BC ELN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday, July 12, 2024

9:15 am – 3:30 pm Pacific
Westcoast Energy Executive Meeting Room, Room 2250
SFU Harbour Centre
515 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC

In Attendance:

Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria
Gwen Bird, Simon Fraser University
Camille Callison, University of the Fraser Valley, *Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions*
Gregg Currie, Selkirk College, *Rural Colleges*
Ali de Haan, Acsenda School of Management, *Associate Members* (Alternate)
Ben Ferrel, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Natalie Gick, Simon Fraser University, *Host Site Officer*
Tania Gottschalk, Thompson Rivers University, *Small Universities* (Vice-Chair)
Shirley Lew, Vancouver Community College, *Urban Colleges*
Todd Mundle, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, *Arca Advisory Committee Chair* (Guest)
Susan Parker, University of British Columbia
Trish Rosseel, Douglas College (Chair)

Guest:

Catherine Steeves, Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) Task Force on Machine Learning and AI

BC ELN Staff:

Sasha Han (Recorder)
Leah Hopton
Sunni Nishimura
Brandon Weigel

Regrets:

Brenda Mathenia, University Canada West, *Associate Members*

Introductions

T. Rosseel welcomed attendees and provided a territorial acknowledgment. She noted regrets from B. Mathenia and welcomed alternate A. de Haan.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as approved.

2. BC ELN and Artificial Intelligence

T. Rosseel introduced C. Steeves, Chair of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) Task Force on Machine Learning and AI, who spoke to the committee about the task force's recently published report and strategy.

C. Steeves shared highlights from the formation and work of the task force:

- The group aims to make use of consortial infrastructure and create a compelling case for collaborative action for machine learning and AI.
- The task force is made up primarily of library directors, in addition to paid positions (Project Manager and Tech Manager).
- The group prioritizes "human-in-the-loop" development, meaning that while some technology may eventually operate without human mediation, everything the task force does is to enhance and complement the work of library staff.
- Engagement activities to date have included a Hackfest at McMaster, an interim report and summit, and outreach to iSchools, research library networks, and other regional consortia.
- Next steps will be continuing outreach within the GLAM sector and the launch of several capacity-building projects.

In response to questions, C. Steeves confirmed the following:

- While the task force doesn't anticipate their projects will be developing models with environmental footprints as large as those of foundational systems, there is much learning to be done around the environmental impact of AI and is a consideration as the group enters the next exploration phase.
- One area the group will be exploring is how to expand this work across jurisdictions and bring in national networks.

C. Steeves concluded her presentation and exited the meeting. During the follow-up discussion, several committee members shared updates on AI learning and training efforts already underway at their respective institutions.

G. Bird noted that the chat reference platform currently being explored by the OCUL task force, LibraryH3lp, is the same software in use by AskAway. There was agreement that BC ELN should regularly check in on the task force's progress in this area, in the event that there are implications for AskAway. T. Gottschalk noted that AI products and models are becoming increasingly common in discussions with eResource vendors but that there is a lack of clarity

around the scope of the AI tools.

T. Rosseel concluded this agenda item by reminding the committee that new 2-year goals will be set in 2025 in support of the Strategic Framework, and that there may be opportunities at that time to explore the impacts of AI on BC ELN services, including virtual reference and eResource licensing.

3. Ministry Report

B. Ferrel provided updates from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS):

- The Ministry will soon put out a call for nominations for a working group on AI technologies as part of the Digital Learning Strategy, with the primary goals of the group being to (1) articulate best practices and guidelines that can be used to inform post-secondary policies or individual guidelines, and (2) identify approaches to collaboration in the deployment of technology.
- The Ministry is continuing to work with the Cloud Innovation Centre at UBC to enhance access to the resources and guidelines developed under the Digital Learning Strategy.
- PSFS continues to negotiate a Service Agreement between the Government of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University for the administration of BC ELN. PSFS was initially drafting a single Service Agreement to encompass all three SFU-hosted program offices (BCcampus, BC ELN, and EducationPlannerBC), but the unique and embedded nature of BC ELN within SFU has led to a decision to move forward with a separate Service Agreement.
- One current area of focus for PSFS is the exploration of ways to support Indigenous-led institutions in accessing new initiatives through the Digital Learning Strategy. B. Ferrel highlighted the importance of situating BC ELN in this work.

4. Removing Barriers Initiative

S. Nishimura guided a discussion on the Removing Barriers Initiative and funding, with the goal of receiving feedback from the Steering Committee on moving the initiative forward. Committee members considered strengths, weaknesses, benefits, and risks of the initiative in pairs and then brought their ideas back to the wider group for discussion.

Several committee members expressed that more clarity was needed around which organizations are being referred to with the phrase “Indigenous-led institutions”. B. Ferrel clarified that the original funding letter was written before legislation using the designation “Indigenous-led institutions” had passed. PSFS has provided direction to broaden language from “First Nations” to “Indigenous-led institutions” and recommends a distinctions-based approach moving forward.

S. Nishimura then initiated a discussion on Guiding Principles to create a shared understanding of how BC ELN should approach this work. Committee members offered several suggestions:

- That the Removing Barriers work plan and eventual engagement activities be rooted in a distinctions-based approach.

- That BC ELN consider partnerships within the sector, as current work being done at BCcampus and BCCAT in this area can offer valuable learning opportunities.
- That larger umbrella organizations be approached first when this initiative commences, recognizing the burden on individuals who are frequently asked to participate in this work.
- That relationships be reciprocal and that there are efforts made to engage face-to-face.
- That existing frameworks, principles, and legislation like UNDRIP be acknowledged and formally accepted as part of this work.

L. Hopton noted that the discussion from this meeting would inform the job description for the Term Librarian position that will be posted as part of this initiative. S. Nishimura thanked the committee for their contributions to the discussion.

5. Associate Member Criteria

L. Hopton led a discussion on associate member criteria, precipitated by two new associate membership applications and the ongoing provisional status of one member pending DQAB authorization.

Members of the committee discussed criteria relating to degree authorization and post-secondary statuses – including DQAB and PTIB authorization, exemption status, and coverage by independent acts – and the differences between each. The Committee also discussed the legacy status of some BC ELN members (i.e. those that joined BC ELN before the Associate Membership category was created) and whether any changes to membership criteria, including annual fees, would necessarily affect them.

Given the complexity surrounding degree authorization and the potential to impact future activities related to the Removing Barriers Initiative, it was proposed that the Steering Committee form a working group to re-examine criteria for associate members. The group will work closely with PSFS to better understand the policy landscape, with the goal of bringing a redlined draft of Associate Membership requirements back to the committee. The revisions will take into consideration the potential to impact new applicants to BC ELN as well as members with legacy status.

MOTION: To review and refresh BC ELN's membership categories to ensure there are equitable cost structures in place for the entire consortium.
Moved: T. Gottschalk
Seconded: G. Currie
Motion carried.

6. Strategic Progress

S. Nishimura, L. Hopton, S. Han, and B. Weigel provided updates from the BC ELN Office.

Staffing Updates

S. Nishimura shared several staffing updates, including that the hiring process for the Continuing

Librarian position has reached the decision-making phase and the Office hopes to announce the successful candidate by September, and that the search for the Limited Term Librarian for the Removing Barriers Initiative will be the next priority and will incorporate feedback shared in this meeting.

Strategic Framework Update

L. Hopton provided a high-level overview of strategic progress, noting that a more detailed summary is available in the update report posted to the BC ELN website.

L. Hopton reminded the committee that the high-level directions in the framework are intended to guide the consortium over the five years of the plan, and that the 2-year goals are monitored and updated on a more frequent basis. After a slower start in 2023 due to the Executive Director transition and wrap-up of projects under the previous framework, the Office has been making good progress with the current two-year goals throughout 2024.

To illustrate some of the work being done in the Office in service of the strategic goals (specifically goal 1a, to review services to ensure they are steeped in a culture of continuous improvement and inclusion), S. Han introduced a new internal committee that has recently formed. The JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Collective aims to guide all staff in creating an inclusive work environment at BC ELN. Building on this internal work, the Collective aims to then support the application of JEDI principles to the broader organization, including BC ELN's services, governance committees, and external communications.

Arca Migration Update

B. Weigel provided an update on the migration of the Arca platform to Islandora 2.0. The migration is on schedule and is now the top-priority project for discoverygarden, Arca's service provider. The first pilot site migration is expected to take place by the end of the summer and discoverygarden anticipates that most of their work will be finished by the end of September. Once this initial migration is complete and any technical questions resolved, the Arca Admin Centre will work with members to build a migration schedule based on each site's needs. It is anticipated that the Admin Centre will be doing site-by-site migration work throughout the Fall term.

B. Weigel demonstrated some of the features of the new platform on BC ELN's sandbox site, including an exploration of collection structures, linked entities and taxonomies, and 3D objects.

In response to a question about whether the current funding is sufficient to see the project through the remainder of the migration, B. Weigel shared that the budget is currently on target and that the Arca Advisory Committee reviewed and approved the migration expenditures and budget in June 2024.

7. New Business – Arca Recommendation

T. Mundle, Chair of the Arca Advisory Committee, presented a recommendation to allow non-library organizations to join Arca.

T. Mundle shared that the Arca Administrative Centre has recently received inquiries from non-library organizations about joining. He noted that there is an opportunity with these requests to serve an identified need in the GLAM sector, to provide a sustainable home for the province's digitized materials, and to increase Arca's financial capacity by spreading costs across a greater number of institutions.

While some risk has been identified in regard to the Arca Admin Centre's workload capacity, there are options for risk mitigation that are either already in place or can proceed immediately, including review of membership eligibility criteria and the new scalable deal with SFU Cloud. If the motion is approved, the next step would be to revise the Benefits and Responsibilities to accommodate new types of members.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation to amend the Arca Benefits and Responsibilities, allowing non-library organizations to join Arca as full members or to participate in the shared Loupe site.
Moved: G. Bird
Seconded: T. Gottschalk
Motion carried.

In response to a question, T. Mundle confirmed that eligibility to join this service area would be separate from eligibility to join the consortium as a whole, and there would be no connection between non-library organizations joining Arca and non-library organizations potentially joining BC ELN.

8. Wrap Up

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held in-person on Friday, December 13 at the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Richmond campus. More information will be shared closer to this date.

Concluding the meeting, T. Rosseel invited the Committee to join a toast to celebrate the upcoming retirement of G. Bird and to thank her for her years of service to the post-secondary library community and to BC ELN.