

# BCLA President's Report – AGM Report 2009/2010

By Ken Cooley.

During 2009/2010 BCLA has contended with a number of difficult issues both externally, as it responded to worsening financial situation and internally, as it sought to rationalize its complex organizational structure while maintaining the standard broad spectrum of services to members.

## Governance

At the BCLA Board Retreat in spring 2009, discussion focused on the composition of our membership and the structure of BCLA as an organization and specifically on how to make the BCLA Board as representative of the membership as possible. One of the recommendations arising was that the current Executive initiate discussion with ALPS and YACCS, whose board membership represents groupings of much larger primary sectors, and work out a resolution that would provide for representation of the whole sectors, not portions of them.

I and Vice-president Marjorie Mitchell met with the Chairs of YACCS and ALPS, in person and on conference calls during the year to discuss this proposal. No clear resolution has been negotiated and discussion is ongoing

Over the past year, it has become clear that BCLA's structure needs to be continually reviewed. As we move forward into 2010/11 we will initiate a comprehensive review of all Committees to ensure that their mandates and procedures are current and valid.

## Finance

BCLA's financial situation weakened significantly in 2010 as the Association was impacted by cuts to its Provincial Government operating grant and a loss of accounting services revenue resulting from the Provincial Government's decision to end financial support for shared databases in the public library system.

In responding to these developments, the Executive has sought to document and improve our understanding of BCLA's financial operations. Most

specifically on February 1, 2010 when BCLA personnel met with Jacqueline Van Dyk, Director of the Public Library Services Branch to discuss the accounting and contract processing services that BCLA has provide to PLSB for several years. The meeting brought a greater degree of clarity to the details of this relationship and underlined the need for annual Executive orientation that would serve to keep understanding of our relationships with other organizations current.

Throughout, the Executive has kept members apprised of the situation by sending letters on two occasions detailing the nature of our financial position and the steps taken to address it in the short run. As we move into a new fiscal year, it is likely that more stringent measures will be required.

In another response to our financial challenge, the Fund Development Committee will be re-energized under Christina de Castell. The Committee will devote time to developing other options for fund raising with the hope of offsetting this year's losses and setting BCLA on a more independent path in terms of its own budgetary resources.

## Advocacy

Throughout late fall 2009 and into winter 2010 BCLA has worked with partner organizations, BCLTA and ABCPLD in organizing and preparing to meet with the Minister of Education in an effort to keep issues of library funding before the Minister's eyes. BCLA Executive Director, Alane Wilson and BCLTA Director Andy Ackerman have devoted a great deal of effort and skill to the preparation of suitable materials and in presenting them to the Minister.

Among the many issues that were examined at the BCLA Board Retreat last May was the need to clarify BCLA's advocacy role, in particular we need to develop guidelines for a fair and consistent process for managing its advocacy issues and ensure that any executive group and Board will be able to follow well identified procedures when they receive a request for assistance. The intent was not to create an advocacy how-to document but rather to produce a very practical statement of how the

Association deals with requests to intervene. The urgency of BCLA's work with the Minister of Education relegated this initiative to the back burner. However, it is an ongoing project that as Past President, I will continue to work on.

### Communication

Beginning in 2009, The BCLA Reporter became the BCLA Browser the online electronic newsletter of the Association. The browser continues to cover all aspects of the Association's organizational issues and events. Congratulations to Editor, Sandra Wong, for her conscientious work in filling the Browser with news every quarter.

Vice-President, Marjorie Mitchell, Executive Director Alane Wilson and I participate in a weekly conference call during which we update each other on current issues. It is an opportunity for Alane to brief both Marjorie and myself on the many issues that cross her desk weekly. This has been a very effective way to keep in contact and I recommend it continue.

In many different ways, BCLA makes a concerted effort to maintain contact with organizations whose interests either parallel or overlap with the Association's. Vice-President Marjorie Mitchell attended both the summer and winter meetings of the Partnership in Toronto bringing BCLA's voice to that group meeting. Executive Director Alane Wilson is consistently in touch with a multitude of organizations but has worked particularly effectively with both the British Columbia Library Trustees' Association (BCTLA) and the Association of British Columbia Public Library Directors (ABCPLD) in regards to responding to successive cuts in government support to libraries in the province.

I have had the pleasure on two occasions of addressing library students at the UBC School of Library and Archival Studies. Once at the fall convocation for graduating students and again, on March 18, at the SLAIS Career Fair. These are excellent opportunities to make contact between newly minted librarians and BCLA.

For an Association that finds itself so often called on to make public comment or to respond to issues arising from actions both within the Library community or from external events, the Executive found that BCLA had few resources and limited experience in public relations. Despite willingness and ability in the BCLA Office, it was recognized early in

2009 that developing a well functioning public relations programme within the organization would require some outside expertise. To that end Executive Director, Alane Wilson, has worked with Rebus Creative to develop public relations resources for use within BCLA.

### Conference

As the premier service to members, the Conference Planning Committee is challenged to offer excellent sessions and social events that will appeal across the breadth of our membership and again this year, under the banner of Seriously Entertaining: Learning through Fun and Games, the Committee members have succeeded in putting together another outstanding Conference programme. Thanks to:

- Alane Wilson, Conference Manager;
- Heather Compeau, Conference Director;
- Allie Douglas, Conference Registrar;
- Jamie Anderson, Sessions Coordinator;
- Christina de Castell, Sponsorship Coordinator;
- Hazel Fry, Local Arrangements Coordinator;
- Julie Iannacone, Hospitality Coordinator;
- Mari Martin, Policy and Manual;
- Barbara Jo May, Author Talks Coordinator;
- Diane Nelles, Exhibits Coordinator;
- Ross Tyner, Web Site Coordinator;
- Jennifer Wilson, Publicity Coordinator.

### Continuing Education

Many of BCLA's Committees and Interest Groups offer continuing education opportunities to members. Sessions this year covered many topics from building better websites, to working with MarcEdit to sources of consumer health information and statistical methods in collection management. Continuing education is a very important and valued service to members and I would like to thank all those who worked to prepare the session offered this year.

### BCLA Office

As always, the BCLA Office has continued to provide consistently timely, enthusiastic and skilful support to the Executive, the Board and to members. I would like to thank both our Executive Director, Alane Wilson and our Office manager, Allie Douglas for their outstanding competence [and good humour even during this difficult year.

*Ken Cooley is the President, BCLA 2009/2010.*