

Academic Library Service Models in British Columbia: A Report for Practitioners

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Introduction

This report details the results of a 2019 study of academic librarians at post-secondary institutions in British Columbia regarding the current state of front-line library service models. An online survey and series of interviews were conducted. This report includes an annotated literature review as well as a thematic contextual analysis. Strong themes emerged within the data, and areas for further research and collaboration are identified. This report is written for librarians as practitioners. It aims to raise and address practical questions that relate to current and future practices of front-line service delivery. By establishing a baseline of service models currently in use, the intent of this report is to help guide decision-making in academic libraries through the gathering and sharing important insights regarding service delivery. The creation of a province-wide community of practice will facilitate discussion beyond this report.

About the Author

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At the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus Library I am responsible for overseeing the strategic and daily management of many front-line library services. I coordinate service desk assessment, bi-weekly staff training, schedule librarians as part of our referral model, lead a student outreach team that guides and delivers displays and programs, and contribute to a campus library operations team. I also provide liaison services for four subject areas, and teach information literacy classes to first-year students. From July 1 – December 31, 2019, I have been on a study leave that has allowed me to pursue the research reported here.

Context for Research

In 2016, when I was tasked with leading the service desk redesign at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus Library, the literature provided limited guidance on best practices in how to design and run a contemporary service model, especially one poised for future campus growth. The professional literature seemed steeped in tradition on the one hand (reference and circulation desk as distinct entities) and experimenting without much assessment on the other (a variety of single-service point models). Through a collaborative decision-making process and almost two years of contemplation, discussion, and searching for ideas, we found a creative way forward for our library. However, when the opportunity for a study leave presented itself, I knew the questions to which I wanted answers. They pertain to how to best deliver front-line academic library services given current social, university, and library contexts. As a starting point in understanding best practices, I set out to determine what we are collectively doing so that we can make informed decisions about future changes. Alexander and Wakimoto (2019) recently conducted a similar study at the University of California, that has helped to create a baseline of service models against which further changes can be measured. I have separately described the UBC Okanagan Library redesign in an article that I expect will be published in early 2020.

Research Questions

- How are front-line library services being delivered in British Columbia post-secondary institutions? Related, which employee groups are delivering those services?
- How are transactional (circulation, directional, technical assistance) activities and more complex activities (reference/research help, teaching, tutoring) being articulated by libraries?
- How are current service models experienced by patrons and by library employees, and understood by administrators outside of the library?
- What are the desk design and staffing implications of shifting patterns of library service usage?
- What role do academic libraries currently hold on academic campuses and will that remain similar in the future? What is the future of front-line library services specifically?

This series of questions guided the creation of a province-wide survey and subsequent interviews. Related to this series of questions is a contextual analysis that examines why libraries engage in the services we do, and how those practices are shaped by both a corporate university structure as well as the ideology of neoliberalism. Johnson (2019) provides an excellent overview of contemporary librarian work, creating understanding of service model evolution in a broader context. These topics are intertwined, and the contextual analysis section of this report will draw these themes together.

The purpose of this report is to offer a baseline of how front-line library services are being delivered in BC as a means of facilitating discussion and decision-making. I have come to understand that the work that we do in public view primarily fits into two categories: transactional and complex. Both types of work are essential to supporting our campus constituents. How best to design spaces for both types of work as well as who should deliver them are not questions with clear answers. Throughout BC, there are three main types of post-secondary institution: college/polytechnic, teaching university, and research university. These distinctions came through in the survey data, but less frequently than one might expect. The same service models are in use across all types of institution, and libraries hold remarkably similar roles on our various campuses.

Data Collection and Methods

After obtaining approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Ethics Research Board, I conducted an anonymous online survey, emailed to all BC academic librarians as listed on their library's website (see Appendix B for survey instrument). Survey respondents had the option to volunteer for a follow-up interview. The survey was open for one month during the summer of 2019, and expert interviews were conducted in the early fall of 2019 (see Appendix C for interview questions).

The survey had a response rate of 20%, with 63 completed surveys. An additional 25 partial responses were received but not analyzed as respondents completed fewer than 54% of questions. A total of 312 librarians were identified through listings on academic library

websites, and each received two emails requesting their participation in the survey. There are 25 public post-secondary institutions in BC, and complete responses were received from 21 of them, which is an 84% institutional response rate.¹ Fourteen one-hour interviews were conducted in-person, by phone and by Skype.

The scope of this survey was limited to British Columbia academic librarians for multiple reasons. First, education is legislated provincially in Canada, and as such, funding levels, collective bargaining, student transfer credits, and bureaucratic systems are comparable at a provincial level. Second, professional organization through library associations is often organized on a provincial level, and one of my goals with this research is to establish a community of practice for library professionals involved in front-line service delivery.

While the contributions of all library professionals are respected by the researcher, librarians were the only population surveyed. As the analysis below will show, the structure of academic libraries is quite varied, with significantly different language and meaning being used in the job titles of library technicians and assistants. Even identifying a representative set of people to email would be very challenging on library websites because all employees are not always listed. Further, as the educational credentials and job descriptions of library technicians and assistants vary considerably throughout the province, I was not confident that I would be able to craft one survey that would elicit the comparative perspective that I was looking for while respecting the multiplicity of views that respondents would bring. Public library employees also have much to offer to any discussion of front-line service delivery, but again, as mandates differ between academic and public libraries, they were excluded from this study.

Literature Review Summary

Appendix A consists of an extensive bibliography organized by category, with notable articles described. This format is designed to help facilitate discussions when service model redesign and evaluation are being considered. For an excellent traditional literature review on the topic of service model evolution, start with Alexander and Wakimoto (2019).

Thematic Findings from the Survey & Interviews

Introduction

There is not a common mode of front-line service delivery across libraries in the province. There is a strong sentiment that local campus conditions are important to consider in service delivery. A trend in desk design is toward a single service point, with staffing models best described as either *co-located*, that is, one desk with different employee groups performing

¹ Valid responses received from British Columbia Institute of Technology, Camosun College, Capilano University, Coast Mountain College, College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Justice Institute of British Columbia, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Langara College, North Island College, Okanagan College, Simon Fraser University, Thompson Rivers University, University of British Columbia, University of Northern British Columbia, University of the Fraser Valley, University of Victoria, Vancouver Community College, Vancouver Island University. The following four institutions are not represented in the results of this report due to incomplete or absent responses: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Northern Lights College, Selkirk College, Royal Roads University.

different distinct functions, or *merged* meaning one desk with all staff at the desk performing all types of functions. In both of these single desk models, advanced reference is typically provided by librarians, either through an on-call model or by appointment. However, as of the fall of 2019, most libraries in BC maintain separate circulation and reference desks, and while many are contemplating change, it is often without clear direction as to which future configuration will meet staffing, patron, and administrative needs. Tracking reference and circulation statistics is common. However, standardized assessment techniques across institutions are absent as are robust qualitative measures of front-line services.

The literature on library service models demonstrates that there are multiple motivating factors for the trend toward consolidating service points. These factors include the efficient use of employee time in the face of declining circulation and reference questions, reducing confusion for patrons between multiple library service points, and additional competing job duties for librarians leading to a reprioritization of time allocation away from traditional reference services at a desk. These pressures for change mirror those described in the survey and interviews. However, in the local BC context important additional themes stand out. First, an overwhelming demand for student study space is leading to library renovations in which service model revision is a consequence rather than the purpose. Second, there is a perception that library technician roles are in a state of flux with impacts on future service model revisions. Third, substantial increases in international student enrollment across BC is directly impacting front-line library services with attention required to ensure equitable and inclusive approaches.

In both the literature and in the BC context, impediments to the trend of consolidating service are a lack of financial resources for service model redesign or full-scale renovation, building constraints, outdated or inaccurate job descriptions across employee categories, collective agreements tying specific duties to specific types of employees, a need for rigorous and ongoing training for staff, and a general aversion to change within workplaces. There is also a growing recognition that while a single service point may solve some current challenges it is not a uniform solution, nor is it seen as a best practice in library service delivery.

Research Findings

Survey responses were received from librarians representing 21 institutions. However, many of these institutions have multiple locations or campuses and as such the total number of service points in the results exceeds 21.

Physical design: Survey results

- All libraries reported having an in-person service point.
- For institutions with multiple campuses, it is quite common for variation at each location including the physical configuration of the desk, the services offered, and the staff division of duties.
- Beyond circulation and reference, technology support is the next most common service to be located at a physical desk within the library. Such a service is alternately staffed by IT professionals, students, or library staff.

Survey question: Thinking about the physical desk which serves as a main point of contact, which configuration best describe your library?

Type of physical arrangement	Number of Responses	Number of Institutions Represented
Circulation Desk AND Reference Desk as separate physical desks located far apart	5	15 of 21 institutions have separate reference and circulation desks
Circulation Desk AND Reference Desk as separate physical desks located near each other	36	
Circulation Desk AND Reference by appointment only	1	4 of 21 institutions have a circulation desk with reference exclusively by appointment
Circulation Desk and Reference Desk combined as one desk	21	12 of 21 institutions have a one desk model
Other configuration? Please explain.	15 configurations were described as other. Most often, these comments represented multiple locations within a system, and have all been added to the above categories	

Staffing: Survey results

- Most libraries employ a range of employee groups to deliver front-line services and there are frequent discrepancies between the work that needs to be done and existing job descriptions and task divisions.
- Library technicians are the most common employee group delivering both circulation and reference services.
- Few libraries still employ a clerical level of library employee to perform strictly circulation duties.
- Most libraries do not schedule librarians at a physical reference desk although all libraries reported that librarians form part of their overall reference model. Librarians are typically available using a combination of on-call service during a limited set of hours, and by referral for appointments. A few libraries provide librarian-level reference by appointment only, with no on-demand availability.

Services offered: Survey results

- Libraries offer a range of services during all hours, most commonly including circulating books and media, lending technology such as laptops and chargers, assisting with finding and retrieving known items, fulfilling office supply requests and general customer service. This level of service is generally considered the minimum standard for service offerings.
- As a standard, assistance with citing sources and research skills such as searching by topic are offered for a limited set of hours relative to the hours the library is open. Few libraries provide this level of reference support during all open hours.
- Many libraries cited AskAway as part of a service model approach to provide reference services during all or most library hours.
- Basic and intermediate reference, including known-item lookups, beginning a search by identifying keywords and places to search, as well as citation support, is generally viewed as

best delivered by library technicians. There is not unanimous consensus on this topic, but overall, survey and interview results show that librarians are confident that library technicians have the skills to deliver these services well. Ongoing staff training and a culture of trust between employee groups are both seen as essential to the success of this model.

- Comprehensive research support, including tasks such as developing a search strategy, searching in multiple locations, evaluating results and citing sources is viewed as best delivered by librarians. These services are usually offered for a limited set of hours and by appointment.
- Many libraries offer additional services from their main service point including the creation of photo identification cards and loading money to print accounts. The value to the overall campus of a staffed, secure, service point that is open for long hours fulfilling multiple purposes should not be understated.
- There is a significant trend of other academic support units, such as writing support, math tutoring, digital media support and similar services being located within the library (often understood as the Learning Commons model). Occasionally these services are offered from the same service point as library services.

Physical Design: Analysis

The physical design of service desks, even ones with many functions, continue to favour the transactional activities that comprise only a part of front-line services. Large structures, often with varied heights of workstation, are common in libraries across BC. There are clearly delineated staff and patron areas with various degrees of ergonomic and accessibility considerations for employees and patrons. These desks are often at standing height and are designed for quick interactions such as lending materials. As print circulation declines precipitously due to e-preferred book acquisition policies, amongst other reasons, the large desk design is starting to be called into question, especially when renovations are planned. Many survey and interview respondents would advocate for a smaller footprint than their current desk. Single-service models require staff to do multiple types of tasks simultaneously, and many of those tasks are complex in nature rather than transactional. Desk design is seen as needing to account for these shifting patterns of service, and flexibility is key with opportunities for teaching space(s) built into the design.

Large desks convey prestige and expertise which may directly work against stated customer service and inclusivity principles for front-line service. Comments in this report about the physical design and approachability of a desk apply equally to separate desks as they do to a single-service point. To paraphrase from an insightful interview participant

Libraries have not evolved from the basic model in place in the 1970s when many of our campuses were built. When post-secondary students were a relatively homogenous group: mainly white, middle to upper class, and predominantly male. These students were confident to seek the assistance they needed in order to succeed in an academic setting. Our service desks are still designed for them.

What we know is that the people coming through our doors have never been more diverse. Further, they include many people who for good reason have no idea how North American libraries or post-secondary bureaucracies' function. Can we expect that all people entering our libraries will have the confidence to ask professionals behind a large imposing structure, in the middle of a busy public space, for help? How can we imagine our service spaces to reduce barriers to seeking assistance? Can we position library services to be pro-active? Retail websites increasingly have a pro-active chat feature, and in fact, this is an optional function in the new AskAway software. Is there a corollary to be explored for in-person service? Regardless of the service model in use, the data shows that we need to challenge ourselves to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of our service spaces while simultaneously better articulating the range of services that are on offer.

One of the benefits of a two-desk model is that it clearly conveys two distinct services, despite the common cited confusion regarding what those actually are. Circulation and reference are in fact very discrete types of activities, and separating them in space has been a logical decision in libraries for many years. Given the complex range of services on offer in libraries, the two-desk approach does make sense in advertising a variety of service offerings. Even without signage two desks communicates two types of service. Many libraries are challenged to continue to allocate staffing resources to this model while additional pressures for employee time and energy are added to relatively stagnant (in comparison to enrollment) budgets. However, a lower station at a circulation desk, or a consultation room, do not easily allow a new-to-the-library patron to understand the range of services on offer. Representing a variety of services is something the two-desk approach excels at. While the survey did not specifically address assessment, multiple librarians did describe their reference statistics as stable or increasing; these libraries have either a two-desk model or a process for students to book consultations directly into the calendar of a librarian.

For all of the practical, economic, and customer-service oriented benefits of a single-service desk, the combination of transactional and complex work in one location is a uniquely library approach. While the two-desk approach is often derided in the literature as confusing for patrons, the one-desk approach is arguably too simplistic in what the design communicates. An analogy may help to make my point. Would you ever expect that the grocery store had nutritionists to dispense advice specific to your purchase at the same time as they rang through your groceries? The single service desk, whether a co-located model with different services at each end of a desk, or merged, with the same person performing all tasks, is not replicated elsewhere in society. We are expecting people to assume an ability to complete very different types of activities in the same space: they can borrow a book or laptop, pay a two dollar fine, and ask for assistance on how to cite sources for a paper (while being terrified of committing plagiarism), or how to find articles for a first-year Indigenous Studies course (where they feel completely lost as to what is being discussed and are afraid to use any language that might cause unintended offence). Better yet, we expect people to approach this desk as a gateway to expert advice on systematic reviews, locating business data, or determining an applicable engineering standard. By attempting to improve patron satisfaction with a one-desk model

libraries have unintentionally over simplified the service interaction possibilities if seen from a patron viewpoint.

The survey and interviews identified a need for different furniture and desk designs that recognize shifting usage patterns, specifically regarding circulation activities. Technology lending has surpassed print lending activities at many of our desks. Two opposite views emerged in the data. Despite the best of intentions for creating equitable access to education through technology loans some librarians expressed that the activity now feels like a concierge service. This service misses the point of facilitating equitable access to education and requires significant budget resources, staff time, and energy that could be directed toward more meaningful student support, rather than supplying laptops, chargers and adaptors all day long. Also apparent is the perspective that technology loans are a critical contemporary library service, especially as regards laptops. Many librarians reported a perception that circulation activity in their library is split three ways: technology loans as dominant, followed by course reserves, followed by print book circulation. Some librarians had recently queried their statistics to substantiate these statistics, and others made anecdotal comments. However, it seems reasonable that if considering a renovation or redesign, a serious evaluation of current circulation statistics should take place, as designing spaces for the activities of 20 years ago seems counterproductive. How much space should circulation activities receive, and what physical requirements do those services really require? If technology loans are a critical library service, how are those best facilitated in relation to other budget, staffing and service priorities? These questions require further examination.

Staffing: Analysis by Employee Type

A dominant theme in this survey and interview data is staffing. More than the physical design of a service desk, or the complementary services that may be on offer in libraries, best practices in staffing is the piece of the puzzle that most libraries are struggling with. Separate analysis by each employee type is provided. Administrative employees were reflected in decision-making structures, but they were not otherwise prominent in the data. Determining how to divide tasks between employee groups in a contemporary library, while respecting the unique value that each group brings to a library is critical in redesigning service models. Only a few librarians interviewed were very confident in their staffing model while most felt that there was room for improvement in the division of tasks and in fostering positive workplace dynamics.

Librarians: Master of Library and Information Studies required

Only one of fourteen interview participants reported that their library is likely to have librarians scheduled for on-desk reference for the foreseeable future. Many other libraries still staff librarians at a reference desk but often also use a referral model some of the time or are planning to move to a strictly referral model. A growing number of libraries in BC are not scheduling librarians on a desk but are relying on a triage referral model to ensure that advanced and complex questions are answered by librarians. Librarians are seen to have valuable contributions to front-line service but a cost-benefit-analysis type of decision-making has become the norm and it is generally seen as inefficient to allot librarian time to this task.

Various strategies for managing referral processes are in place from categorization of the question on the READ scale to employee judgement. Concerns regarding librarian collective agreements were not expressed in the data, although the broader shift in librarian positions was noted many times. Johnson (2019) provides excellent insight into contemporary librarian work and the redistribution of time from reference to other activities.

Library Technicians: Library Technician Diploma may be required

This is the employee category where the most change is arguably underway. For library technicians, the role within a merged or co-located desk is quite different from a transaction or clerical focused position in that it requires a complex set of skills in addition to previously expected transactional knowledge. While many libraries employ reference assistants, this type of position is also becoming less common as libraries look to broaden the scope of library technician roles, assigning duties that include reference, circulation, and other tasks related to supporting acquisitions, interlibrary loans, course reserves, website editing, etcetera. In many ways, these positions are becoming broader in scope mirroring historical librarian roles with knowledge spanning the breadth of library policies, services and functional areas.

Survey and interview respondents expressed concern that current library technicians' roles suffer from numerous issues. One set of concerns includes a perceived lack of job satisfaction due to a simplicity of tasks despite robust education requirements. These concerns occurred mostly in libraries with two-desk or co-located service models in which certain positions perform specific tasks with a strict division of labour. In contrast, libraries with merged desks and libraries where library technicians work on reference desks, concerns arose due to a perception of inadequate monetary compensation for the complexity of work performed. In almost all libraries, there was a perceived lack of ongoing in-house training to support people in these roles. Other respondents questioned whether library technician programs were preparing their students for these complex and varied roles.

Library Assistants/Clerical Staff – Typically, no specific library credentials required

This category of employee is in decline in almost all libraries in BC. The reduction in print circulation has meant fewer people are needed to loan, shelve, and process books, serials, and media. Positions now require a broader set of skills, and most libraries have made conscious decisions to employ people at something closer to a library technician level in order to be able to assign a more diverse set of job duties. Libraries have transitioned from these positions through job reclassification processes, layoffs, and retirement. Other libraries have supported existing employees through training processes to meet new expectations.

Student Employees

Students play quite varied roles within our libraries. Students are hired as circulation clerks, shelvers, writing tutors, technology assistants, and graduate-student reference librarians. In each of these roles at any given institution, very different rules govern their employment. There is an argument to be made that including students within a service model allows patrons to see themselves reflected at the service desk and thus reduce barriers to asking for assistance. But

there are also significant costs to frequently hiring, training, and scheduling student employees. Based on this research, students currently play a minimal role in most front-line service models. Yet there is an expectation that student employment is likely to increase in the future, either through a peer-research support model or in the provision of other peer services such as writing support. Additionally, there is pressure from post-secondary administrators to employ students as a way of improving the financial accessibility of post-secondary education while concurrently reducing staffing costs to the institution.

Staffing: General Analysis

Many collective agreements and job descriptions are out of step with contemporary service model expectations. This is an area that needs immediate attention in the province. Looking at current service model practices, we need to take a holistic view in hiring, supervising, and training all front-line staff, and in overseeing any referral process that involves librarians. Previous distinctions of circulation, reference, access services, public services, and the corresponding roles that have gone with those categories need to be questioned as many workplace tensions are the result of trying to create new service models without addressing these bigger staffing changes. Due primarily to the Internet, much of the work of academic libraries has changed over the past twenty years and bureaucratic structures have not kept pace. This is perhaps not surprising as our profession does not yet have a clear understanding of the impacts of these changes on our historical approaches to service delivery.

One of the main issues that emerged in the survey and interviews was trust between employee groups. Many librarians question the ability and skill of front-line library employees to appropriately deliver and refer reference questions due to current hiring and training practices. Ongoing and robust training for all types front-line employees emerges as a clear solution. However, survey results show that there is very little consistency in existing training programs throughout the province. Very few libraries reported a regularly scheduled in-house training program as an expectation of all front-line positions. Due to the iterative nature of reference skills and the wide range of campus, academic, policy, and interpersonal skills that comprise a good reference interaction, ongoing training is critical in supporting all of the people that deliver front-line services. There is a common thread throughout the survey and interview responses that libraries are in dire need of a culture shift which values the perspectives of all library employees. Some libraries have succeeded in cultivating such a culture while others are stuck in an environment that seems to value hierarchy over collaboration. The complex social and campus issues that contemporary libraries face requires robust problem solving from throughout the organization.

I asked many different questions about decision-making practices within libraries. Some libraries are described as collaborative places where referral works well, with fuzzy lines between employee groups that share a common goal of assisting patrons with library services. Other libraries are strictly hierarchical with a very clear and fixed division of duties. As all libraries surveyed operate within collective bargaining frameworks, these variations should be remembered when contemplating change. There is room for productive conversations that lead to changed roles, but the existing workplace culture will have a big role to play in success. There

is a lack of coherence in many libraries regarding which employee type is responsible for daily and strategic service model decisions. A staff position with the title of circulation manager, or equivalent, is often responsible for daily desk operations. Responsibility for reference duties and training often belongs to a librarian position. However, there are real limitations in many collective agreements regarding sensible reporting structures and supervisory duties as relate to the range of tasks an employee performs and a holistic approach to service delivery. None of the comments expressed in the data implied a dismissal of unions or collective bargaining, but rather that there is a need for all of the types of work done in academic libraries to be properly recognized and supported.

Decisions about how to deliver front-line services are complex, and thoughtful processes need to be brought to these discussions in order to respect all of the factors in play. Most survey respondents included administration or strategic directions, budget, and the importance of historical and status quo factors as primarily contributing to decisions about service models. In addition, secondary factors such as professional trends and evidence-based approaches were considerations in most libraries. It is clear from the data that leadership plays a very important role in libraries. Libraries that have successfully shifted workplace culture to allow for collaborative service delivery across employee groups have had strong leadership capable of advocating within a campus structure for required budget and human resources support to implement meaningful change. Within individual libraries there is a lot of variation in workplace culture. Some libraries have established collaborative decision-making processes that include front-line staff as well as administrators and librarians in designing or revising service models. Other libraries remain attached to strict hierarchies and divisions of tasks. Most libraries function along a continuum representing elements of each of these models.

Service Model: Analysis

The survey asked participants to identify how recently changes had been made to various aspects of their service model either through a new building, renovation, or service revision. The numbers below represent the responses for each timeframe. Note that multiple responses were received from some libraries, so the values exceed the number of institutions in the province. What we see in this data is that most libraries in BC have made changes to their service models within the past 5 years.

Time	Changes to physical desk(s)	Changes to staffing model	Overall revision of service delivery
0-2 years	25	17	14
2-5 years	6	19	20
5-10 years	2	1	1
10-20 years	1	1	1

While there is certainly variation between institutions, I offer the following summary of the data, with no pretense of representing each library individually. There is a clear staffing trend towards a robust set of library technician duties comprising the front-line of library services, located at a single desk that is not a giant imposing structure. Those duties typically include the

circulation of library materials and technology, basic technical support, and reference service in the form of known item look-ups, introductory-level topic searching, and citation support. Supplementary services such as advanced technology help and writing help may be provided by another campus unit or by students. Advanced services for research support and in-depth reference consultations, provided by librarians, round out this service model. However, this summary should not be understood as an end-point or a best-practice in library service delivery. Experimentation with these service models has really just begun after more than 100 years of consistent practice. Assessment of these experiments is currently insufficient to make claims about efficacy or even improvement.

Many interview respondents commented on an inability to rely on technology to perform routine, transactional activities. In theory, the technology is available. In reality, the capital costs of implementing technological solutions are beyond most library and campus budgets. Further, many library employees, in all categories, hold dear the idea that if we help students with the “small stuff,” they will bring us their research questions. Library leaders need to articulate the resource constraints that we face in mediating all types of transactions and the important academic role of the library within the institution. Examples of services ripe for automation include payment for printing, self-checkout, laptop lending, campus card creation, holds pick-up, and course reserves access. While these services matter, so too does the critical evaluation of sources for scholarship. Given a limited set of resources to work with, focusing professional skills at the technician and librarian levels to support scholarship should be encouraged rather than giving priority to transactional services. It is imperative that we find a viable way forward to meet the local needs for transactional services in a less staff-intensive manner so that we can focus on the unique value that libraries contribute to post-secondary education.

Libraries have long struggled with what to call our various service points: Ask Us!, Start Here, Information, Reference Desk, Research Help, Research Assistance, Circulation Desk, Borrow Here, ?, Loans, Public Services, Library Service Desk.... We have many examples to draw on. Finding words that accurately express may be more important in campus budget proposals than within our space. However, the phrases used to locate our services within a library do matter. Very different social meanings are conveyed when we use these different labels to describe our space and services. Moreover, we likely create additional confusion for transfer students who can comprise a third of the incoming students at research universities in any given year (BCCAT, 2015). International students also bring with them experiences of libraries from around the world. The mix of transactional and complex activities in one place is common in libraries, but it is hard to name accurately and succinctly.

All service models reported on in the data include some form of referral process for advanced reference questions. For libraries with dedicated circulation and reference staff, the questions are referred by location. For libraries with an on-call model for librarian assistance, the point at which a question is referred varies considerably. Three libraries reported that front-line staff book consultations directly into librarian calendars using either the Springshare product LibCal or Microsoft Outlook. Vancouver Island University is the only library that reported using the

READ scale to determine the point when a question is referred. The survey did not specifically address assessment of reference, so VIU's use of READ is provided as a starting point for conversations on this topic. Other libraries rely on in-house definitions of basic, intermediate and complex reference. Some libraries reported strict guidelines that staff follow, while others reported relying upon staff judgement and confidence level for referrals. A few libraries use an online form to capture student information and have the liaison or subject librarian follow up. However, most libraries require the student to take the initiative to book an appointment, often using information provided on a business card. Concern was expressed regarding the consistency of referral practices within many libraries, and this is noted in the data as an area of practice that needs improvement.

Interview participants were asked to assess the inclusivity of their service model. A definition of inclusivity was intentionally not provided, and this led to the emergence of a broad set of considerations. While some interview participants felt that their libraries were doing a decent job of providing inclusive services, others described areas for improvement. There is a need to consider accessibility from the viewpoint of disability as regards the physical design of service points. There is a need for privacy on multiple fronts within a service point, specifically regarding patron data, and in creating a space in which patrons can ask questions without judgement from staff or other patrons. There is a need to develop clear signage that does not require previous knowledge of North American academic libraries and allows people to navigate our buildings and services independently. There is a need for libraries to develop proactive approaches, of which course-embedded information literacy instruction and proactive chat are potential solutions, that improve patron awareness of expert assistance.

Additional areas for improving inclusivity in library services were identified. A need for all library employees to have knowledge of the specific international student populations on our campuses as well as the academic cultural translation services that libraries are poised to offer. The need for all library employees to be aware of the complex issues addressed in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* so that library services are delivered with care and respect. Inclusivity was also understood as applying within the library, where all employee contributions need to be recognized as valuable in order to foster a culture of respect and to reduce unnecessary hierarchies. In short, there is a lot of work to be done to ensure that service models are structured to facilitate inclusivity.

Based on the results of this research, the value of in-person assistance within our spaces is not currently questioned by library practitioners or campus administrators, but how such services are best delivered has also not been ascertained. When asked in the survey if they expected front-line library services to be delivered the same in ten years' time only seven of sixty-three librarians said yes. Yet, when interview participants were asked to think ten years out and imagine their library, there was no consensus among the answers. Unique and valuable insights were provided, but there is not a definitive path forward from where we are now, despite an overwhelming expectation of further change.

Thinking ahead, it may be that recent changes to front line service are only the beginning of a significant evolution to our campus role. The library is positioned to be seen as a key player in campus well-being and mental health support for students. How to articulate that value to campus has not yet been determined. The library as the campus location and administrator for all academic support services can be imagined. This expands on the proven value of libraries in delivering front-line campus services such as writing support, card services, and technology support and expands upon the Learning Commons model of co-located academic supports. How the future library fits into the trend on most post-secondary campuses of offering foundational skills courses and workshops is yet to be seen; perhaps these also live within the mandate of future academic libraries. How all of this would fit in our physical spaces, and how these additional services would co-exist with tradition library offerings, may be the next set of challenges that we face in service model delivery.

Contextual Analysis

Dividing the front-line work that libraries do into the two broad categories of transactional and complex allows us to step back from a conventional understanding of the tasks we perform. Survey results show that most patrons entering our libraries are presented with a structure that represents transactional activity through its design and primary purpose of circulation. The complex nature of teaching research skills, a collaborative endeavor intended to impact not only the task at hand but to contribute to a broader set of skills, is rarely conveyed in the physical design of service desks. How transactional and complex activities are presented to patrons, through physical design and the skills of available staff, can reinforce conventional understandings and misunderstandings of libraries, or they can seek to improve scholarly support by designing spaces that convey the wide range of services that we actually do offer.

Collaborative spaces that, by design, showcase the range of services on offer seems like a way forward. New service models need to include routine, transactional activities such as circulation, card services, and technology loans, with the exact set of services varying by campus. They also need to showcase complex services such as research appointments, research help as an extension of in-class information literacy programs, and potentially, writing, math and science help. While library work requires specific skills, which should not be undervalued, creating desks that continue to reinforce authority and power by design are counterproductive when trying to encourage all scholars to engage willingly without having to overcome barriers of exclusivity and anxiety. Interview participants from each type of post-secondary institution in BC expressed the need to consider the patron first and then sort out how to deliver better library services.

In an effort to delve deeper into the idea of collaborative service space, try to imagine multiple round tables that convey and produce collaboration, in the midst of an otherwise busy and study-focused area. This is a potential new service model. With wireless, networked technology available, this kind of space holds promise for library technicians to provide inclusive and flexible front-line service. Such space would allow librarians-on-demand to seamlessly enter an interaction. Where to line up becomes unclear in this space because this design prioritizes teaching over transactions. An adjacent lockable cabinet or room with supplies and valuable

technology becomes a requirement, rather than the focus of the physical desk design. A collaborative furniture solution is a very different concept than a built-for-transactions desk, and it would require a significant culture shift as well as a move towards simplifying library policies to enact successfully. Such a layout also allows for other campus partners to deliver pop-up services or take up residence as campus needs continue to shift. When imaging the future of library services, many interview participants expect co-located or library management of other academic support services. This differs from a more traditional understanding of a learning commons in that the space would position library services to be teaching focused and on a par with any other support services in the space.

This design moves libraries in the direction of “beta spaces” which Dickerson (2016) introduces in the library literature as similar to a makerspace, but with a focus on ideas over technology. This type of design retains the skilled expertise that all library professionals can bring to front-line service while shifting the services communicated to those that directly support patrons as scholars. Essential to the success of this type of model, is a large-scale reduction in human-mediated transactional tasks, a simplification of library policies to reduce transactional interactions about accounts and fines, and powerful leadership to align daily practices with big-picture strategic goals.

When considering any future evolution of service models, there is overwhelming evidence from survey and interview respondents that the answer(s) to this question rests firmly within libraries. This is an important responsibility to consider carefully. Outside of the library, campus administrators are not asking detailed questions about why we do what we do, or specifically considering the resources allocated to current front-line service approaches. Interview respondents included librarians providing reference, those overseeing public and access services, and administrators. All interviewees were confident that the library held the purview to decide how services would be delivered. At a glance, this seems positive. However, it also speaks to the broader misconceptions about libraries as known entities by administrators that do not require additional resources since “everything is online” and “libraries are the heart of the campus.” Both phrases minimize the complexity of the services we provide to our campuses while obfuscating the deep challenges that we face in meeting an ever-evolving set of expectations from various campus stakeholders. Demonstrating the value of service model changes in support of the academic and strategic directions of our institutions will be key in garnering the resources required for creative, innovative, and meaningful solutions.

Many insightful comments were provided in both the survey and the interviews regarding the value of skilled, in-person library services in the contemporary academic context. Academic campuses provide few places for in-person interactions, especially without an appointment. On many campuses, the library may be the only such space that is scholarly in focus. Ensuring that the in-person interactions that we offer to our campuses are inclusive and represent the values of libraries is critical in forging a new understanding of front-line service. Hoppe and Jung (2017) discuss the role of reference in providing an “ethic of care” in a campus context. This sentiment also surfaced in the interviews as reference was described as an important contributor to the emotional labour of campus and through this as impacting student’s holistic

well-being. As we reconsider how to best deliver library services, it is critical to remember that library services have always been about people. Founded to support literacy in society, libraries remain vital in connecting individuals with understanding, and with each other. Creating service spaces that convey these values is required for our future success as indispensable academic contributors.

The library profession has been challenged to imagine, design, and assess new service models given the myriad changes that have occurred on post-secondary campuses in recent decades. The number of social factors that have changed within post-secondary institutions over the past 30 years are substantial and not insignificant for front-line library services (Côté & Allahar, 2011). Within the province of BC, a reorganization of the university college system fundamentally altered the post-secondary landscape from 2005 onward creating different categories and funding structures for different institutions (Cowin, 2018). International student populations are dramatically increasing on all of our campuses (Heslop, 2018). We need to realize that we do not have front-line services figured out, but that this is an area that needs constant attention.

Conclusion

There is no certainty that the trend toward single-service points represents an endpoint of service model evolution. If viewed on a timeline from the inception of academic libraries in the province just over 100 years ago, to now, service models have not changed significantly and resistance to this change is to be expected. However, the context in which libraries provide service has changed considerably, and we need to challenge ourselves professionally to design service models that meet the mandates we have within our institutions, the professional values we collectively agree to, and the evolving scholarly needs of the patrons using our spaces.

Why do we want skilled and welcoming humans available within the main area of a library? I would argue that this is tied to a set of professional values held by librarians who see libraries as a public good. The space, both physical and virtual, and the collections, both print and digital, are insufficient to create a library.

There is no question that what libraries do, in many people's minds, is provide and circulate books and provide access to information. Very few people, if asked, "What does a library do?" would answer, "they safeguard basic democratic freedoms, they contribute to the quality of life in our society, they symbolize human aspirations, and they reflect the humanistic values that underlie our society." These are in fact essential social elements in the purpose of libraries. (Curley, 1987, 36).

Foundational values are rarely articulated by contemporary academic libraries as we tend to look to institutional strategic documents for guidance. When considering large-scale change, we need to collectively consider the values upon which the social institutions that we steward are based. Conscious attention must be given to underlying values if our libraries are to continue to garner the good-will and trust that allows many of us to operate relatively

autonomously within our institutions, but also to ensure that these values extend to all of the diverse people engaging with our spaces and services.

Future Research and Collaborations

Libraries have work to do in order to articulate what is on offer at our service points for the benefit of staff working within our institutions, for the administrators that make funding decisions for our libraries, and for the people visiting our libraries. A series of topics emerged during this research that require further consideration and collaboration.

- We need to understand demand for reference, research consultations and information literacy instruction in relation to type of post-secondary institution, program offerings and class sizes. Based on the provincial restructuring of post-secondary institutions since 2005, the impact on academic libraries should be examined.
- We need to understand how to foster inclusivity within all library services, especially given province-wide increases in international student populations.
- In relation to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action*, we need to collectively consider Aboriginal student success strategies in the context of front-line library services.
- A comparative analysis of librarian and library technician job descriptions and compensation would be remarkably useful to employees and administrators as libraries further modify service models.
- User experience research that qualitatively documents the first impressions of what academic libraries offer would be particularly interesting, and could inform naming conventions for services as well.
- Given the demand for space within our libraries, any studies of space usage that could inform decisions regarding the allocation of square footage to various functions would be most welcome.
- Campus wellness is a growing concern for administrators and documented evidence of how libraries contribute to the social infrastructure that supports student health would be very timely. The *Okanagan Charter* and the *Healthy Minds, Healthy Campuses* initiative from the Canadian Mental Health Association could provide starting points for this investigation.
- Technology loans represent a growing service area in many libraries. What evidence do libraries have that the resources put to these services are supporting student success?

This research was designed to fill a gap in the literature by addressing how post-secondary institutions in British Columbia are delivering front-line library services. Through the varied forms of analysis, it is my sincere aspiration that this report assists librarians in making informed decisions and asking important questions within their libraries. By documenting how services are currently being delivered, it is my hope that this report provides a baseline against which future changes can be measured. As I have not offered concrete solutions to most problems, I am also establishing a community of practice on service models, with details available at <https://bclibraryservicemodel.design.blog>.

Acknowledgement

To everyone at UBC Okanagan Library, I am grateful for all of the work that each of you did to allow me to step away from my daily duties for six months. A study leave is a precious benefit, and I am privileged to be in a position to have taken one. Jan Gattrell has been my mentor and friend since 2007, and I am indebted to her for being my “editor emeritus.” To everyone who completed my survey, participated in interviews, and offered encouragement, thank you. To have work in which you find meaning and the autonomy to guide its course is a rarity in today’s economy and despite daily pressures, I am most grateful.

Appendix A: Literature Review

Service Models: Reference Desks

Articles on service model consolidation are more plentiful than those arguing to retain a dedicated reference desk. For the latter, Weber & Bowron (2019) provide a case study and Hoppe and Jung (2017) offer a theoretical perspective on the many values provided to a campus through discrete reference services. They also contribute an excellent overview of the many staffing approaches being used in different service models.

Hoppe, E., & Jung, K. (2017). Proceed with care: Reviewing reference services through a feminist lens. In M.T. Accardi (Ed.), *The feminist reference desk: Concepts, critiques and conversations* (pp. 137-159). Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.

Weber, J. E., & Bowron, C. R. (2019). The evolving reference desk: If we scrap it, then what? *Tennessee Libraries*, 69(2), 1. Retrieved from https://www.tnla.org/page/69_2_Weber

Service Models: Consolidation

Articles addressing service model consolidation can be broken into the following main categories: space, staffing, and assessment. However, there are a number of recent publications that I think are particularly noteworthy. Alexander and Wakimoto (2019) conducted a study of service models in place throughout the California State University system. Beyond the insightful results of their study, they also provide an up-to-date literature review and detail the many challenges that each service model proposes. Taking the evolution of front-line service further than this report has detailed, Hockey (2016) describes the complete transformation of traditional library desks to a unique blend of physical and virtual services at the University of South Australia Library. While the technical solutions implemented in this system do not seem to resonate with the prevailing campus culture in BC, this is nonetheless an insightful article as it challenges the profession to articulate how local culture matters in decision making and service delivery. Offering another unique perspective, Dickerson (2016) introduces the concept of “beta spaces” as visible, collaborative service points designed around reference. Dickerson places many other recently library design and service trends in context and offers an alternative, creative approach for reference space design and staffing.

Alexander, S., & Wakimoto, D. K. (2019). Exploration of reference models in a public university system. *Reference Services Review*, 47(1), 21-36. doi:10.1108/RSR-08-2018-0062

Bremer, P. (2017). Librarian on the loose: A roving reference desk at a small liberal arts college. *Reference Librarian*, 58(1), 106-110. doi:10.1080/02763877.2016.1199006

Buss, S. P. (2016). Do we still need reference services in the age of Google and Wikipedia? *Reference Librarian*, 57(4), 265-271. doi:10.1080/02763877.2015.1134377

- Dickerson, M. (2016). Beta spaces as a model for decontextualizing reference services in libraries. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, May, [n.p.]. Retrieved from <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2016/reference-as-beta-space/>
- Everall, K., & Logan, J. (2016). A mixed methods approach to iterative service design of an in-person reference service point. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 12(4), 178-185. doi:10.18438/B83W45
- Hockey, J. M. (2016). Transforming library enquiry services: Anywhere, anytime, any device. *Library Management*, 37(3), 125-135. doi: 10.1108/LM-04-2016-0021
- Frederiksen, L., & Wilkinson, B. (2016). Single service points in libraries: A review. *Journal of Access Services*, 13(2), 131-140. doi:10.1080/15367967.2016.1161522
- Garnar, M. (2016). Whither the reference desk? 20th century values in a 21st century service model. *International Information & Library Review*, 48(3), 211-216. doi:10.1080/10572317.2016.1205417
- Phelps, S. F. (2017). Implementation of proactive chat increases number and complexity of reference questions. *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice*, 12(2), 172-174. doi:10.18438/B85370
- Sider, L. G. (2016). Improving the patron experience: Sterling Memorial Library's single service point. *Journal of Access Services*, 13(2), 91-100. doi:10.1080/15367967.2016.1161519
- Stoddart, R., & Hendrix, B. (2017). Learning at the reference desk: A pilot project to align reference transactions with university learning outcomes. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 43(1), 3-7. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2016.11.004

Librarian Work

Changing librarian roles is one of the important driving factors in current service model revision. Two recent articles contribute immensely to the profession by carefully detailing these changes and their implications.

- Johnson, A. M. (2019). Connections, conversations, and visibility: How the work of academic reference and liaison librarians is evolving. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 58(2), 91-102. Retrieved from <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/rusq/article/view/6929/9382>
- Si, L., Zeng, Y., Guo, S., & Zhuang, X. (2019). Investigation and analysis of research support services in academic libraries. *The Electronic Library*, 37(2), 281-301. doi:10.1108/EL-06-2018-0125

Space

Articles on space design often overlap with service models and assessment techniques. The articles selected here provide practical insights and approaches when considering renovating or redesigning a space.

Gardner, B., Napier, T. L., & Carpenter, R. G. (2013). Reinventing library spaces and services: Harnessing campus partnerships to initiate and sustain transformational change. *Advances in Librarianship*, 37, 135–151. doi:10.1108/S0065-2830(2013)0000037010

Pierce, S., & Schilling, A. (2019). Removing the invisibility cloak: Using space design to influence patron behavior and increase service desk usage. *Journal of Access Services*, 16(2), 56-77. doi:10.1080/15367967.2019.1614930

Prentice, K. A., & Argyropoulos, E. K. (2018). Library space: Assessment and planning through a space utilization study. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 37(2), 132-141. doi:10.1080/02763869.2018.1439213

Venner, M., & Keshmiripour, S. (2016). X marks the spot: Creating and managing a single service point to improve customer service and maximize resources. *Journal of Access Services*, (13)2, 101-111. doi: 10.1080/15367967.2016.1161520

Two additional sources provide a bigger picture perspective on library as social places. Both are written by academics from other disciplines and have the potential to challenge typical librarian views of libraries and the work we do within them. The library literature often draws parallels between our services and businesses and these authors both place libraries in a much different context and provide new insights. An edited book written in 1987 has influenced my recent thinking as I have tried to understand not only where libraries are going but the roots that our approaches are based in; Curley is cited above discussing libraries as a public good.

Curley, A. (1987). Towards a broader definition of the public good. In E.J. Josey (Ed.), *Libraries, coalitions and the public good* (pp. 34-42). New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Klineneberg, E. (2018). *Palaces for the people: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life*. New York, NY: Crown.

Mattern, S. (2014). Library as infrastructure. *Places Journal*, June, [n.p.]. Retrieved from <https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure>

Staffing

The themes of staffing models, change management, changing professional roles and referral practices are intertwined. This selection is the tip of the iceberg.

Bodemer, B. B. (2014). They CAN and they SHOULD: Undergraduates providing peer reference and instruction. *College & Research Libraries*, 75(2), 162-178. doi:10.5860/crl12-411

- Bunnett, B., Boehme, A., Hardin, S., Arvin, S., Evans, K., Huey, P., & LaBella, C. (2016). Where did the reference desk go? Transforming staff and space to meet user needs. *Journal of Access Services, 13*(2), 66-79. doi:10.1080/15367967.2016.1161517
- Burnette, M. (2017). Tacit knowledge sharing among library colleagues: A pilot study. *Reference Services Review, 45*(3), 382-397. doi:10.1108/RSR-11-2016-0082
- Faix, A. I., (2014). Peer reference revisited: Evolution of a peer-reference model. *Reference Services Review, 42*(2), 305-319. doi:10.1108/RSR-07-2013-0039
- Gottfried, J., DeLancey, L., & Hardin, A. (2015). Talking to ourselves: Internal communication strategies for reference services. *Reference & User Services Quarterly, 54*(3), 37-43. Retrieved from <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/rusq/article/view/5641/6971>
- Hogan, S., & Conlin, K. (2019). Library student employee expertise: Strategies for maximizing your student employee contributions to the library. *Public Services Quarterly, 15*(2), 104-115. doi:10.1080/15228959.2019.1586618
- Hughes, S. E. (2018). Scheduling using a web-based calendar: How Team Up enhances communication. *Public Services Quarterly, 14*(4), 362-372. doi:10.1080/15228959.2018.1518184
- Keyes, K., & Dworak, E. (2017). Staffing chat reference with undergraduate student assistants at an academic library: A standards-based assessment. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 43*(6), 469-478. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2017.09.001
- Morris, A. (2018). Many hands make for better work: Enhancing the library with entry-level workers. *Public Libraries, 57*(3), 24-26.
- Shen, L. (2014). Reference desk employees need both research knowledge and technical skills for successful reference transactions. *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice, 9*(4), 55-57. doi:10.18438/B8F617
- Skellen, K., & Kyrychenko, A. (2016). How less is truly more: Merging library support services. *Journal of Access Services, 13*(2), 141-149. doi:10.1080/15367967.2016.1161523
- Trujillo, N., & Backen, R. (2018). *Reference service redesign: Does incorporating student employee feedback increase feelings of empowerment?* doi:10.1080/15367967.2018.1506703

Assessment

Articles on assessment are critically important to this topic, as a service model is a very complex thing to assess. Many librarians expressed a desire to implement improved assessment practices beyond keeping statistics and conducting satisfaction surveys.

Bowron, C. R., & Weber, J. E. (2017). Implementing the READ scale at the Austin Peay State University Library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 43(6), 518-525. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2017.08.010

Daniel, D. (2013). Gender, race, and age of librarians and users have an impact on the perceived approachability of librarians. *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice*, 8(3), 73-75. doi:10.18438/B8JP5H

Eichelberger, M., & Imler, B. (2016). Academic technology confidence levels vs ability in first-year traditional and non-traditional undergraduates. *Library Hi Tech*, 34(3), 468-479. doi://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1108/LHT-03-2016-0032

Krieb, D. (2018). Assessing the impact of reference assistance and library instruction on retention and grades using student tracking technology. *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice*, 13(2), 2-12. doi:10.18438/eblip29402

Magi, T. J., & Mardeusz, P. E. (2013). What students need from reference librarians: Exploring the complexity of the individual consultation. *College & Research Libraries News*, 74(6), 288-291.

Miller, K. (2017). Undergraduate students' research and information skills continue to change in their second year. *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice*, 12(1), 116-118. doi:10.18438/B8V041

Mohess, N. (2016). From service analysis to staff development: A reference desk gap analysis at a community college. *Community & Junior College Libraries*, 22(3), 125-140. doi:10.1080/02763915.2017.1304010

Paulus, A. R. (2014). Using data to assess staffing and services: University of Iowa Main Library. *Journal of Access Services*, 11(3), 189-205. doi:10.1080/15367967.2014.914424

Rogers, E., & Carrier, H. S. (2017). A qualitative investigation of patrons' experiences with academic library research consultations. *Reference Services Review*, 45(1), 18-37. doi:10.1108/RSR-04-2016-0029

Post-Secondary Landscape

There are many factors influencing the culture of academic libraries that are entirely external to our decision making or professional debates. Côté and Allahar (2011) offer a sociological understanding of contemporary Canadian universities, and their conclusions have direct

relevance for libraries. Changes to the structure of post-secondary education in British Columbia (Cowin, 2018) are crucial to understanding service models in use throughout the province. Also important is context for the current increase in international students throughout the province (Heslop, 2018; British Columbia Federation of Students, [2018]).

BCCAT: British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer. (2015). Transfer students at RUCBC universities 2008/9-2012/13. Retrieved from http://www.bccat.ca/Media/Default/images/Profile_infographic.jpeg

British Columbia Federation of Students. [2018]. International students in British Columbia. Retrieved from http://www.wearebcstudents.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/bcfs_booklet-FINAL.pdf

Côté, J. E., & Allahar, A. L. (2011). *Lowering higher education: The rise of corporate universities and the fall of liberal education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Cowin, R. (2018). *Postsecondary education in British Columbia: Public policy and structural development, 1960-2015*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Heslop, J. (2018). International students in BC's education systems: Summary of research from the Student Transitions Project. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/data-research/stp/stp-international-research-results.pdf>

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Introductory Text:

This survey is intended to capture the type(s) of service model being used at your institution to deliver front-line library services including circulation, reference, and customer service. By service model, this survey will ask about the physical design of your library as well as the staffing and referral models in place. It also aims to capture some of the decision-making practices and priorities that have shaped your current model of service delivery.

The goal of this research is to provide an aggregate overview and assessment of front-line library service delivery in British Columbia in 2019. At the end of this survey you will be asked whether you are willing to participate in an in-person interview to provide further insights into the topics covered in the survey.

Definitions:

Reference is defined as “information consultations in which library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others to meet particular information needs. Reference transactions do not include formal instruction or exchanges that provide assistance with locations, schedules, equipment, supplies, or policy statements.”

Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/rusa/guidelines/definitionsreference>

Circulation is defined as the lending of various items (books, technology, media, etc.) for free to a community whose membership is typically defined by criteria to obtain a library card/account.

Adapted from <http://www.ala.org/tools/circulation#Coverage>

Library Customer Service is defined as the “excluded” activities in the reference definition, including assistance with locations, schedules, equipment, supplies, or policy statements as well as referral to specific library and campus services.

Front-Line Library Services The phrase front-line is used to capture the services available at time-of-need, usually at some form of desk, in the main area/first floor of a library. All libraries provide a range of services “behind the scenes” – those are out of scope for this survey. I am interested in what patrons’ encounter (in terms of physical setup, staff availability, and service options) when they enter the main area of a library.

1. Please select the post-secondary institution at which you are currently employed.

British Columbia Institute of Technology

- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Coast Mountain College
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College

- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
 - North Island College
 - Northern Lights College
 - Okanagan College
 - Selkirk College
 - Simon Fraser University
 - Thompson Rivers University
 - University of British Columbia
 - University of the Fraser Valley
 - University of Northern British Columbia
 - University of Victoria
 - Vancouver Community College
 - Vancouver Island University
2. Do you work at an institution with multiple libraries/campuses/locations? If yes, I recognize that different models might be in place throughout your library system. Please answer all questions below based on the library branch/location that you primarily work in.
- Yes, multiple libraries/campuses/locations
 - No, one library
3. Does your library have some sort of physical desk as a main point of contact for library services?
- Yes
 - No (Skip to #5)
4. Thinking about the physical desk which serves as a main point of contact, which configuration best describes your library?
- Circulation Desk AND Reference Desk as separate physical desks located far apart
 - Circulation Desk AND Reference Desk as separate physical desks located near each other
 - Circulation Desk AND Reference by appointment only
 - Circulation Desk and Reference Desk combined as one desk total
 - Other configuration? Please explain.
5. If your library does not have some sort of physical desk as a main point of contact for library services, please describe how services are accessed at your library. (Skip to #9)
6. Which of the following front-line services are offered from a front-line service "desk" without requiring an appointment or referral? Check all that apply.
- Borrowing collection items such as books and DVDs
 - Borrowing technology such as laptops and chargers
 - Assistance with citing sources
 - Assistance with finding and retrieving known items (a book by title for example)
 - Assistance with research skills such as searching for sources by topic

- Assistance with comprehensive reference questions such as developing a search strategy, searching in multiple locations, evaluating results, and citing sources
- Assistance with using technology such as printers, MS Office or wireless
- Assistance with writing or editing skills
- Accessibility assistance with book stacks, technology, or other similar topics
- General customer service such as directions, library policies, campus knowledge/referrals, office supply requests
- Are there other services offered at your "desk"? Please describe.

7. Within your library which employee groups are scheduled to be at a physical front-line desk to provide any of these services?

	Circulation	Reference	Customer Service	Technology Assistance
Library Technicians/Assistants				
Library Clerks				
Professional Librarians				
Administrative Staff				
Students				
Other employees? Clarifying comments? Please describe.				

8. Within your library which employee groups are available through a referral process but not scheduled at any physical front-line desk?

	Circulation	Reference	Customer Service	Technology Assistance
Library Technicians/Assistants				
Library Clerks				
Professional Librarians				
Administrative Staff				
Students				
Other employees? Clarifying comments? Please describe.				

9. At your library, which employee group primarily makes day-to-day operational decisions about your front-line library services? Relevant decisions could include setting schedules, setting referral procedures, determining training needs, determining workflows or assigning tasks.

- Library Technicians/Assistants
- Library Clerks
- Professional Librarians
- Administrative Staff
- Students

- Other employees? Clarifying comments? Please describe.

10. At your library, which employee group primarily makes strategic or longer-term decisions about your front-line library service model? Relevant decisions could include revising which employee groups perform tasks, renovating or replacing furniture, creating a vision for service delivery, or directing marketing of front-line services.

- Library Technicians/Assistants
- Library Clerks
- Professional Librarians
- Administrative Staff
- Students
- Other employees? Clarifying comments? Please describe.

11. Other than initial training for new employees, does your library provide ongoing training for front-line staff? Please describe.

12. If your library uses a referral model, please describe the process in place at your library.

13. Are front-line services provided during all open hours, or does service availability vary?

- All services, during all open hours
- Limited services during certain hours, such as evenings/weekends. Explain, if desired.
- Other model of service availability, please describe.

14. In your own words, please provide a short summary of the front-line service model in use at your library.

15. In your own words, please describe the physical service desk(s) in your library.

16. Please consider uploading a photo to accompany your textual description of your physical service desk(s); however, there is no obligation to do so. Photos will not be re-published.

17. To the best of your knowledge, when was your service model last revised/renovated/built?

	0-2 years	0-2 years	0-2 years	0-2 years
Physical desk(s)				
Staffing model				
Overall approach to service delivery				

18. Thinking about the front-line employees in your Library and the services they deliver, what factors do you think have contributed to the way your current service model is staffed? (Select all that apply)

- Historical: this is the model that has always been in place here (There has not been significant change in 10+ years).

- Status quo: due to collective agreements and continued demand for all forms of front-line services, there is no perceived reason to change anything (There has not been significant change).
- Budget: due to budgetary reasons, changes have been made to which employee groups deliver which services
- Administrative Direction/Strategic Plan: due to library or institutional goals, changes have been made to front-line library services.
- Trends in Libraries: due to various widespread trends such as the decline of print circulation, the [perceived] ease of online searching, and the shifting patterns of library as study space, changes have been made to library services including which employees are available for front-line services.
- Evidence-based: due to internal or external research, your library has decided to staff front-line services in a specific way.
- Comments: Do you have any comments to add regarding the decision-making factors at your library?

19. Thinking about the configuration of physical desk(s) including furniture, layout and overall design, what factors do you think contributed to the current model? (Select all that apply).

- Historical: this is the model that has always been in place here (There has not been significant change in 10+ years).
- Status quo: due to collective agreements and continued demand for all forms of front-line services, there is no perceived reason to change anything (There has not been significant change).
- Budget: due to budgetary reasons, changes have been made to the physical design and/or number of service desks.
- Administrative Direction/Strategic Plan: due to library or institutional goals, changes have been made to front-line library services.
- Trends in Libraries: due to various widespread trends such as the decline of print circulation, the [perceived] ease of online searching, and the shifting patterns of library as study space, changes have been made to library services including how front-line services are delivered within the physical space.
- Evidence-based: due to internal or external research, your library has decided to deliver front-line services in a specific way.
- Comments: Do you have any comments to add regarding the decision-making factors at your library?

20. Thinking about your front-line-library service model, is there anything else that you think is relevant to the researcher in terms of a comparative study of how front-line library services are being delivered within British Columbia that you would like to share?

21. Finally, if you imagine your library in 10 years, do you think front-line library services will be delivered with the same service model currently in place?

- Definitely yes

- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

22. Do you have any comments or professional insights regarding the future of front-line library services?

End of Survey.

Appendix C: Guiding Interview Questions

1. To begin, could you please describe the service model in place at the library in which you work? Follow up prompts to articulate staffing model, physical design, and range of services offered, as appropriate.
2. Imagine your library in 10 years; do you think front-line library services will be delivered in the same way, or differently? Follow up prompts to discuss the perceived impacts of current decision-making factors and future expectations.
3. If you imagine change, what strengths of your current model would you like to preserve or change? Why?
4. If given the option, what would you change immediately, and why?
5. Thinking again about your current service model, how would you describe the decision making that has put it in place? Who makes the decisions at the service model level, and what kinds of budgetary, university, strategic, operational or other factors matter most at your library?
6. Do you think of your current service model as being inclusive? Why or why not?
7. Do you think of your current service model is preferencing (through design or staffing) circulation or reference services? What do you see as the future of these services respectively?
8. Thinking about your front-line-library service model, is there anything else that you think is relevant to the researcher, in terms of a comparative study of how front-line library services are being delivered within British Columbia that you would like to share?
9. Would you be interested in participating in a community of practice with other BC post-secondary librarians responsible for overseeing front-line library services? The anticipated outcomes of such a community would be shared best practices, operational insights, and guidance/perspectives on strategic decisions.