

Dear Members

By *Kenneth Cooley, BCLA President.*

Hello. It's my great pleasure to serve this year as BCLA President. During the past year, as Vice-President, I've become increasingly aware of how varied the membership concerns and activities of BCLA are. Given the array of issues, I think BCLA's current strength and continuing relevance is a tribute to the competence and commitment of all Board and staff members who have worked so skillfully for the Association over the past many years.

The BCLA Board retreat held in April was part of this ongoing commitment to keeping the Association tuned-in and responsive to the expectations of our members and the always shifting opportunities in the library world. Among the many issues that were examined at this workshop, BCLA's advocacy role surfaced as a topic requiring clarification, particularly in regards to how the organization responds to requests for support from the many causes that solicit our attention. Appropriately enough, given the highly social and humanistic nature of libraries, these requests tend to fall within the category of "social justice" concerns. This also means that the issues can be complicated and not infrequently, emotional and potentially divisive. In order to deal well with these issues, BCLA needs to develop some guidelines for a fair and consistent process for managing its advocacy role.

Over the next year I will be working with two past presidents, Deb Thomas and Lynne Jordon to develop these guidelines. We will review past practice and solicit input from members and others with experience in championing causes. Some of the basic notions underlying our review will included: how do we ensure that BCLA's mandate and constitution consistently dictate our response to requests and how do we ensure that BCLA continues its advocacy role in a manner designed to avoid bringing the Association into disrepute. There are also a range of practical questions like: what is the most effective process for receiving requests, gaining an understanding of the issue, framing a response and following through on the consequences. This raises procedural details concerning to whom request are to be sent, establishing firmer expectations around timelines, investigating the need for dependable access to legal counsel and confirming the BCLA Board as the body that authorizes any advocacy response. Finally it will be necessary to make this process well understood in our community.

Deb, Lynne and I look forward to hearing from members who have experience or opinions on this issue.

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