

powerful voices I want to invite to participate in the enlarging circle; Patricia, K.C., Zoe, Adriana, David, Katherine, Brenda, Raffaella, Irene, Paul, Natalia, Terry....

### **Portfolio: MEMBERSHIP, AWARDS, NOMINATIONS**

led by Joyce Cunningham

One task encompassed by this portfolio that has engaged Joyce Cunningham this spring has been that of finding a replacement for Sheila Jankowski, our Secretary Treasurer. We celebrate Sheila's new position as vice-principal. We are always delighted when strong teacher-librarians are recognized as leaders in other areas and become administrators.

Angela Di Prima, a teacher-librarian extraordinaire whose work was featured in two articles in the last issue, has agreed to complete Sheila's term (2000-2002). We are delighted with this new talent on Council while at the same time we declare: "Bravo Sheila. We wish you the best."

The portion of this portfolio that has engaged Joyce most in time and thought has been Membership. Erosion in individual school libraries continues in a number of districts and this has been hard on our members. There are examples that buck this trend, but inequities across the province continue with recent data that shows a disproportionate decline in school libraries in our most northern and smaller communities.

### **There Are Good News Stories**

However, there also continue to be good news stories. These include York Catholic board for one, which has maintained their last year's reversal of an earlier decision of cutbacks when they reinstated their teacher-librarians to full-time in secondary and allocated .5 teacher-librarian as the minimum in elementary no matter what the enrollment with increases to reflect enrolment. Also, Directors of Education such as Marcel Castura of Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic and John Laughlin of Thames Valley are important voices, vocal about excellence in school library programs and the continued support in each of these Boards points out their critical positions.

The Greater Toronto District likewise has a strong library program and continues to have an excellent consultant team providing program leadership and technical assistance. The rest of the province seeks their excellent work.

### **The Latest Data**

That said, we can't deny recent publications, such as the one by the Elementary Teachers' Federation, "Report From the School-based Research Survey", and the other by People for Education "The Tracking Report 2001" which confirm anecdotal evidence; teacher-librarians continue to decrease and libraries are kept open increasingly by volunteers, clerical staff and library technicians.

Another erosion of school library programs is staffing teacher-librarians as planning time teachers. That's double dipping of course, using the budget line for planning teachers and then blending it with the 1.3/1.1 benchmark budget line for teacher-librarians. Let us make a commitment that these captive groups of students get such a wonderful instructional program from teacher-librarians, that the rest of the student body, their parents and teachers say with one united voice, "I want to have that exciting, meaningful, skills-based reading and information literacy instruction too!"

Meanwhile, our members, who include teacher-librarians and library technicians, are engaged in rigorous, sometimes controversial and provocative, discussion on the OSLA listserv about these choices. We know in principle that an effective school library program requires specifically qualified staff working as an interdependent team.

As one caller participating in a recent CBC Radio phone-in about public education funding said,

"We have allowed ourselves to be pushed into separate corners and we come out swinging at each other instead of the inadequate funding for public education."

That struck a chord. Having said that, I do think rigorous discussion is healthy but in the end we must celebrate our differences, focus on our strengths, focus on our mission for the good of students and work together rigorously and creatively.