

# Edition

The journal of the Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto branch

SEPTEMBER 2008

## Reflections from *Editing in the Global Village*

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# Edition

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## Editor's Note

It is from under my umbrella that I review this issue and with my now webbed fingers that I write these words. Environmental events do not allow us to forget that we have little control over the world we live in. At the same time, without a computer or a Web connection we are, as editors, toast. A common thread that weaves itself throughout this issue is: technology. As the first issue of the fall season (Is summer really over?) we backtrack to say good-bye to the previous season/year in our program reports. Mary Allen provides a detailed report of the informative evening in May on the wonders of Web technologies. As well, Mary Anne Carswell and Ken Weinberg reflect on their experiences at the EAC annual conference, *Editing in the Global Village*, for those of us who missed it, or the lucky ones who were present and want to reminisce. Ann Firth provides a review of what you need to know if you are interested in expanding your professional knowledge base and acquiring new skills with the advent of a new school year; and while we are on the topic, there is a list of the branch fall seminars to whet your appetite. Finally, Art Wenk's review of Charlotte Brewer's exploration of the history of the Oxford English Dictionary allows us to begin our search for educational sources while learning more about a resource we so often use.

*Sara Promislow*

Newsletter co-chair

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*Above & below: EAC's May monthly meeting.*

## Past program reports:

### *Transitioning to new media*

By Mary Allen



Joan Virall-Cox, communications professor at Sheridan College and Dawn Boshcoff, President of PWAC's Toronto Chapter.

“**B**OTTOM LINE, IF YOU are not on the Web, or you're not engaged in social media conversations with your marketplace, then you are facing a very uncertain future. As I'm fond of saying 'Be Found, Be Noticed or Be History!'”<sup>1</sup> This counsel, offered up by James Burchill, one of the more prominent, new social media gurus, encapsulates the message conveyed in a more subtle fashion by Dawn Boshcoff, President of Professional Writers' Association of Canada's (PWAC) Toronto Chapter, and Joan Virall-Cox,

<sup>1</sup> James Burchill. Social Media and the IM Conference. Retrieved June 21, 2008 from: [www.itincanada.ca/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&Itemid=49](http://www.itincanada.ca/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=49)

communications professor at Sheridan College, at the May 26 meeting.

Dawn Boshcoff began her talk with a quick survey to determine who among the audience identified as *techno geek*, *technophobe*, or *techno savvy*. Response to this informal poll—very few geeks or savvys raised their hands, while none admitted to being a technophobe—indicated a captive audience for Boshcoff's presentation, “Making the Transition to New Media”.

After a short introduction, Boshcoff launched into her two-part presentation. In the first section, Boshcoff made the case for transitioning to new media, no small feat when presenting to a group of professional editors, who on occasion





have been known to wage heated debates on the merits of online versus offline editing. According to Boshcoff, the reasons in favour of this transition include: much of the labour-intensive work involved in editing, including the transfer of documents, can be done on your own computer; local business is now global business; pretty much all entrepreneurs and freelancers use digital media, so to stay competitive an editor must also engage online; and social media is great for networking as the Internet provides immediate access to a much broader swath of potential clients, partners, or suppliers.

In the second part of her presentation, Boshcoff spoke in more specific terms about different types of technology and how they apply to business development. For example, she considers e-mail the bare minimum of communications'

tools, while instant messaging is a better way to release the limitless “power of partnerships” the Web has to offer, as it has greater potential for *interactivity*, or two-way exchanges. Social networking tools, such as Facebook, allow you to not only stay in touch with friends and your children but also to engage in professional networking. MySpace enables the creation of a professional profile page or Web site, which advertises a business brand on the Internet. Boshcoff explained that greater interactivity is an important attribute that is now being built into multi-page Web sites in the form of blogs, newsletters, bulletin boards, forums, podcasts, audio and video feeds, and online shopping systems. This interactivity enhances communication, improves customer service, and can turn audiences into new customers. Embedded links, tagging, clear messaging, Web site design and regular updates, or reinvention are techniques that serve to harness the tremendous opportunities that the World Wide Web has to offer—simple, right?

Joan Vinnall-Cox, Web consultant, coach, and educator, followed Boshcoff with her presentation, “Web Basics for Editors”. Vinnall-Cox elaborated on some of the more technical questions that continue



to dog initiates to the new media dark arts. Though Vinall-Cox has taught communications at Sheridan College for many years, her comfort with computers was not intuitive and, as with many PC users, she found memorizing strings of DOS characters a particular challenge. Forced to learn computer skills for her doctoral research on “Moving from technophobia to technophilia”, Vinall-Cox’s facility with computers developed in pace with the transition to more user-friendly interfaces to the point where she now values the Web as a tool that teaches her “how to be lazy”. In other words, Vinall-Cox now has full appreciation for how Web tools can save time and energy, and enable productivity in research and tasks that were unimaginable in the past.

The tools that Vinall-Cox flagged as especially useful to editors include: styles in word processing that allow automation in the creation of tables of contents; the insertion of comments to query authors; tagging devices, such as del.icio.us, Digital Research Tools (DiRT), or social bookmarking to share research interests with other users; tools for the automatic



generation of bibliographies ([www.bibme.org](http://www.bibme.org)); and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds such as Google Reader or Read Write Web that place all the bloglines, or Web sites a user wishes to follow in one place. Time constraints dictated that Vinall-Cox was unable to provide due attention to other important networking and communication technologies; however, if you would like to know more about Wikis, Twitter or microblogging, Vinall-Cox can be readily found on the Web. For a list of her Top Ten Web Tools, visit: [www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/joanvinallcox.html](http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/joanvinallcox.html) ■■■

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Mary Allen  
[maryallen@editors.ca](mailto:maryallen@editors.ca)



# Year-end party in pictures

By Annie Leung and Sharon O'Brien

Let's network at the bar.

Why not the snack table?



Some 60 people came out in full force for the year-end party.



Staff from Back Alley Woodfire BBQ and Grill put the finishing touches on their catered fare.

Just Perrier?  
No, spike it!



Wine and beer complemented the hors d'oeuvres.

What nifty notepads!

No red pencil with it?



Appreciation gifts were distributed to last year's volunteers.



# Year-end party

Any more hors d'oeuvres?



The room was hushed during the volunteer appreciation ceremony.

Keep up with me if you can!



Editors "let their hair down" in the second half.

With more chutzpah, gals!



A rousing rendition of *Hava Nagila* broke loose.

America's Dance Crew, eat your hearts out!



A conga line cut a swath through the crowd.



Not tepid like last year.

Hide the lampshades!



The Henry Furman Trio

So, I *know* I can dance!



James Harbeck performing Russian dance.

Have a great summer!



A nice night to be on the back deck.

Will we regret this later?

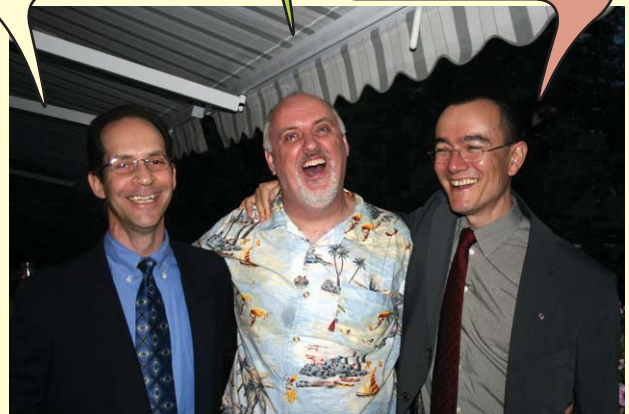


Editors showing a little leg.

Editors cut the rug!

Don't we host a great party?

Join us for more fun next year.



Ken Weinberg (National Representative), Brian Cardie (Branch Administrator), and Alan Yoshioka (Branch Chair)

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 Hours: 9 AM to 1 PM Monday to Thursday

## 2007–2008 Toronto branch volunteers

We extend our appreciation to the generous and energetic volunteers of the Toronto branch, who have helped make this year's branch activities a resounding success. This year's volunteers are:

Nancy Ackerman  
Mary Allen  
Elizabeth d'Anjou  
Lee d'Anjou  
Christa Bedwin  
Peter Benn  
Pat Bishop  
Diane Bisson  
Karen Black  
Natalie Boon  
Megan Burns  
Pietro Cammalleri  
Kerry Cathers  
Grace Cherian  
Dimitra Chronopoulos  
Monifa Colthurst  
Ian Conway  
Demetra Dimokopoulos  
Kim Elliot  
Nancy Foran  
Freya Godard  
John Green

Heather Guylar  
Sarah Hipworth  
Lindsay Hodder  
Ranee Holmes  
Gerry Jenkinson  
Karin Joeveer  
Carolyn Jongeward  
Caroline Kaiser  
Ian Kennedy  
Karen Kligman  
Elske Kuiper  
Marnie Lamb  
Cindy Marie Law  
Sandy Leppan  
Nathan Medcalf  
Lannie Messervey  
Lawrence Miller  
Jean Mills  
Marg Anne Morrison  
Sheila Munro  
Caroline Murray  
Jeny Nussey

Sharon O'Brien  
Irene Peters  
Carolyn Pisani  
Lily Quan  
Shirley Rennie  
Jean Robinson  
Debra Roppolo  
Natalie St. Pierre  
Mila Santiago  
Noreen Shanahan  
Allyson Skene  
Leslie Smith  
Rachel Stuckey  
Meg Taylor  
Martin Townsend  
Elizabeth Trew  
Julie van Tol  
Marion Voysey  
Michelle Weise  
Arthur Wenk  
Carolyn Wilker  
Jennie Worden

*Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!*

## ■ For your diary pages

### Executive Meeting

Monday, September 8, 2008,  
6:30 PM  
EAC National office,  
27 Carlton Street, Suite 505  
All members are welcome  
RSVP: [toronto@editors.ca](mailto:toronto@editors.ca)

### Program Night

Monday, September 22, 2008  
6:45 PM New members Q & A  
7:30 PM Program

Join us for a fun, casual evening where members are invited to share their stories of clients who have been difficult, challenging or altogether nightmarish. It will be an entertaining start to our new season of programs and our new meeting format. It will also be a great primer for November's session, when writer and certified life coach Linda Dessau will discuss business relationship management essentials for editors.

8:30 PM Mix-and-mingle

The Women's Art Association of Canada  
23 Prince Arthur Avenue  
Members free/non-members \$5

## ■ Welcome new members!

As of July 31, 2008, the Toronto branch has 689 members: 359 voting (including 2 life members), 273 qualifying (formerly associate category), 45 student members, and 10 emeritus members. Twenty people have joined since May. The new members are:

Nicky Borland  
Sarah Brebner  
Joe Cotterchio-Milligan  
Hélène Crevier  
Linda Dessau  
Gavin Elliott  
Bruce Gillespie  
Christopher Hanney  
Brenda Hutchinson  
Richard Johnson

Scott Johnston  
Wanda Kowalski  
Jessica Lyall  
Maggie Maclsaac  
Berna Ozunal  
Taunia Samoyloff  
Arleen Schenke  
Shealah Stratton  
Deirdre Swain  
Sarah Vandewater

## *The view from the new branch chair*

**W**ELCOME BACK TO A NEW YEAR of EAC activities! I hope YOU all have had a restful and enjoyable summer. Since I came home from the national conference in Edmonton in June, my own summer has been very full, between a succession of medical reports and manuscripts for my clients and an intensive effort to redevelop the Online Directory of Editors (ODE). We hope that our membership drive, bolstered by initiatives such as the new ODE, will persuade more working editors to join our association.

We hope the new arrangement of branch meetings will bring new vitality to our monthly gatherings at the Women's Art Association building. As of press time, however, we have not yet found a suitable person to fill the new key role of member relations chair; and our secretary has stepped down for personal reasons. The nominations committee's search continues.

For a long time we have been considering publicizing our seminars through the use of postcards, which are less expensive to print and mail than the traditional brochures, and this

season we are going ahead with this plan at last. Full details of the seminars are available as usual on the Web site, [www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars/index.html](http://www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars/index.html).

Next June's conference will mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of



what began as the Freelance Editors' Association of Canada. Several special events are in the works, under the able leadership of the national conference chair, John Green. We look forward to your thoughts about how we in the Toronto branch can remember the past and prepare for the future. ■■■

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Alan Yoshioka  
Branch chair  
[toronto\\_br\\_chair@editors.ca](mailto:toronto_br_chair@editors.ca)

## *A preview of the fall seminars*

**W**ELCOME TO A NEW SEASON OF SEMINARS!

You'll find an exciting lineup of seminars in the Fall 2008 season. New and experienced editors will find a wide range of workshops. These seminars take you through all aspects of editing, from substantive editing to proofreading to learning about the editor's role in the publishing process. Many popular EAC instructors will lead perennial favorites such as Copy Editing: A Hands-on Introduction and Taking the Plunge as a Freelance Editor. Detailed information on the individual seminars will be available shortly. Visit the EAC Toronto branch *Seminars for Editors* Web page at [www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars/](http://www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars/) or call 416-975-5528 to sign up today!

**Taking the Plunge as a Freelance Editor—Wednesday, October 1**

**Harnessing the Writing Process—Saturday, November 8**

**Copy Editing: A Hands-on Introduction—Saturday, October 4 & 11**

**Proofreading—Saturday, November 22**

**Conquering Corporate Markets—Tuesday, October 14**

**Substantive Editing—Tuesday, November 25**

**Scholarly Editing—Saturday, October 18**

**Eight-Step Editing—Saturday, November 29 (Kitchener)**

**Introduction to the Publishing Process—Saturday, October 25**

**On-Screen Editing—Saturday, December 6**

**Punctuation and Mechanics—Tuesday, October 28**

**Eight-Step Editing—Wednesday, December 10 ■■■**

**Plain Language—Wednesday, October 29**

**Copy Editing: A Hands-on Introduction—Wednesday, November 5 & 12 (Kitchener)**



## Public relations chair report:

### Dying To Get Out of the City? Already There?



COME AND JOIN US AT *THE WORD ON THE STREET*. CANADA'S largest one-day celebration of the printed word will take place on Sunday, September 28 in Halifax, Toronto, Kitchener, Calgary, and Vancouver. There are author signings, readings, exhibitors, workshops, and stuff for the kids...not to mention free entry. ([www.thewordonthestreet.ca](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca))

The Toronto branch needs volunteers to help out at the EAC booths at *The Word On The Street* on September 28 in Kitchener. If you live in those areas or just want to get out of town, we'd love for you to help out. You'll have time to take in the festivals, and you'll only need to *work* for two or three hours. Of course, it won't really feel like work. You'll get to hang out with other members and rave about your profession to complete strangers. We may be able to arrange for carpooling if you'd like to help out but don't have a car. If you're interested, please contact Jen Govier at [toronto\\_br\\_pr\\_chair@editors.ca](mailto:toronto_br_pr_chair@editors.ca).

We're also looking for a few more volunteers for *The Word On The Street* in Toronto, also on September 28. ■■■

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Jen Govier  
[toronto\\_br\\_pr\\_chair@editors.ca](mailto:toronto_br_pr_chair@editors.ca)



Hotline Report	June - July 2008
Members registered	27
Clients registered: Hotline opportunities	1 (Copy editor for financial presentations.)

### Hotline Registration

Clients call to be matched with branch members who have registered with the Hotline for work.

When you register, please note these guidelines:

If you are listed in the EAC Directory of Editors (print or online), note any changes to your listing.

If you are not listed in the Directory and have not previously registered with the Hotline, send your résumé in Directory or Hotline style. You can find guidelines to the Directory format at [www.editors.ca/hire/ode/search\\_tips.html](http://www.editors.ca/hire/ode/search_tips.html). Hotline style follows the Directory format. However, you may include as many interests as you wish and write your profile in point form.

Please limit your résumé to one page.

If you have registered before, send your résumé only if it has changed.

Hotline registration begins on the first of each month. Please contact the branch every month to be listed again.

Telephone: 416 975-5528 Fax: 416 975-5596  
[toronto@editors.ca](mailto:toronto@editors.ca) (.rtf attachment; subject: Hotline)

# Reflections from the annual EAC conference

Editing in the Global Village,  
Edmonton, June 6–8, 2008

Photos courtesy of [www.mediamag.ca](http://www.mediamag.ca)

## 1. Mary Anne Carswell's impressions

June 6

On takeoff from Calgary the sky is lowering and the crew warns us to expect a bumpy ride. Yes, it is! Lightning in the sky and rain slashing down, hard, on the ground. Only metres from the gate in Edmonton, the plane stops. Because of the storm the airport closes down, and we wait. I settle in for some quiet before what I know is going to be an intense weekend.

Edmonton: big sky, huge expanses. The conference centre is built right into the bluff above the North Saskatchewan River. The escalators go down through a central corridor, all glass, greenery, and cascading waterfalls, down and down, five storeys, spectacular views at every level. A tourist boat on the river, way down there. On the next escalator, a young woman in fancy dress strikes a pose while her companion photographs her.

At the welcoming wine and cheese: a juggler, a clown, a live jazz band, and the Mayor of Edmonton.

June 7

What a packed day! Keynote address, sessions, coffee and lunch breaks, Oops! Awards, the AGM, and the banquet. Did we really do all that? Yes, we did!

Many of the sessions are new-technology-oriented, but the keynote address by Ruth Kelly strikes a different note. Ms. Kelly has used all the usual-suspect technologies to create her success as a publisher of several award-winning magazines: contacts, speaking engagements, diverse publications, and multiple markets. One of her success stories is a magazine





for teens, a demographic everyone said never ventured beyond its usual Internet habitat. Another is an Alberta business magazine, which she bought when it failed and has turned around completely. Now it is read nation-wide.



How does she do it? She says she is always building, always moving towards excellence, never achieving it. She maintains a long-term view, always creating space in which things can happen.

Session highlight of the day for me was Chris Duncan's *Editing at the Crossroads*. Duncan's

technology-driven company creates subtitles for Hollywood and UK studio films. With offices in five countries (and five different time zones) they create subtitles—in as little as 72 hours for a feature-length film. The film's meaning is captured in screenfuls that can only contain 40 characters; as audio comprehension is about 150 words a minute, the text must be considerably condensed. Background chatter has to be considered as part of the meaning, too. The chief goal of subtitlers is invisibility, so titles cannot be

intrusive. Often the work begins as the final version of the film is still being edited, and there may be no written script to work from. Add to that some very difficult relationships with the Hollywood studios, and you end up with a formidable set of editing tasks.

Later, John Green tells me that at a session he'd attended on de-cluttering one's workspace, the presenter said everything in the workspace should be useful and/or beautiful. I love this idea of beauty as an organizing principle. The Wedgwood Room of the Fairmont MacDonald Hotel, venue for the banquet, puts the principle into practice. The domed ceiling is painted soft green with elaborate, Wedgwood-style plasterwork; lace curtains are on the windows, with views of the terrace and gardens outside and the river below. Ted Blodgett, Edmonton's poet laureate, reads a poem he wrote especially for us. His rhythmical voice sounds like music to me. I am very moved, unexpectedly. I feel I have been serenaded.

## June 8

At the *Senior Editors' Round Table*, I understand something new: The Internet echoes ancient practices of storytelling. Many versions of the same story are told, each with a different spin, out of which a core meaning emerges. The Internet is an oral medium! This is fascinating to me. I love this kind of talk. I love listening to how meaning emerges through conversation.

Later, I sit down for dinner with a couple 

of new editor friends in the choice corner table of the hotel's restaurant, overlooking the river. I eat Alberta beef: delicious. We reveal secrets to each other. We drink altogether too much wine and roar with laughter.

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Mary Anne Carswell  
toronto\_br\_past\_chair@editors.ca

## 2. Ken Weinberg's impressions

Abraham Maslow professed that we are motivated by a hierarchy of needs. I wasn't sure what motivated me to attend the national EAC conference in Edmonton this year, but my needs were definitely met.

Physiological (breathing, eating, drinking): This certainly wasn't the rubber chicken I was expecting. All the conference meals were very tasty, and the banquet meal was so delicious, a hush came over our table as everyone enjoyed the tastes. The views of the river valley were breathtaking, as was the morning run I took, which concluded by climbing several hundred steps up to the street.

Safety (personal and financial): Parts of downtown Edmonton can be dodgy, especially after dark, but I didn't venture into unknown territory alone so nothing *interesting* happened. The conference sessions were full of useful, practical ideas for improving my business, and my financial situation felt much more secure as a result.

Social (friendship and support): This had

to be the most memorable part for me, as it has been at all the EAC conferences I have attended. Editors are so darn friendly! From the opening reception to the final plenary, I felt like I was with good friends.

Esteem: I met many esteemed colleagues at the conference, and came away with more self-esteem.

Growth: This is probably the main reason I go to conferences. By experiencing what other editors are involved in, learning the tricks of the trade, and finding new areas where my skills and talents can be applied (for example, comic books!), I know that I'll never lack variety and challenge in my chosen career.

After having such a needs-satisfying experience in Edmonton, I'm definitely motivated to attend the next EAC conference. See you in Toronto! ■■■

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Ken Weinberg  
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**Note:** For more on the 2008 conference, go to [www.editors.ca](http://www.editors.ca) and click *Training and Certification/Conference 2008*.



# EDUCATING EDITORS:

## Editors, it's time for some learning

By Ann Firth

FOR MOST PEOPLE THE NEW YEAR begins on January 1st. For me it begins in September, after Labour Day. It's been a long time since I attended school full-time, but the start of a new school year still feels like the start of the new year. So as September is on our doorstep and fall approaches, my thoughts turn to the classroom. I start wondering what I can learn this year. I start to seek out new skills, new theories, almost anything to do with learning. Some avenues for learning are the old reliable ones, such as bricks and mortar—sitting in a classroom. Others are a little newer: distance learning and relying on Canada Post to ship materials back and forth. Then there are the newer ones, available via the Internet. You can improve your skills as an editor using any one of these methods, but they're not all as straightforward or as obvious as you might think.

Let's start with the obvious subject: editing. Many available programs and courses cover various types of editing,

from proofreading to substantive editing. You may find some specialties on offer as well, such as technical editing, medical editing. Some Ontario colleges offer editing certificates, while others offer publishing programs, of which editing comprises a significant part. When checking out college listings, some specify the course instructors and some provide a list of instructors associated with the program. If you're close to the Toronto area, you'll be pleased to see that many of these instructors also appear each year on our EAC branch seminar roster. The EAC branch seminars and workshops provide a very good introduction for a variety of types of editing. They also provide a good opportunity to brush up on changes in the publishing industry, or to shake the dust off some rusty-but-not-forgotten skills.

Universities and other associations offer editing courses as well. For example, the Society for Technical Communication will cover editing as it relates to technical writing. For



*Some avenues for learning are the old reliable ones, such as bricks and mortar—sitting in a classroom.*

*Others are a little newer...*

editing-related skills, such as indexing, the Indexing Society of Canada is a good place to look. International associations, that is, those based in locations other than Canada or the US, may also be good educational sources; for example, the Society for Editors and Proofreaders, based in the UK. Unless you're really lucky, in-class education is not an option in such cases, but they may have a good selection of online courses. You can also check out their association publications and recommended reference books.

Reference books and workbooks are a great source for learning, allowing you to work at your own pace and put skills and theories to the test when you can. Once course listings for college programs are available, recommended reading lists are also available—a good thing to check out, especially if you can get to the college bookstore to see the books before you buy them.

After editing, the next subject area on my list is writing. As an editor working with authors, or perhaps even an editor who also does some writing, it is helpful to develop your writing skills. It helps you better understand the authors you work with, and what they go through to produce

their manuscripts. If you are performing heavy editing or have to go so far as to rewrite sections of a text, writing skills and experience will come in quite handy. As with editing, colleges and universities are a great starting point to find writing classes covering a wide variety of subject matter. There are classes for creative writing, technical writing, journalism, business communications, and many more. Other sources for writing classes are local boards of education, associations, and even private colleges and business schools. When signing up for classes consider your options. There are classes during the evening or on weekends as well as daytime classes. If it's just the learning you want, and don't need the final grade or certificate, auditing classes may be an option—you may even get a break on the registration fee for that.

Is that all there is, editing and writing? I don't think so. One of the best things we can do as editors is to constantly learn about all sorts of things. Do you garden for pleasure, but hope someday to work on one of the many gardening books published each year? Are you interested in politics, helping to save the environment, or exploring our beautiful country by bike, and think that you can help



improve materials written on those subjects? One way to make sure you're ready to tackle editing opportunities when they present themselves is to learn as much as you can about those subjects. Check out the general interest sections in college catalogues, boards of education, or find associations related to your area of interest that hold seminars and workshops.

Regardless of the subject matter, get creative when you want to learn. Ontario colleges and universities have lots to offer, as do boards of education around the province. Online classes and Web seminars are increasing in number all the time. Sometimes they're a duplicate of an in-class course, others are unique for the online learning environment. If you want to take advantage of online courses, you can extend your search outside of Ontario borders to national and international institutions and organizations. Check out educational opportunities that various associations offer, whether they're editing-related, writing-related, or cover another area that is of interest to you. Other options to check out are museums, galleries, libraries, and local business groups. And if you work for a company, find out what the company offers; sometimes even information sessions during a lunch hour can be a great way to learn more about the company and its products.

Learning is something you can do throughout life. It doesn't have to happen within classroom walls; it can be done almost anywhere and anytime these days.

Lifelong learning helps us with our jobs as editors—whether it's staying on top of the tricks and trades of our business, borrowing from other businesses (thank goodness someone designed writing tablets for graphic designers!), keeping up on the latest acronyms for business communication or slang for that next great novel. You never know when your interest in gardening, travel, or some other subject will come in handy... or lead to a great opportunity to make the world better through editing.

Here are some helpful links to get you started this fall:

Discover the seminars and workshops various EAC branches offer:

[www.editors.ca/branches/index.html](http://www.editors.ca/branches/index.html)

Find other associations, reference materials, etc.:

[www.editors.ca/resources/web\\_links/index.html](http://www.editors.ca/resources/web_links/index.html)

Online courses, offered in association with Ontario community colleges:

[www.ontariolearn.com/](http://www.ontariolearn.com/)

Access listing of Ontario colleges:

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/college.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/college.html)

Access listing of Ontario universities:

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/univers.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/univers.html)

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Ann Firth

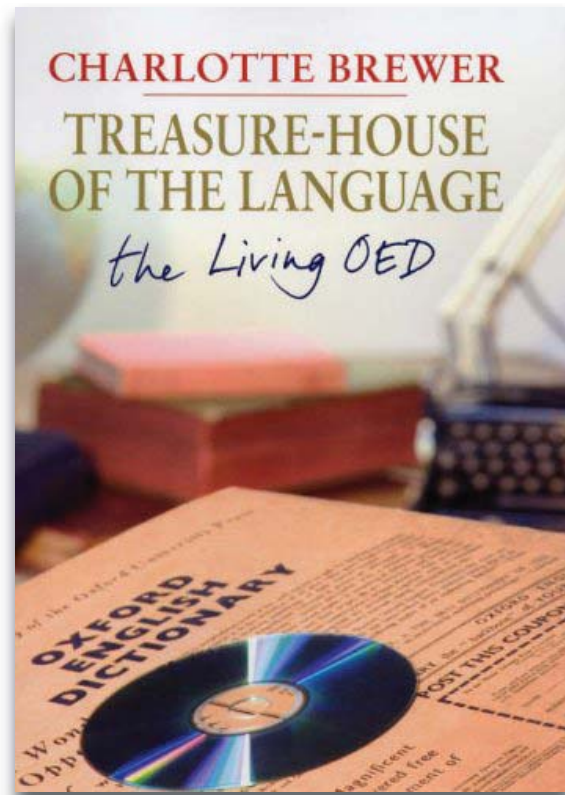
[toronto\\_br\\_treasurer@editors.ca](mailto:toronto_br_treasurer@editors.ca)

# CHARLOTTE BREWER'S TREASURE- HOUSE OF THE LANGUAGE

## THE LIVING OED

Reviewed by Art Wenk

COMPUTERS HAVE SO ALTERED our perspective on information retrieval that younger readers—those who have not known a world without computers—may have difficulty grasping the message of Charlotte Brewer's book, *Treasure-House of the Language: The Living OED* that traces the history of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) between the appearance of the first edition in 1928 and the start of the third edition, whose completion is not expected before 2025. Still younger readers—those who have not known a world without Google or Wikipedia—may have difficulty understanding her point in writing this book. In order to appreciate this



generational divide, older readers—those who consider the print version of the OED an indispensable companion—might be advised to take an online tour at [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com).

Here one learns the basic history of the dictionary, initiated in 1884 under the editorship of James Murray and completed in 1928. Supplements to the first edition appeared in 1933, 1972 and 1986, followed by a second edition in 1989, which amalgamated the first edition and the supplements as well as adding some 5,000 new entries. Between 1993 and 1997 a further three volumes of supplementary material known as Additions followed. In 2000 an online version became available, bringing together all existing material and



setting the stage for the third edition of the OED, the first full-scale revision of the dictionary. The availability of this material online permits not only an unprecedented ease of consultation, but the possibility of heretofore impossible searches. Just as the graphing calculator has invited mathematics teachers and students to ask questions that would have been unthinkable before its invention, so the online OED invites new ways of exploring the dictionary's treasures. (And like mathematics students who have never employed slide rules or tables of values, those encountering the OED for the first time in this format will take these innovations completely for granted.)

Lexicographers and linguists have found another use for the online version of the OED: a scholarly analysis of the dictionary's methodology and practice. An uncritical acceptance of the OED in its current form fails to take into account the peculiarities of its construction. During the 44 years required to complete the first edition, the world changed so rapidly that early parts of the alphabet were already obsolete when the first fascicles appeared. The completed first edition dictionary, as published in 1928, contained no entries for *appendicitis*, *airplane*, *aerodynamics*, etc. Subsequent supplements only partially overcame these shortcomings, as one learns on the website of *Examining the OED*, an independent scholarly analysis of the dictionary: "Most of the material in *OED2*, therefore, has remained unchanged

since 1928, and some of it—from the earlier parts of the alphabet—was put in its final form as long ago as 1884 (and can look very out of date)."<sup>1</sup>

In *Treasure-House of the Language: The Living OED*, Charlotte Brewer exposes the underlying problem of the OED, the undefined cultural assumptions behind its defined objectives. The first edition of the OED presented an historical survey of every word in the English language, "based on a collection of five million quotations from works written between 1150 and the 1850s, contributed by hundreds of readers over decades." The Victorian origins of the vast project reveal themselves in the selections. "The English language" meant primarily English as spoken in Great Britain and the *works* meant great literature created by primarily male British authors. Redefining these terms to include English usage throughout the world, embracing journalistic and scientific sources to complement the literary, and offering a fairer representation to female and non-British authors has been a difficult and painful process, confined to the creation of new entries until the third edition of the OED undertook a complete revision of the dictionary.

The author chronicles the inevitable conflict between the publisher, eyes set on a finished product, and the lexicographer,

<sup>1</sup> <http://oed.berthford.ox.ac.uk/main/>



committed to a painstaking process. “This book examines how the OED has tackled the need to revise and update itself since the completion of the first edition in 1928. In particular, it reveals the tension between two coexisting aims: to make the Dictionary as nearly perfect as possible, and to produce succeeding supplements and editions at a viable speed and cost.” We learn how the Oxford University Press, after closing down the project at the completion of each successive stage, lately accepted that editing the OED, like the job of painting the Golden Gate Bridge, has no end.

The dictionary’s editors wrestled with difficult questions of description versus prescription and the problem of inclusiveness. The vision of the OED as “treasure-house of the great works of the past” stood in conflict with its function as “an impartial historical and linguistic record.” Other, less obvious problems also emerged, such as how to deal with poetical language. “Literary writers often choose to express themselves by deviating from

Brewer  
exposes the  
underlying  
problem of  
the OED, the  
undefined  
cultural  
assumptions  
behind its  
defined  
objectives.

‘ordinary language’ rather than merely exemplifying it.” How should such idiosyncratic usages be handled? Charlotte Brewer points out the dictionary’s inconsistency in dealing with such questions, sometimes the result of changing editors, and sometimes the result of a change of heart by a single editor. We may be amused by “the OED’s own incestuous relationship with dictionary-reading writers,” such as Auden, whose use of archaic words drawn from the first edition of the dictionary was sometimes cited in supplements.

The organization of *Treasure-House* occasionally jars the reader expecting a consistently chronological treatment. Yet the insights on methodology that the author has gleaned from a study of the online version of the dictionary surely need to be included, even if they do not always fit easily into the

chronicle. Charlotte Brewer has provided us with a fascinating perspective on the process of creating a monumental resource. ■■■

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