

Bibliothèque publique de La Nation Public Library Proposal Request for Contract Cataloguing Support

1. Purpose

This proposal requests board approval to engage a contract cataloguer to address a significant and growing backlog of uncatalogued library materials. The volume of work currently exceeds what can be managed alongside existing operational responsibilities, and the library's ability to make new materials available to the public is directly affected.

2. Background and Context

When the Library Manager assumed the position, there were approximately 200 books awaiting cataloguing. Since that time, the library has expanded its collections in response to community demand — accepting book and puzzle donations totaling approximately 300 additional items. Once grant-funded purchases are completed under the Commonwell Grant, approximately 100 further items will require cataloguing. A large purchase of approximately 200 books from allocated budget funds is also planned and would be processed as part of this project, bringing the total backlog to an estimated 800 items. It is worth noting that the Commonwell Grant carries a requirement that all funded purchases be completed within the 2026 calendar year, and cataloguing is an essential step in fulfilling that obligation.

As a temporary measure, select uncatalogued items have been made available to borrowers on an exception basis. While this has allowed some access to new materials in the interim, it is not a sustainable operational practice and raises concerns around equitable access — not all community members benefit equally from informal arrangements. A catalogued collection ensures that every borrower, regardless of their familiarity with library staff, has fair and consistent access to available materials.

3. Operational Constraints

The library currently operates with two staff members across three branches. The Library Manager's time is distributed across a wide range of responsibilities that limit availability for cataloguing work, including:

- Approximately 8 days per month managing the open hours of the Limoges branch
- Approximately 2–4 days per month dedicated to board meeting preparation, depending on topics covered
- Management of the Integrated Library System (ILS) transition and all associated tasks
- Completion of grant-funded purchases and associated tasks
- Program development and community engagement across all branches and seasons
- School year close-out and associated tasks
- All general library administration and communications

This volume of competing responsibilities does not leave adequate time to address a backlog of 800 items, nor to provide the hands-on training that volunteers require to catalogue independently.

4. Volunteer Cataloguing Capacity

The library has made genuine efforts to engage community volunteers in cataloguing support. Three individuals expressed interest and committed to assisting. However, due to personal circumstances, one volunteer has since withdrawn. Two volunteers remain willing and available but have not yet been able to begin, as they have no formal cataloguing training or experience, and the Library Manager has not yet had the capacity to provide the foundational training they require — both in cataloguing practice and in the new Integrated Library System (ILS).

Looking ahead, it is hoped that the contract cataloguer would have the opportunity to provide introductory training to these volunteers as part of the engagement. Once the backlog project is complete, the Library Manager will be in a significantly better position to provide ongoing support and guidance. With consistent dedication, volunteers may become a more reliable and integral part of cataloguing operations in the future.

The library values its volunteers deeply, and they continue to contribute meaningfully to library operations. That said, the nature of volunteer engagement — flexible schedules, varying availability, and the absence of employment obligations — means that operational continuity cannot be guaranteed at this time. A trained contract cataloguer would not replace volunteers but would allow structured cataloguing work to proceed reliably and at the pace the backlog requires.

5. Case for Contract Cataloguing Support

A contract cataloguer would bring the following direct benefits:

- Professional cataloguing expertise — the Library Manager holds formal training in the field but has required significant reorientation after nearly two decades away from library work; training volunteers with no prior experience presents a comparable challenge and is not a task that can be adequately supported alongside current operational demands
- Reliable, consistent progress on the backlog without dependency on volunteer availability
- Faster and equitable public access to the library's growing collections, including books, puzzles, and instruments
- Relief of administrative burden from the Library Manager, allowing greater focus on programming, service delivery, and the ILS transition
- Potential to support training of existing volunteers once the new system is stable

The library is at a critical juncture. Collections are growing, programming demands are increasing, and the ILS transition adds a layer of complexity that requires sustained attention. Addressing the backlog through contract support is the most practical path forward without compromising current operations.

6. Community Impact

A backlog of approximately 800 uncatalogued items represents a significant portion of the library's collection that is inaccessible to the public through regular circulation. For a small bilingual library serving a rural municipality, every accessible item matters. The library has seen a notable increase in community engagement, with over 15 new patrons registered within a single two-week period. While not the norm, this reflects a renewed and growing interest in library services — and with that growth comes an expectation of access to new and varied materials. At the current rate of cataloguing, the library is not able to meet that expectation. It is worth noting that service capacity concerns have been raised at the municipal level, underscoring that the impact of this backlog extends beyond library operations and into the broader community conversation.

7. Recommendation

The Library Manager respectfully recommends that the board approve the engagement of a contract cataloguer on a time-limited basis, with scope and terms to be confirmed in consultation with the CEO. The contract cataloguer should have demonstrated experience in library cataloguing, and bilingual capacity in English and French would be considered an asset given the library's bilingual mandate and community.

Candidates would be sourced through Ontario Library Service (OLS) and Algonquin College, both of which have confirmed they can assist with distributing the posting to interested parties and have informed the wage range below. Should these avenues not yield a suitable candidate, an official job posting would be pursued as a secondary option.

The total engagement is proposed at **270 hours**. Based on an average processing rate of approximately 30 items per day, cataloguing the 800-item backlog alone represents an estimated 187 hours. The remaining hours are allocated to supporting tasks integral to the project, including reviewing and correcting records migrated from previous systems, cleaning up and standardizing records during the ILS transition, and providing introductory training to existing volunteers.

Two scheduling options are proposed for board consideration, both capped at 270 hours:

Option A — 3 days/week × 7 hours/day × approximately 13 weeks (3 months, fixed) A structured, higher-intensity schedule with a defined end date. No extension anticipated.

Hours	At \$30/hr	At \$35/hr	At \$45/hr
270 hrs	\$8,100	\$9,450	\$12,150

Option B — 2 days/week × 7 hours/day × up to 17 weeks (4 months, flexible) A lighter weekly schedule over a longer runway, not to exceed 270 hours total. Extension within this cap may be applied at the discretion of the CEO should project requirements warrant additional time.

Hours	At \$30/hr	At \$35/hr	At \$45/hr
270 hrs (max)	\$8,100	\$9,450	\$12,150

The Library Manager recommends a rate of \$35/hour as a competitive mid-range rate reflective of the qualifications sought. At this rate, the projected cost for either option is **\$9,450**, with a full range of **\$8,100–\$12,150** depending on the successful candidate's education and experience.

In both options, scheduling would be coordinated to align with the Library Manager's branch coverage obligations. The Library Manager is prepared to provide any additional information the board may require and welcomes discussion.