

Ten lessons

from the Montreal EAC conference

by Christina Vasilevski

When I joined EAC as a student member last autumn, I felt a part of the association, yet somewhat distanced from it because I had met so few members in the flesh. I participated in the email forum, and had a mentor through the mentorship program (a Toronto branch initiative). I realized the annual conference was my best chance at meeting people. But attending a conference involved travel and meeting new people all at once, and there was a lot I was unsure of before attending: Could I contribute constructively to a group of people with so much more experience and training? Could I network effectively and be a useful resource for others? Would I enjoy myself? I was both excited and nervous for a number of reasons.

First, there was the prospect of being in an unfamiliar city. Then, there was meeting people whose names and editorial outlooks I had become familiar with, but whose faces I didn't know. Finally, there was the disbelief that I was actually doing it, that I was taking a step towards meeting others and officially becoming a part of the editing community.

I'm happy to say that I worried over nothing. The conference was full of informative sessions, useful resources, and extremely friendly, open-hearted people. Being part of the Conference Buddies program was helpful; before I left for Montreal, I was matched up with a group of editors from across the country who were also attending. Over email we learned about each

other and made plans for our time together in Montreal. Becoming familiar with a ready-made group of people was encouraging and comforting.

My first session at the conference was the Eight-Step Editing workshop facilitated by Elizabeth d'Anjou. One of my conference buddies was in the same seminar, and we managed to have a conversation during the snack breaks. Thinking about editing as an exercise not in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, but in moving progressively from subtle to drastic changes in an author's voice was illuminating. Looking back, I consider that seminar to be one of the most informative sessions I've encountered about working on text.

Almost two months later, my memories of my time in Montreal have blurred together and become a pleasant hum of informative conversations, laughter, new faces and names, and plenty of handouts.

Despite the lapse in concrete memories, I do recall a lot of the formal and informal (sometimes, very informal!) lessons I learned from attending the Montreal conference:

- 1.** Business cards are a must. Keep plenty on your person at all times.
- 2.** Networking isn't about how the person you're talking to can help you. It's about how you can help the person you're talking to.
- 3.** Editors often have an interesting

story to tell about how they started to edit. If you take the time to listen, you never know what you might learn.

4. You can write a song about anything, including grammar.

5. Unlike horseshoes and hand-grenades, close is not good enough when it comes to crafting resumés to submit to other editors. Make sure it's perfect.

6. Don't try to attend a seminar in every available timeslot. Sometimes it's OK to take a break from the sessions and sit down to organize your thoughts.

7. Don't be scared to strike up conversations with new people. (This paid off well for me as I will be working full-time with someone I met through the conference.)

8. Take accurate notes about everyone you meet, right after you meet them. The information won't be as fresh two weeks later.

9. The AGM will always last longer than you expect it to.

10. Whether you attend conferences or other information-gathering events, come home with a list of things to accomplish using the information you've learned. Otherwise, it's easy to lose momentum. 