

CALL/ACBD Vendor Liaison Committee

Annual Report 2020 - 21

May 2021 – Virtual

Committee Chair(s): Jacob Ericson and Joan Rataic-Lang

Members: Danielle Brosseau, Dominique Garingan, Louise Hamel, Nadine Hoffman, Amy Kaufman (sabbatical year), Yasmin Khan, Alexia Loumankis, Josette McEachern, Ann Marie Melvie (Exec Liaison), Katherine Melville, Mary-Jo Mustoe, Judy Singh, Jen Walker

Working Group Members and ad-hoc committee support: Elizabeth Bruton, David Cumming, Beth Galbraith, Helene Guerette, Reagan Janke, Kathryn Kingston, Michelle LaPorte, Karen Sawatzky, Katie Thomas

Activities and initiatives that the committee has completed during this past two years:

Thomson Reuters' (TR) project to upgrade its backend operations, the innumerable issues it caused, and the resulting impact on our members, dominated the attention of the VLC Chairs and committee members for much of 2019 and 2020. The dominance of this issue was further emphasized by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown measures. It brought into focus how much of a monopoly TR has in Canada, and how devastating and far reaching their internal issues can be for law libraries across the country. The resulting efforts of CALL members and the VLC also indicated how valuable maintaining productive communication between CALL and the vendors can be to having issues resolved in a satisfactory manner.

Ongoing, continued communications between the VLC and TR took up much of the Chairs time. Many frustrated members reached out to the Chairs in hope of assistance, guidance or a direct line to TR. In response to this, the VLC conducted an extensive and detailed survey which resulted in a document that TR used to guide their efforts in identifying and prioritizing the issues to be solved. Another result of the communications between TR and the VLC was the formation of feedback committees composed of CALL volunteers to work more closely with TR and ensure that fixes and enhancements meet users' needs.

A joint "CALL Live Event" on December 1st was the culmination of discussions. The VLC encouraged TR to openly discuss their survey results and future plans to address ongoing issues. The presentation was well-received. We now await the completion of promised fixes and enhancements.

At this point the Chairs feel that there is little else they can do to assist TR in successfully completing the implementation of their backend migration. The migration project was originally only supposed to take a few weeks at the end of the summer in 2019, and instead dominated the VLC's time for over a year and a half. The impact and monopoly that TR has in Canada justified the amount of attention spent on it in 2019 and 2020, but there were other matters which needed to be addressed.

The Chairs reached out on behalf of members to resolve access issues to services that cropped up from time to time, such as to determine why Newsdesk temporarily lost access to the Globe & Mail. A semi-annual vendor call was held with LexisNexis in early 2021 and the report has been shared with our membership. The meeting was a combined effort of the CALL VLC and TALL'S PLC, a perfect example of CALL working together with local law librarian associations.

Activities and initiatives that the committee hopes to tackle for the next business year:

Libraries are embarking on a new normal, a different working environment with different issues and concerns. It is time to get back to basics, especially since the basics look different now. The work environment has changed and the impact of those changes will affect our relationships with vendors.

While we cannot impact the speed with which TR addresses old issues, there are new ones to consider. The nature of TR's publishing and licensing model has indicated that TR has an unequal relationship with law libraries, depending on what type of organization or institution they are housed. Law firms with sophisticated VPN's are able to support their legal professionals virtually. Law school libraries have also been serving their user base virtually for years. Those libraries that are more akin to public libraries, courthouse libraries specifically, whose doors are open and serve a wider audience struggle to serve their users in this modern ever changing world. This will need to be addressed. Discussion with all publishers need to address the new normal, but with TR's near monopoly that relationship plays a bigger role than most.

The Chairs look forward to holding a Business Meeting in the near future. It is time to set a course that matches future needs of our members. Through an open discussion we hope to determine what that should look like.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacob Ericson and Joan Rataic-Lang