

West Coast EDITOR

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

MARCH 2003

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EDITORS'
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES
RÉVISEURS

BC BRANCH

Why Every Editor Needs a Web Site

When Derek K. Miller asked a roomful of editors at the January 2003 EAC-BC meeting how many had their own Web sites, only a few raised their hands. By the end of his interactive and engaging presentation, most of those present were talking about taking the plunge and beginning to develop their own Web presence.

Miller, proprietor of Penmachine Media Company and a self-described “writer, editor, Web guy, drummer, and dad,” has worked as a writer and editor for over fifteen years. His Web site—www.penmachine.com—is a wealth of links and information for writers, editors, and their clients, and includes Derek’s biography, résumé, work samples, client list, photos, and much more. He has even posted slides from his EAC-BC presentation on the site; you’ll find them at www.penmachine.com/eac/2003-01_meeting.

In addition to all that content, Derek posts a daily weblog which showcases his writing on topics from music to politics to the Web to parenting. The weblog includes links to topical Web sites, be they personal, corporate, informative, or just entertaining. The links are an element of the site that is central to Derek’s philosophy as a freelancer and Web designer.

“Put absolutely anything useful on your site,” he advised the audience during his presentation. “Make people want to link to your site. Every link you put up can bring traffic back to you, and that’s your goal with a Web site—to get people visiting it.”

Why should every editor have a Web site? According to Derek, “To be taken seriously, you need a Web site. If not now, soon.” A Web site is the business card of the twenty-first century, and a crucial tool for any modern business. Web sites let people access information discreetly and efficiently, without the hassles of phone calls or extensive research.

A Web site is a perfect place for an editor to store a résumé and portfolio. Anyone with an Internet connection can read whatever information you choose to make available: your services, clients, rates, work samples, and almost anything else you care to share. Just think, no more lugging that bulging portfolio to meetings.

As an editor, what should you put on your Web site? Perhaps more than you’d think. Derek’s site is primarily a showcase for his work, but is also a window into many other aspects of his life—and a useful resource for writers, editors, or anyone interested in learning about writing in general. Visitors to the site can watch a Knowledge Network interview with Derek, read his top ten tips for writing better business letters, and view his family photos. One portion of the site is devoted to his band, The Neurotics. (To hear them play or to watch a music video, check out www.theneurotics.com.)

During his presentation, Derek recommended that people think of their Web sites as free online resources. “A good Web site is designed for the people who visit it,” he cautioned, “not for the person who designed it.” It’s okay to have a site that’s all about you; just consider the needs of the people who will be visiting that site. Will visitors be looking for style guides? Writing tips? Information on agents and publishers? Put links to those things on your site! Including links to other useful and interesting sites can only make your own site more useful—and popular.

How can you make people want to visit your site? Derek offered two easy guidelines: keep it simple and make it useful. People get fed up easily when seeking information on the Web; many sites are difficult to navigate, take too long to load, or offer inferior or dated content. A simple, useful site will keep visitors coming back, and may bring you some business in the process.

How can an editor (even a technophobic one) go about creating a Web site? Well, as Derek pointed out, editors tend to be well-organized

Web Sites (continued)

individuals, so a natural first step is to start simply by creating a plan.

Design a home page with your contact info (it can be as simple as a scanned business card with your email address) and work from there. Decide on the purpose and layout of pages you plan to add to the site, then decide if you want to go the do-it-yourself route or hire someone to do it for you.

Scores of software packages and online tutorials are available for the do-it-yourselfer—just type something like “create web page” or “HTML tutorial” into a search engine and see what comes up. If you’re not ready to dive into the world of tags, headers, and JavaScript, professional Web designers can put together a page for a few hundred dollars. And if you’re on a tight budget, you could try approaching staff or students at a college, university, or technical institute to design a page for you.

A Web site is an indispensable business tool. So get going and make one! For more advice on all aspects of creating a Web page, visit Derek’s site and follow the links. Just watch out that you don’t get sidetracked for too long watching those fab Neurotics videos... ◀

*Curtis Foreman,
Public Relations/
Industry Liaison Chair*

Don’t Get Scammed

Worried about being stiffed for payment by a client? Recently, the EAC/ACR email forum has been buzzing with concern about one such client who appears to be making her way across the country, bilking innocent editors. There have been calls for an association blacklist.

Fortunately, this is a rare incident but troubling nonetheless. Before we overreact and threaten people with blacklisting without due process, let’s step back and see what we should be doing as individual editors—and what our association is prepared to do to help us.

First, be careful when you respond to clients. Talk to other editors if you

have concerns. Always make sure that you have a clear agreement on what work you are to do, the time period in which it is to be done, and how you will be paid. EAC/ACR has developed the *Standard Freelance Editorial Agreement* to cover most situations. You can find it on the EAC/ACR Web site at www.editors.ca/pubs/contract.htm.

Although a written agreement is not legally necessary, it is clearly preferable. Letters and emails that clearly spell out the terms of the arrangement and are agreed on by both parties are binding. Verbal agreements may be as well, but are obviously more difficult to substantiate. If contact with the prospective client is electronic, given the ephemeral nature of cyberspace, it is even more important to have these understandings clearly set out in a signed agreement, and, better yet, to receive some advance payment as a demonstration of good faith. When preparing invoices, include a date by which payment is due.

If, for one reason or another, you are not paid what you are owed by a client, EAC/ACR is prepared to assign a mediator to help resolve the situation. However, the mediator cannot force a resolution.

Document all attempts to collect your fee. You may need to make a formal written demand for payment. If this isn’t successful, you may consider taking legal action to obtain payment. One option is to pursue your claim in BC Small Claims Court, which deals with claims under \$3,000. You can find out more about how to file a claim and the current fees at www.ag.gov.bc.ca/courts/small_claims_court.htm.

Even if you are successful in court, you may have to take further steps to enforce your judgment if the client still refuses to pay. The Law Society of British Columbia and the Canadian Bar Association together offer two services which may help you. Dial-a-Law is a free service which provides

general information on legal topics of interest. Call 604-687-4680 or 1-800-565-5297, or go to www.bccbca.org/Guest_Lounge/dial-a-law.asp.

The Lawyer Referral Service provides a first 30-minute consultation with a lawyer for a nominal fee. Call 604-687-3221, or 1-800-663-1919 from outside the Lower Mainland. More information is also available at: www.bccbca.org/Guest_Lounge/lawyer_referral.asp.

These are some options for dealing with a situation where you have not been paid for your services. However, putting a little extra effort in getting a written agreement ahead of time can often save you much trouble and grief down the road. ◀

*Faith Goldenhuys
BC Branch Chair*

Your Association Needs You!

EAC-BC is a volunteer-run organization, and we’re recruiting now for next year’s executive. Elections will be held at the May meeting. This is **your** chance to connect with other editors and advance your profession—and perhaps your career. The substantial rewards include networking opportunities, the chance to learn editorial and other skills, and an impressive activity to add to your résumé or profile.

If you have ideas to contribute, consider serving on the branch executive. Experience is welcome but not required. We’ll post a list of available positions in the next *West Coast Editor*. If you are interested, send an email to Winnifred Assmann at wj_assmann@yahoo.ca.

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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Fashioning an EAC/ACR Statement of Purpose

The EAC/ACR National Council has begun the process of creating a statement of purpose (or “mission statement”) for the organization. To encourage wide participation, each branch is being asked to conduct its own statement process before the national annual general meeting in June in Ottawa where branches will contribute their results to the formation of a national statement.

The BC Branch has set aside the April 16 meeting for this exercise, which will be led by a professional facilitator working within the guidelines established by the National Council.

In order to give everyone time to consider the issues and to make their contribution, please note that the meeting will start at **6:00 PM** (pizza will be provided).

A statement of purpose answers the following questions:

- Who are we?
- What are the basic social needs we exist to meet?
- How do we recognize, anticipate, and respond to these needs or problems?
- How should we respond to our key stakeholders?
- What is our philosophy and culture? Our values?
- What sets us apart?

The answers to these questions will allow us to chart our course for the future—in other words, to engage in strategic planning, and to determine what the organization can do today to ensure tomorrow’s success. Background material about EAC/ACR’s history and aims, as they have been articulated in the past, will be circulated well before the meeting.

Please plan to attend. EAC/ACR is your organization—and your contribution is needed. ◀

Faith Gildenhuis
BC Branch Chair

BOOK CORNER

New edition of business primer hits stores

Following up on John Vigna’s advice in the December 2002 *West Coast Editor*—urging freelance writers and editors to “learn all they can about running a business”—I’d like to recommend the new edition of a national best-seller by BC author Frances McGuckin, entitled *Business for Beginners*. I was privileged to proofread this book last year and found it to be an up-to-date, readable, comprehensive guide for anyone currently operating or considering starting a small business.

The author, CEO of SmallBizPro.com Services—<www.smallbizpro.com>—has been running home-based businesses for two decades and teaching entrepreneurship for almost as long. Her accessible primer, subtitled *A Simple Step-by-Step Guide to Starting a Small Business*, walks the reader through start-up, financials, market research and marketing, and legal and taxation issues. Numerous success strategies and case studies keep the text lively. Abundant checklists make this an exceedingly practical workbook. McGuckin does not sugarcoat the realities of running a small business. “Are you ready to be an entrepreneur?” she asks at the start. “Do you have what it takes?” Chapter 12 was one I could particularly relate to: “Your home office—heaven or hell?” Appendices include a telephone and Internet directory for small businesses and one on filling out government and WCB forms.

Brimming with clear explanations and sound advice, this book is well worth its \$23.95 price tag. Now in its third edition, it is widely used in college and university entrepreneurship and business courses. I guarantee that any self-employed person will find it a worthwhile reference. ◀

Naomi Pauls is a Vancouver freelance editor.

Did you know that EAC-BC members are entitled to a discount on selected books? Check out the book table at our monthly meetings and workshops, or contact our Book Sales Coordinator, Lynn Smith, at <lynn_smith@shaw.ca>.

Featured Book of the Month

Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. (The University of Chicago Press, 1993). This granddaddy of them all lives up to its billing as “the classic reference for all who work with words.” From abbreviations to zip codes, chances are if you need writing, editing, or publishing-related information, you will find it in *Chicago*. This is the volume that no serious editor should be without. Price: Members \$65/ Non-members \$68 (GST included).

Other Book Table Titles

Editing Canadian English

2nd ed., 2000 EAC/ACR

Price: \$24.00*/\$32.00

Meeting Editorial Standards

Revised ed., 2000 EAC/ACR

Price: \$75.00*/\$80.00

A Canadian Writer’s Reference

Updated 2nd ed., 2001

Diana Hacker

Price: \$29.00*/\$32.00

Canadian Press Stylebook

12th ed., 2002

Price: \$31.00*/\$34.00

CP Caps & Spelling

15th ed., 2000

Price: \$21.00*/\$24.00

* Member’s price.

EAC-BC meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the third Wednesday of each month (except December, June, July, and August) at the **YWCA Wellness Centre, 535 Hornby Street (Hornby and Dunsmuir)** in downtown Vancouver. Non-members are welcome! (\$5 drop-in fee.) For more information, please call **604-681-7184**.

WHAT'S ON

**SIGN UP FOR ONE OF OUR
SPRING WORKSHOPS!**

All workshops will be held at
SFU Harbour Centre
515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Design and Print Production

Saturday, March 15, 2003

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Members \$79 / Non-members \$105

We will discuss the design process, moving on to the basic principles and traditions of design and typography, and ending with an overview of the print production process, covering terms and concepts used by designers and printers. Participants will be able to look critically at the design of printed materials and discuss technical aspects with designers and printers.

Ron Woodward, President of Main Floor Creative Inc., has been a designer and design teacher for 30 years, starting with a print shop and design studio in the West Kootenays. He started and chaired the Graphic Communications Department at Selkirk College for six years and currently teaches in the Master of Publishing Program at SFU.

Ron and his wife Meredith have completed a book on the Inside Passage that will be released this spring by Altitude Publishing.

Copy Editing

Saturday, March 29, 2003

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Members \$79 / Non-members \$105

Learn how copy editing fits in the publication cycle. You will have the chance to assess your copy editing aptitude, learn the proper use of copy editing symbols, develop style sheets to ensure consistency, and practise on excerpts from a variety of publications. We will discuss the differences between hard copy and electronic editing, and how to decide when to leave things alone. This course is aimed both at editors with little or no copy editing experience, and those who want to brush up on their skills.

Ruth Wilson has been editing for 21 years. She was managing editor at Self-Counsel Press for several

years, and has been an independent consultant since 1998. She is a member of West Coast Editorial Associates. Ruth works with book publishers, international associations, corporations, and government. She also teaches in SFU's Writing and Publishing Program.

Indexing

Saturday, April 12, 2003

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Members \$79 / Non-members \$105

As an editor, you may be asked to edit or create an index for a non-fiction work, software manual, or other publication. This workshop will tell you what is involved in creating an index; how long it takes; what software can help; how to tell if an index is good or not—and, if all else fails, where you can hire an indexer.

We will identify the difference between good and inadequate indexes; practise basic indexing techniques and discuss ways to learn additional skills; view demos of indexing software and Web sites of interest; and address the realities of working as an indexer.

Annette Lorek, MLS, is a librarian at Capilano College and principal of Infoplex Information Associates Inc., an indexing service. She has indexed more than 100 documents, from back-of-the-book indexes to guides, regulations, journal volumes, and government databases. Annette provides in-house workshops and teaches an indexing course in SFU's Writing and Publishing Program.

Next Meeting

March 19, 2003 @ 7:30 PM

Local author **Lorraine Murphy** will discuss the book she is working on about the women who have gone missing from the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. She will talk about the research process and her efforts to interest a literary agent.

Lorraine is a columnist for *Business in Vancouver* and operates her own writing business, Raincoaster Media Ltd. She maintains an online diary at www.terminalcity.diary-x.com and is a member of the 2003 Surrey International Writers' Conference Committee.

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