

Workforce Development Services at EPL

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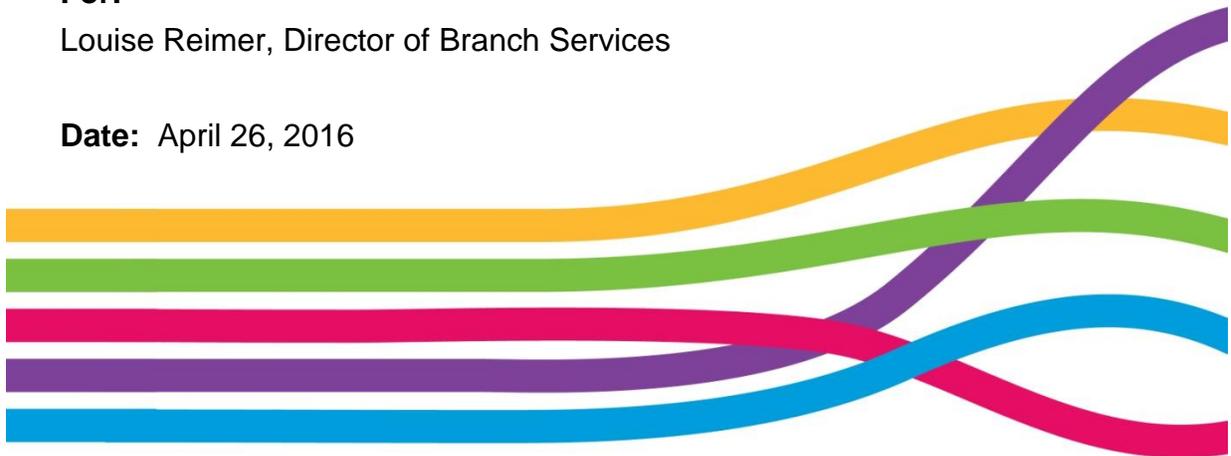
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For:

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Date: April 26, 2016



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EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a move of extraordinary prescience, in 2015-2016, Edmonton Public Library sought to identify service needs and potential partnerships to support workforce development in Edmonton, including service to job seekers. This timely report is the result of the Workforce Development Services Intern Librarian's yearlong research project to find answers to the questions:

- What services are currently offered to job seekers in Edmonton?
- Who are EPL's job seeking customers and what job seeking tasks do they engage in at the library?
- What barriers do job seekers face during the job search process? What assistance do they want from EPL during the job search process?
- What job seeking services can EPL offer to its job seeking customers? What staff competencies are required?

Engaging customers, Workforce Development Organizations, and all levels of EPL Staff, a mixed methods study was conducted using surveys, interviews, and Dotmocracy exercises. Also informing this report is an Environmental Scan which was undertaken by the intern in the summer of 2015, and which included a review of workforce development trends and initiatives at public libraries across North America.

Recommendation Areas

1. Services to job seekers are recognized as a core component of Discovery Services.
2. Establish a sub-team of Discovery Services to provide a leadership and coordination of workforce development services and programs.
3. Build staff knowledge and skills for assisting job seekers.
4. Address barriers and service needs of job seekers.
5. EPL takes on a convening role for job seekers and employment services.
6. Develop library programs to respond to the identified needs of job seekers.
7. Establish partnerships and shared program agreements to support job seekers.
8. Build EPL's volunteer program to include support for job seekers.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, acting on feedback from front line staff and managers regarding the prevalence of job seekers coming to EPL for assistance, EPL hired a Workforce Development Services Intern Librarian to identify service needs and potential partnerships to support workforce development in Edmonton. The intern's first task was the preparation of the *Environmental Scan: Workforce Development Services* report ("Environmental Scan"), and the creation of a definition of Workforce development which would work within the context of a public library. Workforce development was found to be a broadly understood concept that supports job seekers, employers and entrepreneurs. Offered through government and private agencies, non-profit organizations and libraries, these services are a key strategic focus for municipalities in ensuring a skilled labour pool.

Workforce development services include information and referrals, opportunities for education and skills training, and networking and personal growth development. They help job seekers increase their chances to successfully navigate a job search, employers to fill jobs, and entrepreneurs to find the information they need to get their businesses off the ground and thrive. They foster a system that better connects employers and job seekers, entrepreneurs and customers, and increases their opportunity to grow and succeed.

The Environmental Scan examined Edmonton's demographics, labour and economic situation; workforce development services and programs at EPL; workforce development trends at public libraries across North America; and workforce development services available in Edmonton. Upon its completion, realizing that the current project could not cover the entire gamut of workforce development services as mentioned in the above definition, the Library Services Leadership Team decided to focus this internship project on services and programs to job seekers.

EPL's focus on improving services to job seekers supports its *2014-2016 Business Plan* and *2014-2018 Strategic Goals* to transform communities by:

- Contributing to digital literacy skill development, employment and other life skills programs;
- Contributing to efforts to eliminate homelessness and poverty;
- Engaging with communities to identify strengths, gaps, needs and priorities around EPL services;
- Reducing barriers to accessing library services;
- Acting as a catalyst for learning to improve customers' job seeking skills and empowering staff as learners who can in turn better assist customers.

EPL's community-led philosophy relies upon "connecting, consulting and working collaboratively with community members, including individuals and groups" to "understand the needs of the community in order to inform the direction of library

work and policies” (EPL, 2013, p.5). In accordance with this philosophy, and with all of the above factors in mind, between September 2015 and January 2016, the Workforce Development Services Intern developed an evidence-based approach to better understand the needs and barriers of Edmonton’s job seeking community and to ensure that recommendations will align to the service needs as identified by the community.

RESEARCH GOALS

The following research goals served as the framework for this project:

1. To determine what services are currently offered to job seekers in Edmonton.
2. To discover who EPL’s job seeking customers are and what job seeking tasks they engage in at the library.
3. To identify the barriers job seekers face during the job search process and determine what assistance they want from EPL during the job search process.
4. To identify what job seeking services EPL could offer and identify any staff competencies required.
5. To develop evidence-based recommendations for programs and services, including recommendations for potential partnerships with workforce development organizations.

DEFINITIONS

This project relied upon the following definitions:

Job Seeker/Job Seeking Tasks

A job seeker is a customer who comes to the library to do any of the following tasks either online or using print resources:

- search for jobs;
- research employers, careers, or the labour market;
- complete a job application;
- write, format, type, save, upload, print, and/or email any employment-related documentation, such as a resume, cover letter, application form, or credentials;
- open an email account so they can apply for jobs;
- look for educational opportunities or engage in skills upgrading/training so they can find a job/find a better job;
- perform any other activity relating to finding employment.

Socially Vulnerable Populations

A large number of EPL's job seeking customers come from the City's socially vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, there was no definition of the term "socially vulnerable" found in the library literature, therefore the intern turned to other social sciences and health disciplines. The word "vulnerable" is simply defined in the Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) as "susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm," but "social vulnerability" implies that there are layers of factors that:

...constitute potential adversities or risks in exercising different types of citizenship rights or achieving the goals of community, family, and individual projects, the inability to respond adequately when faced with the manifestation of these risks, and the inability to adapt to the consequences that the manifestation of these risks entails. (Richaud, 2013, p. 751)

Ranci (2010) provides further detail regarding what the "adversities" or "risks" as referred to by Richaud (2013) might entail:

Different from the notion of poverty, it includes aspects that are not connected exclusively with income level, but also with housing conditions, employment, the management of care for children and dependent persons, the models of family organization and the difficulties arising in the transition through different phases of the life course. (p. 15)

For the purpose of this research project, vulnerable populations will be defined as being comprised of individuals who are unable to integrate or participate fully with their community due to a lack of access to resources or other underlying reason, including financial circumstances, housing status, mental and/or physical health, age, functional status, ethnicity, and gender.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study takes a mixed-methods approach which “integrates conclusions from both qualitative and quantitative data into a cohesive whole” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 258). Research methods consisted of surveys, interviews, and a dotmocracy exercise; this report also integrates information obtained through the Environmental Scan.

The following section details the separate data collection methods used throughout this project:

- Branch Survey
- Customer Survey
- Dotmocracy Exercise
- Workforce Development Organizations Survey
- Edmonton Public Library Staff:
 - Library Assistant Interviews
 - Community Librarian Survey
 - Manager Interviews
 - Outreach Worker Interviews
 - Settlement Worker Interviews

Branch Survey

Staff was asked to fill out the Branch Survey (see Appendix 1) following interaction with any customer who came to the library and asked for help with any job seeking or employment task (“transaction”). The research goal for the Branch Survey was to determine:

- What barriers customers face when they come to EPL with job seeking tasks
- What library resources job seeking customers are using
- What are the gaps in EPL’s services when assisting job seeking customers
- Whether there are date and time trends for job seeking customers

The Branch Survey tracked the transaction date and time, the nature of the help requested, whether Staff was able to help the customer and what resources were used. Designed as a “tick chart,” the Branch Survey was scheduled to run in all branches for a two week period between October 13 and 25, 2015.

Data Limitations

The Branch Survey relied upon the “honour system” that staff would complete it, as there was no feasible way for the intern to personally supervise its administration in all branches simultaneously. Communication from Managers and Staff responsible for returning completed forms indicated that in many branches, there were varying lengths of time (ranging from hours to days) when Staff either forgot or did not complete the Branch Survey. There are large gaps in data, and it is not known

whether there were no job seekers asking for assistance, or if it was simply forgotten. In later interviews, several Library Assistants admitted that they were not always meticulous about filling in the Branch Survey and that they thought that there were more job seekers in their branch than what the Branch Survey showed.

Several branches either forgot to start the Branch Survey on the prescribed date or did not maintain it for a sufficient number of days and thus ran it for additional time. As well, the intern inadvertently omitted one branch manager in the initial communication process and thus one branch (IDY) did not participate in the Branch Survey's initial run, but did run it for two days at a later time.

Customer Survey

To obtain data from customers, the intern designed a survey for customers ("Customer Survey") (see Appendix 2) which would capture two facets of data: demographic information, and qualitative data about customers' job seeking experiences.

The research goals for the Customer Survey were to determine:

- Whether there were demographic trends regarding job seeking customers
- What are the job seeking tasks being done at the library as identified by customers
- What are the barriers to using the library for these tasks, as identified by customers
- What customers want to be able to do when they come to the library for job seeking tasks

Branches that were holding employment related programming (MLW, WMC, WOO and STR) were automatically included in the Customer Survey. Recruitment of other branches (LHL, ABB, CLV, SPW and MNA) was done thorough email to all Managers where they were asked to advise whether their branch typically saw large numbers of job seekers.

Customer recruitment was done through convenience sampling, which is a statistical method of drawing representative data by selecting people because they are easily and conveniently found (in this case, customers who happened to be at the branch performing job seeking tasks on the same day the intern was conducting the Customer Survey). The intern relied on the assistance of EPL Staff and job-seeking program leaders to direct their job seeking customers to the intern for the purposes of administering the Customer Survey. The intern spent a total of 64 hours at branches, as follows (note that time spent at branches was divided between staff interviews and Customer Surveys):

- MNA, October 13 and 16, Tuesday and Friday, 9am-12pm each day
- CLV, October 15, Thursday, 10am-2pm, 5pm-9pm
- ABB, October 19 and 28, Monday and Wednesday, 1pm-5pm each day

- SPW, October 20, Tuesday, 10am-7pm
- WOO, October 23, Friday, 1pm-6pm
- STR, October 24, Saturday, 10am-5pm
- MLW, October 14 and 26, Wednesday 1pm-4:30pm and Thursday 11am – 3pm
- WMC, October 21 and 27, Wednesday 1pm-4:30pm and Tuesday 3pm-7pm
- LHL, October 29, Thursday 10am – 5pm

The program leaders from either EPL or a partner WDO (Alberta Works, BGS Enterprises) who asked customers to complete the Customer Survey were leading the following onsite programs:

- Resume Review and Career Advising @ EPL (Alberta Works) at MLW on October 14
- Resume Review and Career Advising @ EPL (Alberta Works) at WMC on October 21
- Resume Creation and Job Search Strategies (EPL) at WOO on October 21
- Careers: Work Search (BGS Enterprises) at STR on October 24

Data Limitations

Although recruitment was through convenience sampling, in order to maximize representation of EPL's job seeking customers, recruitment efforts were made on different days of the week and times of day. Despite employing several different strategies to encourage customer participation in the survey, participation was extremely low, as Customer Survey data was obtained from only 29 customers. Due to this small sample size, data from the Customer Survey is not generalizable to the EPL customer base.

Recruitment Problems

Recruitment was hampered by several reasons. Having to rely on EPL Staff to refer customers was problematic, as their ability to refer was understandably impacted by how busy the branch was at the time. Customer participation was extremely low even when referred by a Library Assistant; many customers were observed actively avoiding the intern as they left the branch. Higher participation occurred when a customer was referred by a partner organization, as the organizations did not 'invite' customers so much as they directed them to attend the Customer Survey.

The intern's direct recruitment efforts were even less successful, due to what was perceived to be customers' preference not to be included in an official survey process. Avoidance behaviour was noted among customers from the time they identified the intern holding a clipboard. To illustrate, during recruitment efforts at SPW, customer participation was so low that the intern stood near the entrance of the library in an attempt to engage customers as they came into or left the branch. Several customers were observed opening the library door to enter and, upon seeing the intern, turning and leaving the library altogether.

Not only did customers avoid taking the Customer Survey, but observed customer behaviour cast doubt on the quality of the data being collected. The Customer Survey included demographic questions; observation of body language noted that visual minorities were taken aback when asked to identify ethnicity, and older customers became flustered when asked about age range. Once sufficient observation of this effect on surveyed customers caused the intern to move the demographic questions to the end of the survey, other problems with data quality were noted. Customers who self-identified as “unemployed” became defensive when answering subsequent questions. Many of these customers gave short and perfunctory answers, and were suspected of not being forthcoming about their job seeking experiences.

Customers were not comfortable confiding their difficulties with technology, their perceived lack of ability with job seeking tasks, and may have been hindered by their shame of being unemployed. To illustrate, the intern observed an older male customer for approximately two hours become increasingly frustrated using the library computer: he worked through the process of scanning, converting, updating, saving and emailing his old, typewriter-created resume. Upon being surveyed, he stated “no” when asked whether he experienced any frustrations or barriers in his job seeking tasks. It was determined that another method of data collection was needed, one that would allow customers to relate their experiences in a frank and open manner.

Dotmocracy Exercise

The intern spoke with colleagues and other researchers about data collection methods for sensitive topics and/or reluctant participants. The intern decided to conduct a Dotmocracy exercise, also known as “sticker dot voting,” because it is unusual, colourful and un-officious; therefore, the intern hoped that customers would become intrigued and be drawn in rather than chased away.

The Dotmocracy exercise designed by the intern (“Dotmocracy”) involved using a 3x4 foot board which asked two questions with five suggested answers or tasks for each, as well as an “other” section intended for other tasks or comments. Customers were provided with sticker dots that they used to recognize the various job seeking activities that they did, and wanted to do, at the library, and sticky notes if they wanted to write out any ideas or comments to the “other” section. To further assist with recruitment, free coffee was set up next to the Dotmocracy board and made available to all customers.

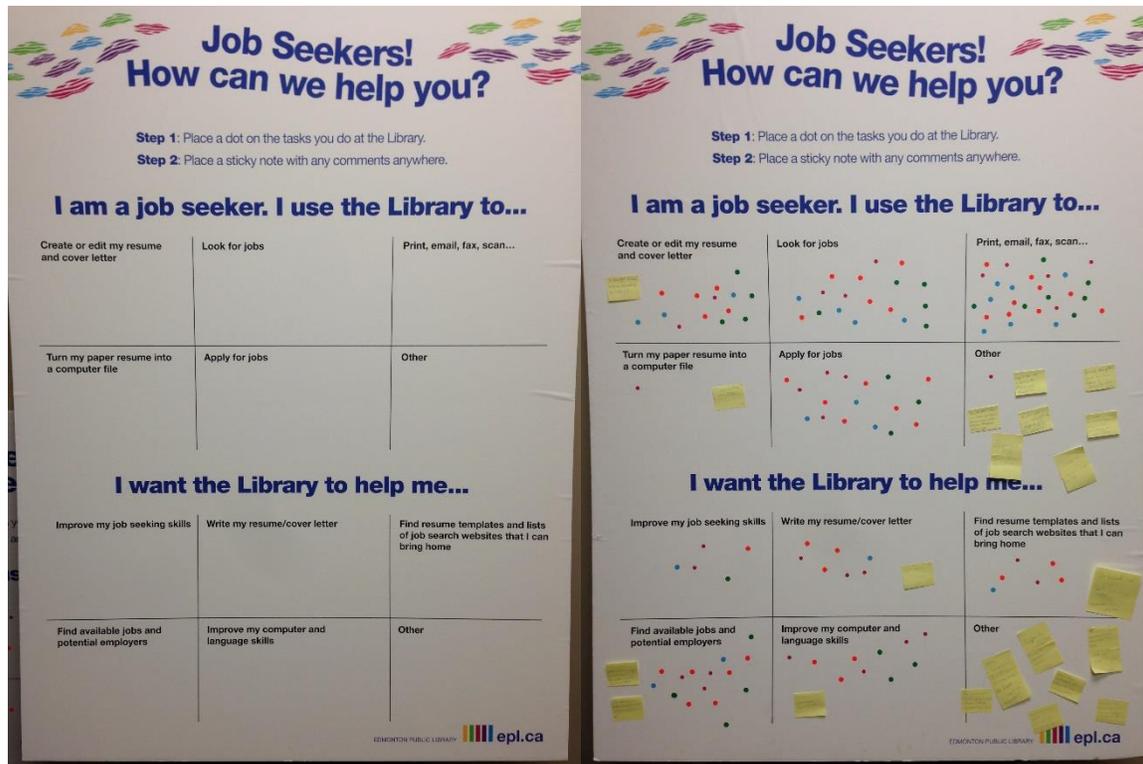


Figure 1: Dotmocracy board, before and after

This process was extremely successful. Dotmocracy was performed at the four branches (ABB, MLW, SPW and WOO) which had elicited the most participation in the Customer Survey, and data was collected from 53 job seekers. Recruitment was wholly voluntary as customers came over to ask questions about the Dotmocracy board and engage in conversation by their own volition. All data was collected anonymously. When customers volunteered demographic information, it was freely given and the intern noted no associated anxiety or defensiveness. The intern avoided directing the conversation as much as possible in order to elicit as many ideas and stories from customers as possible. Conversations were not recorded and no concurrent notes were taken, although best efforts were made to record comments and observations as soon as possible after each conversation.

Data Limitations

Some data may have been lost as the intern was not always able to record conversations with customers directly following the interaction. All conversations had to be summarized based on the intern's recollection. While interactions with customers were meant to be as unstructured and open as possible, some questions (drawn on the Customer Survey) were asked in order to encourage further participation in the process.

Workforce Development Organizations

A list of 28 Workforce Development Organizations (“WDOs”) that provide free and essential employment services within the City of Edmonton boundaries was prepared using the Alberta Works website and the *211 Tough Times Handbook* (see Appendix 3). Privately run employment and temp agencies were not included as they generally charge for their services; only WDOs that provide a significant proportion of their services free of charge were chosen.

Each WDO’s website was reviewed and a spreadsheet created to track what services were provided and what barriers Edmontonians might encounter when accessing those services. To obtain information not found on the websites and other qualitative data, an online survey (“WDO Survey”) (see Appendix 4) was created.

Each WDO was initially contacted by telephone. From the outset, five WDOs did not return phone calls/voice mail messages. Where responses were received, a contact person was identified and offered the choice of completing an online survey using FluidSurveys, taking the survey over the phone, or in person. One WDO declined to take the survey, stating that it had no further information to offer that was not on its website. Eleven WDOs completed the online survey and 9 WDOs (this included three of the four Alberta Works locations) opted for an in-person survey. In total, 18 different WDOs responded to the survey (64% of contacted WDOs).

Where WDOs opted for an in-person survey, a semi-structured interview was conducted using the questions from the survey as a guide. As several WDOs balked at the prospect of a recorded interview, it was elected, to improve candor and openness, to not record any interviews. According to Trochim (2006), audio recording of interviews may be affected by respondents straining to only “say things in a socially acceptable way,” and while the record may be more detailed and accurate, “it is likely to be distorted by the very process of obtaining it.” As the intern has extensive experience in note-taking during meetings, confidence was high that they would be accurate and reflective of the discussion. As such, concurrent notes were taken on a laptop and eventually coded. Personal impressions and observations were also recorded.

Edmonton Public Library Program Statistics

Program statistics were pulled from the “Program Stats – Historical” section in apps.epl.ca for programs from 2010 until mid-2015, and through Evanced for programs between April – December 2015, for all programs that were identified as being of interest to job seekers. The filters set for the program search was for “all branches;” no date filters were applied. The “Type” of program searched for included “Adult Programs,” “Adult Internet Training and “Teen Programs.” Under each Type, statistics were pulled for scheduled programs about careers, job

searching, resume and cover letters, interview techniques, and all partnered programs (such as Alberta Works and BGS Enterprises).

Data Limitations

The older “Apps” program which captured program data does not include a program description, made it difficult to determine which programs were partnered. Wherever possible, those programs not explicitly titled as partnered were cross-referenced with the printed Library Guide; printed Guides were only available intermittently from 2012 to 2014, with full Guides available for 2014 to current day.

In both Apps and Evanced, program attendance numbers were not always recorded. As it cannot be known whether the absence of an attendance figure signified zero attendance numbers, a failure to record, or program cancellation, these programs were removed from all calculations. Programs where zero attendance was actively recorded were included.

Edmonton Public Library Staff

Data was gathered from the categories of staff who work at, or out of, EPL and who provide frontline assistance to customers: Community Librarians, Generalist Librarians, Youth Services Librarians, Outreach Workers, Library Assistants and Managers. Although they are not EPL Staff but employees of the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association who work out of EPL space, Settlement Workers were included in this research as they work so closely with EPL’s customer base. Strictly for the purposes of this research report, they are included under the umbrella term “EPL Staff.”

All three Outreach Workers employed by EPL were interviewed. Three Library Settlement Workers who collectively work out of three branches (MNA, MLW and LON) were interviewed. Thirty Library Assistants were interviewed; recruitment was done with the assistance of Managers who were asked to provide names of Library Assistants who would be best suited to an interview meant to “gather the experiences, ideas and stories from the public services staff who directly assist EPL’s job seeking customers.”

Because of their key positions as relationship builders within their communities, all Community Librarians were asked to participate in this research; Youth Services Librarians were asked to participate if their work included employment initiatives for Teens. Three Community Librarians were initially interviewed in person in order to test survey questions. Once questions were refined, the choice of in-person or online survey was given to the remaining Community Librarians. Three opted for in-person and the remainder chose the online survey; in total, data from 19 Community and Youth Services Librarians was gathered. Two Generalist Librarians were interviewed about job seeking related programs and services at MNA.

Interviews, when done, were face-to-face and semi-structured in nature. Interviews were not recorded, but concurrent notes were taken and subsequently coded.

Copies of the questions asked of EPL Staff are attached as follows:

- Library Assistant Interviews: Appendix 5.
- Community Librarian Survey: Appendix 6.
- Manager Interviews: Appendix 7.
- Outreach Worker Interviews: Appendix 8.
- Settlement Worker Interviews: Appendix 9.

WHO ARE OUR JOB SEEKING CUSTOMERS?

Demographics of Service Users

Slightly more women (55%) participated in the Customer Survey; however, the Dotmocracy exercise was dominated by men (70%). Most participants of the Customer Survey were between the ages of 26-45 (65.5%). Age can only be estimated in the Dotmocracy exercise but based on observation and responses, it is estimated that the percentage of participants in the 26-45 year old age bracket would be slightly higher.

Data on ethnic background was originally sought for the purposes of identifying any trends associated with these populations. Ethnically, the Customer Survey was predominantly answered by Caucasians (42%), followed by those of African (17%), South East Asian (14%), and Aboriginal (7%) descent (total visible minority 38%). Dotmocracy observations would push the percentage of Aboriginal customers up closer to 15% (making the ratio of Caucasian to visible minority to be almost 1:1) although the intern would estimate the other percentages to be accurate.

Data on length of residence in Edmonton was sought because the Environmental Scan had identified higher rates of unemployment among newer (<5 years) residents¹ and there were direct benefits to assisting immigrant settlement processes in placing immigrant labour into the workforce quickly. Slightly more than half of the customers who answered the Customer Survey were long-time (more than 5 years) residents of Edmonton (55%). Most were either unemployed (69%) or were employed part-time, and looking for better paying, full-time work (17%). Both statistics correlate to comments made by customers during the Dotmocracy.

When asked about the demographics of their clientele, WDOs advised that such statistics were not kept. Only seven (7) WDOs offered to comment on this issue. It must be noted that the following information is based solely on their comments, therefore while not generalizable to the client base of these WDOs as a whole, it gives an interesting perspective:

- The majority of clients are counted among Edmonton's socially vulnerable populations. An Alberta Works consultant advised, "People who have more education and computer skills usually do everything themselves. We don't see them very often here, although they are certainly welcome to use our services."
- Alberta Works consider their clients to be facing "semi-barriers," such as poor English language skills (this includes both new Canadians with very little

¹ In 2014, the average immigrant unemployment rate was 5.3%, with very recent immigrants experiencing 7.1% unemployment compared to established immigrants at 4.8%. Unemployed immigrants accounted for 22.7% of total unemployed Albertans in 2014 (Government of Alberta, 2014).

English, or native English speakers with low education levels), poverty (usually intergenerational), domestic abuse, mental health issues, addictions, and low levels of education.

- Several WDOs have high percentages of immigrant and/or Aboriginal clients; others cited higher numbers of older workers, seasonal workers, and those who, for physical reasons, can no longer work in the energy industry.
- All WDOs reported that their clients generally have low digital literacy skills, and low to middle literacy skills.

Educational Considerations

WDOs who currently offer programs at EPL (Alberta Works, BGS Enterprises) indicated that their library clients are generally better educated and have more qualifications than the majority of the clients they serve at their respective offices, and that program workshop attendance among confirmed participants was cited to be higher at library programs (80-90% vs 50% at their offices). The Alberta Works (Argyll) consultants, who conduct outreach Resume Review programs out of two EPL branches (MLW and WMC) stated that their library clientele includes high numbers of foreign-trained professionals.

Observations and perceptions made by the intern during interactions with customers noted a vast range of education levels. Specifically, service needs of both Customer Survey and Dotmocracy participants changed significantly from branch to branch. Generally speaking, the majority of participants at MNA, SPW and ABB needed help with basic digital literacy and job seeking skills, and were seeking general labour, minimum wage, or jobs that required minimum skill levels. Participants at CLV, MLW and WMC had, on average, higher levels of skill and training, from skilled labour to highly educated professionals, many of whom were foreign-trained and looking for Canadian work experience, or were formerly employed in the energy industry and were looking to branch out into other areas. Participants at WOO and STR had a broader range of education, skill and employment needs.

Job Seekers and Emotional Considerations

A key element when interacting with any job seeker is understanding that their emotional state may be quite high, and is undoubtedly complex. A job seeker may be experiencing any or all of the following: financial anxiety, loss of identity and self-esteem, possible feelings of isolation, depression and stress (Jerrard, 2009; Gutsche, 2011). Tasks associated with job seeking, and the array of skills needed to accomplish those tasks, loom over the heads of job seeking customers as a gigantic, overwhelming barrier. Library Assistants spoke about customers wanting to “stick with what is familiar,” insisting on printing out multiple paper resumes, or only job searching on one website, rather than have to learn about a new job seeking process or resource, because they do not want to be overwhelmed. In reality, responding to job seekers’ needs usually involves having to teach skills they do not know that they need in their job search (Roy, Bolting & Brzozowski, 2010).

Throughout this project, frontline staff frequently spoke about the elevated level of anxiety and stress associated with the job seeking process. One of EPL's Outreach Workers stated that marginalized populations often feel ashamed when faced with having to document their lack of education and experience, as it acts as a "reminder of how they see themselves as failures." New Canadians, especially women who may have held traditional roles and are looking to work outside the home for the first time, may be quickly overwhelmed by the Canadian job seeking process, which is difficult even when one is not struggling to articulate transferrable skills and work experience in a foreign language. Settlement Workers specifically emphasized patience when dealing with new Canadians who, as they struggle with language, technology and cultural barriers, need longer to process what might be considered "normal" amounts of information to an English speaking Canadian.

For all job seeking customers, relationship building, encouragement, and extreme patience is required. EPL's discovery service expectations align with these requirements and appropriate training is included in the *Discovery Services: Customer Service @ EPL II: It's Still Personal* program.

Expectations of Job Seekers

A recurrent theme from Library Assistants and Community Librarians was their understanding of EPL's "find a way to say yes" customer service philosophy and its impact on what customers expect from EPL Staff. Staff across all branches spoke about the tension they felt when balancing this customer service principle with experiences such as customers asking them to create or type up resumes, or ask them to provide answers to questions on an online job application.

Similar expectations are made of WDO consultants whose clients tell them "I'm willing to do anything" and have not put together a resume, or built a list of skills and experience, but expect to be placed immediately in a waiting job. "The economy has been really good for a long time so people are not used to having to work at getting a job anymore" said an Alberta Works consultant. All library and WDO personnel spoke of the tension between wanting to "teach a person to fish" and showing them the resources available to the customer and encouraging them to build new skills in pursuit of their job seeking goals, and the customers' expectation that staff should do the work for them.

The misconception surrounding Alberta Works' role in workforce development services and the expectation it creates was addressed during interviews with Alberta Works consultants. Many customers think of Alberta Works as a either a full-out placement organization, or at least a place where someone can find a job for them to apply for. Customers get frustrated when they go to Alberta Works and are "given the run around," as one city WDO indicated.

However, job placement is not part of Alberta Works' mandate. "We are more of a 'way finding' organization; we assist with people's career planning and make referrals on where that person wants to go. We do the quick and dirty stuff; we don't

have time for in-depth service” said one Alberta Works consultant. With respect to job seeking tasks, “if a client is self-sufficient, we will direct them to our in-house resources so that they can help themselves. If they need more help than that, we refer out to our workshops.” Consultants are available for career advice and resume review on a drop-in basis. EPL Staff who are not familiar with Alberta Works’ mandate may be unintentionally supporting misconceptions and thus creating unrealistic and unfair expectations for services at that organization.

The Transient Nature of Job Seeking Customers

Comments from EPL Staff, together with data received directly from customers during the Dotmocracy, indicate that a portion of the population who attends the library to do job seeking tasks are transient users of library services. Customers from across the branches where the intern spent time stated that they had never been to the library before coming in to borrow a stapler, use the fax machine, or attend the Alberta Works Resume Review program.

“I get the sense the customers who come here for job seeking are relatively new library users, they get a card to access computers in order to do searching and prepare their resumes. They are discovering our processes for the first time.”

EPL Manager

Some job seeking customers may be coming into the library simply for their job seeking tasks, never to return. For these customers, the requirement to learn the skills they require for their tasks is transient.

The difficulty with providing service to these customers is that, while their need is immediate, they usually do not have the time or the desire to learn EPL computer systems in order to complete their task. They need a final product right away and do not have the time to wait for a library program, but they also do not want to learn new skills in order to accomplish their task. Tension can occur between such customers and EPL staff which in part seem to stem from a lack of clarity surrounding *EPL’s Customer Service - Guiding Principles*.

From a customer service perspective, these job seekers require high levels of patience, encouragement and positivity from frontline staff. They need information and resources that are easy to find and navigate because they are not familiar with our website or spaces. They require easily understood instructions and supportive tools to get their tasks done. Referrals need to be informed, and EPL Staff need information service guidelines to provide more clarity.

WHAT JOB SEEKING SERVICES ARE ALREADY OFFERED IN EDMONTON?

Services offered by WDOs range from drop-in, self-service models to heavily structured skills instruction in a classroom setting. Programs may run as a one-hour drop-in workshop or a twelve week progressive program that involves an intake process and enrollment.

WDOs reported their most popular programs and services to be job seeking skills, employer connections (placements, job fairs and job boards), one-on-one career counselling and drop-in self-services.

Job Seeking Skills/Tasks

Across Edmonton WDOs, assistance with job seeking skills is offered in a wide variety of delivery models. It may be provided either as a formal classroom offering (programs, workshops) or as on-the-spot, frontline assistance (immediate services). Assistance with resume preparation, resume review and job searching are offered by all WDOs, whether it be one on one, in a workshop format or as part of a larger program. While only one organization offers a formal, free typing service (BGS Enterprises), many organizations admitted that they will type a resume for a client if they have time; generally, this is performed on a case by case basis. Online job search and job application assistance were cited as an essential immediate service, given that jobs are almost exclusively offered, and applied for, online. Online job searching and applications are frequent topics of workshops. Formal interview preparation is usually offered as a program/workshop, although tips are provided by most WDOs, usually in conjunction with assistance finding interview-appropriate clothing and/or transportation support for attending interviews.

Connecting with Employers

Placement programs and services were cited as popular among those WDOs that offer it, which is relatively few among the WDOs contributing to this survey. Only one WDO (McBride) has a formal Job Placement Program, which requires an intake process and acceptance as a client. Opportunities to meet with employers, such as job fairs, on-the-spot interviews and hiring, and job shadowing, are offered by more WDOs and are cited as being extremely popular among clients. Job boards, where postings are listed on the wall in paper format, are also prevalent in WDOs and cited as popular among clients who are older or who have limited digital literacy skills.

Career counseling

Career counselors advise, coach, provide information and support people who are planning and managing their life, education and work direction. These services are offered by several organizations, usually as a one-on-one appointment booking.

Group workshops are offered by some organizations, usually in the context of a lengthier program.

Drop-in self-service

Drop-in self-services include access to computers, printing, photocopying, scanning and faxing, and are offered by all organizations. All WDOs except the academic institutions and EPL offer printing and photocopying free of charge (with a cap on the number of pages per customer per day) as they receive funding for this through the Alberta and Federal Governments. Free services require a customer name and SIN number for funding purposes, although most stated that the lack of a SIN would not bar a client from basic services such as help with resume preparation if that was the only thing keeping them from putting food on their table.

Employment and Job Seeking Supports

All WDOs provide free printing and photocopying as mentioned above, phone calls and faxing (including long distance). The majority of WDOs provide clients with some form of support during job seeking and early employment. Many selectively provide access to transportation in the form of bus tickets, either to attend programs, job interviews, or for a specific time period once the client begins work. Edmonton Transit Services (“ETS”) generously gives EPL Outreach Workers 80 ETS day passes each month which allows free transit for the day for one adult and up to four children. Outreach Workers are able to provide passes to their clients who need transit to get to support services/appointments, including job interviews.

A few organizations fund their clients’ safety/exposure tickets, although all had a maximum number of courses they would fund per client. A few organizations collect clothing and will provide appropriate attire for interviews; most refer to organizations such as Suit Yourself. Three organizations (Bissell, Boyle Street and DECSA) spoke about nutritional support (groceries or bagged lunches for first two weeks of work). Two organizations (Boyle Street, Bissell) indicated that they provide access to construction and labour safety attire such as CSA approved boots, hard hats and safety glasses.

WDOs who do not provide tangible supports such as bus tickets refer clients to funding available through Alberta Works or other community resources. Most forms of support were in the way of free programs, services and resources. Most frequently cited gaps in supports include housing, bus tickets, safety/exposure tickets and funding to obtain ID.

WHAT BARRIERS ARE JOB SEEKERS IN EDMONTON FACING?

The following barriers were identified through interviews with EPL Staff, customers, and WDOs. Note that this report was not limited to looking at barriers to accessing library services; the intern examined barriers to accessing job seeking services generally, and included accessing library services within that examination.

Awareness of Services, Programs, and Resources: Customers

Most customers were unaware of the range of services offered by WDOs operating in Edmonton. While a majority of customers were aware of Alberta Works generally, not all had attended an Alberta Works office or knew what kind of services they could provide. Residents tended to be more familiar with organizations based in their own community; for example, residents of Abbotsfield were more familiar with WECAN than they were of city-wide organizations such as Alberta Works, which has four locations in Edmonton.

“I come here for books, but I didn't know you could do any job stuff here. I didn't know the staff can help with job searching.”

Customer, CLV

Customers are also largely unaware of the job seeking resources, services and programs that can be accessed at EPL. Peter Maguire's *Top Five Barriers to Library Access* cited Service Awareness as one of the top barriers facing underserved communities; this report found that the same may be said of job seekers and potential job seekers to this day (EPL, 2014b). This statement is reinforced by the 2013 survey results in *Library Services in the Digital Age* which found that, while 91% of Americans surveyed said that public libraries are important to their communities, only 22% knew all or most of the services their libraries offered. Another 46% knew some of what their libraries offered and 31% knew not much or nothing at all of what their libraries offer (Pew, 2013).

At every branch visited by the intern, customers stated that they were unaware of the extent of programs (such as Alberta Works' Resume Review), resources

“If I knew there was more available, what other options there was for help, it would be good, but I didn't know there was anything else such as resume workshops and things like resume builders, that would have been great to know.”

Customer, MLW

(resume building software, learning databases, Settlement Workers), or services (Library Assistants to help with job searches, resume templates, fax machines, scanners, informed referrals) that are available to help job seekers at EPL. The *Barriers* report found that “customers are more interested in library services when they are directly relevant to problems they are trying to solve;” during Dotmocracy, customers asked questions and were interested in hearing

about library resources that would help them with their job seeking tasks, especially once they realized that these resources were free of charge (EPL, 2014b).

Lack of awareness may be due in part to the fact that knowledge of job seeking resources are not needed until customers find themselves out of work. As previously mentioned, a large number of job seekers at EPL are transient users of library services and technology in general. Finding themselves suddenly scrambling for a way to get started with their job seeking tasks, they may turn to the library as a place they know as having free computer use, helpful books, and frontline staff who are knowledgeable and friendly, but they may not look beyond what they already know about the

library to investigate EPL's myriad of other services available to them.

Because EPL does not specifically promote itself in the community as a destination of choice for job seekers, and because our job seeking resources are not easily found on the website, the library is not the first place the newly unemployed thinks about when they think about finding job seeking help.

"I do all this (resume) at home, I just came in for a stapler. I've not yet been able to apply to any of the jobs that require submission by fax, I didn't know you guys had a fax machine."

Customer, WOO

Promoting Awareness of Services

Conversations with Generalist Librarians and the Adult Programming Team indicate that the process of evaluating the success of a program is heavily weighted toward attendance numbers. Certainly, the foremost reason that EPL's Resume Creation and Job Search pilot program, which ran between February 4 and March 25, 2015, was not continued was due to the pilot program having low attendance. However, virtually every Library Assistant and Community Librarian stated that EPL does not sufficiently promote awareness of individual programs to customers and the public as a whole, to which they attribute poor attendance numbers at many programs.

The *Barriers* report recommended continuing to find "new and innovative ways to promote awareness of the variety of services we have to offer" (EPL, 2014b). Holly Arnason's *Next Generation Readers and Information Services* intern report observed that EPL Staff members are "frequently a key source of information about the basic functionality of library services" and recommended that EPL "develop a strategy for how the brand message can include information about some of our less recognizable, technology oriented services ([...] "Yes, you can make and print your resume at the library")" (EPL, 2011). Both of these remain true today.

Throughout this project, the Intern asked WDOs how customers learned about their organization, services and programs. The number one method by far was word of mouth, followed by their website, and finally through referrals from other organizations (such as social services, government agencies and educational institutions). A consultant from Alberta Works (North) said, "When we are able to

assist one customer, they tell their friends and so on, and so on ... this is mostly true with ethnic communities. In the North, the Somali community is huge, and when one person has a successful interaction and outcome they get a lot of their friends and family to come in.” Word of mouth communication is generally effective because customers are perceived to be more honest about a service than is communication originating from the marketer (Hamilton, 2014).

Outreach Workers concur with the effectiveness of work of mouth promotion, but advocate for patience and a willingness to consider other criteria for “successful” program than attendance numbers. They believe that programs which may start with a small group, if they are continued to be offered over time and a focus made on building relationships, the success will build. Especially with marginalized populations, success is measured differently because initial trust needs to be built, which takes time.

Word of mouth promotion of services is not a new concept for libraries; the library literature has several articles and publications that include ideas for how libraries can benefit from word of mouth promotion of services. Key to the process is EPL Staff: Staff needs to be aware of services and resources, and need to actively embrace and deploy word of mouth promotion (Barber, 2010).

Awareness of Services, Programs, and Resources: Staff

Barriers do not start and end with customers. The level of awareness of resources available at the library and in the community varies greatly between EPL Staff. This constitutes a barrier for EPLs job seeking customers, who rely greatly on staff for the discovery of library-related and other job seeking resources.

EPL Resources

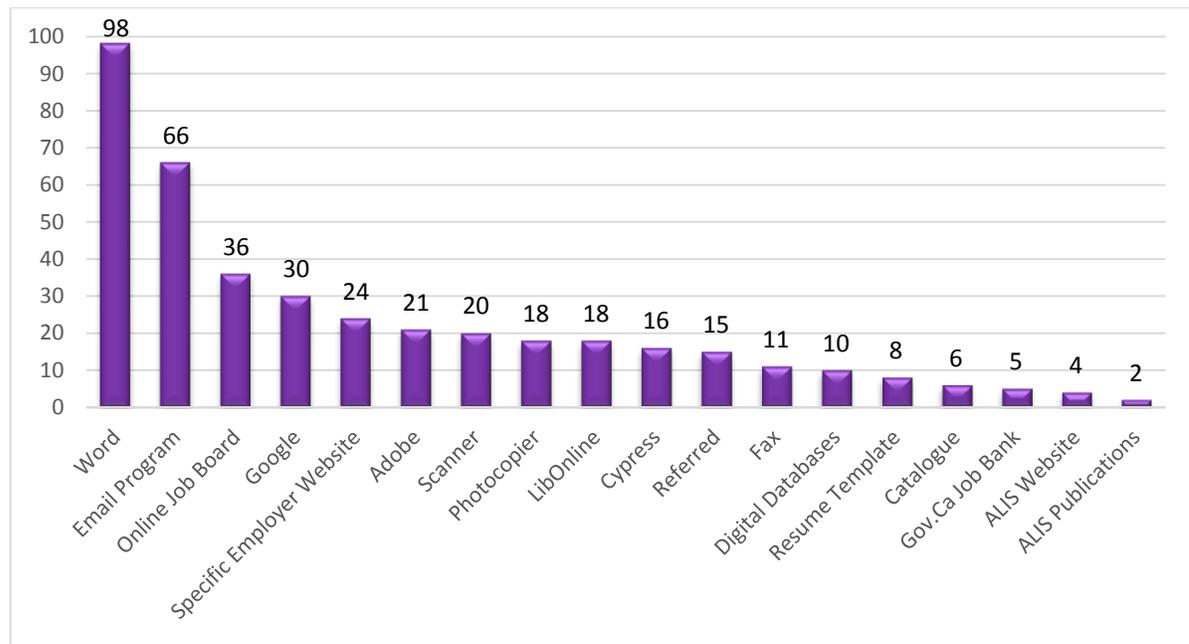
The Branch Survey asked the question “What resources did you use to help the customer?” The table below illustrates the frequency that staff used specific EPL resources to assist customers. Predictably, the most frequently cited resources were Microsoft Word (98), email programs (66), online job boards (36), specific employers’ website (24), and Adobe Acrobat (21). More revealing are the least utilized resources, which include ALIS

“ASSIST provides resume and job support workshops for newcomers. I’ve been trying to incorporate available library services such as Microsoft Word into their job support sessions. I come in and talk about skill building using Lynda.com, Gale Courses and those types of things. Skills such as how to communicate in a North American culture, email, these are all available through Lynda. Through Gale, there is MS Office, Project management courses, so I work with them to incorporate that. They refer clients to the Alberta Works programs we hold.”

Community Librarian

publications² (only available at a few branches) (2), ALIS Website (4), Job Bank [gov.ca] (5), the library catalogue (6), resume templates (8), and the library’s digital databases (10).

Table 1: Resources used by staff to assist customers



Interviews with Library Assistants revealed that their awareness of digital resources that can be used to help job seekers build resumes and employment skills is extremely varied. For example, most knew that Lynda.com had courses on learning how to use Microsoft Office; fewer were aware of the Lynda.com business and job seeking skills courses. Most talked about the Cypress Resume building program; they had coached customers through it, but only two had used it themselves. While online databases such as Brainfuse were mentioned by Community Librarians, very few of the Library Assistants interviewed knew that it offers career resources and resume writing assistance, or that it includes the feature “Write a Winning Resume” which provides examples and templates and the opportunity to upload the draft and receive live resume help from a Brainfuse career coach.

Knowledge of the assistance that is provided by Settlement or Outreach Workers also varied greatly by Library Assistant and branch. One Library Assistant from WOO said: “we have a unique perspective with our Outreach Worker because she is here on a regular basis, so referring is really easy. Before we had someone here it was complicated. We have that schedule we can tell people which is good but

² Alberta Learning Information Service (“ALIS”) publishes over 50 booklets that cover a broad range of job seeking skills, career research, education and even money management. These resources are available to order for free through the provincial website for career, learning and employment information and services. See Customer Needs/Information Resources for further discussion.

knowing them is better.” Branches without these resources varied in their knowledge of how and when they should refer customers for help. Information on schedules and contact information was felt to be difficult to find on StaffWeb and the EPL website. Where some branches had handbills advertising Settlement Worker services, staff experiences led them to believe that the schedules were incorrectly printed and were reluctant to use them. Staff spoke about how empowering it is to have Settlement or Outreach workers speak at staff meetings and stated how useful it would be for this to occur more often given the high turnover of staff per branch.

“At an EISA presentation I did, there was a man who was overjoyed to hear about the courses on Lynda.com because he needed AutoCad. It’s great to be able to offer this to our customers.”

Community Librarian

Knowledge about the work done by Settlement workers was particularly lacking, most notably practical information involving the referral process, hours, branches and contact information. Library Assistants want a quick way to find this information and print it for customers’ use. Library Assistants stated that contacting Settlement Workers by telephone is a challenge, as phone calls are to be made to the central office, not person-to-person.

Community Resources

Only a few Library Assistants told the intern that they had confidence in their knowledge of what resources were available either in their catchment or in the city for job seekers. The WDOs included in this study are included in the appropriate Community Profiles, but only (with some exceptions) within the branch’s catchment, which is understandable but limits awareness of those WDOs outside of the catchment area. Some Library Assistants admitted that they were not aware of any WDOs and were therefore unable to refer customers to any other resource besides what the library offers. Only four out of thirty Library Assistants spoke about making a phone call to a specific WDO to clarify services, although it should be noted that this was not a specific question asked by the intern.

Staff expressed the desire to know more about community resources so that they could support customers and make better and more informed referrals. Staff stated that they are willing to use task time to explore resources and asked if local WDOs could come in and speak at staff meetings so they could feel more empowered to refer.

WDOs themselves are not well informed about all of the resources available in Edmonton for job seekers. As an example, one WDO expressed frustration with Alberta Works for not helping one of her clients find a specific job, unaware that Alberta Works does not, in fact, provide placement services. While most WDOs know of each other’s existence thanks to the *211 Resource Guide*, very few know about specific programs or services unless they have had reason to find out. WDOs

were happy to hear of this research project, and were grateful for the opportunity to discover that EPL had resources for job seekers. Beyond free computer access, knowledgeable and helpful staff and later hours of operation, most were unaware of the resources EPL could provide to their clients.

The literature acknowledges that awareness of services between organizations that assist job seekers is a widespread issue. Establishing connections between area workforce support services, including partnerships with other training entities and WDOs, will help customers move more quickly through the job seeking process, can limit the unnecessary duplication of resources between organizations, and will raise awareness about the wide range of resources available within the broader community and in libraries (Urban Libraries Council, 2007). The Vancouver Public Library's Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre (SIIC) staff seek out pamphlets, info sheets, publications and notices from partner, local, public and private organizations regarding services, events and resources, as they believe that the best service to customers is provided when service providers support and promote each other's services (Alexis Greenwood, personal communication, June 19, 2015). They also have a Facebook page which they use to promote programs offered at VPL as well as by community WDOs.

The Downtown Community Resource Fair held on October 14, 2015 is an example of how EPL can achieve success as a convener within the community. The Fair received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, and was especially praised for the networking opportunities, diversity of exhibitors and information from multiple agencies in one place (EPL, 2015c). Several comments stated that providing ongoing opportunities for agencies to meet would be welcome, indicating that establishing methods of ongoing communication regarding programs and services may be a welcome next step.

“Part of the problem is that there are lots of agencies in Alberta and Edmonton that are helping job seekers, but there is not a ton of information between those agencies, including us. We don't know how to give the best advice. People don't know they can come to us for job seeking help, and we don't know either.”

Community Librarian

Branch Managers advised the intern that using online training modules to teach staff about resources for job seekers may not be the most effective training method, given that task time is not usually assigned and there is no way to track or monitor whether training has been done. They feel that the best way to get branch staff on the same page is to use staff meetings. Managers felt that they would be able to send one staff member for a library-wide presentation, and would expect that staff to disseminate information during a staff meeting. Unanimously, they thought that having a Job Seekers Learn Grow Share would be excellent.

Challenges for New Canadians

Language, cultural differences in job seeking and finding Canadian work experience are the most frequently cited difficulties new Canadians face. Those with language challenges require specialized resources and programs, and are frequent attendees of the ELL and LACE programs at EPL.

Library Assistants identified some coping mechanisms they use to assist new Canadians with these barriers. “They ask for help with that blurb that you put in an email when you attach your resume to it – some people have, like, one blurb that they’ve printed out and they carry it around in their wallet, and just insert it each time they email someone” one MNA Library Assistant stated. Some Library Assistants automatically advise new Canadians not to attach a photograph to their resume; a standard practice in many Asian countries. Settlement Workers advise that immigrants who are terrified at the prospect of a Canadian job interview should be encouraged to take conversation classes, library programs and attend community events as a way of building themselves up and practicing speaking with people they don’t know.

While foreign trained professionals are required to have high levels of English, they still require specialized information regarding education equivalencies, credentials, and how to “Canadianize” their resume, cover letter and application language. This latter issue, together with identifying and articulating transferrable skill sets from the immigrants’ country of origin to something applicable to Canada, are two of the most frequently cited tasks that Library Assistants are called upon to help new Canadians with.

“The most important thing to remember about newcomers is that you cannot rush them. You have to work slower so that you are sure that they have understood what you’ve taught them before you move on. Be slow, be patient, build their skills slowly and have strategies in hand to make sure that you have been understood.”

Settlement Worker

Settlement workers cite lack of Canadian experience, references and networks as the biggest barriers that foreign qualified workers face. They encourage clients to volunteer in roles that will enhance their skills and that align to their professional interests and training, and will allow them to obtain a Canadian reference. Also, there are organizations in Edmonton such as ERIEC that will provide mentorship opportunities for some immigrants with professional qualifications.

Library tours and orientation were noted by Settlement Workers as being a key introduction for new Canadians to the EPL as a place for resources and learning; these are done by Community Librarians when arranged through organizations or programs, but individual tours were not mentioned by EPL Staff. While Settlement workers praised Library Assistants for their helpfulness and knowledge, they expressed some reluctance to hand their clients off to Library Assistants on the floor. Their perception is that shifts change frequently but they do not know when,

and they are also conscious that the staff are busy and have to cover the floor. Knowing how much time and patience their clients require, they fear that staff will not have sufficient time before the end of their shift to spend with a new Canadian who requires more time and patience than the average customer. Two of the three Settlement Workers interviewed wondered if there could be a type of on-the-spot service involving staff who could provide orientations of the library space and resources without having to provide other customer service.

Low digital literacy skills is another barrier frequently faced by some new Canadians. “For newcomers, you are trying to introduce them to general library resources, and it can easily become overwhelming. Brainfuse can be quite difficult to navigate for people with low digital literacy skills, and it may be a struggle even to login for the first time” said one Community Librarian. Settlement workers acknowledge that many of their clients have no computer skills; when coupled with low English language skills it can be especially frustrating. “If staff are not able to help a new Canadian, I want them to refer the client back to me. Don’t tell them to call Immigration, don’t tell them to go to the internet, send them back to me” said one Settlement Worker. Settlement Workers are able to best direct newcomers to resources and services that are best suited to their particular needs.

Digital Literacy

Throughout this project, the foremost ancillary need as identified by all interviewed parties is digital literacy. The *Barriers* report identified Literacies (including digital literacy) as a barrier to library use; it is also a barrier to job seeking. This is because virtually every aspect of the job seeking process has a digital literacy component, even if the work that the job seeker is applying to do does not require digital literacy skills.

Individuals most at risk of facing this barrier, as identified by library personnel, include refugees (who generally have lower education levels than immigrants and have

often spent long periods of time, possibly years, in camps), individuals who have not previously needed computer skills in their workplaces such as manual labourers and older workers, individuals with low levels of education, and individuals who are returning to work after a long absence from the workforce.

“Do what you can to raise the general level of literacy, and especially digital literacy, of Edmontonians. There is a huge need for computer skills, this is the #1 gap among our clients.”

Alberta Works consultant

Library Assistants were unequivocal in stating that the largest draw on their time when they assist job seeking customers is the customers' lack of digital literacy skills. They also describe it as the highest cause of frustration and anxiety among job seeking customers. As was summed up by one Community Librarian, "the days of applying for jobs with printed resumes are gone, and this is frustrating to many unemployed individuals who don't have computer skills."

The Environment Scan noted that EPL customers rely heavily on staff to further their digital literacy skills through one-on-one interactions. EPL's *Impact Survey – Public Access Technology* (2014) states that 47% of technology users reported having received one-on-one technology assistance from library staff. EPL's *Next Generation* report identified technology help as the highest proportion of major interaction types at a majority of surveyed service points (EPL, 2011).

The challenges presented by the lack of digital literacy as a job seeker are multifaceted. Certainly, making sense of all of the technical pieces of creating a resume and handling its distribution, finding jobs to apply for, and successfully completing an application form is a substantial part of those challenges. Another considerable portion of the challenge is how the current job seeking process acts as what one Library Services Coordinator insightfully described as a "passive filtering technique." The job being applied for may not require computer skills, but the application process has been set up in such a way, or the application questions phrased in such a way, as to filter out people with low digital literacy and English language skills. Inherently, the process favours those who have a traditionally Western, middle-class Anglophone education by passively filtering out those who have not.

"The toughest websites I've seen are for WalMart and Value Village – they actually require a timed test. If you ask me, it cuts out people who aren't native English speakers. There was this one person, they had to have Library Assistants helping them to understand the test as they took it."

Library Assistant, MNA

EPL Website

All categories of EPL Staff identified EPL's website as a barrier for job seeking customers. To find the category titled "Jobs & Careers," customers need to navigate under Digital Content > Research, which is not an intuitive thread, especially for populations that already struggle with digital literacy and poor language skills. Further, that category only groups together the digital resources that job seekers may be interested in; it does not link to materials in the catalogue or community resources. Many library staff indicated that they had no idea there was a "Jobs & Careers" page on our website, and those that did stated they had difficulty finding it when they looked.

Most job seeking customers' entrance to EPL's resources is through the website, and with no top or second level subject categories listing resources for job seekers, they are left to discover EPL's job seeking resources by themselves, or from staff who may be equally unaware. For transient users of library services and technology, having a comprehensive grouping of all of the library's resources in an easy to find location is a crucial first step in building a relationship that inspires confidence in our ability and desire to help them.

"We used to have a section for employment resources. It would be great if, under the "Support for" area, we had all of our resources for job seekers findable in one spot. I would suggest having a page like that, it would help both staff and customers."

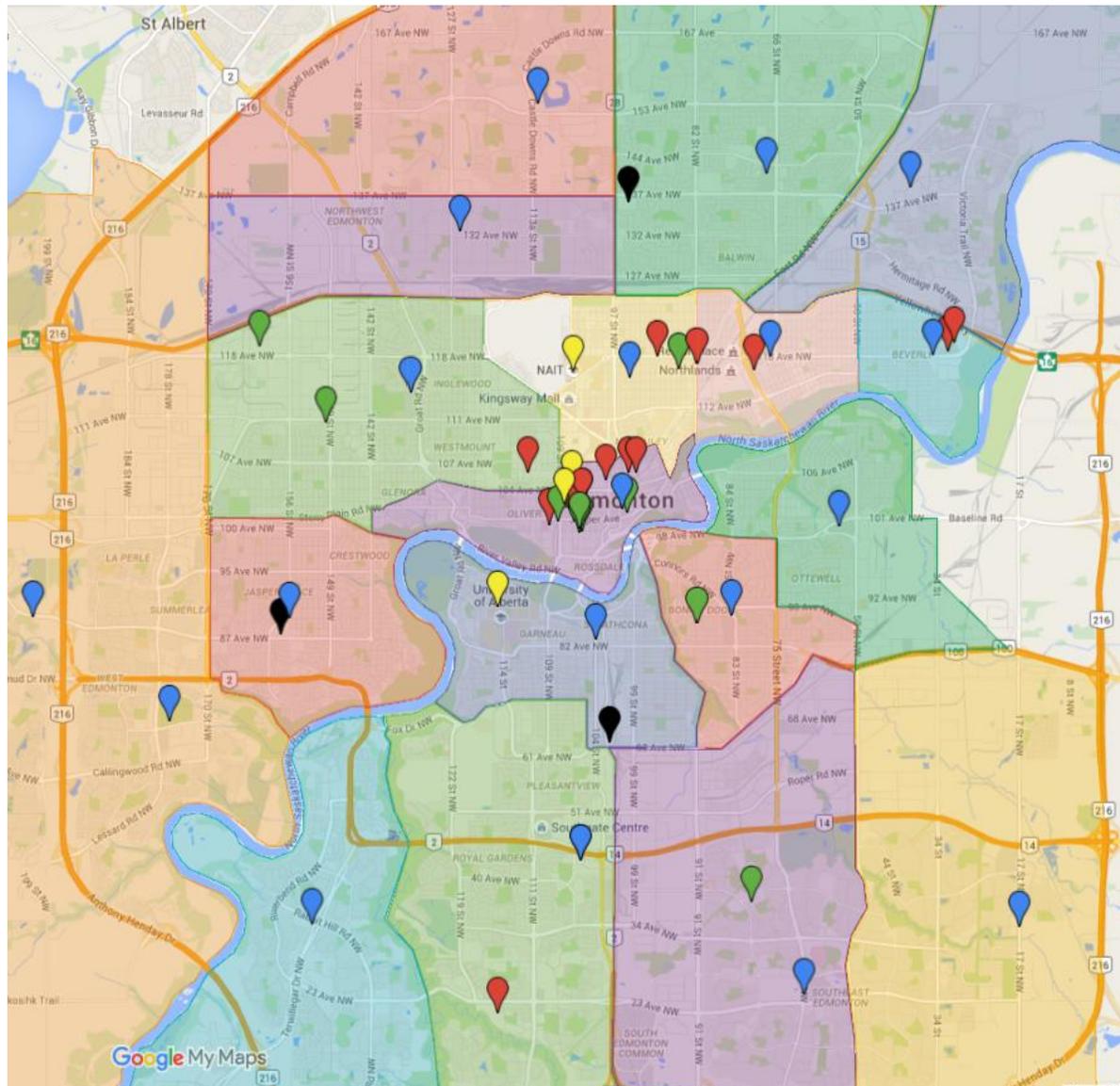
EPL Manager

Location, Hours and Accessibility

All WDOs interviewed were operational only during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, usually 8:30-4:30 with no evening or weekend hours. They are all closed on holidays and several close for an extended period over the Christmas holidays. There were some other variations on restrictions on hours of operation, such as WECAN which closes every day over the lunch hour, and Boyle Street whose funding only allows them to operate their popular Water Wings program 11 months out of the year. Most WDOs encourage their clients to attend EPL for continuing computer access when they close their doors at the end of the day, given EPL's extended hours of operation in the evenings and on weekends.

The following map shows locations of all participating WDOs and library branches in Edmonton:

Table 2: Map of Edmonton with EPL Branches and WDOs



Legend

- EPL Branches
- Alberta Works Offices
- Post-Secondary Institutions
- WDOs - No restrictions
- WDOs - Specific Populations

On the above map, there is an Alberta Works office in the downtown core which is hidden in the crowd of other markers. Green markers are WDOs that limit services to specific populations only (for example, aboriginals or newcomers), and the red markers are WDOs with no restrictions

Accessibility to WDOs is a problem for people who are unable to afford private or public transportation, as the vast majority of WDOs operate in or around the downtown core. For this reason, community based WDOs are extremely popular for local residents and tend to cater to local interests. While downtown is ideal for the inner city and marginalized populations, and those able to afford public transportation, the south side Alberta Works office is very difficult to get to without a vehicle. It is served by only one bus (Route #80) that operates on the half hour; any other route requires at least a 500m walk from the nearest bus stop. It is for this reason that Alberta Works South provides outreach services in the form of Resume Review programs twice a month at both WMC and MLW branches.

The literature regarding workforce development strategies in public libraries acknowledges that job information resources and programs in libraries have the potential to reach a much wider group of job seekers than WDOs for reasons which include their geographic distribution of facilities across the community (Urban Libraries Council, 2007) Through its many locations, commitment to accessibility and extended hours of operation, EPL has the ability to reach a much greater customer base, and to be an extension of many existing services. Because of this, the potential for WDOs to do outreach programming at EPL branches is tremendous.

Eligibility for Services

Not all WDO services are available to all Edmontonians. Navigating the waters of which services can be accessed by whom can be a barrier in itself.

Many of the WDOs included in this research project have eligibility requirements for their services. For example, Access Emploi only assists French speaking customers. Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Oteenow Employment & Training Society, Rupertsland Institute and TradeWinds to Success all provide services exclusively to First Nations, Metis and/or Inuit people. OnSite Placement and EmployAbilities provide services only to clients with disabilities; Elizabeth Fry Society only provides services to women. Grant McEwan and NorQuest College have services that are only offered to students and recent graduates. The John Howard Society only assists youth at risk, people impacted by family violence or involved/at risk of becoming involved in the justice system.

Some WDOs have partial services available to the general public. ASSIST Community Services gives immigrants and citizens with barriers priority access, but they will otherwise assist anyone. DECSA has three programs for people with specific needs (disabilities and former sex trade workers) but their self-serve centre is open to the public. The University of Alberta Career Centre generally only has programs for students and alumni (several for a fee), but does have some programs for members of the public, although they are geared towards those with post-secondary education. BGS Enterprise workshops require attendees to be able to speak, read and write English, and while McBride Career Group has some programs for those facing a semi-barrier, clients must generally be ready, willing and able to work. The Candora Society offers services to the whole community,

however their employment program is only for women who are ready to enter the workforce.

Alberta Works services are open to any Albertan of any age. Community-based organizations such as Dickensfield Amity House and WECAN Cooperative are open to all, as are organizations that traditionally work with vulnerable downtown populations, Boyle Street, Bissell Centre and the Mustard Seed.

WDOs that offer free services are able to do so because of funding from the Provincial and Federal Governments. Access to this funding requires the client to be over the age of 18 and have a valid SIN number. Usually, the only variance from this policy is if there are programs directed specifically at youth. In reality, most WDOs will assist anyone in need with basic services, including youth and people with no ID, despite the fact that the organizations are not paid for this work.

Wait List for Services

Two-thirds of the WDOs that responded to the survey indicated that they had wait lists for their programs, individual consultations or workshops. BGS Enterprises, which is contracted by Alberta Works to hold workshops and programs for job seekers such as Resume Writing, Interviews and Work Search, stated that their programs usually have a wait list of 2-3 weeks. More specialized programs that only do intake a few times per year have much longer wait times, such as the Women's Pre-Employment Program offered through the Bissell Centre, Growth 4 U or Rebrand through McBride Employment Group, or the popular Ventures program offered at DECSA. Most of the organizations that offered one on one assessments and counselling indicated that they were able to meet with clients within five days, sometimes less.

It should be noted that while none of the WDOs indicated that clients experienced any wait time for their self-serve drop-in resources, Alberta Works will impose time limits on their public computer stations when needed.

Stigma and WDOs

Many individuals who contributed to this project, regardless of whether they were a customer, EPL Staff or member of a WDO, spoke about the stigma that is associated with being unemployed.

Often, that stigma is associated with the Alberta Works offices. Alberta Works not only provides employment assistance, but also where Albertans must go in order to apply for Income Assistance. In the vernacular of the customers interviewed by the intern, it is known as "the Welfare Office" and holds the negative connotations associated with that term. Customers who stated that they had been to or used the services at Alberta Works gave mixed reactions about their experiences. Many spoke positively about using the resources (computers, phones and long-distance faxes, and free photocopying and printing), while others described the customer experience in lukewarm terms. Customer comments contrasted greatly, from "You

need to be patient at Alberta Works, but they've been good to me" to "the downtown office is like a zoo."

Staff shortages at Alberta Works have limited its usefulness for some people. One Outreach Worker stated, "Alberta Works is itself a barrier. They have zero time for one-on-one assistance. I heard somewhere that the downtown Alberta Works is the busiest in Canada, so obviously they are overloaded themselves. They say that they can give one-on-one help, but in reality, they can't." Multiple Library Assistants confided that customers tell them they come to the library because there are "live bodies who will actually help." One EPL Community Librarian attends the downtown Alberta Works on a monthly basis to provide drop-in tech help, and related that the security guards are often called upon by customers to assist with various technical issues while the Alberta Works staff assists customers at the counters.

Alberta Works is not the only organization offering employment services with a stigma issue. The employment services director of Boyle Street Community Services knows that his space carries a stigma, even though his popular and effective Water Wings program does not. "It takes guts to come to Boyle Street, this place itself prohibits people from coming here. It takes guts to walk in through the front door, some just have to close their eyes and walk in."

Alberta Works consultants freely admitted that job seekers are likely more comfortable accessing library services because there is no stigma attached with the library space as there is with their offices. A review of the literature supports the contention that one of the public library's strengths is its openness to all patrons without preconditions, its reputation as a

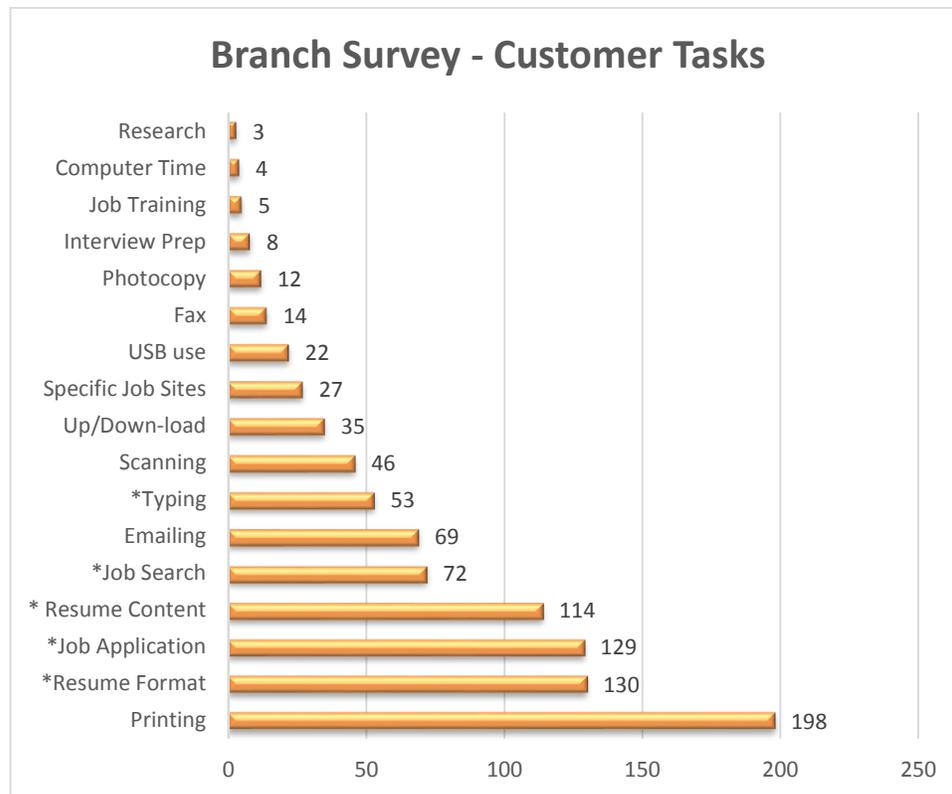
One manager indicated that EPLs lack of stigma is an advantage to hosting partner programs within our spaces. "You could be coming here for any reason and at any time, nobody would think any different about you for coming to the library. You can even bring your kids and they are welcome. We welcome everyone."

trusted, quality community information source and the lack of stigma that one might feel crossing the threshold of a government agency (ULC 2007; Romero, 2011; Gutsche, 2011). Similar statements were made by all levels of EPL Staff during interviews. Bringing in partners to offer services and programs at EPL is an effective way of allowing those services to be accessed by populations who might not otherwise access them for reasons such as stigma or intimidation.

WHAT ARE OUR CUSTOMERS DOING AT THE LIBRARY?

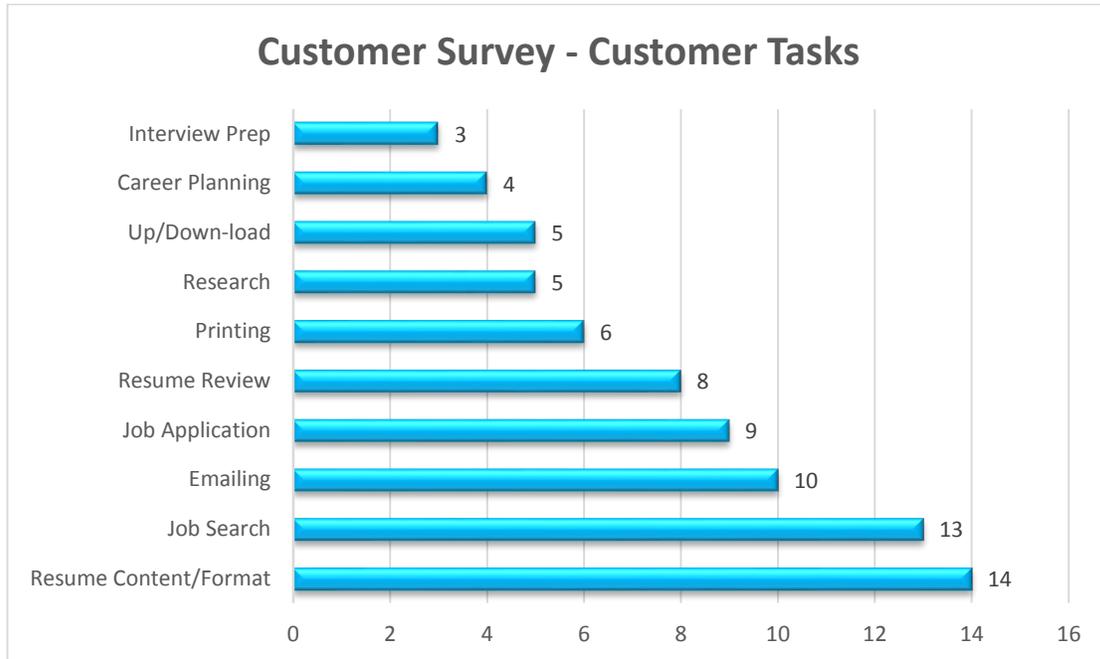
Branch Survey Results

The tasks that people most frequently asked staff to help them with are illustrated in the below chart. Data titles with an asterisk (*) were the preset categories supplied on the tick chart; the remaining data titles were coded from the “Other (Specify)” column found on the tick chart. Tasks with a count of one or zero were excluded.



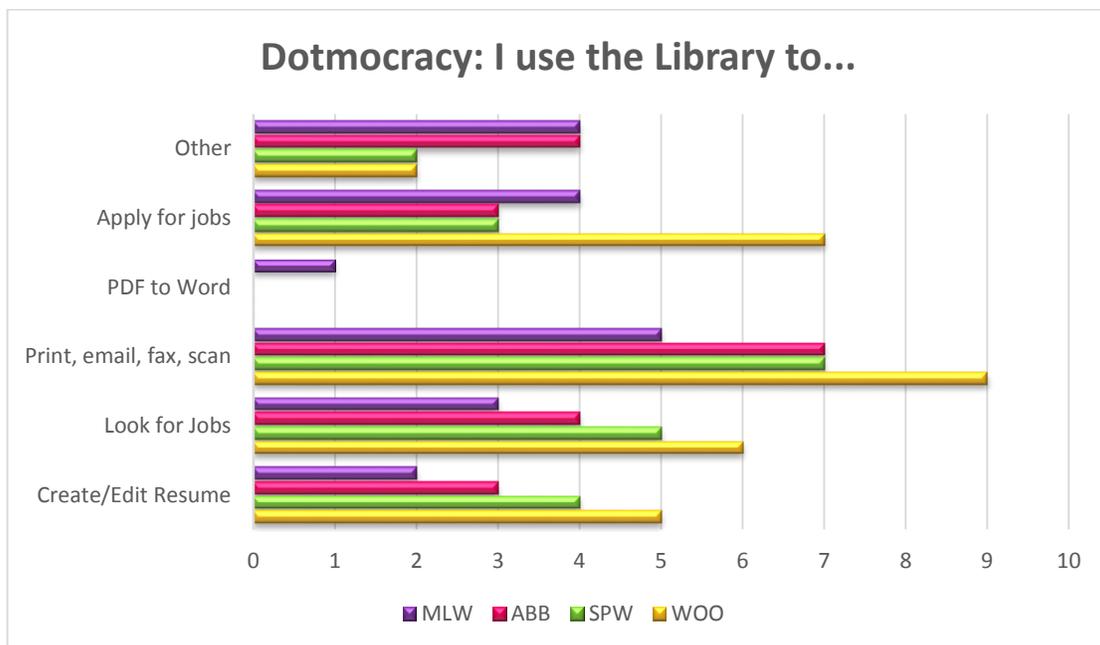
Customer Survey

The following responses reflect the information provided by customers during the face to face survey in response to the question “What kind of job seeking help do you need from the library?” Customers were not provided with a preset list of tasks; all responses were coded by the intern. Tasks with a count of one or zero were excluded.



Dotmocracy Exercise

The Dotmocracy exercise asked two specific questions, the first of which was “I use the library to” Responses are presented below. All categories were preset by the intern based on information gleaned from interviews with Library Assistants and the Branch and Customer survey results as noted above. Room for free responses was captured in the “Other” category.



Tasks in the “Other” category included (in order of popularity): bringing their children so they can play while the customer works on job seeking tasks, using office supplies (stapler, taking paper supplies from free material racks), learning to use computers, using computer and internet because they cannot do what they need to on their phone, and colour printing.

Discussion

The quantitative data indicates that the primary job seeking tasks performed by customers at the library are: printing, faxing, emailing and scanning. Often, these are tasks which do not demand high levels of EPL staff time to resolve, although the frequency in which they arise makes this category of customer service time consuming. The remainder of the top tasks for which job seeking customers come to EPL are usually very time consuming: resume creation and editing/formatting, job applications, and job searching.

The data correlates to the library demographic identified previously in this report, and the contention of WDOs that for the most part, their clientele are those who face barriers or semi-barriers to job seeking. Customers who have higher levels of education and digital literacy will frequently have their own computer and internet access, and are more confident doing job searching, online applications and preparing resumes on their own.

However, it is interesting that the customer-provided data (Customer Survey, Dotmocracy) does not fully support two themes which were prevalent during interviews with all levels of library staff: typing (which does appear on the Branch Survey), and converting documents from PDF/image file into an editable file.

To address the first theme: Library Assistants and Managers all stated that they regularly field requests to type up customers’ resumes or job applications. While the intern did not ask about the actual frequency of these requests, words such as “huge problem” and “all the time” were used, and during interviews, over 75% of library staff mentioned fielding typing requests from customers. Several Library Assistants stated that depending upon the circumstances, they may just type up the resume for the customer, despite the fact that they know it creates false expectations of EPL’s customer service philosophy.

Customers with low digital literacy skills generally are poor typists, and the prospect of typing out and formatting a resume and cover letter from scratch is a huge barrier. It is not known why customers did not request this as a library service during the Customer Survey and Dotmocracy, and yet it appeared on 53 occasions as a customer request during the Branch Survey. Evidently, it is a service need, yet not one which customers were either able or willing to relay to the intern during the research process.

The second theme concerns customers who either need to scan an old, paper resume into a PDF file, convert it to Word using online software, and then format

and edit it; or they have a PDF image of their resume that they want to convert into an editable document. These tasks require a high level of digital literacy that many customers simply do not have, and both carry with them high levels of frustration for the customers and staff members, who often struggle to find adequate solutions to overcome the conversion issue.

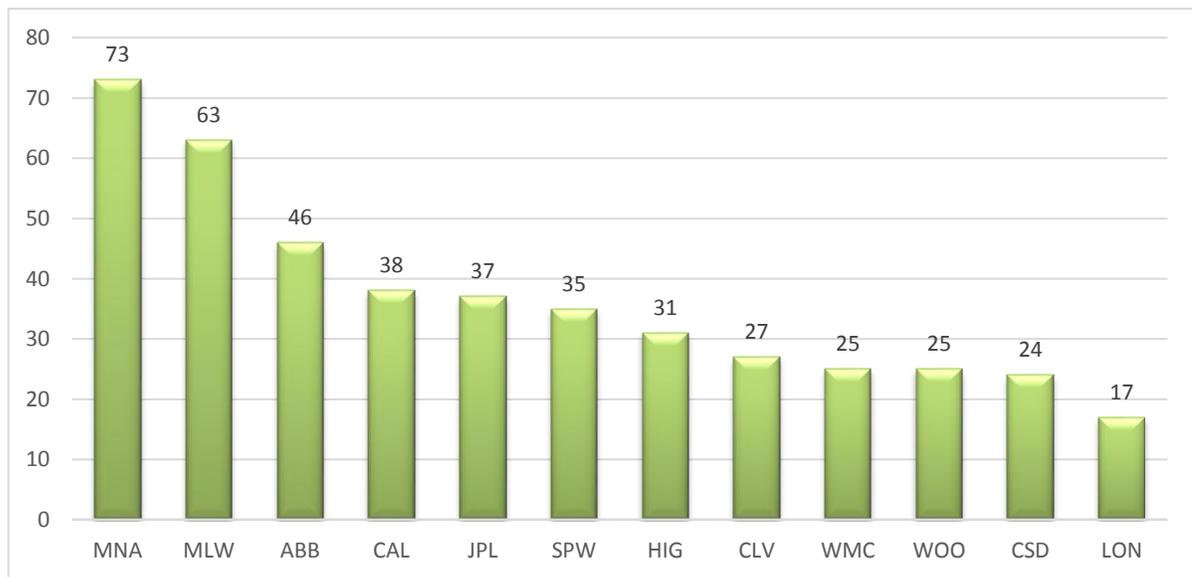
The Customer Survey garnered no references from customers about the need to convert their paper resumes or image files to editable documents. Only one customer identified this need during the Dotmocracy. Library Assistants and Managers stated that frequently, customers do not have sufficient digital literacy skills to understand the difference between document formats and image files; this lack of awareness may have served as a barrier to customers identifying it as a need during data collection.

WHEN/WHERE SHOULD WE OFFER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

Branch Survey Results

The Branch Survey revealed that the following branches recorded the highest number of transactions with job seekers (see Appendix 10 for raw data from all branches):

Table 3: Total number of transactions by branch



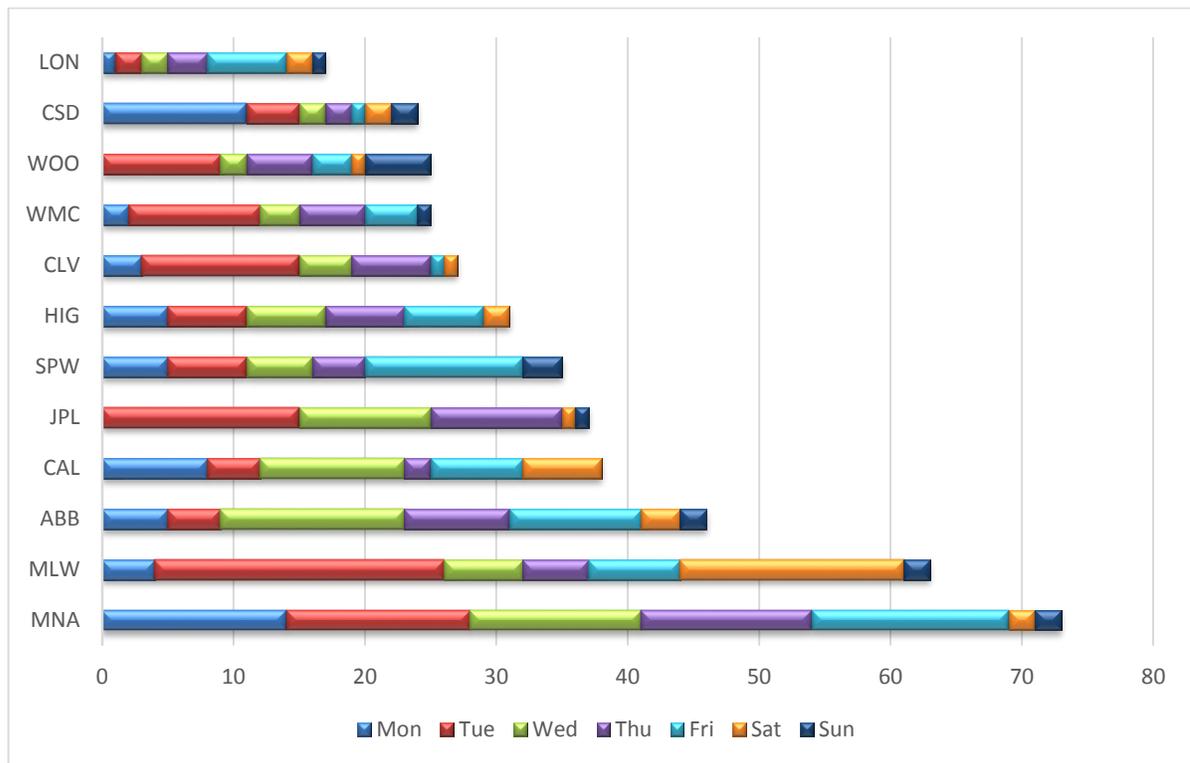
It is interesting to note the prevalence of north side branches, which does correlate to the north side having lower socio-economic levels than the south [pending additional info/reference from Soleil]. The number of job seeking transactions at smaller branches such as ABB and CAL is significant because of their overall lower populations; the percentage of transactions with job seekers is much higher than at

the larger branches. It is important to note that the MLW branch has a newcomer population hovering around 30%, and according to the Mill Woods Community Profile (2015), has “many people who are not currently working in their trained field because their foreign qualifications are not recognized in Canada” (EPL, 2015b).

Day of Week

The following chart shows the number of transactions per branch, divided by day of week:

Table 4: Number of transaction by branch and day of week



This chart illustrates well the variance between transactions and days of week, as well as the variance between branches. Weekends are the least busy days for job seekers at branches, although the consistency of transactions between weekdays and Saturdays at Calder is notable, as is the outlier Saturday at Mill Woods. The prevalence of job seekers at a branch on a Saturday may be due to the number of customers who are already employed during the week and are looking for other job opportunities on the weekends.

With respect to weekdays, Tuesdays saw the highest number of transactions in half of the branches. Abbottsfield had notably more transactions on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; Sprucewood saw disproportionately more transactions on Fridays, Castle Downs on Mondays. Highlands and Stanley A. Milner displayed the most consistency over weekdays as a whole.

Time of Day

Across all branches, staff recorded the most transactions with job seekers between the hours of 10am-2pm, with an average number of transactions per hour of 108.6.

Customers generally work on their resume and cover letters between 10am and 3pm, with questions dropping off dramatically after that time. Formatting questions continue throughout the day, dropping off only starting at 5pm. Questions about job applications are steady through the day, dropping off in the early evening, while questions about printing employment related material remains steady throughout the day and evening. By 7pm, questions about job seeking tasks are relatively few.

Table 5: Number of transactions per time of day

Time Block	Printing	Job App	Resume Format	Resume Content	Job Search	Email	Typing	Scan	USB	Total
9:00*	2	1	1	1						5
10:00	37	12	23	19	8	9	9	5	4	126
11:00	23	17	13	18	9	9	6	5		100
12:00	22	11	15	14	7	8	7	6	5	95
1:00	21	22	16	18	12	11	3	8	6	117
2:00	21	20	17	13	11	8	7	7	1	105
3:00	18	9	13	6	2	4	5	5	1	63
4:00	27	12	13	9	8	2	6	2	1	80
5:00	10	6	5	2	7	3	1	2	1	37
6:00	8	10	3	8	3	9	2	3	3	49
7:00	3	6	5	3	3	3	5	2		30
8:00	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	1		13
Total	196	127	126	113	71	67	52	46	22	

*MNA is the only branch open at 9 a.m.

The following tables show the number of transactions by branch for the daytime hours, 10am–5pm, which have been divided into two blocks of time, 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm. There is a noted consistency with job seeking transactions at LON, CSD, HIG, WMC and WOO between these time blocks. At other branches, afternoon transactions drop on average by 40%, except at CLV and CAL where transactions dropped substantially, 72% and 65% respectively. Interestingly, afternoon transaction numbers actually increased at ABB (22%) and SPW (44%).

Table 6: Number of transactions by branch for 10am - 1pm time block

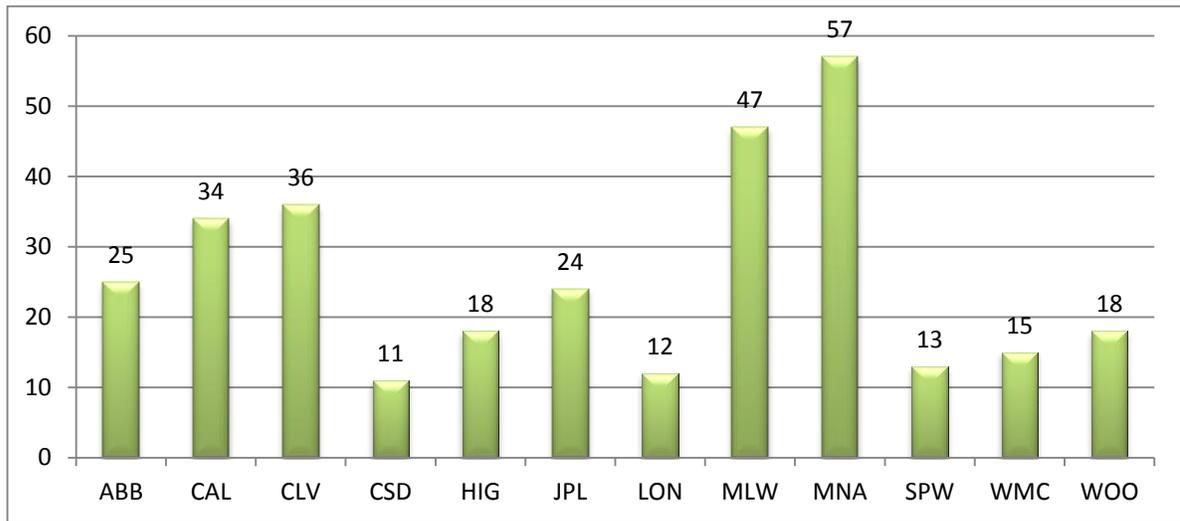
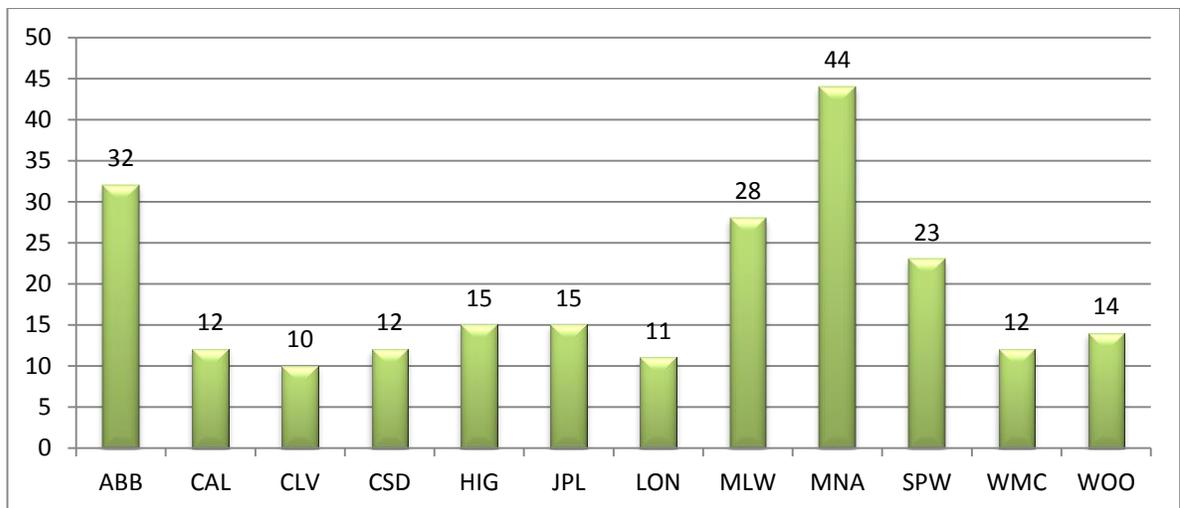


Table 7: Number of transactions by branch for 2pm-5pm time block



These statistics suggest that focusing EPL’s programming efforts during the daytime hours will be of most assistance to its job seeking customers. Determining which day of the week and time of day to focus programming to job seekers will depend upon the branch, although holding programs during the weekday will certainly benefit job seekers who are unemployed.

Program Statistics

Program Attendance by Year

There is a fair amount of flux in the number of job-seeking related programs run per year at EPL since 2009. 2010 had the greatest number of programs run, with multiple career and employment related series being offered by partners (WECAN

out of ABB, and the Welcome Centre for Immigrants and Mennonite Centre for Newcomers out of MLW and LHL), and saw the second highest attendance numbers. This trend did not extend into 2011, which saw similar, albeit fewer, programs being run by the same partners.

Table 8: Program attendance by year

Year	Number of Programs	Attendance	Average Attendance
2009	6	13	2.17
2010	42	218	5.19
2011	34	125	3.68
2012	25	177	7.08
2013	7	25	3.57
2014	33	154	4.67
2015	42	176	4.19

It should be noted that 2012 saw the highest average attendance at programs when BGS ran its “Careers” series in several branches (CAL, CPL, IDY, MNA, SPW, STR and WOO) for several consecutive and regular program times. This is despite having close to half the number of programs than in 2010.

Despite this, there is no question that the average attendance for job seeking programs in the past is low. The value of this data, though, is in the program model that was in place at the time of greatest attendance; consistent, regular program times. This may speak to the benefit of running programs regularly and consistently, which may affect program attendance numbers and help programs to reach more job seekers.

Interestingly, sessions held in the library by our program partners have historically had higher attendance numbers. For example, BGS Career Series was a series of resume, cover letter, job search and interview technique that was run one Saturday per month at the STR branch in the fall of 2012 and had numbers that overall were higher than the 2010-2011 programs. The 2010 *New to Canada? Pathways to Employment* session saw 90 attendees; an *EmployAbilities* program held at MNA in December 2013 had 40 attendees, and EISA’s *Employment Workshop* held at MLW in 2012 had 25 attendees.

Customer Survey

Customers were asked if there was a time during the day was best for them to access job seeking programs and services. 66% of job seekers indicated either “anytime” or “no preference.” This result is not surprising given that this figure roughly correlates to the number of respondents who were not currently employed (69%). 7% of respondents indicated a preference for morning or afternoon, with only 3.5% preferring evenings.

Customers were also asked whether they had a preference of which day of the week was best for them to access job seeking programs and services. Once again,

66% of respondents expressed no preference, with 17% specifically preferring weekdays and 10% preferring weekends.

Immediate Services

Respondents were asked about their preferred method of receiving assistance with their job seeking tasks, and were given five choices:

- Drop-in, on demand
- By appointment for one-on-one assistance
- Scheduled, in-person program
- Handout with instructions
- Online class/tutorial

82% of respondents to the Customer Survey stated that their preferred method of assistance for job seeking tasks was on a drop-in, on demand basis, or “immediate services.” 11% preferred one-on-one help by appointment, and 7% preferred a scheduled, in-person class.

Job seekers require first and foremost the provision of effective immediate services at the point of need: this includes frontline *service* by EPL staff and qualified volunteers, and effective and immediate *resources* to support the service delivery.

WHAT ARE OUR CUSTOMERS' SERVICE NEEDS?

The Branch Survey, Customer Survey and Staff Interviews were the methods whereby data was collected about tasks with which EPL staff were not able to help customers. This may mean any of the following:

- They were not able to find a solution for the customer;
- They did not feel that the request was appropriate given their role;
- They did not have the skills or equipment necessary to help;
- There was a third-party issue stopping them from finding a solution for the customers (ie equipment malfunction, external website down).

The tasks which EPL staff were not able to assist with were: Extensive editing or formatting of resumes (including proofreading), resume creation, filling in job applications, retrieving/resetting forgotten passwords (often requiring a cell phone in order to verify identity), typing, and document conversion. Other, less frequently cited gaps in service included lack of job placement, lack of child care, insufficient computer time, and very specific requests regarding jobs in particular fields.

The data collected from all categories of library staff, WDOs and customers indicates that the needs and skills required by job seekers generally fall into two basic categories:

Ancillary. Basic needs and skills need attending to either prior to or in conjunction with job seeking tasks and skills. The foremost ancillary need is computer help/digital literacy. Others include all forms of literacy (reading, writing, numeracy), social supports (housing, child care, income support) and typing.

Job Seeking. These include such skills as searching and applying for jobs, creating a resume and writing a cover letter, networking and interviewing skills. They also include such needs as job boards and job fairs, expert advice, and understanding how to relate transferrable skills in an application.

The following is a brief discussion of the needs and service gaps that have been identified during the course of this research project.

Ancillary Needs and Skills

Child care

Not having access to childcare was cited by many women as a barrier to job seeking and acquiring job seeking skills; no men who were interviewed expressed the same concern. Women bring their children to the library to keep them occupied while they work at the computers; with children spending time at the computers or looking at books. Among those who responded to the Customer Survey, only mothers of young children had time specifications during which they would be able to access programs or assistance at the library; three stated that one-on-one assistance by appointment would be their preferred service model so they could

arrange for child care, while others indicated that they could only attend programs while their kids were at school.

Complex Needs

Many job seekers who come to EPL are marginalized or from the socially vulnerable populations. They have many layers of need, such as a lack of housing and health concerns, and are often facing multiple barriers to finding work.

The Service Objectives of EPL Outreach Workers include “support[ing] staff understanding and capacity in working with socially vulnerable individuals and to collaborate with staff to engage them actively in building relationships and delivering library services to Outreach Service clients” (EPL, n.d.). However, during interviews, all Outreach Workers advised the intern that while they would like to “hand over” their customers to EPL staff for help with library-related services, their customers need to be able to trust the staff member they are to be working with. This trust is built over time, and involves consistent, familiar faces and an established relationship. “The assistance can’t be anonymous” said one Outreach Worker.

Zettervall’s article “Whole Person Librarianship” refers to two tenets of social work that, together, form the basis of serving the “whole person.” The first is that each person is an expert on his or her own life, and the second is that they should be “viewed in the context of his or her full existence because we are all inseparable from the systems in which we live” (Zetterwall, 2015, p. 13).

Librarianship informed by this principle becomes “whole person librarianship,” and includes taking the time to uncover the context of the customer’s environment, to build trust, and eventually build a relationship with that customer.

For Outreach Workers to have confidence in handing over their customers to EPL Staff, Staff will

require the opportunity to practice whole person librarianship, to take the time to build trust and a relationship with those customers. Without question, practicing whole person librarianship for all of EPL’s customers is the ultimate goal.

“These people need all around supports; there are multiple layers of need. It is complex. Anyone giving service to the vulnerable populations needs to have knowledge of other resources. They support not just by doing a resume and faxing it, they give support in that they give hope where there is only despondency. A job seeker is not a happy person. We need to touch their mind, body and soul and encourage, encourage, encourage.”

Director of Water Wings, Boyle Street
Community Services

Computer Issues

Public Computers

All frontline staff and managers raised concerns about LibOnline (the session and print management system used on the public computer stations), specifically with respect to the difficulties it presents for customers. LibOnline is a locked system,

and does not present the desktop in the way which the customer expects. Concerns included customer difficulties with navigating to programs, the odd work around in place for USBs, and difficulties with printing. During Customer Surveys and the Dotmocracy exercise, customers also expressed concerns about the time limits on computers and told stories of having lost work because the library computer booted them out mid-task.

EPL's IT Manager, Vicky Varga, is well aware of the LibOnline issues and, at the time of writing this report, has issued an RFP for a new session and print management system. LibOnline is a "dead product," meaning it is no longer being supported or updated, and presents a risk to one of our major services.

Varga is concerned that the skills that the customer might gain using EPLs public computers are limited because of the "oddness" of LibOnline. The considerations being made for a new systems is for on that presents a "normal" desktop, features ease of use for the customer in all respects including printing, and can be used on Mac systems.

User time limits will still be on the new system for fair use of resources. Decisions about potential new systems will consider how self-extensions will be handled; specifically, the IT Department wants to ensure that self-extensions, once made, will be "hard time," meaning that the customer will be guaranteed that extra time and will not be booted off if the computer is requested by another customer during the self-extended time.

Ready access to computers

Customers expressed the desire for ready access to computers. Customer tolerance to wait for others to finish on public computers before they can edit and print their resume is very low, and likely directly correlated to their heightened anxiety and pressure as a job seeker. EPL recognizes this issue; at busier branches, there are "20 minute stations" which provide customers with enough time to call up a document and make small changes. The need for these stations is determined on a branch by branch basis and can be requested through IT.

Public memory space

Several EPL Staff members asked about the possibility of having a small amount of memory per customer, such as that which occurs in a school setting. One manager wondered if the amount of storage needed to offer this service could be mitigated by offering it as an option and having customers sign up for it, as opposed to simply offering it for every library card issued. This issue arises out of several concerns:

- If customers could save their work to the system from the start of their session, it would alleviate some of the frustration associated with the forced log out or the end of a public computer session.
- Front line staff and Managers indicated that a large number of customers come to the library with no storage device, and cited the \$8 charge for USBs as prohibitive to some customers; USBs are frequently lost or not functional.

- Many problems arise from customers not understanding the difference between PDFs and Word or text-based documents, and make choices regarding saving, emailing and printing those documents that later require difficult file format conversions. Encouraging customers to use of free Cloud storage may help alleviate this issue.

Varga stated that offering public storage to customers was discussed at the IT Department's most recent Business Plan brainstorming session. The IT Department has a good understanding of the need, and while it is not outside the realm of possibility, there are issues to consider, including retention periods, access, and the infrastructure cost of offering this service versus educating customers to use the Cloud storage that is currently freely available.

Free Cloud storage is offered by Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive and Dropbox, to name a few. The pros of these programs is that they are free and accessible from any computer with internet connection. The cons of Cloud storage include the need to sign up and the digital literacy needed to use it.

Digital Literacy

As previously stated in this report, the foremost ancillary need as identified by all interviewed parties is the need to raise the digital literacy skills of Edmonton's working population. EPL has positioned digital literacy as a core library service, and seeks to raise digital literacy skills through digital literacy services and programs, its discovery service and co-learning, and staff training initiatives.

It is important to note the demographics of the EPL's job seeking customers. For those on the middle to higher end of the education and socio economic scale, or even those with lower digital literacy who have the need and drive to learn, especially to improve their employment-related skills, EPL's digital literacy initiatives are a welcome tool and scaffold to their learning.

However, as has been previously discussed, a large number of job seeking customers are transient users of technology who need help putting together the essential digital files (resume, cover letter, online application form) that comprises their passport to employment. There is a tension in many customer interactions where the customer has insufficient computer skills to get done what they need, but an EPL Staff member may be unclear about the customer service and co-learning philosophies, and think it precludes them from simply giving the customer what they need. One manager summed up this tension well:

In my 30 minute interaction with this customer, she is not going to learn a new skill. Realistically, this will take repetition, and it just feels futile, because she's not going to remember it. It is silly of us to think in this short interaction that I will actually be able to teach her how to do this. It's not her need at this moment. Right now, she needs to get a job, not find digital literacy. In that moment, forget the instruction and co-learning, I'm just going to figure that out for her.

This manager is absolutely correct, as EPL's *Customer Service – Guiding Principles* 2d) allows staff to “provide the answer” for digital literacy and other needs based on their assessment of the individual transaction.

Layers of Issues

Unfortunately, the issue is rarely limited to matters involving digital literacy. For job seeking customers, it is not feasible to separate the digital literacy issue from job seeking tasks, as the two are inexorably intertwined. Every Library Assistant who was interviewed expressed the desire for clearer and more explicit guidelines regarding the extent of help they

may give to job seeking customers, because not only are there issues of digital literacy, but there are also language, “expert advice” and timeframe factors to consider. Accordingly, any recommendation regarding a service model for job seekers must address multiple issues.

“Sometimes it’s formatting, spelling, sometimes it needs a complete overhaul. There is the automatic “We can’t help you” because it’s terribly time consuming work for the Library Assistant.”

Community Librarian

Literacy and the mechanics of language

All library staff identified poor English literacy as a barrier among job seeking customers. To clarify, this includes both English language learners as well as native English speakers with poor literacy skills. All levels of EPL Staff reported being asked to do proofreading, checking grammar and punctuation, checking for “Canadian-ness” of language in resumes, cover letters and online applications. New Canadians ask staff to sit with them when filling out job applications in order to explain the meaning of questions, understand the technical instructions, and help them fill in appropriate answers.

The Discovery Team's *Multiple Literacies Primer for Staff* states that EPL supports growth of traditional literacy in such ways as “taking the time to assist a customer to read, understand and complete a form” and provides other resources for long term growth (EPL, n.d.). While there will always be a continued need to help customers learn and improve their language and literacy skills, in the context of job seeking, this is one area where “immediate services” are required.

WDOs that work with new Canadians and other vulnerable populations identified the need for workplace-relevant literacy in all forms. The Director of Boyle Street's Water Wings program and the Mustard Seed's Support Services Manager both admitted that they have been considering the possibility of partnering with EPL, due to the two organizations' common clients and mandates. The Water Wings Director identified the need for focused conversation to build verbal etiquette and workplace

"I don't feel comfortable putting words into the resume – that's your resume, it sells you, the way you are. And I am not comfortable padding people's resumes. Or like, jeez, you need to put some capital letters in there, man!! Sometimes when we're not busy I'll give them more, but when we're busy it's minimum because I've got 35 other people looking for help."

Library Assistant, SPW

English skills, as well as reading comprehension and numeracy. "It needs to be a practical kind of training, focused on workplace English and math, more rigorous and focused than just a regular 'conversation circle.' These people don't have time for an informal kind of conversation circle; you can't do an ESL course for 18 months when your family is already hungry," he said, as he talked about what a possible library partnership might look like.

There are resources for customers who have time and resources for literacy growth, and the *Multiple Literacies Primer* provides several excellent examples. Other resources include NAIT, which has a comprehensive ESL program which has 3 intakes yearly, the University of Alberta, Faculty of Extension also has ESL courses. NorQuest College offers an 'English in the Workplace' program and other English language courses. The Learning Centre Literacy Association is highly recommended by WDOs for customers with literacy needs that are greater than that which they have capacity for. EPL has several online resources for adults to improve their language and writing skills, including Learning Express Library's "Writing Skills for the Workplace."

Printing

Managers and Library Assistants alike spoke about the amount of staff time they spend assisting customers with printing and loading money onto their library cards. While the printing issue will likely be fixed when the new print management system is in place, the issue of loading money for printing raises a related issue.

EPL, together with the Educational Institutes that participated in the WDO Survey, are the only organizations among those included in this report that charge customers for printing job seeking related documents, although WDOs often impose a limit upon the number of pages per day that a customer can print. The difficulty that presents for a public institution such as EPL is how to manage printing for job seekers versus printing for other customers.

The possibility of having a library card come preloaded with a small amount of credit which renews itself each month was suggested by a number of staff and Managers.

This suggestion is not without precedent, as it is a service offered by the Calgary Public Library:

All Calgary Public Library patrons have a print account with a monthly print credit of \$5.00. This credit allows you to print up to 50 black and white pages, or 25 colour pages free of charge each month.

The free \$5 credit renews at the start of each month, and your unspent credit will not accrue from month to month. You can add money to your print account for additional printing but the free \$5 credit is used up first before amounts are drawn from these additional funds.

Source: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/faq/using-the-library-faqs/>

Space

Requests for a space in the library for job seekers that would include dedicated computers, larger desk space and a separate “job seekers” portion of the library collection was raised by different categories of library staff and customers alike.

The issues at the core of this request include ready access to computers, easier discoverability of the library’s job seeking resources, and a space for job seekers to focus on their tasks. These issues can be addressed by implementing the intern’s recommendations regarding collections and workshop/computer learning labs.

Typing

As previously mentioned, EPL Staff reported that typing remains a task that customers ask for frequently. Not only are they being asked to type resumes from scratch, but customers are asking staff to type in responses on job applications and profile building.

BGS Enterprises is contracted through Alberta Works to provide a 48 Hour Resume Typing Service. The process requires the customer to fill in a specific template available through BGS Enterprises or Alberta Works; templates come in Chronological and Functional formats. As BGS Enterprises types the resumes “as is,” the handwritten template must be proofread and approved by an Alberta Works staff member before being faxed to BGS Enterprises for typing.

Job Seeking Needs and Skills

Job Applications

With the majority of job applications needing to be filled in online comes the need to have job application skills: a combination of digital literacy and language skills, online etiquette and cultural acclimation. At a minimum, customers need to know how to:

- Create a profile/account on a job search site such as Indeed.ca
- Parse information from their resume to populate online forms
- Upload a resume and cover letter

- Fill out an online application form
- Attach documents to an email and properly compose the email subject line and message
- Manage passwords
- Understand how to use a portable storage device (USB drive)
- Use webmail as a way to save documents

“We spend a lot of time helping people upload resumes to job sites, navigating job sites, figuring out what they’re doing wrong. When they fill out an online form and that red asterisk comes up for required information ... many people don’t understand that and it creates a lot of frustration.”

Library Assistant, MNA

Identifying online job applications as one of her customers' greatest needs, one Library Assistant said, “a lot of people use that ‘Indeed’ website, but it’s horrible. It’s like a job board, but some employers want you to email your resume directly, some want you to create an account on their website, some want you to create an account on the Indeed website ... there are so many different variables.” EPL Staff spoke about the level of frustration experienced by customers and the significant amount of time required to assist them; one Manager stated, “If you leave a customer temporarily to help another customer, when you return to them, they are likely to be in exactly the same place as you left them, like they are just frozen, waiting for you to come back.”

Changing Workforce/Workplace

The changes to how people look for and apply for jobs and the skills needed to accomplish these tasks is confounding to workers who suddenly find themselves laid off after having been employed for a long period of time, or people returning to the workforce after a long absence. This is especially true if the worker has been employed in a field which required little or no digital literacy skills. During the Customer Survey and Dotmocracy exercise, customers in these circumstances expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, of feeling left behind while the world passed them by, of not knowing where to start.

“I know of several older men who got sick or injured working in the oil fields. I honestly believe that employers feel that workers in Alberta are expendable – one gets injured there are three more behind him waiting to be employed, so who cares?”

Director, Dickensfield Amity House

WDOs spoke about the large segment of workers who have spent years in jobs related to the oil and gas industry and for reasons of injury or age are no longer physically capable of continuing in their current employment, but are not yet able to retire. According to Alberta Works consultants, these workers require specialized

advice about career planning and retraining options; many would benefit from advice regarding financial literacy.

Coping with these feelings is not limited to the older workforce, however.

“I haven’t had to look for a job in 20 years. I thought I’d need a paper resume. Was I ever wrong.”

Customer, WOO

Throughout this project, the intern spoke with customers of all ages who struggle with technology skills, self-esteem issues, face barriers such as poor education and lack of work experience, or juggle temporary jobs and part-time work, and feel intense bewilderment and stress associated with unemployment.

To assist customers in coping with the job seeking process, several libraries host “Job Seekers Clubs” based on the premise that finding a job is a stressful, emotional process, and that job seekers can be the best resources for other job seekers (Wishart, n.d.). Job Clubs allow attendees to provide each other with emotional support, share search experiences (i.e. interview questions and trends), job leads and employer information.

Job Clubs are usually facilitated by a library staff member who provides structure to the meeting, but minimal involvement. While it is an opportunity for the library to disseminate information about programs being offered at the library, it is primarily for participants to share experiences or to host guest speakers such as employers or employment specialists.

WorkSC.org has tips on starting a job club; Ottawa Public Library has an established Job Club for adults as well as youth. Calgary Public Library holds a Career Café which is a noon-hour talk on career and labour market information; Toronto Public Library has an Employment Café which runs for two hours on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month and features community agencies that provide information on job search support, job postings and community information.

“I know homeless people with trade qualifications trying to get back into it, but they’re out of touch with how to apply. It’s hard to get through to them that they can’t just fax a handwritten note to “Bob” asking for a job because “I’m great at it” and expect to be hired.”

Outreach Worker

Collections

A number of issues regarding EPL’s collection were raised by both Library Assistants and customers.

Library Assistants at branches where job seekers are prevalent advocated for grouping job seeking materials together in one area to make it easier to find. As many of these branches have high numbers of new Canadians who are looking to pass their language tests in order to find jobs, they thought that grouping the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), ELL (English Language Learners)

and other material specifically geared towards newcomers together in this same area would make sense. Library Assistants relayed that customers, especially those with poor English literacy, find these resources difficult to locate and may be wary of asking staff for help.

Collection Management and Access Manager Sharon Karr advised that EPL's shelved materials are organized pursuant to the signage and wayfinding guidelines and are consistent across all branches. To create a dedicated area within branches for employment and/or language learning materials would involve different signage as well as changes to cataloguing; it is not a simple procedure. A simpler and quicker solution for branches with high volumes of job seekers is to have ongoing displays of materials relevant to employment tasks, one that is constantly restocked and which includes promotion of the library's relevant online resources (Cypress Resume Builder, Brainfuse, Learning Express Library, Career Cruising, and Lynda.com). Karr also encouraged branch staff to actively use in-shelf displays to promote EPL's extensive online resources.

During interviews and Dotmocracy, multiple customers requested a greater selection and more up to date job seeking resources, both print and eBooks, on topics such as resume preparation and interview skills. Two Library Assistants voiced specific requests for materials that would help to explain cultural differences to newcomers, as this would also be helpful and would reinforce much of the advice staff provides to new Canadians. This report is not intended as a vehicle for pointing out gaps in EPL's collection and these comments are not included for that purpose. Instead, these comments illustrate that there is disconnect between gaps reporting and the collection management process at the branch level.

Recommendations for collection development are generally made through the Gaps Board on StaffWeb, and through email communication with the Collections Librarians (CollectionsLibrarians@epl.ca). Karr advised that the Gaps Board is best used for recommending the purchase of specific titles and reporting subject gaps; it is an online form and not intended to have a conversation about a subject. Emailing the Collections Librarians is the best way to have a conversation with CMA about collection development in areas that may be more nebulous to define.

Karr indicated that, while the Gaps Board is very heavily used, this is the first she has heard about gaps in the collection for job seeking materials. She encourages Library Assistants who are either being advised by customers, or finding for themselves a lack of subject material at their service point for job seekers and/or helping customers with cultural connections, to report these gaps to their branch librarians (Community Librarians, Associate Managers and Managers). As branch librarians are aware of the broader communication surrounding collections and may have a different perspective on collection issues, they are well poised to bring collection gaps and concerns forward to CMA. Karr would like branch librarians to play a larger role in forwarding collections related feedback to CMA.

Employer Connections

Customers are not only frustrated with the technical change in the job seeking landscape, but also with the loss of a human face that accompanies the process. “I don’t like applying on a computer, I prefer face to face so I can explain things. I can do that at a job fair and would like to see that here,” said one customer at the MLW branch. A Sprucewood customer agreed: “If you guys could help me connect with employers, I mean, I don’t know how to reach them except by email and I don’t like that I can’t talk to them.” The former self-identified as a new Canadian, and the other did not, however both expressed their frustration with their inability to properly present themselves and their qualifications through an online application.

Providing customers with an opportunity to meet with employers face to face was also identified by Community Librarians, who suggested holding community-based job fairs in the library. Settlement Workers expressed their eagerness to promote job fairs to their clients, as making connections with employers and industries is a very difficult first step for many new Canadians.

Job fairs and opportunities to connect with employers already exists in Edmonton. Alberta Works job fairs are advertised on their website, and they also invite employers to their offices for on-the-spot interview and hiring blitzes. McBride Career Group has a weekly “Employee Connection” session where employers explain who they are, information about the company, criteria for job opportunities, qualification and what they look for in potential employees. Exploring options with WDOs such as McBride Career Group and Alberta Works to host similar programs in branches would help customers with the need to speak directly to employers about their issues and concerns.

Having a library-organized job fair is not necessarily the best use of library resources. Allowing organizations who already hold job fairs such as Alberta Works, Postmedia or CAREERS: The Next Generation, to hold them within larger library spaces would be a beneficial partnership that allows EPL to provide service philosophy-appropriate support to the job seeking community. EPL can offer to hold job fair preparation sessions or “boot camps” based on tip sheets that are available through Alberta Works. As an example, in 2016, Alberta Works held “Alberta Works Week” with events taking place around the City, including a “Resume, Set, Go” event at Jasper Place Library.

“I would like to hear employers speak about how they choose candidates and what they look for in resumes. I am getting negative responses back way too quickly; I know how long it takes to fill a spot and this is too quick. I have the qualifications and experience so I don’t know why they’re not considering me properly. I don’t know if they already have an internal candidate in mind, or if I’m just not saying what they want to hear in my resume.”

Customer, MLW

“In this economy, we need help branching out. I’ve been in oil and gas for over a decade, but I’m not optimistic, not for the next two years at least. We need to branch out into the public sector or somewhere else. About 80-90% of our skills are the same, it’s just the 10-15% that is not transferrable. I need to know how to revise my resume for an engineering job outside of the oil and gas industry, branch out to other industries.”

Customer, MLW

Together with job fairs, customers previously involved in the oil and gas industry are looking for ways to adapt their application documents to be attractive to related industries. The intern received customer requests for EPL to host sessions with employers and recruiters who can give advice about recommendations for restructuring resumes, advice about how they choose candidates, and what they are looking for.

This kind of assistance falls squarely within the realm of specialized knowledge; inviting such industry or human resources experts into the library would occur through partnered programs or guest speakers.

Interview assistance

Assistance with interview preparation was a need most often identified by EPL Staff who work with vulnerable populations: Outreach and Settlement Workers. During the Customer Survey, the need for interview preparation help was expressed only by women. This was discussed during an interview with a Settlement Worker, who identified the common factor between the particular needs of these two groups as confidence. She stated:

Look at where they come from: they are not used to interviews, or facing an employer in an interview, Canadian interviews are scary, especially for women. Many immigrants are very shy. In the past at home, culturally, their role is very traditional. But here, they need two incomes to survive. They just don’t have the experience or confidence to succeed in interviews or to express themselves. They especially don’t know how to articulate their transferrable skills.

These needs are not the exclusive territory of immigrant women, however, as noted by a young Edmonton-born woman attending a job seeking library program:

I need help with interview skills, writing resumes and cover letters, how to come across as confident, job market research, how to translate transferable skills.

Clearly, interviewing includes a diverse range of skills that work together, such as proper preparation and self-evaluation, research, language, and the very important emotional component of confidence building.

Customers who wanted assistance with interview preparation made comments about not being able to find what they wanted at the library, but they were not able

to clearly articulate what it was they thought they needed. Some customers talked about finding conflicting information on the internet but they were not sure what sources gave credible information. None of them thought to access the databases for assistance, and were surprised to learn that EPL databases Lynda.com and Career Cruising offered advice on interviewing skills.

Certainly, directing customers to library and reliable, credible online sources of information and advice about interview skills is within the realm of expertise of EPL's frontline staff, as is the need to provide encouragement and support to customers who self-identify as potential interviewees. However, counseling customers about interview questions and responses and advising on interview preparation falls within the realm of specialized knowledge, where partnering with or referring to an outside WDO in order to offer formal workshops would be the best course of action for many customers.

Information Resources

"We need help to help our customers" was a common sentiment expressed by Library Assistants.

EPL Website

The *Barriers* report recommended that EPL "categorize library services from a customer-centered perspective (in terms of how customers use the service) and list them on the website" (EPL, 2014b, p. 28). This report has shown that EPL's job seekers often have low levels of digital literacy, are transient users of technology, and may be new library users, therefore they require complete, reliable information that is easy to find and quick to access at their time of need.

Virtually every Library Assistant, Manager and Community Librarian interviewed stated that resources for job seekers on EPL's current website are difficult to find.

"My staff are knowledgeable but they don't know everything about finding jobs in Edmonton, and it takes them a lot of time to Google stuff and try to decide which the reliable resources are. We used to have a section for employment resources on the website, it had really useful links ... it would be great to have resources findable in one spot, something that has templates, career planning tools, tips on career and cover letter building, interviewing tips, links to collection, that sort of thing. It would really help my staff point customers in the right direction."

EPL Manager

"We have tons of resources for staff and customers, but no one home for all the resources" said one Library Assistant. Locating the Job and Career Search page under Digital Resources> Research is simply not intuitive, plus the only content on that page are databases. EPL Staff want a Job Seekers page on the website where they can direct customers and introduce them to the content. Ideally this page would be linked to the EPL Home page under Library Resources> Support For>, similar to the page for Newcomers to Edmonton. This page will not only help

customers to self-discover resources available at EPL, but will also help staff direct customers to appropriate content.

Having such a web page is not without precedent. The following Canadian libraries have webpages that compile their resources for Job Seekers:

- Toronto Public Library links to their Job & Career Help page directly from their main page. Their Job & Career Help page lists all of the services and resources, links to “Career & Job Search Help” tagged entries from the library blog, has links to their online tools, programs and catalogue materials, and also have recommended websites.
- Ottawa Public Library has a “Jobs and Careers” page under their top level “Services” tab which links to their online resources, blog posts, Programs and Events, and links to online job boards.
- Halifax Public Library has a “Business & Careers” under their top level “Research” tab that links to their databases, reading lists curated by librarians, and job search links.
- Vancouver Public Library has a “Career and Job Search” page under “Subject Guides” that has 11 subpages covering different topics; the main page features suggested catalogue searches, useful websites and suggested electronic resources. VPL’s Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre (<http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/>) is an online and in-person resource centre that helps newcomers to Canada find the information they need to get a job or explore careers. All content is created in-house, it is an invaluable resource for customers and librarians alike and is highly recommended by the Settlement Workers.

Throughout this project, the intern has kept track of suggestions by library staff and customers for what they would like to see on this webpage. These include:

- Have the Great Stuff Crew create “Staff Picks” lists for resources for specific needs, for example, resume writing, interviewing, IELTS, which includes both print materials and database resources.
- Links to program searches or lists of suggested search terms to use on Evanced. Less digitally savvy customers told the intern that they thought there were no programs for them, because when they searched for “jobs” in Evanced they were advised that no events matched their search. The term “Event Type” did not mean anything to them.
- Online job seeking and skill development training resources found at the library (Lynda.com, Gale, Brainfuse)
- List of top 10 job search websites (Indeed.ca, Kijiji, Job Bank, Monster etc.)
- Sample resumes with a brief explanation as to their purpose
- Resume templates that are sanctioned by a Career specialist and are downloadable. They should include brief formatting instructions, for example, how to insert bullets and indent paragraphs.

- Lists and brief descriptions of city-wide and community WDOs for job seekers, with links, maps and bus routes. This list would include which population they serve, and supports offered (safety tickets etc.).
- List of city-wide and community supports, such as how to access income support, clothing for interviews, drop-in day care, health related programming.
- Contact and schedule information for Settlement Workers, contact information for Outreach workers
- Digitized copies of Alberta Works tip sheets
- Links to:
 - The ALIS website
 - In-house developed resources (ie Tech Time Toolkit)
 - Alberta Works' Job Fair website
 - The calendar of free workshops offered by Alberta Works partners (such as BGS Enterprises)
 - Free, online typing programs
 - Vancouver Public Library's Skilled Immigrant Info Centre

Evanced

Job seeking customers are not aware of the programs offered by the library. During the intern's time spent in branches, several customers expressed that they wished they had known about the Alberta Works resume review program at Whitemud Crossing or Mill Woods branches, or stated that they had attended the program serendipitously and wished they had been more prepared. It is inferred by these statements that customers are not using Evanced, either because they do not know about it or do not understand how it works. Customers who were more digitally savvy requested the ability to subscribe to our programs so that they would be notified when relevant programs are scheduled.

StaffWeb

EPL Staff are extremely resourceful and innovative and come across new resources (including print, online and community-based) every day. One Library Assistant that was interviewed talked about how she seeks out information about local agencies on her own accord which she keeps in a binder on behalf of the branch and passes out to customers; another Library Assistant took a resume workshop from BGS Enterprises and was able to disseminate information to customers based on this experience.

While many staff members post these discoveries on StaffWeb, they quickly disappear in the blogs, never to be seen again. Having a page on StaffWeb to collect and share useful tips that is easily found and searched would be helpful.

Handouts/Reference Sheets

EPL's front line staff's knowledge of resume and cover letter preparation is extremely varied, and there is little consistency in where they look to find answers to customers' job seeking questions. Most staff expressed an interest in having

resources on hand that would help them to help customers with various job seeking tasks, and several commented that new staff specifically need help finding employment resources in order to help customers. Resources that were frequently mentioned in conversation include resume and cover letter templates, sample resume and cover letters for different job seeking scenarios, job seeking strategies, and lists of work search websites.

Alberta Learning Information Service (“ALIS”) publishes over 50 booklets that cover a broad range of job seeking skills, career research, education and even money management. These resources are available to order for free through the provincial website for career, learning and employment information and services (www.alis.alberta.ca). The Intern first encountered these publications at Alberta Works, where consultants encouraged EPL to stock them at all branches. WDOs such as DECSA and Wecan also carry a wide variety of these publications for their clients.

They are written for different demographics (youth, adults, midlife career changers, older adults) and for different abilities (such as workers with disability barriers or low English language skills). Many of the publications have a workbook-style component to them; for example, the publication *Work Search Basics* has a “Worksheet: My resume master” which the customer can use to write down all of their education and work history, qualifications, and brainstorm skills and objectives in anticipation of creating their resume. It also provides templates for the various types of resumes and cover letters for different situations.

Alberta Works has over 35 tip sheets that cover topics such as work search sites, employment agencies, job seekers' workshop schedules, preparing for a job fair, and how to get a free email address. These resources are found at Alberta Works offices only; Alberta Works consultants have advised that they may be taken and displayed at other locations such as EPL branches.

A proposal for carrying ALIS Publications and Alberta Works tip sheets has been submitted to library leadership (see Appendix 11).

Customers would benefit from printed or online resources that will assist them with various simple technology tasks, such as basic document formatting, uploading, emailing documents, saving to a USB drive, saving using email, how to use free Cloud storage, creating a profile, and creating a free email account. Having a set of simple instructions detailing how these tasks could be done would be a useful tool for staff and customers alike.

Record keeping

All frontline staff indicated that their customers have difficulty keeping track of passwords and logins they have created on the multitude of websites where they have set up profiles, or for their email application, or for their EI files, and so on. Library Assistants who spend lengthy sessions with customers setting up new profiles and email accounts expressed a desire to have blank templates (regular or wallet sized) that they can give people that would help them to keep track of these passwords. As well, keeping track of the jobs applied for is a record keeping skill

that the library could assist with by providing instructions on how to organize email inboxes, or a template for a handwritten list, whichever the customer prefers.

Programs at the Library

Attendance Issues

From the beginning of this research project, the Intern has been told that job seeking programs at EPL are not well attended, and attendance figures support this. EPL piloted a Resume Creation and Job Search program between January and March 2015, but it was discontinued for reasons including poor attendance, customers requiring staff-intensive, one-on-one assistance that did not work in a group setting, and customers having little to no computer or internet experience.

Several WDOs identified with this experience. Agnes Kamela of Wecan said their workshops have poor attendance also, as people need more immediate services.

“People always tell me ‘you should hold so-and-so workshop’ but when we do, they never show up. Ask anyone, workshops don’t work.

This is why we have two support workers instead.” These workers assist customers in a similar way as EPL’s Library Assistants; they assist all customers who use their drop in services for up to 15 minutes. If a customer

needs more time, then they are asked to book

a one-on-one session which runs for one hour; if they require more expertise, they are either referred to one of their three employment specialists or referred out to a program (such as computer skills for absolute beginners).

“Job seekers need help when they need it, not for two hours, a week from next Thursday.”

Generalist Librarian

BGS Enterprises holds employment related workshops for Alberta Works, and states that while their workshops are often filled at registration and have wait lists, they only get about 50-60% attendance. For library programs, they usually struggle for the minimum numbers to run the class although they usually get 80% or higher of registrants showing up. She believes that the issue with library programs is promotion; the programs struggle with numbers in all branches except one, where she attributes consistent attendance numbers to the active promotion of that branch’s Community Librarian.

Program Models

In order to suit the broad demographic of EPL customers with their wide range of skill levels, program delivery should be available in diverse forms, which may entail a shift in thinking in the minds of both staff and customers. Throughout this project, frontline staff told the intern how customers would ask about programs and be disappointed to learn, for example, that the next resume building workshop was scheduled at a different branch in six weeks’ time. With the technologies and resources available to the library customer, the idea that program delivery can be done at the point of need needs to be implanted. Having a range of delivery modes, including self-directed (online) programs, drop-in lab-style programs, and

“traditional” programs, promoting them equally to customers and emphasizing that they can be completed anytime, anywhere, will help to ensure the broadest coverage and meet the diverse needs and skill levels of our customers more effectively.

Self-directed programs. EPL subscribes to a number of online resources that can assist job seekers including Gale, Lynda.com, Career Cruising, Cypress Resume, Learning Express Library and Brainfuse. There are free online programs such as <https://www.digitallearn.org/> offered by the Public Library Association and basic digital literacy offered by the Microsoft Corporation <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/digitalliteracy/overview.aspx>. For a self-directed program, customers can use EPL computers to do learning on the floor, on their own schedule, at their own speed, with EPL Staff available for guidance as required.

Lab-style programs. This program is workshop or computer lab-based rather than lecture-based, with one or more program leaders who are available to guide a group of attendees.

As the intern is writing this report, the Tech Time pilot program is running at MNA. The goal of this program is to introduce participants to a toolkit of already existing resources compiled on a wide variety of topics available online. Although each week the program features a topic or theme, in reality customers are free to work on whatever they wish in this guided learning environment. The program starts with an informal polling of attendees to find out what each customer wants to focus on that week, followed by a brief presentation by the Library Assistant on a topic that is common to the most attendees. The Library Assistants then help customers get started on their learning resources, and remain available to assist.

Customer feedback has praised the location (computer lab, classroom setting) for being a familiar and conducive learning environment, the comfort of being surrounded by people of similar abilities, and the professional level of one-on-one assistance (average about 20-30 minutes per person in a 1.5 hour session) provided by the Library Assistants who run the session. The program has developed a regular following and averages about 10 people per session.

The Librarian who created Tech Time reported that a portion of those attending the program are interested in learning to use technology for employment-related tasks. The Library Assistant leading the program states that they would likely get more job seekers if the program was

“My education. I’d like to get my GED, part time, you know? I wonder if I can come in and sit and have someone to ask questions when I need help. Sit down for a time and give me guidance. That’s what I want – guidance. There was a great program through the John Howard Society but it doesn’t run anymore. I’d like to upgrade my skills but I’m a bit lost, you know?”

Customer, MLW

promoted that way; at the moment, it is a “tech time” as opposed to “job help time” and the program attendees reflect this.

The Programming Director of BGS Enterprises spoke about a critical gap in services being a laboratory-style program with immediate services provided by an employment professional. Along a similar vein, Alberta Works consultants all agreed that the lack of personnel on the floor at their service points constitutes a gap in their customer service. The potential for success of lab-style programs led by an employment professional and supported by library staff is extremely high.

It is feasible, from a technology point of view, for branches without a computer lab set-up to create a pop-up computer lab in their program room. By the middle of May 2016, every branch will have 5 laptops, and will be paired with another branch for the purposes of sharing laptops. As well, DLI can lend branches 10 laptops, meaning that computer labs with a capacity of 20 laptops can be created at any branch.

One-on-one programs. In the context of this report, one-on-one programs involve booked time with a librarian, library assistant or volunteer. This type of program would assist job seekers with tasks that take up large chunks of time, including online application forms, resume creation, interview preparation to name a few. One-on-one sessions with librarians are available in other Canadian libraries:

- Toronto Public Library ([Book a Librarian](#)), offers booked time for job seekers and other information at one of their branches;
- Ottawa Public Library offers appointments with a librarian for help with job search or career goals by emailing CareerServices@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca

A relevant example of this service would be the WeCan support workers whose time can be booked by customers for one hour to help them with specific job seeking tasks.

Library Orientations. Orientations specifically geared towards familiarizing job seekers with the library's electronic and print career resources are offered at [Calgary Public Library](#) and through Vancouver Public Library's [Skilled Immigrant Information Centre](#). At VPL, these 90 minute programs are offered twice a week, and are meant to “introduce you to VPL's extensive job and career resources – learn how to access hundreds of job ads; locate resources to improve resumes, cover letters and interviews using the most current tools; and explore career options.” The SIIC Coordinator stated that these tours are heavily utilized, although was not able to provide numbers (Alexis Greenwood, personal communication, June 19, 2015).

Partnering for Programming

Traditionally, programs offered by WDOs in library spaces have not been well attended, although data from customers point to the lack of awareness of such programs. All North American libraries surveyed by the Intern during the Environmental Scan hold programs for job seekers to varying degrees. Practically speaking, unless a job centre is opened within the library space, libraries need to

rely on programs led by external agencies in order to fully benefit from the expertise of WDOs in the community.

Volunteers

Building an effective volunteer team has mutual benefits: EPL gains access to specialized knowledge, and Library Assistants are able to redirect tasks that are time consuming, allowing them to deploy their energies in directions better suited to their skills. In return, volunteers gain experience, references, and in some cases required volunteer commitment fulfillment. EPL's Volunteer Coordinator states that at least 60% of our volunteers are newcomers to the city who are pursuing volunteer positions to assist with their own job seeking efforts.

A review of the literature supports the use of volunteers to support public libraries' efforts on behalf of job seekers, especially in times of high unemployment such as occurred in the US during the last decade and is occurring at the time of writing this report in Alberta; Jerrard (2009) and Romero (2011) both advocate enlisting volunteers to supplement library staff in the areas of computer skills training, translation and job seeking skills coaching. Having a strong volunteer program has precedent locally; Calgary Public Library has over 2,500 volunteers in their volunteer program, which is supported by 5 full time staff members.

Referrals

Library to WDOs

Two facts became immediately apparent during the course of this research project. First, that Library staff will not refer customers to WDOs when they lack a thorough knowledge about what services are offered at that organization. Staff who are aware of a WDOs services

generally gained that knowledge when those organizations attended at staff meetings or other work-related events. Only two staff and one manager mentioned calling an organization to discover what services they could offer a customer, although this was not a specific question posed during

“I know about Alberta Works. But I’ve never referred anyone there because I don’t even know what they do myself – I don’t know about their services so I can’t very well refer someone there, can I?”

Library Assistant, CLV

the interview. This suggests that there is disconnect between staff knowledge and understanding of the *Customer Service – Guiding Principles 2c) Informed Referrals*.

Second, a lack of knowledge about outside WDOs, or about the services they offer, is very common. “For many EPL staff, it has been a long time since they themselves were job seekers, so they have little personal frame of reference with which to assist customers, and little opportunity or reason to seek this information out.

Resume and Cover Letters

The foremost job seeking need for customers as identified by all interviewed parties is resumes. It is the foundation upon which any job application is built, and the starting point for most job seeking customers. Resume needs of job seeking customers run the full gamut, from creation, editing and formatting, to content and proofreading.

According to Library Assistants and Managers alike, formatting and editing resumes are some of the most time consuming tasks that occupy frontline staff when they assist low digital literacy job seeking customers. Not only are many customers' word processing skills fairly low, but the increase in Cloud-based word processing and document creation programs can be difficult to keep up with. Managers praised their staff widely for their capabilities with these programs, despite the time commitment usually involved.

Another common occurrence is that a customer will come to EPL with a resume that was prepared by an agency/a friend/a relative and it is saved on their email/USB/Cloud based account and it now requires editing and sending. For the most part, issues arise when those resumes have been saved in an alternate format or have been saved as an image as opposed to an editable file.

With respect to creating resumes, managers and Library Assistants alike indicated that there is a need for templates that have been verified as being good templates and useful for specific circumstances (chronological vs functional). While some customers are comfortable with the Cypress Resume Builder database offered by EPL (see more on this below), much more popular are the templates offered through Word, or the resume builder program available at the Government of Canada's Job Bank. Alberta Works consultants who review resumes prefer resumes that are Word documents as it is much easier for them to edit when they meet with clients.

There are other resume building resources in EPL's databases. Lynda.com has several courses for resume and cover letter writing. Under its "Adult Learners" tab, the Brainfuse database provides the feature "Write a Winning Resume" that includes resume and cover letter templates in Word format as well as writing tips.

"Converting a text-based PDF to Word works well in Word 2013, but you can't do the same thing with a PDF image file. A text-based PDF is a document that started its life as a text document (using Word, Adobe Creator or another type of file) and then converted to PDF. An image file was a physical object that was scanned using a flatbed scanner or a photocopier's "Scan to PDF" function and is now an image. It is a subtlety that is hard to convey. For image based PDF, you need an optical character reader – try www.onlineocr.net. The result will need some cleaning up and formatting but it's pretty good otherwise."

Vicky Varga, IT Manager

Users also have the opportunity to upload their draft and receive live resume help from a Brainfuse career coach. Learning Express library offers Job Search and Workplace Skills including tutorials to create resumes and cover letters.

Regarding content, frontline staff vary in their confidence to assist customers with resume preparation, and are aware that there is a point where the customers' needs crosses over into territory best handled by someone with training and specialized knowledge. Most frequently, this occurs in the area of resume review. Customer comments are similar to each other: "I need someone to look over my resume and tell me why I'm not getting hired," or "I did the resume myself using the internet. I'd like someone to go over it for me." The Environmental Scan, looking at library services across North America, found no consistency to how much assistance is provided by library staff; some libraries stated they were comfortable helping a customer build and write a resume, some will only correct English and punctuation errors noticed when formatting, some direct customers to library and online resources but otherwise give referrals to outside agencies who they feel can give a better, more professional level of resume building service.

Cypress Resume Builder

Cypress Resume Builder was almost universally condemned by Library Assistants and Community Librarians for use with customers who have low digital literacy and/or language skills. Some admit that it can be useful as a starting point, as it inserts quite a bit of the descriptive language usually found in a resume, however most stated that the customer usually ends up with a resume that does not properly reflect them, or that does not "sound" like them and thus the resulting product seems to be a dishonest representation of them and their skills. "We have to look at the perspective of the customer," said one Library Assistant. "We have to make sure that what we are offering is customer friendly not staff friendly. We have to remember the literacy level – great for me, but not for the customer whose literacy level is poor." Even among users who praised Cypress Resume Builder for its usefulness and attractive formatting, it was noted that they would only refer the program to customers with higher levels of English language and education.

Among supporters and dissenters alike, however, were stories of difficulties with the assembling, downloading and saving of the resume. Not only does the program frequently freeze during the save process (which can only be done at the very end of the process) causing the customer to lose all of their work, but several Library personnel indicated that the end product is formatted into a table which is difficult to edit and does not always display properly once it has been emailed. As well, customers have to create a login, which is one more password for them to remember.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research presented in this report, the following recommendations support EPL as a destination for job seekers:

Recommendation #1: Services to job seekers are recognized as a core component of Discovery Services

1. Develop internal staff communication and supporting documentation that institutes service to job seekers as a core facet of Discovery Services.
2. Amend the *Customer Service – Guiding Principles 2a*) “Timeframe” to include guidelines for triaging service and managing the service needs of job seeking customers who require large segments of Library Assistant time.
3. Amend the *Customer Service – Guiding Principles 2d*) “Providing Instruction and Providing the Answer” to clarify that EPL Staff, who are well educated and skilled at language, are able to provide assistance in the area of spelling, grammar and punctuation at the time of need, when minor corrections are all that is needed to finalize a document. They are capable of evaluating the level of proofreading required in customer-authored documents and, depending upon factors such as the individual customer’s circumstances and the limitations of the service point (busyness and staffing complement), may refer the customer to other proofreading services.
4. Amend the *Customer Service – Guiding Principles 3b*) “Medical, Legal and Consumer Information” to allow EPL Staff to offer commonsense advice regarding resume and cover letter content, including when it is appropriate to recommend that a customer seek more specialized assistance through community WDOs or partnered library programs.
5. Include in Discovery Services training/orientation information about what Settlement and Outreach Workers do, working with and evaluating the needs of marginalized customers and newcomers, and how best to refer customers to those services.

Recommendation #2: Establish a sub-team of Discovery Services to provide leadership and coordination of workforce development services

1. Services and programs for job seekers will require coordination between several communities of practice. Unless otherwise designated, all recommendations made hereafter are to be overseen by this sub-team.
2. Ensure that a plan for regular follow up, evaluation and revisions of tools and initiatives is implemented.
3. Explore funding opportunities that may arise given the current (2016) economic climate and government initiatives and mandates to boost employment.

Recommendation #3: Build staff knowledge and skills for assisting job seekers

Internal Resources

1. Work with Web Services to create a webpage for job seekers on epl.ca that is found under Library Resources > Support For, and add content as appropriate (using list on pgs 60-61 of this report as a guide).
2. Work with Web Services to explore adding a Wiki similar to that under “Programming> All Programs Wiki” under the “Customers> Discovery Service” on StaffWeb for EPL Staff to easily share resources to help job seekers. Where appropriate, ensure that resources are added to the Job Seekers public web page.
3. Implement a mechanism where information about programs and events can be disseminated to Settlement and Outreach Workers so they can keep themselves, and by extension, their clients, informed about upcoming offerings.

External Resources

4. Explore opportunities for Community Librarians and Discovery subteam to engage with community resources/WDOs so that they develop relationships and familiarity with job seeking services available outside of the library. For WDOs that provide City-wide services, consider inviting a representative to speak at one branch with large capacity (WMC, MNA) and invite staff from each branch to attend with the intention that they will disseminate information within their branch; ensure the session has an opportunity for Q&A.

One Library

5. “Our Mission is simple: We share.” Encourage staff to share their knowledge and expertise. Initiatives that start with industrious staff members need to be shared with the whole organization and celebrated. Information gathered by one Library Assistant can be scanned and posted to the StaffWeb Wiki for the entire staff to access.
6. Encourage staff to do “Learn Grow Share” sessions on topics related to helping job seekers.

Staff Training

7. Develop a sustainable and effective training model for developing knowledge, skills and abilities for providing employment-related help to customers. This training can set the expectation for the extent of assistance to job seekers that can be offered as an on-the-spot service.
8. Provide training on the *Customer Service – Guiding Principles* once revised, in order to build awareness and understanding.

Recommendation #4: Address barriers and service needs of job seekers

Child Care

1. Together with ELF and SAS, explore resources that can be offered to parents/guardians to help them engage children (games, manipulatives) nearby while the parents/guardians are on the computers looking for work. This may require some rethinking of the computer space configurations in branches so that children can play and/or access children's computers while parents can work on adult computers in the same vicinity.

Complex needs

2. Recognizing the larger numbers of marginalized customers in Edmonton's core, MNA would benefit from having a smaller number of staff who work closely with Outreach Workers and their customers in order to build familiarity, trust and relationships with those customers. Established in consultation with MNA Managers, these staff will assist outreach customers with their information needs so that the Outreach Workers will have confidence handing over their customers when appropriate. Having one of these staff members on the floor during Outreach Worker hours is key to the success of this recommendation. This is an initial strategy, recognizing that this will become a standard part of customer service by staff.

Computer issues

3. Work with IT and DLI to develop tools to assist customers to understand and use free Cloud storage for their documents, which can be promoted to customers by front line staff.
4. Work with Finance to investigate the possibility of offering a limited, monthly print credit for cardholders.

Information Resources

5. Explore resume builder program options that would be more appropriate for customers who have low digital literacy skills, and ensure an assessment mechanism is in place after six months of public usage.
6. Explore the possibility of having a link that automatically searches Evanced for programs relevant to job seekers from the Job Seekers webpage.
7. Explore the feasibility and value of developing or using existing online resources for availability on the Job Seekers webpage, simple instructions for various technology and word processing related tasks (basic Word document formatting, how to create an email address, saving to Cloud storage) as well as templates for record keeping/password purposes.
8. Implement proposal for carrying ALIS publications and Alberta Works tip sheets for career and employment skills in branches (see Appendix 11) and, where appropriate, digitized on the Job Seekers webpage.

Changing Workforce/Workplace

9. Investigate starting Job Clubs at EPL branches that see significant numbers of job seekers.

Awareness of Resources

10. To assist those who are not skilled at searching the collection, work with the Great Stuff Crew to expand Staff Lists to include job seeking resources, and publish those Staff Picks lists on the Job Seekers webpage.
11. Consulting with CMA as required, branches with high volumes of job seekers are encouraged to create and maintain ongoing in-house displays of job seeking resources. Incorporate promotion of online resources into regular and in-shelf displays.
12. Consulting with CMA as required, ensure that branch librarians are forwarding collection gaps and feedback from staff and the community to CMA via the established mechanisms.
13. Explore with the Service Point Workflows Team whether Evanced will allow customers to subscribe so that they can receive notifications when relevant programs are added or upcoming.
14. With Marketing and Communications, explore and implement methods to promote awareness of specific library services and programs for job seekers in the community, including:
 - a. Methods for encouraging staff involvement with word of mouth promotion;
 - b. Promoting online resources for job seekers; and
 - c. Promoting EPL as a destination for job seekers.

Recommendation #5: EPL takes on a convening role for job seekers and employment services

1. Hold an Annual Job-Seeking/Employment Related Community Resource Fair.
2. With Marketing and Communications, explore methods to:
 - a. Improve communication with interested Edmonton WDOs
 - b. Establish protocols to cross-promote programs and services with WDOs.

Recommendation #6: Develop library programs to respond to the identified needs of job seekers Adult Services Team

1. Adult Services Team to explore options for employment consultants to hold regularly scheduled hours at branches with high numbers of job seekers for career counseling and resume review sessions.

2. For customers that require extensive assistance with their job seeking, explore the feasibility of offering “Job Help One-on-One” skilled volunteer as a booked, one hour time slot.³
3. Consider developing a standard tour package and offering Job Seekers Orientation Tours at branches with high numbers of job seekers.
4. Partner with WDOs to offer a workshop/computer learning lab in library branches. The model would involve a career specialist from a partner organization who comes to the library and provides specialized assistance to multiple customers while other customer needs are supported by Library Assistants.

Recommendation #7: Establish partnerships and shared program agreements to support job seekers

1. Investigate the viability of a formal partnership agreement with Alberta Works.
2. With the Adult Services Team, cultivate relationships with WDOs and investigate the possibility of shared program agreements to provide programming in the areas which they have identified as the greatest needs, including:
 - a. Drop-in resume critiquing and career advice;
 - b. Open workshops with an employment specialist (see Recommendation #6, sub-recommendation #4);
 - c. Resume creation (i.e. one-on-one session where an experienced professional creates a customers’ resume on the spot); and
 - d. Interviewing skills.
3. Explore hosting employer connection events in the library with relevant WDOs.
4. Approach organizations who already hold job fairs and explore the possibilities and benefits of holding them within larger library spaces. EPL can offer to hold job fair preparation sessions or “boot camps” in conjunction with job fairs.
5. Liaise with Alberta Works in order to become a link in the chain that is the Typing Service offered by BGS Enterprises. Specific branches could be a location for pick up and filling out of templates. Branches would host Alberta Works counsellors for Resume Review programs which could be an opportunity to review and approve templates; customers could fax to BGS from library branches. This would be ideal for customers with extensive work experience or more complex resumes, or who may require expert advice.
6. Explore the development of workforce English, reading comprehension and numeracy skills training in partnership with organizations such as Boyle Street, Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Bissell Centre and Mustard Seed.

³ This sub-recommendation needs to be considered in terms of setting a precedent as a service model, and balancing work that volunteers do versus the work legitimately done by EPL Staff.

Recommendation #8: Build EPL's volunteer program to include support for job seekers

1. With the Volunteer Program Coordinator, explore establishing volunteer-run programs for job seekers, including:
 - a. Proofreading and typewriting services;
 - b. Other language, interpretive or translations services (to complement library tours, or for one-on-one or job application help); and
 - c. Resume preparation.
2. Explore options with the Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA) or other Human Resources associations for volunteer run programs that require HR expertise, such as one-on-one or small group interviewing skill development, resume creation and review.

Appendix 2: Customer Survey

Branch: _____ **CUSTOMER SURVEY** Time: _____

Referred from: OW – SW – Library Assistant – PROGRAM

1. Age category

- Up to 25
 26-35
 36-45
 46-55
 56-65
 65+
 Prefer not to answer

2. Gender self-identity

- Male
 Female
 Other
 Prefer not to answer

3. Ethnic self-identity

- First Nation/Inuit/Metis
 Caucasian
 Asian: E SE S
 Middle East
 South/Central American
 African
 European
 Prefer not to answer

4. How long have you been living in Edmonton?

- Less than 1 year 1-3 years 3-5 years 5+ years Prefer not to answer

5. Employment status

6. Employed: FT PT Not employed Self-employed Student

7. What kind of help do you need with your job seeking?

8. How would you like to receive this help? (Rank the top three)

- ___ Drop-in/on demand
 ___ Appointment for one-on-one help
 ___ Scheduled in-person class
 ___ Online class/tutorial
 ___ Handout with instructions
 ___ Other:

9. Is there a:

Time: (morning/ afternoon/ evening/anytime/ No Preference) or

Day: (weekday/weekend/No Preference)

that is best for you to access job seeking programs/services?

10. Were there any job seeking-related tasks that EPL was not able to help you with today?

11. Do you encounter any frustrations or barriers when you come to EPL for your job seeking tasks?

12. What employment organizations are you aware of in the city? Have you used any of their services? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

Appendix 3: External WDOs Contacted

	Organization	Address
1.	Access Emploi	202, 8627 -91 (Marie-Anne-Gaboury) Street
2.	Alberta Works, City Centre	10242-105 Street
3.	Alberta Works North	2050, 9499-137 Avenue
4.	Alberta Works South	6325 Gateway Boulevard
5.	Alberta Works Meadowlark	120, 15710-87 Avenue
6.	ASSIST Community Services Centre	9649 – 105A Avenue
7.	Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	11648 – 85 Street
8.	Bredin Institute for Learning	9th floor, 10045 – 111 Street
9.	Bissell Centre	10527 - 96 Street
10.	Boyle Street Community Services	10116-105 Avenue
11.	BGS Career & Corporate Development	310, 10665- Jasper Avenue
12.	CAPS (U of A)	2-100 SUB (U of A Campus)
13.	Candora Society	248, 3210 - 118 Avenue
14.	DECSA	11515-71 Street
15.	Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers	11713 – 82 Street
16.	EmployAbilities	4th floor, 10909 Jasper Ave
17.	Grant MacEwan	Room 7-121, 10700 104 Avenue
18.	John Howard Society	Suite 401, 10010-105 Street
19.	Elizabeth Fry Society	10523 - 100 Avenue
20.	McBride Career Group	801-10242 105 Street
21.	Mustard Seed	10568-114 Street
22.	NAIT	Online only
23.	NorQuest College	Room C101, 10230 - 108 Street
24.	OnSite Placement	#200, 10025 - 106 Street
25.	Oteenow	#300, 14925-111 Avenue
26.	Rupertsland Institute	2300, 10123 – 99 Street
27.	Trade Winds to Success	#311, 16120 – 118 Avenue
28.	Wecan Cooperative	240 Abbottsfield Mall, 3210-118 Ave

Appendix 4: WDO Survey

(Text imported from FluidSurveys)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey on your organizations' programs and services to job seekers. This survey should take between 15-30 minutes to complete. Your participation will help Edmonton Public Library understand more about the job seeking resources currently available in Edmonton so that we can develop evidence-based program and service initiatives for our customers.

If you have any questions during this survey, please contact Jennifer Schell at jschell@epl.ca or 780.496.8832.

The survey will begin with some general questions about your organization, its services and clients.

Name of Organization

Are there eligibility requirements for clients wanting to access your programs? If so, please specify.

How do your clients find you (e.g. referrals, word of mouth)?

What kind of support, if any, do you offer those attending your programs (e.g. financial assistance/living support/transportation)?

Do you have drop-in services (e.g. computer and internet access, job searching resources)?

- Yes
- No

If so, is someone available to assist drop-in clients, if required?

Are there any fees associated with self-serve services such as faxing, photocopying, printing?

- Yes
- No

What software do you use for resume and cover letter creation?

This section will ask you about workshops, programs and related services that may be offered by your organization.

Does your organization hold job seeking skills workshops?

For the purposes of this survey, a "Workshop" is a one-time, group instructional session.

- Yes
- No

If so, which statements best describe your organization's workshop schedule?

Please choose one:

- Less than once per week
- Once per week
- 2-4 times per week
- Five or more times per week

Please choose one:

- Workshops are held throughout the year
- There are periods of time during the year when we don't hold workshops
(Please state when) _____

Are your workshops free?

- Yes
- No

If not, please describe your fee structure.

Does your organization offer job seeking programs?

For the purposes of this survey, a "Program" is a multi-session, group instructional class with progressive learning.

- Yes
- No

If so, do you have intakes throughout the year?

- Yes
- No

Do you have waiting lists for any of your programs?

- Yes
- No

Are your programs free?

- Yes
- No

If not, please describe your fee structure.

Does your organization offer individualized programs?

For the purposes of this survey, an "Individualized Program" is where one clients' needs are assessed and a plan is drafted, and their progress is monitored over a period of time.

- Yes
- No

Do you have a waiting list for individualized programs?

- Yes
- No

Are your individualized programs free?

- Yes
- No

If not, please describe your fee structure.

Does your organization offer consultation services?

For the purposes of this survey, "Consultation Services" are defined as a one-time, scheduled meeting.

- Yes
- No

If so, which statements best describe the frequency and availability of consultations?

Please choose one:

- We can usually meet with clients within two working days
- We can usually meet with clients within five working days
- Clients have to wait more than a week to meet with someone
- We can accommodate people on a drop-in basis

Please choose one:

- Consultations are held throughout the year
- There are periods of time during the year when we don't hold consultations
(Please state when) _____

Are your consultations free?

- Yes
- No

If not, please describe your fee structure.

Almost done! In this section, we will ask questions about literacy levels, together with our final questions.

What digital literacy skills do your clients need in order to access your services? Please choose all that apply:

- No skills necessary
- Client should have basic knowledge of computer components (know how to use a mouse, be familiar with a keyboard)
- Client should know how to access the internet and perform basic searches
- Client should have an email address and know how to send emails and attach documents
- Client should know how to use a word processing program: create a document, basic formatting, print, save
- Client should know how to fill in an online form and upload/download documents
- Other: _____

Which statement best describes the level of literacy your clients need in order to access your services?

- We can accommodate a client with below-basic literacy (client can follow simple written instructions; requires extensive help to draft a document)
- Client needs basic literacy (client can read and understand information in simple documents, can draft a document using a given template)
- Client needs intermediate literacy skills (client can read and understand moderately complex texts and be able to summarize and make inferences; can consult reference materials in order to create their own documents)
- Other: _____

In your opinion, what are your organization's three most popular services/programs?

What services do you think would benefit your job seeking clients that your organization does not offer?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your services or programs to job seekers?

Last question! Thank you for telling us all about your clients, services and programs. This question is asking about the data you collect.

Are you able to share any of the following information with us?

- Customer demographic information
- Program or workshop attendance numbers (including program capacity)
- Drop-in services numbers
- Other data: _____

If so, please send your information to Jennifer Schell at jschell@epl.ca, or by fax at 780.496.7097.

Appendix 5: Library Assistant Interview Questions

Name/Branch:

Date: **.**.2015

1. What are the 2-3 top barriers that our customers face when trying to find a job that you think EPL might be able to help with?
2. What kinds of job seeking-related help do EPL customers ask for?
3. Are there any tasks that you are not able to help them with, and why?
4. Do you ever receive customers in referral from other staff members such as outreach or settlement workers, or community librarian? Is there any particular information, skill or training that library staff could have which you think would make these referrals more successful?
5. Are you aware of other organizations in the city that offer employment services? Do you ever refer customers to organizations that provide assistance to job seekers in Edmonton?
6. What services/ programs/ technology could EPL offer that would support job seekers?
7. What professional development, knowledge or information could EPL provide you with that would enable you to further help your job seeking customers?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Appendix 6: Community Librarian Interview Questions

1. Which branch will you be talking about in this survey?
2. Please tell me about your interactions with organizations or groups who in some way provide assistance to job seekers.
"Interactions" may include presentations about library resources, outreach work, programs, or even preliminary discussions with organizations about potential relationships with EPL.
3. What are the most prominent job seeking or employment skill needs of the customers in your catchment that you think EPL can help with?
4. What services could EPL offer that would support our job seeking customers?
This may include either new, or changes to existing, service models, programs, resources, or technology in our branches.
5. What kind of support could EPL provide to public service staff that would improve our level of customer service to job seekers?
Your answer might include staff training opportunities, resources, policies, or anything else you can think of.
6. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about improving our services to job seekers?

Appendix 7: Manager Interview Questions

Name/Branch:

Date: **.**.2016

1. What challenges have staff at your branch faced in providing service for job seekers?
2. What kind of support could EPL provide to public service staff that would improve our level of customer service to job seekers? Your answer might include staff training opportunities, resources, policies, or anything else you can think of.
3. What services could EPL offer that would support our job seeking customers? This may include either new, or changes to existing, service models, programs, resources, or technology in our branches.
4. These are the top 5 challenges that job seekers face, as identified by staff. What is your perspective on this at your service point?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about EPL's services to job seekers?

Appendix 8: Outreach Worker Questions

1. What branches do you oversee?
2. Demographically, do your clients fall into broad categories?
3. What job seeking-related help are your clients asking you for?
4. What job seeking-related help are you able to give them?
5. What are you not able to help them with? Why?
6. What barriers can you identify that our clients have with the job seeking process?
7. What kind of interaction do you have with WD community organizations in Edmonton, if any?
8. What needs do you think are being met by those agencies? What are their strengths/what do they do very well?
9. What needs do you think are not being met by those agencies? What are their weaknesses/what do they do very poorly?
10. What services or programs could EPL offer that would support your efforts to help your clients find a job?
11. Partnerships: Is there a WD or skills acquisition organization you think has potential for partnership with us, and why?
12. Do you refer customers to outside WD organizations? If so, which ones?
13. Have you been able to evaluate the success of your referrals to these Organizations?
14. What knowledge or information could EPL provide you with that would enable you to further help your job seeking clients?
15. Do you refer your job-seeking clients to library staff at any point during your interaction with them? At what point during your interaction with them would it be most beneficial, both to the client and to you?
16. What information do you think the library staff should have that would help outreach clients with their job seeking needs?

Appendix 9: Settlement Worker Questions

You & Your Clients

1. What are the top barriers that your clients face when trying to find a job? What kind of programs do you refer them to for these barriers?
2. What services/programs could EPL offer that would support your clients' efforts to be job ready?
3. Do you work with community/ethnic/cultural groups, or individuals only? If groups, what job seeking related programs or services are they asking you about?
4. Is there any information, assistance or otherwise that EPL could provide you with that would help you help your clients with employment?

Referring within EPL

5. Do you sometimes refer your job seeking clients to other library staff? If so, what tasks are you referring them for?
6. What makes a referral between you and other library staff a successful one? Is there any particular information, skill or training that library staff could have which you think would make these referrals more successful?

Organizations

7. Do you have any direct interaction with organizations that provide assistance to job seekers in Edmonton, if any (ex: Alberta Works, BGS Enterprises, Bredin)?
8. Which employment or employment skill organizations do you refer clients to?
9. Have you been able to evaluate your clients' success with these organizations?
10. What needs do you think are being met by those organizations? What are their strengths/what do they do very well?
11. What needs do you think are not being met by those organizations? What are their weaknesses/what do they not do well?
12. Do you think there are other organizations that EPL could seek more collaboration with in order to provide assistance to job seekers? If so, which one(s)?

Appendix 10: Raw Data from Branch Survey

Transactions by Day of Week

Branch	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Total
ABB	2	5	4	14	8	10	3	46
CAL		8	4	11	2	7	6	38
CLV		3	12	4	6	1	1	27
CPL		2		1	2	5	2	12
CSD	2	11	4	2	2	1	2	24
HIG		5	6	6	6	6	2	31
JPL	1		15	10	10		1	37
LHL		7	2	3	1			13
LON	1	1	2	2	3	6	2	17
MEA			1	1	2	1	1	6
MLW	2	4	22	6	5	7	17	63
MNA	2	14	14	13	13	15	2	73
RIV			1	6		3	1	11
SPW	3	5	6	5	4	12		35
STR		4	2	3	1		1	11
WMC	1	2	10	3	5	4		25
WOO	5		9	2	5	3	1	25
IDY			2		2			4
Grand Total	19	71	116	92	77	81	42	498

Appendix 11: Information Resources from Alberta Works and ALIS

MEMO

To: Louise Reimer

From: Jennifer Schell

Date: November 26, 2015

Proposal: Carrying information resources from Alberta Works and ALIS in EPL branches

Louise,

During my research, I learned that the Whitemud Crossing branch carries a selection of the free publications that are available from Alberta Learning Information Service (“ALIS”), the provincial website for career, learning and employment information and services (www.alis.alberta.ca). I first encountered these publications at Alberta Works, where councilors encouraged me to have EPL stock them at all of our branches. Workforce development organizations such as DECSA and Wecan also carry a wide variety of these publications for their clients.

In addition, the Alberta Works councilors recommended that EPL distribute copies of their free “tip sheets,” which are one to two-page handouts with such titles as “Work Search Websites by Subject” and “Employment Agencies in Edmonton.”

Based on information from Karen Miller, who orders the ALIS publications for WMC, my discussions with staff at various workplace development organizations in Edmonton, and my discussion with the SCL librarian, I believe that EPL customers and staff would benefit if we implement a system for making the ALIS publications and Alberta Works tip sheets available in all branches as soon as possible.

Introduction

My research indicates that the library assistants’ knowledge of resume and cover letter preparation is extremely varied, and there is little consistency in where they look to find answers to customers’ job seeking questions. Most LA’s expressed an interest in having resources on hand that would help them to help customers with various job seeking tasks, and several commented that new LA’s specifically need help finding employment resources in order to help customers. Resources that were frequently mentioned in conversation include resume and cover letter templates, sample resume and cover letters for different job seeking scenarios, job seeking strategies, and lists of work search websites.

ALIS publishes over 50 booklets that cover a broad range of job seeking skills, career research, education and even money management. They are written for different demographics (youth, adults, midlife career changers, older adults) and for different abilities (such as workers with disability barriers or low English language skills). Many of the publications have a workbook-style component to them; for example, the publication *Work Search Basics* has a “Worksheet: My resume master” which the customer can use to write down all of their education and work history, qualifications, and brainstorm skills and objectives in anticipation of creating their resume. It also provides templates for the various types of resumes and cover letters for different situations.

Alberta Works has over 35 tip sheets that cover topics such as work search sites, employment agencies, job seekers’ workshop schedules, preparing for a job fair, and how to get a free email address. These resources are found at Alberta Works offices and are not available online.

In the absence of current, targeted staff training and as a companion to any potential training that may be recommended by my project, these resources can be used as either a starting place or a building tool for both customers and LAs.

Example of Whitemud Crossing branch & Strathcona County Library

The Whitemud Crossing branch has been stocking and offering ALIS publications to customers for at least three years. Karen Miller is responsible for monitoring, ordering and refreshing their display shelves and states the publications are very popular with their customers. Karen keeps 16 publications on hand at all times (list attached). She re-orders approximately every two months, although she does not order every publication every time. WMC does not stock the Alberta Works tip sheets.

Whitemud Crossing has a spacious staff/workroom area, and Karen stores the extra publications on a regular sized bookshelf. In the library, they can be found on a wall display located about half way between the customer service desk and a large computer pod. The display has four shelves which fit all 16 publications with their covers facing out.

Karen spends approximately 30 minutes of task time every two or three months for reordering. She spends approximately 10-15 minutes each week when on the floor to inventory and refresh the display shelves.

During a recent visit to the Strathcona County Library, I noted that they stock a wide variety of both Alberta Works tip sheets and ALIS publications (together, “employment resources”) for their customers. The librarian at SCL indicated that they are well used – she restocks the displays on a weekly basis.

Project Plan

Step One: Information Gathering

The first step is to contact all branch managers to determine:

1. Do they already carry the ALIS publications at their branch? If so, could they please advise who maintains their stock so that we can collaborate on a go-forward basis;
2. Also:
 - a. If they do not already, are they amenable to carrying either/both the ALIS publications and/or tip sheets at their branch;
 - b. What needs do they have regarding a display area for the employment resources;
 - c. Do they have available storage space for extra copies of the ALIS publications at their branch; and
 - d. Identity of a staff member to be the “branch coordinator” for this task (required).
3. This program will need a central coordinator, located at Milner (see “storage” below). Perhaps this is a task for one of the generalist librarians.

Step Two: Practical Considerations

Employment Resources

Branches should be able to choose the ALIS publications they think will be of most use to their customer base. The ability to make this choice is also important as branches may be limited by display space. Branch coordinators will be responsible for monitoring and stocking publications, and in consultation with appropriate personnel will choose the publications that will be available at each branch.

ALIS has a *Career and Workplace Resources Catalogue* that branch coordinators can peruse and choose from. Karen Miller’s list can be circulated and some samples of publications that I have collected, together with the recommendations from agencies I spoke with about which publications are likely to be the most useful.⁴

Because the tip sheets are not available online from the Alberta Works website, it is recommended that a wide variety be collected, scanned and saved to Staff Web.

⁴ These include Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation, Work Search Basics, Advanced Techniques for Work Search, Career Coaching Your Teens: A Guide for Parents, Change and Transitions: The Path from A to B, Education and Training Planner, A Guide for Midlife Career Moves, Job Smart: Tips for Staying Employed, My Choices, My Work, My Life, Self-Employment; Is it for Me?, Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting Basics, Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers, Workability: What you Need to Get & Keep a Job, Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants, Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work. From their “Easy Reading” series, Find a Job, Keep Your Job, Training for Work, Work and You (Books 1 and 2).

They can be accessed and printed off by the branch coordinators as needed. The central coordinator should collect and refresh (as needed) new sheets on perhaps a quarterly basis to ensure they are up to date.

Storage

The central coordinator at MNA is necessary because smaller branches that want to take part in this program might not have the capacity to store the extra ALIS publications. It is assumed by the writer that MNA has sufficient storage space for extra publications; inquiries will have to be made to confirm this [certainly, another location will be necessary during the Milner revitalization].

Display Units

Once information is received from the branches, discussions about display units may have to take place with Facilities or Purchasing to see if necessary units can be distributed/allocated to branches as needed. At SCL, the tip sheets are displayed in a revolving tower-type stand while the ALIS publications are held in stand-alone literature display shelves.

Step Three: Implementation

The central coordinator at MNA would assume responsibility for ordering for MNA as well as the branches without storage. The central coordinator would respond to refresh requests from those branch coordinators, filling the same, and keeping stocks of publications ordered.

Branches that have their own storage capacity could be self-sufficient: their branch coordinator could order and maintain their own publications, with the understanding that they are welcome to share publications with the central coordinator if needed. Having some self-sufficient branches would benefit the program as a whole because the maximum order quantities (300) of most publications would not be sufficient to distribute sufficient number of publications to all branches.

On a quarterly basis, the central coordinator will need to collect tip sheets from Alberta Works, replace any updated sheets on the system, and communicate any updates to branch coordinators.

I recommend that an email group be set up which includes all coordinators. Also, there should be a place on StaffWeb that has a list of coordinators, the CWR Catalogue, the scanned tip sheets, and instructions for reordering online or requesting refresher copies from the central coordinator.

Benefits and Difficulties

The benefits:

1. The employment resources are free.
2. The time commitment is minimal. It is not expected that the time commitment for branch coordinators would exceed that described by Karen Miller. The central coordinator would likely need one or two task times per month to respond to requests and order ALIS publications, and approximately 2 hours per quarter for work associated with tip sheets.
3. The ALIS publications are an excellent quality resource. Feedback from Alberta Works councilors and other workforce development organizations is consistent - these publications are useful, valuable and effective.
4. The tip sheets are useful and concise.
5. Staff would have quality resources to refer to when helping customers. Also, these resources can be used by staff to learn from during task time that will help them learn how to better help our job seeking customers.
6. Customers have quality, free, take-home resources.

The difficulties:

1. Some branches may have difficulty finding a suitable display space.
2. Some branches may not have a display unit available; there may be cost in obtaining or distributing units for some branches.

In summary, I believe that the value offered by carrying these employment resources in our branches for both staff and customers is excellent, despite the cost that may be incurred with respect to the display units. While some branches may be challenged to add a display area to their existing space, there is flexibility in the number of publications they can carry.

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