

How does a nascent Federation of Library Associations work well with others? The Case of Canada

Donna Bourne-Tyson

Dalhousie University Libraries, Halifax, Canada.

E-mail address: donna.bourne-tyson@dal.ca

Susan Haigh

Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), Ottawa, Canada.

E-mail address: susan.haigh@carl-abrc.ca



Copyright © 2017 by Susan Haigh and Donna Bourne-Tyson. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Abstract:

In 2016, a new Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) was born as an intentional and positive outcome of the dissolution of the Canadian Library Association. The Federation's focus is on national advocacy for all libraries. This is a new way forward – one that hopes to leverage the combined membership strength of the many library associations in Canada, to create new opportunities for individuals in the library community to have their voices heard at a national level, and to reinforce collaboration amongst the various library associations rather than see competition amongst them.

CFLA's emergence is a credit to its key association members' willingness to invest in, and to work together on, common issues -- but how will the Federation and its member associations best coordinate advocacy on key civil society issues? How do they engage with other memory institutions and associations, and non-library groups that are active on those issues? Drawing upon various Canadian associations' activities, including the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council, Ontario Library Association, and the Federation itself, we will describe work in two active policy areas: indigenous services and response to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and copyright and user rights' groups' readiness for a 2017 Parliamentary Review of our Copyright Act.

Keywords: library federations; advocacy; copyright; access to information; indigenous services.

Introduction

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA) is now just over one year old. Its purpose has been defined as three-fold: to advance library excellence in Canada; to champion library values and the value of libraries; and to influence national and international public policy impacting libraries and their communities. As a national voice of Canada's library communities, the Federation aims to advocate for libraries on issues such as Indigenous library services, copyright, intellectual freedom, and accessibility. This paper will describe the reasons for, and the approach that

was taken toward, the Federation's formation, and then provide an overview of its initial areas of advocacy focus.

The Genesis of the Federation

The process that confirmed the dissolution of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the attendant creation of the Federation was initiated by the CLA's own Executive Council. The elected Council was sufficiently resolute to recognize that CLA was losing membership, capacity and momentum and that these realities signaled the need for a major re-conception of the national library association. As was later stated:

The need for work on a new approach has been evident for a number of years. Rather than continuing to try to tweak an increasingly weakening association structure, the library association representatives agreed to work together to contemplate a new way forward for the Canadian library community.ⁱ

In early 2015, the CLA Executive Council hosted an invitational meeting attended by 32 representatives from existing national, provincial and territorial associations to discuss a concept paper: *Canadian Library Association: A Proposed New Vision for our National Association*.ⁱⁱ While they were not prepared to endorse any one model at that time, the assembled representatives agreed that a) there was critical need for an agile and focused national voice for libraries and library issues in Canada, and b) that a direct membership model was no longer sustainable, and thus more exploration of a federated model was required.

This initial consultation led to the formation of the Future Federation Working Group, which deliberated and consulted widely throughout 2015. The working group included executive directors or board chairs from the associations that represent Canada's largest research libraries (Canadian Association of Research Libraries, known as CARL), Canada's largest public libraries (Canadian Urban Libraries Council, known as CULC), several provinces' professional associations including the largest of these (Ontario Library Association, or OLA), some specialized library associations, a library consortium, and CLA Executive Council. The group (in which co-author Susan Haigh was a participant) engaged in frank but constructive dialogue that built trust and led to collaborative decision-making, under the able guiding leadership of chair Sandra Singh, City Librarian of Vancouver Public Library, who was at the time the elected President of the disbanding Canadian Library Association.

The Founding of the Federation

The Future Federation Working Group produced a vision document entitled [*Toward a Federation of Library Associations in Canada*](#)ⁱⁱⁱ Following initial feedback received at the June 2015 CLA Conference and AGM, and later feedback received from a widely-distributed survey about the revised proposal conducted in November of that year, this report was finalized and released in December 2015. The report described the proposed Federation's purpose and scope; its structure, governance, and financial model; its name; its benefits; and next steps. It also included appendices to help dispel known concerns: a FAQ and detailed information on the background, context and chronology that had led to the proposal.

The focused mandate defined for the Federation would be to act as a national voice of Canada's libraries to advance library excellence in Canada; to champion library values and the value of libraries; and to influence national and international public policy impacting libraries and their communities.

The Federation was founded on the basis of this report following a special vote of the CLA membership that took place during the widely-attended OLA Super Conference in Toronto at the end of January 2016.

Building on the vision articulated in this document, the founding Bylaws of the new Federation were developed during the first quarter of 2016. CFLA-FCAB was formally incorporated in May 2016.

In advance of the first Board election held at the AGM on February 1, 2017 in Toronto, Ontario, CFLA-FCAB worked with an Interim Board named by the founding member associations. The CARL Vice-President Donna Bourne-Tyson (and co-author of this paper) from Dalhousie University served as interim co-chair for the Board, along with the CULC chair, Paul Takala from Hamilton Public Library. CARL's Executive Director Susan Haigh participated on the CFLA-FCAB interim Board as an alternate, and provided leadership and coordination on copyright issues that arose during the eight-month period after CLA was discontinued and before the CFLA-FCAB Copyright Committee was in place. OLA provided extensive administrative support for the fledgling association, and other associations such as the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), also a member of the earlier working group, provided file storage for all of the CLA files. The Federation's [1st Annual Report](#) provides more information.

There are now over 20 member associations, and the Board is comprised of representatives from library and archival associations representing all regions of Canada.^{iv}

It has been a very positive experience for the authors to see so many library associations working together. The level of commitment to meaningful collaboration has helped the Federation overcome initial obstacles, and throughout the first year, the Federation has added new members steadily, beyond the initial founding members.^v

Influencing Public Policy

CFLA-FCAB struck two national committees in 2016: the limited term Truth and Reconciliation Committee and a standing Copyright Committee. Representation was solicited for both committees from member associations, with a general guideline for each committee that a maximum of two individuals would be named from any member association. This resulted in large committees but allowed a good mix in expertise, type of library and regional representation. Both committees struck smaller subcommittees to undertake specific areas of the overarching committee's mandate.

Copyright

Copyright advocacy is a key, and likely perpetual, priority for the Federation. During the transition period from CLA to the Federation, an ad hoc group under the auspices of CARL and CULC provided continuity in representing the community as a whole on copyright issues. In December 2016, the CFLA's Copyright Committee was created, and Victoria Owen from University of Toronto Scarborough (and a former chair of the CLA Copyright Committee, OLA's Copyright Committee, as well as of IFLA's Copyright and other Legal Matters Advisory Committee) was named chair. The Federation has received observer status at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

The new committee is responsible to:

- Engage with existing committees and/or working groups within CFLA members to maximize the efficacy and impact of copyright advocacy.
- Prepare for CFLA advocacy in the context of the 2017 legislative review of the *Copyright Act*.
- Review and confirm pre-existing CLA positions on copyright matters.
- Recommend a long-term structure and direction to the CFLA Board to pursue to address copyright issues related to libraries, including the formation of a permanent committee and programs, following the inaugural CFLA AGM in February 2017.

The committee has established subcommittees to develop its advocacy positions on fair dealing, the Copyright Board, and all other copyright issues in anticipation of Parliament's mandatory five-year review of the *Copyright Act*, which is slated to begin after November 2017.

This work is intentionally strengthened by and aligned with the copyright advocacy work of some of its member national organizations. CARL, for example, actively works with organizations that represent the interests of post-secondary education stakeholders, including associations representing universities, colleges, students, and teachers. Research and documentation that provides evidence supporting our common advocacy positions is regularly shared among these groups, as are strategies and draft communications. This sharing will undoubtedly intensify as Parliament pursues its upcoming review of Canada's copyright legislation.

Indigenous Knowledge

The Federation formed its Truth and Reconciliation Committee in 2016 “to promote initiatives in all types of libraries to advance reconciliation by supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.”^{vi} It was also to recommend a long-term structure and direction to the Board for pursuing Indigenous issues related to libraries, including the formation of a permanent committee and programs.

The Committee was divided into four teams with the following responsibilities: The Black Team compiled Best Practices already in existence related to Indigenous peoples of Canada. The White team provided a gap analysis on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and recommends an annual review be to evaluate progress. The Yellow team looked at existing relationships and developed a contact database. Finally, the Red Team envisioned the future by reviewing the existing body of knowledge related to the decolonization of space, access and classification, Indigenous knowledge protection, outreach and service.

The Committee concluded its limited term mandate with the release of [The Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report](#). While each team provided a number of specific recommendations, the following ten (10) overarching recommendations were made:

1. As CFLA-FCAB is a national voice with the ability to influence national and international policy regarding issues of importance, we request the CFLA-FCAB create a permanent Standing Committee on Indigenous Matters utilizing the medicine wheel framework developed by the Truth & Reconciliation Committee;

2. The T&R Committee supports and endorses the CFLA-FCAB Position Statement on Library and Literacy Services for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) Peoples of Canada;
3. Encourage libraries, archives and cultural memory institutions to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 94 Calls to Action, several of which have been identified as having a direct impact on libraries and archives and are prioritized in this report, and to implement a status report on a yearly basis to monitor their implementation;
4. Ensure accessibility moving forward by continually reminding stakeholders that material produced and programming planned in the future should be accessible to all Canadians. CELA (the Center for Equitable Library Access) and NNELS (the National Network for Equitable Library Service) are positioned to support these efforts.
5. Decolonize Access and Classification by addressing the structural biases in existing schemes of knowledge organization and information retrieval arising from colonialism by committing to integrating Indigenous epistemologies into cataloguing praxis and knowledge management;
6. Decolonize Libraries and Space by recognizing and supporting Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledges through culturally appropriate space planning, interior design, signage, art installations, territorial acknowledgements of geographic-specific traditional territories and public programming in collaboration with local Indigenous stakeholders;
7. Enhance opportunities for Indigenous library, archival and information professionals as well as the inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies in the Canadian library and archives profession through culturally appropriate pedagogy, recruitment practices, professional and continuing education and cross-cultural training in collaboration with local Indigenous stakeholders and partners;
8. Recommend the implementation of Indigenous Knowledge Protection protocols and agreements with local and other Indigenous groups who have holdings in libraries, archives and/or cultural memory institutions to respect the Indigenous cultural concept of copyright with regard to Indigenous history or heritage, which is often located in but not limited to oral traditions, songs, dance, storytelling, anecdotes, place names, hereditary names and other forms of Indigenous knowledge; recommend that CFLA-FCAB actively participate in reforming the Canadian Copyright Act to include protection of Indigenous knowledge and languages while advocating for changes to include traditional knowledge as outlined and recommended by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) – Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (<http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/>). We join the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in calling upon Library and Archives Canada to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #69 (Appendix D) by fully implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf and the Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to

Combat Impunity (2005), more commonly known as the Joinet/Orentlicher Principles <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/impu/principles.html>;

9. Establish an online database of “living documents” to highlight existing Best Practices of Indigenous Services in libraries, archives, and cultural memory institutions that will serve as a foundation to help disseminate those best practices and for this “living document” to be updated preferably on a quarterly basis but minimally semi-annually;

10. Maintain a database of Indigenous organizations or groups committed to preserving cultural memory primarily, but not limited to, libraries, archives, language preservation, cultural history/museums to build relationships; to support the development of an Indigenous association of library, archives and cultural memory institutions; and to support in principle the National Aboriginal Library Association (NALA) regarding their stated intent of developing First Nations public libraries on reserves.

The report was then widely endorsed by CFLA member organizations, and work is now proceeding through the formation of a new, standing committee that will advance work on its recommendations.

The Indigenous Matters Committee will retain the Indigenous framework that was created in consultation with the Elders for the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. The Indigenous Matters Committee is a standing committee that consists of 5 teams that will implement the recommendations made in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report. As such it will be divided into numerous working groups applicable to the recommendation that originated from that team.

Additional CFLA Activities in Year 1

The Federation undertook a range of other initiatives in 2016 that started to demonstrate its national and international roles and value beyond the scope of its two main advocacy priorities. Among its accomplishments were:

- identifying and inviting Canadian observers for the ALA Accreditation Panel for reviews of the library/information faculties at University of Toronto, University of British Columbia, and McGill University;
- proclaiming October 21, 2016 as Canadian Library Workers Day;
- participating in the Canadian Library Month October 2016 Campaign;
- arranging IFLA membership and WIPO accreditation;
- co-hosting the Canadian Caucus at IFLA 2016 with ASTED;
- preparing submissions to federal government consultations including Consulting with Canadians on Planned Accessibility Legislation and Canadian Content in a Digital World;
- drafting letters of support for the Newfoundland and Labrador Library Association and the Saskatchewan Library Association when public library funding was threatened in those provinces;
- continuing the annual Resources and Policy Challenges Survey with University of Alberta Professor Emeritus (and former CLA President) Alvin Schrader;
- expressing support to ALA in its US advocacy efforts; and

- reviewing and adopting of numerous CLA Guidelines and Position Papers for the Federation.

Key Ingredients of Success and Some Challenges that Remain

The Federation has successfully navigated its start-up year through the good will, hard work, and best intentions of a significant number of library leaders from a variety of Canadian library associations. The work of the initial working group, and then the interim, and now permanent, boards has been a model of constructive collaboration in which it has been an honour to participate. It hired an experienced manager who was tasked with establishing start-up necessities and legalities for a new not-for-profit organization. In general, the concept and activities of the new federation also received broad support from across the library community as a whole in Canada and internationally.

The Federation has shown some early successes, and we are hopeful that it will prove vibrant and effective in coming years. There are, however, some significant challenges that could still threaten its long-term strength and viability.

While CFLA is striving to be an operationally bilingual organization, reflecting Canada's two official languages (French and English) and the perspectives of all libraries, it has not succeeded in attracting membership from Quebec's francophone library associations. These associations are, themselves, considering forming a federation. If they pursue this course, they will have in CFLA a strong process model; and, once formed, CFLA would work with that new federation as a peer organization and partner in federal advocacy and in representing Canada internationally (for example, within IFLA).

At the present time, the Federation's revenue arises almost exclusively from association membership fees. The revenue base is not sufficient to support more than one staff person or a wide range of activities. Currently its operational capacity is significantly augmented by in-kind contributions from some of its member associations and by a relatively low fee from its government relations firm. Association membership contributions currently range widely (from \$60,000 to \$300) based on a minimum percentage of each association's budget. Its largest investors, the groups representing Canada's largest public libraries (CULC) and largest research libraries (CARL) have obtained support from their members for an additional levy to support CFLA membership that only, for now, extends for an initial three-year period.

These same associations, as well as the largest of the provincial associations, OLA, also have their own advocacy positions, activities, and voice. The Federation is honoured to count the Canadian Council of Archives as a member and will continue to explore ways for CFLA to collaborate with the Canadian archival community and other associations affiliated with memory institutions. We continue to explore—but with constructive dialogue and the communities' best interests in mind—who does what and who speaks for whom.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge contributions to previous documents which inform this paper: ASTED; Canadian Library Association, including past-presidents Sandra Singh, Marie DeYoung and others, Michael Ridley, numerous committee chairs, and former Executive Director Valoree McKay; Canadian Research Knowledge Network Executive Director Clare Appavoo, Ken Blonski and other staff; IFLA; IMPACT Public Affairs; National

Librarian and Archivist Guy Berthiaume and staff at Library & Archives Canada; The Partnership; Sections of this paper appeared in presentations and reports by CFLA Board and committee members Peter Bailey, Camille Callison, Christina de Castell, Victoria Owen, Shelagh Paterson, Alix-Rae Stefanco and Paul Takala.

References

ⁱ <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/about/342-2/>

ⁱⁱ http://cla.ca/wp-content/uploads/Concept_paper_CLA_renewal_d8_2jan2015_final2_ltrhd.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Toward a Federation of Library Associations in Canada*

^{iv} See [2017 Board](#).

^v See [CFLA-FCAB Membership List](#).

^{vi} See the Committee's charter: <http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Committee-Charter-Truth-and-Reconciliation-Committee-Approved.pdf>