

PLIG Minutes

Thurs, Sept 22 7pm

Metrotown Library, 3rd Floor Boardroom

Attended by: Meghan Savage (Surrey Libraries), Heidi Schiller (VPL), Deb Thomas (BPL), Shideh Taleban (WVML, NVDPL, NVCL, BC Children's Hospital), Sarah Felkar (WVML), Anna Ferri (VPL), Ryan Kyle (Art Institute of Vancouver)

Phoned in: Tamarack Hockin (Surrey Libraries), Tanya Thiessen (Surrey Libraries)

Regrets: Jane Curry (VPL), Karen Liebel (VPL), Chris Middlemass (VPL), Shannon McLeod (Courthouse Libraries of BC)

1. Meeting called to order at 7:05pm
2. Welcome & Introductions
 - a. Everyone introduced themselves, their library experience, and a few shared their opinions about the proposed name change from Public Librarians Interest Group to Public Libraries Interest Group
3. Overview of name change proposal
 - a. Heidi read the name change proposal (please see appendix 1) and explained the reasoning, process, and responses so far
 - b. Over the past two years, PLIG has received several comments from the BC library community asking for a more inclusive name. We sent out an email to our members in July indicating that we would be changing the name if we did not receive significant feedback. We received 14 responses in favour of the change to Public Libraries Interest Group and 3 opposed. We decided we would like to give people an opportunity to discuss and share their opinions so we planned this meeting with that purpose.
4. General Discussion about the name change:
 - a. History of the group: Deb described how when PLIG first formed, the first members were concerned about the de-professionalization of librarians/libraries and felt like there wasn't enough support for that cause. PLIG grew out of the Committee of Concerned Librarians in 2007. BCLA Board indicated at one point their desire for the group to be "public libraries"-focused. PLIG had a few meetings in the early years, but mostly communicated via the list-serv.
 - b. Documentation: We don't have any minutes or official documentation passed down to us, other than the information available about PLIG on the BCLA website: <https://bclaconnect.ca/plig/>. Sarah mentioned that according to BCLA, all interest groups should have terms of reference so she's surprised that some groups don't have them and/or aren't meeting regularly. Tamarack looked at the BCLA bylaws and read that an interest group must have no less than 10 members in good standing and interest groups need to submit an annual report each year. Terms of reference need to be written up and coincide with the BCLA mandate and direction. The BCLA Strategic Plan discusses issues of access and inclusion, diversity, etc. Anna suggested that our lack of mandate/direction is a larger issue than the actual name. Heidi said that indeed, by proposing to change the name, Meghan and Heidi are proposing that the group's strategic direction be broader and more inclusive.
 - c. Inclusiveness and Professionalization: We discussed the fact that the concern over the de-professionalization of librarians is one of many public library topics that would be of relevance to a "Public Libraries Interest Group," and talked about how Deb was the Head of Nelson Public Library for 18 years without an MLIS, as many chief librarians in rural BC communities often are. Deb mentioned that a past president of BCLA, June Stockdale, did not have an MLIS. Shideh pointed out that many public library staff members have professional degrees other than MLIS (ie. they are from other countries or in other topics). We discussed how there is a concern about library education in general as technicians are also being replaced by clerical staff in many cases. The group can address these issues by hosting public forums or panels on the topics. Sarah

mentioned that she's looking for a forum for mentorship and connecting with other people who work in public libraries. She mentioned that the Cataloguing and Technical Services (BCCATS) Interest Group has been helpful in mentorship and connections. Tamarack spoke about the transition of the Library Technicians and Assistants from an Interest Group to a Section and how it provides a home base and launching point for members but doesn't limit them from the rest of the association. LTAIS' limitation is that it's prescribed by qualification only. If PLIG were to transition to a section, we would have a position on the board. We agreed that we need to organize ourselves before we get to that point. Tanya wants us to be more active advocates of public libraries—and said this is a great opportunity for us to come together as a larger group with a common goal. SLAIS had no student version of PLIG, and Shideh agrees that public libraries are not represented very well by groups (CLA had a group focused on public libraries at one point when it existed).

- d. Term 'public libraries:' Sarah mentioned that the group is about the people and the communities we serve and less about the institution, but we can point out that we're using "public libraries" as an inclusive term, not to overshadow the people who work for public libraries. Heidi indicated that we envision a group that can discuss and debate topics in a more inclusive way to allow for a richer conversation. Tanya suggested that the group will be more dynamic with a name change, as PLIG hasn't done a lot in the last several years and could use some new energy. She also said that the group should be inclusive and welcoming since that's what public libraries do, and if we're not welcoming and accessible to our colleagues, what does that mean for the future of the public library? There are genuine threats to the livelihood of public libraries but there are also questions about the value of the MLIS. The reason public librarians may feel they need their own group is because there is a lot of pressure put on public libraries as a whole—library technicians are feeling the same pressure. Changing the name of PLIG doesn't preclude discussing this issue and threats to library jobs.
 - e. Academic Librarians Section: Ryan told us that he joined the ALS Executive Committee in June when there was a call out to form a working group to look into changing the name of Academic Librarians Section to Academic Libraries Section, but they didn't receive a lot of interest. They sent the request out again as they wanted both librarian and non-librarian representatives from at least 6 mainstream universities. The working group has just been formed and they're working on next steps. Tamarack shared her opinion about how the ALS name-change has been overcomplicated and that the process itself is just another barrier to non-MLIS library workers. She's hoping the PLIG discussion doesn't go the same route as there are bigger issues that we could get on with discussing.
5. Next steps
 - a. We'll send out these notes and a link to vote on the name change proposal
 - b. The voting will end after a few days and the result will be announced soon after
 - c. We'll then schedule meetings to work on our terms of reference and strategic planning for the group. This will be an opportunity to be iterative and brainstorm organic ideas. We can borrow terms of reference templates from Perspectives and other BCLA Interest Groups.
 - d. For the name change vote, we don't need to wait until the BCLA AGM since we are an interest group, not a section.
 - e. FYI that the new BC Societies Act is going into effect this November so changes may affect BCLA.
 6. Meeting times: we discussed various options for meeting regularly before deciding on monthly meetings on the second Thursday evening of each month at rotating locations. We will be meeting Thurs, Oct 13 at 7pm at Metrotown Library and Thurs, Nov 10 at 7pm at West Vancouver Memorial Library.
 7. Meeting adjourned 8:12pm

Appendix 1

PLIG Motion

September 22, 2016

As co-chairs of PLIG, we have received several inquiries and comments regarding the expansion of the group's name and mandate to include all library staff, in addition to librarians, in the interest of promoting inclusivity and engagement with a wide audience of colleagues who are passionate and excited about public libraries.

We believe there is a greater need within the BCLA community for a group that is broadly focused on issues of importance to all public libraries and public library staff, rather than one that is limited by one specific job classification.

Therefore, we propose the name of our group be changed to Public Libraries Interest Group, from Public Librarians Interest Group.

Meghan Savage and Heidi Schiller
Co-chairs, PLIG