

PAL-Reading Services Inc.
Annual General Meeting
September 18, 2017

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Saint Francis of Assisi said, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." That pretty much sums up our history.

Jim Hamilton started PAL back in 1975 out of necessity, so that he could access the written material he needed to complete his university education. For decades since we have read for thousands of students and have supported blind and print-challenged people of all ages and walks of life in being equal, fully-participating members of their communities. In 2015 the work we had been doing for the Ministry of Education trickled off and what at first looked like a potential financial problem turned out instead to be an opportunity, enabling us to focus on the possible: redirecting most of our resources to serve our individual clients, previously a part-time summer program.

Our dedicated volunteers are a crucial part of what makes this happen, and at this point I'd like to wish a fond farewell to Bill Hildebrand, Helen Angus, and Edith Gear who each volunteered for over 25 years at PAL. They have 'retired' from the reading ranks this year for various reasons and will be dearly missed around the office. I'm hopeful that our paths will cross at Holiday parties and AGMs in the future.

On a sombre note, this past June saw the passing of our 30-year plus volunteer Robert Hawkins. His charm, wit, talent and brilliance were a high point of our week and we will feel his absence for many years to come.

This year we've met and worked with many new clients, some of whom are here tonight. And I'd like to introduce new volunteers, Danielle, John, Lucy, and Marie-Catherine (our French specialist), and welcome back old friends Nahid and Timothy. Thank you to all our volunteers who work with PAL in so many different capacities.

These are the people who form the lifeblood of PAL-Reading, and the reason we do what we do. As Susan mentioned, we have increased the ways in which we stay connected and we look forward to continuing and expanding these important activities going forward.

Susan also told you about the many ways we are expanding our funding sources. Well, in the past few months we have been approached by a number of self-published authors and are working with them to produce audio versions of their books...an entirely new aspect of the work we do at PAL. Could this become a future source of income? Time will tell – we'll keep you posted.

So where do we go from here? What will it look like when we find that we are suddenly “doing the impossible”? According to Mary Kay Ash, “Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that so it goes on flying anyway”. Maybe the print-challenged Canadian of the future will be completely unaware that they shouldn't be able to read printed material, and will go on reading anyway. Will we even recognize if we are print-challenged? What will Canada look like one day, when everyone is fully accommodated? Let's aim for that, shall we?