

# West Coast EDITOR

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

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SEPTEMBER 2001

## *In this issue*

- EDITING FOR THE WEB | 2
- WORD ON THE STREET NEEDS VOLUNTEERS | 2
- EXCITING PROGRAMS FOR THE FALL | 2
- THE ORGANIZERS: TIPS FOR INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | 3
- MORE NEWS FROM NATIONAL | 3
- PLAIN LANGUAGE CONTEST | 4

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**EDITORS'**  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES  
**RÉVISEURS**

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BC BRANCH

## Editors: Getting started and changing direction

ROBERT CHESTERMAN

The upcoming September 19 branch meeting will feature a panel discussion, with veteran editors Charles Campbell, Nancy Flight, Maureen Nicholson and Barbara Pulling. They will share their expertise on how to get started as an editor and how established editors can change direction (e.g., move to another editorial specialty, move from in-house to freelance or vice versa, or ...). The discussion will appeal both to established editors and to newcomers. There will be opportunity for questions from the floor, so come prepared!

Charles Campbell edited the *Georgia Straight* <[www.straight.com](http://www.straight.com)> from 1986 – 1997, and was entertainment editor at the *Vancouver Sun* <[www.vancouver.sun.com](http://www.vancouver.sun.com)> from 1998 – 2000. He is currently an editor and writer for the editorial pages of the *Sun*.

Nancy Flight is well known as editorial director of Greystone Books <[www.greystonebooks.com](http://www.greystonebooks.com)>, a division of the Douglas & McIntyre Publishing Group. She has taught editing at the Banff Book Editing Workshop, the SFU Book Editing Workshop and the SFU Writing and Publishing Program. She is past national president of EAC and won the Tom Fairley Award for Editorial Excellence <[www.editors.ca/fairley/fairley.htm](http://www.editors.ca/fairley/fairley.htm)> in 1988 for *Genethics: The Ethics of Engineering Life*, by David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson (Stoddart Publishing).

Maureen Nicholson provides editorial services to trade publishers, educational institutions and non-profit organizations through her company, Keyline Consulting Associates. She has taught at the Banff Publishing Workshop and the SFU Writing and Publishing Program. Maureen currently coordinates and teaches in the Print Futures: Professional Writing program at Douglas College <[www.douglas.bc.ca/calhtm/programs/ppf.htm](http://www.douglas.bc.ca/calhtm/programs/ppf.htm)>. She is past national professional development chair for EAC, in which capacity she organized the successful May 2000 EAC conference in Vancouver, and is a current member of the certification steering committee.

Freelance editor Barbara Pulling began her editing career in 1983. She was on the staff of Greystone Books and Douglas & McIntyre from 1988 – 1998. She has edited a wide variety of titles for Press Gang Publishers, New Star Books, Annick Press, Greystone Books and Douglas & McIntyre. Barbara is the 2000 winner of the Tom Fairley Award for Editorial Excellence for *The Bear's Embrace: A True Story of Surviving a Grizzly Bear Attack*, by Patricia Van Tighem (Greystone Books). ✧

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## News from national

WINNIFRED ASSMANN

In June I attended the annual EAC conference “Editing that Works,” the annual general meeting and the national executive meeting (all in one jam-packed weekend) in Toronto. Held in the beautiful Victoria College buildings on the University of Toronto campus, the conference had lots of interesting sessions to offer editors. Here’s a brief report on a few other matters of interest to EAC-BC members.

Downtown Montreal (Saint-Denis Street) is the proposed venue for next year’s conference. Tentative dates are May 24 – 26, so mark your calendars.

Although the motions to restructure EAC were withdrawn before the AGM, this initiative is by no means finished. The restructuring and communications committees are working on the next stage: the referendum to be sent out to members in the fall.

See more news from National on page 3

## Editing for the Web, our next frontier

ROBERT CHESTERMAN

This half-day seminar was held at the University of Victoria on May 26 through a collaboration of EAC-BC and PEAVI (Professional Editors' Association of Vancouver Island). Thirty people attended, including six from the Vancouver area. The co-presenters were Anne Pepper and Mike Cassie. Anne is an Internet writer, editor and content consultant with her own company, Pepper Writing Company <[www.pepperwriting.com](http://www.pepperwriting.com)>. She also teaches through SFU's Writing and Publishing Program and UBC's Multimedia Certificate Program. Mike is a Web designer and the principal of Pixel Paint and Paper Design. He is co-founder of Cobalt Mediaworks Inc. and Synapsys Software Inc., and teaches Web design at Langara College.

As most of the participants had not edited or written for the Web, the seminar was a helpful and practical introduction. The presentation covered team roles (information architect, writer/editor, designer, programmer), the "designer personality" and the process of Web site construction from the editor's perspective. The key stages of this process are planning the Web site (intentions, audiences, language), developing the site map (a visual representation of the pages on a site and of the navigation menus) and content editing. Anne and Mike handed out examples of real-life site maps and explained them clearly; they also included two hands-on exercises for participants. The workshop was packed with content, and even though a technical glitch (wouldn't you know it!) precluded a live Web link, the presenters were still able to illustrate their points by showing sample sites. The workshop finished on time without seeming rushed and without participants feeling that the material was glossed over.

Editing for the Web was a highly relevant seminar for editors, as the Web has become an important and pervasive communication medium. Anne Pepper and Mike Cassie deserve kudos for the quality of the seminar. The handouts were comprehensive and well organized and the exercises were both useful and fun. This was an excellent seminar and well worth attending.

EAC-BC is pleased to present the seminar again this fall in Vancouver. Watch future issues for a confirmed date. ✧

## Word on the Street needs volunteers

JANET HUDGINS & INGRID LUTER

On September 30, Word on the Street (WOTS) is back for the seventh year at the Vancouver Public Library and on the surrounding streets. WOTS has become an annual Canadian fall event attracting thousands of publishers, arts organizations, readers and writers.

WOTS Vancouver expects 38,000 visitors this year to see more than 100 exhibits. There's "Adopt an Author," the "Cooking Stage," a new Multilingual Venue, Writing and Publishing Panels and the Home & Garden Tent. It's an opportunity to meet others in the word business, listen to author readings and watch the entertainment.

As an EAC volunteer you will get to talk to people interested in editing, give out newsletters and pamphlets and also sell a few editing books. If you are a newcomer, we will pair you with a seasoned editor who has volunteered for previous WOTS. You can choose from several time slots of 1.5 hours each. We will set up our booth about 10:15 AM for the 11:00 AM opening, and begin dismantling around 6:00 PM.

Interested in volunteering? Email Janet Hudgins at <[jhudgina@sfu.ca](mailto:jhudgina@sfu.ca)>, or phone 604-687-8733. Let us know which shift you prefer and we'll do our best to accommodate you. ✧

### Exciting programs planned for fall EAC meetings (non-members welcome)

Mark your calendars for these stimulating Wednesday evening programs held in the Royal Bank Room at the YWCA Hotel and Residence at 733 Beatty Street (in downtown Vancouver) starting at 7:30 PM:

#### **September 19—"Getting Started and Changing Direction"**

A panel discussion with senior editors offering their insights on how to get started as an editor and how to change direction once you are an editor (say from in-house to freelance or from one genre or type of editing to another).

#### **October 17—"Practical Tips for Effective Networking"**

Moe Somani of SOHO Business Group is a networking guru for entrepreneurs and small business owners. He will offer practical tips that work and perhaps even have an exercise for those who wish to participate. Networking is important for everyone—whether you are a freelancer or not.

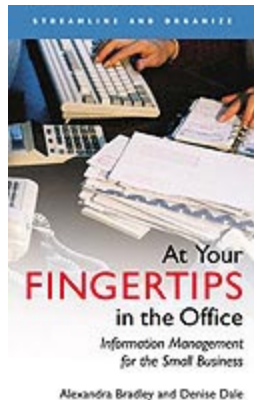
#### **November 21—"A Live Demonstration of Dreamweaver 4 for Editors"**

Michael Hayward of SFU's Himie Koshevoy Publishing Lab will present Dreamweaver 4, and Sandra McKenzie, online course editor at TechBC, will explain how she uses Dreamweaver in her work. It has been said that Dreamweaver is to Web design what Windows was to computers. This powerful, user-friendly software program will be of interest to editors who want to write and edit for the Web.

Each meeting ends with refreshments and informal networking and socializing. The executive would like to encourage more interaction among people who attend, so we'll be trying different ideas to help "break the ice." Program chair Robert Chesterman welcomes any feedback or suggestions <[bonum@axion.net](mailto:bonum@axion.net)>. ✧

## The Organizers made it look easy

ROBERT CHESTERMAN



Do you recall the TV program *The Avengers*? Well, at the May 16 meeting of EAC-BC, our guests were *The Organizers*! Denise Dale and Alexandra “Sandie” Bradley are clients of EAC editor Naomi Pauls, who introduced these two “whizzes at getting information under control.” Denise holds a master’s degree in library and information studies, is a reference librarian at Kwantlen College and operates Streamline Information and Organizing Services. Sandie is a certified records manager, an adjunct professor at UBC and president of Harwood Information Associates. The two women have co-authored books about information management systems for the home and for small businesses.

Have you ever missed an important appointment or deadline? How about the expensive theatre tickets you couldn’t find, which meant you ended up staying home at great cost? And what about that exasperating, time-eating search for a document that just wasn’t at your fingertips when you needed it? Denise presented the worst-case scenario of a family departing for an overseas vacation. The problem was that Dad could not find his passport, despite tearing the house apart. The rest of the family finally took off in a taxi for the airport, leaving an increasingly desperate Dad behind. There’s a happy ending to this story, because Dad did find his passport and off he went in the nick of time.

Denise asked us to think about the value of organizing our homes—the flip side of assessing the cost of disorganization. She then presented the principles of an information management system for the home, complete with an impressive set of props that she and Sandie had set up before the meeting. You start by eliminating unneeded clutter, and you do this by setting up an in-basket. All information should land here when it first arrives in the home. Denise next introduced the rest of their Household Filing System: where the information goes when it leaves the in-basket. This includes Fingertip Files (calendar, contacts, shopping), Household Files (temporary or referred to frequently), Reference Files (clippings of interest), Permanent Files (will, passport) and garbage or recycling.

Sandie carried on with this fascinating presentation, pointing out that the principles of a household filing system are applicable to a small business. As in a household, information in a business also has a life cycle. In business, however, certain life cycles are legislated—such as the requirement to keep financial and tax records for six years. There are other important principles: keep it simple, find an easy place to put things and be able to retrieve them later, protect documents and keep information private that needs to be private. Sandie is a fan of inexpensive cardboard file boxes—papers need to breathe, not be sealed in. For long-term storage, look for acid-free paper, no colour, nothing metallic or elastic. Recycled paper won’t last as long as regular paper.

Denise and Sandie’s self-published titles are *At Your Fingertips! A Household Filing System That Works for You* and *At Your Fingertips in the Office: Information Management for the Small Business*. Check out their Web site <[www.streamlinebooks.com](http://www.streamlinebooks.com)> for details on where you can purchase these inexpensive but valuable books. ✧

### More news from national

continued from page 1

Keep on the lookout for information arriving soon about a new insurance plan from Imagine Insurance for EAC members. If you’re looking for an insurance package, check this one out carefully. Please let national know what you think of it; your input is crucial.

At the national executive meeting in June, several branch chairs/representatives (including myself) declared their intention to improve branch/national communications this year. This column in the *West Coast Editor* is a part of that initiative. With the structure of the national executive/organization possibly changing, it’s especially important for us to keep informed of what’s happening nationally.

Certification is another exciting initiative being carried out by a special Certification Committee right now. After the conference and AGM, a group of senior editors went off to a retreat near Montreal to write the prototype certification exam. This exam will be used for the first pilot testing and will serve as a sample examination in future preparation materials.

You might want to consider holding onto your project proofs and notes so you can submit one of your current editing projects for next year’s Tom Fairley Award. The next Fairley award comes with a \$2,000 cash prize and will be open to in-house editors for the first time. Deadlines are in February (there will be more information about the award and what’s required coming to you soon). Last year’s award was won by BC branch member Barbara Pulling.

And finally, if you have any questions or concerns you’d like to have addressed or that you think should be presented to the national executive, please don’t hesitate to contact me at 604-921-2441 or by email <[wj\\_assmann@yahoo.ca](mailto:wj_assmann@yahoo.ca)>. ✧

## WHAT'S ON

## Technical communicators launch new plain language contest

The Canada West Coast chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) is gearing up for a new Plain Language Contest this year. Last year they asked contestants to explain to their mothers, in 25 words or less, what technical communicators do. And they got prize-winning responses, which were posted on the STC Website <[www.stcwestcoast.ca](http://www.stcwestcoast.ca)>.

The contest is open to all—not just technical communicators—and this year the STC is looking for suggestions from you: Do you have an example of egregious writing? Something that cries out for rewriting? Something that can be transformed in 25 words or less? Dig out your pet peeves:

- technospeak
- windbag explanations
- political doubletalk
- bureaucratic jargon

Anything in the public arena is fair game: brochures, reports, government publications and newspaper quotes. The STC can't acknowledge your entries, but they will treasure them! The selected winner will receive a \$50 cash prize and plenty of publicity. Send your nightmare entry by October 31, 2001 to: Plain Language Contest, STC Canada West Coast Chapter, addressed to: Sheila Jones

c/o International Wordsmiths Ltd.  
203 – 807 Fir Street  
Vancouver, BC V6J 3A9,  
or by email <[sheilaj@istar.ca](mailto:sheilaj@istar.ca)>.

If you look at any list of great modern writers such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald, you'll notice two things about them: (1) they all had editors; and (2) they are all dead. Thus we can draw the scientific conclusion that editors are fatal.

—Dave Barry

## Meet Robert Chesterman, Program Chair

Robert joined EAC less than a year ago after procrastinating for at least a year. He says, "I feel at home now, and I'm learning even more about the proper and effective use of the English language."

Robert had a previous career for many years in Toronto as a manager in a social housing agency, where his writing talent was well appreciated. He has always loved writing and now finds that editing is equally satisfying.

"It's all about communicating clearly, accurately, logically, concisely, elegantly and flawlessly." Robert is a freelance writer and editor serving the business, government, non-profit, educational and academic markets. He likes to have variety in the contracts he takes on. He is also eager to develop and employ his skills writing and editing for the Web.

Robert welcomes suggestions and feedback from members to help him and the executive offer stimulating and worthwhile programs for the monthly meetings. ✧

## Drop in to an EAC monthly meeting

EAC members and interested non-members are welcome to attend EAC-BC monthly get-togethers to listen to speakers and meet and talk with other editors. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month 7:30 – 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.

Need to get your hands on a copy of *Editing Canadian English*? Contact Jean Lawrence at:  
<[bc@editors.ca](mailto:bc@editors.ca)>.

## WEST COAST EDITOR

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