

# BCLA Volunteer Nancy Hannum

Submitted by Adrienne Wass.

## Current Position

Consultant to the LawMatters program of the Courthouse Libraries BC; otherwise semi-retired.

## Former library positions:

- Vancouver Public Library various positions 1974 – 1978
- Legal Resource Centre of Legal Services Society 1979 – 2002 Manager 1989 - 2002

## BCLA Experience

Current: Chair of First Nations Interest Group

Past: President, Vice President, Past President 1991 - 1993

Member of the Executive – about 3 years earlier

Chair, Government Publications Committee  
Member, Information Policy Committee and Intellectual Freedom Committee

Awards: SLAIS Alumni and Leadership award – 2001  
BCLA Helen Gordon Stewart award – 2003

## In her own words

BCLA has been an essential part of my life since I became a librarian in 1974. In the beginning it was a way to get connected, see what was happening in the library world and meet library people from around the province. We had our heroes and I remember the conference when several people including Sam Rothstein, Director of SLAIS, announced their retirement. All too soon the generations were changing and the torch was being passed – to just us – the new kids.

BCLA became a place where I could learn skills and share skills. We made a decision at the Legal Resource Centre to hold 'law for librarians' workshops for reference staff at BCLA conferences and did so for 25 years. Several of the Interest Groups I was involved with also held workshops or at least had information tables. There were conferences where I never had lunch because people just kept talking informally. (Of course, you don't have to miss lunch to be part of BCLA!)



Nancy Hannum. Photo by Public Library Services Branch.

BCLA became a place where we could work on library issues not limited to just one library and not always directly in our job descriptions – like intellectual freedom, access to government information, library services to First Nations. By working with the BCLA Interest Groups, Committees and Sections we could work directly on these issues of concern to many library workers. We could educate our fellow librarians through BCLA and where appropriate we could work directly with the BCLA Executive/Board to take a public position, hold a public event and take other initiatives that a provincial organization can do.

By working in a provincial organization representing all types of libraries, we had the challenges and opportunities of communication, cooperation and collaboration. We had the opportunity to work back and forth between the members, the Interest Groups and Committees to the Board members of BCLA. At the same time, the experience of being on the Executive/Board was a big learning experience and it provided an opportunity to bring library concerns to the provincial table. BCLA provided an opportunity to work in collaboration with the Public Library Services Branch – to help develop the many special projects that the Branch could fund and support. Our depth of learning about BC libraries and library issues increased with each meeting.

And about the issues:

- Library service to Aboriginal people in BC is still sketchy and needs work at every level. While local initiatives are essential, it is also important to work provincially to address the overall gap in services.
- As technology evolves it keeps raising critical public policy issues such as privacy, copyright, access to government information that librarians know about from the front lines. As with other professionals such as physicians and scientists, we have a social responsibility to use our knowledge and experience on public policy issues related to our field.

Looking back – some of our best accomplishments came in collaborative efforts through BCLA. Some of my fondest friends were made in the course of all those meetings, projects and long dinners. And I'm pleased to report that even retired library workers can participate in BCLA activities.

*Adrienne Wass is the Manager, Community Development at Greater Victoria Public Library.*