

West Coast EDITOR

A MONTHLY FORUM FOR EAC
MEMBERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
TO EXCHANGE IDEAS,
DEVELOP SKILLS AND
SHARE NEWS ABOUT EDITING

FEBRUARY 2001

In this issue

WORKSHOPS FOR WRITERS AND EDITORS | 2
EAC-BC DISPLAY AT VANCOUVER LIBRARY | 3
SPELLING QUIZ | 3
FREEDOM TO READ WEEK | 3
NEW EAC MEMBERS & A GUEST EDITOR | 4

EDITORS'
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES
RÉVISEURS
BC BRANCH

Daniel Francis' big encyclopedia project

CORA LEE



The *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* is one big book. And I don't mean just in the literal sense. True, it's a hefty, eight-pound, 824-page tome stuffed with 4,000 entries and hundreds of photographs, maps, tables and charts. But the book was also a huge editorial challenge. "It was massively difficult to coordinate," said Daniel Francis, the project's editor-in-chief, addressing editors at EAC-BC's first meeting of the New Year on January 17.

The idea for the project began in 1990. Howard White of Harbour Publishing had always wanted to put out a BC handbook similar to a California one that he had seen. With Daniel's involvement, the original handbook concept evolved to become the *Encyclopedia of BC*, and plans expanded to include a CD-ROM, a future online version and updates. As big as these plans sound, they could have been bigger—contrast the single-volume BC book with Newfoundland's six-volume set.

According to the vision, all of the entries were to be written by experts in each field. Publication of the book was set for 1992. With the natural tie-in between the encyclopedia and the 200th anniversary of Captain George Vancouver's visit to the region, the partners thought they were assured of funding.

In reality, the book wasn't published until September 2000. Daniel told how the bicentennial came and went quietly, leaving none of the hoped-for funding and publicity. In any case, the book wasn't ready. The limited budget meant that 60-70% of the material was written by Daniel, who had been compiling entries "in a haphazard way" since the project's conception.

"There was an enormous amount of flying by the seat of our pants," Daniel admitted. The photos, for example, were originally slated for black and white, and the decision to go colour was made just two months before press.

Editing was a huge effort. Daniel first went over all entries. He pared them to a minimum; with 4,000 entries, the size of the book determined the length of articles, and to some degree, the included topics. Extensive cross-referencing helped limit the text. Daniel still thinks longingly about the space he might have saved by dropping the word *in* from unavoidable dates. A lighter touch was given to the six or seven essays that served as both introductory overviews to different sections and as "a calculated manoeuvre to get some well-known names on the title page." In editing the material, Daniel tried to maintain a mid-high school reading level (essays excepted), and made certain the encyclopedia didn't become Vancouver-centric.

Daniel ensured information authenticity by passing entries on to at least one expert. He said that during the final couple of years, Mary Schendlinger, the managing editor at Harbour, became his partner in the enterprise and organized the copyeditors (three more for the CD-ROM), the many proofreaders and the two to four indexers. Editors also worked closely with computer experts at DNA Media to produce the CD-ROM. Despite the monumental endeavour, the result was one familiar to many editors. "I still found one [error] just today," he said.

When the book went to press, Daniel finally took a holiday. On BC Day, he awoke to newspaper headlines proclaiming that BC history had changed forever. "An editor's worst nightmare," he laughed. Actually, Samuel Bawlf's discovery, that Sir Francis Drake had secretly explored the BC coast over 400 years ago, did little to alter the book.

In all, the team made 75 changes at press. "It was a struggle to keep it up to date," said Daniel. For two years, he scanned newspapers for deaths, company takeovers, buyouts and anything that meant updates to the book. It was, he admitted, a hard habit to break.

Ultimately, the encyclopedia's overwhelming success made the work well worth the effort. The initial print run of 15,000 sold out in three weeks. An additional 15,000 copies were printed and Harbour expects to sell the full 30,000 eventually.

Asked what other big ambitions he had, this writer and editor who organized the *Encyclopedia of BC*—and completed four social studies textbooks in the same period—said he planned to write a very small book next.

Fiction, plain language and other professional development workshops

NAOMI PAULS

Techniques for Editing Fiction

How an editor helps to shape creative writing

Saturday April 28, 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Members \$37.50 / Non-Members \$50
Fiction editing enjoys a glamorous reputation, but what really happens behind the scenes? In this interactive and hands-on workshop, Raincoast's editorial director of fiction, Joy Gugeler, will attempt to achieve the following:

- demystify the process of working with literary titles
- outline some general guidelines for working with novels and stories
- compare the process to working with other genres or markets
- discuss issues related to integrity of voice, respect for authorial vision, manipulating structure and developing character and plot
- address promotional concerns regarding the "packaging" of the manuscript

Joy will also discuss the vagaries of working with first-time authors and outline considerations pertaining to young-adult fiction.

Joy Gugeler joined Raincoast Books in January 2000 as editorial director. Four years ago she was the managing editor of Beach Holme Publishing. Joy has worked as a producer and host of a biweekly literary radio program, a CBC book panelist, an editorial board member for three literary magazines, a book reviewer for the *Vancouver Sun* and *Ottawa Citizen* and as a freelance and festival publicist.

How to Write a Query Letter

An editor's advice on getting published

Saturday March 10, 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Members \$37.50 / Non-Members \$50
Master the art of writing a query letter to a magazine or newspaper editor and you've unlocked the door to a successful writing career. Freelance writers of all levels of experience are sure to learn something from this hands-on workshop. It includes instruction and insiders' tips from a

veteran writer and former magazine editor, as well as lively in-class practice and critique. Bring two issues of your favourite publication and a calculator. We'll supply pencils and paper.

Pam Withers has worked as a journalist, magazine editor, associate publisher and a consultant to magazine publishers. She is a regular contributor to *BC Business* magazine and the co-author of *Values Shift: The Work Ethic and What It Means for Business* (Prentice Hall Canada, 2000). Her writing credits include the *New York Times*, *National Post Business*, *Equinox*, *Chatelaine*, *Canadian Living* and many inflight magazines.

Plain Language Editing

An in-depth look at the process and the tools

Saturday March 24, 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Members \$75 / Non-Members \$100
You edit for "plain language" all the time, but are you aware that this is a specialized area with its own rationale and guidelines? Here's your chance to learn from two experts in the field. This workshop will fine-tune your plain language skills, improve your writing management approach and challenge you with hands-on exercises.

This workshop will address topics such as:

- how the writing and editing process is altered for a plain language project
- how to assess and serve readers' special needs
- how plain language is a document production process, not just an editing technique
- how to conduct a document audit and
- the plain language policies and practices of government clients

Janet Dean is a professional technical writer devoted to ensuring "people issues" are incorporated into writing and design. She was instrumental in establishing the Vancouver Community College Technical Writing Certificate Program and currently teaches at the college. Since 1995, she has worked on plain language writing projects for government, education, private industry and the non-profit sector.

Cheryl Stephens worked as a language consultant for 11 years on projects for government, business and law organizations before becoming a personal and business coach to professionals. She founded the International Plain Language Consultants Network in 1993, and has developed several Web sites devoted to plain language. For site access, go to <http://plainlanguagenet-work.org>.

Eight Step Editing

Over 3,000 served . . . and still counting

Saturday April 7, 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Members \$75 / Non-Members \$100
Whether you're a novice or an experienced editor, a would-be writer or a business manager supervising other writers, this workshop will help make your words clearer.

Using a step-by-step process, this approach to editing identifies the most common obstacles to readers' understanding and shows you quick and simple techniques to fix them. At the end of the day, you will know how to edit a piece of writing without rewriting and making the author's life miserable.

Even if you've taken this course before, you'll find it worthwhile to register again. Jim Taylor revises the program and handouts after every seminar, incorporating the insights participants offer. Several of the original "steps" have long gone, replaced by other, more valuable, techniques. To find out what they are, you'll have to take the seminar!

Jim Taylor, co-founder of the publishing house Wood Lake Books, has published more than 200 titles and is himself the author of 12 books and "somewhere over 500" periodical articles. Since 1985, Jim has offered his Eight Step Editing workshop for the Editors' Association of Canada in major centres across the country. He estimates that more than 3,000 editors and would-be editors have learned from his approach—and claims to learn as much as he teaches.

Volunteers needed for Vancouver library display March 1 to 15

SHEILAGH SIMPSON

As part of our ongoing awareness and publicity program, EAC-BC will once again set up a display at the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library during the first two weeks in March. The display will cover four large bulletin boards in the language and literature division on the third floor, at the top of the escalators, as well as a display showing books on the subject of editing. To promote the association, we will distribute newsletters and workshop brochures. This year we will focus on our professional development workshops and on editing for business, dedicating two of the bulletin boards to these topics.

Volunteers are needed to staff the display for a couple of hours each afternoon. Volunteers can chat about EAC in general, as well as about what editors can do for business. They can also talk about and promote the upcoming spring workshops.

As a volunteer, you will be provided with information sheets about the association and our services for business. (Toronto has been working on the concept of business editing services, and we'll have ideas and information from them.)

The display needs examples of edited business letters, newsletters and other publications for corporate clients (ideas about other "et ceteras" are welcomed). If you would like to volunteer, or if you have ideas about this display, please email me at <sheilagh@attglobal.net> or call 604-929-7772.



How well do you know your suffixes?

Complete the following words with the correct endings—ary, ery or ory

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. thiev _____ | 2. auxili _____ | 3. chican _____ |
| 4. promiss _____ | 5. element _____ | 6. monast _____ |
| 7. statut _____ | 8. confection _____ | 9. cemet _____ |
| 10. summ _____ | 11. imagin _____ | 12. exempl _____ |
| 13. mock _____ | 14. rudiment _____ | 15. sal _____ |
| 16. heredit _____ | 17. document _____ | 18. dysent _____ |

Answers: 1. thievery; 2. auxiliary; 3. chicanery; 4. promissory; 5. cemetery; 6. monastery; 7. statutory; 8. confectionery; 9. cemetery; 10. summary; 11. imaginary; 12. exemplary; 13. mockery; 14. rudimentary; 15. safety; 16. hereditary; 17. documentary; 18. dysentery

New exhibit features Vancouver's history

A century of books covering everything from Vancouver's history and politics to its literature and culture is featured in a new exhibition that opened at City Hall. Vancouver in Print: 100 Books from a Century Past is presented by the City of Vancouver and the University of British Columbia Library. It highlights key books representing excellence and variety in works published about the city since its incorporation in 1886.

The 100 books were chosen from the *Vancouver Bibliography*, a comprehensive compilation of material written about Vancouver. The bibliography was the centennial project of the Vancouver Historical Society in 1986, and continues to be supported and maintained by the society and the UBC Library. Today, it contains almost 20,000 entries and it's online at <www.library.ubc.ca/vancouverbibliography>.

The exhibition will be at City Hall until February 9 and then moves to the Vancouver Public Library (350 West Georgia) from February 12 to March 12; to UBC March 14 to May 4; and then to the BC Book Awards banquet on May 5 at the Wall Centre. For more information, contact Nancy Duxbury at <nancy_duxbury@city.vancouver.bc.ca>, or call 604-871-6003.

Freedom-to-read week celebrated with readings from controversial and banned material

Freedom to read can never be taken for granted. In Canada, books and magazines are banned at the border, removed from schools, bookstores and library shelves every day. Free speech on the Internet is also under attack. Freedom-to-Read Week (February 25 to March 3, 2001), organized by the Book and Periodical Council, encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom.

To celebrate this year's Freedom to Read Week, the British Columbia Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee has planned an evening of readings from banned and controversial material. For more information on this year's Freedom-to-Read Week, or on censorship in general, visit <www.freedomtoread.ca>.

Footnotes

New branch members

As mentioned in the January issue, **Cora Lee** is the new Communications and Hotline chair.

Once immersed in the world of biochemistry and biotechnology, Cora now writes and edits a variety of interesting, fact-based materials. She's worked on science articles, book reviews, technical works, guidebooks, catalogues and magazine articles.

She hopes to soon add fiction to this list, and is especially drawn to Canadian children's literature.

Robert Chesterman says he has a passion for writing that is clear, logical, concise and expressed elegantly in flawless English. He operates his own writing and editing business in Vancouver called Bonum Consulting.

He seeks variety, fulfillment and suitable remuneration through writing and editing for business, government, educational and non-profit organizations, as well as for academic authors. In a previous life, he toiled for too long in Toronto as a social housing manager.

WCE features guest editor

As I will be away exploring the wonders of Thailand, **Val Wilson** has generously consented to fill in as guest editor for the March issue of this newsletter. Please send articles and other news to Val at <valgal@home.com>.

Val has been a proofreader for the past two issues and she says she is a picky Virgo well suited to the editing profession. Her career experience includes sales and marketing, advertising sales, and editing magazines, book manuscripts and corporate communications.

February 21 EAC-BC meeting

Be sure to mark your calendars for the next branch meeting, which will feature an informal discussion of editing experiences. Editors, editors-to-be, members and non-members are all welcome to share ideas and work experiences. Out-of-town editors can email their memorable editing anecdotes to Val Wilson at <valgal@home.com>.

Regular branch meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month from 7:30 to 9:30 PM at the YWCA Hotel, Royal Bank Room, 733 Beatty Street (between Robson and Georgia) in downtown Vancouver. *(To help offset costs, there is a \$5 drop-in fee for non-members.)*

Discounts for members

EAC members receive a 25% discount on association workshops. Email Naomi Pauls to register for our upcoming selection of professional development classes at <npauls@sfu.ca>.

What do you call a group of editors?

- A bicker of editors?
- A blot of editors?
- A bobbit of editors?
- A coterie of editors?
- A critical mass of editors?
- A delendo of editors?
- A deletion of editors?
- A drivel of editors?
- A haggel of editors?
- A mob of editors?
- A murder of editors?
- A picayune of editors?
- A plight of editors?
- A pod of editors?
- A query of editors?
- A quibble of editors?
- A spat of editors?
- A squabble of editors?
- A stet of editors?
- A trivia of editors?
- A WiteOut of editors?
- An erudition of editors?
- An expletive deleted of editors?

WEST COAST EDITOR

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Mailing address | Box 1688, Bentall Centre Post Office, Vancouver, BC V6C 2P7

Phone | 604-681-7184

Email | bc@editors.ca

Web site | www.editors.ca

Editor | Cathy Brannen

Please email articles to cbran@telus.net

Original design | Sharon Boglari

Layout | Cathy Brannen

Proofreaders | Suzanne Bastedo

Val Wilson

Branch coordinator &

Book sales coordinator | Jean Lawrence

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2000/2001 EAC-BC EXECUTIVE

Chair | Ann-Marie Metten

ametten@telus.net

Past Chair | Filipe Figueira

Secretary/Social/Outreach |

Jacqueline Wood

jacquelinewood@home.com

Treasurer | Penny Gray-Allen

grayalla@interchange.ubc.ca

Membership | Cheryl Andrews

derekand@interchange.ubc.ca

Programs | Rick Rogers

wordsmith@dccnet.com

Professional Development | Naomi Pauls

npauls@sfu.ca

Communications/Hotline | Cora Lee

pyee@direct.ca

Public Relations/Industry Liaison |

Sheilagh Simpson

sheilagh@attglobal.net

Newsletter | Cathy Brannen

cbran@telus.net