

## **CLTA President Jan Harder Addresses Trustees at BCLTA Banquet and Awards Ceremony**

*[The following is the speech that Jan Harder intended to give at the 2009 BCLTA Banquet and Awards Ceremony. Ms. Harder gave a wonderful, impromptu speech instead and sent the text of this prepared speech upon her return to Ottawa.]*

Good evening fellow trustees, library practitioners, friends and advocates. It's a great pleasure to speak to you tonight. Thank you so much for inviting me.

I have had two days to participate in your wonderful conference and to get to know and speak to many of you individually about what's happening in public libraries in BC. The topics you have focussed on – protecting freedom of expression, library performance measures, fundraising strategies, strategic planning, marketing the library, are so very important. They resonate with me not only as CLTA President, but as a board chair.

We are all dealing with many of the same issues and they are even more urgent than ever in these days of economic uncertainty; the crowded information marketplace and the need to demonstrate clearly and loudly the value of the public library to the community if we are to move from awareness to sustainable funding in the long term.

First a little promo about the Canadian Library Trustees Association. CLTA is a division of the Canadian Library Association with headquarters in Ottawa. It exists to foster excellence in public library service and to stimulate and support excellence in public library trusteeship. It was established as a division in 1947 and has the following goals:

- To promote and support cooperation and communication among library trustee associations and other library related organizations within and outside Canada;
- To encourage public library trustees to participate in association activities and address national issues;
- To represent the interests of public library trustees (and thereby public libraries) to government and the public; and
- To develop and coordinate training and education programs and provide forums for meaningful discussion and exchange of ideas for public library trustees.

CLTA publishes its CLTalk newsletter in e-format four times a year and we make a concerted effort to fill it with the activities of the provincial associations (and to push it back out to trustees across the country). A very special thanks to BC Trustee Don Hamilton for launching the new version of the newsletter and for setting such a high standard for this publication.

And of course we have an awards program including the Merit Award for distinguished service as a Trustee, and the Stan Heath Award for Achievement in Literacy.

I know that library trustees in BC are doing a wonderful job and are very busy with the Trustee Orientation Program; outreach and advocacy to local government elected officials; and participating in the provincial government's Library Act Review Process.

This provides a great model for library boards in the rest of Canada and makes our work just that much easier. So I thank you. Keep on contributing this information to CLTALK.

CLTA's role is to work with CLA on issues that are national in scope and today I want to touch on five files that need trustee advocacy now and/or will need you to exercise vigilance in the future:

- First is the **Library Book Rate**, which is a preferential rate for interlibrary loan. Bill C322 introduced into the House of Commons on February 25 by MP Merv Tweed (Brandon-Souris) of this year will secure this rate. It needs the enthusiastic support of every library board in the country. (Our city librarian was on the Hill with the member to help launch the bill – because of our location in Ottawa, OPL gets called on to represent CLA and/or the library community quite often.)
- Second is **copyright**. We expect new legislation to heat up in the coming months and the library and related communities have to act in concert to ensure that it contains measures which help our institutions maintain the free flow of information. Fortunately you have your local expert in the form of Paul Whitney, Vancouver's City Librarian, so you are in good hands. But be prepared to act.
- Third is **IELA – the Initiative for Equitable Library Access**. This is an initiative to create the conditions for sustainable and equitable library access for Canadians with print disabilities. CLA lobbied for it; the Library and Archives Canada (LAC-BAC) was given initial funding. But, if we are to be successful at the local level, we as trustees must work with our CEOs to put sustained pressure on the federal government and on LAC-BAC not to let this file languish.
- Fourth is **Literacy**. In the last few weeks we are all invited to make submissions to the National Strategy for Early Literacy. Our library and our provincial association did. I hope many of your libraries took the opportunity to make submissions. It's critically important that public libraries strengthen their role in community literacy endeavours.
- Finally, the **federal infrastructure stimulus programs**. All Canadians were invited to submit their ideas. As CLTA President I made a submission on behalf of you all in early January. In an email campaign, I urged all of you to make the case for public library eligibility for infrastructure funds. Many of you did and because of that the "L" word – libraries was included (perhaps for the first time!) in the Culture section of the program. I am convinced that this was no accident. It's small, but a great start. The Culture portion of the fund is \$60 million over two years and the good part is that it does not have to be matched. So make the best of it and leverage what you can to improve capital funding for libraries at the provincial and local levels as well.

There is also one new and very important development that I would like to call to your attention. The American Library Trustees Association has approved new bylaws and a new name. It is now the Association for Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations with the acronym ALTAFF. I think we should begin thinking about this possibility in Canada so that we might all speak with an even bigger and louder voice.

In closing I would like to say thanks again for being such wonderful hosts to my first BCLA/BCLTA conference!

Jan Harder  
CLTA President

*[For more information on the Canadian Library Trustees Association, visit [www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CLTA](http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CLTA)]*