



North Vancouver District
Public Library

Connecting Community. Sharing Knowledge. Inspiring Stories.

Inspiring Stories

January 2017

MOOCs & More—Connecting Community



2017 is off to a great start for NVDPL programs and events! Twenty-seven people attended the new Talking TED Talks program and fifteen people attended the first Discussion Lounge session of 2017. And we're set to start up a brand new Massive Open Online Course—or MOOC—in February called "Chinese Thought: Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Science." Discussion based programs become increasingly more important as digitization and automation increase the pace of daily life. They provide a safe space for discussion and engagement, which is crucial for residents without extensive social and family circles to support and satisfy the need for human connection and intellectual discourse. Programs, like MOOCs in particular, allow NVDPL to deliver on all strategic priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan: collaborate with our community on community-led programming, transform our digital environment by encouraging patrons to build digital literacy skills by participating in lectures online, and expanding community learning as attendees hear new perspectives, view points, and facts.

And to demonstrate it, see the back of this page for a wonderful letter NVDPL received regarding the community focused programming taking place at Parkgate Library.

“To the North Vancouver District Public Library

I am writing to **express my appreciation** for the Library’s community learning initiatives. Over the last two years I have been fortunate to attend two sessions of Mass Open On-line Courses (MOOC). Whereas I originally joined the MOOC in order to earn about the subjects, I have now come to see these experiences is **broader terms**.

For one thing, I get much more out of these courses by **taking them together with other people**. There are any number of on-line courses one can do from the comfort of one’s easy chair, but this would not be nearly as good as taking it with a group of other, interested people. In our recent Parkgate MOOC, Ideas of the 20th Century, we had many **people from different ethnic and professional backgrounds**. We had a wide range of education. What we shared was a willingness to struggle through, sometimes, difficult material. **Studying together makes us more inclined to do the reading, think about the ideas, and go to the lecture**. It is too easy, studying alone, to just skip over the hard parts or lose interest. Going to the Library keeps us focused, keeps us serious. I feel this alone allows me to get more out of the course than I otherwise would get, and it pushes me to complete.

Related to this is the **bonus of different points of view**. We have people who have lived in many different countries and who grew up in other cultures. They bring these perspectives as well as their specific historical and cultural knowledge to the table. **Our discussions benefit from this multi-culturalism**. These are not people I would otherwise have met, and **it is the library that has made this happen**. I am intellectually enriched in this process of sharing knowledge. This encounter gives me more points of view with which to think. I feel I am a wiser community member for this interaction and a more informed citizen.

I am a life-long learner and the library’s community learning initiatives suit me well. I am retired from paid work now, but I will never retire from learning. It is very important for the mental health of seniors that we engage intellectually with new challenges. But our group is not only seniors. **We include different ages, genders, classes, and experience**. An example of this diversity of vision showed itself repeatedly in our MOOC on Ideas of the 20th Century. It came to us from the University of Austen, Texas. An unexpected but interesting analysis developed as we watched the lectures each week. Not only did we engage with the ideas presented, but we also analyzed the historiography and political perspective promoted by the lecturers. In, sort, we became more broadly analytical. I feel this idea that one can question an authority on a subject was new to some of our members. I watched as some quieter members, intimidated by the lecturers, gained more voice and became more confident of their own point of view. **This increased analytical ability and growing confidence benefits the individual, our class, and the whole community**.

I feel that the public library **is a crucial partner in the development of a community**. The NVDPL learning initiatives bring citizens together, inspiring new opportunities for person intellectual growth, **encouraging collaboration**, and connecting community.

In conclusion, I **encourage the library to expand its community learning initiatives**. We are all grateful for the librarian’s time. Paul and Rachel at Parkgate have been informed and enthusiastic leaders. Perhaps we can be more independent as time passes, but right now we benefit from the NVDPL providing us with this guidance. **I feel the Library is fostering a culture of learning and civic engagement**. I know it is the envy of my friends in other areas of the Lower Mainland that are disappointed to find out that their library’s do not offer this **avenue of individual growth and community engagement**. Thank you for this”

