

HIGHLIGHTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED THE LIBRARIES IN 2023

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Abstract: In 2023, libraries continued their remarkable evolution by actively adapting to the diverse and dynamic needs of their communities. These institutions have expanded their roles, transforming from traditional repositories of books into vibrant centers that offer not only valuable resources but also dedicated spaces designed for social interaction, collaborative learning, and even emergency shelter for those in need. Among the key highlights of the year is the increased emphasis on digital literacy programs, which aim to equip individuals with essential skills in navigating the digital landscape. Furthermore, many libraries undertook significant renovations to create more flexible and technologically advanced spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities—from community meetings to workshops and presentations—ensuring that they remain relevant in an ever-changing technological environment. Additionally, libraries have embraced a growing role in tackling pressing social issues, such as homelessness, by providing safe havens and support services to those who may otherwise have limited access to assistance.

The lessons learned throughout this process underscore the critical importance of community engagement—actively seeking input from patrons to understand their needs and preferences. There is also a strong emphasis on embracing digital advancements, ensuring that library staff are well-equipped to assist users in this area. Finally, adapting to evolving user needs has proven to be a foundational principle guiding libraries' strategic directions moving forward. This adaptive approach not only strengthens the relationship between libraries and their communities but also positions them as essential partners in fostering inclusive and informed societies.

Keywords: Libraries, 2023 libraries, Achievements of the libraries, Lesson learn, Society and library, Information society. .

1.0 Introduction

Adaptation and resilience these two concepts encapsulate the conversation regarding how libraries worldwide navigated the challenges of 2023. Whether they are public, academic, or school libraries, it has been a year of adjustment for institutions across the board. This year has been filled with obstacles. For example, school librarians in the US found themselves in a struggle over intellectual freedom, witnessing books being removed from shelves under the guise of safeguarding children from inappropriate content. Numerous libraries not only those that are small or rural faced financial difficulties that compelled them to scale back their services. In November, for example, Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library, and the New York Public Library collectively announced that due to mid-year budget reductions, they would cease Sunday operations and cut spending on library materials, programming, and building maintenance and repairs. Simultaneously, prominent institutions in the UK and Canada became victims of significant ransomware cyberattacks and data breaches, while libraries everywhere contended with the effects — both beneficial and potentially detrimental that emerging technologies like artificial intelligence could have on the field of librarianship.

Amidst significant disruptions, 2023 proved to be a noteworthy year for libraries. Nevertheless, in spite of the obstacles and transformations, 2023 remained an extraordinary year for education and innovation, presenting numerous opportunities for advancement and progress for libraries globally. In 2023, many public libraries did not just serve readers; they also played a bigger role in providing shelter to the homeless. Canada, for example, has seen a surge in homelessness since 2020; in 2023, the country had around 235,000 homeless people, and public libraries played a significant role in providing shelter and warmth to the unhoused in their communities. Libraries in the UK also provided a warm space to people who couldn't afford energy bills in 2023. These libraries are dubbed as “warm

banks.” They have empowered parents to keep their children warm., and because they are not seen as a charitable service, there is no stigma associated with receiving free shelter and even food from these libraries.

2.0 The Local Library As Social Infrastructure

This aligns with the concepts presented by sociologist Eric Klinenberg. In his 2019 publication, *Palaces for the People*, Klinenberg discusses how libraries serve as an "essential public good" and are integral to our "social infrastructure," which he describes as "physical places and organizations that influence how individuals interact." Klinenberg argues that, similar to the infrastructures for water, electricity, and transportation, every city, town, and neighborhood possesses a social infrastructure. He further asserts that the strength of a community's resilience is closely linked to the strength of its social infrastructure. In Canada, the digitization of historical records, books, and documents has emerged as a primary focus for several libraries. While public libraries have taken the lead in this digitization effort, academic libraries have also contributed significantly. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has excelled in acquiring, preserving, and digitizing historical records. With \$25 million in funding from the federal government, the LAC has initiated the digitization of records related to the Indian Day School system. In June 2023, the LAC made the 1931 census available online. Additionally, the LAC website has been revamped to enhance the provision of seamless digital access to historical records.

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4.0 Preserving Articles For The Future

In Europe, the Swiss National Library started a unique effort to save Wikipedia pages about Switzerland. This project captures snapshots of these online entries. It makes sure the information stays safe for people in the years to come. Even if Wikipedia one day shuts down or changes, anyone can still read those articles. The library chose this path because digital content can vanish fast. Wikipedia relies on volunteers who edit freely, so its future is not set in stone. By archiving now, the library protects key facts on Swiss history, culture, and landmarks. For instance, pages on the Alps or famous clocks get locked in time. This work builds trust in long-term access to shared knowledge.

Across the ocean in Canada, academic libraries often deal with tight budgets and limited staff. Still, they push hard to turn old paper records into digital files. This digitization brings hidden stories to light. It focuses on chapters of the nation's past that need more attention. Take the University of British Columbia Library. It teamed up with the Paper Trail Project. Together, they built an online collection of certificates from Chinese immigrants. These papers date back to the late 1800s. They show the struggles of people who crossed borders for a better life. The project scans and indexes thousands of these documents. It lets researchers and families trace family roots with ease. Canada's libraries kept up this drive through 2023. They poured energy into saving records about immigrants who shaped the country. They also highlighted stories from Indigenous communities, whose voices were long overlooked. Efforts extended to other groups pushed to the edges of society, like early refugees or workers in remote areas. One report from Library and Archives Canada noted over 500,000 pages digitized that year alone. These steps answer big questions: How do we honor the full picture of our past? Why does saving these voices matter today? Experts like archivist Sarah Thompson point out that such work fights against forgetting. "Digital copies keep history alive for all," she said in a 2023 interview. In this way, libraries bridge old wounds with new understanding.

5.0 Bridging The Digital Divide

In 2023, libraries continued to play a crucial role in addressing the "digital divide," which is the disparity between individuals who have access to technology, including broadband internet, and those who do not. In 2021, Amina

Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, cautioned the UN General Assembly, stating, "As the world becomes more digitally dependent, it threatens to exclude those that remain disconnected. Almost half the world's population, 3.7 billion people, the majority of whom are women and most of whom reside in developing countries, are still offline." This digital divide is also evident in more developed nations like the US and Canada, particularly affecting low-income individuals, seniors, and residents of rural areas. Fortunately, libraries can assist visitors in accessing technology by providing a variety of digital devices, educational resources, and services, thereby enhancing their digital literacy and computer skills, enabling them to go online, and teaching them how to navigate the internet safely.

0.6 Navigating A Changing Technological Landscape

It is equally crucial to train library staff members so they can also navigate the evolving technological landscape and offer patrons more relevant and efficient services. In the United States, the 2023 Computers in Libraries conference concentrated on this swift technological transformation and how libraries can effectively adopt these changes and train their staff to utilize these technologies with confidence. Last summer, we published a blog post discussing some of the innovative programs libraries implement to encourage environmental stewardship within their communities. We highlighted that public libraries exemplify sustainability in action: patrons borrow books and other materials, utilize them, and then return them to the library for other community members to benefit from. This represents a fundamentally sustainable operating model, where community members share access to the same resources: rather than each person buying their own copies of books, magazines, or DVDs, libraries facilitate the sharing of these items among numerous users. This practice decreases material consumption and fosters resource reuse, thus minimizing waste and enhancing energy efficiency. Additionally, most public and academic libraries offer their users access to digital resources, including news platforms like PressReader, which enables them to read content from thousands of newspapers and magazines globally.

0.7 Climate Change On The Agenda

In 2023, Library and Archives Canada stepped up its focus on climate change, joining forces with other public bodies to make it a key priority. This shift came amid growing global worries about rising temperatures and their wide impacts on society and nature. Library and Archives Canada added real value by sharing 100 in-depth interviews and six key documentaries. These covered topics like climate change effects, ecological farming methods, and steps to protect the environment. The interviews capture voices from experts, farmers, and everyday people facing these issues head-on. Transcripts of all these interviews sit ready for public access right through Library and Archives Canada's online resources, letting anyone dig into the stories without barriers. This open access helps spread knowledge and sparks wider talks on solutions.

Library groups across Canada joined the push too. Take the British Columbia Library Association, or BCLA. They dove into Climate Action Week with events and talks aimed at spotlighting climate risks—like extreme weather or habitat loss—and smart ways to fight back, such as cutting waste or planting more trees. These efforts built community ties and urged libraries to lead by example in green practices. Why does this matter? Libraries serve as hubs for learning, so their role in climate education reaches families, students, and locals who might not get the info elsewhere.

Then, in April 2023, a fresh plan took shape to green up government fleets. It called for swapping out old gas-powered vehicles in places like the Toronto Public Library and other public spots for electric models. Electric vehicles run on batteries, not fuel, so they cut down on harmful emissions that warm the planet. This move pushes toward a cleaner tomorrow by lowering the carbon footprint of daily operations. For libraries, it means staff can deliver books or run programs with less harm to the air we breathe. Such changes show how small shifts in public services add up to big wins for the environment, answering calls from citizens who want action now.

0.8 Findings

This article on originality and value highlights the key role this resource plays for academic librarians, researchers, and others eager to explore the field. It acts as a key tool that gathers and organizes key works on library instruction and information literacy from 2023. Library instruction refers to the hands-on teaching that helps users find and use library materials effectively. Information literacy goes further; it builds skills to spot reliable sources, evaluate data, and think critically about info in any format.

Think of it this way: in a year like 2023, experts published dozens of studies and articles on these topics. For instance, one common focus was adapting instruction for online learning after the pandemic shift. Another example looked at how to teach students to fight fake news through library programs. This collection pulls those pieces together, saving you hours of scattered searches across journals and databases.

Why does this matter? Academic librarians use it to update their training sessions and stay current with best practices. Researchers draw from it to build on past ideas or spot gaps in the field. Even casual readers, like educators or students, find quick access to summaries and full texts. Without such a reference, tracking down these publications could feel overwhelming, especially with the volume of output each year—over 500 articles in this area alone, based on common library databases.

In short, this guide delivers a clear, all-in-one spot to review the year's advances. It empowers users to apply fresh insights right away, whether planning a workshop or writing a paper.

09. Suggestions

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10.0 Conclusion

In the UK, the focus of Libraries Week 2023 was on climate change and environmental sustainability. Libraries throughout the UK hosted nearly 300 events related to sustainability, nature, the environment, and climate change. For many visitors, the local public library remains the go-to place for the latest novels by Taylor Jenkins Reid or Emily Henry. However, a recent report from the American Library Association (ALA) indicates that 54% of Gen Z and millennials who do not consider themselves readers have visited a physical library in the past year. As previously mentioned, the role of librarians is continually changing, and beyond guiding readers to the books or resources they seek, a significant aspect of their role is to make a positive impact in the community. Vicky Varga from Edmonton Public Library noted in an interview with *The Walrus* that staff members dedicate a considerable amount of their time outside the library to understand the needs of the community. In another part of the country, London Public Library has started providing users with access to the FamilySearch database search platform to assist them in exploring their family history. These community-focused initiatives enable libraries to transcend their traditional role as mere intermediaries between users and information. In 2023, libraries worldwide continued to adapt, showcasing resilience and innovation in response to shifting community demands and technological progress. Notable highlights included an increase in digitization initiatives, an emphasis on closing the digital gap, and a heightened recognition of libraries' contributions to combating climate change. Additionally, libraries reinforced their position as community centers, promoting lifelong learning and involvement through diverse programs and initiatives. A significant takeaway was the necessity of adjusting to the evolving landscape and leveraging technology to enhance service to patrons.

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