



# CANADIAN EBOOKS IN K-12 EDUCATION

*Association of Canadian Publishers*

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## 1.

# INTRODUCTION

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*“Restrictions associated with the pandemic have made access to reading resources extremely challenging. School districts are making massive shifts to online learning and face huge challenges in providing quality learning resources in that environment.”*

[canadianschoollibraries.ca](http://canadianschoollibraries.ca)

The above quote captures the reality of schools and districts across the country since early March 2020. In response to a significant increase in requests from educators seeking digital content to support distance and blended learning, the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) commissioned this report to help its members better understand how to make their reading resources accessible in digital formats to the school market in Canada. The restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the move to virtual learning have meant that traditional print books, the most common format used in K-12 schools in Canada, are difficult or impossible to access. The COVID-19 protocols imposed on physical books differ vastly across the country, ranging from curbside pickup outside schools to personal delivery by teachers to complete closure of school and library facilities.

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, the entire educational apparatus—from provincial ministries of education down to individual schools—has rushed to implement virtual learning for all students. The approaches have varied both geographically and over time as educators coast to coast responded, and continue to respond, to changing local pandemic circumstances. Many places have experienced full-time virtual learning as well as several versions of hybrid learning, combining online and in-person instruction. Some jurisdictions have been able to provide robust online learning platforms, quality professional development for teachers, and a vibrant and resource-rich environment for students. Most jurisdictions, however, have struggled to meet the challenges of sudden and massive change. Inequities and barriers to access are significant features of the learning and resource landscape. This report will focus on how these factors impact the availability and use of Canadian-authored fiction and nonfiction books in digital format.

One of the key findings of our research and not a surprise to any on our team is that fiction and nonfiction ebooks have been eclipsed by the proliferation of other digital resources. As teaching methodologies have evolved over the past 15 to 20 years, the growth of the digital market has been exponential. Many of these resources support differentiated instruction, link meaningfully to curriculum, and offer attractive interactive features.

The incredibly rapid deployment of virtual learning has demonstrated that digital resources can no longer be considered a choice or a luxury. Educational jurisdictions must develop and build capacity in order to provide virtual learning to all students in Canada. Resource providers wishing to participate in the K-12 school market must, similarly, develop and build capacity in products, sales, and services. The arena is complex, crowded, competitive, and chaotic. Currently, the digital products published by ACP members make up a very small fraction of this market and are largely absent for teachers and students in a virtual environment.

Though Canadian publishers have developed considerable digital capacity, many who serve the educational market have not previously forecasted an adequate return on investment to warrant producing customized digital products for this market. The small- and medium-sized companies that comprise ACP's membership focus almost exclusively on publishing content by Canadian creators that reflects the Canadian reality and experience. The membership includes companies with experience developing core K-12 curriculum materials as well trade publishers whose books appear in classroom and school library collections, often with strong links to curriculum. Competing with the large multinational companies that dominate the K-12 market is a long-standing challenge for ACP members. With the shift to digital learning, this reality risks becoming even more entrenched, despite the rich and relevant content available from ACP member companies.

Online learning, supported by digital resources, is here to stay. Teachers and students who have returned to in-person learning are continuing to use the technology and resources that were thrust upon them by the pandemic. Our team is confident that all educators, educational suppliers, and distribution partners are already moving into a collaborative effort to reshape the way schools work and students learn. The opportunities for ACP members going forward are great, whether with quality, trade fiction and nonfiction or with curriculum-specific resources. Given the quantity and quality of available fiction and nonfiction titles, ACP member firms are uniquely positioned to ensure that Canadian students hear Canadian voices.

## Research Methodology

Due to the pandemic, the research for this report was carried out virtually. Information was solicited from a variety of sources, across the country. Interviews and survey-style questions were used to garner information on a one-to-one basis, and survey responses were solicited through Mindshare Learning, a Canadian EdTech information company. All responses were provided on the condition of anonymity.

*Our researchers interviewed educators from the following groups:*

- Senior-level directors, superintendents, and curriculum leaders
- Board, district, and division-level managers in IT and library positions
- School librarians
- Teachers

*We also interviewed a number of individuals from the publishing, EdTech, and software industries in the following positions:*

- CEOs
- Directors and managers
- Elearning specialists
- Digital specialists
- Senior executives and marketers from various ACP member firms and affiliated companies

This cross section of individuals provided us with a current snapshot of the technology ecosystem in Canadian schools, a narrative on the impact of the pandemic on learning and resources, and a launch pad for strategic thinking about the digital market in K-12 schools going forward.

*Research team members:*

- Brian O'Donnell
- John Doherty
- Martyn Beckett
- Robert Martellacci

*(See Appendix A: Research Team Biographies.)*

## 2.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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*“Like jurisdictions around the globe, the pandemic has highlighted the need for enhanced digital learning. This significant investment will ensure we are able to provide all students, regardless of the situation with COVID-19, every possible opportunity to succeed.”*

July 6, 2020, Honourable Brian Warr

then Minister of Education, now Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, for Newfoundland and Labrador, in response to the province’s \$20 million funding announcement

### Introduction

At the start of 2020, many school districts in Canada were well on their way to implementing a strategic digital path for their teachers and students. This path included not only the technology but also the digital tools and resources needed for instruction and learning. The onset of the pandemic in March 2020, however, highlighted many gaps in the systems as schools started to implement full time, online instruction. Educators faced a shortage of devices for students, a lack of robust internet connectivity, and an inadequate supply of digital resources. Professional development in the area of effective online instruction was needed as many teachers had little or no experience using technology and digital resources. Quality of resources was also an issue in some curriculum areas, prompting numerous requests for ebook versions of print books currently in use. Districts that were the furthest down the digital path simply accelerated implementation with the goal of encompassing their entire educational ecosystem, and these districts were notably successful. Conversely, many districts across the country were unable to offer any form of home-based, online instruction.

It is safe to say that the majority of school districts in Canada were not on solid footing with respect to the dramatic shift to virtual learning. The pandemic threw a harsh light on the reality that steady, gradual adoption of digital learning resources over the past dozen or more years was not enough to provide universal access to education in a crisis. The inequities and resource gaps across the country are considerable. This section will focus on the access, availability, and usage of Canadian-authored digital resources published by member firms of ACP. The section concludes with senior leaders’ and classroom-level educators’ perspectives on the current environment for acquiring digital resources to support virtual learning—and on the need to be ready to support whatever learning models may arise in K-12 schools going forward.

## *Basic Infrastructure for Accessing Ebooks*

In order for students to access ebooks (or any other digital resources), they require the appropriate devices, and their schools must be linked to a central board or district platform, which is, in some cases, linked with the province's chosen platform. This is the essential backbone of all digital access. However, we heard from many educators, particularly those in rural or remote communities, that students often lack internet access or adequate broadband.

*“Big concern is access to technology for kids to use e-readers. A lot of kids at our school do not have access to tech at home.”*

**Teacher, Durham District School Board**

Combined with a lack of devices, the lack of internet connectivity has made a switch to virtual learning extremely difficult for many students. This applies to online access within schools as well. A recent report titled *Technology in Schools – A Tool and a Strategy*, released by People for Education in May of 2020, indicated that more than 30% of Ontario's classrooms did not have internet connectivity, and 25% of schools had WiFi only through a hotspot or single source.

All provinces are working diligently to make internet access available in all regions, and these initiatives, combined with new and emerging technologies, continue to improve students' access to virtual learning. In November 2020, the government of Ontario announced an investment of nearly \$1 billion over six years to improve and expand broadband and cellular access across the province. Access to broadband is a core component of the province's Learn at Home plan. Reliable internet, particularly in rural and remote areas, is seen as essential to supporting students' success in school.

*“At present, 1.4 million Ontarians lack access to broadband services that meet the CRTC's minimum service standards, many in rural and northern areas.”*

**Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy,**  
**Minister of Finance for Ontario, November 4, 2020**

## Student Access to Ebooks

For a student with a device and adequate connectivity, the process of accessing ebooks is relatively simple. The flowchart below shows how students can select fiction and nonfiction ebooks from home, from their classrooms, or from their library commons. Individual ACP member firms need to ensure that students (and teachers) can access Canadian-authored books through the established platforms and services by negotiating the inclusion of their titles in these collections. It is important to highlight that many of resources published by ACP member firms are currently represented in these collections, though specific data on public library sales versus K-12 school sales is not provided by the platforms in their reporting to publishers. *The suppliers of digital fiction and nonfiction titles are listed in Appendix B.*



The importance of a presence in “collections” is highlighted below. Teachers have access to a number of programs that allow them to build appealing classroom homepages with links to provincial, district, and school resources. For example, **Google Bitmoji Classroom** allows teachers to display digital learning resources on the class “bookshelf.” Canadian-authored and published books will be readily accessible if they are “in the box on the shelf.”



## *Print Book Availability: Supply Chain to K-12 Schools*

The print book supply chain to K-12 schools is well established and highly effective. Traditionally, Canadian-published books have found their way into schools through library wholesale vendors. These companies offer titles from many publishers and organize titles by age range, topic, genre, and curriculum connections. Library wholesale vendors also respond to RFPs from provinces or districts. These vendors rarely carry textbooks or reference materials, which are generally sold by individual publishers. So, buyers rely on wholesalers to provide quality trade books curated in a way that allows them to make purchases targeted to their specific district or school needs. In many instances, library wholesalers are the sole source of fiction and nonfiction books for schools.

The library wholesaler system has relied heavily on face-to-face sales. Vendors set up displays, known as “take aways,” at conferences and professional development meetings whereby teachers and librarians can see a wide variety of new and popular titles and walk away with a personally selected box (or more!) of books. Teachers and librarians have also been warmly welcomed at wholesaler warehouses, where, again, they make on-the-spot purchases using funds allocated by the board or individual schools. Although these forms of supply continue to exist, their importance in sales for publishers has been much diminished by the pandemic and the move to virtual learning. This said, everyone we interviewed felt that print books would continue to hold a key place in the education system, particularly in the early grades and for developing readers.

## *Digital Book Availability: Supply Chain to K-12 Schools*

Over the past ten years, many school libraries have morphed into “The Learning Commons,” a new name that reflects the reality that the traditional “room with books” is now a hub with books, technology, and digital resources connected to platforms and services beyond the physical confines of the school itself. Indeed, the new library commons has begun to morph further into a “virtual learning commons.” (See *Cross-Country Snapshots*, page 21)

The digital resources in the library commons vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, depending on funding, but the supply chain falls into four basic categories. Publishers wishing to sell ebooks to the K-12 market must find themselves represented in one or more of these categories. (See *Appendix B: Digital Library Resources*.)

1. A robust catalog of available ebooks in multiple formats and with multiple licensing and purchasing options. Customers select and purchase individual titles from these vast collections. The two services most prominent in the English K-12 market in Canada are Follett Destiny and Overdrive Sora. The ebooks in these collections are mainly fiction and nonfiction trade books. (A project funded by the Quebec Ministry of Education called Biblius will offer schools in Quebec access to ebooks in a fashion similar to Follett Destiny and Overdrive Sora.)
2. A curated collection of titles tagged by age and grade level, available on a subscription basis for schools, districts, or provinces. A subscription gives the purchasers access to the entire collection. Examples of this type of offering are Tumblebooks, Big Timber, MackinVia, and Capstone Interactive. The ebooks in these collections are fiction and nonfiction books organized in a school-friendly way. Often the ebooks in these collections are supported by read-aloud, read-along, and highlighted words features.

3. A curated collection of titles tagged by age and grade level, available free to schools. Users have access to the entire collection. The ebooks in these collections are fiction and nonfiction books. The most widely used example of this type of product in Canada is Epic. The Epic free-to-schools sales model is built on home subscriptions.
4. A structured, curriculum-based collection of levelled ebooks with instructional and assessment components and many interactive features. These products are generally sold on the basis of an annual license. Pearson Canada's Spark and Learning A-Z's Raz Kids are examples of this category.

These different types of ebook offerings are usually licensed at the district or board level, although some jurisdictions also allow purchasing at the school level. Ebooks compete for budget dollars with the much larger category of digital learning resources as well as with the proliferation of free and (OER) Open Educational Resources. Due to limited budgets, some districts and schools have circumvented this problem by linking their library commons directly with local libraries, which offer a similar range of ebook products. Currently, Canadian-authored ebooks published by ACP members are under-represented in these product categories. In other words, the availability and use of Canadian fiction and nonfiction ebooks is low.

## *Current District Leadership Perspective*

Canadian school districts are led by a senior educational official, known variously as a Director of Education or Superintendent. These individuals, along with a senior team, are responsible for all day-to-day operations, including staffing and resource procurement.

The information in this section is summarized from conversations and written submissions from school system leaders across Canada. By way of broad overview, educational leaders said that the past year has exposed a host of weak spots in the delivery of education in K-12 schools, notably a lack of preparedness for online learning, an inadequate supply of Canadian digital resources and resources to support equity, limited funds for digital resources, unfair licensing models, and digital library resources with insufficient curriculum support.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Senior administration identified a number of challenges as schools closed to in-person learning. One of the first to hit was a simple lack of preparedness. Classroom resources were largely in print form and many teachers had been reluctant to embrace digital

resources that were offered. The shift to digital resources had been slow, if steady, in part because of teacher resistance but significantly because of the perceived high cost of digital resources. In a matter of days, an evolving process had to pivot to an operational process. Teachers and students needed to be able to access digital materials with the same ease that they had had with print resources. As noted earlier, jurisdictions varied dramatically in adaptability across the country.

Districts identified equity as a prime consideration in selecting resources for teacher and student use. They defined this as resources reflecting every child's lived reality from the perspectives of ethnicity, family context, sexual orientation, and disability. Within this discussion, the need for more high-quality Canadian resources in print and digital formats was often cited. Additionally, tools such as ReadWrite™ (text to speech software) to support library resources were cited as part of any purchasing decision.

School library budgets tend to be very modest, which poses a problem from the outset when considering digital resources. The difficulty is compounded, in the minds of some leaders, by the nature of licensing models. For example, in one situation, a district leader reported that a product was licensed at a low introductory price, then the price was increased once the product had regular usage among schools. The district was faced with a frustrating choice: continue to pay for something it could not afford or cancel and create discontent in schools. The district cited this as an unfair practice. In another case, a district leader reported that the district was required to license more product than it intended to use and was, as a result, taxed with determining which titles covered by the license were of greatest value and negotiating licensing of that subset of the whole.

The recommendation of the districts in these cases was that licensing for digital resources should be flexible and designed such that districts could license only what they needed. One district noted that the ability to purchase a title outright for student and teacher use was an attractive purchasing option.

In Ontario, district leaders indicated that they would like library resources to be linked to the provincial curriculum. Teachers are busy and resources linked to the curriculum are more likely to be used in the classroom.

Publishers should be aware of the importance of a seamless link of digital resources to a district's learning management system (LMS). In Ontario, senior administration most often identified Google Classroom and Brightspace (a D2L product) as being in regular use. Products that could not be integrated with the LMS would not be purchased. It is worthwhile to note that ACP member firms' digital resources are currently technologically compatible with these platforms.

## KEY LEARNINGS

School districts are moving much more actively to the use of digital tools for teaching and learning. Districts that were implementing one-to-one devices for student use have accelerated their pace in order to ensure that students have access to learning should schools need to close in-person learning again.

One Ontario director noted that, through the timeframe of the pandemic, digital library resources could be used by multiple students without additional work, whereas paper resources needed to be cleaned between each use, requiring precious staff time. In this case, the use of digital resources was determined to be superior to paper.

Professional development support for teachers is important and has become increasingly so during the pandemic, as new software tools become available, and district central office staff wish to ensure smooth implementation. To this point, a consideration in purchasing library resources may include the provision of staff professional development to guarantee a smooth rollout. Every school district interviewed identified staff development as a factor in the implementation of digital resources for teaching and learning.

School districts are very focused on literacy as part of their core mission. Levelled library resources will be attractive to boards as they consider purchases of fiction and nonfiction ebooks. Levelled library resources that offer curriculum links, student activities, teaching notes, and assessment items will receive the most favorable attention.

One of the lingering questions arising from the pandemic is whether or not schools will return to full-time, in-person learning, or perhaps be more of a blended learning model, where students are in class for a portion of their educational career and using remote tools for the remainder. Indeed, what will the learning ecosystem look like? However time answers that question, it is certain that digital tools will be vital.

## *Classroom Perspective*

Approximately 60-70% of school districts across Canada operate using a decentralized purchasing model. In this model, decisions about classroom resources are made at the individual school level and often at the individual teacher level. While this model provides the ultimate flexibility and choice for teachers to determine what resources work best for their specific class and set of students, it adds additional layers of complexity when it comes to the selection of digital resources and ebooks for both the educators and ACP member firms. The pandemic has pushed all teachers into the digital resource world whether they were ready or not and has added additional support and service requirements onto the publishers.

Consider the list of factors school-based educators must address when searching for ebooks: curriculum relevance, age appropriateness, genre, reading level, bias and inclusivity, license terms and options, broadcast rights, privacy issues, compatibility with in-place learning management systems and other digital platforms. Understandably, the learning curve for educators in a decentralized purchasing model is steep and the time commitment to purchase a digital classroom resource is significantly higher than for a print selection. It is for these reasons that platforms such as Overdrive Sora and Follett Destiny, as well as the array of additional content aggregating platforms, remain the most obvious connection points for both educators and publishers when it comes to ebooks. The ability to search and source from a trusted and wide-ranging database of titles is critical in helping teachers save time and remain confident their selections will meet the requirements stated above. Overall response to these platforms is very positive and they serve the Canadian market well. However, a serious limitation to these databases is that educators cannot easily search for Canadian-authored and published titles. Neither can educators search for authors writing in their local context, which they would keenly like to be able to do.

With the above in mind, it's easy to see why teachers find comfort in curated collections, such as Tumblebooks, and curriculum-based collections, such as Pearson Canada's Spark. The fiction and nonfiction ebooks in these types of products offer access to a wide range of topics and titles with vetted content, instructional supports, and friendly interfaces. Ebooks published by ACP member firms offering the Canadian content teachers would like are generally not available in these collections.

For many resource suppliers, connecting with educators in a decentralized model, which is the bulk of the K-12 market, remains an ongoing challenge.

## *Summary*

**The pandemic has seen an unprecedented round of spending across the country on technology to address the needs of students and teachers in a virtual learning environment. This move to online learning and instruction has also highlighted the need for digital editions in various formats of books authored and published by Canadians. From the educators polled and interviewed in our research, the majority answered positively to the need for quality Canadian-authored resources. However, the discoverability of Canadian ebook titles remains an ongoing issue. Ebooks published by ACP member firms are generally not easy for educators to find in the four categories of digital resources listed earlier.**

### 3.

# ACQUISITION MODELS AND DIGITAL LICENSING

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## *Introduction*

*This section of the report focuses on two key aspects of the purchasing process used in the K-12 school market:*

- Established approaches and models employed by ministries of education and school districts for purchasing all types of resources
- Current and emerging licensing models for ebooks and other digital resources

## *Established Purchasing Models*

*School districts in Canada typically employ one of four approaches to purchasing resources.*

- A completely centralized approach whereby resources are chosen by district leaders or a committee of experts within the district. Selected resources are implemented across the system.
- A completely decentralized approach whereby resources are chosen at the school or teacher level.
- A hybrid approach whereby some resources are selected and purchased at the district level for system-wide use, and some resources are selected and purchased at the school or teacher level.
- The provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island purchase core curriculum resources at the provincial level for all teachers and students in their provinces. A small percentage of provincial resource dollars in these provinces is downloaded to individual school districts to allow for discretionary spending. This often includes spending on library resources.

Actual purchasing of school resources occurs throughout the year, matching the natural rhythms of the school calendar. New curriculum most often goes live at the start of the

school year, and resource developers strive to be ready for September implementation. As such, the heaviest purchasing months are May and June, or August and September in the case of just-in-time resource delivery. The Atlantic provinces that purchase for their provinces as a whole often make significant purchases in March at the end of their fiscal year.

## *Current and Emerging Licensing Models for Digital Resources*

As noted earlier in this report, the pandemic made K-12 schools nothing short of desperate for digital resources, including fiction and nonfiction ebooks and audio books. Many resource suppliers raced to meet the need, sometimes at reduced cost or with no additional fees, and many fast-tracked digital versions of print titles. This rush of activity has given us a K-12 digital market where the purchasing and licensing options for ebooks and audio books are as varied and numerous as the resource suppliers themselves.

*Most digital license agreements are built on four key considerations.*

- The duration, in time, of the license agreement
- The number of users permitted to access a single title at the same time
- The number of uses allowed for a given title over the length of the agreement
- The option to purchase a digital resource outright, allowing unlimited use, perpetually

*These considerations have given rise to terminology that suppliers and purchasers can use in negotiating a license:*

**CONCURRENT:** Multiple users using a single resource at the same time.

**NON-CONCURRENT:** One user of a resource at any given time.

**NUMBER OF USES:** License expires once a predetermined number of uses is reached.

**LIMITED TIME FRAME OR TERM:** License expires once the agreed-upon time frame is reached, regardless of number of uses (for example, 3 months, 6 months, 2 years).

**PERPETUAL LICENSE:** Customer buys and owns the resource. Unlimited use.

**PAY-PER-USE:** Customer has access to complete libraries or databases and pays only when a title is accessed.

**BUNDLED RESOURCE:** Customer chooses a fixed number of titles with unlimited access for a set price and set length of time, often one year.

The Biblius product currently under development for French-language titles and funded by the Quebec Ministry of Education offers one example of how a license can be structured. *The Biblius terms of service are as follows:*

- The duration of a loan may not exceed 41 days. Renewing an expired loan generates an additional loan in the system.
- All digital books/files can be loaned simultaneously to multiple students and/or staff.
- Books can be borrowed by all school clients (students and staff).
- Reading digital books can be done on any type of device: tablet, computer, smartphone, interactive digital boards, and so on. However, some e-readers may be incompatible.
- Digital files on the platform are subject to a technical protection measure (TPM), which prevents reproduction or access to the file beyond the borrowing period and ensures respect for copyright.

## *Patterns and Trends*

Uncertainty is widespread. All levels of educational jurisdictions across the country recognize that digital resources are needed and that digital resources will benefit the learning experience as schools embrace a post-pandemic, 21st century future. The immediate-term patterns and trends add up to a time of flux—and opportunity. Resource suppliers, whether focused on quality fiction and nonfiction or on products tuned directly to curriculum, need to assess their positioning in relation to acquisition models, products, marketing, and cost. Here are reflections based on these points.

Most every district will implement multiple licensing models for digital resources, including ebooks and audio books. No single model will satisfy the needs of every district or product type, so suppliers need to become agile negotiators. Many jurisdictions are alive to the importance of usage data. Buyers are loath to buy what they do not use. So, deals that provide for shorter licensing terms and flexibility in adding or subtracting to resource lists based on usage data will be a priority.

The current “winners” from a product point of view are Overdrive Sora and Follet Destiny. These databases with multiple licensing options are ubiquitous across the country and generally well liked. A number of jurisdictions are genuinely concerned about the “undiscoverability” of Canadian-authored and published titles in these products, but most are happy with the products themselves. At present, no comparable Canadian databases of resources for the English market are available.

Further to product, Canadian content and Canadian authors who write about the lived realities of Canadian students and local experience are important to educators. However, buying from a Canadian publisher simply because the publisher is Canadian is generally not a priority.

Educators do care about product features. Resources linked by publishers to curriculum expectations and competencies, identified in relation to grade level and reading level, and supported by meaningful activities are highly desirable and trending upwards. Similarly, instructional features, such as read-aloud, read-along, and more technically, the ability to interface with co-reader apps and teachers' desires to manipulate font and colour for projection and to feel confident that broadcast rights are in place are highly desirable. Audio books are highly desirable for English language learners. An example of this is the read-along feature of the Scholastic BookFlix product.

At every level, educators are keen to be current. They rely on the marketing mix of resources suppliers. The vanguard in years past of knowledge of fiction and nonfiction books has been school librarians, and this brain-trust is disappearing. The old channels are fading as well—conferences, library wholesalers' events, publisher displays, and word of mouth. This void is likely to be filled by educator-friendly, searchable databases. *At present, ACP member firms resources are partially represented through the following ACP marketing initiatives:*

- **49th Kids/49th Teachers** (see Appendix C) are sites intended for readers of children's and young adult fiction and nonfiction, 49<sup>th</sup> Teachers includes more than 1,000 teaching resources and 49<sup>th</sup> Kids represents more than 15,000 Canadian authored children's and young adult titles.
- **Top Grade** is a School Library Marketing Project of the ACP that targets decision-makers at the school library level with information and Advance Reading copies of new children's and young adult books produced by Ontario and Canadian publishers.

While the objectives of these initiatives are to provide information and teaching resources to address the K-12 market and to showcase and highlight the children's publishing industry as a whole, there are drawbacks and shortcomings that are addressed in *Challenges and Opportunities: Our Recommendations*, page 25-33.

Not surprisingly, cost is an enormous factor in the acquisition of fiction and nonfiction ebooks and audio books. Unanimously, school districts highlighted budget for ebooks and audio books as an ongoing concern. Budgets for digital library resources at the district level often landed in the range of \$.50-\$1.00 per student, per year. Additional dollars for print resources at the school level are usually in the "bucket of funds" category and the occasional one-time grants from ministries of education do not

appreciably improve the picture. In Ontario, for example, OSAPAC (Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee) is being eliminated. This body advised the ministry on provincial software licenses for all publicly funded schools, and approved software was provided by the province. This is no longer the case. The cost falls now on stretched district and school budgets.

## *Summary*

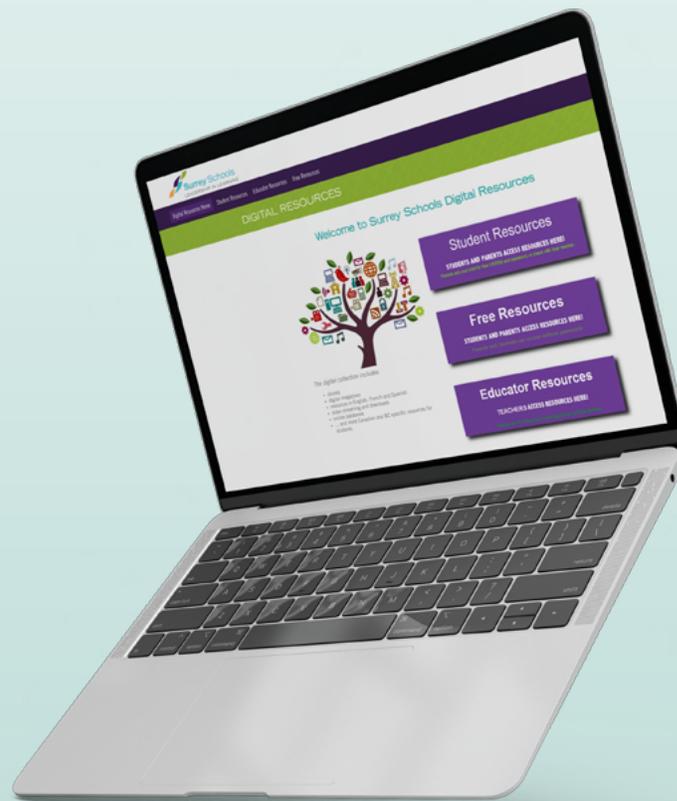
**At the time of this report, COVID-19 restrictions remain in place in many parts of the country. Educators at every level are continuing to adapt to a learning environment that blends and alternates between online and in-person learning. Most expect this situation to persist. In this context, the acquisition of digital resources remains mostly fluid and ad hoc.**

## 4.

# CROSS-COUNTRY SNAPSHOTS

## *Introduction*

This section provides snapshots of the digital learning resources available to staff, students, and parents in three boards of education across the country: **School District 36 Surrey** (British Columbia), **Toronto District School Board** (Ontario), and **English Montreal School Board** (Quebec). The variety and the sheer number of resources highlight the fact that ebooks make up only a small portion of the educational resources designed for online learning. These websites are open to the public, but most of the resources are available only to students with appropriate login credentials. Digital resources are typically organized by product type, and students click on product logos to access content. All three boards offer at least one broad-based collection of fiction and nonfiction ebooks from either Overdrive Sora or Follet Destiny.



# School District 36 Surrey

The following Student Resources screen image indicates the wealth of resources available to students in Surrey School District 36. Fiction and nonfiction books are included in the following applications:

This page contains links to 42 different DATABASES & RESOURCES



**Click Here to Access**  
**WORLD BOOK DISCOVER**  
 Licensed: 3 - 9  
 Multimedia, multi-disciplinary encyclopedia. Includes: online atlas, dictionary, animations, articles, pictures ...  
**LEARN MORE**

Note that there are also many resources available to teachers and parents.

Link: [Digital Resources online at Surrey District School Board](#)

# Toronto District School Board Virtual Library

The following home page image indicates the various resources available to students in Toronto District School Board through the Virtual Library. *The TDSBVL resources are organized in the four categories:*

The screenshot shows the TDSB Virtual Library homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Find Your School', 'New to Canada', 'Policies | Media', 'About Us | Staff | Employment | Leadership | Contact Us', and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there are several icons for 'virtual library', 'eRead', 'my LIBRARY', 'resources & info', and 'Contact Us'. The main content area is divided into four categories, each highlighted with a colored callout box:

- 1. READ (fiction & nonfiction ebook collections):** This category includes links to 'Search Catalogue', 'Français', 'Read Watch Learn', 'Find', 'Inquiry', 'Educator', 'Parent & Family', 'Read', 'Public Library', and 'TL Login'. It also features a 'READ' section with logos for 'LITTLE LEAF BOOK LIBRARY', 'capstone', 'Destiny Discover', 'TEEN', 'Tumble WASH', 'BIG TIMBER MEDIA', and 'tabvue'.
- 2. LEARN K-12 (informational databases):** This category includes links to 'Britannica School', 'Britannica ImageQuest', 'PebbleGo', 'PebbleGo Next', 'CultureGrams', 'Gale in Context: Elementary', 'The Canadian Encyclopedia', 'Explora K-6', and 'Canadian Reference Centre\*'. It also features a 'LEARN 7-12' section with logos for 'GLOBAL ISSUES', 'Teen Health & Wellness', 'Gale eBooks', 'Explora\*', 'AP Source\*', 'Canadian Points of View\*', 'History Reference\*', 'Science Reference\*', 'Literary Reference\*', 'Canadian Literary Centre\*', 'Jobs People Do', and 'edwin'.
- 3. WATCH & LISTEN (videos and audio):** This category includes links to 'CURIO.ca', 'CBC Curio', 'LEARN360', 'Learn360', 'NFB', 'tvo in the Classroom', and 'TVO in the Classroom'.
- 4. MAKE & DO (practical curriculum-based activities):** This category includes links to 'Adobe Spark', 'myBlueprint', 'Scratch', 'Knowledgehook', 'Gizmos', 'Brainingcamp', 'tvo mPower', 'tvo Mathify', and 'Mindomo'.

Link: [Digital Resources online at the Toronto District School Board Virtual Library](#)

## English Montreal School Board

The following Resources for Teachers screen image indicates the wealth of resources available to teachers in the English Montreal School Board. Fiction and nonfiction books are included in the following applications:

This page contains links to 40 different **DATABASES & RESOURCES**

The screenshot shows the 'Resources for TEACHERS' page of the English Montreal School Board Virtual Library. The page has a red header with the logo and navigation links (Home, Resource Descriptions, About, EN, FR). Below the header is a dark grey banner with the title 'Resources for TEACHERS' and a note: '\* Click for login information to Virtual Library resources'. A navigation bar contains buttons for 'All', 'Social Sciences', 'Math and Science', 'eBooks', 'Streaming', 'Professional Resources', 'News and Articles', 'Encyclopedias/Dictionarys', and 'Library Catalogue'. The main content area is a grid of 40 resource logos, each in a colored box. A hand cursor is pointing at the 'TEEN BOOKCLOUD' logo. The logos include: Sociétés & Territoires, GALE IN CONTEXT CANADA, GALE INTERACTIVE SCIENCE, Gizmos, Sora, OverDrive, TumbleBook Library, TEEN BOOKCLOUD, BookFLIX, eduMedia, EBSCOhost, Quebec Reading Connection, LIVRES OUVERTS, HORIZON FLS, LITERACY TODAY, CURIO.CA, NFB EDUCATION, IDELLO, Les guides pédagogiques SCOOP!, The Gazette, Éduc ART, LE JOURNAL DE MONTRÉAL, EUREKA.CC, Canadian Points of View, NATIONAL POST, Britannica School, Canadian Encyclopedia, and UNIVERSALIS Junior.

Note that there are also numerous resources available to students and parents.

Link: [Digital Resources online at the English Montreal School Board](#)

## 5.

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

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## *Introduction*

The most widely and deeply held belief that we encountered in our research is that there is no going back. Educators do not expect and do not really seek a full return to pre-pandemic styles of teaching and learning. As these fundamentals are re-imagined, so too must be the fundamentals of resource development, marketing, and sales. The picture contains much good news. Student access to high-speed internet and mobile devices is rapidly increasing, and this helps to address some equity issues. Teachers have gained experience and confidence with technology, digital resources, and online learning. Indeed, this may prove to be an inflection point for K-12 education in Canada. More, not fewer, resources from Canadian publishers are needed. This section will detail the challenges and opportunities for ACP member firms going forward.

## Resource Development and Formats

Fiction and nonfiction ebooks are in demand, but resources must address equity, accessibility, and unique learner needs to be successful. Multiple formats are essential in an online learning environment. A short list of desired features includes read-aloud, read-along with highlighted words, and interactive options such as audio word definitions. Audio books are important for struggling readers. Some platform providers are currently making these alternate editions available through agreements with individual publishers. It is important to note that not all individual titles require multiple features and formats. Each book has its own market and the formats publishers invest in should respond to this.

Teacher support is another important consideration. The website TeachingBooks makes it easy to see why teachers would be drawn to select, buy, and recommend books for which much hard work has already been done.



*The TeachingBooks database provides a complete summary of each title and includes multiple other teaching aids including;*

- Authors and illustrator information and interviews
- Lesson plans
- Assessment items
- Awards the book may have received
- Preview pages

Within the search criteria of TeachingBooks, keywords such as Canadian do produce some results; however, the site is strictly for teaching purposes and there is no opportunity to buy ebooks through the software itself.

ACP member firms will have realized that some print and ebooks, principally designed for the trade market, may fit naturally into the library or core curriculum market, however, long term success in the K-12 education space requires significant focus and effort. Research has indicated that individual firms within the ACP membership have effectively begun moving down this path.

Many educators told us equity is a priority. This value goes beyond access to devices or adequate connectivity. Equity also means that all students have the opportunity to

see themselves in the fiction and nonfiction books they read in school. ACP member firms developing resources for the trade and library market will find a strong appetite for titles that address students' experiences as members of historically marginalized communities, notably First Nations, Métis, Inuit (FNMI); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and two-spirit (LGBTQ2+); and Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC).

Finally, in relation to resource development, there is no question that fiction and nonfiction books developed from the outset with curriculum in mind are desirable in the K-12 school market.

### RECOMMENDATION #1

***Publishers interested in developing fiction and nonfiction books with a specific curriculum focus would need to develop the capacity to meet the following shortlist of requirements:***

- *Close understanding and focus on current curriculum and upcoming curriculum changes*
- *Deep understanding of resource acquisition guidelines and processes at provincial and school district levels*
- *Direct connections/research with district and school-based leaders to understand current and future resource priorities, including system requirements and desired resource features*
- *Targeted and focused publishing in priority areas identified by Ministries of Education and influential school districts*

## Metadata

One of the underlying factors to success in the K-12 digital space is the critical importance of the individual title metadata supplied by the publishers. The metadata must include accurate education-based information in order to return reliable data when searched by educators. If the data is erroneous and returns incomplete or inaccurate information, the services will not receive educator endorsement or usage.

### RECOMMENDATION #2

***In order for a book to be discoverable in an online search as a Canadian-authored or regional or local title or simply as a title to support a teaching need, the publisher-submitted metadata about the title must be comprehensive and robust. The ACP should work with educational experts and metadata tagging experts to develop a comprehensive list of appropriate educational data tags that publishers unfamiliar with the K-12 market could use to adequately provide quality metadata.***

## Supply/Discoverability

A recurring theme in our research was that Canadian-authored and published books are not highly visible or readily discoverable. As noted earlier, the breakneck speed to implement online learning has only highlighted the issues of discoverability for Canadian authored and published books.

*We pause here to note the many positive and well-established organizations and programs whose mission it is to promote Canadian-authored and published books.*

- The Canadian Children’s Book Centre, notably the highly visible and popular TD Grade One Book Giveaway program
- The Ontario Library Association (OLA) Forest of Reading award program
- Over twenty annual awards programs, including the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award, Geoffrey Bilson Award, Norma Fleck Award, Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, Governor General’s Awards, Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator’s Award, Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award, Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People, Sheila A. Egoff Children’s Literature Prize, Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prize, and Burt Award for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Literature.

School librarians have been relying on these organizations and awards for years to guide them to the very best in Canadian children’s publishing. However, this group of educators is waning across the country. As noted in *Canadian Library Journal* (November 11, 2020), during the early stages of the pandemic and the move to online learning, librarians and library staff “provided online programming, supported teachers with research and helped administrators train staff not comfortable with technology.” Sadly, the pandemic has closed many school libraries, for safety reasons, and the librarians have been reassigned to classrooms. Though the re-purposing of school librarians varies district by district across the country, one significant example is the Toronto District School Board who took this step in its 450 schools. What had been a trend for a couple of decades became a *fait accompli* within a year. *The following statistics show the Ontario pre-pandemic situation in 2020 with these champions of Canadian children’s literature.*

- 51% of elementary schools report having a teacher-librarian full time or part time, compared to 65% of schools in 2001, and 73% of schools in 1999.
- 67% of secondary schools report having a teacher-librarian full time or part time, compared to 78% in 2001.

- The average ratio of students to teacher-librarians is 869 to 1 in elementary schools, and 1068 to 1 in secondary schools.

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Technology-In-Schools-Final-May-5.pdf> pg. 14

What is needed now is online visibility for nonexperts. Where do “nonexperts,” meaning educators whose principal job is teaching, not purchasing, look for ebooks? *The first stop will be digital products put in place by their province or board, most likely these:*

- Database-style collections such as Follett Destiny and Sora Overdrive
- Curated collections such as Tumblebooks, Big Timber, and Capstone Interactive

### RECOMMENDATION #3

***The ACP membership should strive to work with the database-style collections listed above to establish and highlight a Canadian curated collection of titles within their systems.***

Relevant to this research, it is evident that significant steps to improve discoverability and sales growth has occurred through the 49th Shelf and 49th Kids platforms. Both initiatives are a good start to address the real hurdles faced by the members selling into the K-12 market.

The 49th Shelf website 49th Kids, developed by the ACP and Ontario Book Publishers Organization (OBPO), contains entries for thousands of Canadian-authored children’s books. The “For Teachers” tab of this site allows teachers to search the database and gain information about individual titles. A strength of the site is its Canadian-only content. However, in comparison to the entries in TeachingBooks and other competing platforms, the teaching supports in 49th Shelf are thin. Actual lesson plans and assessment items, for example, are the exception not the rule.

In creating 49th Teachers, ACP and OBPO have recognized the value in aggregating teacher resources in a single site. Our research reinforces the importance of a single-point of access for these materials; however, given the high number of books listed in the 49th Kids database that do not have accompanying teacher resources, the site is not reaching its full potential as a useful teaching support.

Individual publishers can and do provide comprehensive teaching supports for some titles, but educators looking for Canadian-authored and published books would be best served by a single site.

49th Shelf's obvious strength is the consolidation of titles into one platform, a feature appreciated by educators who were familiar with the database. In practice, this marketing tool is limited by the unreliability of its data, which is supplied by publishers via BookNet Canada. We heard repeatedly that 49th Shelf and 49th Kids are not well known, and that most librarians and library staff who do know about these tools would not use them to search for Canadian-authored titles because they are not consistently helpful in matching books to students or to teacher needs.

In short, if ACP member firms are seeking to increase their success in the K-12 educational market they need to engage in a collaborative effort to aggregate and effectively metatag Canadian-authored and published books in a robust search engine, with the needs of teachers at the forefront of its design. Currently, 49th Shelf, and 49th Kids provide an excellent starting point.

#### RECOMMENDATION #4

*ACP member firms selling into schools should consider working collaboratively to build 49th Kids and 49th Teachers into a separately branded K-12 ebook platform with robust teaching support, full searchability for key words with relevance to the Canadian context, full educational metadata including age, grade, genre, text type and curriculum links as well as reading levels. The service must also allow direct purchase options for educators using the site, including simultaneous student uses. It is understood that this platform would require ongoing and substantial awareness and marketing efforts to establish it as the go to platform for Canadian authored and published resources.*

Our team is mindful of the considerable investment that the above recommendation would require. We suspect it's unlikely that any province will take on the job, as the province of Quebec is doing with the Biblius initiative, but ACP might explore cross-country provincial funding to support the project.

Capitalizing on "Canadian" and "Local" continue to be two very important differentiators for the ACP but it is important to understand that in a very crowded market, Canadian and Local are often not distinguishable enough.

#### RECOMMENDATION #5

*As an alternative to Recommendation #4, the ACP may choose to partner with an existing firm or distributor focused in the K-12 space in Canada with the capacity to house, distribute, and market their resources.*

## Sales and Marketing

The Top Grade program received positive feedback from almost every customer we connected with who is part of the program. They all liked receiving copies of new titles and especially liked the ability to touch, feel, and read complete print titles. Receiving information on new titles digitally did not generate the same response though that may be due, in part, to other priorities during the pandemic. Interestingly, most customers could not confirm if receiving the titles led to purchases within their jurisdictions.

### RECOMMENDATION #6:

*To improve the effectiveness of the Top Grade program, expand the national contact list, target sample resources around trending educational priorities, include a complete version of each sample and engage with every customer after samples have been sent.*

Although sales can appear to be a last step in the publishing process, cost and budget limitations are the number one concern of buyers in the K-12 market. The problem is acute in the case of fiction and nonfiction ebooks.

*School boards face the realities of a “hostile institutional licensing market for digital content.”*

**Toronto District School Board, Library Staff**

Canadian-authored and published books face many obstacles. Not only are budgets small, but also money is often allocated to general expenditures, forcing ebooks to compete for discretionary dollars with all other digital products. The problem is not new. School libraries have often been forced into fundraising and book fairs to keep collections fresh and current. Not surprisingly, it is easier for parents and community members to get excited about books on shelves than books on screens, and the public perception that ebooks should be cheaper than print (despite expectations of enhanced features) does not help.

*“Cost is prohibitive. Would rather purchase physical copies.”*

**Library Technician, District School Board of Niagara**

As noted earlier, the business of licensing collections to schools is very much under development. Whether an educator is looking at individual titles or at collections, less than \$1.00—in some cases, less than \$.50—does little to inspire the motivation to understand new products and new acquisition models.

*“Have a great following of readers who prefer print.  
The public library fills ebook needs.”*

**School/Teacher-librarian, British Columbia**

The challenge is certainly great for publishers of fiction and nonfiction ebooks seeking to establish a meaningful Canadian presence in K-12 schools, but so too is the opportunity. In the section Acquisition and Licensing Models, we noted a variety of approaches currently in play. Only two models received unanimous approval from the educators we spoke to. The first was simultaneous access to all titles. The second was the single use, check in/check out model. Simultaneous access was seen as the most desirable for teaching purposes, allowing multiple students access to a resource at the same time. Single use, check in/check out was seen as the most cost-effective approach. The idea of a simultaneous use license priced on a pay-per-use basis generated considerable interest. However, this model requires much further investigation into technology requirements for logging usage analytics and reasonable per use charges. A streaming model for ebooks similar to the models currently available for home music and video services was often mentioned.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #7**

***The ACP in collaboration with its current partners develop and test pricing and delivery of ebooks with educators across the country. The simultaneous and pay-per-use models mentioned above need to be further investigated to ascertain their viability.***

## **Closing**

Success in the K-12 school digital market going forward will depend on understanding the teaching and learning environment. This encompasses the online classroom and evolving methodologies, with curriculum ever at the centre of what schools do. We were told more than once that good literature knows no borders. Resource decisions are driven by the desire to engage readers and support curriculum. Multiple formats, interactivity, and teaching supports add meaningful value to any ebook title. Purchases are often made by educators with little background in acquisitions. Everyone we talked with had genuine interest in Canadian-authored books that reflect Canadian curricula, the Canadian experience, and local contexts, but most expressed frustration that the tools available to them did little to make such books discoverable. Identifying a title as Canadian falls far short of ensuring that metatags lead purchasers to the unique, Canadian attributes of the title. Cost and licensing provisions must be finely tuned to the budget limitations provinces and school boards face. While that reality might be

discouraging, we reiterate here that all educational jurisdictions do need fiction and nonfiction ebooks, books keyed to and supportive of Canadian curriculum, and books grounded in the lived and local experience of Canadian students, and dollars are most likely to be found for resources seen as essential to the mission of Canadian educators.

We close with an enormous thank you to the many educators, administrators, publishers, and software and EdTech company personnel who shared their knowledge, ideas, and perspectives on how technology is reshaping teaching and learning in K-12 education in Canada. We are extremely grateful for the time everyone spent with us, especially during a time of unprecedented global crisis brought on by the pandemic.

# Appendix A:

## *Research Team Biographies*

### LEAD CONSULTANTS

**BRIAN O'DONNELL:** Brian's work with individuals and teams on publishing projects in K-12 education, technology project development and integration, and copyright and rights management have produced strong and sustained business results. His career has covered all aspects of K-12 resource development, giving him deep insights into the ecosystem of the education sector and an extensive list of contacts, both individuals and groups. Brian has been involved in a number of reports, particularly the precursor to this RFP. His knowledge of publishing and education and his ability to discern, synthesize, and impart the information gained through research make him a key member of the research team.

**JOHN DOHERTY:** John has worked in the K-12 education sector in all parts of the country, developing a deep understanding of how school systems work and of the resources teachers and students need to meet learning objectives set out by each province. As Vice President of Sales and a member of the K-12 executive leadership team at Pearson, Canada's largest educational publisher, John worked with a wide array of resource options and solutions, spanning print and digital resources, services, and platforms. His career has provided him with insights into the acquisition, deployment, and classroom use of resources, including the growing customer desire for seamless integration of content and assessment with system-wide platforms.

### EDUCATION CONSULTANT

**MARTYN BECKETT:** Martyn's background provides knowledge and experience across all levels of K-12 education. Starting as a teacher, his career advanced to progressively more senior roles: Vice Principal, Principal, Superintendent of a Family of Schools, Superintendent of Special Education, and Director of Education with the Durham District School Board from 2008-2016. Most recently (2016-2020), Martyn was seconded to the Ministry of Education in Ontario, serving as Assistant Deputy Minister in the Learning and Curriculum Division. Martyn retired in the spring of 2020 to start Beckett Education Consulting, where he was hired by the Ontario Ministry of Education as a special advisor to help address the impact of the pandemic across school systems. Beckett Education Consulting is advising technology and resource companies on their work in supporting improved student learning in Ontario.

## RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

**ROBERT MARTELLACCI AND MINDSHARE LEARNING:** As founder and president of internationally award-winning MindShare Learning Technology, Robert is recognized as one of Canada's foremost EdTech thought leaders and was recognized by EdTech Digest as a Top 100 Global Influencer. He's a champion for igniting student success through innovative solutions and partnerships in Canadian schools. Often referred to as the "connector," Robert specializes in forging mutually beneficial partnerships between education and technology-solution providers. A passionate life-long learner, Robert pursued a transformational learning journey, earning a master's in educational technology from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Psychology and Education. His Pepperdine experience inspired the creation of the MindShare Learning Report – Canada's learning and technology eMagazine. Robert's innovative spirit and desire to see an accelerated pace of change in education led to the creation of C21 Canada – Canadians for Learning and Innovation, a not-for-profit organization which he co-founded and where he currently serves as CEO.

### About MindShare Learning

MindShare Learning is Canada's leading EdTech industry strategy, news and events media company. We counsel with education and industry leaders in understanding the emerging needs of learners to succeed in the 21st Century global, knowledge-based digital economy. MindShare Learning's partial client list includes Adobe, Blackboard Inc., C21 Canada, Cisco Canada, Compugen, DELL, Epson America, Follett, Global Scholar, Intel Canada, Lego Education, Microsoft Canada, Nelson, Ontario Ministry of Education, Research Machines (RM) PLC UK, SMART Technologies, and Steelcase.

# Appendix B:

## Digital Library Resources

### EBOOK RESOURCES

Company	Description	Category	Location	Website
Overdrive/SORA 	It empowers students to discover and enjoy ebooks & audiobooks from their school, for both leisure and class-assigned reading.	EBooks Application	Chicago, Illinois, USA	<a href="https://www.overdrive.com">overdrive.com</a>
Follet/ Discover Destiny 	Provide a variety of educational products to schools, colleges, and public libraries through its subsidiaries.	EBooks, Library Solutions	Westchester, Illinois, USA	<a href="https://www.follett.com">follett.com</a>
Tumblebooks 	TumbleBookLibrary is a curated database of children's e-books, available by subscription to Elementary Schools and Public Libraries around the world.	EBooks	Toronto, ON, CAD	<a href="https://www.tumblebooklibrary.com">tumblebooklibrary.com</a>
Teen Book Cloud 	TeenBookCloud is an online collection of ebooks, enhanced novels, graphic novels, videos and audio books, which offers students and adults of all reading levels access to an amazing range of content.	EBooks	Toronto, ON, CAD	<a href="https://www.teenbookcloud.com">teenbookcloud.com</a>
Big Timber Media 	Big Timber Media has supported educational publishers and distributors in providing ebooks to their school-age readers.	EBooks Platform	Burnsville, USA	<a href="https://www.bigtimbermedia.com">bigtimbermedia.com</a>
Capstone Interactive 	Capstone is a trusted publisher of children's media, including books, digital products, solutions and services, literacy programs, and K-12 professional development resources.	EBooks	North Mankato, USA	<a href="https://www.mycapstonelibrary.com">mycapstonelibrary.com</a>
Nelson Edwin 	Edwin digital learning ecosystem gives you curriculum-linked resources, interactive tools, and curated collections to keep your classroom connected.	Learning Resource Platform	Toronto, ON, CAD	<a href="https://www.edwin.app">edwin.app</a>
Tab vue 	An exclusive, one-of-a-kind online catalogue that allows you to view every page of every title before you make a purchase.	Digital Resources, EBooks	New York, NY, USA	<a href="https://www.tabvue.com">tabvue.com</a>

<p>Scholastic BookFlix K-3, TrueFlix 3-6, ScienceFlix 4-9, F.I.R.S.T</p> 	<p>Watch, read, explore! Nonfiction and fiction ebooks from Scholastic to build a love of reading and learning.</p>	<p>Digital Resources, EBooks</p>	<p>Pittsburgh, PA, USA</p>	<p><a href="https://www.scholastic.ca/education/digital">scholastic.ca/education/digital</a></p>
<p>Pearson Spark</p> 	<p>A new digital library from Pearson Canada. Ignite literacy learning with exceptional books, personalization tools, and teaching/learning supports.</p>	<p>Digital Library, EBooks</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p><a href="https://www.pearsoncanadaschool.com">pearsoncanadaschool.com</a></p>
<p>Raz Kids</p> 	<p>The award-winning website where K-5 students go to read—anytime, anywhere!</p>	<p>EBooks</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p><a href="https://www.raz-kids.com">raz-kids.com</a></p>

## VIDEOS AND AUDIO RESOURCES

Company	Description	Category	Location	Website
<p>Curio</p> 	<p>Curio.ca is CBC and Radio-Canada's online subscriber-based streaming service developed expressly for the Canadian educational community, including school boards, government ministries, universities, colleges and cégeps, and public libraries.</p>	<p>Streaming &amp; Radio</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p><a href="https://www.curio.ca/en">curio.ca/en</a></p>
<p>Learn 360</p> 	<p>Learn360 is the premier streaming digital delivery service for the K-12 educational market: the complete district solution.</p>	<p>Digital Streaming Service</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p><a href="https://www.learn360.infobase.com">learn360.infobase.com</a></p>
<p>NFB ONF</p> 	<p>Films on this site can be streamed free of charge, or downloaded for your personal use for a small fee. We also offer educational works on a subscription basis to schools and institutions.</p>	<p>Streaming, Film</p>	<p>Montreal, CAD</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nfb.ca">nfb.ca</a></p>
<p>TVO in the Classroom</p> 	<p>Interactive ways educators, parents, and students can connect to the Ontario K-12 curriculum. Boost engagement and learning impact in-person or online. Bring TVO's in-depth Current Affairs, thought-provoking documentaries, and award-winning TVOkids videos and games into your lessons today.</p>	<p>Video, Games</p>	<p>Toronto, ON, CAD</p>	<p><a href="https://www.education.tvo.org">education.tvo.org</a></p>

Scholastic Watch & Learn	The Watch & Learn Library™ builds learning excitement with hundreds of online videos! This video library made up of real-world footage helps teachers introduce new units of study across curriculum areas and brings concepts to life.	Video Library	USA	<a href="https://www.scholastic.ca/education/digital/watchandlearn">scholastic.ca/education/digital/watchandlearn</a>
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## DATABASES

Company	Description	Category	Location	Website
	EBSCO is the leading provider of research databases, e-journals, magazine subscriptions, ebooks, and discovery service to libraries of all kinds. For more than 70 years, we've partnered with libraries to improve research with quality content and technology.	Database	Ipswich, MAS, USA	<a href="https://www.ebsco.com">ebsco.com</a>
	Gale's scholarly resources include databases and primary sources, as well as learning resources and products for schools and libraries.	Database	Michigan, USA	<a href="https://www.gale.com">gale.com</a>
	The Encyclopædia Britannica is a general knowledge English-language online encyclopedia.	Database	USA	<a href="https://www.school.eb.com">school.eb.com</a>
	To enhance learning and reading for children around the world by developing trustworthy, engaging content to create products that will engage children of all ages at home, on the go, in the classroom or in libraries worldwide. We aspire to establish World Book as a renowned, global, adaptive, and mission-driven enterprise that helps kids learn and read throughout their entire childhood journey.	Database	Illinois, USA	<a href="https://www.worldbook.com">worldbook.com</a>
	The Canadian Encyclopedia plays an essential role in providing Canadians and others with accurate, updated information about our people and country.	Database	Canada	<a href="https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en">thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en</a>
	The Centre for Equitable Library Access, CELA, is an accessible library service, providing books and other materials to Canadians with print disabilities.	Library Service	Canada	<a href="https://www.celalibrary.ca">celalibrary.ca</a>

## OTHER

Company	Description	Category	Location	Website
 <p>brightspace by D2L</p>	From the kindergarten classroom, to college campuses, to global corporations, the Brightspace learning management platform helps create inspired and engaging learning for all.	LMS	Kitchener, ON, CAD	<a href="https://d2l.com">d2l.com</a>
 <p>Mindomo</p>	Mindomo is a versatile freemium collaborative mind mapping, concept mapping and outlining tool developed by Expert Software Applications.	Software	Romania	<a href="https://mindomo.com">mindomo.com</a>
 <p>Edsby</p>	Edsby is a next generation LMS for K-12 with the broadest set of capabilities in a single application made just for K-6 and 7-12.	LMS	Markham, ON, CAD	<a href="https://edsby.com">edsby.com</a>
 <p>Flipgrid</p>	Flipgrid is a simple, free, and accessible video discussion experience for PreK to PhD educators, learners and families.	Video Discussion	USA	<a href="https://info.flipgrid.com">info.flipgrid.com</a>
 <p>fresh grade</p>	FreshGrade Connect makes success easy with all the tools that teachers, students and families need for remote and/or in-class work.	Digital Portfolio/ Assessment platform	Kelowna, B.C., CAD	<a href="https://freshgrade.com">freshgrade.com</a>
 <p>Knowledgehook</p>	Knowledgehook is an Instructional Guidance System (IGS) that uses engaging assessments to unlock insights and expert guidance for math teachers.	Digital Assessment	Toronto, ON, CAD	<a href="https://knowledgehook.com">knowledgehook.com</a>
 <p>Hāpara</p>	Our mission is to provide a seamless teaching and learning experience for teachers, students and parents whether at home or in the classroom by providing the visibility and organization necessary for everyone to be on the same page.	Learning Platform	Auckland, NZ	<a href="https://hapara.com">hapara.com</a>

# Appendix C:

## 49th Teachers

*The following information is provided by the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) and Ontario Book Publishers Organization (OBPO)*

**April 2021**

### OVERVIEW

[49th Teachers](#) is a special section of 49th Kids, a companion site to ACP's 49th Shelf discovery platform. It is purpose-built for educators and was created with the financial support of a series of Ontario Creates Canadian Books in Ontario Schools grants that were awarded to OBPO between 2017 and 2020 and continues with funding from their Industry Development Program.

The site is a direct response to many of the opportunities and challenges Canadian publishers experience in selling their books into K-12 schools, especially (a) the high level of interest in Canadian books among educators and (b) the lack of any other mechanism for differentiating Canadian children's and young adult titles in the marketplace. It is the most significant effort of its kind in Canada's English-language market, and remains a unique source of aggregated info about Canadian children's and YA titles.

49th Teachers now houses more than 1,000 teaching resources, which represent the largest-ever such collection of classroom resources in English-speaking Canada. That collection continues to grow and all resources are marked up with a custom data schema so that files can be easily searched or filtered by a number of educator-specified criteria, including resource type, subject area, and grade level. These resources complement the nearly 20,000 titles listed within 49th Kids' database.

In addition to title listings and teacher resources, 49th Teachers features curated book lists, blog posts by educators, information about ordering Canadian books from wholesalers, monthly newsletters to a growing mailing list, and dedicated social media channels on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This original content responds directly to the needs of educators. For example, the need for Canadian-authored #OwnVoices titles is more urgent than ever. In response, 49th Teachers continues to develop lists and discovery tools for Canadian books that reflect a diversity of lived experiences by creators from diverse backgrounds, so that educators can quickly and easily find what they need.

49th Teachers employs a part-time marketing consultant who is responsible for educator outreach via digital (e.g., email marketing, social media, online advertising) and traditional (e.g., conferences, catalogues, other print materials) marketing. The consultant works with OBPO and 49th Shelf staff to help maintain the site, coordinate with publishers, liaise with partners, and explore new opportunities for growth.

## DATA & SEARCH

All books featured on 49th Teachers are Canadian-authored; this is the primary criteria for inclusion in 49th Shelf's database, which provides the site's foundation. Title listings for both print and digital books are imported from BookNet's BiblioShare database, which is BookNet Canada's central aggregation system that collects and disseminates bibliographic data using ONIX, the international standard for representing and communicating book industry product information in electronic form. Importantly, BiblioShare supports ONIX's Canadian identifier, which allows 49th Shelf to restrict books presented on its sites to those by Canadian creators. Data is provided to BiblioShare by publishers and/or distributors who are responsible for managing a book's ONIX record.

Though BiblioShare represents the most complete collection of Canadian bibliographic data available, 49th Teachers' fundamental challenge is that the ONIX data that populates the site is primarily trade-facing, that is, its intended audiences are retail bookstores, wholesalers, and other customers who sell into the consumer market. Information educators seek when searching for classroom materials is not typically provided in these records, which limits the site's efficacy when it comes to search for this customer group.

In order to improve the suitability and effectiveness of the various browse and search functions available on 49th Teachers, the project team works closely with publishers across the country to improve the quality and depth of data they provide to BiblioShare, or to have them include additional attributes in their data feeds. Because of the large number of data suppliers and titles included on the site, improvement of 49th Kids' title data is a continuing and long-term process of learning and adaptation.

## FUTURE PLANS

### Expanded Content

In partnership with OBPO, ACP is adapting its existing Top Grade marketing program to be featured on 49th Teachers. Launched in 2011, Top Grade is first and foremost a preview marketing campaign, offering customers an advance look at new releases and directing them to a range of purchasing channels. Though the program originally facilitated the distribution of physical book samples and marketing materials, in

response to the COVID-19 pandemic and school boards' reduced capacity to receive and distribute this material, ACP has shifted the promotion online. A digital catalogue of new releases will be highlighted on 49th Teachers, with accompanying preview videos to showcase the books and how they link to curriculum. Piloted in the fall of 2020 and continuing through 2021, Top Grade's focus on frontlist books will enhance 49th Teachers' editorial offerings and offer additional opportunities for publishers to connect with purchasers.

### Marketing

49th Teachers is relatively young and much remains to be done in terms of building awareness and usage among educators across the country. The site has experienced a rapid scaling of traffic and engagement over the last two years. For example, its educator mailing list more than doubled over the course of 2020-21, and now comprises more than 6,300 subscribers. This provides a foundation for further growth and supports the project team's direct marketing efforts to educators. This has proven to be more effective in building the site's audience than direct outreach through school boards, ministries of education, or associations. Particularly during the pandemic, teachers have many demands on their time. Reaching them directly in their email inboxes and on social media is almost certainly now more reliable than providing them with marketing materials distributed in staff rooms or at events. 49th Teachers has also recently expanded its offerings to publishers to include paid advertising opportunities in e-newsletters, giving publishers a way to directly reach educators with their chosen titles.

### Development

As the site has grown considerably over the last two years, we have a number of pressing requirements for improvements and extensions to the existing interface. 49th Shelf has recently concluded the implementation of a wholesale site redesign. The new interface is fully responsive, accessible, search-optimized, and, overall, offers a more cohesive, streamlined user experience. This new interface needs to be adapted for use on 49th Kids and 49th Teachers. There are enough distinct aspects to the title listings and other page types on these companion sites that this is not just a simple matter of applying new markup or styles. Rather, some incremental design work and related engineering will be required in order to establish a high-performing, responsive interface for 49th Teachers. These specific refinements will have to address some of unique functionality on the site, including handling of classroom resources and list downloads, but also some of the rich content elements now being introduced, including expanded use of video and audio content and more extensive samples and excerpts incorporated from outside of the ONIX data feed.

The 49th Teachers archive of teaching resources is growing quickly, and we continue to add considerable original content from both the editorial team and from a growing panel of guest contributors. With these important areas of the site now successfully

established, we need to further refine and improve the interface elements around each for an improved user experience. This will be especially key as traffic on the site continues to build, and as we reach more educators and librarians in particular.

The new 49th Shelf interface has undergone a thorough audit for compliance with formal accessibility standards, and we are currently engaged in a round of refinement to the markup and page templates to ensure that the site is fully compliant with our target standard (WCAG AA). In order to achieve the same standard of accessibility on 49th Teachers, we have to repeat this audit-and-refinement process again for all page templates and behaviours across the site. This work will be supported both by our normal design and development staff, and also by an expert on accessibility that we have engaged to conduct a more complete evaluation of 49th Kids and 49th Teachers.

## CONCLUSION

Though the longstanding challenges independent Canadian publishers face in marketing their books to educators are growing more entrenched, 49th Teachers represents an important investment on the part of Canadian publishers in the collective marketing of Canadian books to K-12 schools. With a growing audience, robust teacher resources, and a deep catalogue to offer educators, the platform offers a springboard for future marketing activity. Sustainable resourcing of the platform will be essential to its ability to meet its mandate, particularly with respect to marketing and audience development. Further, regular engagement with stakeholders—both independent publishers and educators—will ensure the project continues to meet its stated objectives.