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## President's Message

Nancy Frater



# Connection Vs. Complacency

*"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." - John Muir*

And so it is with the business of books. As Independents we live with challenging realities every day. We don't always have the solutions but we do have the choice of whether to bemoan the falling sky or to steer a positive course of action. Since complacency is not an option, let's harness our energy and "get connected."

#### Connecting with our associations and alliances

Our support, both of time and ideas, allows CBA to be ever-vigilant in representing the interests of booksellers and ensures that we all play a vital role in shaping its direction. Not only does CBA sponsor a national conference for us to network and share ideas, but it can also provide support to regional book fairs in the area of programming. CBA's connections with the American Booksellers Association contribute to both the dissemination of information and our professional development, while accessing the services sponsored by Retail Council of Canada to provide support for every bookseller.

#### Connecting with the publishing community

Booksellers and publishers face a changing marketplace. Although the CBA Board, with the support of office staff, has produced a remarkable Summer Conference, a concerted effort is needed by booksellers, publishers and other industry players to mount future conventions: conferences which are truly working conferences addressing the nitty-gritty needs of the publishing-book-selling world. A recent conversation with David Kent, CEO and President of HarperCollins Canada, reminded me of the need for both CBA Board and booksellers to get out and visit publishers' offices. We will always need the continuing dialogue with publishers regarding critical issues such as: the crucial role played by Independents in the distribution channel; the need for publisher reps in our stores; and, in fairness, the challenges faced by publishers.

#### Connecting with new business models

As independent stores require adaptability in an ever-changing market, e-commerce technology, digital delivery, blogs, text message alerts and

social media are now being used by our customers to access markets. Although technology offers another avenue to connect with readers, booksellers need to be circumspect with the ramifications of digital readers: How can booksellers be involved in sales and distribution? How do we deal with the proprietary rights of selling the printed word and intellectual curiosity?

#### Connecting with community

We can be the driving force in promoting localism. When like-minded businesses work together, we are supported by locally sustainable economies. Our position in the community is enhanced when our bookstores become the hub of our community's culture.

#### Connecting with action and optimism

Since the inception of our organization, 57 years ago, we have wanted to usher in a new era of Independents. In reality, we've faced closures, pricing problems, a weakened economy, unfair competition and a host of other challenges but

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we have survived. While the heart leads us to be booksellers for a number of reasons what is clear is that bookselling is a business—a business that needs to be profitable and nourished. At times, it seems that we'll never find the big "eureka" that signifies the ultimate solution; rather we find the answers in small steps—but steps forward.

Not easy work but someone has to do it—and booksellers have been doing it for years. Just ask the great bard himself:

*"Fie upon this quiet life, I want work."*  
- William Shakespeare

Yours in steps ahead,  
Nancy Frater 