

Meeting Regarding the Future of the NLLA

December 7, 2022 12-2pm via WebEx

Present: Erin Alcock, Sarah Bartlett, Jen Brown, Janet Goosney (chair), Leah Griffiths, Sandra Harnum, Chelsea Heighton, Karen Hutchens, Dianne Keeping, Eden Kinzel, Catherine Lawton (minutes), Andrew Lockhart, Pamela Morgan, Stacey Penney, Heather Pretty, Wendy Rodgers, Kate Shore, Michelle Swab, Jenny Thornhill

Regrets: Emily Blackmore

Notes:

J. Goosney opened the meeting at 12:05pm by welcoming everyone, giving a little background, and then open the floor for discussion. Noted that the NLLA has been languishing since probably a little before the pandemic. Various former executive members – C. Lawton, S. Penney, E. Blackmore, C. Rose, and J. Goosney - have been contacted about the NLLA, asking about its future. The group met to talk about possible ways forward, and decided that to bring together members of the NL library community to discuss its future. A couple of potential models were suggested; the purpose of this meeting is to share those ideas and also seek other possible suggestions from the wider membership. Because it is difficult to have broad consultation in a single meeting, our goal is not to make firm decisions today, but to gather ideas for a way forward. The minutes from this meeting will be circulated widely in the New Year, along with a follow-up survey to gather additional input. A vote may also take place to finalize any decisions about the future of the association.

The models:

- **Reboot the association**, and revisit and modernize the terms of reference. We would also look at reasons for why we have had difficulty in filling executive positions. For example, the current model has a 3-year commitment for VP/Pres/past president. This may seem like too much for someone trying out the position.
- **Focus on our successes** – specifically what have we continuously done well. Primarily this has been our Spring conference which has always been successful. While attendance at other activities has usually been low, we have always had high attendance at our conferences. There are examples in Canada (such as WILU) of annual conferences which are passed from committee to committee, and not run by a formal association. A new steering committee could potentially be appointed at the conference each year.

Discussion:

suggests that a 2023 conference would be a good kick-off to whatever we decide.

used to live in Nunavut. Similar problems. Meeting for the sake of meetings. Likes the idea of focusing on conference. Also suggests expanding the use of the NLLA listserv to help facilitate informal consultation and collaboration among members on the NL library community. Covid has shown that

many organizations have struggled to keep going – the Listserv could help with communications, problem solving, resource sharing and support.

mentioned the website which had disappeared but is back under a new URL. The link, <https://nllibraryassociation.wordpress.com>, has been posted on the NLLA Facebook page.

requested some background on the NLLA.

Background:

The goal of the association is to serve all library sectors in the province: Academic, public, special, schools. We've always had one conference in the spring which has been a consistent success. A second, fall conference was introduced a number of years ago. Originally run by the library technicians group (LTAIG) it evolved into a conference that all members could attend. The NLLA was also involved in some advocacy work as well as social events.

asked if there had been any bridge-building efforts between different library fields. Some initiatives have included library tours; the creation of LTAIG and the addition of a library technician representative position on the executive. More recently attempts were made to reach out to teacher librarians, and invite them to participate in the annual conference. At one time there were frequent social events – dinners, games nights – which were useful for building community. There have also been attempts at community building around the “Freedom to read” week, with the creation of a poster that was circulated to libraries, as well as haiku contests during Canadian Library Month. It was suggested that the conference would be a good place to have further conversation about community-building. During the last conference, similar conversation took place regarding the formation of an advocacy committee.

observed that at one time there were more events and structure, which gave more reason to belong to NLLA. Over time, though, as overall numbers declined in the NL library community, all the work fell on fewer shoulders. There just aren't enough people to run a full, active association any more. Although it is probably not feasible, ideally there would be a paid position to support the executive.

asked a governance question: How does the NLLA/APLA relationship work?

NLLA has an APLA representative on the executive and there is cooperation between NLLA and APLA regarding a combined membership rate.

suggested eliminating membership fees, and wondered if we could sustain the association and/or the annual conference off the conference fees alone?

asked approximately how much money the bank account has. Although that number was not readily available during the meeting, it was estimated by a member of the last executive to be between \$5K and \$10K.

The conference fees have always collected on a cost recovery basis; and would need to be considered on that basis going forward.

Several attendees agreed with the concerns regarding adding more work to the already full plates of members of the NL library community, observing that rebooting the full association may not be feasible at this time. Other, related sectors, such as the public library board, are having similar problems

recruiting board member volunteers, and few have the capacity to add more volunteer time to their workload.

wondered if the workload/responsibility could be shared in some way, for example by appointing conference co-chairs. Also wondered if geographic spread is a problem, suggesting that a greater focus on online activities may be helpful.

noted that years ago the association was focused on three main activities: Library week, the NLLA Bulletin, and the annual conference. Also observed that small associations mean more workload for individual volunteers, and that the core membership tends to be within the university because participation counts toward promotion and tenure. With fewer librarians at Memorial there are now less people to volunteer. Willingness to volunteer for executive positions also seemed to decline when the association became more involved with advocacy/library issues rather than local support and community. Advocacy and speaking with the media may be a greater responsibility than people are willing to take on. It was noted that the Newfoundland & Labrador Health Libraries Association (NLHLA) faced similar concerns, and has now folded and become part of the Atlantic association.

asked if we should set a goal of holding a conference in Spring of 2023.

asked, if we are thinking about goals for 2023, what would our “dream” version of the NLLA look like? What do people want from the NLLA, and how can we provide it? This would be a good question to include on the survey. Added that her ideal association would create ways to support and promote collaboration between libraries.

noted that some people may have paid joint APLA/NLLA memberships during the period when the association was inactive, and may therefore require refunds. It is not clear how or if those funds were transferred to the NLLA.

added that, regardless of whether you have an executive or a conference planning committee in future, there will need to be a treasurer in place to handle the funds, along with continuity from year to year in order to effectively hand off the funds.

A question was asked regarding the ability to find conference presenters, wondering if that would be a challenge with the annual conference model. J. Goosney noted that in the five or so years that she was involved with developing the conference program they did not have any real difficulty finding presenters, and does not anticipate that it will be an issue moving forward.

J. Goosney thanked the group for attending and for sharing their thoughts and providing input. The meeting was adjourned at 1:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Lawton