

# BC Electronic Library Network Innovation & Success

2020





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*Cover Photo: Curbside Pickup at  
Justice Institute of British Columbia Library  
Institutional photographs courtesy of the  
institution.*



**BCELN**

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ELECTRONIC LIBRARY NETWORK

## Chair's Message

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Innovation and success looked very different in 2020 for post-secondary libraries than it has in previous years. COVID-19 disrupted in-person service delivery and interrupted procedures, forcing institutions to reconsider usual processes. Fortunately, BC ELN's established services – from licensing electronic resources to resource sharing – were there to support institutions as they 'pivoted to online'. As the pandemic compelled educators to adapt their in-person curricula to virtual learning environments, BC ELN's:

- online learner support services AskAway and WriteAway saw record-breaking traffic; institutions recognized the need and pooled resources to add staffing and service hours
- licensed e-journals, e-books, and streaming content supported online studies; libraries saved money with BC ELN collaborative licensing
- Illume Support Centre guided libraries through uncertainties of sharing resources during the pandemic
- Arca Digital Repository grew by thousands more digitized theses, newsletters, images, and more, all available for exploration online

You'll read stories and see images in this report showing the innovative spirit of BC ELN partner libraries. Masks, social distancing, curbside pickup, and online delivery of services are just some of the ways we have adapted to the changed needs of our students, educators, and researchers. 2020 hasn't been an easy year, but BC ELN partner libraries have been able to count on the fruits of collaboration to succeed even through adversity.

- Susan Parker



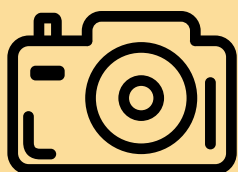
**Anita Cocchia**

Executive Director  
BC Electronic Library Network



**Susan Parker**

BC ELN Steering Committee Chair  
University Librarian  
University of British Columbia



A note about images: At the 2020 BC ELN All Partner Library meeting, library directors were asked to select photographs that express how they see "Collaboration through Challenge". Some of these colour photographs are included in this report.

## BC ELN: Support in Difficult Times

Through a year of uncertainty and unexpected disruptions to in-person services, BC ELN was there to support partner libraries. BC ELN provided reliable access to electronic resources through collaborative licensing, and where possible, resource sharing. Institutions leaned into established online services AskAway and WriteAway, and partner libraries continued to capitalize on shared services like Arca to open digital collections to the world - an endeavour more important than ever.

### Shelter from the Storm: Collaborative Licensing



**33**

partner libraries benefit

**925**

electronic resource licenses collectively held by partner libraries in 2020

**30%**

average savings on electronic resources

### Capacity for More: Learner Supports AskAway & WriteAway



**31**

AskAway participants

**42**

extra days of service

**60,847**

reference questions answered

**18**

WriteAway participants

**15**

extra days of service

**6,850**

assignments received feedback

### Guidance through Uncertainty: Resource Sharing



**102**

provincial partners benefit

**510**

support cases filled by the Illume Support Centre

**39k**

items shared via Illume in 2020

### Strength in Numbers: Arca Digital Repository



**33**

Arca members benefit

**7**

GLAM organizations joined Arca in 2020

**122k**

total items available via Arca, including faculty publications, student research, and photographs

## 2020 Savings for the Sector

BC ELN's collaborative approach to licensing saved partner libraries

**\$4.20  
million**



AskAway and WriteAway achieved cost avoidance of

**\$2.58  
million**

Illume's centralized coordination and shared infrastructure saved public & post-secondary sectors

**\$1.53  
million**

Shared infrastructure, storage, and coordination saved Arca participants

**\$1.54  
million**

### Supporting Students, Educators, and Researchers in Unprecedented Times

In 2020, online access to information and services was paramount for the teaching and learning community.

With BC ELN:

The post-secondary sector had access to 1.5 million e-books, 130,000 electronic journals, magazines, and newspapers, and 169,000 videos through BC ELN's licences.



AskAway and WriteAway gave students a place to go online for expert help with research and writing. Both services expanded their semesters to offer more availability, and both saw record-breaking usage.



Students and educators were able to continue requesting and receiving electronic articles through the BC ELN Illume interlibrary loan service.



The Arca Digital Repository continued to grow with shared scholarship and research. Arca received 131,000 visits from individuals around the globe.





# Collaborative Licensing

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In 2020, partner libraries collectively held close to 1,000 licenses through BC ELN for resources and services that supported learning and research needs during the pandemic.

## Support Through COVID-19

In addition to maintaining a consistent schedule of offers and renewals, BC ELN:

- facilitated resource upgrades in cases where publishers opened access to their electronic resources due to COVID-19;
- signed the International Coalition of Library Consortia's [Statement on the Global COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Library Services and Resources](#), informing vendors and publishers of the pandemic's effects on the information community and requesting actions that will ease hardships; and
- streamlined billing payment processes to reduce labour and decrease handling of physical materials by moving payments to electronic funds transfer (EFT); 91% of partner libraries switched to EFT.

## Crucial Cross-Consortial Collaboration

BC ELN and sister consortia The Alberta Library (TAL), the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL), and the Electronic Health Library of BC (eHLbc) collectively negotiated low common inflationary renewal rate increases for EBSCO and ProQuest resources, resulting in:

- renewal increases kept at a low 0-2% across the board
- significant cost savings for approximately ninety-six institutions across four provinces
- guaranteed predictability for budgets



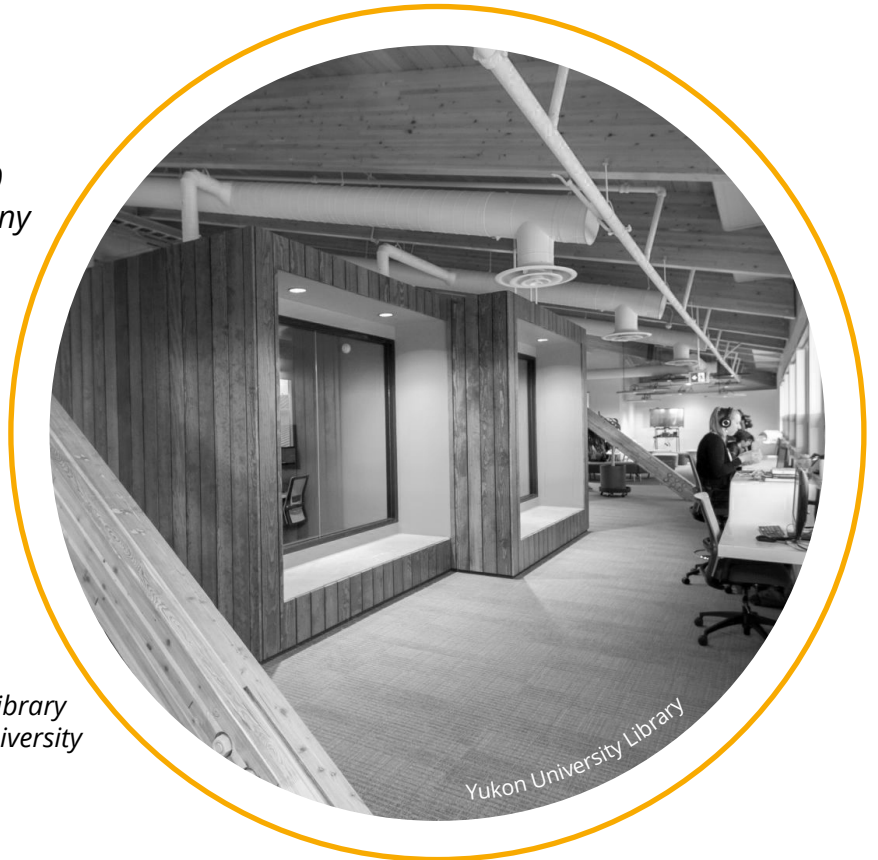
**Did you know?**

Half of BC ELN's licences are negotiated in collaboration with other library consortia.



*There is no question that 2020 was a challenging year for many institutions, and it was no different at Yukon University. BC ELN helped us greatly by maintaining and increasing access to online resources. This access was fundamental not only because of new demands regarding online delivery during the pandemic, but also because of our new university status.*

*Derek Yap, Manager Library & Technology Services, Yukon University*



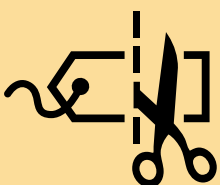
## Exploring the Future of the Common Suite

The Common Suite is a unique multi-year bundle of resources that provides equity to the BC post-secondary system while delivering considerable discounts to BC ELN partner libraries.

With the current three-year licence set to expire May 31, 2021, partner libraries began a process this year to investigate a possible next iteration. As administrative lead, the BC ELN Office:

- conducted three surveys for feedback on approach, process, and initial proposal;
- created the “Common Suite Web” - a website to share background and incoming information about the Common Suite, and provide a forum for library questions;
- supported partner library discussions via four watercooler sessions; and
- negotiated an initial common suite proposal, shared in November.

In consultation with an external facilitator, the Office is arranging partner library meetings for early 2021. The consortium will explore decision-making and communally discuss the future of the Common Suite.



Partner libraries save 65% on the Common Suite, a shared set of online resources that serves the broad needs of undergraduate students.

# Learner Support

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AskAway and WriteAway saw record-setting usage in 2020, a testament to the importance of these learner support services.

## AskAway Chat Reference

When COVID-19 halted in-person library services in the spring, students turned to the well-established online chat reference service in higher numbers than ever; traffic increased by 62% in 2020 over the previous year. Staff recognized the need to extend this virtual support and cooperatively added forty-two extra days to the service to increase student access.

## Responding with Empathy

AskAway institutional coordinators created strategies to support both service providers as well as students who may be feeling stressed during the pandemic. A [blog post](#) and [scripts](#) were released for service providers to use, aimed at empathetically turning interactions around when students are frustrated.



*It's so great that [AskAway is] available for immediate assistance on the weekends. Especially right now during COVID-19 it makes finding what you need much easier.*

*Douglas College AskAway User*

## Did you know?

Students can chat live with AskAway library staff any day of the week during the semester. The service is open most days until 9 pm.



College of the Rockies Library is open during the pandemic with reduced hours and services. Students are making good use of the space while following protocols.

In addition to offering instructional workshops via Zoom, library staff offer virtual assistance through AskAway. The feedback is positive: "Thanks for an awesome service!" say students.



## WriteAway Online Tutoring

As students adjusted to ongoing emergency remote learning, WriteAway saw a 56% increase in submissions in the early months of the pandemic, with usage remaining high through the rest of 2020. To meet the increased need, the service was extended by two additional weeks in the January-April semester.

## Community Growth and Connection

In 2020 the WriteAway Administrative Centre welcomed a new member and sought ways to deepen connections with the writing community.

- Alexander College joined WriteAway, bringing the total number of participating institutions to eighteen.
- Institutional coordinators met regularly to share information, with a particular focus on acknowledging tutors on the front-lines.
- The Administrative Centre developed “grab and go” social media promotional kits for institutions to broaden marketing of the service and reach more students.



*When the pandemic forced us to close the in-person Student Learning Commons at SFU, it was a busy time of year (March). We were very conscious to ensure that we were open and accessible to students. WriteAway was like a security blanket. We were able to tell people, “this service hasn’t changed, we are still available.”*

*Julia Lane, Writing Services Coordinator  
Simon Fraser University Student Learning Commons*



WriteAway Coordinator Megan Robertson published an article called *Asynchronous Affordances: WriteAway’s Pandemic Experience*. [Click here](#) to read it.

# Resource Sharing

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BC ELN supports activities that strengthen the entire research cycle from discovery to delivery, including the [Illume Interlibrary Resource Sharing Service](#). Illume is jointly supported by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training through BC ELN, and the Ministry of Education through the Libraries Branch.

## Illuminating the Way

2020 began with big plans for interlibrary resource sharing, a key project being the elimination of interlibrary loan (ILL) fees for non-returnable items between BC ELN partner libraries. COVID-19 forced a shift in priorities, and in March 2020 the Illume Support Centre swiftly moved into support mode.

As public and post-secondary libraries grappled with new restrictions around sharing physical resources, the Illume Support Centre provided front-line assistance by:

- facilitating province-wide communications;
- establishing closing and re-opening ILL procedures; and
- tapping into the network of other Auto-Graphic SHAREit users across North America to keep the service in step with actions taking place in other jurisdictions.

## Back to Work: Eliminating ILL Fees

With ILL activities settling near the end of the year, BC ELN returned to work on the [elimination of ILL fees for non-returnables](#). In December, library directors approved the Illume [Benefits & Responsibilities](#), which outline system protocols and will serve as an important foundational document.

### Did you know?

Illume is the technical infrastructure that underpins interlibrary loans, allowing users to securely request items from other libraries when their home library does not have the item in its collection.

### Cleaner, Faster, Better! The Union Database Project

Students and library users don't need to know all the intricacies at play when they request a document through ILL, but they do deserve the most streamlined experience possible.

The Union Database Project is aimed at cleaning up records "behind the scenes" in the BC Union Catalogue (BCUC) so the Illume system runs more smoothly. In 2020 the project improved processes, fulfillment times, and shelf availability checks, and streamlined work flows overall for both users and ILL staff.

# Shared Services

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BC ELN works with partner libraries and stakeholders in BC and beyond to coordinate, develop, and implement shared services that benefit all participants.

## Arca Digital Repository

Arca expanded in 2020 with the addition of seven new sites. Close to forty thousand items were added to the Arca Digital Repository, including newsletters, theses, and historical photographs. To support this growth and improve site performance, the Arca Administrative Centre fortified infrastructure in a number of ways, from building new module features that support larger amounts of content to strengthening server architecture.

## GLAM Sector Support

Past, present, and future GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) organizations receiving a BC History Digitization Program (BCHDP) grant have access to free, standards-based hosting for their online collections into 2025 thanks to an extension of the BCHDP-Arca Hosting Initiative.

The initiative is a joint effort between BC ELN and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at the University of British Columbia Library. Four new sites took advantage of the offer in 2020.



New Arca sites in 2020: grunt gallery, Hazleton Oral Histories Project, Karen Jamieson Dance Society, Mount Royal University, University of the Fraser Valley Library Technician Program, Vancouver Public Library, and White Rock Museum & Archives

## Cross-Consortial Synergies

BC ELN acts as the Administrative Centre for sister consortium the Electronic Health Library of BC (eHLbc), providing project management, licence negotiation, and technical support on a cost-recovery basis.

Two consortia co-existing under one “roof” produces multiple synergies – expertise is shared, and similar processes are streamlined. To read more about eHLbc activities, please visit the eHLbc [Progress Reports page](#).

## Did you know?

The Arca site had 131 thousand visits from 207 distinct countries in 2020.



## Partner Libraries

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BC ELN brings post-secondary libraries together to collaboratively meet the expanding information needs of learners, educators, and researchers in BC, Yukon, and beyond. This collaborative approach creates multiple opportunities for cost savings and results in equitable, affordable access to educational resources and services for the province.

Acsenda School of Management

Alexander College

British Columbia Institute of Technology

Camosun College

Capilano University

Coast Mountain College

College of New Caledonia

College of the Rockies

Columbia Bible College

Columbia College

Douglas College

Emily Carr University of Art + Design

Justice Institute of British Columbia

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Langara College

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

North Island College

Northern Lights College

Okanagan College

Quest University Canada

Royal Roads University

Selkirk College

Simon Fraser University

Thompson Rivers University

Trinity Western University

University Canada West

University of British Columbia

University of Northern British Columbia

University of the Fraser Valley

University of Victoria

Vancouver Community College

Vancouver Island University

Yukon University



BC ELN held its first ever virtual All Partner Meeting in 2020. Recognizing that we all needed a little extra TLC this year, the Office sent packets of tea and branded cookies to library directors to enjoy at the meeting. The core topic was Collaboration through Challenge, with attendees discussing how the pandemic has affected their work, and how instances of collaboration have made a positive impact during the pandemic.

# Upholding Ministry Priorities

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BC ELN's work aligns with and supports Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training goals and priorities.

## **Economic Recovery**

Proper training and education are crucial to economic recovery. BC ELN supports students, educators, and researchers by providing access to critical learning resources, student success support through AskAway and WriteAway, and cross-provincial access to resources and services regardless of a student's location.

## **Affordable, Accessible Education**

Students, educators, and researchers are the ultimate beneficiaries of BC ELN's collaborative approach and cost savings. BC ELN negotiates discounted prices on electronic resources, saving the sector millions, and collaborative services are highly affordable thanks to a shared administrative infrastructure and pooling of expertise.

## **Investment in Health**

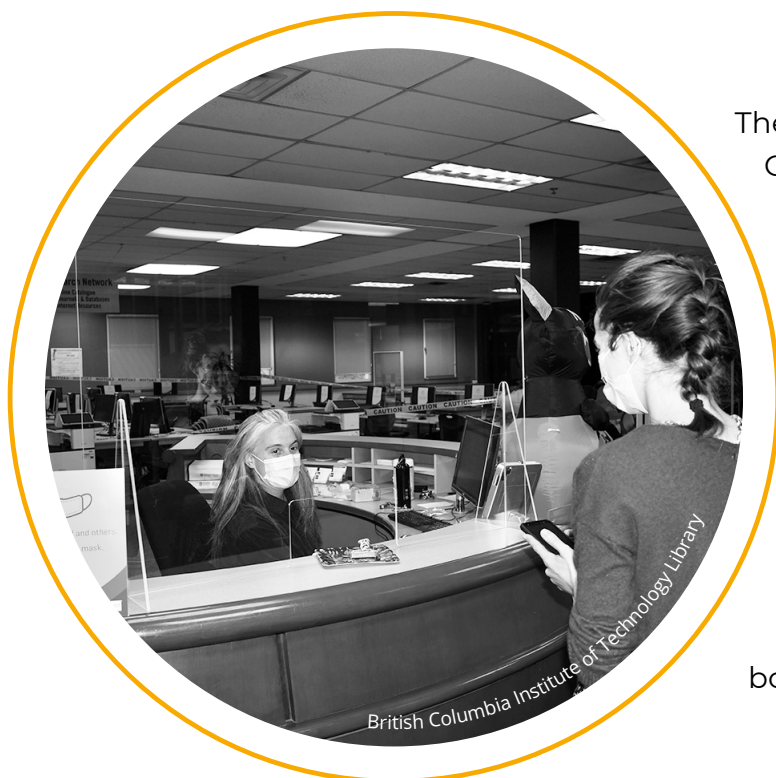
For over ten years, BC ELN has served as the administrative centre of the Electronic Health Library of British Columbia (eHLbc). EHLbc includes 51 members across the post-secondary and health sectors. Thanks to group licensing, eHLbc saves its members millions of dollars and provides equitable access to online health resources (including journals, books, and videos) for students, educators, and health care professionals, wherever they are located.

## **Support for Indigenous Content**

BC ELN negotiates licences for Indigenous content on behalf of partner institutions. The Arca Digital Repository allows institutions to showcase Indigenous content in appropriate ways. The platform supports Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels, which allow communities to express local and specific conditions for interacting with the content available through Arca.

## **Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion**

BC ELN staff attend a range of conferences and workshops that focus on Indigenous issues, representation, and racism. A focus on accessibility has resulted in a closer alignment of the BC ELN website and BC ELN reports to accessibility standards.



The Library at the British Columbia Institute of Technology adapted to COVID-19 conditions by making use of resources and services that were already in place prior to the lockdown, including AskAway, WriteAway, and 23 e-resources licensed through BC ELN. In October, the Burnaby Campus Library partially re-opened with 40 bookable study tables.



# Moving Forward

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BC ELN is committed to meeting goals as outlined in its [Strategic Plan](#), while remaining responsive to Ministry and partner library needs. Some activities on the horizon:

## Common Suite Discussions

BC ELN partner library directors and guests will come together in early February to discuss the Common Suite and utilize a new decision-making model to explore how to proceed in 2021, and subsequently implement the decision.

## Elimination of Interlibrary Loan Fees

BC ELN will proceed with work supporting the elimination of ILL fees for non-returnable items between BC ELN partner libraries, including developing best practices for use of the Illume Service, investigating Illume software improvements, and assessing the impacts of system optimizations.

## Service Area Terms of Reference Update

With the completion of the BC ELN Steering Committee Terms of Reference refresh, BC ELN will next work on updating its service area terms of reference to ensure alignment of processes and practices.

## Strategic Planning

2021 marks the conclusion of BC ELN's five-year strategic plan. The Office will begin consultation with partner libraries on future directions for the consortium.

## BC ELN Steering Committee

as of December 2020

### **Susan Parker**

*Chair*

### **Helen Akulova**

*Ministry of Advanced Education  
and Skills Training*

### **Jonathan Bengtson**

*University of Victoria*

### **Gwen Bird**

*Simon Fraser University*

### **Andrei Bondoreff**

*Ministry of Advanced Education  
and Skills Training*

### **Anita Cocchia**

*BC ELN Executive Director*

### **Rosie Croft**

*Small Universities*

### **Ali de Haan**

*Associate Members*

### **Natalie Gick**

*Simon Fraser University Officer*

### **Brenda Mathenia**

*Rural Colleges*

### **Julie Mitchell**

*University of British Columbia*

### **Trish Rosseel**

*Urban Colleges*

### **Debbie Schachter**

*Teaching Universities and Technical  
Institutions*



## Financials

BC ELN is a partnership between British Columbia's post-secondary libraries and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. BC ELN leverages the Ministry's investment of just under \$500,000 to deliver equitable services and incredible savings to the post-secondary sector and beyond.

### Core Administration and Illume

Includes core and licensing staff, Illume, and partnership activities.

|  | <b>2019/20<br/>Actual</b> | <b>2020/21<br/>Projected</b> |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|
|  | <b>Revenue</b>            | <b>Revenue</b>               |
| Core Funding (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)  | 485,417                   | 485,417                      |
| Host Site (SFU) Contribution<br>(Progress through ranks & general wage increases)                            | 209,860                   | 240,008                      |
| Illume Interlibrary Loan Service (including Support Centre, etc.)  | 192,839*                  | 51,535                       |
| Miscellaneous Revenue (Associate Membership Fees, Carryforward, Prepayments, Resource Sharing support, etc.) | 237,495                   | 229,648                      |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1,125,611</b>          | <b>1,006,608</b>             |
|  | <b>Expenses</b>           | <b>Expenses</b>              |
| Salaries & Benefits  | 551,278                   | 628,853                      |
| Host Support (SFU)   | 56,000                    | 56,000                       |
| AskAway Chat Reference Contribution  | 8,000                     | 10,000                       |
| Arca Digital Repository Contribution   | 8,000                     | 10,000                       |
| WriteAway Online Tutoring Contribution   | 10,000                    | 10,000                       |
| Illume InterLibrary Loan Service (BCUC hosting, Support Centre)  | 216,275                   | 219,751                      |
| BC Historical Digitization Program, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC - Arca Support                     | 5,760                     | 5,860                        |
| Digital BC, BC ELN Contribution  | 2,474                     | 2,500                        |
| Administration/Communication/Governance  | 27,322                    | 4,132                        |
| Technical Infrastructure   | 6,358                     | 12,362                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>891,467</b>            | <b>959,458</b>               |
| <b>Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)</b>   | <b>234,144</b>            | <b>47,150</b>                |

\*Includes 138,339 prepayment for 2019/20.

## AskAway

|   | 2019/20<br>Actual | 2020/21<br>Projected |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
|   | <b>Revenue</b>    | <b>Revenue</b>       |
| Partner Library Support (Service Support Fee & Flexible Contribution) | 95,610            | 96,569               |
| BC ELN Contribution   | 8,000             | 10,000               |
| Miscellaneous Revenue (Carryforward, Marketing, etc.)                 | 2,884             | 2,152                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>106,494</b>    | <b>108,721</b>       |
|   | <b>Expenses</b>   | <b>Expenses</b>      |
| Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure                              | 87,164            | 89,118               |
| Administration/Communication/Governance                               | 340               | 1,233                |
| Software & Technical Infrastructure                                   | 17,195            | 14,542               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>104,699</b>    | <b>104,893</b>       |
| <b>Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)</b>                              | <b>1,795</b>      | <b>3,828</b>         |

## WriteAway

|   | 2019/20<br>Actual | 2020/21<br>Projected |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
|   | <b>Revenue</b>    | <b>Revenue</b>       |
| Partner Institution Support Fee (Service & Infrastructure)                                    | 50,256            | 54,274               |
| BC ELN Contribution   | 10,000            | 10,000               |
| Miscellaneous Revenue - 2019/20 Carryforward of (\$2,207),<br>Marketing etc. revenue of \$579 | (1,628)           | 1,603                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>58,628</b>     | <b>65,877</b>        |
|   | <b>Expenses</b>   | <b>Expenses</b>      |
| Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure  | 48,122            | 50,986               |
| Administration/Communication/Governance   | 1,110             | 352                  |
| Software & Technical Infrastructure   | 8,842             | 8,842                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>58,074</b>     | <b>60,180</b>        |
| <b>Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)</b>  | <b>554</b>        | <b>5,697</b>         |

## Arca

|  | <b>2019/20<br/>Actual<br/>Revenue</b> | <b>2020/21<br/>Projected<br/>Revenue</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Member Service Support   |                                       |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Support Fees</li> <li>• Additional Support Fees</li> <li>• Additional Storage Fees</li> </ul> | 121,679                               | 129,838                                  |
| BC ELN Contribution  | 8,000                                 | 10,000                                   |
| Miscellaneous (Unrestricted and targeted carryforward, etc.)   | 15,791                                | 19,661                                   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>145,470</b>                        | <b>159,499</b>                           |
|  | <b>Expenses</b>                       | <b>Expenses</b>                          |
| Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure   | 96,314                                | 93,996                                   |
| Islandora Foundation Membership  | 4,000                                 | 4,000                                    |
| Security Service Implementation  | n/a                                   | 6,335                                    |
| Administration/Communication/Governance  | 3,203                                 | 848                                      |
| Vendor Support & Technology Infrastructure   | 22,292                                | 33,529                                   |
| Targeted Carryforward: Migration to Islandora 8  | 15,000                                | 15,000                                   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>140,809</b>                        | <b>153,708</b>                           |
| <b>Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)</b>   | <b>4,661</b>                          | <b>5,791</b>                             |

## Licensing

Flow-through finances for licensing activities.

|  | <b>2019/20<br/>Actual<br/>Revenue</b> | <b>2020/21<br/>Projected<br/>Revenue</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Carryforward                             | 75,872                                | (53,227)                                 |
| Partner Library Contributions            | 4,872,355                             | 5,436,069                                |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>4,948,227</b>                      | <b>5,382,842</b>                         |
|  | <b>Expenses</b>                       | <b>Expenses</b>                          |
| Payments to Vendors                      | 5,001,454                             | 5,370,126                                |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>5,001,454</b>                      | <b>5,370,126</b>                         |
| <b>Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)</b> | <b>(53,227)</b>                       | <b>12,716</b>                            |





**BCELN**

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