

Libraries Across Borders: Building libraries, building communities

By Marilyn MacPherson.

What is Libraries Across Borders?

Building libraries, building communities. This phrase best describes the goal of the British Columbia Library Association's special interest group, Libraries Across Borders (LAB). LAB's mission is to support community-based library initiatives both locally and internationally. These initiatives range from building libraries, creating local collections, and training librarians, to providing expertise and advice. To support these initiatives, LAB has a sub-committee, the Assistance to Libraries Fund (ALF). ALF is responsible for fund-raising, selecting library projects and ensuring that the project is using the funds according to the application guidelines.

What has LAB done?

Since 2005, LAB supported more than 65 international and First Nations' library projects such as the Tikapur Library in Nepal, the Lillooet Area Library Association First Nations' book bus, and the Trans Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS) Tibetan refugee settlement library in India. Generous donors such as Josef Wosk, Ruth Foley and United Library Services, and monthly contributors made LAB's work possible. LAB fundraising events, auctions, and salons also raised both funds and awareness of the First Nations' libraries and the international libraries and organizations supported by LAB.

Where LAB came from

LAB has not always been Libraries Across Borders! Until December 2000, LAB was the Third World Libraries Interest Group otherwise known as TWLIG. TWLIG supported libraries in the Third World by buying library materials and seeking funding primarily from BCLA. A period of dormancy allowed members to reassess and reposition the group. Key to this process was situating LAB as a sustainable, globally focused, and self-funded organization. To realize this vision, LAB set goals of having a self-supporting funding structure, a rigorous set of application guidelines, and a network of partnerships with organizations with similar objectives. With its wealth of knowledgeable librarians and information workers, LAB placed itself

as a resource by offering international and local organizations its expertise in library development.

Where LAB is now

Another period of dormancy gave LAB the opportunity to assess its purpose and examine how it delivers its message. At a January 12th organizational meeting, LAB members discussed ways to reconnect with previous partners, develop new partnerships, and provide a forum for international librarianship.

LAB's website will be redeveloped with content that reflects LAB's commitment to First Nations' and international libraries. And with its supportive donors, LAB will continue to fund local and international initiatives such as the Busolve Public Library in Uganda. LAB is donating \$3,000.00 to this Douglas College Library and Coquitlam Public Library initiative. Their goal is to raise \$6,000.00 to provide operating funds and develop solar power so Busolve patrons can have evening access to their library. LAB encourages its members to attend the Busolve fundraising event Library Quiz Night on Thursday, February 9, 2012 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Douglas College Coquitlam campus. Please contact Shelley Waldie for more information at 604-527-5180 or waldies@douglascollege.ca.

How you can get involved.

Integral to LAB is its members. Through-out the years, many dedicated people have supported this organization with their time and effort. Needless to say, LAB always welcomes new members. Not from the Lower Mainland? Become a member and host fundraising events or online information salons in your community. Want to be an active member? LAB is looking for people who would like to be content creators/editors. Want to find more about LAB? Follow us on the BCLA site <http://www.bcla.bc.ca/lab/default.aspx> or on LAB's webpage <http://www.librariesacrossborders.org> or email LAB at librariesacrossborders@gmail.com.

A member of LAB since 2003 and current convenor, Marilyn MacPherson is the children's librarian at Kensington Branch, Vancouver Public Library.