

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Canadian Historical Association

June 2004

The CHA Council and volunteers have pursued three chief activities in recent decades: first, they have supported historical research, including the communication of historians' work at this annual conference and in the *Historical Journal*; second, they have provided a number of ancillary services to members, including the presentation of awards that recognize and advertise noteworthy publications and the distribution of the triannual *Bulletin* containing news related to history and historians; and, third, they often act as the public face of historians, lobbying parliament and granting councils to ensure that public policies serve our needs and those of the community.

Many of you, perhaps nearly all of you, have carried out tasks related to these activities and, if you haven't, you will undoubtedly do so soon. If the CHA is one of the largest and most stable of Canada's disciplinary organizations, as well as one of the oldest, its claim to this status rests on the voluntary labours of its members over the past eighty-three years. Our collective enterprise is organized by the Council, a three-year commitment that is much more than mere honour, as dozens among us can attest. A very strong group of councilors will be stepping down in June, 2004. Denise Angers, Sean Cadigan, Dominique Clément, and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh have served in exemplary fashion, Denise in lobbying related to the census and the new Library and Archives Canada bill, Sean on publications and the creation of an editorial process for our booklet series, Dominique on the dozens of issues concerning graduate students but also in developing a fully-fledged national history grad student committee, and Cheryl in the very large portfolio of prizes. The Association has benefited so much from their work and, on your behalf, I would like to thank them for their service to our Association and its causes.

The activities of the Association cannot be described in full but, in the course of this meeting, several of our members will sketch a little of their work for our collective benefit. To give one example, we can declare this year that the lobbying concerning the 1906 national manuscript census has finally been successful. It has been released to the public after a struggle of many years. Bill Waiser, Chad Gaffield, and Terry Cook have led this campaign but they have been associated with dozens of others. Their success is testimony to their perseverance and to their creative use of such public vehicles as newspaper articles and presentations to parliamentary committees as well as shrewd alliances with other associations of like mind.

Another heavy responsibility for a number of CHA members is the awards programme. We owe much to the jury members who have generously donated their time to this task. Again, one illustration: the Quebec committee for the Clío prize has received nearly sixty volumes in each of the past two years, a measure of the interest it has generated. Their activity publicizes the CHA, of course, but also the practice of history. It puts the names of excellent books and authors in the public eye in ways that we all recognize and appreciate.

The Council, under the guidance of Valerie Korinek and Dominique Clément, has conducted a number of activities related to membership recruitment. I hope you will take back to your colleagues the news that the CHA has room for more members and that a larger membership will make it possible for the Association to do more for them. For example, we would like to launch a new booklet series on international and world history themes aimed at first and second year undergraduates. You can tell them, too, that they will enjoy our newsletter, the CHA *Bulletin*, which is edited by John Willis of the Canadian Postal Museum, our English-language secretary, and Peter Bischoff of the University of Ottawa, our French-language secretary. They welcome your contributions, too, and will publish them with pleasure.

We are also now in a position to open an electronic membership list that could facilitate communication among our members. However, before we go too far down this road, we have asked a committee to address issues related to our use of electronic communications. Margaret Conrad and John Lutz, as co-chairs, have convened meetings with Professors Genevieve Dumas, Don Fyson, and Del Muise. They have concluded negotiations with Chinook Multimedia to close the former Canadian history portal and, in the next few months, will turn their attention to digitization of booklets and Journal, as well as other services that the CHA might provide both to members and to the wider public.

On this subject, the CHA Council decided in November 2003, after receiving a report from a committee chaired by Nicole Neatby, to increase the number of issues per year from one to two as soon as practicable. This is partly to meet the requirements of the SSHRC publications assistance programme and partly to adapt to the changing electronic universe. While the present Journal will continue as a paper publication, it will also be distributed electronically. A second issue, dedicated to special themes, relying on guest

editors, and with a mandate to work in new media and to address international themes, will be published only in electronic form. I welcome your comments on these plans and your contributions to this new publishing enterprise.

Under the heading of 'representing historians', the Council has maintained close contact with Library and Archives Canada and contributed to a study of its relations with community partners. Ian Wilson and Ramsay Cook told us at last year's annual meeting of the launch of the web version of the Dictionary of Canadian Biography and we hope to have news for you about our office space in Ottawa in the next few months.

Also under this heading, Sarah Carter worked with several colleagues on a brief for SSHRC on the issue of confidentiality certificates. We have also nominated a colleague to serve on the forthcoming Tri-Council national committee on ethics issues.

The highest-profile of the issues on which the CHA has represented historians concerns the SSHRC Transformation proposal. We participated fully in the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences discussions. The CHA submitted a brief to the CFHSS and I would like to thank Cecilia Morgan for her many hours of work on that document. Mary Vipond, past-president, also contributed to the preparation of this document and attended a day long session held by the CFHSS to consider the SSHRC proposals. Our brief expressed our full support for the SSHRC in its attempts to raise the public profile of the humanities and social sciences and to secure greater base funding for research in these fields. Our main concern was to express historians' strong support for the Standard Research Grant program, for the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program, and for the recently-developed and funded Graduate Scholarships Program. We also expressed our support for a new programme that would fund scholarly associations in the translation of their publications to ensure that this scholarly work is readily available in both

official languages, particularly for students in their early years of university study.

This is not all that has gone on in the past year in your name but it will give you an idea of the energy and ideas that have been generated in your behalf. I would like to thank Council members again for their dedication to the interests of the Association.

I would also like to draw your attention to our one permanent and indispensable employee. Joanne Mineault runs our Ottawa office and manages all the correspondence of our organization and we owe to her our continued trouble-free existence. On behalf of everyone in our association, I would like to thank Joanne for her tireless work in our behalf.

The CHA has also been blessed for three decades with the dedicated support of our Assistant Treasurer, Marielle Campeau. She, too, deserves our thanks for this remarkable record of volunteer service.

Finally, the heart of the CHA is its annual three-day conference where 300 to 500 individuals gather to contemplate research findings, the opinions of others, and the continued existence of approach to life and society. The conference is made possible by one or two History Departments that, each year, accept the heavy responsibility of acting as hosts for all the rest. This year, it has been the turn of the University of Manitoba. On your behalf, I would like to thank the University of Manitoba Department of History for taking on this task and fulfilling it so admirably. Professors Jarvis Brownlie, Barry Ferguson, and Adele Perry and their colleagues worked very hard to prepare the programme and we are in their debt. We convey a special thank you to them and their assistants.

Gerald Friesen

President, 2003-05

APPEAL TO THE MEMBERSHIP FROM THE INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

At the CHA's Council Meeting held in Winnipeg in June an Internet Communications Committee was established to review and make recommendations regarding the CHA's presence on the internet. The committee members include Margaret Conrad (co-chair) John Lutz (co-chair), Don Fyson, Genevieve Dumas, Del Muisse, and David Moorman. Plans are underway to redesign the CHA's website, to make our publications available digitally, and to develop partnerships with other like-minded organizations to support history on the

web. The committee wants to hear suggestions about how the CHA can better serve its membership and prepare for the digital future. To help us in our efforts to make recommendations to the autumn meeting of the Council, please send your suggestions to Margaret Conrad (mconrad@unb.ca) by September 15th, 2004.