

BCLA Annual General Meeting: Speech from the Vice President / President Elect

By Marjorie Mitchell.

Hasn't this been a fantastic conference? Thank you, Heather and your amazing team.

My year as Vice President/President elect with BCLA started with a BCLA Board Retreat. We took an open and honest look at who BCLA serves, how we serve them, and how we are structured.

We came out of the retreat with a clear and unified vision to move forward.

Boards, by their nature, must look at governance and policy and the retreat was a starting point for a governance review. As a Board we are looking at all the Association's components – staffing, finances, structures – and this process will continue in the upcoming year, building on the solid foundation and work of last year's Board. We, as a Board, see the next year as a time to renew, retool, and restructure BCLA to meet the challenges of the Association and the challenges of libraries and library workers in uncertain times.

One of the stated purposes of our Association is promoting the role of libraries and library workers through advocacy. The Board knows our members value the advocacy work that BCLA does, but there is a need to build a common understanding about both the process for advocacy and the objectives of our advocacy. Clarifying BCLA's advocacy role and strategies is identified as a priority. However, as news of the provincial funding cuts became clearer, it was decided to defer discussions on advocacy to next year while the board came up with new strategies to address the current financial situation. BCLA will develop a very practical statement of how the Association deals with requests for advocacy.

The cuts in funding to BCLA unfortunately came at a time when we experienced lower than anticipated revenues from our reserve funds. We were not immune to the effects of the recession. The Board responded to this situation in prudent and fiscally responsible means. By the late fall, some staff were working reduced hours to help alleviate the shortfall between income and expenditures. The Board also

conducted much more of the business of the association by teleconference and e-mail. The board also communicated the changes in our financial situation in two letters to our membership. The Board has taken active steps to renew our sustainability, but this will be a process that takes some time.

Another step was to appoint a committee to focus on the financial sustainability of our association. The Fund Development Committee has been reconstituted and is beginning its work to bolster the resources of the association. We are excited about the opportunities this process provides us to engage and inform our membership and to work with them to strengthen the long-term viability of the Association.

Another step to restoring BCLA is to undertake a comprehensive review of all the activities, committees, and interest groups that make up BCLA. We can no longer assume the status quo. As president, I am appointing a Task Force on Strategic Sustainability as another step toward bringing the Association into alignment with our stated purposes.

These purposes are:

- promoting the role of libraries and library workers,
- providing opportunities to expand knowledge and skills,
- participating at the national and international levels as appropriate,
- encouraging membership in the Association,
- and ensuring long term, stable funding.

This Task Force will bring recommendations to the Board to help accelerate our retooling and restructuring.

We cannot do this in isolation, nor do we want to do this in isolation. We will continue to revise and retool our communication strategies. Many of you will be hearing from me over the coming months and I welcome the chance to hear your constructive and creative ideas.

While all this is being done at a time of financial pressure to the Association, it is not a negative thing for the Association. Self-examination can uncover

over-looked strengths and set the stage for us to take advantage of new opportunities. We have to engage our membership in these discussions and decisions. I hope our members can see this as their opportunity to have very meaningful roles to play in the Association.

I feel the next year is shaping up to be an exciting one for BCLA. Yes, we have challenges to face, but I am confident we can build on our strengths as we retool, restructure and realign the Association to its stated purposes.

I would like to echo Ken's thanks to Alane, Allie, and Rita for their tireless work and unstinting optimism. I would also like to thank Ken Cooley, our outgoing President for his calm, level-headed approach to association work. His sense of humour helps me keep everything in perspective. I also would like to acknowledge all of the Board members who have served this year, many of whom will be continuing in their roles next year, and some whose term has come to an end:

- Lynne Jordon
- Adrienne Woss
- Christina de Castell

- Chris Middlemass
- Heather Compeau
- Dianne Nelles
- Anne Olsen
- Mary Martin
- Sandra Wong
- Susan Redmond
- Katherine Miller
- Roen Janik
- Mary Aphonso
- David Karppinen

They have been a marvelous team. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would also like to thank Melody Burton and Gwen Zilm of UBC Okanagan for their institutional support of me to participate on the Board.

In closing, I want to invite all of you to join me next year in Victoria as we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of our Association and thank you all for attending our AGM.

Marjorie Mitchell is the incoming President of BCLA.