Introducing: Information Policy News

By Devon Greyson.

The BCLA Information Policy Committee's regular Browser column

The BCLA Information Policy Committee, a standing committee of BCLA, aims to advance and preserve access to information, and to advocate for the public interest in government decisions relating to information policy. Some issues we have focused on in the recent past include: open access, the TILMA trade treaty, net neutrality, media democracy, access to government information and the BC election "gag law." We often work in cooperation with the Intellectual Freedom Committee.

The Information Policy Committee (we call it the "IPC") regularly hosts a series of Salons -- potluck gatherings with guest speakers on various information-related topics. We meet regularly to monitor and discuss information policy issues, sponsor BC Library Conference sessions, write policy-related resolutions for consideration by the BCLA membership, and irregularly host or co-sponsor other public events.

Any BCLA member is welcome to join the IPC. Our next event will be a family-friendly picnic at the end of the summer. For more information, join our listserv by using the BCLA website listserv management tool here: http://www.bclibrary.ca/listservs/bcla/.

This column aims to be a regular feature of the BCLA Browser, reporting on the IPC's activities, as well as information policy topics and events of local interest. Our inaugural article is a report on our most recent Salon, with guest speaker Jennifer Parisi.

Community resistance and public surveillance

On May 29, the IPC was pleased to host a Salon featuring Jennifer Parisi speaking about community resistance to recent public surveillance technologies and national surveillance policies. The talk drew on the groups Parisi studied for her recent MA thesis: International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance, Surveillance Camera Players, and Coalition Justice for Adil Charkaoui.

Parisi described these groups and their various activities to us, contrasting the Surveillance Camera Players' somewhat whimsical style of performance art in front of security cameras with the International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance's focus on post-9/11 international security agreements, and the Coalition Justice for Adil Charkaoui's single-issue approach to building a broad coalition. The diversity of individuals and approaches working toward common goals of human rights and freedoms was fascinating to consider.

Parisi then led the group into a discussion of the upcoming Olympic Games and our related local surveillance issues. While Vancouver has a history of resistance of surveillance cameras, it would be difficult to continue that resistance in the face of such a large international event with significant security concerns. Cameras with face-recognition capabilities are likely in our future, and if Vancouver is anything like Beijing or Athens, those cameras are unlikely to come down after the Olympic Games leave town.

After a conversation about the evidence on the lack of relationship between surveillance cameras and crime prevention, as well as more effective alternatives, the group discussed what might be done locally to raise awareness of surveillance issues. Could we map surveillance technologies around our region? A walking "surveillance tour" of Olympic venues, perhaps? Do or could our public libraries feel any obligation to notify and educate patrons about surveillance on or near the library premises?

If you are interested in these issues, you may be interested in joining the Information Policy Committee's BCLA listserv. If you would like to read more about Jennifer Parisi and her work, check out her blog, *Dataveillance,* and her thesis, A "broad-based and angry network": Opposing surveillance and security measures post-9/11, which is available open access.

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