

Saskatoon Writers' Coop President's Report to the Eighth AGM , March 24, 2010

It has been a pleasure serving as your president again this year. The mission set out by the Coop's founders has continued, I believe, to be honoured by the board and the officers.

Board size and activity. At our last AGM we elected 12 board members, and shortly thereafter we added another, Erica Jen. At the December meeting, however, the complications of life led four members to resign from the board: long-standing members Joanne Blythe and Darla Tenold, and new members Erica Jen and Megha Morganfield. Fortunately we were able to recruit Dave Schultz to join the board in January, so we have completed the term with ten members. Needless to say, all have been very involved, trying their best to attend ten board meetings (only Gary Chappell managed this feat) as well as working with specific projects. The entire organization has benefitted both from their efforts and from the excellent issue-exploring and problem-solving discussions around the board table.

Board duties and responsibilities. As of this AGM the board consists of Jim Weseen (president), Janice Salkeld (secretary), Gary Chappell (treasurer), Jeff Smith (vice-president), Carrie Prefontaine (registrar), Cindy Clarke (membership), Peter Jonker, Kristina Komendant, Jo Oliver, and Dave Schultz. Because half the board was new last spring, I as president once again took on the additional jobs of *Coop Scoop* editor and website co-administrator (with Jeff Smith). This allowed other board members more time to work on various aspects of programming, which is, after all, the Coop's purpose. The results of their dedicated work are summarized in the Programming Report.

Committee structure. Since our last 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. In general, the approach once again seems to have functioned quite well.

Priorities. In the facilitated planning event in June 2007, the then-board identified a number of objectives for the Coop. These have guided the Coop for the past three years. The list is as follows:

- maintain/increase the Coop's community profile
- continue to seek ways to collaborate with other groups, businesses, and organizations that serve local writers
- continue to work on the Coop's Web visibility and the usefulness of our website
- maintain a regular date for board meetings, and once again plan and publicize the Coop's 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 the Coop's 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 (but first, apologies). This year we got off to a bit of a slow start, but we continued to advance, or at least hold the line, on these fronts. Here are some of my personal observations in addition to what you will see in the Programming Report.

As president I made an elementary error last spring, about which I should clearly have known better. With such a high proportion of new board members, it only makes sense to have a board orientation workshop to familiarize people with procedures and with available resources. I failed to do this, and as a result our new board members sometimes found themselves in a sink-or-swim situation on project teams, which isn't pleasant for anyone. I offer them my apologies.

Nevertheless,

- We have continued to develop collaborative relationships with other writer-focused groups and organizations, as well as with local publishers, the City, the University, and the public library. Two board members (Jo Oliver and Dave Schultz) took part in the City of Saskatoon's Cultural Planning Forum. One board member (Gary Chappell) represented the Coop on the Word on the Street (WOTS) organizing committee. We have continued to collaborate with the Writer in Residence, and with local booksellers. It must nevertheless be noted that, as reported last year, our links with the print and broadcast media remain tenuous at best.
- A new program is well established, thanks to the tireless work of Darla Tenold and Peter Jonker: the Writers' Coop Coaching Program, exclusively for Coop members.
- A project team has been established to explore new ways to make use of ever-increasing Coop funds to serve Coop members, writers, and the larger community (in that order).
- Our growing website has recently been averaging almost 75 visitors per day (up from 50 last year). This, despite the failure of the website updater (me) to keep things up-to-date the past couple of months. The board continues to look at the possibility of evolving from a static to a dynamic (interactive) website, though no timeline has yet been established.
- We have put out a *Coop Scoop* every month except June, July and August, plus 12 *Coop Scoop Bulletins* (and two *Coop Scoop* corrections).
- Our board established a regular meeting date and location, and attempted to follow the familiar planning calendar (a class and a workshop each half-year, plus regular monthly Open Mikes and occasional social events). We didn't always succeed: the fall class was cancelled (regrettably, because late registrations would have made it viable), and in view of increasing choices from other sources available to Saskatoon and area writers (itself surely a good sign) we have not scheduled a spring workshop.

- Our membership is holding steady, the membership fee has remained unchanged at \$10 (the original fee set eight years ago), and our fiscal position is once again slightly ahead of last year.

Membership. At last year's AGM, our membership was 140. This year, the total sits at 142. Obviously, though some may have left us, others 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. Joanne Blythe and Darla Tenold retired in December from long service on the board, and Cindy Clarke has said she will be unable to let her name stand for a board position in the coming year. Joanne joined the board in January 2004, thus serving the equivalent of six terms (actually five and two halves), first as treasurer 2004-2005 and a bit, and then as registrar from 2006-2009. Darla joined the board in February 2007, and served as treasurer from 2007-2009, as well as working to develop and expand the Writers' Coaching Program (a role she continues as a volunteer). Cindy completed one full term on the board, 2009-2010, serving as membership coordinator and being a major contributor to programming (a role she will continue as a volunteer in the area of writers' groups). We very much appreciate their contributions to board deliberations and activities, and their commitment to the Coop. We will miss them (and, of course, call on them whenever possible).

Jim Weseen, President