

Patricia Demers, FRSC
Chair, Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives
c/o Jessica MacQueen

Response of the Canadian Association of Law Libraries

1. What is the nature and make-up of your organization?

The Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL/ACBD) has roots dating back to the late 1950's when several Canadian law librarians informally began meeting at annual meetings of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) to discuss matters of mutual interest. On July 5, 1963, CALL became a formal association with its own Constitution and By-Laws. The first President of CALL was Marianne Scott, with Eunice Beeson acting as Vice-President and Rosemary McCormick acting as Secretary. CALL also became a chapter of AALL in 1963 and continued as a chapter of AALL until 1971.

CALL is currently incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23.

The objects of the Canadian Association of Law Libraries are:

- a. To promote law librarianship, to develop and increase the usefulness of Canadian law libraries, and to foster a spirit of co-operation among them.
- b. To provide a forum for meetings of persons engaged or interested in law library work and to encourage professional self-development.
- c. To co-operate with other organizations which tend to promote the objects of the Association or the interests of its members.

CALL currently has approximately 400 members representing a wide variety of law library interests across Canada. It provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among members, fosters cooperation among Canadian law libraries, and plays an active role in promoting access to legal information for all Canadians.

2. Does your organization provide services: (a) directly to Users? Or, (b) to members who make-up the organization?

CALL/ACBD provides services to members who make up the organization.

3. In terms of Question 2, describe the services provided directly to Users, and if they are consortial in nature please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine and measure the impact of the services, particularly as they relate to Canadians.

N/A

4. Would Canadians know of, or understand, the contribution you make to library/archival service in Canada?

Canadians who are users of law library services, including, but not limited to: lawyers, judges, paralegals, law clerks, law students, law faculty, prisoners, those who work in legislatures, self-represented litigants and members of the public who have used law library services would understand the contributions of law librarians. Those who have not directly used our services, would not generally recognize this group of professionals and services, nor appreciate their contributions.

Cases often come to court many years after an actual incident took place. It is essential for all parties to have access to the law and official documents as they were at the time when the incident in question occurred, often before the availability of electronic formats. It is therefore essential to have access to historic legal information in print.

In addition as current official documents are more and more made available only in electronic format and as formats change, libraries especially Library and Archives Canada must preserve and make accessible those documents for future generations.

Libraries are a cornerstone of democracy.

5. What inhibits you from providing services that ultimately would improve library/archive services to Canadians?

Budget cutbacks are the largest threat to our services. Space and staffing reductions are related threats as is the erroneous thinking that electronic formats are equivalent or better than print and that electronic information resources can somehow be managed by themselves or by IT experts. The underlying reasons would stem from economic factors combined with the general notion among stakeholders that all information is available online for free, and accordingly, paper resources are not necessary. Since libraries and librarians are generally associated with paper resources, this assumption carries significant challenges for us.

6. What do you see as the challenges for libraries and archives in the forthcoming years?

More of the same as outlined in question 5 above. Of significance to our democracy, however, is the fact that the Canadian government does not appear to be prepared to address long-term information preservation needs with respect to government information.



Annette Demers, BA LLB MLIS
President, Canadian Association of Law Libraries
c/o Maddy Marchildon