

COORDINATOR'S REPORT 2023

This is a year of benchmarks. I recently started my 25th year here at PAL-Reading Services and Mark is about to finish his tenth year on-staff. For 13 of those years, Wanda Fitzgerald has been an important part of the PAL family serving on the board of directors, and Mark and I would like to express our deepest gratitude for the knowledge and expertise you've shared with us Wanda, and for your support throughout the years.

On the subject of benchmarks, this evening we're honouring one of our volunteers for 10 years of service. TJ Lloyd began in 2013 at PAL as a volunteer narrator, and over the years has served on the board as a Director, and on the board's executive as Secretary, as President and currently as Vice-President. Thank you TJ, and know that when we're back to honour you for 20 years of service, we'll expect to add Treasurer to that list!

Here's a metaphor for you: Sir Isaac Newton's first law of motion has recently been in the news, and is paraphrased as saying that "an object in motion tends to stay in motion except insofar as it is acted upon by an external force". True to that universal law and despite the disruption brought on by the pandemic, PAL has continued to "stay in motion" as it were; we're still providing audiobooks to our clientele, our dedicated team of volunteer narrators continues to do high-quality work, and the recorded hours provided to PAL clients increased over last year as they have steadily since the pandemic started. The process of bringing back our original pre-pandemic volunteers is ongoing, and there are many interested new people waiting in the wings for when a position opens up. Our individual client base is ever-expanding, and we continue to receive job requests from agencies and organizations; clearly there's still a demand for human-voiced recordings of print material.

More demand means more output. Over the past few years we've noticed a gradual increase in cost and decrease in availability of blank media. So, we've begun shifting from CDs to digital downloads where possible, which has the added benefit of reducing our carbon footprint. Enough of our clients are able to make this transition so that we'll have CDs available for those not able to do so, for some time to come.

Newton's first law reflects his understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, recognizing that no object in the universe exists in isolation. Isolation is not a natural state, which is why the work we do at PAL is so important. Books help us stay connected. They are powerful. After all, as Lemony Snicket said (to follow Danielle's example): "All the secrets of the world are contained in books. Read at your own risk." Thank you to our volunteers, clients and board members for your roles in keeping us all connected.