

Saskatoon Writers' Coop (SWC)
President's Report to the Ninth AGM, March 17, 2011

SWC is all about engaging and energizing the Saskatoon writers community. Tonight's AGM is another way of accomplishing this. Welcome all!

It has been a genuine pleasure serving as your President this year. As my fellow Board members will attest, I was a decidedly-unwilling candidate and thus drove a hard bargain with them, which was this: "Sure, I'll serve as President provided that the rest of you do all the darn work. Oh, and let me not forget to mention that I'll also be away for half of the year!" For never-explained reasons, and much to my consternation, they went for it regardless. The upshot of this is: if you wish at any time to serve up a round of applause, please direct it at the other Board members for they cheerfully shouldered not only their own responsibilities but most of mine as well. They performed magnificently! I thank them publicly. Together, we have remained sharply focused on and in hot pursuit of SWC's mission—set out by SWC's founders nine years ago—which is: "... to offer support and stimulation to the writers of Saskatoon and area."

Board membership and meetings

At our last AGM, a year ago, we elected nine board members: Gary Chappell, Peter Jonker, Kristina Komendant, Jo Oliver, Carrie Prefontaine, Janice Salkeld, Dave Schultz, Jeff Smith, and Jim Weseen. During the the intervening months there was some turnover of Board members: Carmen Davies, Dayna Fesciuc, and Karen Millard joined us, whereas Janice Salkeld and Carrie Prefontaine left us; Dayna Fesciuc also resigned as of our March 3, 2011 meeting. The reason for choosing to leave, in each case, was an inability to make time for effective participation.

During the year, the Board met monthly (excluding the three summer months) and occupied itself entirely with advancing the SWC mission.

Board Member Executive roles

As of this AGM, Board-member Executive roles are as follows: Peter Jonker (president), Jeff Smith (Vice-president), Gary Chappell (treasurer), Dave Schultz (secretary), Jim Weseen (Past-president).

Board Member Project roles

During the past year the following project-specific roles were assumed by Board members: Peter Jonker—Coordinator of Up-Close-and-Personal program; Liaison (to Coordinator, Darla Tenold) for the SWC Coaching Program;

Jim Weseen—Membership, Coop Scoop Editor, Website Co-administrator, assistant to Open Mic events, and Project Leader of Dave Margoshes Workshop;

Gary Chappell: Co-coordinator of Open Mic Program; Liaison to SWG's Word-on-the-Street;

Kristina Komendant—Coordinator of and MC for Self-Publishing Workshop;

Jeff Smith—Website Co-administrator;

Carmen Davies—Registrar; Coordinator and Administrator of SWC's Facebook page;
assistant to Open Mic events;

Jo Oliver—Membership Secretary; Co-coordinator of Open Mic Program.

At this point, I wish to thank heartily all those who served on the SWC Board during the past year for the dedication and energy they brought to the tasks.

Goals and Objectives that Guided the Board

The following goals, first articulated in a June 2007 planning event, have continued to guide the SWC Board this past year:

- maintain/increase the SWC's community profile;
- continue to seek ways to collaborate with other groups, businesses, and organizations that serve local writers;
- continue to work on the SWC's Web visibility and the usefulness of our website;
- maintain a regular date for Board meetings, and once again plan and publicize the SWC'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 SWC'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; and
- remain both affordable and fiscally responsible.

For this past year's specific objectives, we depended largely on an internally-produced document entitled Strategic Initiatives Proposals tabled at our March, 2010 meeting. This planning document proposed the following six initiatives, the first two of which we realized:

- SWC Speakers Program: to provide a series of public, free presentations by Saskatoon area high-profile writers;
- Coaches Program Subsidy: to make the Coaching Program financially more attractive;
- Word On The Street Participation: to enter a booth in the annual Word On The Street program each September;
- Writing Group Support Program: to provide one free workshop visit per year by an experienced writer for all writing groups with 100% SWC membership;
- Web-Site Redesign: to professionalize the general look and feel; to provide online services that will appeal to younger and online members; and to distribute the content maintenance workload across a wider body of contributors/editors; and
- Writing Retreat Program: a writing retreat in a cloistered setting (bed and breakfast) provided to three or four SWC members to allow them undivided writing time with other writers, and a resource person for a period of 24 hours.

A Change in our Modus Operandi:

Early in the year, to achieve our strategic objectives, the Board decided to veer away somewhat from our traditional dependence on ad-hoc project committees toward coordination by project-leaders. We believe that this not only recognizes our complete dependence on volunteer energy but also affords a greater sense of project-leader "ownership" for a particular program. Under the new model, the Project Leader (guided by and answering to the Board) assumes full responsibility to plan and deliver all aspects of a program and to secure assistance from whomever she deems appropriate.

Under this model, we planned and delivered three very successful new programs:

- a day-long Self-Publishing Workshop; Project Leader, Kristina Komendant;
- a day-long writing workshop facilitated by Dave Margoshes; Project-Leader, Jim Weseen; and
- two Up-Close-and-Personal events (with authors David Carpenter and Anthony Bidulka); Project Leader, Peter Jonker.

Accomplishments

Routine administrivia aside, I believe that the success of SWC's Board in any year ought to be assessed by two measures: (1) how well we engaged ourselves with the local literary community generally and with our membership specifically; and, (2) how well we served up programs that support enthusiasm for and excellence in writing. We did very well on both counts.

Accomplishments—Liaison/Communication

- We dearly value our ongoing partnership with the Saskatoon Public Library (SPL) in relation to two SWC programs: the longstanding Open Mic program and the newly initiated Up-Close-and-Personal program. The SPL supports us not only with a strategic venue but also with promotion in its Library News pamphlet and by providing us with a supply of posters.
- The SWC website is our virtual home base. Here you will find not only a wealth of information and links in support of writers and writing but also updates of upcoming events and accounts and photos of past events. Thank you to Jim Weseen for managing this.
- Coop Scoop is our monthly pro-active email outreach to members. Its effectiveness is further enhanced by the equally regular Coop Scoop Bulletin. Thank you Jim Weseen also for this. These are circulated not only to SWC members but also to our contacts in other writerly organizations, McNally-Robinson Books, and Indigo Books.
- SWC Facebook Page—a new communication medium this year, has a growing list of "friends." Our expectation is that this medium, with its capacity for interactive engagement, will grow to become a discussion forum for writer- and writing-related issues.
- Gary Chappell has served as SWC's liaison with Word-on-the-Street (WOTS).

- Jo Oliver and Dave Schultz served as liaison with City of Saskatoon Cultural Planning forum.
- At last year's AGM, our membership was 142. This year, the total has reached a record, 150. Year by year, we continue to see a steady increase—a sure indication that we are maintaining a vibrant connection.

Accomplishments—Programs

- **Coaching Program (ongoing):**
Since its launch in 2009, we have matched six applicants to five Coaches; three of these coaching relationships continued after the so-called Test-drive. This year, we introduced a 50% subsidy (to a maximum of \$50) for each Test-drive. A very recent survey of both Coaches and Coachees indicates a high level of satisfaction. The Board is now awaiting specific recommendations from Peter and Darla to build on this success. We would like to obtain a longer list of Coaches and a livelier intake of applicants. Thank you, Darla Tenold, for continuing to serve as Coordinator for this program.
- **Open Mic Program (ongoing, monthly):**
Open Mic evenings continue to grow in popularity. Total cumulative attendance this past (calendar) year, over nine events, was 248 people; participants made a total of 98 readings. To our delight, 38 of this year's readers were reading for their first time at our Open Mic. Thank you to Jo Oliver and Gary Chappell for their ongoing coordination of this program.
- **Self-Publishing Workshop (November 13, 2010):**
This day-long workshop attracted 32 registrants. Overall, the participants gave it very high marks. Thank you, Kristina Komendant, for coordinating and emceeing this successful event.
- **Writing workshop with Dave Margoshes (March 5, 2011):**
This most recent day-long workshop, entitled "Story as a function of desire and choice," attracted a full house of 12 registrants. Again, it received very high evaluations from them. Thank you, Jim Weseen, for coordinating this successful event.
- **Up-Close-and-Personal events:**
 - (1) David Carpenter (December 7, 2010): approximately 35 people attended.
 - (2) Anthony Bidulka (January 20, 2011): approximately 50 people attended
Both events were very well received; time slipped by long before participants had satisfied all of their questions. Thank you, Peter Jonker, for coordinating this program.

Peter Jonker, President