



The Medium: President's Message

Submitted by: Joan Miller

The school year is well underway, and the seasonal transition from fall to winter is imminent. The SSLA is also in a transition phase as a number of new individuals have joined the Association's Executive. I heartily welcome Sylvia Regnier (Treasurer/Memberships), Jacqueline Helman (Secretary/Marketing), Loretta Morhart (Networking), Jennifer Climenhaga (Editor), and Carlene Walter (Editor and Web Site developer). The fresh ideas and perspectives that this group brings to the table are invigorating and appreciated!

In mid September, the SSLA Executive participated in the STF's Special Subject Council Day which was held at the STF building in Saskatoon. Attendance at this event provided an opportunity to network with other Special Subject Councils (SSC) and with the administrative staff of the STF. This year's focus was on Open Space Technology, a model for impromptu discussion and decision making for which there is no predetermined agenda. Participation in this forum gave SSLA Executive members a better idea of how the model works and facilitated discussion of concerns common to all Special Subject Councils.

One of the issues that surfaced at Special Subject Council Day is related to the amalgamation of school divisions that occurred in the fall of 2005. Unfortunately, restructuring continues to have a negative impact on Special Subject Councils and the services they are trying to provide. In some school divisions, professional development funds have been frozen or have been diverted to mandated, top-down professional development. Attendance at most SSC conferences is down, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain members.

The SSLA relies on conference and membership revenues to bolster its operating budget and is not immune to the above-noted difficulties. When these revenues are reduced, ways in which to cut costs must be considered. One is forced to "think outside the box" in order to ensure that appropriate professional development and member services are delivered.

The good news is that adversity often breeds ingenuity. To make membership in the Association more attractive, for example, development of a secure, interactive SSLA Web site is being investigated. Moving the Association's traditional print journal to a digital format to curb expenses and to bring it into the information age is being pursued. And a one-day workshop that would take the place of this year's annual conference is being proposed to make professional development more accessible to individuals whose school divisions have limited funds.

In the months ahead, the SSLA Executive is committed to strengthening and reshaping the Association in order to promote school libraries and to advance the interests of teacher-librarians and associate members. I am excited about working with this dynamic, enthusiastic group!