

## CHA PRESIDENT'S REPORT, MAY 2005

Gerald Friesen

The Association has had an exceptionally busy year. Its three central functions remain unchanged: we support scholarly research and the distribution of works based on research; we act as a vehicle of communication, assisting scholars to make contacts, publicizing developments in the field, and recognizing publications deserving of wider attention; and we represent historians in the wider community, seeking to influence legislation and to ensure that the major national cultural institutions such as Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) understand our concerns.

The face of the historical profession in Canadian universities is changing rapidly and the Association is experiencing a remarkable renewal of members and ideas. Valerie Korinek (University of Saskatchewan) has done a wonderful job tracking our membership and helping us to understand where we have been and where we must now turn. The number of members, which had dropped in the 1990s, is now rising and the disciplinary profile is changing. These trends pose serious questions. We cannot serve professional historians appropriately if almost all of our energies are dedicated to specialists in Canadian history only. Our challenge is to serve the international historians in the country as well as we have served Canadian historians and to establish effective forums for their scholarship.

Two initiatives have been undertaken to begin to meet this obligation. Beverly Lemire (University of Alberta) has agreed to become the editor of a new series of short books on international history topics, each of which will, I hope, pay some attention to the Canadian experience but will place the subject in a global perspective. The first title, on Aboriginal history, will be announced shortly, and a second on Western sexuality is also being considered. Bev has negotiated a publishing agreement with Broadview Press for the English-language version, and Peter Bischoff has kindly intervened to ensure that we have a French-language publisher, Vent d'Ouest (Gatineau).

The second initiative concerns the CHA's electronic presence and our major contribution to scholarship, the annual *Journal*. Last year, members approved a motion asking Council to commence the planning of a second issue each year. This is well underway, led by Steven Lee (University of British Columbia), Valerie Korinek (University of Saskatchewan), and Joan Sangster (Trent University). Kerry Badgley (LAC and Carleton University) is the English-

language editor and he has agreed to take on this extension of the job, for which we are immensely grateful. He is assisted by Dominique Marshall (Carleton University), the French-language editor. Margaret Conrad has contributed immeasurably to the Association by revamping the Website, arranging a contract with Érudit to host the electronic version of our *Journal* (all the issues from 1920 to 2003 will be on our site soon), and negotiating another contract with LAC to create a first-class Web (similar to the DCB access) for our booklets. As a result, our scholarly materials will be accessible around the world — and free — and Canadian scholars will be assured that contributions to the CHA Conference and *Journal* will be available to readers everywhere. We have received funding to digitize our booklets and the back issues of the *Journal*. I would like to thank long-time CHA member Dr. Alan Bowker of Foreign Affairs for helping to arrange this connection, and Jean Labrie, of International Academic Relations, Foreign Affairs Canada/ Relations Académiques internationales, Affaires Étrangères Canada who ensured that the CHA received grants totaling \$38,000 for this work in the past two years.

Other developments that will support all scholars in Canada include the creation of two special dedicated funds for first-time authors of scholarly works and for translation of works into English or French, both under SSHRC, the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS), and its Aid to Scholarly Publications Program (ASPP).

The work of the prize committees, led by Kate Desbarats (Pierre Lanthier, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières will succeed her) and John Sainsbury (Brock University) is discussed elsewhere in the *Bulletin*.

The last issue of the *Bulletin* contained a report by Terry Cook (University of Manitoba) on legislation that would open the twentieth century censuses to historical research in an orderly fashion. The bill, S-18, had been passed by the Senate when I spoke to our AGM and as you read these lines the bill has been passed by the House of Commons, as received royal assent and is now law. This campaign has preoccupied the CHA for nearly a decade. Our alliance with Senator Lorna Milne and Canada's genealogists has been an effective one. We owe Senator Milne, Gordon Watts (coordinator of the genealogists), Chad Gaffield, Bill Waiser and Terry Cook a big thank you. We also have a new campaign: to make the census legislation workable in the future. That will require another article.

We have represented you in a number of other matters, of which several should be mentioned: First, the matter of ethical practices in the professions: in response to ongoing issues in this sphere, Nancy Janovicek (University of Calgary) and Joan Sangster will co-chair a CHA committee to establish our positions on these matters.

Second, copyright policy has become a concern, both within the CHA and because of the prospect of revised national legislation. Mary Vipond (Concordia University) maintains a watching brief by serving on an ad-hoc national committee spanning a number of disciplines and associations.

Third, the graduate students' committee, led by Robert Dennis (University of New Brunswick), has been very active, notably in the attempt to solve problems at LAC related to Access to Information and Privacy legislation. They have also encouraged (this is Dominique Clement's file) the development of a new copying and scanning programme at LAC. The new Assistant Deputy Minister for Programs and Services, Doug Rimmer, promises prompt action on both matters.

Fourth, the Federation (CFHSS), lobbying arm of the professional associations, continues to absorb our attention. It will hold a major national conference on universities on 27-29 November in Ottawa and we hope you will consider attending and perhaps presenting papers.

Fifth, two officers from SSHRC, Janet Halliwell and Laurent Messier, spoke at our Annual Meeting, outlining its attempts to maintain a strong presence on Parliament Hill, its successes in the form of a recent grant increase, and some of the successful applicants for research grants.

The people who carry out these tasks on your behalf are volunteers. In 2005, five members will retire from Council. Sarah Carter (University of Calgary) has handled our lobbying and public affairs issues. Beverly Lemire has been the voice of international historians in Canada. Kate Desbarats

(McGill University) has managed the Garneau, Macdonald, Ferguson, Bullen and Neatby prizes. Cecilia Morgan (OISE, University of Toronto) wrote several important statements on behalf of the CHA and has also surveyed historians in related institutions such as colleges and education faculties to determine what services we might provide for them. Peter Bischoff (University of Ottawa) has been our French-Language Secretary. We will miss his contributions to the *Bulletin* and his cheerful enthusiastic support at our meetings. Elsbeth Heaman (McGill University) has been our Web Master for the past two years and we are grateful to her for the invaluable work she has done.

Council's new French-Language Secretary is Dr. Jean Martin, of the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. He will join John Willis, English-Language Secretary, in editing the *Bulletin* and will serve as a member of the Executive. And the CHA has a new Web Master, Dr. Brian Shipley, of Dalhousie University. We welcome Jean and Brian to these important roles.

You may have noticed that we are holding a sale of booklets, led by Jo LaPierre (Dawson College). We have several hundred thousand booklets, over 90 titles, each in two languages and Jo will place them in your students' hands for the cost of postage and GST — next to nothing — and well worth the effort.

The CHA is run by two dedicated staff members, Joanne Mineault and Marielle Campeau. We on the Council would like to thank them for their generous, selfless service to this association.

The main activity of the CHA is the Annual Conference. Roger Hall from the University of Western Ontario supervised an excellent programme. To Roger and the programme committee members Alan MacEachern, Francine McKenzie, Shelley McKellar, Bill Turkel, and Robert Wardhaugh we convey a special thank you.