

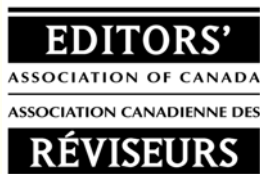
# West Coast EDITOR

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

OCTOBER 2002

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BC BRANCH

## New Views on Typos

**Lyon's Law of Typos:** On your first glance at a newly typeset document, you will immediately discover an error you missed while editing.

Why this maddening experience occurs is a mystery to me, but it's nevertheless true that when I see a document in a new form, I also spot "new" errors. If this is true for you, too, you can use Microsoft Word to turn it to your advantage. How? By changing the way you view a document in Microsoft Word.

Let's say you've already "finished" editing a document—you've made everything consistent, fixed errors of fact, run a spell-check, and so on. Ordinarily, you'd send it off to be typeset—*after* which you'd spot those additional typos. This time, however, why not try reading through the document again after changing the way it's displayed? You could try any of the following:

- \* If you've been working in Normal view, switch to Print Layout view (under the View menu)—or vice versa.

- \* Read the document in Outline view (under the View menu).

- \* Change the Zoom percentage to something radically bigger or smaller than what you've been using (View > Zoom).

- \* Attach a different template (using the same style names) to display your type in a different color and font. If you're going to do this, make sure you have a "real" template that you can attach later to restore the document's true formatting. You can learn more about this at: <http://www.topica.com/lists/editorium/read/message.html?mid=1704544112>.

- \* Switch to Draft font. You've never used Draft font? It shows text in a plain font with a minimum of formatting. Here's how to display it:

1. Click "View." 2. Click "Normal" (you must be in Normal view to use

- Draft font).
3. Click "Tools." 4. Click "Options." 5. Click the "View" tab. 6. Put a check in the box labeled "Draft font." 7. Click the "OK" button.

Alternatively: 1. Click the "Tools" menu. 2. Click "Options." 3. Click the "General" tab. 4. Put a check in the box labeled "Blue background, white text." 5. Click the "OK" button.

This will display your document with white text on a blue background, just like the old WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS.

Word 2000's Draft font has a bug that prevents the display of bold and italic, as explained here: <http://support.microsoft.com/search/preview.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q210585>.

But in other versions of Word, Draft font works fairly well and is definitely a different way to look at your documents.

Will using one of these methods eliminate typos in typesetting? Well, probably not. After all, Lyon's Law of Typos is a law. But another read-through in a different view should help catch some of those errors.

*Jack M. Lyon: editor@editorium.com*

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*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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## Introducing the 2002/03 Executive

### *Robert Chesterman, Program Chair*

Robert writes, edits, and does research for business, government, educational, and non-profit clients. He considers himself a scribe in the sense of the Latin word *scriba*, “one who makes a profession of writing: hence one employed by a person, magistrate, college, or prince for writing, noting, recording, registering, and so on.” His passion is writing that tells the client’s story accurately, logically, concisely, in words the reader can understand, expressed elegantly in flawless English. He took his company name, Bonum Consulting, from the Latin word *bonus*, -a, -um, meaning “good, honest, apt, seemly, skillful, friendly, in prosperous circumstances, honourable, fortunate.”

Robert feels fortunate indeed to have “found his home” with EAC-BC, after many years of wandering as a manager in the desert of a government bureaucracy in Toronto. He has a lot of fun as Program Chair, organizing the monthly branch meetings and serving on the executive. You can reach Robert at [<bonum@axion.net>](mailto:bonum@axion.net).

### *Ricki Ewings, BA, TT, Hotline Co-chair*

Ricki is a freelance editor whose varied projects have included true crime, autobiography, a screenplay, a book on diabetes control, Web content, proposals, training and leadership manuals, policies and procedures manuals, curriculum design, promotional materials, resume development, journal articles, academic papers, personal growth materials, reports, and anything else she can get her blue pencil on.

She is a mystery novel addict, not interested in recovery.

### *Curtis Foreman, Public Relations Chair*

Curtis is a freelance writer and editor specializing in fiction, academic writing, educational materials, training manuals, and travel writing. Curtis is

an avid hiker, loves windsurfing and snowboarding, and is also an amateur mechanic.

He studied at UBC where he obtained a BA and BEd before teaching high school English. Lately, he has been doing a lot of volunteer work, but he plans to start billing soon enough.

### *Faith Gildenhuis, Chair*

Faith is an active writer and editor of a wide variety of documents, including academic papers, educational materials, trade books, and personal memoirs. She has written and edited print and Web-based materials for the BC Pension Corporation, the Ministry of Human Resources, BC Communications and the Ministry of Finance. She is an associate of Your Corporate Writer. Visit their Web site at [<www.yourcorporatewriter.com>](http://www.yourcorporatewriter.com).

Faith was a professor of English literature at Carleton University for 25 years. While at Carleton, she held a number of administrative positions. As Director of Continuing Education, she was in charge of non-credit courses, distance education, and the university’s television programming.

She is active in several professional organizations: Professional Editors Association of Vancouver Island (Chair, 1999 to present), BC Consultants Group, and EAC/ACR. Faith is currently president of the Victoria Symphony Volunteer Guild. You can visit Faith’s Web site at [<www.wordswellchosen.com>](http://www.wordswellchosen.com).

### *Christine Kondo, Treasurer*

Christine recently started freelancing after more than five years editing in-house in the magazine publishing industry. She specializes in editing trade non-fiction books. Christine’s interests include sports, fitness, gardening, and economics (she is currently taking the Canadian Securities Course).

### *Paulette MacQuarrie, Social/Outreach Chair*

Paulette has always had a love of reading, grammar, and spelling. Eventually it led her to a career as a freelance writer and editor, which she began as a sideline in 1987 and in earnest in 1995. She has been published in community papers and currently spends most of her time writing and editing newsletters and promotional material for corporations and professional associations. She also works with a small local commercial publications company, developing format and policy for niche-market publications. In her spare time, Paulette is pursuing a bachelor’s degree part-time by distance education and learning how to write fiction.

### *Ann-Marie Metten, Secretary*

Ann-Marie copyedits and proofreads books for Raincoast Books, Douglas & McIntyre, and Whitecap Books while also serving clients who publish in the areas of the law and plain language. You can contact Ann-Marie at [<ametten@telus.net>](mailto:ametten@telus.net) or by telephone on 604-263-6586.

### *Susan Safyan, BA, MLS, Professional Development Co-chair*

Susan’s goal will be to help organize useful and inspiring workshops for both experienced and novice editors.

Susan is an experienced researcher and information specialist making a career transition to editing. She has worked as an academic reference librarian for the last twelve years, doing traditional and Web-based research, teaching classes on research skills, and building Web sites for libraries and professional associations. She’s not entirely new to editing, however; she has written and edited numerous educational and commercial documents, both on-line and print, and was also managing editor of a monthly

print journal (*BC Library Association Reporter*).

Susan welcomes your suggestions for future workshops. Contact her at [<ssafyan@telus.net>](mailto:ssafyan@telus.net).

*Lynn Smith, Book Sales Coordinator*

Lynn graduated in April from the Print Futures: Professional Writing Program at Douglas College. She recently started her new position as copy editor at the Continuing Legal Education Society of BC where she combines her love of editing with her previous experience as a legal assistant. Lynn looks forward to continuing her professional development with active involvement in EAC-BC. Contact Lynn at [<lynn\\_smith@shaw.ca>](mailto:lynn_smith@shaw.ca).

*Kathryn Spracklin, Hotline Co-chair*

Kathryn recently moved to Vancouver after a four-year stint in San Francisco, where she wrote policy for an Ottawa-based non-profit organization and edited marketing communications material for software companies. A freelance and in-house writer and editor since 1988, Kathryn's background includes writing and editing consumer and trade magazines, public education materials, newsletters, and Web sites.

*Mark Varley, Professional Development Co-chair*

Mark has extensive experience researching, writing, and editing in the fields of science, technology, finance, marketing, and education, both in print-based and digital media. His academic background is in biology and zoology. He now holds a faculty position in Health Sciences at the British Columbia Institute of Technology where he teaches and develops the distance education curriculum for the Occupational Health and Safety Program.

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## The Long and Short of It

or:

### It's Not How Long It Is: It's How You Use It

Short sentences good, long sentences bad. As editors and writers we hear this dictum so often that it's begun to sound "a bit like the chant of the sheep in *Animal Farm*," in the words of one critic. This criterion for readability seems to have been reduced to one formula.

Short can be good, no doubt. Musing on "A Dissertation on the Antiquity of Fleas," Ogden Nash once wrote, "Adam/ had 'em." Quicker than we can say "Brevity is the soul of wit," Nash tells us everything we care to know about the subject, deflates his own portentous title, and even slyly implies that, for your average Joe (or Adam), the metaphysical consequences of the Fall might loom less large than a bad itch. All of this achieved through a three-word sentence.

Except for entomologists or cat-owners, few would consider fleas a subject worthy of lengthy dramatic treatment, compared to "the fate of humankind in the face of nature in upheaval," for instance. Consequently, Richard Hooker, writing in 1593, accords the latter subject a much longer sentence: "...if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve?" In fact the full sentence is much longer (200 words) than space allows for its full reproduction here. It begins with a succession of six "if" clauses that roll forward in waves, finally breaking upon the final clause—a question. It is a powerful and majestic sentence, although a modern reader might find its rhetorical flourishes too stagy and overwrought.

If long sentences are inherently difficult to read, what are we then to make of their profusion in the writing of previous centuries? Have we become more dim-witted, or did antiquity simply produce more blowhards than we? Hooker's example of a long sentence is certainly not an isolated case: in the 1700s, for instance, Samuel Johnson routinely wrote 250-word sentences. Even as recently as the Victorian era, sentences were two to three times longer than they are today. Perhaps sentence length has decreased in response to increased amounts of exposure to information. With all the competing demands on our attention, we no longer have the time or patience to plough through a long passage: we want to get to the point and move on. Three-minute pop songs, ten-second sound bites, and twenty-word sentences.

Yet historical relativity is only one part of the picture. How we view sentence length is also influenced by culture. Anglophones who have ever edited or translated the work of francophones will have noticed their insistence on loading up a sentence with as many subordinate clauses and as much information as possible. Francophones have positively made a virtue of our vice, considering it a point of honour and a sign of good breeding to be able to build sentences with as many strata as a Byzantine bureaucracy.

Sentence length can be deceptive as well. Hemingway's prose, at least in our imagination, is the epitome of American succinct expression and understatement: it is clean and hard and good. Apparently, however, his sentences are longer on the average than those of F. Scott Fitzgerald, whom most people consider to be, in the words of one university prof, "florid and wordy." There are factors at

*Continued on next page ...*

play here other than sentence length: Fitzgerald's writing uses five times more adverbs than Hemingway's, and Hemingway tended to avoid linking clauses through subordination, preferring the simple coordinating conjunction "and." It is thus not only a question of how many words you use; what words you choose and how you connect them can also keep a sentence buoyant or sink it in bombast.

All of which is to say that neither short nor long sentences are intrinsically good or bad. Both have their place and use, and we are ill served by admonitions to pare down sentences to twenty words across the board. Of course, when dealing with writing that is strictly utilitarian and aims only to convey information in the most efficient manner, then short sentences are the way to go. But any writing with a broader scope is better served by a variety of sentence lengths, thereby avoiding both the disjointed staccato effect of short sentences and the oppressive weight of longer ones. The important question is not whether the sentence is too long, but whether its structure can bear the weight its author intends.

Jack Ognistoff

**Executive Changes**

Marial Shea recently announced her resignation as Membership Chair. We will bring you details of her replacement in the next issue.

EAC-BC meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the third Wednesday of each month (except December, June, July, and August) in the Royal Bank Room at the YWCA, 733 Beatty St. (between Robson and Georgia) in downtown Vancouver. Non-members are most welcome! (\$5 drop-in fee.) For more information, call **604-681-7184**.

**WHAT'S ON**

The next EAC/BC meeting will be on Wednesday, October, 16. EAC/BC members will have the opportunity to showcase their unique skills, talents, and experience. This one is not to be missed!

Check the Web site for more details: <<http://www.editors.ca/bc/bc.htm>>.

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Reminder: The Surrey International Writers' Conference takes place over the weekend of 18-20 October. For more information, visit their Web site: <[www.surreywritersconference.bc.ca](http://www.surreywritersconference.bc.ca)> or <[www.siwc.ca](http://www.siwc.ca)>. Alternately, call 604-583-4040. EAC/BC will be hosting a stand at the conference. If you are interested in volunteering or you would simply like to find out more about what is happening, contact Curtis Foreman at <[stylesheet@hotmail.com](mailto:stylesheet@hotmail.com)>.

**Deadline for next newsletter submissions:  
November 10, 2002.  
Let your creativity take hold!**

**Menu Gaffes**

Feeling hungry? You may change your mind after reading these!

A list of typos found while proofreading menus, from <[www.Menus.com](http://www.Menus.com)>:

- Soup of the dog*
- Served on a warm nun*
- Pork with geek and garlic*
- Kids' menu (served only to chicken under 12)*
- Scared breast of chicken*
- Cork chops*
- Kindly beans*

**WEST COAST EDITOR**

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- Copy Editors** Rosemary Gretton  
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