



To: Jonathan Bengtson, “Coming out of COVID” Library Fund (CCLF) adjudication committee

From: Pia Russell, British Columbia Historical Textbooks (BCHT) primary investigator

Date: April 26, 2023

Re: British Columbia Historical Textbooks Interactive Digital Library

Project description

Due to a SSHRC Insight grant and strong institutional support from the University Librarian, the British Columbia Historical Textbooks (BCHT) Interactive Digital Library project is a successful, ongoing initiative within UVic Libraries. BCHT is a successful collaboration including student Research Assistants, Indigenous community members, and Faculty co-investigators and involves multiple library units such as Special Collections, Digitization, Reconciliation, and Metadata. With the project’s aim to use digital technologies to preserve and increase access to central primary sources from the history of education in the province, BCHT also provides a significant opportunity for decolonizing collective historical narratives and working towards broad public dialogue for reconciliation.

The BCHT aligns closely with the libraries’ following six strategic directions:

Open

- Strengthen seamless discovery and access to resources to enable learning, teaching, and research
- Develop effective processes to prioritize and communicate activities and initiatives that include opportunities for dialogue and engagement within UVic Libraries and across the University of Victoria

Enduring

- Invest in preservation expertise, infrastructure, and partnerships in order to provide sustainable access to knowledge

Engaged

- Provide experiential learning opportunities for students and the broader community
- Continue to build sustainable partnerships and collaborations with a wide range of external communities
- Deepen research, instruction, and curriculum partnerships across all disciplines

Timeline

While the BCHT project is an ongoing effort across multiple library units, much of the current work is being completed within the time frame planned for the SSHRC Insight grant. This grant was set to conclude in the spring of 2023 with an automatic year extension to March 2024. To further leverage the current grant and effectively position the project for future grant applications to SSHRC and Heritage Canada, additional CCLF funding proved essential to maintain momentum in the 2022-23 fiscal year. Thank you again for this generous support.

Goals

Overview goals of the BCHT project include:

1. Strengthen relationships and draw upon guidance by local Indigenous community partners
2. Develop an authoritative textbook inventory, database, and monograph-style catalogue
3. Build pedagogical tools that centre upon these historical textbooks in order to develop equity-focused, historical consciousness curriculum for K-12 and post-secondary learners and educators
4. Design equity-focused digital public exhibits related to the textbook collection that provide essential interpretative content that fosters critical dialogue to broad public audiences
5. Publish a website to contain the project and host its critical and interpretative content
6. Provide superb experiential learning opportunities for talented undergraduate and graduate Research Assistants as well as meaningful employment experiences to recent graduates

CCLF funding successfully achieved outcomes related to the above six goals and particularly to goals one and two.

Budget

The BCHT is an iterative project which responds nimbly to the strengths of available team members and existing library workflows and capacities—it ebbs and flows as time and resources permit.

Long-term additional grant applications will be submitted to Heritage Canada, SSHRC Insight, and MITACS to extend this project into future phases. Routine requests will also be made to UVic's Work Study and Co-op programs as well as Heritage Canada's Young Canada Works program.

The original request for CCLF funding, included the following:

Listed in order of request priority:	
1. Elder time for about 30 hours (\$150 per hour)	\$4,500
2. Lunch during three project planning days for elders, educators, and selected team members (\$500 per day of a lunch event)	\$1,500
3. Honorarium and travel for four K-12 teacher project collaborators (\$500 per person)	\$2,000
4. Undergraduate Research Assistant for about 175 hours (~\$20 per hour)	\$3,500
5. Graduate Research Assistant for about 120 hours (~\$27 per hour)	\$3,240
6. Registration for three RAs to complete the UAlberta Indigenous Canada MOOC (\$70 per participant)	\$210
	\$14,950

*This lecture event will be the focus of a SSHRC Partnership grant application currently under development.

**This event will be the focus of two other grant applications currently in progress to Heritage Canada and SSHRC Connections programs.

Funds spent	
1. Undergraduate Research Assistant for about 400 hours (~\$22 per hour)	\$9,566
2. Indigenous Research Assistant for about 195 hours (\$30 per hour)	\$5,934
	\$15,500

Modifications

Budget priority one for Elder time changed over the course of the grant as the original elder on our project could be paid out of the SSHRC grant because that funding had additional funds made available. Funds for this were re-directed to hire an Indigenous Research Assistant, Lacey Jones (see below). Priority two regarding a planning lunch was not able to happen as the available Elder was unable to meet when originally planned due to the passing of multiple family members this past Fall. We re-directed these funds to an Indigenous Research Assistant and Undergraduate Research Assistant, Chloe Kitt. Priority three for teacher honorariums were not utilized because the planning days could not happen, as outlined above; we hope to revive this idea in 2024. Budget priority four was able to be enhanced due to changes in priorities one, two, and three. Budget priority five was able to be expanded by hiring an Indigenous Research Assistant who was a recent UVic MA graduate, namely Lacey Jones. Priority six was not required as both research assistants already had completed this or had equivalent training. Last year's campus-wide hiring freeze also posed challenges. By retaining an existing undergraduate research assistant, we could pivot funds without losing the position. Very fortunately, the Indigenous Research Assistant position was a new posting that was a rare one approved by VPAC despite the freeze, for this we were very grateful.

Outcomes

- **Indigenous-led, historical analysis** of textbook titles up to 1900. The Indigenous Research Assistant spent hours in the Special Collections classroom and reading room conducting close-readings of the textbook sources to identify future topics for digital displays and lesson plans. This was intensive, often upsetting work, but ensured that the entire BCHAT project continues to be deeply informed by local Indigenous ways of knowing and being, as well as taking a critical lens to understanding collective historical consciousness. This analysis also built important community relationships for future work to come.
- Completion of a 381-page **monograph** titled: *Authorization of Textbooks for the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1871-1921*. This outcome is an essential component of the entire BCHAT project moving forward. It will serve as the authoritative listing of government prescribed textbooks and a critical research guide for researchers and students in BC and beyond. The amount of historical and archival research required to complete this was considerable and took the bulk of the Undergraduate Research Assistant's time. This assistant will also get co-authorship of this publication.
- Completion of a 45-page **wish-list** of titles that the library does not yet have but that would complete the collection. This also took considerable time for historical and archival research. This wish-list will also serve as an important reference document when liaising with other university libraries for future collection collaboration.
- **Marginalia inventory**. The Undergraduate Research Assistant was also able to systematically go through ranges of textbook years to inventory examples of student marginalia. This is significant as it provides evidence for children's creativity from the past—a rare and much sought after research need. Analysis of these samples will also contribute to scholarship on the history of the book and particularly traces within the book. A conference presentation based on this inventory has been accepted to the annual symposium of the University of Oxford's Centre for the History of Childhood.
- The Undergraduate Research Assistant was able to finalize completion of **physical inventorying and sorting** of donated textbooks awaiting digitization, cataloguing, and transfer to Special Collections.

Summary

The BCHAT project is a meaningful and rewarding project with considerable potential to operationalize UVic Libraries' Strategic Directions as well as university-wide goals for reconciliation. The BCHAT project's success to-date is made possible by a superb institutional support, which the team is most grateful for.

Thank you for your continued financial and moral support of this project.

Pia