

Edition

The newsletter for members of the
Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto branch

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Program Report

The Chicago Manual of Style: A Decade Later by Sharon Aschaiek

After much anticipation, the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* made its foray into the publishing world late last year. The venerable guide has long been the reference of choice for editors, authors, proofreaders, and indexers, and its editors have had a lot of ground to cover since the last edition came out in 1993. Technology, especially, has had a profound impact on the publishing industry over the last decade, and the *CMS* has had to play catch-up in extending current guidelines, and creating new ones, for electronic publications.



Stephanie Fysh puts CMS under the microscope again.

But the changes in this edition cover much more, including current design and production processes, mathematical copy, documentation (including citing electronic sources), and other developments that inform current style and professional practice.

The 15th edition came under the microscope in February as EAC

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members, led by Stephanie Fysh—editor, indexer, and coordinator of the Ryerson University publishing program—discussed the changes. The program was the continuation and finale of the presentation which Stephanie gave last November. With manuals in hand, many EAC members highlighted or marked with sticky notes; some were eager to reflect on how these changes will affect the way they work. On the whole, the changes went uncontested or were praised as commonsensical.

Others, however, came under fire: Why should words starting with *Mac* and *Mc* now be listed alphabetically instead of together, as is the tradition? It seems to reflect a more literal stance by *CMS* on alphabetization. Another example: compound names are now alphabetized by their first element—much to the dismay of long-standing EAC members such as Lee d’Anjou.

“They’re letting the computers win!” d’Anjou commented.

CMS has also rewritten the law in some areas of capitalization: when referring to political groups, the word *party* must be capped, e.g., *Liberal Party*. And companies with unusual capitalization in their names now get things their way.

“You can’t just decide that *eBay* is wrong,” Fysh said.

Other interesting tidbits covered at the meeting: a ship is no longer referred to as a “she”; *U.S.* can be used only as an adjective—*United States* is the correct noun; all addresses should follow postal code standards, e.g., *Kingston ON*; and



EAC members study changes in the CMS, 15th edition

when referring to time, use *a.m.* and *p.m.*—but no periods when using small caps.

The 15th edition also tries to create order in the still-unruly area of electronic sources. When listing Web sites, it says to give the full URL (*http* included). But why the extra work?

“It has to do with how they think the Internet will evolve,” Fysh said. “It’s hard to predict where Web addresses will go—they’re playing it safe.”

URLs should be broken up in text only after a slash—avoid using hyphens. And it’s OK to use punctuation after a URL—most people will realize that if they key into their browser a Web address that has a period or comma hanging off the end, it won’t go anywhere.

The new *CMS* features much more extensive treatment of Canadian content, some of which contains errors. Examples of items that are incongruent with Canadian protocol, as well as several estab-

lished reference guides, include: “the governor-general of Canada”—in Canada, the official style is without a hyphen; “the prime minister . . . (not normally used as a title preceding the name)” —no other reference has been found to support this; “the North American Free Trade Association; Nafta”—the second A stands for Agreement; and “the premier . . . the Right Honourable”—premiers are just “Honourable” (ahem).

EAC has already submitted its comments on this content to *CMS* headquarters.

Ultimately, while the *CMS* is on the whole a thorough, commonsensical guide for editors, publishers, and anyone who works with words, as Fysh said, like all references, it is better suited to some people and projects than to others.

“Not every style book covers everything—not even this one—and it can be useful to have an understanding of the range of options presented by what’s out there.” E