

Rebranding Feedback Consolidation Report

Reporting to the
National Executive Council
and Members of the
Editors' Association of Canada

November 24, 2014
(revised November 26, 2014)

**Researched and written by the
Rebranding Feedback Consolidation Team**

Table of contents

Table of contents	i
About this report	1
Background.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Methodology	2
Rebranding feedback themes	2
Report on Member Feedback by Theme	4
Theme 1. The Short Name – Editors Canada / Réviseurs Canada	4
Context	4
Background	4
Member feedback on the short name	4
Theme 2. The Visual Elements of the Brand	7
Context	7
Background	7
Member feedback on the visual elements of the brand	8
Theme 3. The conceptual elements: Brand mandate and marketing.....	11
Context	11
Background	11
Member Feedback about the conceptual elements of the brand.....	12
Theme 4. The Rebranding Process	15
Overview.....	15
(a) The rebranding process itself	15
(b) Communications to members regarding the rebranding process	17
By way of conclusion	20
Appendix A – Message to members.....	21
Appendix B – Listserv message.....	22
Appendix C – Message to members after NEC September meeting	23

The rebranding feedback consolidation team developed this report in November 2014 at the request of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Editors' Association of Canada. This report describes member feedback on the process and elements of the association's rebranding initiative, and is part of the "What's next" section of the NEC letter, "Association rebranding: What happened and what's next?" (Appendix A).

Background

The new brand of the Editors' Association of Canada was originally launched in mid August 2014 on Facebook and other social media platforms with the following message:

Ch-ch-changes! Change is in the air for Canadian editors. Canada's only national editorial association is becoming Editors Canada.

We're the same organization that's driven to advance, support, educate and inform editors, but over the coming weeks we'll be rolling out a new visual identity (including a brand new website) and voice. As always, we're committed to community, conversation and collaboration. In that spirit, we're inviting our social media friends into our transition to a bolder, more dynamic and fun association. Take a look at our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ pages for your first glimpse of the new Editors Canada.

Following the launch, there was a flurry of comments about the new look. The Facebook discussion migrated to the EAC listserv and to the LinkedIn group, as word of the new look spread. Some responses were positive, but serious concerns were also expressed about both the new brand itself and the process that had led to its creation and soft launch—especially the lack of consultation with members of EAC.

As a result, on August 26, the NEC apologized for the lack of consultation and the rollout was halted. In September, the NEC sent out a call to EAC members for volunteers to form a small group that would consolidate the feedback and discussion about the organization's recent rebranding initiative (see Appendix C or at www.editors.ca/node/2740). The volunteers who answered that call formed the rebranding feedback consolidation (RFC) team. We began meeting on October 9. Our role was to gather feedback, to collate views and consolidate member discussions into a report for the NEC, which would reconsider the rebranding at its meeting in late November.

A discussion forum was then set up on *Interactive Voice*, on the editors.ca website in early October, and discussion continued. The RFC team sent out a message to members in early November [www.editors.ca/node/2778] to communicate its activities and offer an alternative method of providing feedback—to an email address—in addition to ones that had already been used such as the listserv and social media.

We consulted the NEC rebranding representative while we worked to verify our direction and to ensure we were in line with NEC expectations. The NEC also asked the Member Communications Committee Chair, to review the report to ensure fair representation of member views. The RFC team is providing its meeting notes (six one-hour meetings), raw feedback data, and consolidation tables to the NEC. This report is intended for dissemination to members (through *Interactive Voice* and emailed to members who ask for a copy) and the NEC.

Between the feedback period, which started in August and continued to November 12, members expressed their opinions. This feedback has been consolidated in this report. French member feedback has been integrated where possible in the report.

Methodology

The RFC team started by collecting feedback data chronologically. We gathered it from the EAC listserv, *Interactive Voice*, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) and the email account and archived it by forum. We have tried to capture a sense of the chronology of events in this report, as helps understand some recurring themes.

We discussed the feedback over several conference calls and saw that it could be divided into several themes. We also considered whether we would quantify the data but in the end decided we would take a broadly qualitative approach, identifying generally what members said they liked and what they had concerns about. This approach would allow the “deep thinking” the NEC rebranding representative advised us that the NEC was looking for to have a basis for moving forward. Apart from the extra time that quantification would have taken, we were not in a position to quantify this data for the following reasons:

- **Representativeness:** Participants in the various forums represent a fraction of the membership. The RFC team learned that less than half of the English-speaking members are signed up to the English listserv, and saw that not all participated in the discussion. Furthermore, the same people sometimes repeated their comments or made comments in more than one forum. As a result, we cannot simply enumerate them.
- **Ambiguity of the purpose of quantification:** It is not clear how quantifying is either possible or helpful while discussion continues. In October, while we were working on gathering feedback and understanding the general flow and topics of discussion, a survey was proposed, but the approach was not seen as optimal.
- **Feedback was not provided in a quantifiable form:** To gather a sense of the scale of opinion—what members felt they loved, liked, disliked, or strongly disliked—is difficult with email feedback during an evolving process, as the last few months of the debate have been.
- **Self-selection bias:** The comments and feedback on the various platforms largely comprise unsolicited feedback and most likely would represent the views of members who felt strongly enough about the issue (whether positively or negatively) to state their views. Such comments would not be representative of all members’ views on the matter.

Sometimes this report uses quantifying words, and so when we write few, we mean a few relative to the comments we collected. We also have removed names from this report to protect the privacy of all individuals concerned, including the names of the design company and members of the executive. The RFC team notes that it has collected all French member feedback on all aspects of rebranding in one document.

In general, the RFC team tried to maintain great sensitivity to the tenor of member comments. We worked as individuals and as a team to understand the effects of bias and have striven to avoid introducing bias in this report.

Rebranding feedback themes

For the qualitative analysis, the RFC team divided the feedback into four main themes:

1. The short name—Editors Canada/Révisseurs Canada —its use and significance
2. The visual elements of the brand: The logo, choice of colours, message visuals, fonts
3. The conceptual elements: Brand marketing and mandate
4. The process: How the rebranding initiative was conducted, rolled out, and communicated to members

We pulled comments from our raw data documents on each of these themes, grouping them into tables, identifying each comment with the commenter’s initials, and, where pertinent, signalling

questions raised. We then identified subtopics and any analytical considerations. We discussed the themes and comments generally and prepared reports on each of the themes, summarizing members' feedback, positive comments, criticism and concerns, and what questions they asked. In addition to the background section above, some background on individual themes is provided in each theme section.

Comments are either verbatim or summarized for brevity. Since a lot of information came forward during the member discussion period, each report includes some background details for each of the four themes, for the sake of clarity.

Report on Member Feedback by Theme

Theme 1. The Short Name – Editors Canada / Réviseurs Canada

Context

The short name is a short version of the official legal name. Association Staff described it on *Interactive Voice* on Oct 8, 2014:

The Editors Canada, Réviseurs Canada, Editors/Réviseurs Canada, Réviseurs/Editors Canada style names replace the EAC/ACR [/ ACR/EAC] family of acronyms. These new style names do not replace the legal name of the association, which remains Editors' Association of Canada/Association canadienne des réviseurs.

The style name is succinct and descriptive. It works well on social media (e.g., @EditorsCanada is an immediately recognizable name) and, along with the caret logo, tells the story of what the association is: the hub for editors in Canada.

And it's also the name already used by the association. Our website is editors.ca/reviseurs.ca and email addresses are @editors.ca/[@reviseurs.ca].

Thus, it is intended to replace the abbreviation, “EAC/ACR.” Under the constitution, the formal name, Editors' Association of Canada, is still the official name and cannot be changed except by membership vote.

Background

Discussion about the English version of the short name was marked by confusion and concerns about (a) its purpose and (b) how it was introduced. The discussion regarding the French name was similar, but also included comments on its impact based on French language conventions (e.g., general discouragement of acronyms, approach to apparent gender neutrality). Some English messages also commented on the French name. “English” and “French” in this analysis is not based on the language in which the comments were made but on the comments on the English or French version of the name—many members use both languages.

Starting in August, attempts were also made to clarify the short name's purpose on the listserv by individual executive members and/or people who had participated in the rebranding. Depending on when a commenter entered the discussion, the points were not always grasped in the same way. Furthermore, when the short name was first used in public forums such as LinkedIn, Twitter, the EAC blog, and Facebook, no explanation was offered, nor was it presented consistently over the different forums. This caused confusion. The rebranding was halted, but not reversed; for example, Twitter uses the rebranding imagery, but communication initiatives during the feedback period have not used it.

Member feedback on the short name

Positive comments about the short name (English)

- more recognizable to new editors and non-editors than “EAC”
- don't think that the name Editors Canada can negatively affect one's career, employment, or client relationships

- a brilliant step towards clarity
- Editors Canada and @editorscanada are meaningful and memorable
- Editors' Association of Canada is way too long and EAC doesn't mean much
- feels fresh and modern (but miss the ease of typing EAC)
- no more having to tell people there's an apostrophe
- easier to use for social media:
 - so much easier for tweeting! [we assume this means easier than Editors' Association of Canada]
 - Editors Canada is more meaningful than EAC/ACR . . . but it makes for a longer Twitter name [than EAC or ACR, we assume]
- It never crossed my mind how much of a drag typing Editors' Association of Canada (EAC) is until the prospect was raised of changing to Editors Canada. Of course! Why didn't I think of that?

Concerns about the short name's meaning: English

- Not professional, does not represent a calm, cool and collected professional look
- Words that identify us are particularly important and Editors Canada is not clear at all—is it a company? a college? A government department? Oh, it's an association of editors! Editors' Association of Canada gets that idea across quite clearly.
- Editors' Association of Canada... professional and more accurate, with no ambiguity.
- Need a name that reflects tradition, respect, confidence, continuity and the fact that members have fought to be considered as highly educated craftspeople, if not “professionals.” Editors Canada reduces us to a social media hashtag; trendy hipness does not necessarily make a brand.
- Editors Canada could just as easily be a government department or a magazine or an editing company as an organization of editors.
- [What about] editors.ca and revision.ca... URLs as short names are in keeping with a modern approach. Our URL is so simple and expressive of who we are—editors.ca—this is the home of Canada's editors.
- Branch names:
 - Editors Toronto—is it a different organization? Editors Canada, Toronto Branch, is clearer
 - There's an awkwardness about Editors <Branch>, and does seem to indicate separateness, rather than part of a whole about it
 - It's very unclear that Editors Toronto is part of Editors Canada
- the name too generic. (Editors Canada, Doctors Canada, Transport Canada, Health Canada, Plumbers Canada – what do any of those mean?) And as a “short name,” Editors/Révisseurs Canada is four times longer than EAC/ACR. What's up with that?

Criticism of the short name's meaning: French

- I like [Editors Canada] though it may not work in French ... “Editors Canada” might be clear “en anglais,” but what's the French version going to be? “Rédacteurs Canada”?

- *[translation]* In French, the short form ACR for reviseurs.ca is not the preferred approach. For a term that can refer to either men or women, we choose, as often as possible a term that includes all its members, that is gender neutral. For example, Association canadienne de la révision professionnelle or Association canadienne de la révision linguistique would be such terms. Thus, we could have revision.ca or revisionlinguistique.ca as the short form.
- *[translation]* I agree that a gender-neutral term would be the best approach for our short form (Web address, email, social media, etc.). I like revision.ca. On the website and in social media... preserve the full name of our association, which is more descriptive, e.g., for the website title... As a model for new naming conventions in French, look at the Association professionnelle des techniciennes et techniciens en documentation du Québec (APTDQ) (note that the T is not duplicated) <http://aptdq.org/>. Similarly we could have: Association professionnelle des réviseuses et réviseurs du Canada (APRC) or Association des réviseuses et réviseurs du Canada (ARC). I like the second choice less because you lose the notion of professionalism, which to me is very important.

Members' questions about the short name

- What's the purpose of having two names?
- Which one am I supposed to use, and where?
- What's the legal difference between them?
- How am I supposed to cite the organization?
- Do I always use the short name, or are there times when I should use the long one?
- In our case, does the acronym become EC instead of EAC?
- What goes on my business card?
- Who has certified me—the Editors' Association of Canada or Editors Canada?
- What exactly is Canada's national editorial association, anyhow? What is our name? Is it E/R, E&R, Editors Réviseurs, Canada's National Editorial Association, Editors Canada (our name on Twitter)? EAC is so well known as "EAC"—do we really want to confuse the issue by giving the association a new acronym, or several acronyms, or no acronym? This is a huge problem, not just for the association as an entity but for individual members. Can we continue to say, to our clients and in our CVs, that we are members of EAC? This jumble of names and acronyms runs counter to the goal of a brand, which is to simplify an organization's image, not complicate it.

Theme 2. The Visual Elements of the Brand

Context

Association staff posted the description of the visual elements on *Interactive Voice*, on October 8, 2014:

Colours

The rebrand features a modern colour palette selected to reflect the three pillars.

Primary colours

Reds: Passion, action, energy, pioneering spirit, leadership

Charcoal grey: Scholarly intellect

Secondary colours

Yellow: Warmth, sun, friendliness, cheerful optimism

Blue: Knowledge, trust, expertise, stability, wisdom

More red and grey hues: As above (passion, action, energy, pioneering spirit, leadership, scholarly intellect)

Caret logo and wordmark

The caret logo is a confident, dynamic design that is immediately recognizable to editors, but is also a bold abstract to people who are not familiar with markup. The caret is our bridge between editing traditions of the past and present.

The aim is for the caret mark to eventually be so recognizable it can be used without the association name.

Visuals

The new brand uses illustrations with simple lines to reflect the strength of the logo.

Illustrations will change as new initiatives are introduced to reflect the friendly tone of our association voice.

Background

In addition to specific comments about the various visual elements of the rebranding, the visual elements prompted discussions and reflections about membership in the organization. The visual elements also elicited comments about the general nature of branding, and about what we are: are we a business trying to get clients, or are we an association that exists for mutual support? There was also some concern that the new look was a *fait accompli*, and that it will now represent us permanently.

Members expressed both approval and disapproval of the visual elements of the new brand, often breaking their comments down by category. The discussion revolved around the following:

- Logo – the caret, and there was a some discussion about the letter cloud
- Colours – red, white and yellow
- Cartoon character
- Message – primarily, “Everything you ever wanted to know about text but were afraid to ask”
- Fonts

Member feedback on the visual elements of the brand

Positive comments

Logo (caret)

- Many comments were in favour of it. Often members liked it even when they didn't like anything else about the new look.
- Members used words such as *neat, clean, crisp, clever, simple, direct, sophisticated, professional, fresh, modern*.
- There were many comments on how much easier it would be to use the new logo on social media and on small devices such as smart phones and tablets.
- A couple of members said it was the only thing they liked about the brand.

Colours

- There was some favour for the new colours, calling them fresh and modern. Some said they didn't hate it, which is not quite the same as liking it.
- A discussion broke out about the new colour vs the old colours: some liked the old colours, some didn't.
- There were some suggestions about colour combinations that might work better.
- Some liked the red and white (Canada's colours) but not the yellow.
- The point was made that since other companies use the same colours, they cannot be called unprofessional.
- There were suggestions that the colours could be modified or made more subtle.
- Some of the discussion revolved around the associations and meanings of colours:
- The old blue and grey: wisdom and intellect
- The new red: passion, energy, and leadership
- The new yellow: warmth, friendliness, cheer, optimism

Cartoon character

- There were some members who liked or at least expressed indifference to the cartoon character and it was mentioned that this was but one of a series of visuals with messages.

Message

- There was some approval for the use of humour in the organization, arguing that humour and whimsy can be professional and snappy.

Concerns and criticism

The biggest concern was that the new look was unprofessional. There was some discussion about how the visual elements represent members as editors.

Logo (caret)

Some of the main concerns were:

- No one will know what the symbol is; it is meaningless. (However, some members felt that this would not be the case—that eventually the logo would be associated with the organization.)

- The symbol is confusing and not unique. It could be mistaken for such symbols as the “play” button, “click on” symbol, campground symbol, or the French circumflex.
- The symbol is obsolete and more meaningful to an older audience, although there were arguments against this line of thinking.
- The name of the association doesn’t appear on the symbol, and words cannot be added to it.

Colours

- Members especially criticized the yellow. Not many people liked it, even when they liked the other colours. They used words such as *jarring*, *abrasive*, *harsh*, *garish*, and *cheap*.
- Often the objection to both the red and the yellow had more to do with shade than with colour. There were pleas for a softer shade. Some members felt that the colours clashed.
- There were concerns about the colour red and what it symbolizes: death, danger, aggressiveness, alarm. The colours don’t send a calm, reassuring message, and this could have an effect on clients. Some members pointed out that the old colours sent that message better.
- The combination of red and yellow was particularly distressing, with its connotation of fast processed food, especially McDonald’s.
- Primary colours—red and yellow—are seen as childish by some members.
- Some members felt that the colours and their combinations (colour on colour and shade on shade) would compromise legibility, readability, and accessibility.
- Others wondered how these colours would look when printed in grayscale, and expressed some concern about the bleed.

Cartoon Character

- Many members reacted strongly to the cartoon character, expressing dislike and often describing it using the word *unprofessional*.
- There was some extremely strong reaction: Some commenters “hate” it or were “appalled.” A number of them threatened to leave the organization if it was to be retained.
- Some felt it said nothing about what we do. Others said they would not send clients to a website with it.
- There was confusion over whom he was supposed to represent: the editor, the client, or a reader? If he represents clients, do the latter want to be associated with such an alarmed and bewildered figure?
- There was dissatisfaction with the apparent gender (male, in an association with mostly female members), and some discussion about whether he was supposed to be androgynous (most people commenting on this felt that he definitely looked male).
- Members did not like the Woody Allen look (some don’t want to be associated with him in any way).
- Members used words such as *immature*, *not dignified*, *cheap*, *embarrassing*, *negative*, *amateurish*.

Message

- There was concern about the use of word play and idiom when we’re supposed to be reaching out to a more international audience.

- The word *unprofessional* came up a lot in discussions.
- There was a plea to use humour carefully in the world of business.
- Some members didn't like the use of sexual innuendo. They felt it was juvenile.
- Many didn't like that the reference was to an old sex manual and later a Woody Allen movie.
- The Woody Allen association itself was seen by some as offensive.
- There was concern that the message doesn't represent what editors do: we don't teach people how to write.
- Members used words such as *dated, cheap, embarrassing, poor taste*.
- There was one mention of the fact that the French contains typos.

Fonts

- A couple of members mentioned that they liked the fonts. There were no negative comments about the type.

Members' questions about the visual elements of the brand

Logo

- Are there alternatives?
- Are members going to continue to put the logo on their web pages if they hate it? Or are we willing to push it through and lose that exposure to "those people" who "have different tastes" than what is proposed?
- Are members going to continue having a logo on their LinkedIn if they feel they've been sideswiped and had their visual presence changed without their consent?
- (General question) The fact that the logo was on the mugs at conference created confusion. Most did not realize that it was part of a rebranding.

Colour

- I rather like the new look, but new logos, colours and images are also an issue of usability.
- Will the bright yellow and red and white text and backgrounds work in print and online for most media?
- Can users of all ages read, for example, white text against a red background?
- How do existing and potential new members react to these colours and layouts?
- Are the new layouts easy to follow? And so on.
- I assume that the design company hired undertook usability testing?
- Can we rebrand in the blue we're used to?

Cartoon character

- Why change from present use of real humans?
- Who does he represent? The reader or the editor?

Message

- Text isn't clear. Who is it directed at? New members? Clients?
- Why have anything negative or mocking in the logo?

General

- What does EAC offer us? This list [listserv] is the main benefit. For instance, if you are in the Prairies where regional meetings don't exist, and you remove a reasonably professional website, what's left?

Theme 3. The conceptual elements: Brand mandate and marketing

Context

Association Staff described the voice and messaging mandates of the rebranding project in the following way in Interactive Voice on October 8, 2014:

Voice: To strike a current and relevant personality and tone, the association will be creative in delivery, using brief attention-getting headlines and text. The voice of the association will be professional, but friendly in tone, using humour to engage the association audience.

Messaging: To promote the editing profession and the need for the association, messaging will be focused on three key awareness-building areas.

The three pillars:

1. **Market:** Creating awareness for editorial services and providing access to editors through the web
2. **Community & Networking:** The association is the hub for Canadian editors, sharing idea and insights
3. **Best Practices:** Setting the standards for professional editing, supporting/advancing editors at various career stages

The messaging platform is still in development. Once complete, members can expect to see examples of how the association can talk about current and future initiatives in ways that point back to one or more of these three pillars.

The branding presentations also state the following project objective:

Create and establish a new brand (visual and written) to tell the story of editors and their work as well as the work of EAC in a positive, contemporary and dynamic way.

Background

In member discussions online, a great deal of focus has been placed on the messaging that was presented on social media: the red and yellow colour scheme and the "Waldo guy." There hasn't been a great deal of acknowledgement of the other messages or colours presented in the rebranding presentation or of the fact that the intention was for the elements to be updated and changed regularly as part of a larger story, as tends to happen with corporate brand imagery. It has been remarked (see Appendices A, B, and C) that, although the brand was being used, the task force had not finished its messaging: it had not finished writing the words that accompany the images that explain who and what we are. The intention was also for the full launch to include delivery of a fully bilingual rebrand, and, to date, the elements being presented are primarily in English.

Member Feedback about the conceptual elements of the brand

What members liked about the conceptual elements of the brand

Overall look of the new brand

- Happy to see EAC being rebranded, time for a change, like the direction of the new elements (if not happy with all of them)
- Fresh, crisp, modern, contemporary, assertive, professional, upbeat, eye-catching, positive change and a breath of fresh air
- Cleaner, clearer, less wordy, uncluttered
- More up to date, more current
- Rebranding is long overdue and absolutely necessary
- New look will make us noticeable and memorable, which is needed to attract more members and to promote EAC's benefits

Appeal and voice of the new brand

- New brand will appeal to a different client base, a wider range of clients, untraditional clients
- Design is a step in the right direction, away from the staid, conservative look we've had until now; better than the old look
- Rebranding will help our association develop a voice that promotes our vision and brand to the world
- Messaging can change with new initiatives while still reflecting the friendly tone of the association's voice
- Though the "Everything you wanted to know about text" tagline was not well received, members expressed their appreciation of other taglines and brainstormed new ones
- Hope the fresh look and tone can help recruit new members; important to counteract the reputation of being a stodgy organization in order to attract new members, keep members, and market editors/editing as a profession to others
- Like the idea of refreshing the look to appeal to web-savvy audience and young editors/communications professionals
- Yes to rebranding for the 21st century, but with some tweaks
- Move toward a more youthful, vibrant look is not a bad thing
- Okay to have fun and whimsy and still be professional
- Elements are all suitable and appropriate
- Believe we can wear this brand and over time, wear it happily, professionally

Concerns and criticism

Comments about professionalism and other qualities

- Juvenile, immature, unprofessional, unclear, inappropriate, comic, garish, jarring, cheap, disingenuous, clumsy (most of these comments were directed toward the colours and the “Everything you want to know about text” messaging)
- New look is not sophisticated, serious, professional and doesn’t convey a depth of knowledge or respect for clients
- Concept presented does nothing to establish EAC/editors as reliable, trustworthy, professional or competent; doesn’t reflect who we are or what we do – want marketing to promote editors and editing, and focusing on the reader (instead of editor or client) in the imagery doesn’t reflect this
- Use of humour is good, depending on how often and when, but why does that mean sexual innuendo? Brand should enhance our professional reputation and sex-related messaging does the opposite

Comments about representation of the organization and its members

- Messaging doesn’t portray what our national association stands for; some members feel they are not represented by the new look; some members do not reflect us collectively and some members personally
- New look should reflect that we are about clarity, readability; that we are solid, dependable
- Does not reflect how clients see themselves or the professionalism of editors and the association; not sure how clients will react or what it says about our credibility; distances editors from clients (us vs. you dynamic)
- Clients want to know their work will be taken seriously; prospective editors want assurance that we respect ourselves and our craft; clients and employers do not look for creativity, play on words, sense of humour
- In-jokes, idioms and cultural references exclude second-language users and won’t grab a global audience; doesn’t work if we’re trying to reach a more international audience and communicate clearly
- Messaging is dated, doesn’t get at what editors do, is a wasted opportunity for a tagline; doesn’t reflect other types of editors beyond those who work correcting copy

Comments about rejuvenation of the brand

- In the effort to move away from the staid, boring image of fussy editors, we’ve gone too far in the wrong direction
- Brand should accommodate the status quo as we still need to retain older members; there is a perception that a great deal of energy is going into efforts to recruit new, younger members while little effort is going into retaining long-time, more experienced members
- Attracting a wider demographic is important to grow, but brand also needs to consider members and how they wish to market themselves
- Direction of the messaging is unclear: is it directed toward new members? Clients? What is the call to action?
- One member suggested: we may have done our "brand" a lot of harm by our "soft launch" fiasco, in our members' eyes anyway. Certainly in mine.

- Some reasons for rebranding (works better with social media, it's time) are poor reasons to wipe out all existing brand recognition; existing brand recognition is valuable
- Marketing may appeal to younger demographic/audience outside the association, but not to professional, serious editors
- Reads as a short-term gimmick, not a long-term brand
- New look doesn't seem to fit with target audiences listed in the rebranding document; messaging seems to have the wrong target

Members' questions about the conceptual elements of the brand

- Why is so much emphasis being placed on new, younger members?
- Cartoon character and tagline have the most negative reaction. Could members embrace/live with the rest of the new look?
- What is rebranding meant to accomplish? What exactly is our brand meant to convey about us and to whom? Are we trying to attract new members? To what end? Do we want to make potential employers and clients aware of our valuable services, to help editors find more work and better pay?
- What data exists to indicate that this rebranding will accomplish the goal of adding and retaining members? Have there been surveys of potential members and ex-members that have indicated that they would join, or would not have left, if the association had a different branding approach? Is there any testing that has been done, or data on the design components, to indicate that it will serve these purposes optimally – rebranding in general, and this approach in specific?
- Debate has touched on what best represents the values of the organization; opinion was split on core values. Do the core values need to be re-assessed?
- Is rebranding the way to get new members and retain current members or should we be focusing on other means to achieve this goal?

It should be noted that the membership communications committee chair who analyzed member survey data two years ago did not see branding showing up in the open-ended questions about factors in deciding whether to retain membership.

Theme 4. The Rebranding Process

Overview

The rebranding process and communications regarding it received the most attention in member feedback. In fact, it was on the issue of process that the discussion exploded in August, after the soft rollout, such as the one reproduced in the introduction to this report, on several forums took place without prior, or with incomplete, notification. Discussion on the process was marked by confusion and concerns about

- (a) how the rebranding process itself was carried out – from the decision to rebrand, through the development of the branding products, to the rollout and beyond
- (b) how rebranding was communicated to members

This theme looks at these two issues and provides background information where needed.

(a) The rebranding process itself

The way that the rebranding was carried out was covered in the August 26, 2014, email to all members, in which the NEC offered explanations about the procurement process and mandate of the design firm (please see Appendix A). The NEC rebranding representative also added some commentary on this on the listserv (Appendix B).

What members liked about the rebranding process

There were some positive comments about the rebranding process:

- Positive comments on the process were mostly about welcoming the rebranding as a useful project for the association. In particular, much appreciation was expressed for the hard work of everyone in putting the rebranding together.
- We only saw one comment by the fresh, modern, assertive, and professional look and had few or no concerns about the release process or channels.

Areas of members' concern about the rebranding process

General comments on the process

Members expressed several main concerns.

- They feel they were not consulted on the process and on rebranding elements.
- They felt the way the rebranding was rolled out was seriously flawed and that, without attention to it, will do damage to the rebranding, to the reputation of the EAC and its members, and to the morale of its members. Some commented that they like the new look, but the way it was made public was troubling because of the apparent lack of a concerted approach.
- Some said their concern was so great as to make them want to leave EAC if the process was not addressed. This prompted responses to discourage this action, that all EAC members are valued, and that membership has many benefits.

Concerns about the initial decision to rebrand EAC

- The decision was not communicated clearly to members
- There was no consultation about the purpose of rebranding.
- Rebranding's purpose was not clear to members. Is the brand a marketing tool, and if so to whom (clients, new members) or does it represent the association and editors and editing in general?

- Not clear who the specific audience is—clients such as publishers and anyone who produces anything written, lapsed members, new members?
- Communications failed to reflect the needs of the current members whom we are trying to retain, as well as non-members who have never heard of the EAC

Concerns about the Rebranding Committee (task force)

- Support for committee’s work was expressed. Criticism was not meant for them as individuals.
- Question was asked about who gave them their mandate and whether approved by NEC. This was clarified during the discussions in social forums

Concerns about procurement and expertise of contracted rebranding firm

- There was a question about the company’s skills in French.
- Some members commented it was unclear how the company was selected, what money set aside for them or what the dates for deliverables were; this was clarified by the NEC after this was raised.

There was mixed response to the design company’s results:

- Members who did not like all or parts of the rebranding elements commented that the responsibility for them lies not with the task force but with the executive who did not properly communicate the rebranding. The EAC president affirmed this.
- Some members commented that the problem with the elements is that the firm that was hired to do the rebranding is not good
- Company chosen did initially say something about consulting EAC members before the look was created, to get a better idea of the organization. Consultation may have included members and editing clients.
- There were questions about who within the EAC and outside (clients, etc.) the firm consulted (this was likewise clarified during this same period by the rebranding representative).
- In addition, questions were raised about the methodology used (see questions, below), such as opinion poll, “an ideal focus group,” an idea which may have been proposed by the design company
- There were also comments that poor design may be due to limited budget.

Concerns after the halt to the rollout

The rollout of the new brand was halted after the September NEC meeting in response to the negative feedback from members.

- Several comments expressed disappointment that the posted branding was not rolled back instead of just being halted.
- In response for clarification, the NEC rebranding representative sent a message that clarified several points and asked for member patience while we try to sort out matters.¹

¹ “The first part of the resolution ‘[to] allow the branding task force to complete the next step of its mandate, that is, to finish the messaging, and request that it give updates to the membership as it does so’ refers exactly to that. The task force had not finished its messaging: it had not finished writing the words that accompany the images that explain who and what we are. Rebranding is far more than a logo. It’s who we are and what we are about. We want members to have the entire picture before commenting. The rollout is being halted, not rolled back. It makes no sense to roll back the elements of the new branding that are out there. For example, some branches have developed promotional material based on the new brand. It would be both expensive and needless to make them reprint those

Governance

Governance – was the rebranding done according to EAC rules?

In response to some of the above concerns, the EAC President explained in the listserv: “The NEC created a task force to carry out the branding and create the new look. This is how the last re-branding exercise was done and how many other large projects, such as Governance, are organized. The task force did exactly what we asked them to and based all their decisions on EAC’s Strategic Plan and the latest member survey plus interviews with other industry representatives.”

- There was a comment that decisions on major changes have always included member input and asked if they are wrong to expect this continued care?
- It was noted that even if communication is more than is required “by the book,” sometimes it is necessary to go beyond the rules to make sure that important matters reach all members.

(b) Communications to members regarding the rebranding process

What members liked about the communications regarding the rebranding process

The RFC team generally did not observe positive comments about the process itself from members, although many expressed support for the need for a new brand and especially a new website. Members of the NEC have also agreed that the process had problems. Worthy of note is the all-member email they sent out apologizing for the way the rollout was conducted.

The RFC team observes, however, that when the NEC individually or collectively responded to member concerns – such as on the decision to halt the rollout and study the rebranding more closely – discussions calmed down in the forums and members expressed thanks to the NEC for listening.

Areas of members’ concern about communication about the rebranding process

Concerns about the lack of mention of rebranding at the AGM

The fact that there was no mention at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which several commented would have been the normal way to present a large undertaking, created a flurry of feedback.

Members commented that although the logo was displayed at the 2014 conference, they never saw it and could not understand why the rebranding was never mentioned at the AGM. It was felt that there should have been more communication in advance of the soft launch to clarify the process, especially at the AGM. The lack of mention at the AGM was one of the reasons that led to the need for consolidating feedback and setting up the RFC team.

There was discussion about which change needs a vote vs. which change does not need a vote.

Concerns about the rollout/launch itself

Surprise was expressed initially at how the new brand was announced and the lack of explanation as to its purpose, because the rollout was

- on social media and not through all-member communication—good communication needs to be done “with a sledgehammer [e.g., email], repeatedly, and with only one topic per email” before posting on social media

resources while this is in limbo. What is out there is out there. The office will, however, stop rolling out future material with the new logo on it. All of this has consequences to our finances, our image, our staff time, and our volunteer time and morale. For example, the new Editing Canadian English, which was about a month away from being released on time and on budget is now on hold. So too is the new website, which is long overdue. This rebranding had been timed to coincide with the new governance of the association so that all the document rewrites, promotional material, and new material being produced would show the new brand. All this is on hold, although some small runs of, for example, membership forms are being redone now with the old brand so that we don’t run out.”

- a soft rollout (i.e., display of some of the elements) at the June conference, but without clarity about the purpose of the display
- not discussed at the AGM beforehand

There were also comments that members should have been given choices (three was a number suggested) before rollout. Some expressed the opinion that poor rollout shows the lack of the professional approach to rebranding.

Some of members' specific concerns were that the mug and Powerpoint at the conference were hidden and not clear; the first appearance of the rollout was on Facebook – a public page (Editors of Earth) – and that damage was done by the rollout in general and the public negative response.

It should be noted that, again, many who commented expressed appreciation for hard work of all and concerns that the issue not be made us vs them.

Concerns about general communications to/consultation with members

After the launch/rollout of the new brand, there were many questions about why members were not informed about rebranding beforehand. In response, the association president explained on the listserv that there had been these specific communications from the NEC:

- The first mention of the re-branding was in July 2013 with a call for volunteers and a description of the task force. At that point, everyone would know that re-branding was in the offing and anyone who was interested had the opportunity to be involved.
- There was an update in the February 2014 e-news update.
- There was a presentation to all branch/twig leaders and the NEC in May 2014.

The RFC team notes that no all-member email from the NEC on rebranding was sent between February and June. While there was mention in the annual report, no explanation to members on what was happening was provided. Nothing was formally presented at the AGM, and the soft rollout was not explained. After February, the next commentary from the NEC was on August 26, when the NEC issued their apology for rolling out the rebranding on just social media and then halted the rollout.

We note that the unilingual English nature of most documents restricted feedback on the process and the elements. The following comments capture both this concern and the need for good communications with all members:

- [translation] This underscores that, to be able to provide a documented opinion on this topic, a French-speaking member absolutely must be bilingual. Otherwise, the member can't read the documents. Once the EAC's new look is ready (really ready) to be launched, please make it in both languages at the same time with documents in both languages, and in the same bilingual way on all information channels (communiqués to social media, via the website) We are a bilingual organization – that's the choice we made.
- I think that there is a lack of information given to members, regarding even the existence of this project (mandate, goal, etc.), and the rollout of the main stages. It is of utmost importance to be as transparent as possible with projects of this importance, which affect the very foundations of the organization.

The RFC team also observed that discussion was influenced throughout by how the NEC individually or collectively responded to members. As noted in the introduction to the (b) above, when NEC members stepped in on the English listserv and elsewhere, and presented facts about the rebranding process and/or the elements, the situation generally calmed down. This was evident in

the thanks that followed. For example, just prior to the NEC issuing the apology, the NEC rebranding representative posted an explanation on the listserv of the rebranding process (see Appendix B). Members posted thanks for this clarification. Our team also appreciated this and felt much better informed.

Our team also note the following:

- Only all-member emails informed all members.
- Even clear communications from some members of the NEC were not available to all members and it was not always clear if NEC members were expressing an individual or a unified executive voice.
- We also note that confusion resulted partly because of the nature of social media—contributors may not even be aware of a well-argued discussion that raised a point and settled/developed it, depending on when and where they jump into the discussion.

Concerns about the Rebranding Feedback Committee

This rebranding feedback team was established in the fall to collect and consolidate feedback so that the NEC could make informed decisions about the next steps. In October, the NEC office also set up an area in *Interactive Voice* devoted to this discussion and provided background material. The NEC rebranding representative pointed out that it was the only one accessible to all, but there was some disagreement about that.

Concerns mostly focused on the difficulties getting into *Interactive Voice*, which required a password to get to the members' area of the EAC website and then another one to get to IV itself. It was felt by members that IV was slow, difficult to get into, and seemed awkward once accessed.

Concerns about how the RFC team would carry out its work

Members felt they were not being listened to. Up to the end there were questions about whether our committee was collecting from all forums. Some felt that members were too negative (one called it vitriol), not constructive, in their criticism. Comments signalled the dangers of relying on social media.

Member Questions about Process

Consultation on the rebranding elements

- When significant change is contemplated, what level of involvement from members is required? How to gain that (and in contrast, in what cases there doesn't need to be such consultation)?
- How are NEC decisions communicated to members and the world?
- Why didn't the task force opt to poll members on redesign concepts? – It would have been ideal focus group.
- Whom did the task force consult?
- What is the rebranding meant to accomplish? Are we trying to attract more members? To what end? Do we want to make potential employers and clients aware of our valuable services, to help editors find more work and better pay? Do we want the cartoon guy to show the general public that editors are “fun, creative, alive”? Again, why? We may well be those things (“alive” at minimum), but that's not why people hire us or join our professional association. What exactly is our “brand” meant to convey about us, and to whom?
- Was any testing done or data on the design to indicate it will serve the rebranding objectives?

- Hiring a professional design firm okay – it's the way this sort of thing is done. Who are they? Is the work being done free or paid? How much? How were they selected?
- Concerns: who was consulted, what methodology was used, how was it rolled out?
- On rolling back the brand rather than just halting it – shows NEC listening to members, that it cares
- Mixed opinions on whether the roll back should be halted or reverted, but hardly anyone said it should not be stopped.

Suggestions from members on the rebranding process

A strong message from members was:

- Make sure to communicate important matters to all members before releasing bits of it or sending communication about it in areas seen by limited membership.
- Make sure every single person knows what is happening and provide avenues for individuals not intimately involved in the process to provide feedback. Then the rollout has to be fully internal first. Only then can you move on to an external rollout.
- Communicate what a brand means - An organization's brand is what people feel (feel more than think) when they think of the organization. Fifty percent of that comes from how the organization acts. Only a small portion comes from the visuals. Some comes from the messaging.
- Members offered suggestions on how procurement for rebranding should work and how better results are achieved when members are consulted early in the process.

By way of conclusion

By submitting this report, the RFC team wishes to assure members that their comments were heard in the context of the ongoing discussions and considered thematically. The team acknowledges that we have not had the time to do a thorough copy edit and proofreading of the document and this troubles our editor souls.

In the time allotted, we have done our best to consolidate the commentary into a format that is representative of the views expressed. It is our hope that this report will help the NEC in their review of the rebranding initiative as they decide on next steps.

Appendix A – Message to members

Letter to all members, sent on Aug 26, 2014, at 2:44 PM, by the Editors' Association of Canada <communications@editors.ca>

EAC/ACR: Association rebranding: What happened and what's next?

For the last nine months EAC's rebranding task force has been working hard to update the visual identity and voice for the association. Earlier this month we began to preview the new brand for the association on our national **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn** and **Google+** pages.

Not all EAC members are on social media and some may not even be aware of what has happened. The intention was to offer a preview of the new brand to one facet of EAC's audience: our social media followers. Many members were unhappy that the presentation of a new brand was not made to the full membership first.

They're right. We should have presented the new brand to the membership before going public on social media. Community is at the heart of what this association is about and it is one of the foundations on which the new brand was established. In our excitement to preview the new brand with a segment of our community, we neglected the one closest to us: the membership. For that, we apologize. Unequivocally and without guile. We're sorry.

Background

EAC develops a strategic plan every five years that sets out the goals and direction for the organization. Rebranding the association moved to the top of the list in the last fiscal year after being on the wish list for many years. Membership has been steadily declining since 2008 and it was time for a change.

The rebranding process

In 2013 the national executive council (NEC) struck a rebranding task force with a mandate, budget and timeline. The task force reviewed documents relevant to EAC branding, including the latest strategic plan and the results of the 2012 membership survey. After issuing a request for proposals, the task force contracted [the design company], a bilingual creative agency in Toronto, to create a visual and written brand that would tell the story of editors and their work, as well as tell the story of EAC in a positive, contemporary and dynamic way. The identity also had to work in both official languages. The task force provided an update on its progress in the **February 2014 e-news update**.

As part of their discovery process, [the design company] reviewed the strategic plan and membership survey. They then conducted one-on-one interviews with three groups of people:

- Members. The office generated a random sampling of members. The agency contacted those who gave permission.
- External audience. The agency contacted editors and individuals who hire or work with editors. It ensured it interviewed those who knew about EAC and those who had never heard of the association.
- The branding task force.

Following this, [the design company] presented a number of concepts to the task force, which ultimately chose the one previewed on social media. There was vigorous debate about colours, fonts and images—as you can imagine—but the overall sentiment was that that the design was fresh, smart and appealing.

Spreading the word

After the task force approved the designs, the new look was shared with members of the NEC and branch

chairs and twig coordinators who were invited to view a presentation in May 2014. Members were informed about the rebranding in the initial call for volunteers, e-news updates and in the **Annual Report** (PDF, 1.2 MB). The task force also produced a **PowerPoint presentation** (PDF, 2.8 MB) that was on display at the 2014 conference.

In retrospect, we could and should have communicated more often and more explicitly about the process.

What's next

Some members have asked for the branding preview to be rolled back or put on hold pending member review. The national executive council continues to collect feedback from members about the rebrand and will discuss options and report back to the membership after its third quarter meeting in Ottawa, September 13-14.

Signed by the
EAC President and the
Director of professional standards, NEC representative on the rebranding task force

Appendix B – Listserv message

On the Listserv, the NEC rebranding representative provided some helpful commentary on Aug 22, several days prior to the NEC apology.

... And now the process that brought us here – EAC develops a strategic plan every five years that sets out the goals and direction for the organization. The office then takes that plan and operationalizes it, providing a budget for items that are high in priority. Rebranding moved to the top of the list in the last fiscal year (or possibly year and a half) after being on the wish list for many years. Members have said that the old look and feel of the organization was outdated and the logo did fit with social media, and that after well over a decade (15 years?), it was time for a change.

NEC struck a Rebranding Task Force with a mandate, budget, and timeline in November 2013. Melva McLean from Winnipeg chaired the Task Force comprising members representing different age groups and stages in their editing careers. The Task Force had two phases.

Phase 1 was completed in February 2014 and communicated to members in the February 27 e-news update. It reported that Task Force members had “reviewed documents relevant to EAC branding, including the strategic plan and the 2012 membership survey.” They then issued an RFP and contracted with a design company in Toronto to create a visual and written brand that would tell the story of editors and their work as well as tell the story of EAC in a positive, contemporary, and dynamic way. The identity also had to work in both official languages.

Phase 2 was completed on time and on budget in April or May 2014. As part of this process, [the design firm] reviewed the EAC strategic plan and members survey. They then conducted one-on-one interviews with three groups of people:

- Members. The office generated a random sampling of members. The agency contacted those who gave permission.
- External audience. The agency contacted companies, governments, and agencies who hire editors. It ensured it interviewed those who knew about EAC and those who had never heard of the association.

- Members of the Rebranding Taskforce.

Following this, [the design firm] presented a number of designs to the Task Force, which ultimately chose the one you have all seen. There was vigorous debate about colours, fonts, and images—as you can imagine—but the overall sentiment was that that the design was fresh, smart, and appealing.

Spreading the word: After the Task Force approved the designs, the new look was shared with members of the NEC and then branch and committee chairs. Members were informed about the rebranding in the initial call for volunteers, several e-news updates throughout the year, and in the Annual Report that was sent to all members along with information about the AGM.

Rollout Part 1: The original intent was to rollout the new identity at the conference in June. However, two things conspired against us: the governance issue took the majority of EAC's time and focus over the past year, and necessary changes to the website to support the launch were not ready. The latter continues to be a problem. So, a decision was made (that's a good use of the passive voice!) to begin a soft launch by putting a travel coffee mug in each delegate's bag. I certainly heard about the new logo at the conference, but apparently not all of you did.

Rollout Part 2: EAC delayed the rollout, hoping that the new website would be ready. When it was still not ready months after originally expected, the office decided—after consulting with the taskforce and the agency—to begin a soft rollout that would gradually introduce the new look and feel. This differs from a hard rollout in that the two faces—new and old—are out there simultaneously until the new one gradually replaces the old. The first step took place late last week. I knew that this was going to happen. I expected some pushback along with some delight. We've received both, and much more delight than has been evident in this forum.

Going forward: Heather and Janet have asked that we stop the rollout, explain this change to members first, and allow people time to provide feedback. While I can't speak for the NEC (I am but one member) or the national office, I can ask that this take place. I will bring this recommendation forward and promise to report back.

Appendix C – Message to members after NEC September meeting Rebranding and the NEC

The EAC national executive council (NEC) spent much of Sunday discussing rebranding at its quarterly meeting in Ottawa. All members of the NEC were present, as were Carolyn L Burke and Michelle Ou from the national office and three members.

After considerable discussion and deliberation, the NEC passed a four-part motion to do with rebranding. It agreed to

- allow the branding task force to complete the next step of its mandate, that is, to finish the messaging, and request that it give updates to the membership as it does so;
- communicate to members what the branding is intended to show;
- set up a mechanism to solicit feedback from and discussion among members; and
- continue to halt the rollout of the rebranding until the NEC has had time to consider more member feedback and bring it to the next NEC meeting for a decision on how to proceed.

So what does this mean? It means that the rollout of the rebranding continues to be on hold until the next NEC meeting in November. In the interim, we will ask the rebranding task force to complete the

next phase of its work so that our next decision can be based on a full suite of information. The NEC is looking for a few volunteers to form a small group to help consolidate the feedback and discussion. Please email me if you want to be part of this group *[address suppressed]*. I will not be leading it as we need to have an unbiased facilitator, but I will be coordinating its existence and ensuring that this issue proceeds to a conclusion.

Signed by the
EAC President and the
Director of professional standards, NEC representative on the rebranding task force