

West Coast EDITOR

A MONTHLY FORUM FOR EAC

MEMBERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

TO EXCHANGE IDEAS,

DEVELOP SKILLS, AND

SHARE NEWS ABOUT EDITING

JUNE 2000

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Editors' Association
of Canada



Association canadienne
des rédacteurs-réviseurs

BC Branch

MAY PROGRAM

Ebooks: The Way of the Future

CATHY BRANNEN

"A book is just a vehicle for connecting an author's ideas and imagination with readers," said Cate McNeely, Deputy Chief Librarian of Richmond Public Library addressing the EAC-BC branch meeting in May. And from stone tablets to papyrus to paper and later tape and CD, the latest innovation is ebooks—electronic books or text converted to a digital form for distribution.

"The library of the future will provide books and bytes," said McNeely, "and ebooks are part of that future." In January of this year, the Richmond

zations to distribute and manage information without paper. The advantages of ebooks are numerous: they are lightweight, can contain dozens of titles, don't wear and tear like paper books, and can be read in the dark; text can be highlighted or bookmarked; the font can be changed to a larger type size; and they also contain built-in dictionaries. They do, however, need a power source.

McNeely said the Richmond Library's negotiated price for the SoftBooks was about \$700 CDA per unit. RocketBooks (another ebook format) are about half the size of SoftBooks or about the size of a paperback. They sell for



The library of the future will provide books and bytes, and ebooks are part of that future.

Public Library purchased six ebooks called SoftBooks (one of the currently available ebook formats). These are borrowed like other library material but because of their popularity, SoftBooks are restricted to a two-week loan period.

A SoftBook is about the size of a hardcover book. "It's about the weight of a Tom Wolfe novel," said McNeely, but it may contain up to 12 bestsellers (both fiction and nonfiction), a magazine or two, as well as a daily newspaper—all in one compact apparatus.

"Electronic publishing is the way of the future," said McNeely. It started a couple of years ago when the *Encyclopedia Britannica* stopped paper publication in favour of electronic publication. "Stephen King's recent publication of *Ride the Bullet* in electronic format only was a wake-up call for libraries," she said.

The ebook industry is attempting to provide a cost-effective way for organi-

approximately \$199 US, hold about 4 000 pages of words and images (ten novels), and weigh 22 ounces. Smaller and more compact ebook devices are already on the market for personal use. The Pocket PC comes installed with Microsoft Reader and cleartype technology (which reportedly produces better screen resolution). With the proper software, Palm Pilots can also download ebook titles from the Internet.

With Microsoft, Nuvomedia (owners of SoftBook and RocketBook), and others going into the digital publishing business, ebook suppliers are finding a market for this technology that both competes with and supplements the paper book-publishing business. It doesn't look to be a passing fad.

Cathy Brannen is the incoming editor of *West Coast Editor*. She has been editing and proof-reading for many years, and describes herself as a jack of all trades with her writing, editing, and design skills. It was her recent completion of a two-year professional writing program that led her to decide to focus on editing as a career.

Editing for an International Audience

JUDY PHILLIPS

When I was first asked if I would be interested in an eight-month contract to edit a travel guide on a major US destination, I thought, yes!, but for eight months? Whatever will I do for eight months? I have since learned that a travel guide can typically take 15 months to produce. Work on my guide will continue after the initial eight months of major editing: further editing, further research and fact-checking, further production. And always, fine-tuning.

Because of market considerations, the text needs to appeal to both a European and a North American audience. This raises dilemmas in terms of style, spelling, and usage. How should dates be expressed: 24 May 1999, or May 24, 1999? Which dictionary do we follow: *Oxford* or *Webster's*? And which term do we use: toilet, restroom, washroom, or water closet?

But the bathroom issue doesn't end there. In the listings of recommended hotels and their amenities, must we specify for each of the many hotels that all rooms come with private bath? While American readers may take this for granted, will European readers—many coming from countries where shared baths are more the norm than the exception, even at hotels of good standard? When space is at a very high premium, a seemingly minor content issue such as this can spawn surprisingly lengthy discussion.

One of the biggest adjustments I have had to make for this project is to editing a book in a staggered way, each day editing

(for structure and style) spreads or sections that are at various stages of readiness—the design of each spread at a different stage of completion and the artwork subject to change, thereby possibly affecting the text—while keeping sight of the book as a whole, with its multiple authors and international audience. Ensuring that the manuscript meets content and design requirements and is adaptable to other languages for foreign-language editions (which itself presents editing and design issues) has also been a challenge, but that too a satisfying one.

Judy Phillips is a former BC branch EAC member who is currently working on contract in Toronto.

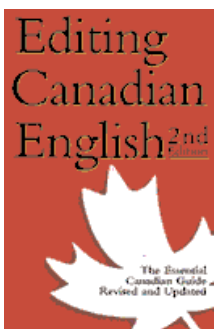
Make that Canadian, Please

Ann-Marie Metten was recently visited by a Swedish journalist friend, who lives in Thailand and writes about Burma and the government there. He told her that he was recently asked to write a chapter on Burma for a British publisher who had well-known author Lynn Pun writing about overseas Chinese communities around the world. The style of language preferred? Canadian English.

It took her friend a while to understand what that meant, but he concluded that Canadian English is a happy compromise between the sometimes archaic structures of British English and the excessive compounding of American English. Go figure!

EDITING

Editing Canadian English II Now Available



“Editing Canadian English is an essential reference book for writers, editors, and journalists working in Canada. Authoritative yet flexible, it perfectly complements the major American or British style guides we all use. It’s also a browser’s delight, chock full of information on topics as diverse as fair dealing, tuques, and whisky.”

Rosemary Shipton, coordinator, Publishing Program, Ryerson Polytechnic University

Two-and-a-half years in the making, the second edition of *Editing Canadian English* was launched on May 26, at Editing on the Edge.

Editors are renowned for being detail-oriented. So imagine the challenge for a publisher in putting out a book written by four editors and coordinated by another. “For publisher Macfarlane Walter & Ross, *ECE II* must have been a nightmare,” says Sheila Protti, coordinator

of the project. “The book’s a reference on editing, written by editors, for editors. It had to be perfect.”

Canadian editors familiar with the 1987 Douglas & McIntyre edition of *Editing Canadian English*, which went out of print in 1995, will welcome this revised, updated, and redesigned reference. Sheila says users of *ECE II* will find it helpful in dealing with uniquely Canadian matters not covered in other reference sources. “It points out current practices in Canadian written material and allows editors and writers to make their own informed choices.”

Macfarlane Walter & Ross | Reference | 6 1/8 x 9 1/4 | 280 pages | 1-55199-045-8

Save On Your Copy

Editing Canadian English retails for \$29.99 (plus GST).

If you are an EAC member, you pay only **\$24.00** (which includes \$1.57 GST).

If you didn't purchase your copy at the conference, e-mail Jean Lawrence at <jlawrence@iprimus.ca> or call 604.437.9804 to place your order.

A Book Editor Visits the Technical Side

SHARON BOGLARI

When Jerome Ryckborst from the Society of Technical Communicators invited me late last year to be a judge in the annual STC Technical Publications Competition, I protested that, as a trade book editor, I knew very little about technical documents. He assured me that I would have help—which duly arrived as an extensive (and very helpful) array of checklists that guided judges through questions such as—

- Is the paper size and binding appropriate for the purpose and the audience?
- Is the typography easy to read?
- Does the writer consistently refer to information within and outside the manual?
- Does the overall strategy for organizing information suit the subject matter?

Reading through the submissions and later discussing them with my fellow judges, I realized that the work I do as a trade book editor is not that different from that of a technical editor: we organize material, clarify subject matter, and may, when appropriate, use visual material to convey information.

Determined to learn more about what is rumoured to be a lucrative field, I joined 13 editors at the EAC-BC Technical Editing workshop in April. Led by technical writers and editors Dana West of IBM and Susan O'Rourke of Nortel, the workshop was a hands-on

initiation into the rites of technical publication. I quickly drew the analogy that the role of a technical editor is a lot like that of a parent:

- You conceive of a suitable format for your publication. This may be a user guide, online help, error message, or training manual.
- You work closely with the writer, graphic artist, and product developer to shape the publication.
- While maintaining strict timelines, you shepherd the publication through production, product testing, and approval.
- Finally, you respond to user feedback once the publication has gone out the door.

Dana and Susan explained that because of cutbacks in the industry, editing standards in technical publications are being sacrificed in order to “get the product out the door” and beat out the competition. This means that some levels of edit may be forfeited, and “good enough” often replaces “perfection.” It also means that companies resort to doing peer edits among writing teams, rather than using editors. To be competitive in this industry, editors should ideally offer the whole package: from writing and editing to project management and desktop publishing.

Sharon Boglari recently left book publishing to test the corporate waters at ICBC's advertising and publications department.

Technical Editor's Toolbox

What software do you need? **FrameMaker** is the software of choice for most technical writers and editors. However, if you don't have access to FrameMaker, learn the book features (index, table of contents, styles) of **Microsoft Word**.

In addition, an **HTML-authoring tool** such as FrontPage or DreamWeaver, as well as familiarity with Adobe **Acrobat** are a useful skillset to develop.

Looking for a good technical reference guide? The **Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications** contains gigabytes of useful information on editing and writing for technical publications. From deciding whether to spell out abbreviations to whether to “click on” an icon or simply “click” it, the Microsoft Press editors have taken care to provide an informative, consistent publication that is useful to both neophytes and experienced technical editors.

Looking for work? Because of corporate structures, most technical writers and editors are hired through independent contractors such as the Contractor's Network Corporation (CNC).

BRANCH NEWS

BC Branch Coordinator Will Help Promote Local Activities

The local branch executive has decided to hire a part-time coordinator. Both the Toronto and Ottawa branches employ part-time staff and find it worthwhile and economical.

Until now, the EAC-BC branch has been served by volunteers, so many of the key activities of the branch, in particular maintenance of databases, have been inconsistently carried out. This has made it difficult to effectively promote some of the branch's income-generating activities and to provide the best service to members.

As the number of local members continues to grow and the workload on volunteers increases, the benefit of hiring some-

one to administer these duties has become clear. With a coordinator in place, the local branch will have a more robust infrastructure and will be better able to provide services to members and to promote them to local clients.

We will shortly be sending members a job description for this position (see an abbreviated version on **page 4**) and welcome applications from members. We hope you will support us in this initiative and look forward to receiving your comments on this or any other issue. Please contact Ann-Marie Metten at <ametten@telus.net> or 604.263.6586.

Job Summary for Branch Coordinator

The EAC-BC branch coordinator will keep in good order the key administrative activities of the branch by—

- Maintaining an up-to-date database of local members, potential members, potential clients for professional development workshops, and PR contacts
- Handling the registration for and administration of workshops

Skills and qualifications—

- Ability to work with databases
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Good organizational and interpersonal skills
- An understanding of on-line issues and e-mail
- Knowledge of editing an asset
- Ability to work with a board

JUNE EAC-BC EVENT

Financial Planning for Freelancers

It's never too late—or too soon—to think about financial security. Freelancers in particular need to be aware that planning goes beyond paying the monthly medicare premiums. Life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement planning can all be so overwhelming that some might prefer to avoid such matters altogether.

Our guest at the June EAC-BC meeting will be **Doug St Arnault** of Artech Asset Advisory Services. Doug has an extensive background in financial planning and will offer advice for the self-employed. (In-house editors will find it useful, too.) We'll take a hard look at how best to secure your financial future—bring your questions to this informative evening.

Wednesday, June 21, 2000
YWCA Hotel—Royal Bank Room
733 Beatty Street (between Robson and Georgia), Vancouver
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

Footnotes

Conference a Success

More more than 170 delegates attending *Editing on the Edge*, with more than 60 coming from out-of-province. Congratulations and thanks to conference chair **Maureen Nicholson**, conference assistant **Eden Evans**, and the more than 60 local volunteers who assisted over the past year.

BC Fairley Winner

Once again the Tom Fairley award went to a BC branch member. Congratulations to Shawnigan Lake's **Elizabeth McLean** who won for her efforts on *Finding the Right Treatment: Modern and Alternative Treatment: A Contemporary Guide to Getting the Best of Both Worlds*, published by Hartley and Marks.

Summer's Coming . . .

And that means a hiatus for the BC executive during July and August. There will be no general meetings or *West Coast Editor* during these two months, but we will be gathering momentum and ideas for the 2000/2001 term. Have a great summer and see you in September!

Writers' Festival Needs Volunteers

If you'd like to work as a volunteer at the Vancouver International Writers' Festival, call (after the middle of August) 604.681.6330 ext. 101, or e-mail: <viwf@writersfest.com>.

Heather Prime is pleased to announce that her new venture, 1 + 1 Communications, is open for business. 1 + 1 Communications offers a wide range of communication and Internet solutions, from publications and communication plans to Web sites and eBusiness applications. Heather was previously manager of Communication Services at the Workers' Compensation Board of BC. Her new contact information is 604.669.2395, <hprime@1plus1communications.com>.

WEST COAST EDITOR

West Coast Editor is the newsletter of the British Columbia branch of the Editors' Association of Canada. Views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect those of EAC/ACR as a whole.

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