

## **President's Remarks at March 19, 2021 AGM**

I accepted this gavel last year at our AGM in March, 2020 on the day the government closed down the universities. This was not exactly the job I signed up for. However, it has turned out to be much more. As a technologist, I have enjoyed the challenge of moving to online programming. It's been great to have such an interesting project during the pandemic.

I want to start by telling you all that you have a fantastic Board!! The Board pulled together, started meeting on Zoom right away in April and planned a way forward. I can't thank the Board enough for this teamwork and for all the extra hours put in to figure out the best way to deliver the courses online. We didn't miss a beat and I am very grateful for all the support I have received during this past year.

Particularly I want to recognize a few people who are retiring from their roles today. Del Milbrandt and Paul Muther are retiring after 6 years.

As you know Del has been our Programme Director for the last 3 years, providing us with all the wonderful courses. Paul has led Membership and fundraising as well as being very involved in Finance. Together with Del's and Paul's leadership, we defined and delivered LLIR@Home

Betty Ball is retiring after 3 years. Betty has been very involved in member communications as well as volunteers and program. She has ably assisted us in many of the behind-the-scenes work, including our new brand LLIR@Home

Although Del, Paul and Betty are retiring from their Board roles, all 3 have volunteered to continue to work on Committees. We are very thankful for their continuing support.

On behalf of the membership of LLIR, I offer a formal thank you - Del, Paul and Betty - for your very significant contributions.

LLIR@Home – what can I say? It has been a large focus of our work this past year.

Del has a favourite saying "keep it simple. You are making it too complicated." Well, we listened to her and you benefited. LLIR@Home was introduced using the "keep it simple" approach as we made decisions.

Offering you 4 courses for the price of 1 is an example. This decision eliminated the need to ask you all which of the courses you wanted to attend and then keep track of who was in which class, who got which email and so on. The devil is always in the detail.

Likewise, the decision to have pre-recorded lectures simplified our work and gave you our members not only a more consistent delivery but also the flexibility to view lectures at a time convenient to you.

We are all volunteers and we needed to manage the workload. We started off by hiring Stacy Costa a UofT PhD student who many of you know because she taught the puzzles

course a year ago. Stacy has a background in innovation and technology and she has guided us every step of the way. Importantly, she also assisted our lecturers to get started recording their courses; the result was a clean process. Our sincere thanks to Stacy.

Our talented group of A-V volunteers pivoted. Some became Vimeo administrators (we have one for each course) and others provided tech support responding to members when they needed help viewing the lectures.

As well, 8 brave volunteers filmed thank-you's to the Course Directors. Thank you all for your contributions.

This year LLIR offered 8 online courses, 4 each term. Unfortunately, not all lecturers were able to transition to online and we had to change the curriculum. It is not easy creating pre-recorded video lectures. The survey responses for both terms indicate that the Program was very successful.

Here's a sample of one comment that we received

"It was fabulous. All of it...the courses, the content, the delivery, the ability to watch whenever, having access to all four courses. Thank you. Couldn't have been better. Loved it all."

Since the curriculum had changed since registration, we gave everyone who paid for the term access to all the courses so members could choose what to watch. We tried to be as flexible as possible. We even allowed members who had thought they would be spending the winter in the sunny south, a second chance to sign up for winter courses. We also opened the waitlist and accepted over 100 new members so that we currently have 1300 members. We will manage this number back down to our usual 1200 members in the future when we stop offering online courses.

We have done a lot of work to develop a flexible plan with which to move forward. We will have 4 online courses again this fall. We have left our plans for the winter open and will reassess in September. If it looks as if it will be safe to return to Glendon for the winter term, in September we will survey our members to see how many are willing to return to class in January. Based on the result of the survey, our flexible Program Committee will decide which courses can be offered at Glendon and which will be online. I would like to note that this hybrid delivery is a lot more work for your Board and is temporary.

Our intent is to return to Glendon fulltime as soon as it is practical. We have all missed being at Glendon.

Other than *LLIR@Home* what else has happened this year?

- We conducted an analysis of our operations to identify areas to improve. Given the workload of launching *LLIR@Home*, some of these projects are on hold right now.

- Our legal challenge regarding use of some photographs on the LLIR website was settled. We now have a copyright policy with clear procedures to follow.
- Not being on campus has changed how members interact. The New Member get together was on Zoom; it was nice to meet all those who signed in.
- Without in-person classes we did not need volunteer Course Chairs and greeters. The bottom line is we have had very little chance to mix and mingle. Clearly member engagement is very difficult in this online world.
- We also made some major changes in our approach to fundraising for Glendon students this year.

Under the leadership of director Paul Muther, the Board undertook a review of our annual fundraising drive, especially in view of the fact that we would not be in classrooms with our donation boxes.

We explored answers to this question: what is the most direct and efficient way to get member donations to Glendon students in need of special financial help perhaps precipitated by the pandemic, such as loss of a part time job or summer work.? The solution was to move to direct online donations into an existing fund, the *Friends of Glendon Hardship Fund* which had been established to make one-time grants to Glendon students in unplanned financial hardship

We had a stretch target of \$28,000. The campaign is still underway at the time of the AGM, but it appears we will have exceeded our target. Wow! Thank you all so much for your generosity.

Of note, when you donated online, you received an immediate tax receipt. There is no administration fee and every dollar you donated became directly available to students.

Paul has been busy – at the Board’s direction, he has also been working with the Glendon Advancement office to set up a new fund for receipt of donations from LLIR members for next year. You will hear more about that in the weeks to come.

Meanwhile, LLIR saved over \$25,000 this year Much of this was attributable to the fact that Glendon did not charge us for rent and other services and there were savings from having eight instead of twelve courses. This money is being used to seed the new fund.

In conclusion, I hope you will all agree that we have had a productive year in spite of the challenge of the pandemic. The Board and I thank you for your support.

**Diane Johns**