

President's Report

By Gwen Bird.

In my last *Browser* column I referenced upcoming work to develop a new mission statement for our Association. I'm pleased to report on both the process and result of that work now. First things first—here it is: *Advancing BC Libraries Together*. I hope your response to this statement is as enthusiastic as mine, and that of the many groups and individuals who participated in our process to arrive at it. Let me walk you through the process we took to get here, as I think it provides a great example of BCLA members, staff, and Board working together.

The 2012-2013 Board knew we wanted to follow consideration of BCLA's new strategic plan with development of revised Mission, Vision, and Values statements. The old ones were really showing their age, now thought to be too long, and in need of refreshing for prominent display on the Association's new website. We provided whiteboards and markers in the registration area of the BC Libraries Conference in spring 2013 and collected a substantial amount of wide-ranging input from conference attendees on words or phrases they'd like to see included in BCLA's mission, vision and values statements. The compiled list of this input was discussed at a fall Board meeting, where we noted key themes—collaboration, connection, community, leadership. In addition, there were many concepts less frequently mentioned, but perhaps no less important to those who contributed them—threads of privacy, freedom of access, advocacy, activism, even “creative destruction!” Following a thorough Board discussion, a small subcommittee crafted several draft mission and vision statements for consideration and these were distributed to the chairs and convenors of all Interest Groups, Sections and Committees. An in-person consultation with representatives from a dozen of these groups was held at the BCLA office in late November. We had a good discussion that evening, endorsing the selected mission statement and a preferred vision statement. Input from those unable to attend the meeting was accepted by email and via one-on-one meetings on request.

The participation of the members at the group event in November was highly rewarding for me as President. Each representative there had consulted with their constituents, came prepared to engage at a strategic level, and we avoided devolving into a group wordsmithing exercise (we've all been there!). BCLA Executive Director Annette DeFaveri supplied



useful documents ahead of time, reminding participants that a mission statement should be brief and catchy—in the age of social media, we need a shorter-than-tweetable phrase that grabs peoples' attention and summarizes why we exist. The vision statement, perhaps slightly longer, is an aspirational statement that conveys where we want to be in the future.

The group chose the selected mission statement as the one that best conveys a strong sense of forward momentum, collective effort, and the importance of our library networks. We also discussed the fact that the statement speaks of advancing *libraries*, whereas many of our activities and benefits actually accrue to library people (as individuals). After unpacking this idea, we agreed that while the latter is true, the reason we do what we do—indeed why we exist at all—is because of the libraries themselves, including the people who run them and work in them. As for the vision statement, one concept that comes up in each discussion of this is the idea of “full membership,” that is, support from library workers at all levels in all types of libraries everywhere in the province.

When the proposed mission and vision statements came back to the Board at our December meeting, the mission was unanimously approved. We have a bit more work to do fine-tuning the vision statement, and we're now also ready to move on to consideration of the values that guide our work as an association.

So there you have it—the BC Library Association:
Advancing BC Libraries Together.

You'll begin to see our new mission statement on
BCLA materials—the soon to be unveiled new
website, printed materials, and other official
communications from BCLA. Personally, I'm as
pleased with our process to get here as I am with our
bold and concise new mission statement. To my
mind, it represents the best of our group working
together, and it gave me a glimpse into the

wonderful support and even loyalty our members
have for this organization. I look forward to more of
this as we further consider the related vision and
values statements, and then continue to build
momentum toward our conference in a few short
months. Stay tuned!

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the Council of Prairie and Pacific University
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