

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Good evening and thank you for coming out to the annual meeting of this historic Montreal institution and, in doing so, showing the Board, volunteers and staff such support in their on-going efforts.

For those who don't know me, my name is Mark Gallop, and until very recently I was the Library's Treasurer. I stepped in as interim President about six weeks ago upon the resignation of Ellen Bounsall but will be continuing in this role in the coming year unless the Board's Nominating Committee has had a last minute change of heart.

With only six week's tenure under my belt I am somewhat unsure of what should be included in this President's report, particularly as Lynn has already so thoroughly covered the institution's progress and many accomplishments of the past year.

What I do know belongs in any President's Report, no matter how brief the tenure, is acknowledgement and thanks of the many individuals who make this place what it is. In an organization with 11 full and part time staff and more than 130 volunteers many of whom I am just getting to know, this a daunting but deeply rewarding task. One of my first and most pleasant duties as President was presenting long-service awards at our volunteer appreciation potluck lunch, and there were many of these.

A good place for me to start today would be with the day I first stepped though the door about six years ago. This was at the invitation of Susan McGuire, then Executive Director, in an obviously successful, and may I say inspired effort to recruit me onto the Board. Susan has contributed in countless ways over the years, but most recently as the Library's Historian. Many of you

will have read her articles in the Westmount Independent or on our website, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. An organization as rich in history as ours should never lose sight of its lessons, and with Susan around I am confident that won't happen.

I have served on the Board under the presidencies of Gordon Clark, who is with us here today, Mary Leslie-Aiken, Hugh McGuire and Ellen Bounsall. Gordon and Mary are no longer board members but have remained very active supporters. Hugh joined the board at about the same time as me and is now stepping away from it to focus on his growing business and other initiatives. Although computers were introduced to the Library in 1984, it has been a continual challenge to keep pace with the changes in technology and the social trends that have led us into a digital age. No one has worked harder than Hugh to keep us aware and motivated to be relevant and adaptive to the impact of new media.

Ellen Bounsall was our president for most of the last year. We are stronger for her energy, commitment and dedication. Of particular note was her chairmanship of last year's record breaking cocktail party fundraiser, and convening and steering an important taskforce on our strategic direction.

My fellow directors have been a true pleasure to work with. I am particularly appreciative of their encouragement and support through this period of transition. I would also like to introduce two newly nominated Directors; Nahid Ahmed and Mary Rivard-David.

An unusual involvement I've had with the Library over the past year is assisting the Acquisitions Committee by shopping for DVDs at bargain prices on my lunch hours downtown. This collection has exploded in size, is very popular with our borrowers

and is attracting new members. Movies may be an apt analogy for the buzz and excitement of the Library's momentum. As important as the work of the Board of Directors may be in providing the general direction and outline of the script and some of the sources the external funding, it doesn't get the motion picture made. The people who make the magic happen on the big screen here are the front-line volunteers and staff members.

And so for us in the category of Best Director, the Oscar goes to our own Lynn Verge, who displays a virtuoso's touch in inspiring all the people and moving parts of our institution to such an impressive year. In the Producer's role would be our Manager of Administration, Tanya Mayhew. We will be losing Tanya Mayhew temporarily in a few months when she becomes a new mother. We share in her excitement as her due date approaches.

I'm going to get in trouble if I try to take the motion picture analogy too far, but it always amazes me how long the list of names is when the credits role at the end of a film - and the Library is like that. And every one of those efforts is in concert with others. Very little happens around here because of the individual efforts of any one person. While we have marvelous staff and volunteers, our greatest strength is the way in which they collaborate on projects big and small.

I used the word "buzz" before and it is not my own. I'm borrowing it from a conversation I had with one of our volunteers at our recent Judy Garland Tribute fundraiser. She felt a buzz in being part of such an unusual, eventful evening, and that sort of buzz seems to happen around here often.

Lynn Verge talked about some of the events and milestones underlying the buzz, but with those accomplishments also lie some of our great challenges for the year ahead. We are grateful for the Federal Government's support of our mission and building, but that is a matching grant meaning that we must raise additional funds to make this a safer, more accessible space, properly suited to an electronic age. The 3-year Quebec government grant challenges us to do more to foster a digital information society. With the rapid evolution of technology we have to image how our users will communicate and share cultural experiences in the years ahead, and find sources of sustained funds to keep our momentum going beyond the initial government seed money.

So thank you all again for your hard work, monetary support and general enthusiasm. We are going to need a lot more of all three as we embark into a new year.

Respectfully submitted.

Mark Gallop, President
18 May 2010