

## **Report of Sonia Lewis, OLA Treasurer May 2008**

From a financial perspective the Ontario Library Association had another successful year in 2007. Funding the diverse programs, services, and projects that meet the professional needs of OLA members is achieved through a successful business model based in innovation, entrepreneurship and diversification. Members may be surprised to learn that less than 20% of the Association's revenues come from membership dues.

The OLA's annual operating budget has grown from just over \$350,000 in 1984 to almost \$2,700,000 this past year. Growth has been steady with the exception of a period of financial difficulty in the mid-1990s. The organization has changed in response to the times, the needs of the members, and changing economic conditions. My predecessor, Rod McLean spoke of the need to build the Association's accumulated surplus, rainy day fund. Back in 1997, the goal the Board set was to have 2/3 to 3/4 of an annual budget in reserve. At that time the budget was a mere \$733,000.

On behalf of the Board and staff, I am pleased to report that at year-end 2007 the OLA had an operating surplus of \$169,150, and the accumulated surplus had grown to \$742,215. We still have work to do to meet the ambitious target established in 1997.

### **Stability in Changing Times**

The Super Conference and EXPO continued to be a strong contributor to the Association's overall financial health. In 2007 the Conference grew on the top-line by more than 10%, but the real story is the costs to operate that landmark program were reduced by more than 10%. This is the largest increase in bottom-line growth of the conference in more than 7 years. Even with a constant moving target with the US currency, the OLAStore turned in an impressive performance, as did the Forest of Reading® and other Libraries Advance Ontario Programs.

The Board committed funds to a number of Special Projects in 2007 including the support of the First Nations Strategic Planning group; Phase II of the School Library Research; the OLBA's Leadership by Design initiative, continued support of The Partnership and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, and the search for a new Executive Director. The Board hired the search firm of Ken Haycock & Associates to guide us through the process.

### **Continuous Diversification**

As OLA Treasurer, I have come to understand and appreciate that the OLA is a web of strong partnerships with both private and public sector partners. The partnership model is as strong as the individual partners. OLA has good partners. OLA members should be particularly proud of the Association's decision to forge new partnerships this year in support of the Forest of Reading® and the Education Institute.

S & B Books stepped up in June responding to the Association's RFP to be the Official Wholesaler for the Forest®. They made a fundamental decision to support the program because it is the right program, rather than just for financial reasons. S & B has brought resources to bear on the Forest® that we could only have dreamed of back in the 1990's when these programs were created. It was a very complicated and time-consuming partnership agreement, but one that will serve the OLA very well through 2010.

An agreement was reached with Neal-Schuman Publishing of New York. They formed a continuing education division called The NS Professional Education Network and are using the Partnership's Education Institute as the backroom and the content.

The OLA has continued to re-engineer its membership database and content management system. Most of it is active now and the time savings are immense. Anyone who has been through a complete work process re-engineering knows how difficult this can be. It took longer than expected, but the staff kept this project on budget and has set the Association in a new direction that will reap benefits for many years.

### **Responsible Program Expansion**

2007 saw some new programs rolled out at the divisional and corporate levels. The biggest was the launch of the Festival of Trees as a finale to the OLA Forest of Reading®. It was a massive undertaking and raised the profile of this event significantly. The event was successful programmatically and financially. The plan in 2008 is to expand it to a two-day Festival. The planning committees and Meredith Tutching, OLA's Program Co-ordinator, are to be commended for their development and delivery of this program.

OLA's component associations began to ramp up their education offerings again in 2007. These were contributors to both the program side and the financial side.

2007 revenue targets were not met by the Education Institute, but the partnership with Neal-Schuman Publishing, as a US sales agent, is expected to show some positive results in 2008. Members will agree education programs, such as the Education Institute are critical to the profession, so continued development of this program is important. We are appreciative of staff's efforts in this area.

Looking forward, I am pleased to report that the Finance Committee passed a balanced budget for 2008 which was approved by the OLA Board in February. Both the central administration and the component associations did a terrific job rationalizing their programs and budgets, resulting in a smooth budget process. The group noted that membership fees had not changed since 1991 and recommended that the Board consider undertaking a review of the fees at some point.

The financial health of the Association is thanks to the hard work of OLA staff. I am particularly grateful for Jefferson Gilbert's guidance, vision, and business acumen. My thanks to the association treasurers who make up the Finance Committee. Finally, special thanks to Larry Moore who has inspired all of us with his passion for this profession and his commitment to the Association.

I look forward to another successful year, under the leadership of the Association's new Executive Director, Shelagh Paterson.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonia Lewis  
OLA Treasurer, 2007-08