

Statement from PLG Coordinating Committee on  
Dissolution of Edmonton Chapter  
29 June 2016

The Coordinating Committee of PLG expresses sadness at the departure of the Edmonton, Alberta, chapter. We extend our best wishes to these former PLG members as they take a next step in their journey as activists within our profession.

We also want to let all members of PLG know that, while PLG is certainly in need of better organizing methods, that we are very disheartened by the fact that Edmonton members chose to issue a statement that seems intended to discredit PLG, the Coordinating Committee, and editors of Progressive Librarian. The Edmonton statement certainly gives PLG no thanks for having provided the context within which the chapter formed and did receive support of various sorts.

For the record, to address issues raised in the Edmonton statement we want you all to know that:

1. The chapter informed the CC at the end of May that they would likely be taking this step. Despite the fact that the chapter had a representative on the CC, we had never previously been informed that disaffection was brewing, and were shocked at the hostility of accusations made against us.
2. In November of last year, the PLG-CC contacted all chapters, including Edmonton, with a draft proposal to raise dues and to change how PLG collected dues and recommended that chapters manage their own finances. No chapter responded, not even Edmonton. The CC would have welcomed chapter input on this matter, but receiving none we went ahead and implemented the proposal. In February, after we'd gone ahead and made the changes, we did receive an inquiry from the chapter's treasurer asking for clarification about the new dues structure for chapters. Concern was expressed that we'd raised dues by \$5.00 (the first increase since 1999) and that these dues would no longer be split with chapters, the logistics of which became complicated when we decided on an online payment system. We notified the Edmonton treasurer that if \$25 was a financial hardship for any chapter member, they could always join at the low income rate of \$10/year. Just last month, when Edmonton finally shared its concerns, the CC was told that the chapter had decided to institute a "dues boycott" against PLG. Prior to this the CC was not informed that such a boycott had been called.
3. Elections do not equal democracy. That said, it is true that PLG-CC needs new members, and we will issue a call for volunteers shortly. The CC guidelines do provide for a vote of the PLG membership in the event more people volunteer than there are positions for. This has never happened.
4. The CC was never informed that delivery of Progressive Librarian to Canadian members was erratic.

5. While it is certainly true that some members of the CC are ill-informed about the concerns of Canadian librarians, Canadian PLGers always have the opportunity to provide information on issues PLG might address.

6. Communication is a two-way relationship. Points 1, 2, 4, and 5 above indicate that whatever lapses in communications on the part of the CC, the chapter was certainly uncommunicative as well.

7. The concern that PLG favors international advocacy over direct action needs explication. PLG is a simple network of people who believe libraries have a role to play in struggles for social justice. We publish a journal that aims to bring critical perspectives and political engagement into our professional lives. As part of the journal PLG sponsors a student essay contest, the Braverman Award. Some PLG members are very active in ALA and local library organizations. Others, in personal and professional lives, do engage in direct action of various sorts, and PLG members have had an organizational presence at various events, demonstrations, and conferences over the past 26 years.

Lastly, members of the CC feel compelled by this situation to state that we hold no grudge against the Edmonton chapter for declaring its need for independence from PLG and acting upon it. We only and truly wish them well, and hope that whatever organization is formed in September will become a sister group with which PLG can act in solidarity.

NOTE: This statement was issued in response to a resolution passed by the Edmonton chapter on 28 June 2016. The resolution can be found here:  
<http://plgedmonton.ca/plg-edmonton-votes-to-dissolve/>