

# Track Changes

## Looking to the past to plan for the future

### Executive starts on policy & procedures manual and archives

It's happened just one time too many—at a meeting of the MEA executive, someone asks about a simple procedure such as when the membership fees become pro-rated. If we're lucky, someone kept their email messages from last year and we can go from there. If we're really lucky, someone remembers a motion made in the minutes two years ago that stipulated exactly when fees switch to what. (And this information just shows that we weren't on schedule with our switch last year.)



Too many ifs can be bad for an organization, especially one without any staff to keep track of operations or any office to house records. The Manitoba Editors' Association has been leading a somewhat virtual existence for eight years now, and we are starting to think we should take stock of where we've been, what we have, and where we're going.

So that we don't have to continue to rely on the memories (always getting more feeble with age) or the personal records (always at risk of being decluttered) of our members, the executive is in the midst of two major projects—developing a policy and procedures manual and archiving whatever MEA materials seem worthy.

This should ensure that each new executive will know what to do and how. Policies are a

lot easier to follow and change if they're written down and stored where they're easily found.

These are long-term projects, and we've barely begun. We are still very much a virtual organization, and so the possibilities for storing records range from a protected site on our web server to a filing cabinet in a corner of another like-minded organization.

If you have participated on the MEA executive or the Programs/Events Committee and have records (agendas, minutes, contacts, etc.) in your possession that you would like to unload, please email or telephone MEA.

Yes, telephone! In keeping with our intangible nature, MEA now has an invisible answering machine attached to an invisible phone—call 452-9700 and try it out!



## Message from the President

Happy summer, and welcome to the first issue of the second volume of *Track Changes*!

Our publishing schedule is still a bit random, but we all seem to be very busy people, which speaks to the booming business of editing in Manitoba.

In this issue of *Track Changes*, we let you know about some of the recent and upcoming events put on by the Events Committee, and we provide a few tidbits about many website resources that you might want to check out for

your professional and personal development.

If you have any comments about or suggestions for the newsletter, or for any of our other services, please email us at <meaworkshops@gmail.com> or telephone us at 204-452-9700.

Have a wonderful summer, and I hope to see you at the AGM in the fall!

Marjorie Poor

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"For an acquisitive society, we're awfully careless about possessives."  
— Patricia T. O'Conner, in *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*

### Special points of interest:

- Resources—websites galore!
- Events past & future
- What makes Fern crazy



## PDFs for the people

by Mark d'Almeida

**P**ortable Document Format files, better known as PDFs, and Adobe Acrobat were the topics of our February 8 workshop, *Adobe Acrobat and Unlocking the PDF Mystery*. This workshop was held at a computer lab at the University of Manitoba and facilitated by Troy Lawrence, a Winnipeg freelance educational material developer and instructor.

PDF is a popular and commonly used format; however, despite its popularity, it is also very poorly understood. Many MEA members had expressed an interest in this topic—as a result, a full-day workshop was organized.

The morning started out with a few technical glitches that tend to be inherent when 20 people are trying to

log on together. However, Troy quickly solved the problem and had all of us back on track.

The workshop consisted of a series of hands-on tutorials using Adobe Acrobat to create and add functionality to a PDF file. Basic file conversion, navigation, and searches were covered, along with editing PDFs using Acrobat—all of particular relevance for editors and writers. We also learned how collaborative work can be easily conducted using this format, and how security—in particular, installing digital signatures—is an especially useful feature of this software.

The workshop was rated very highly by the attendees. Overall, everyone left with a much better working understanding of PDFs and Acrobat.

Our thanks go out to Troy for putting on an excellent program and to the MEA membership for suggesting the topics. If MEA members are interested in learning more about other software applications related to editing and writing, contact the MEA executive or the Events Committee Chair.



Troy solves a PDF mystery for Events Committee member Jillian Brown

### Questions about editing? Information (or jokes) you'd love to share?

Use the listserv to draw on the expertise of MEA members and to share your own knowledge and experience with them. Join by typing "Subscribe mea list" in the subject line of an email to [meaworkshops@gmail.com](mailto:meaworkshops@gmail.com). Once you receive confirmation that you are registered, you can post messages by typing [mea@freelists.org](mailto:mea@freelists.org) in the address line of your message. Take advantage of this benefit of MEA membership!

## Be good and watch your rhetoric

by Jan Farbotnik

**I** had never given much thought to what was meant by rhetoric. I vaguely associated it with the term "party rhetoric" and those cryptic comments prefixed with "I know this is a rhetorical question, but" where the listener was not expected to answer, just to let the speaker's words sink in.

Now I count May 10 as a day when my awareness took a quantum leap. With visible passion for the subject he teaches at the University of Winnipeg, Professor Brian Turner demonstrated the ability of a knowledgeable rhetor to awaken conscious thought and foster discernment in his audience.

During this half-day workshop, the twenty-plus participants were guided through a handout that gave a thought-provoking overview of a subject that has been debated since Aristotle. We started by examining writing samples to recognize if rhetoric was present and to what degree.

Once the group had grasped the basics, more elusive and thought-provoking aspects were added to the equation. It was fascinating to observe how each of us could be affected differently by rhetorical ethos (perception of the good sense, good moral character, and good will of a writer or speaker) as well as by the metadiscourse (nuances of

composition and presentation). The ability of rhetorical passages to evoke emotional response and Dr. Turner's ability to engage the group in this were evident from the flow of lively discussion that carried through to the end of the session.

A note now tacked above my desk by author Stephen R. Covey would sum up well a fundamental message of this workshop: "It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric is or even how good the intentions are; if there is little or no trust, there is no foundation for permanent success. Only basic goodness gives life to technique."

Ultimately, my first venture into rhetoric left me with the challenge to remember that who I am puts an indelible stamp on what I say.

## Literary websites

by Sarah Broadfoot

As a dyed-in-the-wool procrastinator, I'm quite proficient at justifying the time I spend shifting my attention away from the task at hand. One of my favourite diversionary tactics of late is what I like to think of as targeted web surfing (i.e., I've graduated from Googling ex-boyfriends and computer Boggle).

I've bookmarked a smattering of websites/blogs that are somehow literary in nature so that when I get the itch to browse, I already have destinations picked out that could (at least in my mind) be considered research. I've even labelled the folder where they reside "literary," as opposed to, say, "diversions," to reinforce the façade.

Here's a selection from my current list, in no particular order. The descriptions are copied directly from the sites—I have no personal affiliations with any of the contributors and I take no responsibility for the content on any of the sites. Surf at your own discretion!

**Book Crossing:** [www.bookcrossing.com](http://www.bookcrossing.com)

"BookCrossing is the act of releasing books 'into the wild' and then following

their journeys and the lives they touch. The site encourages readers to read, register and release books, and includes a way to track books released, add journal entries and reviews and search for books in the wild."

**Canadian Magazines:**  
[canadianmags.blogspot.com](http://canadianmags.blogspot.com)

"News, views and reviews of the Canadian magazine industry."

**Bookninja:** [www.bookninja.com](http://www.bookninja.com)

"*Bookninja* is the premier Canadian literary site, and one of the top literary sites in the world. It is frequented by thousands of people from all around the globe and has become a nexus for literary news and opinion. Our unique look, content, and acerbic presentation have garnered notice from mainstream media and literary personalities alike."

**Readerville:** [journal.readerville.com](http://journal.readerville.com)

"In the nearly 8 years since *Readerville* first appeared online, it has taken many forms. It was first (and has always been foremost) a community—a place where

readers and writers and publishing insiders could meet each day to find out what's interesting in the world of books and, even more important, to talk about it."

**Bookslut:** [www.bookslut.com](http://www.bookslut.com)

"*Bookslut* is a monthly web magazine and daily blog dedicated to those who love to read. We provide a constant supply of news, reviews, commentary, insight, and more than occasional opinions."

**100 Words:** [www.100words.com](http://www.100words.com)

"The idea is simple: Write 100 words a day, every day, for one month. You can write about anything you want. Anything. Some people open tiny windows into their lives; others write surrealist poetry. Some writers post finely tuned, perfectly crafted vignettes; others show up at the end of the night and spew drunken nonsense onto the screen."

**Narrative Magazine:**  
[narrativemagazine.com](http://narrativemagazine.com)

"*Narrative Magazine* was founded in 2003 with the single mission to bring great literature into the digital age, and to provide it for free. Stories, poetry, essays, novel excerpts, articles, and interviews are available—without subscription—to readers everywhere. With an audience of 30,000 readers, *Narrative Magazine* has brought together online readers with the best literary minds in the world to reverse the downward trend in reading."

**Seen Reading:**  
[seenreading.blogspot.com](http://seenreading.blogspot.com)

"What Is *Seen Reading*? 1. I see you reading. 2. I guesstimate where you are in the book. 3. I trip on over to the bookstore and make a note of the text. 4. I let my imagination rip. 5. Readers become celebrities. 6. People get giddy and buy more books."

### Wordsmith.org: An online community for word nerds by Fern Swedlove

While trying to make small talk at a holiday get-together, I stumbled over a word and my friend quickly replied that I might enjoy (or need?) a subscription to A.Word.A.Day (AWAD). The next day, AWAD began and, although I can't say that it has cured me of my tendency to second-guess my use of certain words, I have found it rather enjoyable.

These daily emails greet me every morning when I turn on my computer and include a definition, an audio clip with pronunciation information, an etymology, an example in a publication, and other odds and ends related to language such as a daily quote.

The site was founded in 1994 by Anu Garg, who has a love of language as well as a computer science degree. The site reflects a cosmopolitan approach to language, as Anu grew up in India and now lives in the US.

The link to find out more about AWAD is

<http://wordsmith.org/awad/index.html>

**Another online source of word power: What do you call a gathering of editors? (see Season Finalé on page 4)**

[http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Transwiki:List\\_of\\_collective\\_nouns\\_by\\_subject](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Transwiki:List_of_collective_nouns_by_subject)

## Manitoba Editors' Association

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We're in the phone book!

204-452-9700

**"A fighting spirit defines  
and facilitates a good edit."**

— Susan Bell in  
***The Artful Edit: On the  
Practice of Editing Yourself***

## Newsletter Committee

Sarah Broadfoot  
Mark d'Almeida  
Jan Farbotnik  
Marjorie Poor  
Fern Swedlove  
Carrie Walker-Jones

We're on the web!

[www.manitobaeditors.ca](http://www.manitobaeditors.ca)



## Rants & Raves

### Digging up the dirt on the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*



by Fern Swedlove

On a cold winter day, I stumbled into McNally Robinson's and noticed the new deluxe edition of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* tucked in a corner. The word *dredge* had been on my mind, possibly connected to my recent experience with shake and bake chicken or dreams about my garden. I could not remember if the word *mud* had anything to do with *dredge*; this became my test word for this two-volume set published in October 2007.

I was shocked to discover in this rather weighty and pricey edition (which retails for \$220.00), *mud* was nowhere to be found within their three part definition of *dredge*. Whether as a verb or noun, the whole idea of *mud* had disappeared as though there was some feeble attempt to sanitize the word. Now why would you even want to use the word *dredge* (the etymology is said to be connected to the word *drag*, but the sound is evocative of *sludge*) if *mud* is removed from the definition?

Confused, cold, and bewildered, and wondering if I needed to replace my prized possession of my older *Oxford Dictionary*, I began to peruse every dictionary I could get my hands on, including online versions. I was relieved to discover that the word *mud* appears in pretty much every dictionary that I referred to. Interestingly, older versions of the Oxford dictionary have honoured this time-old tradition of including *mud* in the definition of *dredge*.

I know it is time to let go of this word and move on. But I am taking a personal stand on this minor indiscretion of tinkering with a perfectly great word and revising the definition. This new volume may be 3804 pages and easier to read due to larger print, but this is one dictionary that will not have a place on my bookshelf.

Long live mud!

***"The world of professional words is full of infectiously cool creative types—writers, editors, designers, and artists. We're movers and shakers with creative ideas and (almost always) a true love of reading, which means we're pretty fascinating to talk to at parties."***

— Suzanne Gilad in  
**Copyediting & Proofreading for Dummies**

## Editors' Aisle

returns next issue

Marjorie Poor dips into reading related to **Beginnings, Middles and Ends** workshop



## Season finale!

CSI has already had theirs, *Desperate Housewives* has, and *Grey's Anatomy* likely has as well, so now it's the MEA's turn to have theirs! We're talking about the MEA's Season Finalé, Wind-up Party, June 5<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 8:30 pm upstairs at the King's Head Pub. Admission is free for all MEA members, but feel free to bring a friend for only \$5.

As usual, there will be things to eat and great door prizes, great conversation, and of course, all the intrigue and surprises an **erudition of editors** can possibly muster up in a dramatic season ender.

Remember to circle June 5<sup>th</sup> for the MEA Wind-up Party and bring some samples of your work for the display table.

King's Head Pub  
120 King Street  
Winnipeg MB

