



Canadian Library Association
Association canadienne des bibliothèques

CLA Member Advocacy Survey:

The Impact of Federal Budget cuts on Canada's Libraries

November 2012

Executive Summary

In the spring of 2012 the federal government announced a series of budget cuts that raised serious concerns within the library community. Library and Archives Canada was subject to a 10% budget reduction, and many federal department libraries were restructured, reduced or closed.

CLA issued a [press release](#) in May 2012 expressing serious concern about the impact of budget cuts on federal libraries, and on the staff of those libraries.

In order to determine how these cuts will impact the broader library community, CLA conducted a survey of its members. More than 400 individuals provided detailed responses to the survey questions. They overwhelmingly agreed that the cuts will impact both local and national library services, with 98% of respondents indicating concern. Areas most likely to be affected were identified, and include: access to material/information, research, interlibrary loans, Community Access Program, preservation, staffing cuts, digital issues.

CLA is preparing follow up actions based on these survey results. Specific concerns regarding how cuts are being implemented at Library and Archives Canada will be raised as a series of questions to the Deputy Head and Librarian and Archivist and the Management Board. A campaign will be launched to inform MPs as well as departmental managers of the essential role of government libraries in the development of informed public policy and legislation. Research will be conducted regarding the implementation of the cuts and their impact on library staff, collections, and services to Canadians.

CLA will keep members informed of developments as we take our next steps, and seek further input as necessary. We will engage members in local advocacy initiatives, to reach out to MPs in their ridings and help spread the message about the impact of these cuts.

The CLA Executive Council thanks all members who contributed to the survey. Your input provides valuable details to inform our advocacy efforts.

1: INTRODUCTION

In recent months, concern has grown in the library community about federal government budget cuts and their impact on libraries across the country. The cuts directly affect Library and Archives Canada and other federal libraries, and by extension the services they provide to libraries and library users in Canada.

Canada's national library and archives has a broad mandate to acquire, preserve and make available the documentary heritage of Canada. It is also responsible for the management of the archival records of government. Additionally, government librarians and government libraries contribute directly to the quality of all public services. With these budget cuts, services to Canadians will be negatively affected.

The Canadian library and archival communities expect leadership on professional issues from their national institution, including standards for activities and support for the continued provision of quality library and archival services to Canadians across the country. Canadians expect to have access to the vast wealth of materials managed by Library and Archives Canada, which includes books, journals, photographs, newspapers, personal and corporate archives, government records, paintings, film, and sound recordings. LAC serves all Canadians, not just government, and its invaluable collections belong to all of us.

At Library and Archives Canada, more than 200 jobs will be cut over 3 years, representing a loss of 20% of their workforce. Their staff resource centre closed on 1 November 2012. Many federal libraries are also affected. Canada Revenue Agency will consolidate 9 libraries into one. The Public Service Commission library is closed. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada library will close by 31 March 2013. Parks Canada will consolidate 5 regional libraries into one. Fisheries and Oceans Canada will consolidate its library services into two principal and two subsidiary locations, and will close seven libraries. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada will close its two libraries as of 31 March 2013. Natural Resources Canada will close six of its 14 libraries by 31 March 2013, with one more to close in 2014. The Transportation Safety Board will significantly reduce, and potentially close, its library. Public Works and Government Services Canada closed its library on 31 May 2012. Transport Canada will close its library by 31 March 2013.¹

The Canadian Library Association remains committed to advocating on behalf of its members for the Government of Canada to consider the impact of these cuts on the ability for all Canadians to access information and to re-evaluate spending priorities to ensure that adequate services will be maintained in government libraries.

In July 2012, CLA's Executive Council issued a member advocacy survey in order to achieve the following:

1. to get members' views on this and other areas of concern;
2. to ensure that CLA's advocacy message is evidence-based; and
3. to inform CLA's strategy for raising awareness of the impacts of federal cuts at the local and national levels.

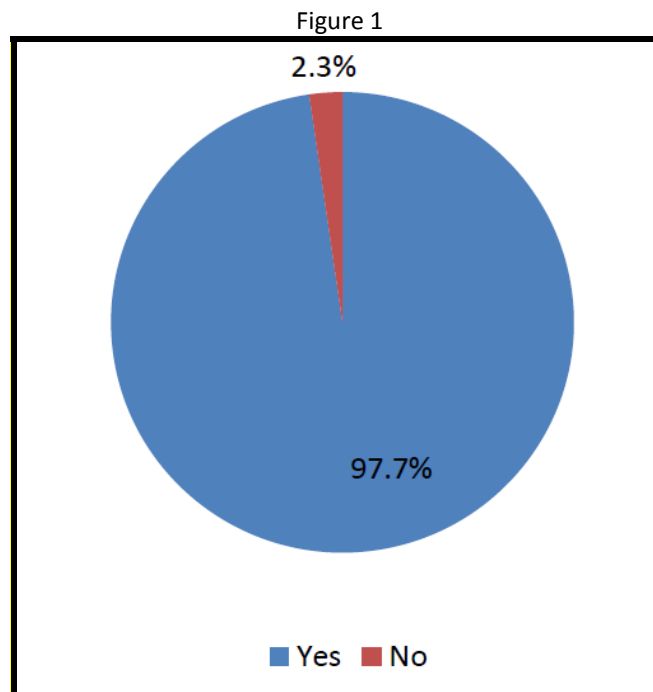
CLA received a total of 421 responses to this survey from members. This report provides a summary of the issues and concerns articulated by CLA members in response to the survey questions that follow.

¹ House of Commons Sessional Paper No. 8555-411-785).

2: IMPACT ON LIBRARY SERVICES

Survey Question 1: Are you concerned about federal budget cuts impacting both local and national library services?

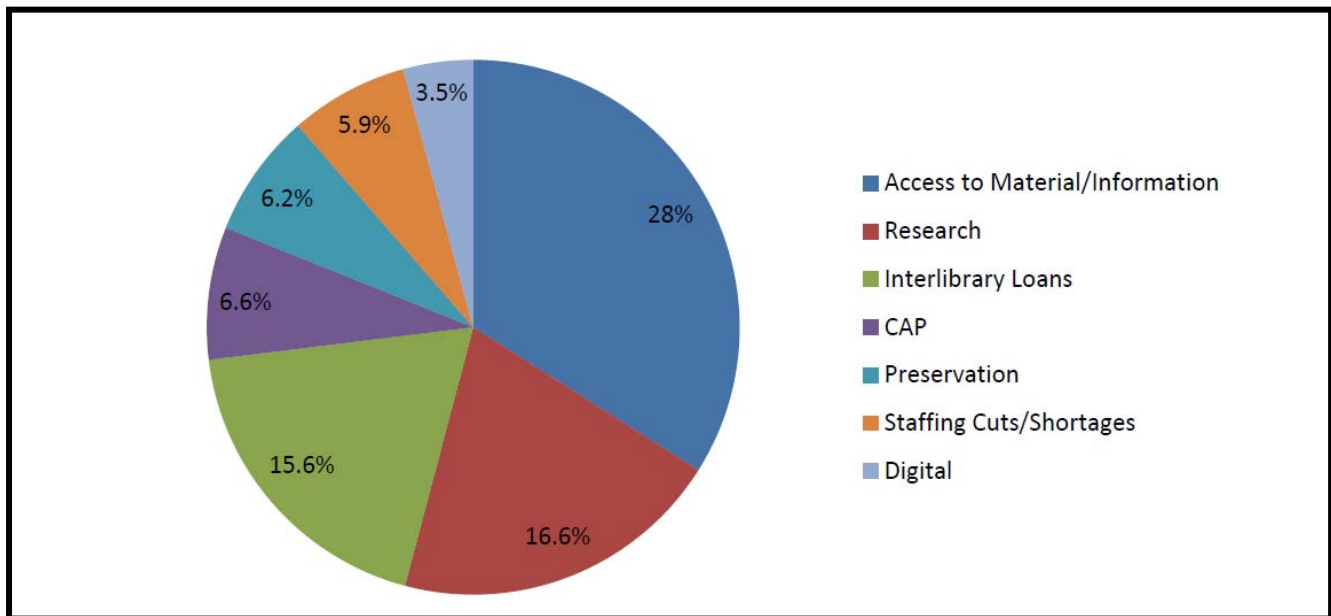
An overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated that they were concerned about the impact of federal budget cuts on library services (Figure 1).



Survey Question 2: Are you able to share specific examples of the anticipated impacts of these cuts on your library?

CLA received a total of 289 responses with regards to specific examples of anticipated impacts. Several common core areas that would be affected by these cuts were highlighted by CLA members (Figure 2).

Figure 2



While each member response was different, it is evident that these common themes can be seen across the board. To provide a snapshot of the responses, it is worth highlighting some of the key member feedback points, broken down into each of these common core areas of concern. Please note some survey responses have been edited for legibility purposes.

Access to Material/Information

- *Access to materials housed at the National Library with particular concern to access to microfilm, e.g. census, ships passenger manifests, and other material related to genealogical research library.*
- *The cuts to Libraries and Archives Canada will mean that, increasingly, I will not be able to go to LAC's website to obtain accurate, current information about Canadian publications. Collections development librarians do so, often.*
- *LAC administrators are being too vague about how they will provide access to materials while announcing that they will be shutting down effective, fiscally responsible networks of expertise and support all in the name of austerity.*

- *I suspect that services currently offered will be cut back or cancelled, If researchers can't access information already out there, they may find that they are 're-inventing' the wheel' - where is Canada's leadership role in that?*
- *Academic researchers and members of the general public will have greatly reduced access to the resources they require and will be less likely to have access to important historical documents in the near and distant future.*
- *ILL is one aspect, but access to government material is also high on the list. Once this access is lost, it is going to be an ongoing struggle to regain access - and the burden of finding things falls to other library staff outside government.*
- *I work at a special library with an archives and the elimination of the NADP will impact our ability to preserve and to make accessible our archival holdings to the public. We have occasionally borrowed material via interlibrary loan from federal libraries and the cuts to this service will affect our library. In addition, our library has had difficulty in the past securing research assistance from LAC and now it will be even more challenging to get assistance due to LAC's staff cuts (we are located in western Canada and cannot easily visit Ottawa). Material that we need to access remotely from LAC will not be a priority for digitization.*
- *Fewer resources available from both local and national library services due to the myth that all info is now free and accessible easily online. As I realize that this is true for some examples (i.e.: encyclopedias, government reports) any resource who's intellectual property is owned by a publisher is not available for free, because these publishers still need to make money. Of course the way that libraries acquire material can be changed to be more cost effective; however it would be detrimental if their ability to acquire was greatly diminished.*

Research

- *My federal library services were cut from my department. Numerous employees have asked me how they are supposed to conduct research and obtain documents for their projects, which include government wide initiatives and other public services. The decision to cut library services impact multiple levels of government services.*

Interlibrary Loans

- *The loss of interlibrary loan services will have a huge impact; we have used the LAC collection extensively. Cuts to archival programs and funding to regional archives will also greatly affect our ability to field history questions.*
- *Closing the Interlibrary Loan Service from the National Library and Archives collections will impact on our patrons, as access to documents will be severely curtailed, unless our patrons can afford to go to Ottawa to access National Library and Archives Materials. Patrons will lose access to our documentary history and culture as a result.*
- *Limited Interlibrary loan services, a weakening of the cultural heritage of Canada.*
- *Our ILL department will be directly impacted especially where we cannot identify locations; the national library has been supplying these locations for difficult items.*

- *I am most interested in the future housing and collection of archival genealogical materials, in addition to the inter-library loan program. As the local history librarian at my branch I have numerous times placed inter-library loan orders to LAC for patrons conducting research on their family history. These records are not available anywhere else. Canadians want, need, and indeed have a right to continue to have access to these materials. With the inter-library loan program and digitization resources both under threat, how will access continue? Additionally, our cultural and historical record will be greatly reduced in scope and quality.*
- *Proposed cuts to LAC's ILL unit are troubling as it removes a vital cog in the ILL network across North America. Many university libraries operate on the assumption that LAC will preserve and make available reference copies in their holdings in a timely manner.*
- *I am concerned the lack of ILL will be felt and most especially by our researchers. The cuts to cataloguers will mean fewer Canadian specific records to be copy catalogued. That the lack of collections acquisition will impact our researchers not having access to important material.*
- *My library requests information and interlibrary loans regularly from LAC on behalf of our patrons (departmental staff and their clients). Lack of access to this information and library material will have a profound impact on their work which consists of high profile issues.*
- *My institution has already lost a fully-funded grant for next year through the NADP. The demise of ILL strikes a blow to the very heart of what it means to have a national library network - we make heavy use of LAC ILL and virtually every library system I know of does the same.*
- *Working in a rural library, I am concerned about the impact that the cuts to the Interlibrary Loan program will have, particularly for rural patrons who are working on research or genealogical projects, for which many resources have not been digitized. I am also concerned about the impact that these cuts will have to the adoption of RDA.*
- *Killing the ILL program will have a tremendous impact on scholars and our students. See: Joanna Duy, citing Collette Mak, "Resource Sharing among ARL Libraries in the US: 35 Years of Growth," Interlending and Document Supply 39, no. 1 (2011): 30.*
- *No more ILL's from LAC: when we use them as a source, they are frequently the only place that has the item we are seeking for our client. Losing this service will mean losing access to vital Canadian research material.*
- *I am very concerned about the closing of Interlibrary Loan services at LAC and other libraries. LAC has a very unique collection of Canadian material especially newspapers, that will no longer be accessible to citizens across Canada.*

Community Access Program

- *End of CAP funding decreases ability of library to assist people affected by the Digital Divide to access essential government services.*
- *Loss of CAP funding means the ability to provide free access to the Internet to disadvantaged Canadians, newcomers from outside Canada is threatened.*

- *The loss of CAP puts our rural branches in a financial bind. The demand is there since many rural communities have very poor Internet access and/or many rural residents don't have the financial capacity to pay for Internet.*
- *As the Director of a small public library, I, and my Board depend upon meager CAP funds to maintain our public access internet service which, among other services helps people access federal government information vital to their lives (work-related, taxation, settlement, etc.).*
- *The cancellation of the CAP (Community Access Program) will call into question if and how to fund public internet services in public libraries in the future.*
- *CAP cuts will affect staffing technology equity in small and Aboriginal public libraries.*
- *Federal CAP program being cancelled will affect our continued ability to provide Internet access to the public.*

Preservation

- *Lack of timely access to Canada's documentary and archival heritage (e.g. when seeking copyright permission to use a photograph in the Library and Archives Canada collection for use in a to-be published article); deterioration in terms of the preservation and conservation of these precious resources.*
- *Loss of access, acquisition and preservation of very useful and significant resources for Canada.*
- *The lack of digitization and preservation mandate is very concerning as we make decisions to discard items from our collection.*

Staffing Cuts/Shortages

- *At my local level, we are constantly stretched to maintain regular levels of service despite staffing cuts.*
- *Reduced funding for collections and staffing at Greater Victoria Public Library and McPherson Library, University of Victoria.*
- *The decision to cut the cataloguing staff is also flawed. The cataloguing performed by the LAC and the AMICUS catalogue are both flawed and have been throughout the decade I've been acquainted with them. I do not feel this is due to a lack of interest in doing a good job by the LAC staff; instead, it's due to a lack of funding, a lack of adequate personnel, and a dearth in interest in the subject by the administration. This affects all libraries that seek cataloguing from the national library. Instead, libraries will seek their cataloguing from other institutions, such as the Library of Congress. In other words, the LAC is in the second tier already, do we wish it to be in the third tier? According to the present response to the LAC cuts, it appears certain individuals do.*

Digital

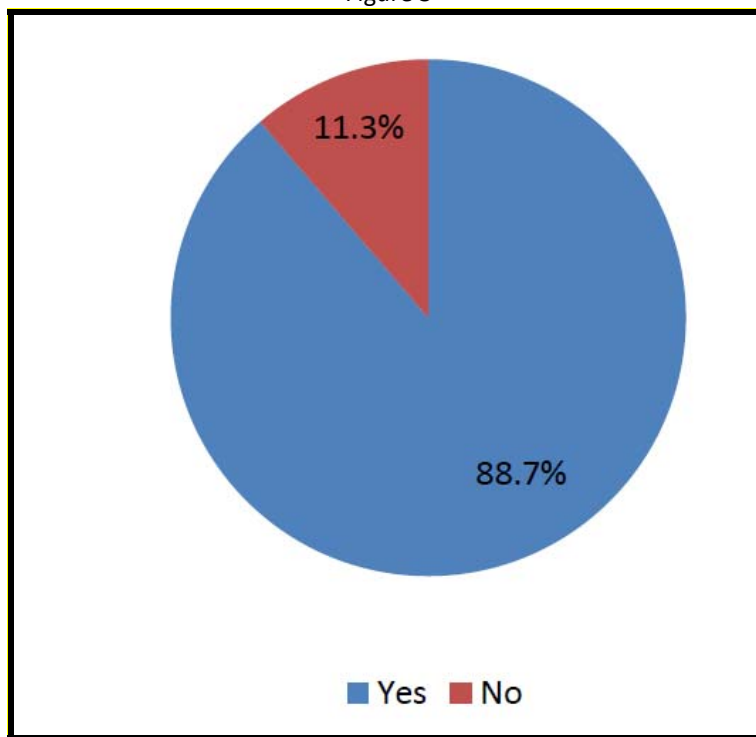
- *For present and future clientele, the cuts to digitization staff are bound to limit future electronic access.*
- *Digitization - lack of capacity and strategy.*
- *I am greatly concerned by this emphasis towards digitization as the solution to everything. While digitization may only require one person on the service frontline, the back-end support services for digitization, including the act of digitizing resources, is incredibly capital and labour intensive. An organization cannot do more with less, it can only offer less and less until it becomes increasingly irrelevant. Digitized items must not only be imaged but also processed; metadata needs to be added, and the more complete the metadata is, the more likely the resource will be found, otherwise the point of digitizing the item is lost, much like the item/file itself. Under the current funding regime, LAC is certainly about to become that.*

3: GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Survey Question 3: In line with CLA’s mission as the national voice for Canada’s library communities, CLA will expand its current lobby initiatives with M.P.s, to inform them about the potential impact of federal cuts. If CLA provided a toolkit, would you support and/or participate in a similar campaign to reach M.P.s in their ridings?

The majority of survey respondents indicated that they would participate in a grassroots toolkit campaign to reach M.P.s in their ridings (Figure 3):

Figure 3



CLA is pleased to see that the majority of survey respondents are willing to participate in targeted grassroots advocacy campaigns. As politicians still respond best to strong, local pressure, CLA members can play an important role in helping to get CLA’s messages across by interacting and communicating with elected officials directly, one-on-one.

4: GENERAL MEMBER FEEDBACK

Survey Question 4: CLA advocates on national policies that have local impacts. Do you have specific advice or concerns that you wish to share with the CLA Executive Council?

CLA provided an opportunity for members to voice their concerns freely, through this open-ended question, in order to encourage feedback on key concerns/issues of importance. This feedback is critical to help shape CLA's communications and advocacy strategy moving forward.

CLA received a total of 190 responses; again, each member response was different. Common themes derived from member responses include:

1. Budget cuts to federal libraries and Library and Archives Canada
2. Community Access Program
3. Copyright
4. Access to Information
5. National Archival Development Program
6. A need for continued advocacy and bigger "public rallying"

While it is challenging to quantify the value of importance for each member response, it is worth highlighting the following brief snapshot. Please note some survey responses have been edited for legibility purposes:

- *Thank you for getting involved and representing Canadian libraries!*
- *This survey is a step in the right direction to find out what the membership is concerned about and act on it. It seems that the CLA has not been a strong voice for championing concerns about the new directions of LAC, the lack of transparency on how decisions are made at LAC, and way professionals are being treated, insecurity of jobs, etc.*
- *I am happy to see the CLA taking on an advocacy role at the national level. I have seen so many of this government's actions directly impact my local community negatively. For example the canceling of the CAP program has resulted in my local public library left unable to pay for public internet service. This government's cuts are impacting the poorest and most vulnerable of my community.*
- *I believe this is a critical function of CLA. Please keep up the advocacy.*
- *I really hope that the CLA will be doing more than just contacting MPs and letting them know about the impact that these cuts will have on Canadians. This isn't enough. You should also be rallying the public around this issue. You could do this by launching a public marketing campaign that looks at the role of federal government libraries and that LAC, the impact of the cuts, and what this will mean for Canadians. The CLA needs to remind government officials at all levels, the public, businesses, civil society groups, and other community stake holders about the valuable role that public libraries play in this country. They should also be reminded that public libraries require adequate funding to deliver important services that Canadians rely on.*

- *CLA should be defending the value of the library profession since the national archivist and librarian seems incapable or unwilling to do so. The CLA should be advocating for the protection of Canada's National Library as the library of last resort for the publications that fall within its collecting mandate.*
- *Advocate on the worth of libraries and use business models to show cost effectiveness of libraries - including adequate staffing and access to information.*
- *I don't feel that CLA has been very vocal about its support of libraries. Too often it seems that the CLA is not willing to take a strong stance. I felt very disappointed at what has happened so far with the CLA's stance regarding the cuts not just to the LAC-BAC cuts but also the other Federal cuts which will have an impact on my library.*
- *My concern is that the CLA is not being assertive enough in regards to LAC, and that the existing efforts have been to try and work with the cuts, rather than to argue against them, or resist them. If our own associations cannot argue against these cuts, we are in very bad shape indeed.*

5: CONCLUSION

It is clear that Canada's libraries have been and continue to be directly impacted, in many ways, by the budget cuts to federal libraries and to Library and Archives Canada. It is even more clear that CLA members are prepared to stand up and fight for Canada's libraries.

CLA remains committed to achieving critical goals through a proactive advocacy and communications strategy, including building awareness and raising the profile of the importance of Canada's libraries. Based on these survey results, CLA will engage in and execute a targeted, direct CLA-branded advocacy and public awareness campaign to express our concerns to government and make all Canadians aware of the impacts of these cuts.

This survey was the first step in CLA's advocacy strategy . It has helped to identify key member concerns and issues of importance. Further strategic elements of the campaign will include:

- setting realistic goals and objectives, outlining desired outcomes and acceptable alternatives;
- determining target audiences, including elected officials (both federal and provincial), public servants, the media, the general public, and members;
- developing a formal position, including key messages;
- developing a tactical action plan, highlighting key activities and timelines;
- maintaining communications and continuing to develop relationships with target audiences; and
- keeping CLA members informed of progress and seeking ongoing feedback.

The Canadian Library Association would like to thank those members who responded to this advocacy survey. The feedback is appreciated and will serve as a valuable tool in our advocacy efforts.