

Annual Report 2014





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It was the librarian's knowledge, immediate grasp of arcane issues and familiarity with the library materials that led me to a solution. This problem would not have been solved in a satisfactory way without the human element.”

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As a self-represented litigant, it is extremely difficult to get access to relevant references in case law or learn about court procedures... This type of service is a vital part of accessing justice.”

“

Courthouse librarians all throughout the province are the angels of the justice system.”

INTRODUCTION

2014 was a time for taking stock and assessing future goals. We concluded our 2010-2013 Strategic Plan and saw the rewards of our ambitious transformation from a traditional library to an organization that emphasizes partnership, skills training, and access to legal knowledge in all its forms. We also embarked on our next phase of long term planning.

Most law-related organizations faced news of funding readjustments in 2014. After years of running off depleted reserves and unrelentingly low interest rates, the Law Foundation of BC notified Courthouse Libraries BC in early 2014 that funding for 2015 would be reduced by 18%. Our Board acted decisively and began managing this funding change early on in anticipation of the following year.

We committed fully to the “digital shift”, which means embracing digital alternatives to print and closely questioning whether the high costs associated with certain print resources can be justified. Compared to printed copies, digital subscriptions in our collection get more use, are available to multiple users simultaneously, and are universally available in all branches. Digital is also not as high-maintenance as looseleaf texts, which required 1,900 staff filing hours to update in the previous year. We looked at usage, and managed to reduce our information resources budget by \$629,000. This choice, more than any other, allowed us to enter 2015 on-track financially with minimal disruption to service levels. It also means we face the next planning phase with the means to implement those plans.

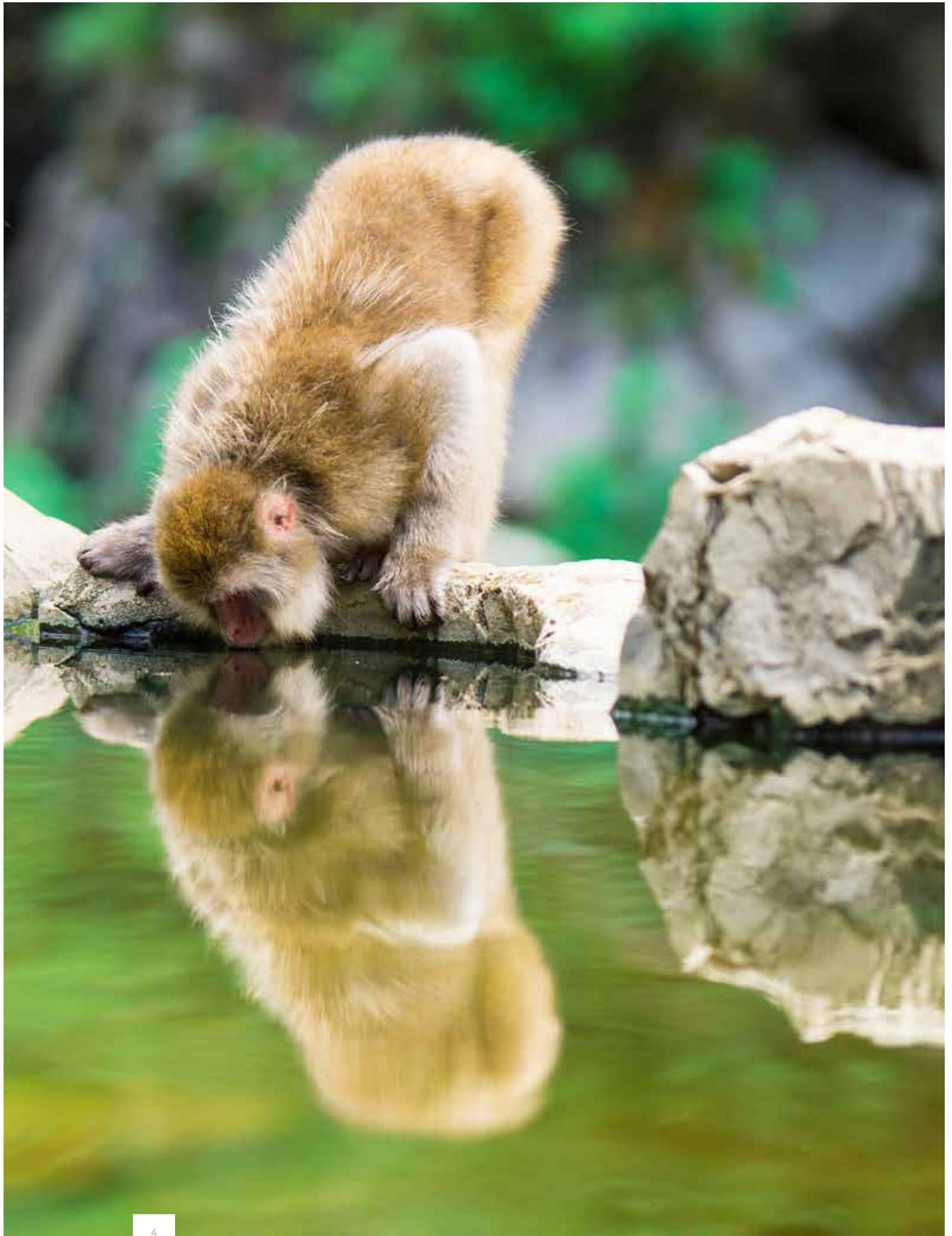
The declining reliance on labour & cost-intensive print resources is being offset with the rise of new, more efficient digital tools to convey legal information and we are committed to being a leader in this movement. Our Clicklaw Wikibooks initiative is a digital publishing platform where legal information organizations and teams of lawyers can create and update entire “wikibooks” that can be read online, downloaded in a number of formats (EPUB, PDF, etc.), or ordered in print.

The rapid public acceptance and adoption of this format is evidenced by the fact that in 2014 wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca became the most heavily trafficked website operated by Courthouse Libraries BC.

From a staffing perspective, we minimized budgetary hardship by delaying to fill certain roles when positions were vacated by departing staff.

We settled on a new planning approach and saw continued success in programs initiated under the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. We held staff workshops and engaged Jane Morley, QC to conduct interviews of key stakeholders and leaders from the justice and not-for-profit sector. We saw advances in lawyer training and legal information development, which have become core competencies for us.

Overall, 2014 was a year for both reflection and ongoing transformation into an agile, digital-first organization. Below are the highlights from this year of taking stock, with some perspective for our current planning phase, which continues into 2015.



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014: CORE PERSPECTIVES

Client Services

Technology and the access to justice gap are driving change. Technology is quickly changing how we share and consume legal information, and more self-represented people came to rely on our services than ever before.

As technologies change and clients' needs evolved in 2014, core services like desk reference and library collections were reshaped. Information requests and collection use went down while other core services emerged. We are being looked to for more than lending books and answering reference questions; we are credited with building innovative "platforms" that support people and knowledge. For lawyers this means more skills training, help with digital literacy, and a more accessible library collection. For the public we are a hub of online and in-person legal information.

Evident in all of the above was our maturing role as a collaborator. Years of fostering collaboration across a spectrum of legal professional groups, public legal information and education organizations, libraries and government agencies has paid off. Demand for our lawyer training programs and our websites Clicklaw and Clicklaw Wikibooks, which attract tens of thousands of people monthly, continued to grow in 2014 due to collaboration. We also found even more ways to support integral players in the justice system—such as Provincial Court Judges, Law Society of BC course moderators, PLTC students and intermediaries such as public libraries and community advocates.

Financial

Funding from Law Society of BC, Law Foundation of BC, and operating revenue were stable for 2014, however the Board changed course to accommodate the 2015 funding reduction from the Law Foundation of BC.

People, Internal Practices and Facilities

The 2014 staff engagement survey indicated very high participation and sense of alignment among employees and the goals and work of Courthouse Libraries BC. A number of senior staff departed in 2014, moving to positions in keeping with their career development and retirement in one instance, and the Board received fresh appointments. A new Director of Finance and Administration was appointed towards the end of 2014.

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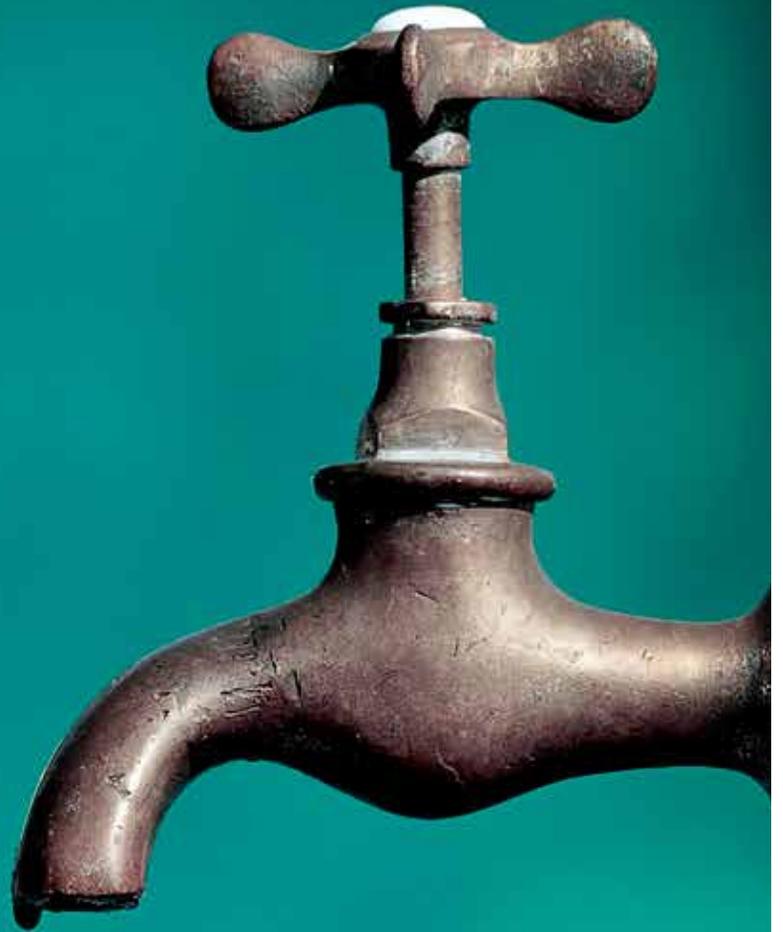
The services provided by Courthouse Libraries and via Clicklaw and LawMatters are extremely useful and important to our every day work with citizens in our community.”

~ LIBRARIAN

“

A note of encouragement about this site: I found everything I needed to know.”

~ CLICKLAW WIKIBOOKS USER



CLIENT SERVICES, TRAINING AND OUTREACH

Our clients include the legal community (judges, lawyers, law librarians, clerks, law students, paralegals, etc.), members of the public and various intermediaries (public librarians, community workers, advocates, etc.). Client services encompasses traditional services like the law library collection, document delivery and reference assistance, but also newer core services such as training, outreach and digital platforms for hosting—and even authoring and publishing—legal information.

Changes in technology are rapidly influencing how lawyers use Courthouse Libraries BC for borrowing, free training, and special digital subscriptions available through the Lawyers Reading Room. we have tried to use technology to meet the needs of small firms, new calls and lawyers in smaller communities.

The rising number of self-represented litigants has also dictated how we shape some of our services, since the general public often requires assistance and information distinct from what lawyers need. In 2014 48% of all information requests came from members of the public, a steadily increasing share.

Other trends show information requests and print usage going down in 2014, while staff answered a higher proportion of complex questions, supported more training sessions, and met the massive growth in traffic on our public-oriented websites with a plethora of new content offerings.

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Thank you for doing this; I would otherwise be stretched financially to meet the LSBC PD requirements.”

“

These appear to be great tools and I had no idea how to use them - thanks so much for taking us through them!”

“

I'm very grateful to the Courthouse Library staff for their great work on making legal research more accessible and more comprehensive.”



Collections and Information Services

Among the 29 Courthouse Libraries BC branches throughout the province, seven are staffed full-time. Just over 42,000 information requests in these branches were recorded for 2014. While this is down from the 46,000 recorded in 2013, the biggest drop was in “directional” questions (e.g. where are the copiers, where can I buy a printer card).

“Quick reference” (e.g. do you have X resource available digitally?) and “complex” (e.g. when was this section of this act amended and did it come into force by regulation?) questions differed by only 3% in 2014 from 2013 statistics.

Usage of print materials in branches declined by approximately 22% between 2014 and 2012, although our collection policies now include an option for free book loan delivery and return by Canada Post. This overall change is congruent with Courthouse Libraries BC’s “Digital Shift” campaign, which involved infographics, posters and articles in legal publications helping to explain to our clients the rationale behind our move to more cost effective digital sources. A title in digital format is used at least four times as often as the same title in print, and the cost of a single looseleaf copy can rival the cost for supplying a digital subscription of that same title in all 29 branch locations.

Usage of digital resources remained relatively stable in 2014. As of the end of 2014, approximately 20% of practicing BC lawyers had enrolled for free access to the Reading Room, which offers anytime, anywhere access to over 150 Canadian law ebooks from Irwin Law Inc., a virtual collection of over 1,500 law journals, and more.

Lawyer Training and CPD

2014 was a banner year for CPD-accredited lawyer training. We offered 23 free webinars and eight in-person training sessions to a total of 1,336 lawyers—a 29% increase over 2013. We also produced three study kits designed to be done in groups of two or more for CPD credit. The downloadable study kits contain articles, cases, scenarios and questions.

Our liaison lawyers and librarians expanded live training considerably by partnering with organizations including the Canadian Bar Association BC, Legal Services Society, NIDUS, and others.

While webinars were not the only form of training we offered, they are now synonymous with our brand. An online culture even began to form in 2014 among the community of lawyers from across BC who regularly attended our sessions. Regular users offer lively discussion in the chat window, and “call out” their location as part of their sign in procedure.

We tended to focus our curriculum on research skills, law and technology topics and sessions that appeal to small firms, new calls, and lawyers in smaller communities. 16 of the 25 webinars we hosted revolved around the “Digital Shift” strategy, helping lawyers make the leap from print to digital resources.

Courthouse Libraries BC offered non-CPD accredited training to a further 689 members of the legal community, mostly PLTC students to whom we taught legal research. We addressed another 515 members of the legal community in the context of orientation and promoting awareness for our services.

A photograph of an elephant standing in a wetland area, surrounded by tall, green reeds and grasses. The elephant's trunk is extended downwards, and its body is partially obscured by the vegetation. The background shows a dense forest of trees.

“

I found this very informative and useful. RSS will definitely make staying current easier, and also be a useful research tool.”

“

Thank you for making it convenient for busy lawyers to participate.”

“

This was super. I am a long-time CanLII fan and user, and I learned about tools/functionality that I didn't realize had been added to the CanLII tool. VERY helpful. The presenter was knowledgeable, responsive to questions, and enthusiastic. Way to go for creating a fun, interesting session — thank you!”

Based on client feedback, we are building skills and confidence among lawyers while answering an unmet need in smaller towns for accessible and affordable CPD.

More Skills, Training and Outreach

We were quite active in other communities too, especially public librarians and community intermediaries. We provided training sessions to 113 librarians and community intermediaries throughout 2014, in addition to outreach and orientation for 1,089 more.

Clicklaw and Clicklaw Wikibooks

Courthouse Libraries BC maintains www.clicklaw.bc.ca as a gathering point for reliable public legal information producers to index and link their content. Clicklaw turned five in 2014, and experienced one of its most successful years yet. The website's growth rate tripled that of 2013. Around 135,000 users accessed Clicklaw in 2014, up from 117,000 in 2013.

Clicklaw was recognized as one of the top several legal help websites in the world in an international study of legal services conducted by professors from Strathclyde University.

Improvements to the website made possible by the Ministry of Justice benefited all visitors but were particularly designed to assist new immigrants.

Clicklaw Wikibooks is a publishing platform where legal information organizations and teams of lawyers can create and update entire "wikibooks" that can be read online, downloaded in a number of formats (EPUB, PDF, etc.), or ordered in print. wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca

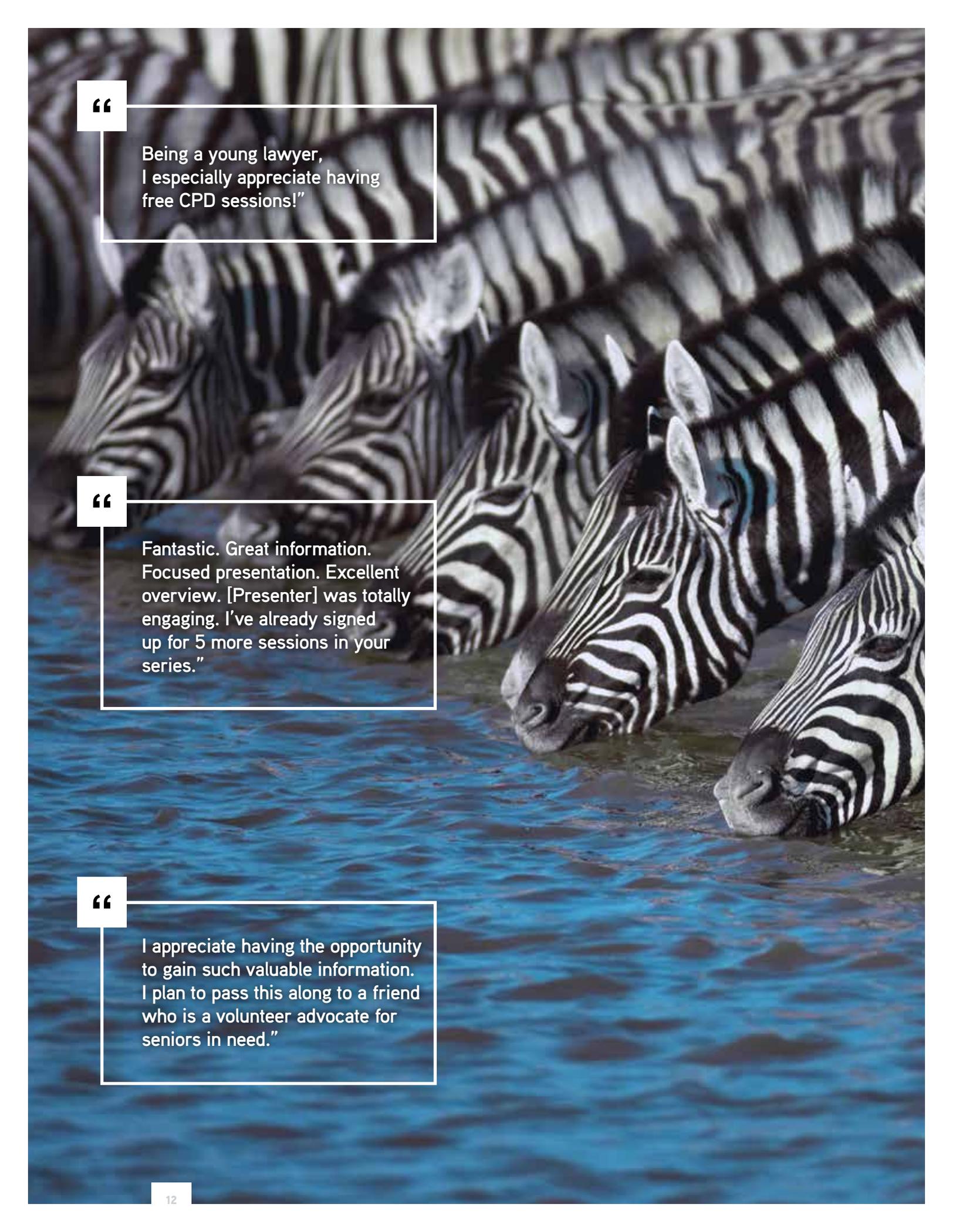
became the most heavily trafficked website operated by Courthouse Libraries BC in 2014, with triple digit growth in visitors and a wide array of new content from various contributors. 14 new titles were added, bringing the total number to 18 from six different contributor groups at the end of the year, with one more, Dial-A-Law, under development from the Canadian Bar Association BC Branch. The number of visitors in 2014 rose 151% to 198,666.

Wikibooks have the advantage of being reasonably cheap to produce, easy to keep current and reliable, and are becoming accepted as legitimate resources in the legal field.

LawMatters

2014 was also the fifth year of the LawMatters program. 58 public libraries representing 231 branch locations received LawMatters grants to add legal information titles to their collections. This represented an increase of 4 libraries from 2013.

The program put on six training events for public librarians, and one community forum in Nelson BC. LawMatters partnered with Nidus, a registry and resource organization for personal planning documents, and nine libraries to host 15 public sessions on personal planning. These were attended by 400 members of the public.

A herd of zebras is shown from the chest up, drinking water from a blue body of water. The zebras are in the foreground and middle ground, with their heads lowered into the water. The background is filled with the heads and necks of many more zebras, creating a dense pattern of black and white stripes. The water is a vibrant blue color.

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Being a young lawyer,
I especially appreciate having
free CPD sessions!”

“

Fantastic. Great information.
Focused presentation. Excellent
overview. [Presenter] was totally
engaging. I've already signed
up for 5 more sessions in your
series.”

“

I appreciate having the opportunity
to gain such valuable information.
I plan to pass this along to a friend
who is a volunteer advocate for
seniors in need.”

Several senior staff moved on to positions in other organizations for career advancement or retired. This allowed us to reorganize with care. We promoted staff internally and took our time hiring new personnel with skill sets that we lacked internally.

We know from the environmental scan performed by Jane Morley, QC that technology is key to the future of Courthouse Libraries BC, both in meeting the demand for conveniently accessible digital information and adapting to possibly offering new services, training and knowledge management functions.

Staff and Administration

The 2014 staff engagement survey showed exceptional organizational dynamics. The overall summary of agreement was at 88%, which the consultant described as remarkable. Courthouse Libraries BC has been in a unique position for several years with universally strong agreement scores across a diverse measure of employee engagement indications—such as vision, leadership, work environment and professional development.

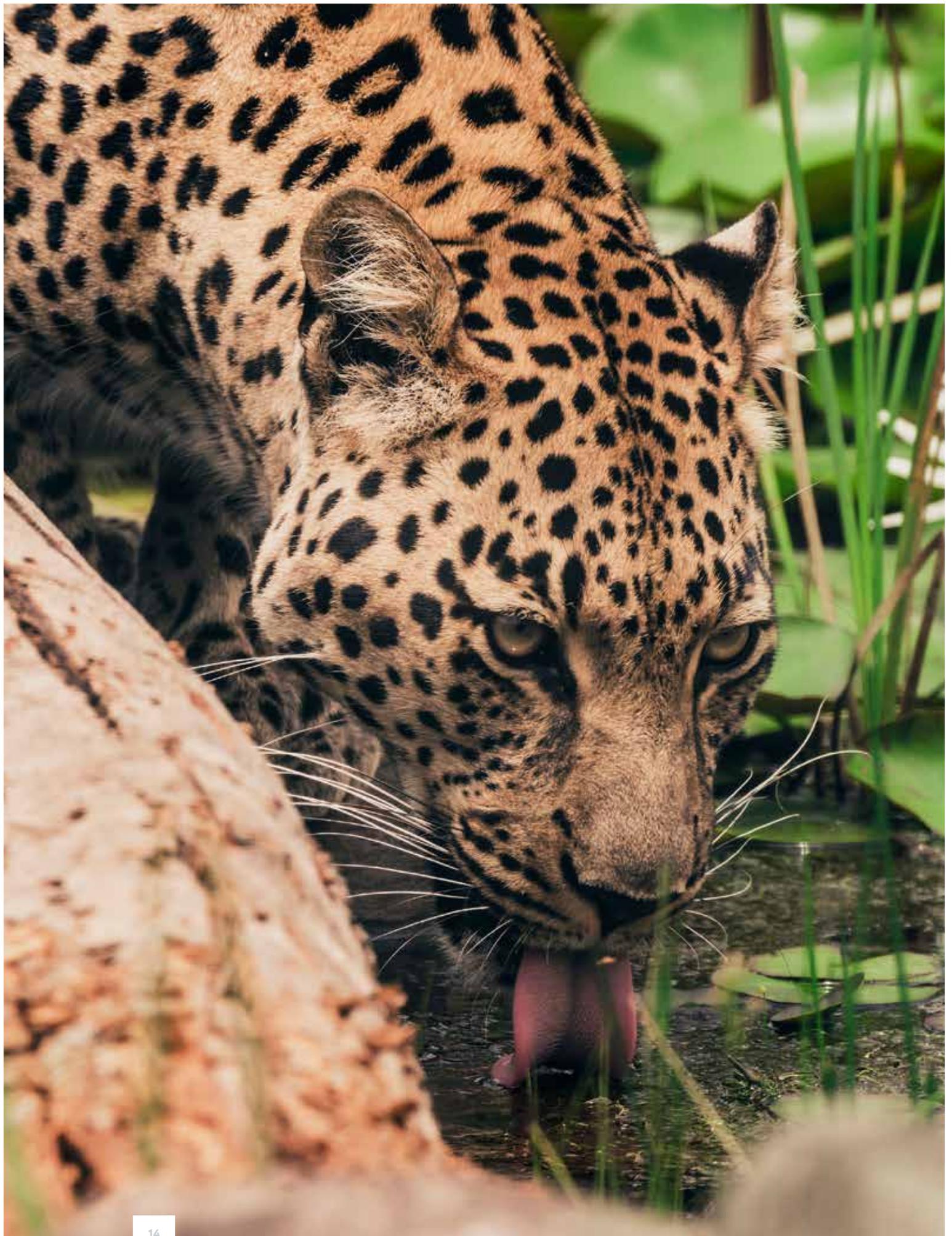
From a staffing perspective, the largest transformations in 2014 were in administration, accounting and IT — all of which are crucial for upgrading technological facilities and capabilities as our next strategic plan require. In December 2014 we hired a new Director of Finance and Administration who has an MBA as well as CMA designation to help Courthouse Libraries BC meet its future goals with robust administrative systems and processes.

The Board received a number of fresh appointments as the outgoing Chair, David Zacks, QC, and member Todd

McKendrick completed their terms, and Tim Outerbridge resigned to be appointed Registrar of the Court of Appeal.

New Technology Systems

Throughout 2014, the efficiency and usefulness of the new intranet became clear. The Loop was implemented partway through 2013, and 2014 was its first full year. It has allowed easier sharing of news across the 29 branches and greater staff connection and learning. It made a positive difference in 2014 within cross-departmental teams of staff, as a productivity tool with strong search and collaboration features.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS 2014

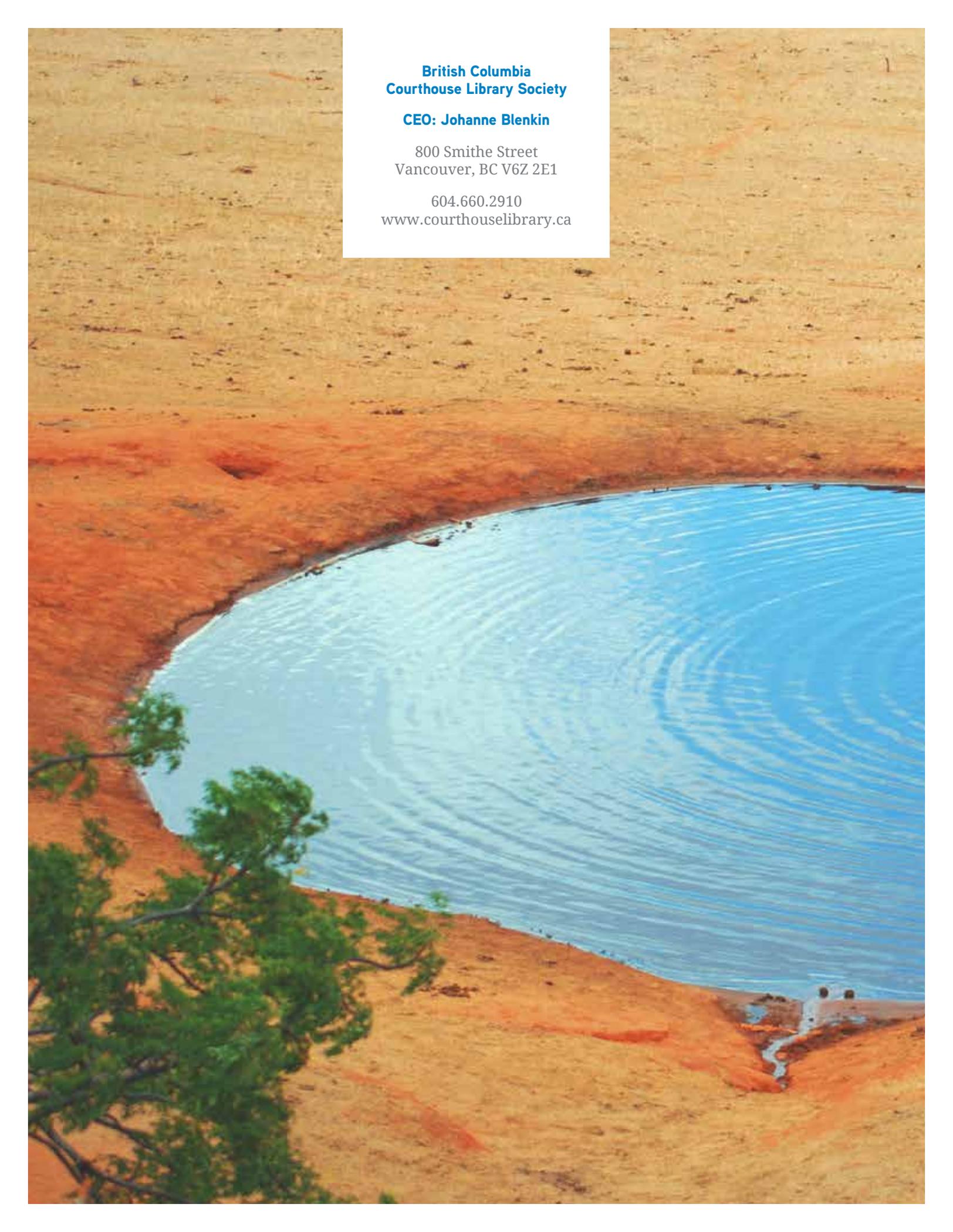
Courthouse Libraries BC entered 2014 with stable funding from the Law Society of BC and Law Foundation of BC compared to previous years. News that the Law Foundation of BC would reduce funding by 18% for 2015 affected finances, however.

As part of the Board's plan to deal with less funding, Courthouse Libraries

ended with sufficient unrestricted net assets to play a significant part in funding the Board's longer term plans .

Revenue from services (including document delivery, copy cards, and other fees) increased modestly from \$170,000 in 2013 to \$178,000 in 2014.

	OPERATIONS	PROJECTS	TOTAL
FUNDING SOURCES			
Law Foundation of BC	2,737,750	—	2,737,750
Law Society of BC	2,113,996	—	2,113,996
Operating Revenue	208,945	—	208,945
Project Funding Grants	—	166,682	166,682
Total	5,060,691	166,682	5,227,373
EXPENDITURES			
Staff	2,532,294	70,570	2,602,864
Information sources	1,124,893	54,014	1,178,907
Operations	518,683	42,098	560,781
Amortization of Capital Assets	93,291	—	93,291
Total	4,269,161	166,682	4,435,843
INFORMATION SOURCES EXPENDITURES			
Print resources	610,997	—	610,997
Digital resources	486,896	54,014	540,910
Other expenditures	27,000	—	27,000
Total	1,124,893	54,014	1,178,907

An aerial photograph of a vibrant blue lake situated in a desert environment. The surrounding terrain is a mix of light tan and reddish-brown sand and soil. In the bottom left corner, the green foliage of a tree is visible. A white rectangular box is centered at the top of the image, containing contact information for the British Columbia Courthouse Library Society.

**British Columbia
Courthouse Library Society**

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