

CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee

2022 Annual Report

Introduction

This report addresses activities undertaken in the calendar year 2022, with references to activities in previous years included for context. It describes the work of the CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee (Committee) on continuing projects, internal organization, and support actions. To the extent predictable, the work ahead in 2023 is indicated under several headings.

Continuing projects

As reported in the 2021 Annual Report, the Committee followed the workplan template suggested in 2019, but found it ineffective. In 2022 the remaining outstanding projects were dealt with. Following the promulgation of a revised Terms of Reference and the consequent recruitment of four new members, working groups were created with appropriate responsibilities: Intellectual Freedom Toolkit, Communications, Challenges Survey, Membership, and the Intellectual Freedom Award.

Because the working groups were fully staffed only after the Committee had its full complement of members in the Fall, the full impact of this change will be seen in 2023, but early results can be described.

Intellectual Freedom Toolkit

Begun in 2021 and reported in that Annual Report, the working group published the first version of this resource in 2022 and completed its first revision after six months. Semi-annual revisions are now slated for 2023. The Toolkit is available [here](#).

Communications Working Group

This group took as its first order of business the improvement of communications between the Challenges Survey and the library community in Quebec, establishing liaison with L'Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec (ABPQ) and the Association Bibliothèques Publiques and La Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec (CBPQ). It should be noted that the CBPQ is not a member of FCAB-CFLA, but it is a vital part of the Quebec library community.

In collaboration with the Challenges Survey working group, and thanks to the research project of a MLIS graduate student, it was decided to survey Canadian public libraries about their participation in the Challenges Survey and their policies regarding Intellectual Freedom challenges. The survey design was completed in 2022 as part of the graduate students project, including approval by the University of Western Ontario's ethics board, and the survey itself will

take place early in 2023. Separate arrangements are in discussion with the ABPQ to facilitate greater participation by the Quebec public library sector.

Under this heading, we recognize the revision of the CFLA-FCAB website by Michael Rogowski and the consequent changes to the Committee's page. Our ability to present the work of the Committee has been considerably enhanced by this effort and will be reviewed in 2023.

Challenges Survey

Files for 2020 and 2021 were added to the web page in the spring of 2022. The process of creation, translation and uploading is on the verge of becoming routine. For the third year in a row, members of the Challenges Survey Working Group contributed a report to be published on the 2023 Freedom to Read Week website.

In both cases (2020 and 2021) the reports posted on the CFLA-FCAB website were available in both official languages, a step forward.

Membership

With the procedural clarifications made in the revised Terms of Reference, an appeal for new members was circulated and four additional members have been added to the Committee's roster. The Committee began 2022 with two vacant positions and during the year an additional two members stepped away. Subsequently, two members indicated their intention to retire from the Committee on December 31, 2022 and a third member will be leaving at the end of their term in April, 2023.

The membership working group was instrumental in filling the four positions in 2022 and the appeal for three additional members went out in the second week of 2023.

Intellectual Freedom Award

The terms of reference for this award, largely the work of 2021, were finalized in 2022 and work has begun on the procedural aspects of the award, to be completed in 2023.

Supporting the Library Community

In response to a request from a small public library, the Committee offered advice on dealing with an attempt, via gift books, to tilt the local collection in favour of COVID conspiracy books.

In response to concerns from the library community, the Committee issued a [Statement](#) on Protest and Disagreement, dealing with conflicts arising from library programming.

In response to reports of librarians receiving notices of so-called personal liability, the Committee issued [guidance](#).

The Committee also issued [guidance](#) on dealing the LGBTQ2S+ issues occasioned by incidents related to drag queen story hours.

In April, the Committee intervened in the Durham School District dispute with both attendance at the school board's virtual meeting and with a written submission, part of which was reflected in the report of the outcome.

The Committee has offered support to the Director of the South-Central Regional Library in Manitoba who is dealing with the issue of "pornography" in the children's collection and other issues seemingly imported from the US situation. Correspondence is continuing and the outcome will be covered in the 2023 annual report.

Collaboration

In the past, members of the IFC have collaborated with the British Columbia Library Association to re-energize the BCLA IFC, and in 2022 similar efforts have supported the creation of an Intellectual Freedom Interest Group in the Atlantic Provinces Library Association.

In May, the Ontario Library Association asked CFLA-FCAB for a representative when dealing with a request for funds from the OLA Intellectual Freedom Fund. The fund was established from monies held in a similar fund by CLA and its terms of reference were negotiated between OLA and CFLA-FCAB. A member of the IFC attended and participated. This matter will return to the IFC agenda in 2023.

In January, members of the CFLA-FCAB Board met with representatives of the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University (CFE) and a member of the IFC to discuss the CFE database project. Subsequently, a report from the IFC to the Board dealt with collaboration and questions not clearly answered in the description of the project was supplied to the Committee following the meeting. After some delays, the Committee proposed to CFE a framework for collaboration. Discussions are continuing and the outcomes will be evident in 2023.

Individual Efforts

Members made several IF related contributions outside of Committee work.

Deb Thomas made a one-hour presentation during a staff training day at Thompson Nicola Regional Library in February. Subsequent training presentations were made by Deb Thomas and Wendy Wright to the Bowen Island Public Library staff and Board (June, with Babs Kelly of the BCLTA) and the Trail Public Library staff (September). Presentations were subsequently uploaded to the Toolkit.

Wendy Wright and Deb Thomas made a presentation to the professional staff of the North Vancouver District Public Library in June, focused on neutrality as a core principle of IF.

Richard Beaudry presented "K-12 Library Learning Commons - Up for the Challenge" on the topic of current challenges in the U.S. and Canada. The webinar was organized by the BCLA IFC

in collaboration with the BCLA Young Adult and Children's Services section and moderated by Wendy Wright.

The Committee responded to a request to sponsor a webinar on LGBTQ+ issues and intellectual freedom at the OALT (Ontario Association of Library Technicians) conference in May 2023. Richard Beaudry and Deb Thomas agreed to create the webinar.

Robert Thomas was on a panel on "Questions or conformity? Reading rights for the right to learn" at Toronto Public Library in November.

Richard Beaudry presented on school library censorship to the Ex Libris Association Conference on November 7.

Michael Nyby's research project, reported in last year's report, has concluded and the resulting article, "The Demography of Censorship: Examining correlations between community demographics and challenges in Canadian libraries" will be published in the upcoming issue of *Partnership*.

Recognition of Service to the Committee

During the year, Tina Thomas stepped away from the Committee as she was changing careers. Her contributions to the committee and as a link to deliberations within ALA have been quite valuable.

Brent Roe also stepped away due to the press of his several administrative positions at Laurentian University. He was a major influence on the creation and publication of the IF Toolkit.

In the Fall, Deb Thomas announced that she would be leaving the Committee at the end of the year in order to concentrate her efforts on the presidency of the Ex Libris-Association. Deb was a major source of strength in the Committee and set a standard for all future secretaries to aspire to.

Richard Beaudry also announced that he would be leaving the Committee at the end of the year, citing his increased responsibilities at UBC. Richard was part of the initial group of members of the Committee and took on the sometimes-thankless task of chairing the group since its inception. He saw the Committee through its initial uncertainties and provided a thoughtful presence over almost five years of deliberations and development. He was a valuable link to the world of school libraries in Canada and the Committee will be hard pressed to find a replacement.

Welcome to New Members

The following members were added to the Committee's roster in 2022, bringing it up to its full complement (temporarily).

Joshua Chalifour, Concordia University

Michael Dudley, University of Winnipeg

Kelly Lauzon, Airdrie Public Library

Michael Nyby, W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind

Robert Thomas, University of Regina