

From the Executive Director

By Alane Wilson.

I am writing this very late in the creation and editing process for this issue of the Browser for a couple of reasons. One is that I have, for better or worse, always chafed against working to a deadline. And the second is there has been much to occupy me this quarter.

The first excuse is personal and not really defensible. I just don't like deadlines so I always leave things to the last minute and tell myself the fiction that I perform better under this deadline (it's not true).

The second excuse is true in spades. I am not sure why the myth of the slower summer time persists but it does. When I started working at the University of Calgary many years ago as an academic librarian, the story was I would have the summer to work on projects and research. I never did. My work at BCLA has been the same. One might assume that the summer would be slower. It wasn't this year. Half way through, it became apparent that the Association needed to pay close attention to provincial budget deliberations. And there went the rest of the summer. You will no doubt have read about or participated in efforts to convince this government of the critical place that libraries play in the fabric of the public good. As a community we were successful in mitigating cuts to the public library sector but that's only part of the challenge. Academic libraries have had their funding frozen within the larger context of their institutions and feature less in the press than do public libraries but the suffering is no less significant. The bottom line is all libraries in British Columbia are being starved and this starves the public good—and that is not good.

Some of you expected BCLA's Board and Executive Director to be more vocal after 2009 budgets, and cuts, were announced. BCLA President Ken Cooley and I appeared before the NDP Social Policy Committee in Victoria in October and some members of that committee offered their opinion that our sector should be much more activist in lobbying the government. I don't disagree. However, I do think that the best lobbying and activism comes from our constituents and that our efforts are best focused on mobilizing our communities not our colleagues. Efforts to engage citizens are more effective than having the "vested interests" speak out. So, in this period leading up to Budget 2010, I

encourage you to communicate with BCLA as to how the association can best represent everyone's interests in the most effective way to ensure libraries thrive.

Speaking of everyone's interests, one side effect of budget cuts is that associations are diminished. BCLA and our sister organizations, the BC Library Trustees Associations and the Association of Book Publishers of BC, to mention just a couple, have received big cuts to operating budgets, and the BCLTA Executive Director, Errin Morrison has resigned. All this makes a difference to BCLA's ability to be effective.

During the advocacy work we did in the late summer it was painfully clear that we were flying by the seat of our pants when it came to giving interviews, communicating with the media, and trying to get our message out. Who, how, what and when were all challenging to us. Primarily, at BCLA this activity fell to me, President Ken Cooley, Vice-President Marjorie Mitchell and Past President Lynne Jordon. We barely managed to cover and coordinate requests adequately. So the BCLA Board will in all likelihood seek to have a media relations handbook developed, as well as media training for Board members. We have a feeling we will not see a drop in the need to engage effectively with all sorts of media.

Looking further ahead, planning for the 2010 BC Library Conference in Penticton is well underway. The Conference Planning Committee is aware that many libraries and library boards may have less finances available to fund attendance (and the Committee is planning accordingly) but I would hope that many people will recognize the personal benefits of attending the provincial library conference even if all costs are not covered. Besides, it is going to be one big fun event! By April, those of us living in the rainier or colder parts of the province will surely be ready for some clear, dry, sunny—possibly warm—Okanagan weather.

And as always, if you have ideas, concerns, or issues to share with the BCLA Board, please get in touch with one of them (all their contact information is on the BCLA website) or with me.

Alane Wilson is the Executive Director of BCLA.