

2000 ACMLA Presidential Report

Two steps forward; one step back. This adage has been running through my mind over the last number of weeks while I was preparing for the 2000 Annual Meeting of the ACMLA. And when I say that, I am not pessimistic at all. As you can tell from the reports of the Executive, Committees, and Officers, there is a great deal of work being carried out on behalf of all members. Constructive, positive work! Our collective efforts go well beyond benefits for members; we continue to be THE voice for the collection of, access to, and preservation of cartographic materials and geospatial information. I dare say that the people of Canada have reason to be proud of our efforts, and future generations will continue to experience the wonders of our cartographic heritage, not only due to the current state of the ACMLA, but because of the tremendous foundation formed by previous members. I could make note of every activity of every member and committee, but I think it is always best to highlight some important developments and leave the details to those who know best.

The last year really began during the ICA Congress in Ottawa. Our successful participation in that internationally important event, largely due to the efforts of Grace Welch, Betty Kidd, and all the local arrangements committee, was a precursor to a very busy year. I continue to hear back from ACMLA and non-ACMLA members about our role in that event; and our lasting impact on the wider cartographic community. Of particular note was the presentation to the ACMLA of the ICA Medal for our service to the cartographic community through the ICA Congress. I was deeply honoured to represent the ACMLA in accepting that award of distinction. Also, the papers presented at the meeting were some of the best I have seen; and I am not alone in that estimation! Thanks to all those who took the time and effort to contribute. And yes, I cannot forget that we had, once again, a great opportunity to meet with our cartographic cousins of the CCA. I think we are bound to meet together for many years to come!

The ICA Congress also saw two other important happenings. Firstly, the ICA delegates elected our very own Alberta Wood as a Vice President. Alberta has already been very busy with ICA duties, and her presence is sure to have a great impact on the map library and archives community on an international level. Secondly, the ICA Congress provided the perfect venue for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), and ourselves. The MOU paves the way for a better working relationship with regard to accessing topographic information. Of course, the MOU and the adjoining license are not perfect and we shall be reviewing it over the next year. However, such an MOU goes beyond the particulars of who can do what and at what price. This MOU signifies a change in attitude and working relationships. We are now seen more as colleagues within NRCAN; our voices are being heard, and we have more opportunities to have positive input (more on that later).

The number of trips to Ottawa for meetings is never an indication of real work being accomplished. However, this year was an exception. I and other members of the Executive have been in constant contact with our colleagues at the National Archives of Canada following up on the English Review and proposed changes to the structure of the Archives. I met with both the National and Assistant National Archivists regarding our concerns and outstanding issues. Hence, the two steps forward, one step back. 2000-2001 will see the ACMLA continuing to voice concerns AND offer constructive solutions and offers of support with regard to ensuring the access to and preservation of cartographic materials and geospatial information within the Archives. My deepest thanks to Betty Kidd at the Archives for her support and guidance.

There have also been several meetings between ACMLA and CARL with regard to our common concerns and positions in bettering access to geospatial information in all formats, including developments within the DSP (and this will be a hot button issue for the next year). I have had the opportunity to meet with Tim Mark (CARL) and Grace Welch (who continues to be a great help in these matters!) on several occasions, and we will continue to work on developing better opportunities for ACMLA members and those we serve to access geospatial information. I should also note that I have begun discussions with other geographic and cartographic associations to link our efforts with ACMLA and CARL to a much broader initiative for enhancing the visibility and status of cartographic materials. Of particular note was a meeting with the Royal Canadian Geographical Society to explore means for ACMLA and others to link efforts during GIS Day. There will, before GIS Day 2000, be something to announce on this matter. (And in case you are wondering, all these meetings we combined with GeoConnections Board meetings, our executive meetings and any other opportunities to save on travel and costs.)

Most likely due to the busy nature of the year, one of the outstanding efforts we have been participating in has been somewhat neglected - and I take full responsibility for that fact. I hope that over the next twelve months, ACMLA can help our sister societies through the Congress of Cartographic Information Specialist Associations to develop means for cooperation and sharing of resources so that each of the associations will not find members stretched (ie: avoiding overlap and burnout). It is an ironic aspect of this year that we have wanted to find ways for inter-association cooperation in order to save time and effort; while we have not had the time to do so.

In terms of Association business, there is one last item to report. As you know, after the ICA Congress, a seat on the Management Board of GeoConnections was made available. I have participated in two GeoConnections meetings over the last year. However, my work on that Board is not as critical or with as lasting an impact as the work of our members who are on the various "nodes" (committees) of GeoConnections. Grace Welch, Richard Pinnell, Carol Marley, and Cheryl Woods are working to bring our concerns and the unique perspective of map librarians and archivists to many of the working areas of GeoConnections. There will be more opportunities for members to become involved - volunteers are never turned away! I still believe that the building of the Canadian GeoSpatial Data Infrastructure will be one of the most significant developments affecting each of us and our users. Updates and news from

GeoConnections will come from the various members on the ‘nodes’, and we will be developing a “news” section in the Bulletin for that purpose. Of course, CARTA will continue to be an important means of communicating time-sensitive news to each of you.

Sadly, this is my last report to you as President. Also, several members of the Executive will be stepping down (or aside) over the year. I would like to mention everyone in my message, but the list of thanks would include each and every member! However, allow me to take this opportunity to thank a couple of people I have worked very closely with over the last number of years; Alberta Wood, Shirley Harmer, and Pat McIntyre. In 2001 I will take over from Alberta as Past-President. Once again, I find myself in the impossible position of trying to fill Alberta’s shoes! I have, during my tenure, tried my best to follow her amazing example of care, compassion and professionalism. Some days, I have failed. I hope there have been more days when I succeeded. Alberta has been a wonderful friend, and she has provided me with wise counsel when I have needed it most. I am, needless to say, indebted to her. Shirley continues to provide the spark we know her for. Never have I met a more energetic person with a humour that can pass through the toughest of hearts – such a small package, but she is larger than I could ever be. And Pat McIntyre. Pat is the big brother of the executive. He has managed our finances and kept us on track for as many years as I have been with the ACMLA. One of the most under-recognized jobs in any association is that of treasurer (I know, I have done it for ten years with another group). The best compliment that can be expressed about our financial guru is that he has made certain the income and expenses of the ACMLA have kept us in a sustainable position. To those three – my biggest thanks, and I pray you count me among your friends.

I should also remark that David Jones, our conference convenor, has joined the executive as 2nd VP. David, we all look forward to working with you, and if your abilities at organizing a wonderful annual conference is any indication, we will be much richer for having you so closely involved over the next number of years. And I cannot let this report go by without giving my deepest thanks to Susan Jackson and Marc Cockburn for their continued service. I learned a long time ago that much of what I do is as a pure representative of the membership and the executive. All the members of the board, current and past, give me the fuel to continue to be that representative. With a great deal of humility, I look forward to the next year. And it is my great pleasure to suggest to you that the ACMLA is very well positioned to have an even greater impact in this century.

With fondest regards, and as always, cartographically yours,

James Boxall
ACMLA President

May 27th, 2000