

# West Coast EDITOR

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

**JUNE 2003**

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**EDITORS'**

ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES

**RÉVISEURS**

BC BRANCH

## Ways of Reading: Editing beyond Words

What if you were asked not only to write and edit a publication, but also guide its graphic design and be art director for the photography that supports the publication's key messages? EAC-BC member Shamina Senaratne has completed just such a project.

On June 5, 2003, she received two Blue Wave Awards of Excellence from the BC branch of the International Association of Business Communicators. Shamina entered the IABC-BC competition in two categories—photography and graphic design for print marketing material. She was delighted to be recognized for outstanding achievement in both areas. “Good communication meets the needs of both our audiences and our clients. To be recognized by a professional communications organization such as IABC for having achieved this is really meaningful to me.”

The Blue Wave Awards are presented by IABC-BC annually to honour the best work done by communications professionals in BC. Competition is not restricted to members of IABC and provides an opportunity to have work evaluated by senior communicators. Submissions are judged not only on the final product but on a “work plan” as well.

IABC believes that good publications and communications tools come from careful planning and an understanding of the project's constraints. All submissions for the Blue Wave must therefore include the project's work plan, noting details of the client's needs, goals and objectives, and budget limitations, a description of the project and audience, and an evaluation of the results to be achieved by the publication or other communication tool. To condense all this into one

page was no mean feat; Shamina says she wore her editor's hat for that part.

Submissions in each category are sent out of province to be judged by another IABC chapter and are assessed against a points system rather than compared to other entries. Of the 43 projects submitted this year, only 18 projects won either an Award of Excellence or an Award of Merit. Shamina was the only candidate to receive two Awards of Excellence this year.

During six and a half weeks this spring, Shamina developed the entire complement of marketing materials needed for the launch of Frank Smith, a new line of furniture designed and produced in Vancouver by her husband's firm, Francis Lemieux & Co. Marketing materials included business cards, product sheets, catalogues, trade show booth backdrop, press kits, and a Web site [www.franksmith.ca](http://www.franksmith.ca)—for which Shamina wrote the text, acted as her own copy editor and proofreader, then directed the photography and Web and print design. All this while working three days a week at her “steady” job at SFU as program assistant for the Philosophers' Café program.

Shamina likens the graphic design aspect of the project to editing a written text. Her challenge was to produce a visual statement of the Frank Smith line of furniture, with pictures, colour, and open spaces, which would immediately convey to readers the values of simplicity and quality that the furniture embodies. As such, images and graphic elements needed to be pared down to the essential while still leaving enough to captivate readers. In addition, she needed to present what were initially

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unconnected prototypes in such a way that the reader would see the cohesiveness of a “line” of furniture.

Shamina is particularly appreciative of the team who worked with her to realize her vision for this marketing campaign: graphic designer Wilson Nam; photographer Rob Bos; and Web designer, Caterina Fake. “To draw from the work experience I have in many areas, do the specific market research for this project, and produce these print and Web materials has been very rewarding. I couldn’t have done it without such a great team.”

Now that the Frank Smith family project is underway, Shamina is resuming her career as an independent editor and writer, with a particular interest in corporate communications. To this end, and spurred on by this year’s EAC-BC presentation Making an Editor’s Web Site Worth the Work It Takes, she recently purchased [www.shamina.net](http://www.shamina.net) and is producing her own Web site this month.

To other editors she offers this advice:

\* Exploit your diversity. Offer your clients as many skills as you can competently manage. Draw on your many selves—the artist, the businessperson, the pragmatist—to help your clients as much as possible.

\* Join other organizations. Shamina particularly recommends membership in IABC (or similar organizations) for any editor who wishes to network with possible clients in the corporate world.

Finally, Shamina wishes to acknowledge the support and collegiality she feels as a member of EAC-BC.

To find out more about Shamina and her impressive diversity of skills visit her Web site at [www.shamina.net](http://www.shamina.net).

To find out more about the Frank Smith collection, visit [www.franksmith.ca](http://www.franksmith.ca). ◀

*Lesley Cameron, Newsletter Co-chair*



### Print Futures: A student’s tale

*Another article in our series on writing and publishing programs in the Vancouver area. We welcome all contributions from program coordinators and students.*

As an almost-graduate of the Print Futures program at Douglas College, I would like to offer a few thoughts on what I found most valuable in the program.

The first aspect of Print Futures that springs to mind is the quality of the instructors. Almost universally, they are talented professionals and talented teachers. Suzanne Bastedo and Diana Wegner, the editing and language-studies instructors respectively, stand out in this regard.

The second aspect that comes to mind is the program’s intensity. By the third week of my last semester, I had fourteen assignments in progress, including several group projects. I learned to manage a heavy and complex workload because the program demanded it as a condition of survival.

Finally, if I had to pick one aspect of the program that I valued above others, it would have to be the part played by coordinator Maureen Nicholson. With Maureen in charge, ongoing positive change was the norm, and problems were solved speedily and decisively. I am especially grateful for her assistance with several excellent practicum opportunities, and could not have

asked for more from someone in her position.

In general, these last two years have been some of the most profitable, and fun, in my life.

*Bryan Johnson is gearing up with equal enthusiasm for his summer practicum. He can be contacted at [brinkerson@telus.net](mailto:brinkerson@telus.net). ◀*

### Volunteers, prepare to be recognized

The editors of *West Coast Editor* would like to extend their thanks to our team of eagle-eyed volunteer proofreaders: Ellen Baragon, Suzanne Bastedo, Jennifer Getsinger, Paul Gowan, Teresa Jones, Sharon McInnis, Janice Newrick, Susan Safyan, Shamina Senaratne, and David Stacey. We would also like to thank our volunteer copy editors: Susan Safyan, Sheila Smith, and Jack Ognistoff. To all those people, too numerous to list by name, who have contributed articles in the last year, thank you for your time and effort and we do, of course, hope to read more articles by you next year!

If you would like to join our list of volunteer proofreaders, we would love to hear from you. Please contact the newsletter team as soon as possible (contact details on page 4).

On behalf of everyone who attended a workshop this year, a huge thank you to Susan Safyan and her co-chair, Mark Varley, for organizing a varied and useful program of events. The effort involved in coordinating a successful Professional Development program should not be underestimated.

EAC-BC welcomes all volunteers with enthusiasm and gratitude. If you would like to contribute to the successful running of your branch, please contact a member of the executive (details on page 4). ◀

## Copy Editing Workshop

Ruth Wilson of West Coast Editorial Associates packed an impressive amount of information into her March 29 workshop on copy editing as she led a roomful of compulsive types (read: new and experienced editors) through a workshop that was lively, often funny, and loaded with useful information. An experienced instructor, Ruth did an excellent job of fielding questions and involving workshop participants in discussions. Questions, as always, ranged from the general to the esoteric to the just plain nitpicky. “Look it up and get back to me” was her standard (and much-appreciated) refrain in response to particularly minute points of usage and grammar.

The workshop began with a discussion of what it takes to be a copy editor. Participants suggested attributes like “an obsessive desire to know everything” and “having to be right all the time.” Joking aside, we agreed that a good copy editor must possess mental stamina, an ability to pay tireless attention to detail, and an inability to leave facts and figures unverified.

“There are two unforgivable errors in editing,” Ruth warned us. “One is assuming that you know more than the client. And the other is assuming that the client knows more than you do.”

Ruth reviewed copy editing symbols with the group and pointed out differences between a copy editor’s marks and a proofreader’s marks. Participants worked through a few guided exercises to practise marking up hard copy before being turned loose on some short sample manuscripts. “Remember that as a copy editor, part of your job is to decide how much editing a manuscript requires,” she admonished us. “You can’t take yourself so seriously that you forget what you’re required to do. ... If someone hands you a dashed-off letter and asks you to proofread it for them, you’re not going to spend 20 minutes agonizing over whether Ping-Pong is a trade name. You need to check dates and phone numbers. You need to notice that they mentioned 10 tents in the first paragraph and 12 tents later on.”

We briefly reviewed common writing errors, then looked at a few of the thornier issues in a copy editor’s life, including capitalization, use of numbers, and the dreaded topic of hyphenation. Deciding when to use a hyphen can be one of the most problematic and time-consuming tasks faced by copy editors, and judging from the lively debate among workshop participants, the issue of when to hyphenate won’t be resolved anytime soon. Ruth reminded us that hyphens should aid clarity, and that the guiding principle in any editor’s use of hyphens should be to use them to eliminate ambiguity in a text. The American editor John Benbow, once editor of the Oxford University Press stylebook, famously quipped, “If you take hyphens seriously, you will surely go mad.”

We then learned how to achieve consistency in a document by following or creating a style sheet. After reviewing an existing house style sheet for SFU’s Writing and Publishing Program brochure, we had to compile style sheets for a medical brochure and a recipe book. We wrestled with the demands of copy editing work from different genres. Ruth stressed the importance of maintaining priorities appropriate to each publication. For example, in the medical brochure, priority would go to the accuracy of instructions, statistics, and emergency contact information; in the cookbook, measurements and sequencing would be most important.

Later, we discussed the art of querying authors, with Ruth cautioning us to avoid the temptation to make witty remarks in a query. She also discussed the importance of creating a clear and traceable paper trail when sending queries and related documentation. Include dates on all correspondence; also, if there’s any chance you’ll need to refer to a piece of correspondence later, make a copy for yourself before sending it.

We then discussed the pros and cons of editing on computer, a process Ruth prefers to avoid. “It takes longer,” she warned, “and it looks messy. Clients find it more difficult to understand; little errors always seem to slip through; and as for programs, you’re at the mercy of Microsoft. Stick to hard copy when you can.” She acknowledged, however, that editing onscreen saves paper and shipping charges, as documents can be transmitted via email, and can be completed more quickly for a rush job.

Workshop participants came away from the day with a comprehensive overview of the copy editing process and the key issues copy editors face—and with a few good editing anecdotes. One of my favourites concerned a team of editors working together, a great experience because they could put their heads together and discuss various points of grammar, usage, etc. One day they had seized upon a minor but contentious point of hyphenation. They were vigorously debating the issue when a co-worker arrived in the doorway, listened for a moment, and commented, “You people are so boring.”

Compulsive, maybe. Boring? Never! ◀

## EAC-BC Scholarship Update

We are pleased to announce that Beverly Greene is the recipient of the first annual EAC-BC Print Futures Scholarship. Beverly was highly recommended for the scholarship by several of her instructors, including editing instructor and EAC-BC member Suzanne Bastedo, who said, "Beverly qualifies in every way for this first EAC-BC award. I applaud her achievements and high level of professionalism."

Originally from the United States, Beverly moved to BC in 1995. Wishing to build on her lifelong love of writing, she enrolled in the Print Futures Professional Writing program in 2000, graduating with honours in 2003. Beverly's career goal is "to work in the non-profit sector where my writing, communication, organization, and design skills can be used fully to promote equality for all types of people." She has put her skills to work creating advertisements, brochures, newsletters, press releases, and Web sites. Beverly's Public Relations instructor, Terri Smolar, says that Beverly is a consummate PR professional, combining "strategic thinking, detailed analysis, and excellent writing [with] leadership ability and a sense of humour."

On the personal side, Beverly enjoys creative writing, especially poetry. She lives in New Westminster with her partner, two cats, and a ferret. Beverly is strongly dedicated to the causes of human rights and equality. Learn more about Beverly and see samples of her work on her website at <[www.members.shaw.ca/beverlygreene](http://www.members.shaw.ca/beverlygreene)>.

Congratulations, Beverly, and best wishes in your future endeavours! ◀



The EAC-BC Print Futures Scholarship was established to

recognize the commitment and achievements of students entering the field of professional writing and editing. This \$500 scholarship will be awarded in March of each year to a graduating full- or part-time Print Futures student at Douglas College. Interested Print Futures students should check with the financial aid office for information on applying for the scholarship, which will be administered and awarded directly through the college. ◀

*Lynn Smith, Book Sales Coordinator*

## WHAT'S ON

Please note that our next meeting will be held on September 17. Have a wonderful summer.

## New Audio Service

EAC-BC is delighted to offer members the option of listening to online recordings of our meetings. Visit our Web site at <<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.

*West Coast Editor* is the newsletter of the British Columbia branch of the Editors' Association of Canada/ Association canadienne des réviseurs. Views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect those of EAC/ACR as a whole.

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