

President's Report 2016

And here we are again! I am delighted to be here tonight reporting on what has been a challenging but, in my opinion, extremely positive year for PAL-Reading Services.

Here are some of the highlights:

Although we had very little of our traditional academic work, we still managed to read more recorded hours than ever before, for more clients, with about the same number of volunteers. The whole reason that PAL exists is to provide books in audio format for individuals who need them, and it is gratifying and reassuring that we are still seen to be useful.

We are starting to find our way in the world of fundraising, doubling the money we raised in June's Great Canadian Giving Challenge compared to the year before, and increasing the number of individual donors. In the coming year one of our major goals will be to access corporate or government funding to cover some of our expenses.

We have been learning how to use social media to reach potential partners, donors and clients, and now have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and, of course, www.palreading.org. This is a big deal: I have noticed that every time I phone someone, which is my preferred means of making contact, they are Googling PAL during the call to find out who we are.

None of this, none of this, would have been possible without PAL's many wonderful friends, old and new. With your permission, I would like to spend some time thanking them.

Many thanks to Derek and Mark and all the volunteers who produced all those recordings and to the clients who continue to bring us their books to read.

And many, many thanks to everyone who made donations over the course of the year. We know that you trust us to use your money responsibly and we promise to do so.

And then there are all the people who have lent a hand for specific tasks over the year and are, in addition, ambassadors for our organization. Avi Debnath, with our website; Kat Mullaly and Mike Dodgson, with our corporate direction; our auditor, Barb Scott, and bookkeeper, Jennifer Bauldic, with financial matters; Jill Witherspoon, with advice on fundraising; Michael Ciccone and Margaret Williams, who have kept in touch on matters relating to CELA and CNIB. Thanks to you all.

Finally, thanks to the members of the Board of Directors whose guidance and support have helped things run smoothly over the past year. I look forward to another busy and productive year with the new board to be elected tonight, and I thank Durelle Harford-McAllister and Gloria Fraser, who have chosen not to return, for their service.

What will this next year hold? For a start, we will have an enhanced presence at Word on the Street, which will be held on Sunday, September 25 at Harbourfront. We will have a booth and will also be making a presentation in the Learning Tent. We hope to use these platforms to raise awareness of PAL and of the issue of print accessibility, and maybe get some donations as well.

Next, we have been working on outreach to a number of organizations in an effort to reach more potential clients, and thereby tap into new sources of funding. I can't tell you any details right now, but I am very hopeful that these efforts will be productive.

As a direct result of our success in the Great Canadian Giving Challenge, we have been offered an opportunity to post a blog on the CanadaHelps website to tell people about PAL and to encourage donations. We'll let you all know when that is up. We also will take part in Giving Tuesday, which happens right after Black Friday and Cyber Monday, and is heavily promoted by CanadaHelps.

We hope to have an open house in December before we close for the holidays, so that volunteers, board members, clients and staff can relax and celebrate our community. There may even be a carol sing - we have some amazingly talented members. Again, we'll let you know when plans are finalized.

And we will continue to look for new ways to deliver our service so that PAL stays relevant. This is a time of huge change, technologically and legally. I look forward to hearing tonight about the recent changes in the Copyright Act and the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty, and how these will impact everyone in this room.

In short, it will be an interesting, challenging and potentially very positive year. We still have a long way to go, but I think we are going in the right direction. I look forward to reporting to you next year on our progress.

Thank you very much

Susan Loube
President