiences from Okanagan Regional Library which serves 30 branches across two time zones with both large urban branches and small rural libraries. Recently, they have experienced incidents in smaller libraries that were only seen before in their larger branches. Two of their larger branches have onsite security.

o In 2025 ORL had 448 reported incidents with 228 experienced at their Kelowna branch and 90 from their Vernon branch.

o Mark explained the difference between primary and secondary trauma, describing how library workers often deal with both types without proper training. Mark detailed the library's approach to trauma prevention, including the development of incident response plans for medical emergencies, violent patrons, lockdowns, and missing children, as well as the implementation of a naloxone program in 10 volunteer branches. He emphasized the importance of regular practice of these plans and proper communication during incidents to help manage trauma among staff.

o Mark discussed two major incidents at library branches and shared lessons learned about handling traumatic situations. The first incident involved a security guard misinterpreting a situation and using physical restraint, which highlighted the importance of clear communication protocols. The second incident during a severe fire season in

2023 demonstrated improved response procedures, including bringing in support teams and properly supporting staff affected by the trauma.

o Mark emphasized the importance of being "buffalo" rather than "cattle" by facing trauma directly, establishing clear protocols, and providing proper support to staff who experience both primary and secondary trauma.

o The discussion concluded with practical advice about implementing trauma response plans, including regular practice sessions and the importance of knowing that those plans may have to be adapted and sharing those adaptations with your team is key. Mark emphasized the importance of watching for both the physical and emotional signs of trauma in yourself and in your team.

- (50:40) ABCPLD Updates

o The group discussed recent advocacy efforts, including the partners' letter to Minister Boyle. Heather thanked Mikale at Whistler Library and Hillary at Squamish Librray for meeting and advocating with Minister Boyle at their libraries.

o Terry reported that a letter written by ABCPLD highlighted libraries' potential to inform government policies and legislation beyond just funding requests given that librarians are very informed about what is happening in communities.

o ABCPLD requested for individual meetings with Minister Boyle, with the Minister of Finance and with Minister Bailey and with the Attorney General's office. The Attorney General's office has agreed to meet, while responses from other ministers are expected in one to two months.

o Regarding the provincial government's budget presentation, there was no specific information on library funding, however, Terry doesn't anticipate that there will be any changes to provincial funding for libraries and will confirm this with Mari Martin at PLB.

o Terry reported that the team also plans to attend local area government meetings to build government relations, with some Library Directors attending at their different regions.

o Heather shared that ABCPLD is working on updates to promotional materials with the aim to be as assertive as we have always been regarding the worth of libraries but also wanting to be respectful of the current economic climate. Heather confirmed plans for a strong presence at UBCM in September, including a panel presentation and hosting a library reception at Vancouver Public Library. Heather also stressed the importance of being able to directly advocate with the provincial government and not just relying on resolutions via UBCM.

- Heather shared that she has organized a dinner for members who are attending the BC Library Conference which will take place at 5:30pm on April 23rd at the Cactus Club. Heather will send out a confirmation email about this.
- Please reach out to Terry or Heather if you have an idea for a future presentation or can recommend a speaker.