

West Coast EDITOR

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

SEPTEMBER 2002

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EDITORS'
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES
RÉVISEURS

BC BRANCH

Editing to Win / Réviser, c'est créer

This was the theme of the national EAC/ACR conference I attended in Montreal on May 24 to 26, 2002. Here are my impressions.

Old Montreal is worn, charming, and quaint. It also seems much bigger than Vancouver. I had understood Montreal was very "English" but I actually found it to be very francophone. For example, the conference provided simultaneous French translation for several English-language sessions, and a book table carried French books but nothing in English. I had a little taste of what it's like to be a minority in a dominant other-culture.

As a relatively new member of EAC/ACR, I was fascinated by the opportunity to meet and to put faces to the names of people I have read about in *Active Voice* and have encountered on the lively email forum. It was also great to see fellow EAC-BC members and to meet other very special people from across Canada. The whole experience made me think that, as a branch, we need to find ways to encourage more members to attend the annual conference and to recognize the value of EAC/ACR as a national organization of editors.

Québécois novelist and current National Librarian Roch Carrier delivered the opening address with *Reflections on Editing/Quelques réflexions sur la révision*. Carrier, a genial man with a great sense of humour, mentioned encounters with dramatist Eugène Ionesco who, on two occasions, thirty years apart, announced that "Literature is dead." Carrier comes from a generation of writers for whom editors were not welcome—writers who were influenced by Balzac's "I am the master of my own text." Carrier's advice to editors? Always flatter!

Carrier opined that a good editor is a good reader, who reads critically,

asks questions, says "here I fell asleep," and has the reactions of a passionate reader. In conclusion, he compared the approach of Québec, where writing is a "religious experience," to that of the rest of Canada, where "text is stuff."

I also attended *Basic Ergonomics for Editors*, presented by Louise Saint-André. She gave very helpful advice, emphasizing that "ergonomic" really means adjusting your environment to your unique body needs.

Riça Night presented *Technically, It's Still Editing*, a quick overview of technical writing. Government and industry, the two main fields, include specific sub-fields such as computers, medical, telecom, and legal. Night presented several approaches to technical writing. One approach is purpose (why is the audience reading the document?) because technical documents are varied and can include policy documents, user guides, training materials, proposals, manuals, and marketing materials. Another approach is by format or genre (how is the audience viewing or using the document, e.g., online, or CD).

Copyediting of technical material is straightforward, but stylistic or substantive editing is often needed for clarity, and then the editor needs access to an SME (subject matter expert). The editor doesn't need to be an SME (the library or the Internet may provide some help) but should know what good technical writing is about.

I left this workshop understanding that there is great scope for technical writing and editing.

Marie-Noëlle Morency, a content manager for Monster.ca, presented an excellent workshop titled *Editing for the Web: The Medium and the Message*. You can read Morency's workshop presentation online at

<www.webographe.com>. Enjoy it in English or in French!

The final workshop was presented by Peter Moskos and Howard Whittaker of The Gordon Writing Group in Ottawa, who will also be the speakers at an upcoming EAC-BC workshop, *From Home Office to Big Office: Developing Your Editing Business*. I almost didn't go to this workshop because I really love working on my own in my own home. However, after attending, I am now considering how to build a substantial and sustainable business that will pay me more than I earn now! Check out <www.gordongroup.com> to find out more about them.

The conference closed with a panel discussion on The Art of Editing with publishers Robert Lecker, Antoine Del Busso, and Jean Bernier, French translator Sheila Fischman, and "animateur" René Bonenfant. I learned here that the usual Québécois term for editor is "correcteur," which suggests that the editorial role is limited to copyediting and proofreading. This is an issue for editors in Québec, because the publishers tend to see themselves as the substantive and stylistic editors. Here's the advice of the publishers on what they look for in an editor. They want more than learned technical editing skills—they also required people skills, judgment, and general knowledge. One of the panellists made an amusing closing reference to Edward O'Connor's article in the May 2002 issue of *Quill & Quire*, *The sadist and the suck: two kinds of editor you don't want to work with.* O'Connor now writes books instead of editing them.

For a list of web resources for any of the above, please contact me by email.

Robert Chesterman, Program Chair
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Trek Magazine: The Renaissance

Chris Petty, Communications Manager for the UBC Alumni Association spoke at our May meeting about the founding of the award-winning *Trek Magazine*, reborn last year from *The Chronicle*, UBC's alumni magazine since 1931. In the late 1980s the UBC Alumni Association hired Petty to work with *Equity Magazine* to make the *Chronicle* profitable. *Equity* wasn't making money selling ads and Petty convinced UBC to let him edit the magazine in-house. He produced the *Chronicle* manually, using paste-boards and overlays, with lots of late nights. He did the design, took the photos, and wrote most of the articles. And he became familiar with university magazine publishing, a niche market that has spawned thousands of magazines and newsletters across Canada.

Most Canadian university alumni magazines are produced by alumni, aimed at other alumni, and are characterized by mediocre design and a lack of focus. Many American university magazines, on the other hand, are big, expensive, and well-designed. (Petty handed around some glossy samples from schools like Harvard and Notre Dame to demonstrate his point.) Petty got the "germ of an idea" to replace *The Chronicle* while attending a CASE (Council for the Support and Advancement of Education) conference in San Francisco in 1998. But he waited until the time was ripe to make his move, about a year later.

UBC history is dominated by one overriding metaphor from 1922 "when spirited students marched to Point Grey" and demanded that the University continue to be rebuilt. (Building had stopped after the Great War ended in 1918.) The "Great Trek," as it is known, formed the vision of UBC president, Martha Piper, which she called Trek 2000. Petty seized the opportunity to propose changing the magazine name to *Trek*. He got Martha Piper and the alumni association onside, and *Trek Magazine* was born in early 2001.

The Chronicle's budget was \$250,000. It was mailed out twice a year to 110,000 university alumni. For Petty, the costs of production, printing and mailing to so many people made it impossible to produce a quality magazine so he used the university database to target 50,000 active alumni to receive *Trek Magazine*.

His opinion is that most Canadian university magazines focus on "needs, deeds and donors." Often produced by the advancement departments, whose focus is on fund-raising, the magazines are filled with photos and profiles of donors. Unfortunately, this means that they lack credibility for many alumni. Alumni often don't read the magazine, other than to look for mentions of classmates in the section for their graduation year. On the other hand, the stories in American alumni magazines are more diverse.

Petty wanted *Trek* to be "UBC-oriented, but not UBC-obsessed." It is unique in Canada in moving away from "people covers" to "concept covers," referring generally to a theme in the magazine rather than a particular story. *Trek* also doesn't shy away from controversial subjects. Petty discussed a recent article based on a study by UBC anthropologist Becky Ross. (When the study, which drew a parallel between the history of striptease and resource development in BC, was publicized it provoked a storm of public protest, including demands to know why a university would fund such a study.) Petty commissioned an article by children's writer Ellen Schwartz, who skillfully juxtaposed the controversial article with a story about her first experience of the strip bar at the Cecil Hotel. The article won two awards.

Trek Magazine can be viewed at <<http://www.alumni.ubc.ca/trek>>.

Rosemary Gretton, Newsletter Co-chair

WHAT'S ON

**September 18 Meeting:
West Coast Editorial Associates**

Georgina Montgomery and Ruth Wilson from West Coast Editorial Associates (WCEA) will speak at the next meeting of EAC-BC.

WCEA, founded in 1992, now has six partners with offices in Vancouver and Victoria, and provides writing, training, editing, and project management services for a wide range of clients.

Montgomery and Wilson will tell us about WCEA—how it's organized, how they market their services, what some of their experiences have been, and what advice they can offer.

Montgomery is based in Victoria and has been a professional editor and writer since 1982. She teaches writing through Words at Work Business Communications, has written two non-fiction books, and was co-winner of the 1998 Tom Fairley Award for her editorial work on Raffi's *The Life of a Children's Troubador: An Autobiography*, published by Homeland Press in 1999.

Wilson began her editing career in 1981, has worked on business, legal, and reference texts, specializing in plain language editing. In addition, she copyedits cookbooks for trade publishers, and project manages for professional associations and international organizations.

Wilson was managing editor of Self-Counsel Press for ten years. She leads workshops on editing and plain language and teaches courses on copy editing and substantive editing in the Writing and Publishing Program at Simon Fraser University.

Robert Chesterman, Program Chair

The Word on the Street

EAC-BC will again host a booth at The Word on the Street Book and Magazine Fair in Vancouver this month. Come and learn what the BC branch of the EAC is up to these days! Look through a few back issues of West Coast Editor, peruse our selection of books for sale, or just schmooze with volunteers.

The Word on the Street runs from 11 am to 6 pm on Sunday, September 29 at Library Square and at the CBC Plaza downtown. Attractions include exhibits by local and national publishers, booksellers, literacy organizations, libraries and writers' associations. The fair will also showcase an exceptional array of current and backlisted books and magazines to browse or buy.

Highlights include book readings and signings by new and established Canadian authors; a kids area featuring popular children's authors, entertainers and activities; and Literacy Lane, where regional literacy organizations celebrate the joy of reading at all levels.

Festival guides will be available in local bookstores and libraries and the full schedule will be published in the *Vancouver Sun* on Saturday, September 28. For more information, call 604-684-8266 or visit the Web site at <www.thewordonthestreet.ca>.

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**.

**Surrey International Writers'
Conference**

EAC-BC will have a display at the Surrey International Writers' Conference 2002, which runs from Friday, October 18 to Sunday, October 20 at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey. This year's conference offers 66 unique workshops covering a wide array of topics including fiction, children's books, young adult novels, screenplays, playwriting, nonfiction, poetry, spiritual writing, and narrative verse. There will also be workshops on research, writing proposals, idea generation, writing and marketing articles, and much more.

The conference will feature a trade show and book fair, editor/agent interviews, and the Blue Pencil Café, where authors can share samples of their work with professional writers. Authors are also invited to sell and sign their books at the book fair. Please contact Bonnie Deren at Guildford Continuing Education, 604-589-2221 or Conference committee member Ed Griffin at <egriffin@direct.ca> if you wish to participate or attend.

Two of the conference's most popular instructors, Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusc, return to Surrey this year to teach their fifth master class. Other acclaimed presenters include editor Jeffery McGraw and authors Bruce Holland Rogers and Diana Gabaldon.

Registration for 2002 is ongoing. Be sure to register in advance—the conference has sold out for the past several years. For more information, call 604-583-4040 or check out <www.surreywritersconference.bc.ca> or <www.siwc.ca>.

*Curtis Foreman, Public Relations/
Industry Liaison Chair*

**October Workshop
From Home Office to Big Office:
Developing a Writing and
Editing Business**

For many editors, working as an individual freelancer or in-house writer or editor is just perfect. For others, the idea of growing a writing or editing business holds real appeal. This workshop starts with some considerations of how to handle problems like volume overload in a single-person business. It then explores a series of possible expansions of a business, from a simple partnership to a complex incorporated company with employees, managers and a sales force. Whatever your goal, this workshop will help you think about your business and plan ahead.

Peter Moskos and Howard Whittaker of The Gordon Writing Group, Ottawa's largest writing and editing company, will lead this workshop. Join them in thinking about what's involved in creating a writing and editing business, including taking on employees, putting financial structures in place, pitching for and managing large projects, and a host of other challenges you may never have considered.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, October 19, from 9 am to 4.30 pm. The location is UBC Robson Square, 800 Robson Street. Fees are \$130 for EAC/ACR members, \$175 for non-members. Lunch is included in the price. For further details, telephone 604-681-7184, or visit the EAC-BC Web site at <<http://www.editors.ca/bc/bc.htm>>.

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**Vancouver International
Writers Festival:**

Meet the Authors Face to Face

Salman Rushdie headlines an early Vancouver International Writers Festival special event on Sunday, September 22. Readings and conversations with other well-known authors such as David Malouf, Eric McCormack, Michael Ondaatje, Nino Ricci and Gail Tsukiyama, will follow during the festival's five days, from October 22 to 27.

Every year the Vancouver International Writers Festival relies on nearly 200 volunteers to make the festival a success. This year, why not volunteer to take tickets or answer phones? Or you could offer to drive authors to Granville Island and have the opportunity to meet many of them face to face. The festival staff are most appreciative of their volunteers, as members of EAC-BC have learned through volunteering to edit the Festival program these past two years. If you are interested in volunteering for the 2002 Writers Festival, you should contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 604-681-6330 or email <volunteer@writersfest.bc.ca>.

We welcome your ideas and submissions.
Contact the newsletter at:
rgretton@telus.net
or
lesley@4camerons.com

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