

A fond farewell to BCLA

By Errin Morrison.

Coming to the End of my Term as ED

I had to include this photo in my farewell article for the Browser. It was taken at Port Moody Public Library's (PMPL) annual "Links to Literacy" golf tournament this past August. I'm at the far right and my husband Grant, who was part of the tournament organizing committee, is at the far left. As you may recall, I am a trustee on the PMPL board...a role I hope to continue even as I leave work to welcome our third child to the world this spring. Leaving BCLA will be difficult, but at least I won't be leaving the library scene altogether. You may even see me at the 2012 BC Library Conference – as a delegate this time, possibly with infant in tow!

Looking Back

It's hard to believe that more than a year has passed since I took over the Executive Directorship of BCLA. Those first few months are a complete blur in retrospect – learning the job, meeting the people, preparing the board for a conference and AGM that seemed to arrive much faster than I anticipated... It was a steep learning curve and I'm very grateful for all the guidance and help I received from Alane Wilson, the 2010/11 and 2011/12 boards, and our invaluable and irreplaceable Office Manager, Allie Douglas (without whom I would have done and accomplished much, much less in my time as Executive Director). All in all, the past 12 months have been a fantastic experience for me. I've made friends, developed new skills, contributed to some very worthwhile initiatives, and learned a great deal about BC's library sector. Most significantly, perhaps, I have been inspired by some of the very passionate and dedicated people who generously contribute their time and expertise to this association. What BCLA lacks in financial resources, it more than makes up for in the enthusiasm, commitment and skill of its membership.

Looking Ahead

As the association moves forward into 2012 and beyond, engaging and involving this membership will become even more important to ensuring BCLA's vitality, stability and longevity. I can say, from experience, that there is more than enough work to occupy a full-time Executive Director. Maintaining this position at part-time and still managing to



Photo taken by Oliver Rathonyi-Reusz of In View Images (www.inviewimages.com) at the Port Moody Public Library's "Links to Literacy" golf tournament.

accomplish the ambitious goals the board sets for itself will be a challenge. I think it's difficult for a lean, non-profit association such as this one to maintain staff and office space but still communicate the very real need for strong member involvement and volunteerism. I also think it's more difficult to communicate a sense of ownership to the members of an association when its elected board has staff support to draw on. Despite employing three staff persons (at various levels of full and part-time employment), this association needs members to step forward and organize socials, connect with new members, provide learning opportunities for colleagues, share best practices, offer up individual skills when relevant projects are announced, contribute articles to The Browser, and so on. We have some very worthwhile initiatives underway at the moment and BCLA will need strong member participation if they are to succeed. I'm thinking particularly of the association-wide mentorship program that is under development, and the drive to boost membership and rejuvenate the BCLA Ambassador Program. When you hear, over the coming months, of opportunities to assist in these programs, I hope you will consider getting involved. I think we have some good momentum at the moment, but the board and BCLA's new Executive Director will need your assistance to carry this forward into action. And if you don't have the time to organize and drive these initiatives, please at least consider attending BCLA events and taking

advantage of social and educational opportunities as they arise.

To Do

Looking at my last few weeks with the association, a couple of the projects I hope to see completed before I go include:

- 1) The new BCLA website – which is currently an attractive and nicely organized shell waiting to be populated with site content.
- 2) The BCLA Historical Archives – a collection of various files, documents, and materials that have been thoroughly weeded and are awaiting proper organization and storage.

Priority projects I'd like to see the association work on in the future include:

- 1) Finalizing our draft conference manual and incorporating an annual update into the conference cycle;
- 2) Creating an up-to-date repository of BCLA's various policy statements and operational guidelines;
- 3) Developing a proper records management system for the print and electronic documents and materials housed at the BCLA office;
- 4) Constituting an active Fundraising Committee charged with securing ongoing financial support for the association's various awards as well as one-time funding for major projects, educational and other initiatives of benefit to the membership; and
- 5) Ensuring that President Christopher Kevlahan's focus on improving BCLA communications practices continues – including members, Sections, Committees and Interest Groups keeping the whole association up to date on key activities and accomplishments of interest – through The Browser, BCLA's various listservs, some kind of quarterly updating schedule, and BCLA's annual report.

To Continue Doing

Excellent work that I hope just carries on as usual includes:

- 1) The great work of BCLA's two existing (plus one prospective) Sections in providing support to their respective members and ensuring engaged involvement at the grass-roots level;
- 2) The passion and commitment of BCLA's various Committees dedicated to ensuring intellectual freedom, access to and freedom of information, and protection of privacy – and communicating the role that libraries play in supporting these core values;
- 3) The work of BCLA's many other Interest Groups and ad hoc Committees dedicated to monitoring issues and keeping the association current and responsive to the needs and interests of members – and library users; and last, but not least,
- 4) The hard work and dedication of those willing to stand for election to the BCLA Board...this is a bigger commitment than many people realize and this core supply of volunteers is absolutely crucial to maintaining a functioning and successful association.

Goodbye

And with that I will say goodbye. My time with BCLA has been memorable and productive and I wish the association well in the coming years. Perhaps I will be back in some active capacity down the road; and at the very least you will be able to count me among your members! Here's looking ahead to another 100 years of BCLA serving the library community and advancing the interests of libraries and library workers throughout the province.

Errin Morrison is BCLA's Executive Director.