

What is involved in serving on the board of the Saskatoon Writers' Coop?

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of the board of the Saskatoon Writers' Coop. I will try to outline what the job involves, to give you a better idea of what to expect if you decide to stand for nomination at the AGM (or to join the board at another time of the year to fill out a term; our bylaws allow us to add members at any time through appointment if we do not have a full board complement of twelve.)

The board serves a membership of about 120 writers, mostly from Saskatoon and area. We are a volunteer board-- that is, we get no pay, no honorarium. We do, however, reimburse for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with board activities.

We are democratic in our operation (consensus is not uncommon), and are governed by a Mission Statement, a set of Articles and Bylaws (amendable) under the Non-Profit Corporations Act, and a slowly growing set of policies and procedures that make it possible not to start from scratch on every single project, if people will just remember to look. We are developing a board manual to centralize this information.

We are a working board. That is, we have no administrative staff (though The Refinery staff do collaborate with us on taking course registrations, and they receive our mail and hold it for us to pick up). All our administrative and organizational jobs are done by board members. We have policies requiring board members to accept a specific job or position (more information below) or else to join a project team, and to attend board meetings more-or-less regularly. Most new board members start out on one of the programming project teams, since it is these teams' activities and initiatives that make the Coop relevant. The more unique project teams we have, the more the program implementation responsibilities can be shared around.

We have a member volunteer list, but have not yet found a consistently successful way to involve our volunteers on standing committees or in organizing particular events. We have mostly invited our volunteers to do an occasional work shift at a Coop event, and that's about it. We hope to increase volunteer involvement in the coming year.

In terms of time commitment, the offices of President, Secretary and Treasurer involve perhaps six hours a month outside of board meetings—sometimes less, but occasionally more during busy times. The positions of *Coop Scoop* Editor and Membership Coordinator probably also take about four to six hours a month. The position of Website Administrator is more flexible, but it can use up as much time as the occupant is willing to give it.

As to project team time, board members who are involved in organizing a particular event or activity can expect to spend some additional time on that, both on planning and on execution (depending on what they agree to do)—plus to attend the event if possible (e.g. parties, open mikes). Classes and workshops tend to leave more of the detailed tasks to the paid instructor, but we try to have a board member present at least at the beginning

and the end of such activities (often one or more board members are taking the course, which helps.)

The project teams involved in communications are more involved in infrastructure behind the scenes—external communications (public relations) is usually the responsibility of a single board member for the year, as are *Coop Scoop* editor, website administrator, and membership coordinator. Sometimes these positions can overlap, particularly to the extent that they involve internal communications.

The board meets for 2 hours once a month, except July, August, sometimes December and sometimes March (AGM month). Recent meetings have been supper meetings starting at 6:30 p.m., usually at Tastebuds Café on Lorne, but these arrangements are subject to discussion at our organizational meeting in April. We have this past year managed to establish a fixed date (first Wednesday, with two exceptions) for monthly meetings, which make planning a bit easier.

We also try to hold a planning-and-policy board retreat of some kind (day, half day or evening) in the late spring—May or June. It is usually held in conjunction with a board year-end potluck.

I hope this clarifies things for you, and I hope you see enough potential here to encourage you to join us. We would be happy to welcome you a-board.

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President
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