

The Importance of Association

By *Errin Morrison*.

I was in Toronto recently for the Ontario Library Association's Super Conference as well as a meeting of The Partnership – Canada's national network of provincial and territorial library associations. I was reminded then, and I am reminded again as we draw nearer to our own BC Library Conference, that the strength of any association depends entirely upon the strength and dedication of its volunteers.

Thank you to Our Conference Organizers

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the volunteers who have been hard at work planning our Conference and 100th Anniversary Celebrations in Victoria – our Conference Planning Committee, our Program Committee, our Volunteer Coordinator and all of the enthusiastic volunteers who will be contributing their time to ensure that sessions and events run smoothly.

These folks hail from BCLA, BCLTA and HLABC; they are library staff and trustees; many of them are students; they come from all kinds of libraries; and are from all around the province. They are doing a wonderful job and I am so looking forward to enjoying the culmination of all their work over the past many months. I am extending a pre-emptive thank you for a job very well done. Anyone who has been involved in putting on a major conference knows just how much work goes into an event like this. In our recent survey on association priorities, the annual conference ranked a strong first in importance for BCLA members. This, in itself, is a clear indication that all this work and effort is much appreciated by the membership – but of course it never hurts to say "Thank you!"

Kudos to BCLA's SCIGS

And while I'm on the topic of association volunteers, let me also express my admiration for those among the BCLA membership who have been active in our Sections, Committees and Interest Groups. Your ongoing work keeps BCLA relevant and engaged. Your contributions are many, and include:

- providing a way for members with similar interests and experiences to network and connect;
- monitoring and communicating on issues of concern to BC's libraries;

- facilitating training opportunities and providing practical resources of benefit to your peers;
- serving British Columbians by promoting library values and developing and strengthening library programs and services.

If you are not yet involved in any of BCLA's Sections, Committees or Interest Groups, I highly encourage you to join and engage with another very committed and energetic group of volunteers.



Erin Morrison and BCLA VP/President Elect Christopher Kevlahan at the OLA Super Conference

Get Involved

If you have ever considered getting more involved in your professional association, I suggest to you that this is the year to do it. BCLA's Task Force on Strategic Sustainability will be seeking member input and ideas over the coming months in response to the challenges ahead.

Please be ready to participate when the invitation goes out to attend a Task Force-sponsored get together in your region. And keep an eye out for online and teleconference participation opportunities as well. And of course you are always welcome to contact BCLA Board members and/or staff with your ideas, concerns and questions...there is no real deadline for input on this or any other issue facing the association. The more engaged you are – at any point – the more responsive BCLA can be.

The Value of Association

I spoke at Langara College last week on an Association Panel that also included representatives from the Health Libraries Association of BC, the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries, the Special Libraries Association, the BC Teacher Librarians Association, and the Pacific Northwest Library Association. One message that came through loud and clear from all of us was the importance of not only joining your professional association, but actually getting involved – taking advantage of the many opportunities to network, learn, develop professional skills and abilities, and make lifelong friends. I wish I had understood the value of association earlier in my own career. I get it now, from my involvement with BCLA and BCLTA, but I could have benefited greatly from knowing it earlier.

Take the Plunge

So...to those of you who are engaged, involved and actively volunteering for BCLA, I extend a heartfelt thanks for your efforts. To those of you who may not yet be members, or who may be leery of giving up the occasional evening or weekend to volunteer or take on a position of responsibility in a BCLA Section, Committee or Interest Group, I say the rewards will far outweigh the sacrifice of personal time. And to those of you who are ready (and you *are* ready) I say put yourself out there and think about volunteering for a position on the BCLA Board. This is an open, inclusive and welcoming organization and we all have something positive to contribute. Start thinking about how you can get involved, make a name for yourself, and give back to BC's library community.

Errin Morrison is BCLA's Executive Director.