

Canadian Writing Centres Association

Annual Report

for the year ending May 31, 2008

OBJECTIVE

The Canadian Writing Centres Association (CWCA) brings together as a bilingual community the people and groups interested in Canadian writing centres, their administration and their services, in order to enable sharing of resources, experiences, ideas and scholarship with the aim of enriching the services provided to students in higher education across Canada. This is accomplished through exposure to best practices within an enduring network of communication between writing centres.

PARTICIPANTS

Executive committee members:

Chair: Martin Holock

Co-Chair: Liesje de Burger

Treasurer: Marion McKeown

Secretary-Registrar: Jana Weerasinghe-Seijts

Others:

Anyone who is

- 1) an employee of a Canadian writing centre, or
 - 2) interested and experienced in the work done in such centres,
- is invited to participate.

BACKGROUND

The CWCA was created to be a medium of exchange for anyone interested in writing centres and the development of student writing skills in Canada. In February 2006 a listserv was opened through the University of Ottawa and an invitation was sent out to writing centres across the country to begin the conversation.

Later in 2006, at the STLHE conference at the University of Toronto in June, a lunchtime roundtable discussion was organized. What was initially supposed to be a 45-minute conversation between eight to ten people turned into three hours between forty people, with further meetings in the evening.

In winter 2007 Liesje de Burger, with the support of Aline Germain-Rutherford of the STLHE, established the Special Interest Group (SIG), which is affiliated with the CWCA, but not equivalent to it. We had our first meeting of both the CWCA and the SIG on June 15, 2007 at the conference at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Meetings:

On June 15, 2007, the CWCA convened officially for the first time in Edmonton. 18 people were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange experiences and best practices in two areas: 1) supporting students as they develop writing skills, which included discussion about graduate students, appointment formats and writing on students' papers; and 2) administration and innovation within university and college writing centres in Canada, which covered various topics such as personnel, record-keeping and statistics.

We then voted in the members of the executive committee, which are listed above.

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 18, 2008 from 1:15 to 4:15 p.m. at the STLHE Conference in Windsor.

SSHRC Congress involvement:

Several CWCA members were in attendance at the Congress in Vancouver where Marion McKeown hosted a panel discussion on Writing Centres in Canada. She is now writing the associated report to Human Resources and Development Canada about the status of writing centres in the country, their importance and their impact.

STLHE involvement:

This year, several CWCA members will also be presenting at the STLHE conference:

Exploring the Pros and Cons of Implementing Synchronous, Online Tutoring in Writing Centres

Hosted by Christina Halliday, Liv Marken, Linda McCloud-Bondoc, Liesje de Burger (all CWCA members)

GradWRITE! Helping Graduate Students Write Right

Hosted by Jana Weerasinghe-Seijts (CWCA member), Paul Schmidt

Addressing the Unique Needs of Graduate Writers

Hosted by Adrienne Jones, Liv Marken (both CWCA members)

Finances:

The CWCA has neither collected nor distributed any funds to date. There is a proposal to be discussed at the 2008 AGM regarding collecting a \$25.00 annual fee from members.

Ongoing interaction:

Members actively participate in the fruitful exchange on the Canadian Writing Centres Association listserv, which has been active since 2006 through the University of Ottawa. This list requires no membership, and is the only exclusively Canadian venue for discussion on writing centres and student writing support.

As well, the CWCA newsletter keeps all members informed of upcoming events of interest, and invites them to attend STLHE conferences and take part in the SIG.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Writing Conference in 2009?

At Congress in Vancouver, a proposal was put forward by Roger Graves of the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW) and the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric (CSSR) to merge writing studies in Canada, including the CWCA, under one umbrella organization and host a conference together next year.

The executive committee decided against merging under one umbrella organization for several reasons, primarily:

- A difference in focus: the executive decided to maintain our identity as a community of practice rather than being primarily focused on research, as the other associations are. Many of our members don't have the opportunity or desire to produce scholarship, and prefer the support network as it is;
- To maintain our independence: as a growing association, the CWCA wants to foster relationships that allow it to concentrate solely on writing centres in Canada. Our community is growing in number and strength, and for this reason, we prefer to continue in this direction, without the direction of decision-makers outside of the CWCA.

That said, a joint conference would be an excellent opportunity to connect with others in the field of writing, and could be an excellent step towards hosting our own conference in 2010. This proposal will be discussed at the 2008 AGM.

Constitution

A draft constitution will be distributed to the listserv during the week of the AGM and will be opened for feedback and comments at the meeting, where it will be edited collectively by all members in attendance. It will be finalized during the weeks following the AGM and posted on the CWCA website.

Joining SSHRC Congress

Marion McKeown is making an application to have the CWCA join the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Congress. This

could open all sorts of opportunities for networking, conferencing, and even funding for travel and research. One of the requirements is to have a constitution in place for two years. Further developments will be reported as they occur.