

Vol. 28 No. 1

winter / hiver 2008

active voice la voix *active*

newsletter of the Editors' Association of Canada / Association canadienne des réviseurs

Editing in the global village

2008 National conference in Edmonton

Grammar Grumble

Baring spell checkers' failings and
gremlins' achievements

Getting work with the feds

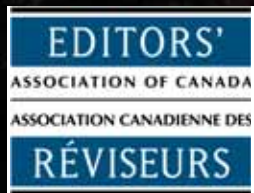
How to get in on the lucrative action

Travailler avec le gouvernement fédéral 101

Il n'est plus nécessaire de vivre
à Ottawa pour profiter des retombées de
ce commerce lucratif

Are you certifiable?

One person's experience
with the Certification tests



Canadian Publications Mail Agreement 40044305

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EAC EMAIL FORUMS

As a member of EAC, you can join in (or just read) email conversations about editing with colleagues from across the country and beyond. To sign up for these members-only forums, visit the members' area of the EAC website.

**FORUMS DE DISCUSSION
ÉLECTRONIQUE DE L'ACR**

En tant que membre de l'ACR, vous pouvez y mettre votre grain de sel, demander de l'aide, ou simplement suivre les discussions au sujet de la rédaction-révision. Pour vous inscrire, visitez la page web <http://list.web.ca/lists/listinfo/acrliste-l> (à noter que le dernier caractère est la lettre L, et non le chiffre un).

Active Voice / La Voix active
**publishing schedule
calendrier de
publication**

Active Voice is published quarterly. Submissions are gratefully accepted according to the following schedule:

winter deadline December 10
spring deadline March 18
summer deadline June 18
fall deadline September 17

La Voix active est une publication trimestrielle. Les propositions sont les bienvenues en fonction des délais suivants :

numéro d'hiver 10 décembre
numéro de printemps 18 mars
numéro d'été 18 juin
numéro d'automne 17 septembre

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Active Voice is the national newsletter of the Editors' Association of Canada. It is published quarterly. Views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect those of EAC.

La Voix active est le bulletin national de l'Association canadienne des réviseurs. Il est édité par trimestre. Les opinions exprimées dans ces pages ne reflètent pas nécessairement celles de l'ACR.

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Comments and contributions are welcome. The editors reserve the right to edit submissions for length but will review changes with the authors whenever possible. Disputes will be resolved in favour of the audience.

Les commentaires et les contributions sont les bienvenus. Les réviseurs se réservent le droit de réviser les soumissions pour la longueur mais passeront en revue des changements avec les auteurs quand c'est possible. Des conflits seront résolus en faveur des lecteurs.

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ISSN 1182-3986

Canadian Publications

Mail Agreement No. 40044305

Send change of address notices and undeliverable copies to

Editors' Association of Canada
502 - 27 Carlton Street
Toronto, ON M5B 1L2

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Readers' corner

Praise and commentary from *Active Voice* readers



Active Voice

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a green read

Since 1997, Christa Bedwin has paired a teaching and tutoring career (she's "freelance instructing" at NAIT) with educational writing and editing. Perhaps the most useful part of her thermodynamics course was learning the Greek alphabet, but she's been glad to have her chemistry and education degrees, which enable her to help out with tricky science questions on the EAC email forum.

Donna Dawson is a freelance editor and proofreader specializing in health care and finance, though she has worked in fields ranging from theatre, biography, and conservation to education, advertising, and business theory. She is a Certified Proofreader and a member of the Toronto branch.

André LaRose is a member of the National Capital Region branch. He has been supplying translation services since 1990, primarily to federal departments and agencies. Il consacre aussi une partie de son temps à la révision de traductions et à la révision unilingue en français, en particulier à celle de publications savantes en histoire—sa discipline d'origine—et en sciences humaines.

Marion Soublière of Ottawa has worked for magazines, newspapers, and a communications agency, and now heads MES Editing and Writing Services. She specializes in northern and Aboriginal issues, and has fond memories of square dancing in Nunavut. She is a Certified Proofreader and a member of the National Capital Region branch.

Karen Virag is the managing editor and publications supervisor at the Alberta Teachers' Association. She also works as a freelance writer for magazines and trade publications.

Is there such a thing as "forest friendly" paper production? Being green is important to all of us, but let's face it, much of what we as editors help to create eventually finds its way onto paper. As a profession, are we contributing to deforestation and harming the environment?

When *Active Voice* returned to print, there was much jubilation. As one of the instigators of change, I was jubilant, too. I was, however, surprised there was not also concern for the impact of our newsletter on the environment. That was, after all, one of the arguments to justify the move to an electronic format in the first place. While I'm certain we all felt some concern, expressed or not, I am about to relieve some of that anxiety.

You may have noticed the FSC logo on the cover of the newsletter. This logo is a stamp of approval from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), guaranteeing that both the paper we have selected and the printer we have hired are FSC-certified. (Our printer, PrintWest, also uses ink produced from canola oil instead of traditional petroleum-based inks!)

FSC was founded in 1993 in Toronto by representatives of environmental groups, the timber industry, the forestry profession, Aboriginal organizations, and community forestry groups from more than 25 countries. Now operating through a network of national initiatives in 40 countries, FSC has become an international non-profit organization that supports environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC certification and labelling is a voluntary, market-based mechanism for ensuring that paper and wood products come from responsibly managed forests and verified recycled sources. Fibre from FSC-certified forests is tracked all the way to the consumer through a chain-of-custody system. A printed document can carry the FSC logo only if both the paper and printer are FSC-certified.

Responsible forest management practices are in all of our best interests. FSC-certified forests protect wildlife habitat and endangered species, ensure clean water by respecting rivers and waterways, and are not planted with genetically modified (GM) trees or converted into plantations.




If you would like more information about the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or its certification process, visit the website at

www.fsccanada.org

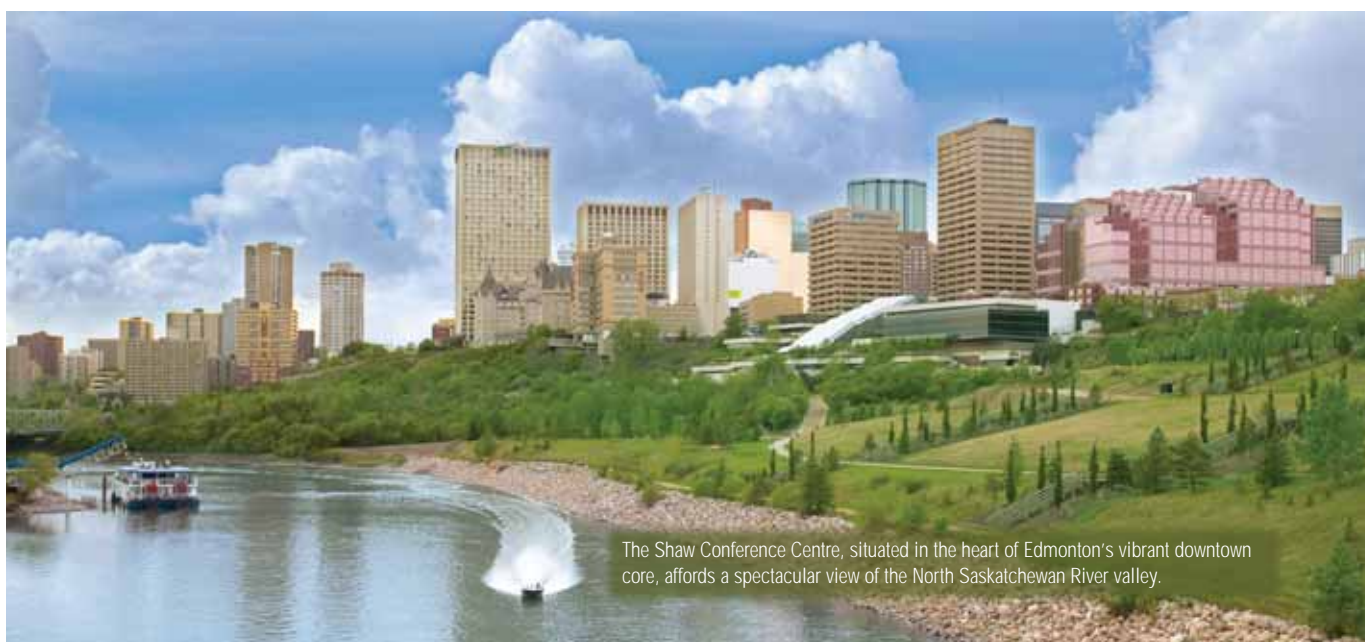


EDMONTON | 6–8 JUNE 2008

EDITING IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

RÉVISION ET MONDIALISATION

EDMONTON | 6–8 JUIN 2008



The Shaw Conference Centre, situated in the heart of Edmonton's vibrant downtown core, affords a spectacular view of the North Saskatchewan River valley.

Conference 2008 brings global village to editors

At EAC's Conference 2008: Editing in the Global Village, editors will get the opportunity to explore their profession from a global perspective. Those in attendance can take part in sessions on cross-cultural editing and copyright, as well as translating and transcribing.

They're coming from all over the place

Ruth Kelly, president and CEO of Venture Publishing Inc. and publisher and editor-in-chief of *Alberta Venture*, Alberta's only province-wide business magazine, will deliver the keynote address (see page 6).

There will be a session on freedom of expression and writing and editing in displacement with special panelist Jalal Barzanji, Edmonton's first official writer-in-exile. Barzanji,

an accomplished Kurdish poet and editor, was on the board of the Iraqi Kurdish Writers' Union and was executive director of the Iraqi culture ministry. He was imprisoned by the former Iraqi government for three years for his writing. He eventually fled to Turkey, applied for refugee status in Canada, and later smuggled his wife and children out of Iraq. In Edmonton since 1998, Barzanji continues to write and publish poetry in

Kurdish and is an active participant in Edmonton's poetry scene.

Editors will also be exposed to the poetry world when Ted Blodgett, Governor General's Award-winning poet, presents an ode to editors at the windup banquet. His daughter Astrid is a long-time EAC member.

Fun for everyone

As for conference social activities, our host, the Prairie Provinces branch, is organizing an informal dinner on the Thursday before the conference opens. On Friday evening, the branch is hosting a wine and cheese reception on the

continued on page 6 ...

Business publisher

gives keynote speech

Ruth Kelly, president and CEO of Venture Publishing Inc. and publisher and editor-in-chief of *Alberta Venture*, Alberta's only province-wide business magazine, will deliver the keynote address at the 2008 EAC Conference.

Venture Publishing also produces contract magazines for the Alberta Mental Health Board, Capital Health, Consulting Engineers of Alberta, Finning Canada, and Merit Contractors.

In September 2007, Venture launched *Unlimited*, the only business magazine in Canada targeted to professionals and entrepreneurs between 20 and 35 years of age.

Kelly was chair of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce in 2005 and currently sits on the boards of the University of Alberta, the Institute of Corporate Directors (Edmonton chapter), the Banff Centre leadership program, and the president's advisory council at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Kelly is also president of the Edmonton Business

Council for the Visual Arts and a past president of the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association.

She was recognized as a Global Woman of Vision in 1998 and a YWCA Woman of Distinction in the entrepreneur category in 2003, and she received the Advertising Club of Edmonton's 2004 Fellowship Award for contributions to industry and the community. In 2005, she was named Allard Chair of Business by the MacEwan School of Business. Kelly received the 2008 Woman of the Year award from Canadian Women in Communication, making her the first Albertan to receive this national honour. [e](#)



Ruth Kelly, president and CEO of Venture Publishing Inc. and publisher and editor-in-chief of *Alberta Venture*, Alberta's only province-wide business magazine.

2008 Conference

...continued from page 5

Shaw Convention Centre's outdoor patio, which affords a fabulous view of Edmonton's river valley.

Committees are compiling hotel and recreation information. There will be attractions as such Elk Island

National Park 30 miles east of Edmonton, which has the continent's largest standing herd of plains bison. (And, yes, they do mostly just stand.) And no visit to Edmonton is complete without a trip to West Edmonton Mall, replete with water park and NHL skating rink. [e](#)

Keep checking the EAC website for program & registration information.



Grammar

GRUMBLE

Karen Virag

Baring spell checkers' failings
and gremlins' achievements

I recently received an email in which the writer exhorted me to *bare with him*. And no, it was not an invitation to expose myself for an X-rated film (I can see it now—*Grammar Grumble does Edmonton*).

Rather, it was a simple hurried error that no spell checker will ever catch. So in the spirit of silly errors and with a strange sense of humility, perhaps brought on by the advent of a new year, this issue's grammar grumble, instead of grumbling, promises to bare, not bear, all.

Now this kind of *bare/bear* homonymic gaffe is not uncommon among the laity. We expect them to make mistakes. We want them to. Nay, we need them to because their mistakes are our bread and butter. How I love to see, as I did once on a handwritten menu, that the soup of the day is "cream of leak" and the special is "Chicken Gordon Blue." A restaurant on Edmonton's Jasper Avenue used to advertise *fine dining*. (Dinning was the last name of a PC Party leadership candidate a few years ago. Grumble is sure there is no connection between the two.)

And just today I saw a TV advertisement for a movie using the wrong form of *its*. But if we are honest, we must admit that even the best of us have made an error or two at

some point in our career (though sometimes those errors are abetted by invisible pernicious gremlins that change things we know were correct before we sent the document to print).

Though spelling gaffes can appall,
they can delight, too, and I think
the world would be much poorer
and certainly far less amusing
without them.

Here's an example. I am the supervising editor at the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). Some years ago, a religious group wanted to advertise a conference in our newspaper. But somehow one of the aforementioned gremlins (clearly an atheist) managed to expunge the letter *r* from the word *sermon*, and the resulting text about the penetrating analysis of the *semon* on the mount would have made Xaviera Hollander blush.

That's not all. The ATA's Religious and Moral Education Council publishes a journal for religious studies teachers. One day, the word *moral* somehow transformed into *morel*, a gaffe that gives new meaning to the term *magic mushroom*. In another regrettable, humbling episode, all

the Cyrillic script in an article was changed to gobbledygook when the galleys were produced on a printer that did not have the correct fonts. The mistake was not noticed until after the journal was mailed. In another technology-related incident, a scanner-dwelling gremlin, clearly a fan of the original *Star Trek*, changed the word *learning* to *beaming* throughout an entire article.

And, dear reader, you can only imagine the extent of knicker-twisting that happens at a teachers' organization if the *I* gets left out of the phrase *public education*. A colleague in a sister organization has actually removed the word *pubic* from his online dictionary, so that the spell checker will always highlight it.

Still, though spelling gaffes can appall, they can delight, too, and I think the world would be much poorer and certainly far less amusing without them. So I think with affection of the poor editor, clearly not a devotee of Ogden Nash, who missed a wrongly doubled *I* and gave the world an unforgettable, inerasable image of a woolly Peruvian monk, the one and only dalai llama. 🐼

If you have a grumble to share, send it to karen.virag@ata.ab.ca.

Getting work with



THE FEDS



By Marion Soublière

It seems that editors in Ottawa are the highest paid in Canada, a nugget revealed at EAC's 2007 national conference during a high-spirited debate on editorial rates.

Ottawa is headquarters to the Canadian government, which spends about \$20 billion yearly on goods and services. The feds are trying to be more efficient and cost-effective when they go shopping these days. That means encouraging more small and medium-sized businesses to pitch to them.

Thanks to the Internet, you don't have to live in the nation's capital to get in on the lucrative action. Two online directories allow government departments to see what suppliers

are out there for smaller buys, the kind made most frequently outside Ottawa.

Get your PBN through SRI

Warning: the acronyms start here.

First, create an account with the Supplier Registration Information (SRI) service (<http://contractscanada.gc.ca/en/regist-e.htm>). Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), which shops on behalf of 100 federal departments and agencies, won't buy from you unless you're registered with SRI.

The process is quick. With your GST number in hand, fill in the online form and get a Procurement Business Number (PBN). Then complete your registration, including a detailed description of your services and expertise (with a link to your website if you have one). Update your SRI account regularly, at least once every quarter.

Register on PS Online

Now that you have the all-important PBN, sign up with Professional Services Online. This database, better known as PS Online, opened up to areas outside the National Capital

Region in May 2006. It helps federal departments across Canada purchase professional services worth up to \$84,000.

PS Online is like a standing offer from approved suppliers. You'll need to mail or fax some mandatory information, including a company profile. You'll need to send a copy of your incorporation charter showing the date and place of incorporation. If you aren't incorporated, provide proof of business registration.

You'll also need to tell them how many years you've been in business, and give them a human resources plan and a detailed description of at least three relevant projects you've carried out in the last three years.

They will also want to see signed certifications that the claims in your mandatory information are true. You must also review, sign, and submit a Trading Partner Agreement.

For step-by-step instructions for registering on PS Online, go to <http://www.pwgsc.gc.ca/acquisitions/text/ps/suppliers/guide-e.html>.

Once accepted, let federal departments and agencies know that they can find you on PS Online. The Procurement Allocation Directory



(<http://pad.contractsCanada.gc.ca/applctrl.cfm?language=en>), a list of key purchasing contacts in PWGSC, is where you start making cold calls.


Then contact materials managers and procurement officers in the 31 government departments and agencies partnering with Business Access Canada (<http://contractsCanada.gc.ca/en/partne-e.htm>).

Check MERX every day

Neither SRI nor PS Online reveals what work the government has up for grabs. To view tenders for larger-dollar contracts, check the MERX online tendering system daily (<http://www.merx.com>). This is critical because government standing offers can last several years. If you miss the opportunity to bid, you'll be shut out for years.

Note that documents accompanying federal government tenders are now free to download from MERX.

Enroll in a seminar

Take advantage of free seminars on getting government work. PWGSC offers these seminars in larger cities across Canada. For dates, check <http://contractsCanada.gc.ca/en/sem-e.htm>. Register at least two weeks in advance. 

Important websites

Business Access Canada
www.contractsCanada.gc.ca

Public Works and Government Services Canada
www.pwgsc.gc.ca

The Office of Small and Medium Enterprises
www.pwgsc.gc.ca/acquisitions/text/sme/sme-e.html

Travailler avec

le gouvernement fédéral 101

par Marion Soublière

Les réviseurs travaillant dans la région d'Ottawa seraient les mieux payés du Canada. C'est ce qui ressortait, entre autres, d'un débat animé portant sur la tarification durant le congrès national 2007 de l'Association canadienne des réviseurs.

Tips for bidders

- Always read the government tender thoroughly, and follow its instructions to the letter.
- Direct any questions about the tender to the contracting authority only. Contacting someone within the department that may be purchasing your services could get your bid thrown out.
- If you don't meet the security requirements outlined in the tender, ask in your bid that the buyer sponsor you.
- Don't wait until minutes before the tender deadline to submit your bid, and make sure you deliver it to the right address (the contracting authority's address can be different from the receiving bids division address).
- Finally, win or lose, always ask for a debriefing to find out what could have been improved in your proposal or what was successful. This way, you're also making yourself known to the contracting authority, a good marketing manoeuvre.

Ottawa est le siège du gouvernement fédéral. Celui-ci dépense annuellement 20 milliards \$ en biens et services, ce qui est énorme. Il a donc réfléchi à la façon d'être à la fois plus efficace et plus rentable. La solution? Choisir de plus en plus de fournisseurs parmi les petites et moyennes entreprises.

Grâce à Internet, il n'est plus nécessaire de vivre à Ottawa pour profiter des retombées de ce commerce lucratif. Il existe en effet deux répertoires de fournisseurs en ligne que les responsables des départements gouvernementaux consultent pour les contrats de moindre valeur, lesquels touchent le plus souvent les régions du Canada à l'extérieur d'Ottawa. Voici comment faire.

Avertissement : préparez-vous à une avalanche de sigles!

Obtenez votre NEA grâce à DIF

Pour commencer, il faut vous inscrire comme fournisseur éventuel du gouvernement du Canada au service Données d'inscription des fournisseurs (DIF) (<http://contractsCanada.gc.ca/fr/regist-f.htm>). Cette démarche est obligatoire pour que Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada (TPSGC), un organisme d'achat pour 100 agences et départements fédéraux, puisse faire appel à vos services.

suite à la page 10...



Travailler avec le gouvernement fédéral 101

... suite de la page 9

Il suffit de remplir le formulaire en ligne en indiquant votre numéro de TPS pour obtenir votre Numéro d'entreprise – approvisionnement (NEA). Ajoutez-y la description détaillée de vos services et, éventuellement, l'adresse de votre site. Par la suite, il est bon de mettre à jour votre compte de DIF au moins une fois tous les trois mois.

Inscrivez-vous aux SP en ligne

Maintenant que vous avez l'indispensable NEA, vous pouvez vous inscrire aux Services professionnels (SP) en ligne. Créée en mai 2006, cette base de données est ouverte aux régions extérieures à la capitale nationale. Le site des SP en ligne permet aux départements du gouvernement fédéral de l'ensemble du Canada d'acheter des services professionnels pour des contrats d'une valeur maximale de 84 000\$.

Les SP en ligne fonctionnent comme un marché à commandes pour des fournisseurs approuvés. Pour vous y inscrire, vous devrez envoyer, par la poste ou par télécopieur, le profil de votre société ainsi que la copie du certificat de constitution en personne morale ou celle du certificat d'enregistrement de votre entreprise indiquant la date et le lieu de sa constitution. Les fournisseurs qui ne sont pas constitués en personne morale doivent fournir la preuve de leur inscription auprès de l'Agence du revenu du Canada (numéro d'enregistrement de TPS/TVH).

Vous devrez y ajouter une déclaration concernant le nombre d'années d'existence de votre société, une planification des ressources humaines et la description d'au moins

trois projets, en rapport avec votre soumission, que vous avez réalisés au cours des trois années précédentes.

Il faudra également fournir des attestations confirmant la véracité de vos déclarations. Enfin, vous devrez prendre connaissance de l'Entente de partenariat commercial avant de la signer et de soumettre votre demande. Pour une description détaillée de l'inscription aux SP, rendez-vous sur : <http://www.tpsgc.gc.ca/acquisitions/text/ps/suppliers/reg-f.html>.

Une fois que votre inscription aux SP en ligne a été acceptée, décrochez le téléphone ! Informez-en les agences et les départements gouvernementaux fédéraux. Pour trouver les principales personnes-ressources en

matière d'achat aux TPSGC, la liste fournie par le Répertoire des attributions des approvisionnements est un bon début (allez à <http://pad.contractsCanada.gc.ca/applctrl.cfm>, puis cliquez sur Français).

Vous pouvez également prendre contact avec les gestionnaires du matériel et les responsables des approvisionnements des 31 agences et départements fédéraux qui sont partenaires d'Accès entreprises Canada (<http://contractsCanada.gc.ca/fr/partne-f.htm>).



Vous voulez travailler avec le gouvernement?

Voici quelques suggestions

Lisez toujours les appels d'offres gouvernementales au complet et suivez les instructions à la lettre.

Si vous avez des questions concernant l'appel d'offre, adressez-vous directement à l'administration contractante. En effet, si vous contactez un responsable dans le département qui pourrait faire appel à vos services à l'avenir, votre offre pourrait être rejetée.

Si vous ne répondez pas aux exigences de l'offre sur le plan de la sécurité, demandez dans votre offre que l'acheteur vous aide à obtenir le niveau de sécurité nécessaire.

N'attendez pas la dernière minute pour soumettre votre offre et assurez-vous de l'adresser au bon endroit. En effet, l'adresse de l'administration contractante peut différer de celle de la division de la réception des soumissions.

Enfin, que vous ayez ou non obtenu un contrat, demandez toujours à savoir ce qui, dans votre offre, a plu ou déplu. Ainsi, vous ferez connaître de l'administration contractante, ce qui est une excellente technique de marketing !


Visitez le site MERX chaque jour

Toutefois, les offres d'emploi du gouvernement fédéral ne figurent pas dans les bases de données DIF et SP en ligne. Pour voir ces appels d'offre, plus payants, visitez chaque jour le site de MERX, le service en ligne du gouvernement fédéral : (www.merx.com). C'est important parce que les contrats portent souvent sur plusieurs années. Si vous manquez l'occasion de faire une offre, la porte risque donc de se fermer sur vous pour longtemps.

À noter : on peut maintenant télécharger gratuitement les documents accompagnant les appels d'offres du gouvernement fédéral sur le site.

Inscrivez-vous à un colloque

Vous pouvez assister au colloque portant sur la façon de faire affaire avec le gouvernement fédéral organisé par le TPSGC. Il en offre dans plusieurs grandes villes du Canada. Il faut s'inscrire au moins deux semaines à l'avance.

Pour connaître les dates, rendez-vous sur <http://contractscanada.gc.ca/fr/sem-f.htm>. 



Liens importants

Accès entreprises Canada
www.contractscanada.gc.ca

Travaux publics et Services
gouvernementaux Canada
www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca

Bureau des petites et
moyennes entreprises
[www.tpsgc.gc.ca/acquisitions/
text/sme/sme-f.html](http://www.tpsgc.gc.ca/acquisitions/text/sme/sme-f.html)

Ouvrage à signaler

Ginette Lachance, *La Révision linguistique en français : Le métier d'une passion, la passion d'un métier*, Sillery, Septentrion, 206 pp., 19,95 \$

revue par André LaRose


Voici un ouvrage substantiel qui constitue « un guide des connaissances à acquérir, des ouvrages à posséder et à utiliser efficacement, ainsi que des méthodes de correction et de révision linguistique en français, particulièrement dans l'exercice d'un travail autonome ». L'auteure y répond à sept questions :

1. Qu'entend-on par correction et révision linguistique?
2. Que faut-il corriger?
3. Que peut-on améliorer?
4. Comment procéder?
5. Comment réviser à l'ordinateur?
6. Comment se préparer à ce métier?
7. Comment se vit le travail autonome en révision linguistique?

Ces questions font chacune l'objet d'un chapitre, de longueur variable. À ces sept chapitres s'ajoutent une abondante bibliographie thématique commentée (20 pages, 275 titres) ainsi que neuf capsules linguistiques, huit encadrés, huit « apartés d'une travailleuse autonome » et sept citations.

Les questions 2, 4 et 5 réunies occupent la moitié de l'ouvrage et, à elle seule, la question 2 appelle un traitement de 55 pages, car les types de corrections à apporter sont nombreux. Après avoir défini brièvement les divers genres d'erreurs (ambiguïtés, anglicismes, formules animistes, etc.), l'auteure donne des exemples et indique « comment les trouver », soit par des précisions soit par des renvois à la bibliographie; elle propose même parfois un exercice dont le corrigé se trouve en fin de chapitre. L'autre aspect du métier auquel elle accorde beaucoup

d'attention, c'est la correction d'épreuves, puisqu'elle y consacre 19 pages, explications, symboles et exercices compris. Par ailleurs, son chapitre sur la révision à l'ordinateur ne manque pas de pertinence. Domage cependant qu'elle ait choisi d'expliquer sa méthode à partir de Word 97 plutôt qu'à partir de Word 2003, version qui, en matière de révision, est plus performante ou à tout le moins plus conviviale que la précédente; dommage également que les nombreuses captures d'écran qui illustrent son propos soient difficiles à lire. Seul autre irritant dans cet ouvrage : l'emploi systématique du tour « l'on », qui finit par agacer. Au milieu des règles et des conseils, les apartés d'une travailleuse autonome comptant une vingtaine d'années d'expérience apportent quant à eux une touche personnelle de fraîcheur et de réalisme au sujet des conditions d'exercice du métier à la pige.

Excellent complément à *Pratique de la révision* de Horguelin et Brunette et aux *Principes directeurs en révision professionnelle* de l'Association canadienne des réviseurs, *La Révision linguistique en français* de Ginette Lachance répond assurément à un besoin des professionnels de la langue française. Résolument pratique, l'ouvrage s'adresse avant tout aux réviseurs et correcteurs pigistes qui font de la révision unilingue en français. Toutefois, les personnes qui font de la révision bilingue — qu'elles soient salariées ou pigistes —, les employeurs du domaine de l'édition, les rédacteurs et les traducteurs y trouveront aussi leur compte. À lire sans faute, donc. 

are you

CERTIFIABLE

My certification experience

by Donna Dawson

I remember a phone call shortly after I began freelance editing from someone looking for an editor. I don't recall the project, but after I'd told the caller about some of the work I'd done, he asked, "But how do I know you're a good editor?" All I could do was give him references and tell him that clients seemed happy with my work.

That call, and others like it, including one asking if I had "a diploma or anything," got me wondering how I could demonstrate to someone unfamiliar with editing that I'm good at what I do. Then again, how do I even know I'm any good? I have always suffered from a slight case of impostor syndrome in my jobs—I worry that sooner or later, someone's going to figure out that I don't really know what I'm doing.

At the beginning of my freelance career, most of my clients were (and to a lesser extent still are) individuals who had never had their documents edited; *any* editing seemed good to them. But neither they nor I knew how my work compared with that of a "real" editor.

The question of competence is easy for publishing companies to answer: they can administer a test. But individuals or businesses with no knowledge of editing would find that more difficult. Comparing before and after samples might be useful, but that takes time and skills they may not have. If they check references, they

may not know what questions to ask. I've always thought it would be helpful if editors had some sort of qualification or designation to let people know we have the necessary skills.

So when the members of the Editors' Association voted to move forward with Certification, I was all in favour. Being certified would show potential clients—and myself—that I am a good editor. It would prove that I can meet accepted editorial standards and might encourage prospective clients to choose me over an uncertified editor, all else being equal. I also saw certification as a way to justify a rate increase, and I thought it would look pretty good on my business card and email signature (and my website, if I had one). I planned to take the tests as soon as they were offered.

Being certified would show potential clients—and myself—that I am a good editor.

In November 2006, I wrote both the Knowledge of the Publishing Process (KP) and Proofreading exams, and I'm happy to report I passed both and am now a Certified Proofreader. I wrote the Copy Editing exam in November 2007.

Studying

I knew I would have to study for the exams. I have taken about 20 EAC seminars over the past dozen years,

but that's all the formal training I have. I have never taken a college or university editing or publishing course. I was most concerned about the KP test because I have never worked in-house and have worked on very few books. I felt I knew almost nothing about publishing, even though I'd been an editor for about 11 years.

I started by familiarizing myself with EAC's *Professional Editorial Standards*. I then completed the *Meeting Editorial Standards (MES)* workbook and the practice tests in the certification study guides. The practice tests were helpful because they showed me what I needed to study more. For both the Proofreading and Copy Editing exams, I made mental lists of issues I missed most frequently and made a point of watching for them during the tests.

In addition to completing the *MES* exercises and the practice tests, to prepare for the KP exam I read the sections pertaining to the publishing process in the *Chicago Manual of Style* and the *New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage*. Those are the only sections of the guides I read closely—I spent more time familiarizing myself with where to find information.

Studying for the exams did not take over my life. I allocated one day a week for about two months before the tests and did the reading in the evening. I was able to continue

working normally. Studying on my own made it more difficult to mark the practice tests; I recommend finding a study partner.

Test day

It had been about 20 years since I'd written an exam and I wondered whether I would be out of practice, but I had no difficulty getting down to work and remembering how to do it. My experience taking the three certification exams has been entirely positive (and I felt that way even before I knew I had passed the KP and Proofreading tests). I was able to complete all three tests in the time allowed, even though the 2006 KP test was, according to the majority who wrote it (me included), too long for the time allotted. But the tests were no worse than exams I wrote in university.

I didn't find the tests exhausting or draining; I felt upbeat and confident afterwards, though I know that wasn't the case for everyone. To be honest, I'm not sure I could take the tests seriously if most people found them to be a breeze. The atmosphere in the exam room was friendly and relaxed, but professional. I don't yet know whether I passed the Copy Editing exam, but even if I fail, I don't think my opinion of the experience

will change. The exams are not a nightmare; they are survivable.

KP was the exam I was least confident about, but I found that a fair portion of the material pertained to the production of many types of documents—it's not just about books. All editors need to know what happens to a document before and after we deal with it. We all need to know something about type, scheduling, and layout, and about some of the problems that can arise in the creation of a document.

Regardless of the outcome...
preparing for the tests has been
an excellent professional
development exercise.

Not every question on every exam was 100 per cent relevant to my work, but I accept this as the nature of an exam. I found the scenarios presented in the Proofreading and Copy Editing exams to be realistic. I've certainly dealt with similar sorts of documents, situations, and problems. The time pressure, too, was not far removed from the we-need-it-by-noon-no-one-else-has-looked-at-it-just-do-what-you-can reality of some of my work.

I also accept that to be taken seriously a certification exam must be invigilated and that there must be certain rules applied to writing it: it has to be clear that there's no possibility for dishonesty. Chartered accountants write invigilated exams; why not editors?

Having now written exams in two different test administrations, I can say that in response to problems with the process identified by test-takers in 2006, the Certification Steering Committee has made concrete changes and clarifications to the test rules. And in 2007, tests were offered across the country—all the way across. So the process is being refined; further improvements could well stem from the 2007 administration.

I will be preparing for the Structural and Stylistic Editing exam next year. Regardless of the outcome of that test, and of my Copy Editing exam, preparing for the tests has been an excellent professional development exercise. Passing the KP and Proofreading tests has affirmed my skills—and I raised my proofreading rate.

My impostor syndrome is diminishing with time. 



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Style plus humour

review by Christa Bedwin

Matthew Stevens, *The Subtleties of Scientific Style*, ScienceScape Editing, 112 pp. hard copy, US\$12 or 103 pp. PDF, US\$6.

Adull title for a beautifully, and humorously, written book. Perhaps it's because he's Australian that the author excels at entertaining us while developing the principles he advocates with an elegance and logic that make them easy to remember and follow.

The author's qualifications are clear by the authority with which he writes, but officially he's got a B.Sc. and M.Sc. (In his words, "It's a master of applied science with a major in agricultural extension and rural development. Quite a mouthful. It was focused on acquiring the skills to get the message out to the punters.") The author has 20 years' experience editing science and has put together sound advice on errors that he has found to be common in scientific writing.

In a funny, pleasing style, the author deals with everything from the types of errors in logic that led to doctors retarding the advance of cures for stomach ulcers, to how to deal with

weasel words (meaning the kind of stuff that gets written when people don't strongly stand behind what they're saying... perhaps because they don't know?).


Stevens gives case studies of rights and wrongs that are so fascinating that you can read this book as entertainment. As a great example of solid, logical, non-weasel language, he quotes Watson and Crick's work on DNA. Besides being fascinating, each story he uses is chosen with care to effectively prove each editing point.

As with many Aussies, Stevens has a balanced world view that might only come from being far enough away from the rest of us to see us all clearly. He writes easily and without prejudice of British and American systems, though Canada only appears once in a footnote, and Australia only once in a Tasmanian anecdote about an ACD (air circulating device) while pleading the case for meaningful abbreviations. Mind you, I'm not sure you'll find another

editing book that includes Platypi as a bold heading under "Errors in Classical Languages," and just before "Hellenolatinisms." Delightful.

Abbreviation is something else that Stevens shows us elegantly how to do, when necessary, creating meaning out of facts instead of, as is too often the case, taking data and abbreviating or reformatting them into obscurity. Some efficient, tidy, and space-saving options are offered to the space-pressed academic editor, ones which leave the meaning and import of the data clear and simple to read.

In short, this book is an excellent introduction for any new scientific editor or any editors who think they might like to get into scientific editing. It is also a book that will bring a smile and nods of recognition to any experienced editors of science.

You can download a PDF of the book at www.zeta.org.au/~mls/subtleties.html. If you like it, the author requests that you send him US\$6 by PayPal. 

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* As this publication is produced entirely by volunteers, exact publication dates vary.

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* Dans la mesure où la publication de *La Voix active* est entièrement assurée par des bénévoles, il se peut que les dates de parution exactes varient d'un numéro à l'autre.

readers'



CORNER

Many thanks to the team who puts together *Active Voice*: another insightful, informative, and useful issue came in the mail today.

It's super! ;-)

Mark Lindenberg

Val-d'Or, QC

Yes, [*Active Voice* is] awesome! I actually have the same reaction to "awesome" as Karen Virag describes in this issue but am even more appalled by the word that seems to be well on its way to replacing it:

"brilliant," when used to describe even the most mundane ideas or utterances. For example:

She: What are you ordering for lunch?

He: An egg salad sandwich.

She: Brilliant!

Or the modified, more nuanced version:

She: What are you ordering for lunch?

He: An egg salad sandwich. It's egg salad between two slices of bread.

She: Absolutely brilliant!

Carolyn Bishop

Everett, ON

[*Active Voice*] IS good. Shiny. But the date is "Fall 2007" and it's nearly Groundhog Day, which is just about Spring 2008 as far as I'm concerned.

Karen E. Black

Toronto, ON

Editors' note: Before it is printed, *Active Voice* undergoes thorough editing and proof-reading by a string of senior EAC people. The process is unavoidably time-consuming, although we're trying to streamline it. The issue you received in January was actually the Fall 2007 issue.



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