



LiRN

Legal Information and Resource Network

LIRN – GENERAL INFO

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Introduction

This document provides an overview of the Legal Information and Resource Network (LiRN). We invite you to review our [website](#) for additional information about the organization.

Legislative and Corporate Framework

The [Law Society Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.8](#) creates the LSO and provides by-law making authority that enables Convocation (the meeting of the LSO's governing body) to make by-laws — including the authority to make by-laws providing for and governing libraries.

[Law Society of Ontario By-Law 13](#), passed under the authority of the *Law Society Act*, requires the Law Society to create a corporation to fund county law libraries and provide, monitor and supervise law library services and programs, including establishing policies and priorities for those services and programs based on the available financial resources.

LiRN was established pursuant to this By-Law.

LiRN's predecessor, LibraryCo Inc., was incorporated under the [Business Corporations Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.16](#) in 2001. The articles of incorporation were amended effective January 6, 2020 to change the name of the corporation to LiRN Inc. LiRN is therefore governed by the provisions of the Act.

LiRN has three shareholders: the Law Society of Ontario, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations (FOLA, formerly the County and District Law Presidents' Association, or CDLPA), the Toronto Lawyers Association (TLA). One hundred (100) common voting shares are held by the LSO. One hundred (100) special shares are divided between FOLA (75 shares) and TLA (25 shares).

The [Unanimous Shareholder Agreement](#) (USA) was signed on November 29th, 2019.

Brief History Behind Establishing LiRN Inc.

LiRN's predecessor, LibraryCo Inc, was established in 2001. Since then, there have been numerous changes in the legal services marketplace in Ontario. New challenges — some transformative — have emerged in the delivery of legal information and library services. These include, among other things:

- Increasing importance of information technology;
- Greater access to free online legal research resources;
- Cost concerns resulting from changes in the legal publishing industry; and
- Need to ensure a consistent library funding model.

These developments are significant to the LSO, FOLA, and the TLA. High-quality library and legal information services are components of the LSO support to licensees and are an element of the LSO's competence platform.

LibraryCo's shareholders (the LSO, FOLA, and the TLA) formed a Transition Committee in 2014 to discuss a new structure for the library system. In 2015, an external consultant was hired to conduct a needs assessment to gather qualitative and quantitative data on library system use and future need. The qualitative data gathered as part of the needs assessment indicated that library users attached tremendous value to legal information and library services.

Taking into consideration the needs assessment, the LSO, FOLA and the TLA developed a proposal for LiRN and submitted it to stakeholders for input in May 2017.

In presenting the proposal for LiRN, the shareholders recognized the important of striking the right balance between moving legal information and support services into the future while still maintaining value for licensees and avoiding unnecessary disruption to the system of services and supports.

A November 2017 report to Convocation articulated specific objectives for the legal information and resource network for Ontario's legal professionals, including:

- Facilitating the regulatory mandate to ensure that the public is served by lawyers and paralegals with high standards of learning and competence;
- Supporting the ongoing learning and professional development of licensees, with a specific emphasis on the use and application of legal information, legal research and legal training content and activities;
- Establishing a platform that provides access to information for all licensees; and
- Considering the development of a supportive legal information services targeted to the needs of users.

The transition from LibraryCo Inc. to LiRN Inc. recognizes the changing nature of legal information and library services and the importance of consultation with stakeholders and users of Ontario's county law library system.

The Operation of LiRN Inc.

LiRN's general mandate is to evolve the provision of law library services and programs for the Ontario county law library system in an efficient and cost-effective manner through the management and allocation of grant funding, ongoing assessment of the system and strategic development of appropriate service offerings.

LiRN's purpose is to carry the central management of the Ontario county law library system on a not-for-profit basis and in accordance with the objectives, policies and

principles established and approved by LSO from time to time in consultation with FOLA and TLA.

Our key objectives, as articulated in the USA, are to:

- Facilitate the regulatory mandate to ensure that the public is served by lawyers and paralegals with high standards of learning and competence;
- Support the ongoing learning and professional development of licensees, with a specific emphasis on the use and application of legal information, legal research and legal training content and activities;
- Establish a platform that provides access to information for all licensees; and
- Consider the development of a supportive legal information services targeted to the needs of users.

LiRN's Governance

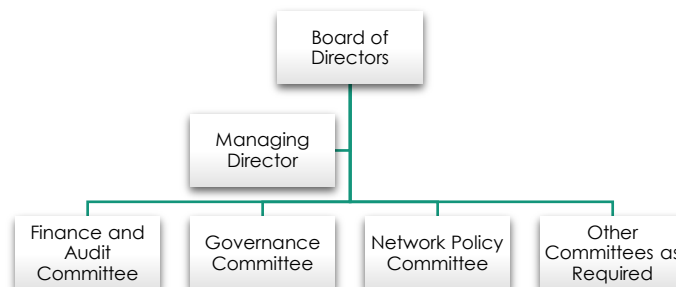
The shareholders agreed that the governance of LiRN is critical to future success and agreed to a Board consisting of independent board members, externally recruited, who provide specified knowledge and skills that best support the future decision-making of the LiRN, based on a defined skills matrix.

Bios for the independent Board of Directors approved by the shareholders can be found [here](#).

The corporation's central management of the Ontario county law library system and legal information network across Ontario and administration of funding on behalf of the Law Society is undertaken in accordance with the objectives, policies, and principles established and approved by Law Society from time to time in consultation with FOLA and TLA.

The shareholders' rights and obligations are set out in the USA linked above, which also includes certain aspects of the organization of the affairs of the Corporation. LiRN has also adopted [LiRN By-Law #1](#) that provides further particulars of its organization and corporate responsibilities.

Organizational Chart



The Board

The Board is tasked with achieving LiRN's purposes and evolving the provision of law library services and programs by county law libraries in an efficient and cost-effective manner through the management and allocation of grant funding, ongoing assessment of the system and strategic development of appropriate service offerings.

As set out in the USA and [LiRN By-Law #1](#):

- The Board consists of a 5-8 directors, appointed based on the recommendations of a Nominating Committee.
- The Nominating Committee is at least six individuals designated by the shareholders, with the LSO appointing 3, FOLA appointing 2, and the TLA appointing 1.
- LiRN delivers its annual report to the LSO's Audit and Finance Committee.

Board Members:

Neil Guthrie (Chair)

Sarah McCoubrey

Vicki Whitmell

Fernando Garcia (Vice-Chair)

Jessie Singh

Johanne Blenkin

Augustine Krawchenko

Officers

The USA and [LiRN By-Law #1](#) also addresses Officers of the corporation. Subject to the USA, the By-Law provides that the Board may appoint a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Treasurer, and such other officers as may be required. The current Officers are:

Neil Guthrie (Chair)

Fernando Garcia (Vice-Chair)

Brenda Albuquerque-Boutilier (Treasurer)

Stakeholders Map

LiRN has many stakeholders beyond our shareholders:



Funding and LiRN's Budget

The LSO levies and collects funds for county and district law library purposes through the annual fee paid by lawyers and transfers those funds to LiRN.

LiRN is required to submit a budget to the LSO Audit and Finance Committee's fall meeting. The final approval of the budget comes from Convocation in its fall meeting.

LiRN's budget currently contains 2 sections:

- Operational, which includes:
 - Grants to libraries. To receive a grant, a library is required to adopt and maintain fiscal and other management policies and procedures and may be subject to an audit.
 - Centralized services for libraries and library users.
 - LiRN Operations.
- Transitional, which includes funding for special projects.

Grants to libraries make up the bulk of LiRN's overall budget. We determine grant amounts as follows:

- Law Associations are asked to provide a budget supporting their grant request in June. Business cases accompany any significant increase in the request.
- Budgets and business cases are reviewed by the Managing Director; grant amounts may be adjusted after review.

The Managing Director reviews and budgets for non-grant expenses, including identifying and costing projects for the upcoming year. The LiRN Budget is presented to LiRN's Audit and Finance Committee, usually in July, for review and guidance. The finalized budget is presented to LiRN's Audit and Finance Committee and Board for approval in late August, in time to be submitted to the LSO's fall meeting.

The Managing Director works closely with the Treasurer and her team throughout this process.

Strategic Plan

LiRN embarked on its strategic planning process in the fall of 2020. The Managing Director met with representatives of each of the libraries. We surveyed librarians for information about their libraries and for their thoughts on future-proofing the courthouse library system. We also surveyed members of the bar for their thoughts on libraries. We researched other courthouse library systems in Canada, with emphasis on British Columbia, Alberta, and Québec as the jurisdictions most like Ontario in size.

With the knowledge gained from these activities informing the discussions, the Board participated in a blue-sky brainstorming session with representatives from the libraries, FOLA, the TLA, and the LSO. That was followed by a facilitated Board discussion to home in on our strategic priorities. The Board shared early draft of the Strategic Plan with shareholders and took that feedback into account while finalizing the plan.

LiRN's Strategic Plan is grounded in four priorities:

1. LiRN is focused on the needs of courthouse library users, both now and in the future
2. LiRN supports libraries and librarians
3. LiRN collaborates with others working to provide legal information and library service prioritizing trust and respect
4. LiRN makes evidence-based decisions

A one-page overview of the plan can be found [here](#).

Context of Law Libraries in Ontario

For information on budget considerations, staffing issues, data collection, services provided by the network libraries, and our digital resources, click [here](#).

Emerging Issues

There is an increasing demand for electronic resources, accelerated by the pandemic. Against this backdrop are ever-present budget concerns and cost increases. Learn more [here](#).