



CANADIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: A PROPOSED NEW VISION FOR OUR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Frequently Asked Questions

March 13, 2015

Background:

In January 2015, the Canadian Library Association Executive Council issued a paper entitled [Canadian Library Association: A Proposed New Vision for Our National Association](#). This paper discusses the history of CLA, its achievements and current challenges, all within the context of the very complex Canadian library association landscape. The paper presents a recommended new model for CLA: a federated association-of-associations. The recommended governance of this proposed federation is the provincial/territorial multi-sector library associations and the national sector associations. The paper discusses the federation model at a very conceptual level, recognizing that many details would need to be determined by the proposed governance representatives.

CLA Executive convened a meeting of national associations, national sector associations, and provincial/territorial multi-sector associations on January 31, 2015 to determine if there is interest in such an approach. The discussion was wide-ranging and, in the end, there was general agreement that an agile and focussed national voice for libraries and issues affecting libraries in Canada is critical. We also heard a willingness to continue to further explore the federated model for CLA, recognizing that the direct membership model is no longer sustainable for our country's national association.

This Stakeholder Group agreed that a smaller Working Group should be formed to further detail membership, governance, and financial features of the proposal, creating a Version 2 of the proposal ("revised proposal"). The Working Group will be formed in March 2015 with an aim to bring recommendations for a revised proposal back to the Stakeholder Group for discussion in June 2015. Once the Stakeholder Group has agreed upon the composition of the revised proposal, then the revised proposal will be drafted and issued to the library associations' memberships for comment and feedback.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Why was my association not included in the stakeholder meeting?

CLA invited the provincial and territorial multi-sector associations, broad-based national associations, and national sector associations to the stakeholder group because these groups collectively represent the broadest range of library roles, membership types, and interests.

Canada has over 150 library associations, often reflecting very specialized roles and interests in the library community and/or smaller geographic areas. You can imagine how challenging it would be to involve all 150 associations in Canada. CLA made the decision to focus on the provincial and national associations that provide the broadest representation across the country. As members of the library community ourselves, who have occupied various roles at times as well, we see the multi-sector provincial associations, such as OLA, LAA, and BCLA, as offering broad and encompassing opportunities for engagement, whether through individual or institutional memberships, across all sectors and role types. They may not cover each individual voice, but they capture representative voices well.

Q: Who is working on this proposal?

The Working Group includes representatives of the provincial and territorial multi-sector library associations, representatives from the national sector associations, and members of CLA Executive Council. The Working Group will also engage a facilitator to help the discussions and a project coordinator to keep the work on track.

Q: My association was not included in the larger Stakeholder Group. Will I have a chance to comment?

Yes. There will be opportunities for all members of the library community to comment on the revised proposal when it is ready. We are still confirming timeline for this work and will share it as soon as it is confirmed.

Q: When will we know what the final proposal is?

At this point, we are hoping that the revised proposal will be ready for release in Fall of 2015.

Q: When will members get a chance to comment?

Members are welcome to provide feedback directly to CLA right now on the high-level concept paper.

We hope to issue the revised proposal in the Fall of 2015. We still have to plan the member engagement strategy for the revised proposal. We hope to work on this engagement plan with the Stakeholder Group and Working Group to ensure a broad and

thorough consultation. More information on member and library community engagement will follow over the summer.

Q: When and how will a decision be made?

There are many stages to a decision such as this. Once we have incorporated member feedback into the revised proposal (essentially creating a Version 3 of the proposal), we will need to have decisions made. First, the proposed governance associations must ensure that their memberships support the proposal. If that happens, then CLA must determine whether our members support the proposal. CLA would take the matter to the membership for vote at an AGM or a special meeting of the members. We are hoping to have a vote no later than June 2016. We should be able to confirm a timeline by Fall 2015.

Q: My individual/institutional CLA membership is coming due, what are my options?

Our hope is that you choose to renew again this year. We particularly need your support now in this time of significant transition.

CLA has a lot of work to do over the year on various national policy issues – such as Bill C-51 and Copyright – and we provide an important platform for national discussion and collaboration. This Future CLA planning work is happening in addition to all of CLA’s regular work so you should still see the same opportunities with CLA in 2015/2016.

We have also received encouraging emails from lapsed members who are re-joining CLA because they are optimistic regarding the changes we are contemplating. We are very pleased to welcome back these former members and appreciate their encouragement and confidence.

Q: I really want to offer input now, how can I do that?

We will set up a wiki or discussion board where people can post feedback soon. In the meantime, please email any feedback you want to share now to CLA Executive Director Valoree McKay.

Q: Will this new association be able to represent all voices in the library community?

The original concept paper does not note that the CLA membership is 1,300 – approximately 1,000 individual members and 300 institutions as of March 2015. This membership composition already does not reflect the entire Canadian library community, nor does it allow for CLA to truly focus on the national issues facing libraries.

The recommended federated approach, on the other hand, would enable people to participate in CLA work and discussions because they are members in their provincial and territorial associations or their library is a member of a national sector association.

This creates a much broader foundation of people for engagement and the potential for many more voices to contribute to the work of CLA.

That said, there is no perfect solution for any association or a solution that will satisfy everyone. What we are striving to do is build a generally inclusive and sustainable model that ensures the library community can continue to educate the broader public on national issues and advocate for these issues and interests at the federal level. That is what we're trying to do now.

Q: Is this a diminishment of CLA as a national association?

There are many models for a national association, as discussed in the original concept paper. This paper also discusses the challenges with a direct membership model (current model) and the benefits of a federated approach. We see the federated model as strengthening CLA through a broader and more representative governance model, greater library community engagement in the work of the association, and the framework for more focused policy and issues-based work.

Q: What input have you heard so far?

We have had a lot of input so far. Some of the themes are:

- Provide membership options for people who are not members of other associations;
- Ensure opportunities for members to network with colleagues from across the country;
- Consider other national level work that cannot happen anywhere else, such as national standards;
- Ensure that people involved in role specific associations – such as trustees, library technicians, school librarians, academic librarians – have clear information about how they can be involved in the association.

In the end, this association will not solve all the problems facing the Canadian library community, nor will it be able to represent every single unique perspective in the community. That is not its purpose. The proposed focus of the proposed future CLA is to: work on national issues and policy; provide a national platform for education, discussion, and debate on these issues; and to ensure the interests of libraries are represented as our federal government deliberates on key issues.