



OCLA Chair's Report

May 2021

Since our meeting in October, OCLA has had a small number of departures and welcomes. I'd like to say hello to Nicole Strandholm of the Hamilton Law Association and Curtis Ellwood at my home library, Carleton – welcome to our group! We'd like to wish the best of luck to Laura Richmond, also of Hamilton, and Duncan McCrie of Waterloo, as they pursue other opportunities. Our Member at Large (more on that to follow) is in charge of updating membership lists, so please let her know if there are any changes at your association.

The biggest change within OCLA in the last eight months has been, of course, the departure of our Vice Chair Laura. As I announced in an email last month, our Member at Large Stacey Zip offered to move into the Vice Chair position and the Executive accepted. Stacey will remain in this role for the rest of our Executive term. This has, however, left the Member at Large position vacant. We announced this vacancy through our email list, and are delighted that Mary-Jo Petsche of the Welland County Law Association has agreed to step forward. As we have no other applicants, we will not need to hold an election at this meeting, and we welcome her to the Executive! Thank you, Mary-Jo!

Carrying out the work of OCLA has been, I'll admit, a challenge. As we are at roughly the 14-month anniversary of the pandemic in Canada, everyone is burnt out with work, to say nothing of the stress at home. Unfortunately, we're also in a transitional time with LIRN, where we want information faster than they give it, which just makes our own urgency greater. It has been a slow process to build up productive relationships with our external partners, but I do believe we are making progress.

For the last several years, our relationships with outside partners has grown either more distant or complicated. This is certainly not at the feet of OCLA, and indeed OCLA has received praise from LIRN on how well we've kept things afloat for a long, long time. Rather, there is a challenging dynamic within the organization of the entire courthouse system, and with other parties who don't always consult us first or at all. Which, as librarians have been saying since time immemorial: have you asked a librarian? No, you're not bothering us – librarians are here to help! We are in the unfortunate position of constantly having to convince other people of the great work we do, and sometimes that convincing even comes in the form of keeping a seat for us at the table. This has been a keen priority of this OCLA Executive, and I'm relieved to say we still do have a place with FOLA, who themselves seem to be in transition in how to deal with libraries. We have been pushing to be included at every step, and thus far we have both opened up a working relationship with Katie Robinette, FOLA's ED, to help with their advocacy messaging, and we have been invited to sit on a FOLA / LIRN monthly call. The future of any FOLA Library / PRC / LIRN / etc. committee is undetermined, but we are staying on top of them and voicing our concerns and ideas whenever and however possible.



As we develop some new advocacy tools, work with our LIRN, FOLA, and LSO partners, and continually seek to strengthen the skills of OCLA members, I hope that we'll be able to weather all these concurrent storms. I am heartened to see that local, area, and regional meetings have been continuing throughout this year, and I hope you'll find the support of your fellow OCLA members an invaluable aid at this time.

Thank you to my fellow Executive members, for their dedication in this most difficult of times: Stacey Zip, Chris Wyskiel, Michelle Gerrits, and Pia Williams.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Walker