

CLA continues dialogue with LAC

At its meeting on 29 May, CLA Executive Council discussed its relationship with Library and Archives Canada, and potential actions in light of the recently announced budget cuts. Executive Council concluded that enhanced engagement with LAC management and with relevant federal Ministers and Members of Parliament is the best way for CLA to influence the impact of the budget reductions. By providing input from the library community regarding the impact of the cuts on access to Canada's documentary heritage, CLA supports LAC management in making informed choices about the changes they must make in light of their budget restrictions.

CLA's relationship with LAC includes having invited Dr Daniel Caron, Deputy Head and Librarian and Archivist of Canada, to present the opening keynote address at the recent CLA National Conference in Ottawa. While some members of the library community came away from the presentation feeling positive because they understood his vision for LAC, others came away feeling annoyed about the lack of consultation with libraries across the country and disappointed that the role of LAC's Pan Canadian Documentary Heritage Network was not clearly explained. His second session, a dialogue with CLA's delegates, was well attended, and many voices were heard.

Some of our colleagues have taken different approaches to expressing their frustration with LAC. The archival community gathered on a trek to Ottawa with a mock funeral in front of the main public LAC building; the Association of Canadian Archivists has withdrawn its participation in the Pan Canadian Documentary Heritage Network; CAUT members have launched a SaveLAC campaign, and held a day of action and distributed black ribbons at the CLA conference.

CLA's immediate response to the situation was to issue a press release on 2 May, expressing dismay at the cuts within LAC and at many departmental libraries within the federal government. We sent a letter to James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, expressing concern about the negative impact of these cuts.

During the unprecedented "CLA on the Hill" day at our conference, 60 members held meetings with 63 different MPs, Senators, and key political staffers, and used the opportunity to draw attention to the cuts at LAC and other federal libraries. One immediate impact of this effort was that the cuts were raised in the House of Commons by MP Dennis Bevington during the debate on 4 June on the library book rate. CLA will continue our advocacy initiatives on this issue.

There are more concrete steps to be taken in the coming weeks. CLA President Karen Adams and members of Executive Council are continuing discussions with Dr. Caron and LAC staff. And we are developing a plan, in cooperation with other national, provincial and territorial associations, to determine the community's expectations of LAC. We will be seeking input from CLA members to gauge the anticipated impact of the LAC cuts to libraries across Canada.

CLA Executive Council is committed to the association's role as the national voice for Canada's library communities. We will advocate for Library and Archives Canada to be adequately funded to fulfill its mandate and ensure that Canadians have access to the whole of our documentary heritage now and in the future.