

Saskatoon Writers' Coop President's Report to the Seventh AGM , March 26, 2009

It has been a pleasure serving as your president again this year. The mission set out by the Coop's founders has been honoured, though admittedly with some small refinements and occasional compromises with the realities faced by all volunteer-run organizations. The fact that, at the end of a very busy season, seven current board members have agreed to stand again for election is a reassuring sign.

Board size and activity. At our last AGM we elected 9 board members, but by fall the complexities of life had forced Don Reimer, who had already served one term, to reconsider. Fortunately this past winter we were able to recruit one more member, Gary Chappell, and we have thus operated for the last three months again with nine members. Needless to say, all have been very involved, most attending nine board meetings and a planning event as well as working with specific projects, and the entire organization has benefitted both from their efforts and from the excellent problem-solving discussions around the board table.

Board duties and responsibilities. The board consisted of Jim Weseen (president), Amy Jo Ehman (secretary), Darla Tenold (treasurer), Jeff Smith (vice-president), Joanne Blythe (registrar), Peter Jonker, Jo Oliver, Edda Ryan, and for the last three months Gary Chappell. Because of the small board size, I as president once again took on the additional jobs of *Coop Scoop* editor, website co-administrator (with Jeff Smith), and membership coordinator (with Jo Oliver's help), because these responsibilities seemed to fit well together and have a focus on internal (membership) communication. This allowed other board members more time to work on various aspects of programming, which is, after all, the Coop's first priority. The results of their dedicated work are summarized in the Programming Report.

Committee structure. Since our board planning workshop in June 2007, the board has operated on the basis of project teams, where teams of various sizes (usually 1 to 3 members) assume responsibility for carrying out specific tasks that arise out of our planning, and thereafter dissolve. Some project teams have had relatively short-term responsibilities, while others remained in place for the entire year, but in general, and with some wrinkles still to be worked out (including ways to make more effective use of volunteers) the approach once again seems to have functioned quite well.

Priorities. At our June 2008 planning event, the board renewed its commitment to a number of priorities or targets originally identified in 2007, as follows:

- maintain/increase our community profile
- continue to seek ways to collaborate with other groups, businesses, and organizations that serve local writers
- continue to work on our Web visibility and the usefulness of our website
- maintain a regular date for board meetings, and once again plan and publicize our events calendar far enough ahead to avoid conflicts with other groups in scheduling writer-friendly events
- recruit additional board members and make greater use of volunteers

- maintain our membership level and hold our members' loyalty
- continue to offer programming that is interesting and useful to our members, and that attracts new members or serves particular areas of interest
- remain both affordable and fiscally responsible

Accomplishments. I believe this year we have done reasonably well on most of these fronts. In addition to what you will see in the Programming Report, here's why I think so:

- We have actively fostered collaborative relationships with other writer-focused groups and organizations, as well as with local publishers, the city, the public library, and the provincial government. Two of our members (Jeff Smith and Jim Weseen) took part in Tourism Saskatoon's Creative City Strategy symposium, and as your president I have represented the Coop at two meetings, one co-sponsored by the Sask Writers Guild and the Sask Arts Board and dedicated to raising the profile of the writing community in Saskatoon's arts and cultural milieu, and the other a public symposium sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, aimed at developing a Provincial Cultural Policy. It must nevertheless be noted that our links with the print and broadcast media remain tenuous at best.
- Our growing website has recently been averaging over 50 visitors per day, more of whom are staying longer, and at least some of whom come to access our regularly updated community calendar of writer-oriented events.
- We have put out a *Coop Scoop* every month except June and July, plus 8 *Coop Scoop Bulletins* (item updated).
- Our board at its planning event established a regular meeting date, and framed a planning calendar we have mostly followed, though with the odd hiccup.
- Our project teams were able to put together a variety of popular programming activities in time for us to publicize them well in advance (to the point where most of our limited-enrolment activities, like classes and workshops, have significant waiting lists) and thus for the most part avoid conflicts in scheduling.
- Our membership is growing, our membership fee has remained unchanged at \$10, and our fiscal position is slightly ahead of last year.

Membership. At last year's AGM, our membership was 135. This year, the total sits at 140. Obviously, though some may have left us, more have joined. The best part is, most have stayed. As your board, we appreciate the support we receive from all of our members, and we hope we can continue to serve you well.

Retiring board members. Amy Jo Ehman and Edda Ryan have announced their intention not to let their names stand for a board position in the coming year, and Don Reimer left us last fall. Amy has completed five-and-a-bit terms, including two-and-a-half as president and two as secretary. Edda has completed three terms. Don finished one term and started on a second. We very much appreciate their contributions to board deliberations and activities, and their commitment to the Coop in general. We will miss them.

Jim Weseen, President