

# West Coast EDITOR

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

DECEMBER 2003

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

BC BRANCH

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## The Word on the Street 2003

For me, The Word on the Street literary festival begins when I first open the program. This year, the long-awaited moment arrived at about seven on Saturday evening, when I settled into my favourite armchair with a cup of tea after a long and hectic week at work.

As the introductory note pointed out, this year's festival would feature no fewer than 162 writers reading from their works, speaking in panel discussions, leading workshops, and fielding questions. And as always, there would be all manner of booths and displays featuring book publishers, magazines, university writing and publishing programs, and non-profit organizations.

Savouring the moment, I did my best to imagine how I could possibly see everything I wanted to see while coordinating the EAC-BC booth. Would I try to catch Timothy Taylor, reading from his novel *Stanley Park*? Or David Suzuki, whose latest collection, *The David Suzuki Reader*, had yet to arrive on bookstore shelves? Susan Musgrave? Bill Richardson? The Vancouver National Poetry Slam team? Decisions, decisions.

Sunday morning was sunny and windy, with the first chill of autumn gracing the air. I found our booth in the shadiest and most effectively hidden corner of Library Square—just like it was last year; this year, I vowed, would be the last time I let the event organizers assign our location. Still, I soon found myself caught up in the general excitement of setting up; then, with the booth in place, I spent 15 delightful minutes exploring Library Square and the CBC Plaza, chatting with other organizers. Finally, clutching the largest cup of coffee I could find, I retreated to the shade and waited for visitors.

Michele Sherstan was the first EAC-BC volunteer to arrive, and we passed the first few uneventful hours chatting—mostly with one another, but occasionally with passers-by such as Tom Koch. Koch, an author, lecturer, and researcher (and the director of Vancouver-based Information Outreach, Ltd.) told us that he would be reading from his latest book, *The Wreck of the William Brown: A True Tale of Overcrowded Lifeboats and Murder at Sea*, at the Launching Pad booth later that day.

“Say,” he asked, “about a dozen years back, were you the Freelance Editors’ Association?”

“I think so,” I answered—though a dozen years ago the only editing I was doing was for my high school yearbook.

Terra Marco and EAC-BC newsletter co-chair Rosemary Gretton showed up to relieve Michele and me for the next shift, and I gratefully hurried out into the sunshine, anxious to catch a few readings and presentations.

First up was award-winning scientist, environmentalist, and author David Suzuki. I have long admired Suzuki’s moderate, common-sense approach to environmental activism and education, and was looking forward to hearing him read from his new collection.

When I took my place at the back of the overcrowded Government of Canada Authors Tent, an already sober crowd was listening as Suzuki addressed topics including fish farming, the impermanence of environmental victories, and the commercialization of human growth hormone.

Asked about the future of the environmental movement, Suzuki responded with both insight and good humour. “The environmental movement won’t

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WOTS 2003 continued

achieve its ends through fits and starts of activism,” he told the crowd. “These values need to become part of our cultural framework, the rules that are so basic that they don’t need to be spoken. When I was growing up, the streetcar that ran by my house had a sign that read ‘No Spitting.’ We don’t need signs like that everywhere now, because our values have changed. That’s pretty much what we’re working toward: an end to spitting.”

Suzuki concluded his presentation by asking everyone in the crowd to take the Nature Challenge, a one-year commitment to choose three of ten possible ways to lighten your impact on the world around you. Find out more at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org).

Back in the shade at the EAC-BC booth, it was time for the changing of the guard. Terra and Rosemary were busy fielding questions from a small crowd, and were cheered to see their relief arrive in the form of Margaret Jetelina and EAC-BC newsletter co-chair (and long-time EAC-BC booth volunteer) Lesley Cameron.

Next up for me was "Inside the Library, Writing and Publishing Panels" for a panel discussion called "Live Free, Write Hard," where five accomplished freelance writers would be discussing the pleasures and perils of working freelance.

Host Daniel Wood got things off to a fine start. “First of all,” he told the crowd of eager writers and would-be writers, “I think the organizers got the title backwards for this event. It should have read ‘Live HARD, write FREE.’”

The panel wasted no time getting down to business and answering audience questions. What are the critical elements for starting out as a freelance writer? Seven credit cards, quipped local freelancer Ken Hegan. Exclusive access to information, suggested Bruce Grierson. Internationally renowned

freelancer Guy Saddy stressed the importance of being able to analyze the architecture of a magazine before pitching a story. And veteran magazine and newspaper writer and editor David Beers described how to land “the killer clip”—the published feature story that will convince every editor until the end of time that they need you writing for their publication.

Faced with the eternal question of what makes a good story, each writer had a telling and compelling response.

Hegan: “Weirdness and conflict. Or Cosby/Carlin-style universal childhood stuff.”

Saddy: “Melancholy and irony. A story with blue notes or a twist of fate.”

Wood: “Ideas, not news. Something that will still be relevant and meaningful three to six months later, when the magazine finally comes out.”

Beers: “The *Zeitgeist*—the next big thing.”

Wood: “As Saul Bellow said, ‘truth in grotesque combinations.’”

With my notebook full of useful writing tips and good quotes, I headed out to spend the remainder of my time off exploring the book and magazine publishers’ booths along Homer Street. At the *Front Magazine* booth, Andreas Kahre and Leanne Johnson told me about the trials and joys of publishing a literary magazine. Next door at Four Corners Publishing ([www.fourcornerspublishing.com](http://www.fourcornerspublishing.com)), founder and author Laura Enridge told me about her book *Tro-Tros and Potholes*, an account of her travels in Africa. (A tro-tro, I learned, is a makeshift taxi.)

At the display of the Vancouver International Writers Festival, Jeff Boone, one of the coordinators, told me how excited he was to have arranged for authors Douglas Coupland and Irvine Welsh to appear

at a festival event called “Iconoclasts in Conversation.”

“Just think,” he told me. “One grew up the son of privileged parents in West Van, the other in the Glasgow projects. What a coup!”

Before I knew it, it was time to return to the EAC-BC booth for the last shift of the day. And as my wife arrived with the car and I began to take down the display, I reflected on the sheer impossibility of taking in even a fraction of what a festival like this has to offer. Somehow, I like it that way. ◀

Curtis Foreman, Public Relations Chair



For the editor on your list . . .

My son wrote his Christmas list weeks ago—a compendium of brand-name toys pencilled in his best Grade 1 printing and annotated with catalogue numbers, so Santa won’t have any cause for confusion. What would an editor put on her wish list, I wondered. Hence the following suggestions, in no particular order, some of which I have road-tested myself. If you’re playing Santa, all of these items can be ordered over the Internet from the comfort of your home. Viva the Christmas shopping spirit—and warmest wishes to all.

1. *An editor’s desk*. Made of wood or particleboard, this folding work surface allows you to edit or proofread at an angle that will save your neck from strain. Chairlines, 2031 West 4th Avenue in Vancouver, sells several designs (\$175–\$265 for more deluxe Ergo Desk models, \$54.99–\$79.99 for a “slant board”). View them online at [www.chairlines.com](http://www.chairlines.com) or order direct from [www.ergodesk.com](http://www.ergodesk.com). The catalogue retailer Levenger [www.levenger.com](http://www.levenger.com), featuring Tools for Serious Readers, also carries an

editor's desk, \$189 US. Should you know a woodworker (calling all elves), you could get one tailor-made.

2. *An ergonomic desk chair.* If Santa is a big spender, suitable seating is available at Chairlines and many other places. Prices vary. Check out the second-hand office furniture stores in your area.

3. *A keyboard tray.* Working on a laptop computer presents specific ergonomic challenges. One solution is to use a separate keyboard. If you don't have a computer desk, you will need to install a keyboard tray under your desk. Chairlines carries various models, as do Lee Valley Tools <[www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)>, Staples <[www.staples.ca](http://www.staples.ca)>, and Office Depot <[www.officedepot.com](http://www.officedepot.com)>. Expect to pay \$45 and up. Keyboard sold separately.

4. *A foot rest.* Although not terribly romantic (unless you have a foot fetish), one of the best presents my husband ever bought me is an adjustable carpet-covered foot rest. Made by Fellowes & Ergodyne, this "premium ergonomic foot rest" can be viewed in comfort at <[www.fellowescatalog.com](http://www.fellowescatalog.com)>, product number 91965, no price listed. It was purchased locally but is not pictured on the Staples or Office Depot websites. However, these office suppliers (and Chairlines) sell other models ranging in price from \$18 to \$78.

5. *A reference book.* It's been said that editors love pens (for which see Levenger, above); in my experience they also love books. A good reference book is always appreciated. Consider the new *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th edition, available at a discount to EAC-BC members), a deluxe atlas, or some other

specialized tome. Have a leisurely browse through the virtual shelves at, for example, <[www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca)>, <[www.abebbooks.com](http://www.abebbooks.com)>, <[www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)>, or <[www.chapters.indigo.ca](http://www.chapters.indigo.ca)>. Or go directly to a publisher's site such as that of Encyclopedia Britannica, <[www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)>, or Oxford University Press <[www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)>.

6. *A good read.* Editors also appreciate good reading according to their taste, be it biography, CanLit, or sci-fi. For recommendations and to read reviews of new releases, check out <[www.globeandmail.com/generated/realtime/SpecialEvents.html](http://www.globeandmail.com/generated/realtime/SpecialEvents.html)> (click on Book Club).

7. *An electronic gadget.* As editors go, I'm on the low-tech end of the spectrum. Others may appreciate—and use—a contemporary tool such as a personal digital assistant (PDA), a digital camera, or a top-of-the-line scanner. To see the artifacts of the future, visit Future Shop <[www.futureshop.ca](http://www.futureshop.ca)>. P.S., Levenger carries some nifty leather PDA holders.

8. *Book darts.* Good for a stocking stuffer, these paper-thin, one-inch-long bronze markers in the shape of a pen nib slide onto the page to mark a particular line. A tin of 50 is \$9.95 from <[www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)>.

9. *A wool sweater.* As cooler weather settles in and the furnace works overtime, most editors would appreciate a cozy sweater or wrap. Pendleton <[www.pendleton-usa.com](http://www.pendleton-usa.com)>, is a big name in woollen goods, and L.L. Bean <[www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com)> offers a good selection of sweaters. Shop at a local craft fair or woollen store to keep money in the community and save shipping charges.

10. *A magazine subscription.* I look forward to my monthly copy of *Quill & Quire* to keep up with news in the Canadian book

copy of *Quill & Quire* to keep up with news in the Canadian book trade, \$59.95 plus GST from <[www.quillandquire.com](http://www.quillandquire.com)>. Two other magazines I recommend for editors are the bimonthly *Copy Editor: Language News for the Publishing Profession*, US \$74 per year, <[www.copyeditor.com](http://www.copyeditor.com)>, and the monthly *Writing That Works*, US \$99 per year, <[www.WritingThatWorks.com](http://www.WritingThatWorks.com)>. Of course, editors have many other interests and might appreciate a subscription to a variety of other publications. Besides *The Beaver*, <[www.beavermagazine.ca](http://www.beavermagazine.ca)>, sporting a brand-new look, Canada now has *The Walrus*, <[www.walrusmagazine.ca](http://www.walrusmagazine.ca)>—neither one a nature magazine. To discover more Canadian periodicals, go to <[www.bestprice.genuinCanadian.ca](http://www.bestprice.genuinCanadian.ca)> or <[www.CanadianMagazines.com](http://www.CanadianMagazines.com)>. ◀

*Naomi Pauls promises a list of less practical, more indulgent gifts for editors come Valentine's Day. Send suggestions to <[nipauls@sfu.ca](mailto:nipauls@sfu.ca)>.*



### Relative difficulty

As I perused a Saturday *Globe and Mail* last month, the following passage offended my grammatical sensibilities, so I stopped for a closer look.

In "Physical combat for white collar workers" (November 15, page D5) the author rationalizes his decision not to deck a queue-jumper at a takeout pizza joint, and proceeds to muse about the larger question of what constitutes correct masculine behaviour nowadays.

After expressing concern about what a black eye might say about him, he wrote: "A bruise is evidence of unpredictability, instability; certainly it proves a

*Relative difficulty continued*  
dearth of imagination in problem solving tactics. Which brings us to a paradox of modern masculinity.”

This brings us to a paradox of modern writing—writers who think a relative clause constitutes a sentence. The source of this error is the same one responsible for numerous laxities in modern English—the belief that we write the way we speak.

Capitalizing a relative pronoun gives the illusion of emphasis; that is, the writer seems to want a small pause for effect after the previous sentence, and then start a new one. Nonsense.

A relative pronoun by definition requires an antecedent, which means it may not begin a sentence. The above error could be fixed by:

a) a comma

(“...*tactics*, which brings us to a paradox...”);

b) a demonstrative pronoun

(“...*tactics*. This brings us to a paradox...”);

c) by inserting “and this”

(“...*tactics*, and this brings us to a paradox...”).

Moreover, the error creates initial ambiguity with the interrogatives “which?” and “who?”.

Unfortunately, certain writers don’t believe the rules of grammar apply to them. About five years ago I called the *Globe and Mail* language maven Warren Clements to complain about this problem in Margaret Wente’s writing. He responded tersely that she was a senior columnist and could write however she wanted. Ah, descriptivism! ◀

Greg Felton



Happy Holidays!

We wish all our members a happy and healthy holiday season. See you in 2004!

**Next Meeting**  
**JANUARY 21, 2004 @ 7:30 pm**  
YWCA Health and Wellness  
Centre, 535 Hornby Street  
Vancouver

Our January meeting will be led by Ruth Wilson, of West Coast Editorial Associates. A member of EAC/ACR's National Certification Committee, Ruth will be talking about the planned certification process for editors.

Please consult the EAC-BC website at [www.editors.ca/bc/meetings.htm#upcoming](http://www.editors.ca/bc/meetings.htm#upcoming) closer to the meeting date.

EAC/ACR members attend meetings at no charge. Non-members pay \$5. Light refreshments are available.



New Audio Service

EAC-BC is delighted to offer members the option of listening to online recordings of our meetings. Visit our website at [www.editors.ca/bc/meetings.htm#programs](http://www.editors.ca/bc/meetings.htm#programs) to download the file. The recordings will be posted a week or two after our meeting and will be replaced every month.

Note: The MP3 file is quite large at 9.2 MB, and may take some time to download if you do not have a high-speed Internet connection.

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