

Edition

The journal of the Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto branch

FEBRUARY 2009

Mining the college experience: Student views on editorial education

- ■ ■ Past program report:
The Canadian magazine industry

- ■ ■ Branch executive reports

- ■ ■ Laughable Language:
A review of June Casagrande's *Mortal Syntax: 101 Language Choices That Will Get You Clobbered by the Grammar Snobs—Even If You're Right*



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Edition

(published nine times yearly)

is the newsletter of the
Editors' Association of Canada,
Toronto branch.

ISSN 1708-5543

Editor's Note



WE'RE BACK WITH WHAT IS SHAPING UP TO BE AN EXCITING NEW year of reports, articles, and book reviews. In December, *Edition* volunteers got together to raise a toast and celebrate our success in 2008. With a bit of spirits in our system and a share of fries, we had lively discussions about punctuation and other editing-related topics (See photos below). And in other *Edition* news, this year Ian Kennedy has accepted a new volunteer position and is our first newsletter coordinator. Mary Allen, Dimitra Chronopoulos, and Elizabeth Trew are members of *Edition's* newly formed 30th Anniversary Committee. And yours truly has finally defrosted after 24 hours without power and a very cold weekend.

Read on and enjoy this month's contributions, including Noreen Shanahan's report on November's program. Although it was a while ago, its insights into the Canadian magazine industry do not have an expiry date. Mary Allen reports on interviews she conducted with a number of EAC members on their experiences in publishing programs at colleges in Toronto. And finally, Lindsay Hodder reviews June Casagrande's latest book on grammar.

Sara Promislow

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Contents

February 2009

Past program report: 4

The Canadian magazine industry. A panel with Penny Caldwell, Craig Saunders, and D. B. Scott

By Noreen Shanahan

Your Toronto branch 8

The Toronto executive

For your diary

A word from the branch chair

Seminar chair report

Membership report

Hotline report

Mining the college experience: 14

Student views on editorial education

By Mary Allen



Laughable language: 19

*A review of June Casagrande's **Mortal Syntax: 101 Language Choices That Will Get You Clobbered by the Grammar Snobs—Even If You're Right***

By Lindsay Hodder



The November meeting with guest speakers from the magazine industry.



THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE INDUSTRY

A panel with Penny Caldwell, Craig Saunders, and D. B. Scott

By Noreen Shanahan

NOT SURPRISINGLY, WHILE the recession sprouts from all ends of the earth, things also run amuck in the Canadian magazine industry. At the November meeting, three magazine editors alerted us to this dire situation. Penny Caldwell, editor of *Cottage Life*, spoke first. She was followed by Craig Saunders, editor of a trade magazine who is also a freelance writer. D. B. Scott ended the evening with a more long-term view of the industry and his experience teaching in the journalism program at Ryerson University.

Cottage Life, founded in 1988, has a paid circulation of 75,000 as well as a 1.1 million “pass along” readership. It averages fifteen readers per copy. The magazine fills a niche market—cottagers excited about their city-escape crave to read about other cottagers. “As we brace ourselves for the economic reality of 2009 and beyond”, said Caldwell, “the passion readers have for their subject will help us.” She spoke anecdotally



The panel: Craig Saunders, Penny Caldwell, and D. B. Scott

about how some people selling their cottage will add an unusual perk: a complete set of *Cottage Life* they’ve had squirreled away for decades. She asked the audience to consider whether they might also have old issues of, say, *National Geographic* stashed in tidy piles in their basements. “There is an appealing tactile attraction to magazines”, she said. “We like to feel it in our hands.”

Meanwhile, *Cottage Life* has had to diversify in order to survive. It now incorporates radio and television broadcasting, consumer shows, and a



book division (which publishes cooking books in particular). And now, the Internet. Caldwell said social networking and online communities increase loyal audiences; these will serve the magazine well in the future. Her presentation ended with a warning: Magazine editors are being pressured to relax their advertising-editing guidelines in order to cinch the deal. "If we let that happen," she said, "it's going to be hard to go back. We need to stand together to protect the editorial integrity of our products."

Craig Saunders said trade magazines are sharply different from consumer magazines



such as Cottage Life. They don't have a niche market; instead they are bound together as part of an industry. The audience of trade magazines are less connected to

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the Internet than consumer magazines, primarily because there are large retail contingents who don't have access to a computer. "It's an industry where a large percentage go home after work and stop working", he said. "They have evenings!" The magazine history, he said, is certainly not a Canadian success story. Since 1985 the industry has faced substantial cuts in government grants, increased postal rates and printing costs, and difficulties in paying for exemplary writers. "You're going to see a lot of marginal magazines go", he said, adding that several have disappeared in the last couple of months. But

he thinks many magazines will squeak by if editors work harder and become part of the Web. "We can't just be print people anymore."

D. B. Scott began his talk with these haunting words: "One of the reasons why I didn't want to go first was I was too tempted to say: We're all doomed." But he doesn't actually believe this. In fact he's reasonably optimistic about the Canadian magazine industry. "Albeit the fact that, at



"We can't just
be print people
anymore."



the moment, we seem to be overwhelmed by a melange of paradoxes, complications, fear and confusion. But then we're like the US Department of the Treasury; we're all trying to figure out what's going to happen." Magazines have had to adapt before, he pointed out, not just with recessions but also with technological cataclysms. He suggested the introduction of television as an example.

"Magazines became niche vehicles that went after very specialized, vertical audiences, and that is something that has built the muscle mass of Canadian magazine publishing", Scott said. As a result, they are good at finding, keeping, and exploiting audiences. "It makes them more flexible and nimble than other media." Magazines are in the business of selling advertising to readers, he said, and they are a low margin business. Many operate at a break-even point; others make perhaps eight or ten percent on advertising revenue

in a good year. "There are many rewards in being in the magazine industry but getting rich is not one of them."

According to Scott, only about 15 percent of the spending of any given magazine in this country goes towards content; all the rest goes into print, paper, and other things, such as distribution. Meanwhile, most Canadian magazines are owned by companies that are not in the publishing business, for instance Rogers Communications, and so tend not to understand the peculiarities of the magazine industry. Finding audiences, holding onto them, and exploiting them is the entire way in which content is paid for, he said, and these goals are generally in the hands of the magazine editors. "But if content is so important there has to be a way for writers, et cetera., mostly freelancers, to be paid enough to live decently in a modern Canadian city." Finally, Scott pointed out that due to the current rupture in the





Canadian magazine industry, there are more jobs for freelance editors—good to hear, for those of us in the audience. But, on the other hand, these jobs are becoming more competitive, because of massive layoffs in the industry.

Although the evening's speakers were informative and often riveting, the outlook was predictably grim for those of us who touch, read, or earn our living by Canadian magazines. ■■■

Noreen Shanahan

“There are many rewards in being in the magazine industry but getting rich is not one of them.”

An audio resording of the program is available at:
www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/news/eac_toronto_recordings/index.html

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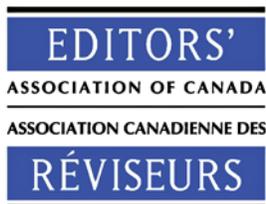
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■ For your diary pages

Executive Meeting

Tuesday, February 10, 2009
6:30 PM
EAC National office,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 505
All members are welcome
RSVP: toronto_br_membership_chair@editors.ca

General Meeting

Monday, February 23, 2009
7:00 PM New members Q & A
7:30 PM Business session
9 PM Followed by a Book swap
and mix-and-mingle

During the business session, members will be discussing rates. The committee struck at the October meeting will present its report, and individual members will be given the opportunity to share comments and ask questions. Given the importance of this discussion, a formal program will not be presented at the February meeting. Instead, we'll be kicking back and swapping some books. Please bring in any books—editing-related or non-editing related, fiction or non-fiction—you no longer want and spread some literary joy.

■ Welcome new members!

As of January 1, 2008, the Toronto branch has 678 members: 341 voting (including 2 honorary life members), 285 qualifying, 40 student members, and 10 emeritus members. 6 members identified themselves as Francophone. A total of 9 people have joined since November. The new members are:

Sue Bruley
Deborah Carroll
Julie Cezer
Linda Levar
Paul Love

Shannon Payne
Kate Scowen
Carrie Shimkofsky
Caroline Ziegler

Hotline Report	January 2009
Members registered	13
Clients registered:	3
Hotline opportunities	1. Children's books 2. Web site content for mid-size computer business 3. French language poetry

Hotline Registration

Clients call to be matched with branch members who have registered with the Hotline for work.

When you register, please note these guidelines:

If you are listed in the EAC Directory of Editors (print or online), note any changes to your listing.

If you are not listed in the Directory and have not previously registered with the Hotline, send your resumé in Directory or Hotline style. You can find guidelines to the Directory format at www.editors.ca/hire/ode/search_tips.html.

Hotline style follows the Directory format. However, you may include as many interests as you wish and write your profile in point form.

Please limit your resumé to one page.

If you have registered before, send your resumé only if it has changed.

Hotline registration begins on the first of each month. Please contact the branch every month to be listed again.

Telephone: 416 975-5528 Fax: 416 975-5596
toronto@editors.ca (.rtf attachment; subject: Hotline)

A word from the branch chair

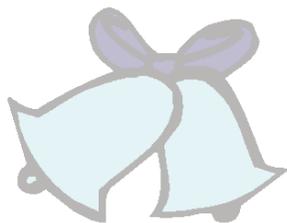
By Alan Yoshioka

A PERSONAL NOTE THIS TIME:
I'm overjoyed to announce that your faithful branch chair is engaged to be married to a fellow member of EAC, Theresa Smyth. Theresa is a clinical social worker who also writes and edits. We hope to be married by summertime. ■■■

Alan Yoshioka, Branch chair
toronto_br_chair@editors.ca



Editors in love



Share your knowledge for a half an hour

ISN'T IT SATISFYING WHEN PEOPLE listen to you with rapt attention and respect? That feeling could soon be yours. If you have a few years of EAC membership and editing experience, here's a terrific opportunity to help the branch grow and to remind yourself how much you know about your chosen field.

For 30 minutes before each monthly meeting, the Toronto branch offers prospective branch members and editorial hopefuls the opportunity to ask questions about the association and the practice of editing. It's often as much about making people feel welcome as about providing substantive information.

Consider leading a Q&A session this year. No extensive preparation is required; all you need are some editing experience and genuine enthusiasm for the benefits of EAC membership. A resource document will also be available to you.

Who knows which future branch leaders you may be inspiring?



If you are interested in participating, please contact the branch member relations chair by e-mail at toronto_br_membership_chair@editors.ca.

Seminar chair report

IT'S A NEW YEAR—THE PERFECT TIME to pick up a new skill or brush up on an old one. The February seminar offerings from the EAC Toronto branch will help you do just that.

Camilla Blakeley kicks things off with *Editing Illustrative Material* on Saturday, February 7. If your editing assignments ever include charts, tables, graphs, or other illustrations, this seminar is for you!

Finishing the month is a double bill from Elizabeth d'Anjou: *Taking the Plunge as a Freelance Editor* on Saturday, February 21, and *Developing a House Style* on Tuesday, February 24. *Taking the Plunge* has plenty of tips and advice for any editor considering a freelance career.

Developing a House Style



offers guidance and support to any editor charged with creating a style guide.

Looking ahead, March brings a new seminar to Kitchener-Waterloo: Catherine Roberts's *Fact-Checking for Magazines*, held Saturday, March 7, at the Kitchener Public

Library. Then, Kathryn Dean returns to Toronto with *Copy Editing: A Hands-on Introduction* on Wednesday, March 11, and Wednesday, March 18.

For full seminar descriptions and to register, go to www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars.

Don't forget to check out the rest of our Winter/Spring seminar line-up while you're there! ■■■

Emily Dockrill, Seminar chair
toronto_br_pd_chair@editors.ca

www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars

MINING THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Student views on editorial education

By Mary Allen

CENTENNIAL
COLLEGE
TRAINING



AT A DECEMBER GATHERING OF *Edition* volunteers, talk turned to editorial training and an idea for this month's feature article was hatched—an interview project that would investigate student perspectives on various publishing programs offered in the Toronto area. To explore student views, five individuals representing both current students and graduates from Humber College, Centennial College, George Brown College, and Ryerson University programs were consulted on their expectations, experiences, and their evaluation of the training they received. To encourage candour, interviewees were promised confidentiality and hence all names have been changed to protect the innocent. Interview subjects will be identified only by institution, i.e., as Humber graduate, Centennial graduate, current Ryerson student, Ryerson graduate, and George Brown graduate. While this approach lays no claim to science, the anecdotal responses provided offer qualitative colour that may be of interest to EAC members,



“So, you want to be an editor?”

and particularly those involved in the development of editorial curriculum and professional standards.

To explore expectations, the first discussion points revolved around why students chose to register for a program, and how they chose a particular institution. Motivation to enrol in an editorial training program appears to have been as varied as the individuals involved, reflecting not only the interviewees’ stage in life but also the different programs they gravitated towards. For the Humber graduate who was already working in an editorial capacity, courses offered the means to further develop professional skills. For the Ryerson interviewees, part-time enrolment in editorial courses began with a vague interest in improving skills or an interest in exploring career alternatives, transformed over time into a firmer commitment to the program. For example the Ryerson student was engaged in a number of editorial projects on a voluntary basis prior to taking courses on a formal basis. The importance of program completion was reinforced in a brush with the real world of publishing:

“Honestly, I enrolled thanks to a job interview where the interviewer said that

most, if not all, of their in-house employees had the certificate or equivalent professional training... My motivations have morphed into a mix of improving my skills and having the knowledge and foundation the certificate offers.”

For other students, recognition of enrolment in a certificate program was a prerequisite to establishing some credibility in the industry was more apparent up front. For the George Brown graduate, completion of a certified program was viewed as a necessary means to move from a career in teaching and translation to one in editing. The recent honours English university graduate registered for Centennial’s full-time program with a clear expectation that the one-year program would provide the competitive edge needed to embark on a career in publishing. Despite varied motivations, then, each interviewee ultimately recognized the value of an editorial certificate or diploma (or courses) as entry to the profession. The Humber graduate, who was personally looking for skills upgrade, added that “a publishing program is a must for anyone who wants to get into the industry.”

Typically, students sought opinions on



the reputation of the different editorial programs through word of mouth; however as an aside that will be heartening to EAC web designers and developers, the EAC

served as a good source of information for students considering their various options. Three of the five interviewees heard about certificate programs from the EAC, of the

“Not everyone is meant to teach.”

three, two had visited the EAC Web site in the course of researching publishing careers, and one specifically mentioned the link, “So, you want to be an editor.”

Generally, all students agreed that their programs met their expectations and that they learned a good deal from the curriculum. While there was some divergence in terms of the content areas that should receive more emphasis, most of the students expressed a desire to delve into editorial issues in greater depth, and demonstrated less interest in course materials dealing with the publishing industry in general. As the George Brown graduate put it, courses offered in substantive editing and copy editing formed the core of the program; the current Ryerson student claimed to be “only interested in editorial courses”; and the Centennial graduate registered for copywriting and substantive editing courses at Ryerson after completing the Centennial program—other courses were considered a

“good overview for an entry-level position.”

In terms of content, more critique was reserved for course delivery, and as with many institutions, courses were described as “good” or “bad” depending on the instructor. That said, it seems that issues related to instructional standards are perhaps more problematic in this type of certificate program. According to the graduate from George Brown, this inconsistency may be a function of the Continuing Education program set up, where busy people from the industry are brought in to teach these courses on a part-time basis, for very little money, a couple of nights a week. In some cases, “they don’t put a lot of effort into it,” and in other cases, while the instructors may be highly specialized in their field, they are not very good teachers. As the Centennial interviewee explained, “not everyone is meant to teach; [some instructors] seemed to lack direction and could perhaps have done with some training in adult education



or a more structured curriculum to follow.”

Suggestions for program and curriculum improvement essentially restated concerns about content focus and instructor qualifications. While most students advised more emphasis on editing courses, the George Brown graduate suggested an introductory course for would-be editors to acquaint them with the “business of editing” and the “process of getting into the industry”. The Ryerson graduate stressed the need for practical courses, and

more computer training in particular (e.g., InDesign), noting that students are told “You will learn that on the job, or you can take a course in that somewhere else”, but that learning on the job is not always realistic and doesn’t help the competitive profile of a job seeker looking to enter the industry.

Reactions to internships also varied. Internships were generally regarded as a means for students to round out their academic studies with practical experience and to enhance their employability. Though

“Learn as much as you can.”

internships were not offered at Humber during the Humber graduate’s course of study and while the current Ryerson student has yet to complete one, the remaining three graduates did have some experience of internships. In fact, work placements are a requirement for program completion at George Brown and Centennial. The George Brown graduate is still trying to “understand the value” of an internship that he personally arranged at a popular Toronto entertainment weekly. While inspired by the arts and culture content, intrigued by exposure to the inner workings of a magazine, and pleased by an invitation to engage in some journalistic writing, the

George Brown intern was also assigned a lot of “fact-checking and list compiling”, and not much work that “related to editing”. As a result, this graduate feels the need to participate in additional internships—hopefully ones that offer more than the “grunt work that nobody else has time to do.” The other interns had more positive experiences: The Ryerson graduate, for example, did not have to wait for graduation or a response to applications for internships. The interviewee was offered an internship during course studies that ultimately translated into a challenging full-time position. Similarly, the Centennial graduate was hired by an outside company while



working through an internship that provided “excellent learning and good preparation,” but advises internship applicants not to expect “to be hired at the end of it.... Just make the most of your time there and learn as much as you can. Even if it doesn’t result in a job, it’s still valuable work experience.”

So if internships are not a miraculous key, how do the various publishing programs serve as an entry point to the world of publishing? Interestingly, not all students would agree that it is so. For example, though the Humber graduate considered participation in the program very good for skills building and a great life experience, “As a job-getting program, I would rate it low. It prepares you for the publishing industry, which is extremely small and generally takes [only] new university grads.” Other students, offered a more positive evaluation of the professional placement services offered by various programs. They pointed to the e-mail address lists maintained by program coordinators at several schools (Centennial, Ryerson) to circulate job postings, seminar

notices, and other industry news, as well as to help offered on a less formal basis. According to the current Ryerson student, the program acts as a “stepping stone” from which instructors introduce students to the publishing community, providing valuable contacts that students may eventually approach to promote their services. The Ryerson graduate concurred with this view, explaining that “the instructors are great and they’re all working, so a lot of them are very helpful when you are looking for a job. They’ll act as references, they’ll actively look for you, they may offer students jobs or send job postings... Just as people, you can become really good friends. And that’s a very important part of it, because it’s all about who you know.” ■■■

Mary Allen

“A great life experience, but...”

Laughable language:

A review of June Casagrande's

MORTAL SYNTAX:

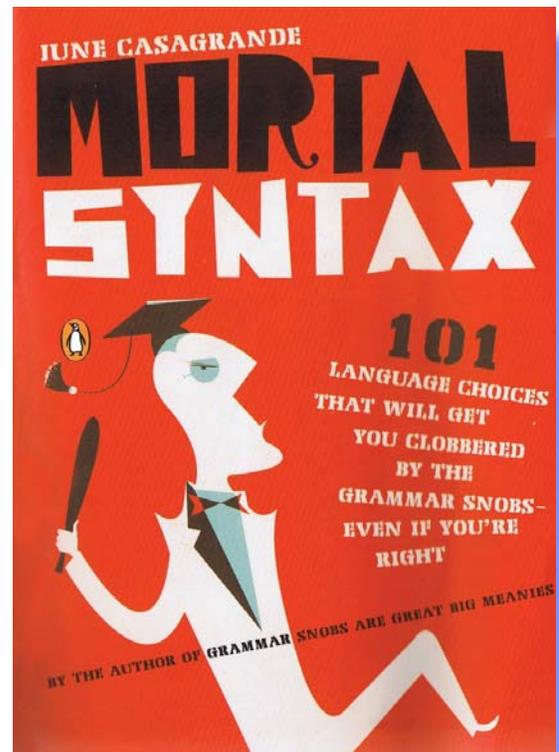
101 Language Choices That Will Get You Clobbered by the Grammar Snobs—Even If You're Right

(New York: Penguin Books, 2008)

By Lindsay Hodder

JUNE CASAGRANDE REVISITS THE “grammar snobs” she introduced in her 2006 title, *Grammar Snobs are Great Big Meanies* (New York: Penguin Books). She has compiled 101 of the common mistakes people make in their everyday grammar and explains the reasons why they're wrong—or why they are actually right but the “grammar snobs” would argue the opposite.

Witty in tone throughout the book, Casagrande's references to current situations to set the use of each phrase makes the book highly entertaining, as well as relevant. Although her examples do rely rather heavily on TV (somewhere between her twentieth reference to the *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*, her candour loses its endearing quality), this is certainly a grammar book, which younger generations can easily comprehend.



*Casagrande uses
humour as her main
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Transitive
Vampire or Bill
Bryson's Mother
Tongue.*

Casagrande uses humour as her main rhetorical device, and I haven't read such an entertaining book on language and grammar since Karen Elizabeth Gordon's *Transitive Vampire* (Random House, 1984) or Bill Bryson's *Mother Tongue* (HarperCollins, 1991). The only criticism of Casagrande's humour is that her word choice and attitude may offend some readers whether or not she intends to insult them outright. I am sure that at least one of her readers uses a certain "uptight" phrase and therefore might "sound like an insufferable blowhard" (p. 36).

Such name-calling aside, Casagrande uses over 20 sources to provide ample background for the final verdict on all points of language choice that she proclaims. The variety of referential sources, many updated, makes this book a great condensed reference tool. I thought it was excellent to see the subjunctive explained so clearly, and her discussion on split infinitives was thought-provoking too. One of my favourite mistakes, "penultimate", is rigidly defined for all who would misuse it (p. 188).

I personally love the delicate interweaving Casagrande uses to demonstrate the difference between the descriptive linguistic and prescriptive grammar communities. I was reminded of my own time studying linguistics courses in my undergraduate degree when she threatens to "expose the secret doing of a great power monitoring our very speech.... Academics who position themselves as liberal freedom fighters against the oppressive





‘prescriptivists’ in our current language wars” (p. 96). Of course this far-fetched sarcasm is silly, but at least a relatable point.

The book does lack a bit of insight into specific Canadian usage for some of the examples and language situations that are more colloquial. Casagrande does well to often point out British differences for her illustrations, but the lack of distinction between Canadian and standard American English perhaps leaves a Canadian reader faced with the larger question regarding the identity of English in Canada. I am sure that we ourselves have differing views on that matter as well.

As a final point, despite relying on American pop culture, the book does provide helpful information on some very common mistakes and may even endear the love of language to a new generation of writers and editors. ■■■

Lindsay Hodder

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