

BC Libraries Book Recycling & Donation Directory

Prepared by the BCLA Climate Action Committee, 2025

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1. Introduction

This directory is designed to help libraries in British Columbia make informed decisions about where to send withdrawn or donated books that can't be added to collections. It highlights recycling and donation options, including national programs, local initiatives, and municipal services.

Each entry includes a short description, what they accept, notes for libraries, and any known costs or considerations.

2. Quick Reference Chart

Name	Type	Accepts	How it Works	Cost	Notes / Region
Better World Books	Nonprofit, international	Most formats; good condition only	Ship boxes with prepaid labels; small resale revenue	Free	Books shipped abroad (higher footprint)
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Charity	Hard/softcover; no damaged/mouldy	Outdoor bins or pickup; unsold go to Zoom Books	Free	Various BC cities
Books to Prisoners BC	Volunteer-run nonprofit	Paperback only; restrictions apply	Deliver to Spartacus Books, Vancouver	Free	Community-based; book drives possible
Paper Trail (Okanagan College)	Student-run social enterprise	Most formats and conditions	Drop-off; books reused/recycled into eco fuel bricks	Free / low cost	Kelowna area focus
Planet Earth Recycling Ltd.	For-profit recycler	All formats; clean & dry	Drop-off or arrange shipment; large volumes handled	\$0.25/book + GST	Based in West Kelowna; city partnerships exist
Textbooks for Change	Nonprofit	University textbooks <15 yrs	Ship boxes directly	Free	Academic libraries only
Zoom Books	Company	Books & media (CDs/DVDs/games); good condition	Donation bins or pickup (10+ boxes); LibraryLink checks for direct service	Free; may pay for materials	Serves Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley

Name	Type	Accepts	How it Works	Cost	Notes / Region
Local Scrap & Paper Recyclers	Private recycling firms	Paperbacks & hardcovers; clean & dry	Arrange pickup or drop-off; may need covers removed	Varies	Check local providers for costs/minimums
Municipal Recycling Programs	Regional/city depots	Varies by depot	Drop-off; often free	Free	Low-carbon option when accepted
Thrift Stores & Charitable Resale	Charities & thrift shops	Books in good condition	Drop off; resold for charity	Free	Local community support
Local Book Donation Shelves & Free Carts	In-library reuse	Books in decent condition	Place on shelf/cart for patrons	Free	Keeps books in community

3. Directory of Options

Better World Books

What it is: International nonprofit bookseller that accepts donations and resells or recycles responsibly.

Accepts: Most formats including hardcovers. Books must be in good condition. No mouldy/damaged items. Must check their database for accepted titles.

How it works: Libraries ship boxes using prepaid labels; some resale revenue may be returned.

Notes: Books may travel long distances (often to US/UK), which increases carbon footprint.

Contact: <https://www.betterworldbooks.com/>

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

What it is: National charitable organization focused on providing mentorship to children and youth. Recycling program that places outdoor bins for collecting books and paper.

Accepts: Books, soft or hardcover. No damaged/mouldy items.

How it works: Provides bins for collection, then picks up on schedule. Drop off also welcome.

Notes: Availability in BC is limited; check regional options. Unsold items go to Zoom Books (see below).

Contact: <https://bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/find-agency-near/>

Books to Prisoners BC

What it is: A volunteer-run grass-roots organization that began in Vancouver in 1992, dedicated to providing prisoners with reading materials.

Accepts: There are restrictions on what prisons will accept. No hardcovers, spiral-bound, or damaged books. No books on pornography, how to immobilize a person, true crime books, books about Canadian prisoners or parolees, or critiques of police or prisons. Check the site for full list.

How it works: Deliver books to Spartacus Books at 1983 Commercial Drive, Vancouver.

Notes: Small-scale and community-based. Book drive templates available.

Contact: <https://bookstoprisoners.ca/>

Paper Trail

What it is: Student-run social enterprise at Okanagan College. Zero-waste initiative transforms paper waste into eco-friendly fuel bricks, providing an alternative to firewood.

Accepts: Most formats in reasonable condition.

How it works: Libraries can arrange drop-off. Books may be reused or recycled locally.

Notes: Small-scale and community-based; a good option for Kelowna area libraries.

Contact: <https://www.enactusoc.ca/current-projects>

Planet Earth Recycling Ltd.

What it is: For profit recycling company in West Kelowna that recycles wide variety of items. Runs a local depot.

Accepts: All formats. Must be clean and dry.

How it works: Libraries can arrange drop-off or delivery. Books may be reused or recycled locally.

Notes: Can handle large volume. Charges apply.

Contact: <https://www.planetearthrecycling.net/> | 250-768-0878

Textbooks for Change

What it is: Nonprofit based in Ontario that resells or recycles university-level textbooks.

Accepts: University-level textbooks (published within 15 years). No general library books.

How it works: Ship boxes of textbooks directly. Drop boxes also available in BC.

Notes: Niche program useful for academic libraries.

Contact: <https://www.textbooksforchange.com/>

Zoom Books

What it is: Company that partners with local organizations to pick up used books/media, routing them for resale, donation or recycling. Around 50% are redistributed.

Accepts: Books, soft or hardcover as well as media such as CD's, DVD's and video games. No damaged/mouldy items.

How it works: Partners with Big Brothers to put book bins in public places. Or schedule pick up for 10+ boxes (free boxes available). When working with them directly, check their LibraryLink database for accepted materials. See LibraryLink [Tutorial](#) and [FAQ](#).

Notes: Serves Vancouver, Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. May pay for materials.

Contact: <https://zoombooks.ca/> or **Find a Donation Bin** at <https://zoombooks.ca/donate-books/>

Local Scrap & Paper Recyclers

What it is: Private recycling companies that accept books along with other paper products. (Some listed above.)

Accepts: Hardcover and paperbacks; must be clean and dry.

How it works: Libraries arrange pickup or drop-off. Some recyclers require covers removed.

Notes: Check local providers for costs, minimum weights, and accepted materials.

Municipal Recycling Programs

What it is: Local city or regional depots that accept books with mixed recycling.

Accepts: Rules vary; some accept all books, others require covers removed.

How it works: Drop-off at recycling depots. Often free for residents/institutions.

Notes: Best low-carbon option when available locally.

Special Mention: Hartland Recycling Depot in Saanich

How it Works: Free drop off in designated book bin. No need to remove mylar covers or labels. Books are shredded and compost for garden use.

Contact: <https://www.crd.ca/programs-services/garbage-recycling/hartland-landfill/public-drop-depot>

Thrift Stores & Charitable Resale

What it is: Local thrift shops and charities (Value Village, Salvation Army, Rotary Clubs, etc.).

Accepts: Books in good condition. No mouldy/damaged items.

How it works: Libraries drop off directly. Materials are resold to benefit charity.

Notes: Supports local community groups while diverting from landfill.

Local Book Donation Shelves & Free Carts

What it is: In-branch shelves or carts where libraries make withdrawn or donated books available for free.

Accepts: Books in decent condition.

How it works: Display at library for patrons to take home.

Notes: Simple, transparent, and keeps books in the community.

4. Appendix: Tips for Libraries

Questions to Ask a Recycler or Donation Partner

- What materials are accepted (hardcover, paperback, magazines, damaged)?
- What happens to the materials (resale, pulped, composted, landfill)?
- What are the costs or returns?
- How far do materials travel, and what's the environmental impact?
- What support is provided (bins, boxes, shipping labels, reporting)?

Practical Tips

- Pilot with one branch before scaling.
- Match your volume to the right provider (small/local vs. bulk/international).
- Factor in staff time for sorting and boxing.
- Be transparent with your community.
- Track diversion results for sustainability reporting.

Sustainability Considerations

- Reuse first, recycle second, compost third.
- Choose local options when possible.
- Avoid mouldy/damaged donations that can contaminate loads.
- Consider composting mouldy/damaged materials for reuse in library gardens.
- Remember that sustainability includes social benefit - community groups and charities count.

5. Final Note

This directory is a living resource. Recycling markets and donation programs shift over time; libraries are encouraged to share updates with the BCLA Climate Action Committee (CAC) to keep this guide current.

If you have a business listing you would like us to consider adding, contact the CAC at climateaction@bcla.bc.ca.