

## WHY CFLA?

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Announcer 2: Okay, let's get on it.

Michael: I'm Michael Ridley, a PhD student at the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western University and today we're going to talk about library associations in Canada. There's a joke in library land that if you get at least two or three librarians together they'll form a new library association. This is perhaps not so farfetched when you consider that in Canada there are over 100 different library associations. We have national and provincial associations, associations for types of libraries and types of library workers. There are disciplinary library associations and even an association for retired library workers.

Given this, how can libraries and library workers in Canada speak with one voice? This brings us to the Canadian Federation of Library Associations; CFLA. But first, a short history. The Canadian Library Association, CLA, was created in 1946 as a national voice for libraries and it did just that for many years. However, slipping membership reflected a loss of confidence in the CLA. The CLA board led by its Chair, Sandra Singh, from the Vancouver Public library, made the very difficult decision to shutter the organization. Some of the remaining funds were used to provide core funding for the deliberations about a new organization and over an 18-month period CFLA was defined and launched.

CLA was a membership organization but CFLA is different. It's a collaboration of other library associations by bringing together these various library associations under a single organization; the national voice of libraries can be focused and strong. Recently at the opening reception of the CFLA forum in Regina, I took a microphone, along with my glass of pinot, to ask those attending "Why does CFLA matter?"

Respondent 1: We formed CFLA in order to champion our libraries not for ourselves but for our society to ensure that our community has the strongest libraries possible and to ensure that the needs, the diverse needs, of Canada's communities are being met. I think without this organization that has been pulled together again with various national groups and diverse, you know, members, that opportunity wouldn't be there.

- Respondent 2: It's a small fledgling association right now – organization actually – right now, and we need to nurture it carefully and make sure that it blossoms into the role that it has to take on.
- Respondent 3: CFLA is essential because Canada needs one united voice for all types of libraries particularly for advocacy issues, that transcend type of library, copyright, intellectual freedom, access to information, net neutrality. We really need to be able to band together and present a united front and CFLA. does that for us as well as developing capacity across the country and making sure it floats all boats.
- Respondent 4: I think CFLA is really important for all organizations but particularly I look at it from the Canadian Urban Libraries Council perspective and if CFLA is not a strong voice for us nationally, then we're going to have to build that in ourselves and that doesn't make sense. I was just standing over here having a conversation about an issue that crosses boundaries; it would be very complicated for us to do that if it weren't for CFLA. So CFLA is going to be the conduit to make that happen.
- Respondent 5: CFLA matters because even though there are a lot of really important library issues at the municipal or the local or the provincial level, there are a number of issues that are incredibly important at the national level. Things like intellectual freedom, things like cataloguing standards, response to Truth and Reconciliation. There are a lot of things that are really not the provincial purview, we need to come together and talk about these things and we have this in common.
- Respondent 6: It demonstrates the power of libraries in this country and that we have to work together and we trust each other. You heard, it is a new organization, but we have to allow it to blossom and to fly.
- Respondent 7: It across all the different sectors of libraries to advocate – I mean, that its main purpose is to bring together the voices.
- Respondent 8: We bring together libraries from all different sectors; public, academic, special, provincial and we work together collaboratively on issues that people may not have once thought were similar issues. And by bringing out these discussions amongst these different groups, they discovered that they do have a lot of similar issues and creating collaborative opportunities with people that might not have collaborated in the past.
- Respondent 9: It's a chance for us to sort of step out of the slightly narrow interest that we might have in a sector or a province or an organization. Or, you know, what's happening back home and think about why libraries matter and somehow find a way to communicate that to our community, the country and in some cases, to the federal government when they feel like listening.
- Respondent 10: We need a national voice for Canada and we need to advocate on a number of important issues including things like intellectual freedom and artificial intelligence, which is being discussed at the forum this year.

Michael: In a future episode we are going to interview Camille Callison, the Chair of CFLA's Indigenous Matters Committee. Camille has led a remarkable effort to a variety of reconciliation road maps for Canadian libraries. In the meantime, check out the CFLA website; [cfla-fcad.ca](http://cfla-fcad.ca). There you'll find more information.

Announcer 2: This has been another episode of So What?.

Announcer 1: The podcast about library and information science research and why it matters.

Announcer 2: So What? is created and produced by students at the faculty of information and media studies at Western University in London, Ontario.

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