



## President Report May 31, 2019

Heather Fitzgerald, CWCA President 2017-2019

This report, along with our financial statement, will be published to our website, so don't feel that you need to take notes.

To begin, I'd like to start by once again thanking the members of this year's Board of Directors: Sarah King, Nadine Fladd, Jordana Garbati, Brian Hotson, Lindsey Voisin, Mandy Penney, Liv Marken, Holly Salmon, and Nancy Johnson Squair. I am so grateful for all you have given to this organization (and continue to give): you have made my job so easy by being so very very brilliant.

We have a lot of great news to report this year, so let's get started:

### 1) Board positions

This year, we made it a priority to document and archive the work we do—particularly the work of conference organization—so that we could better define responsibilities and tasks for each of our Board positions. Each Board member wrote a detailed list of tasks, some of them even with month-to-month breakdowns, that we then used for several purposes:

- Writing more detailed position descriptions in our bylaws, which you will have the opportunity to review a little later in the meeting;
- Developing handbooks for each of our key positions—Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and President—so that incoming candidates have written materials to supplement the person-to-person mentorship
- Re-allocate some duties from those Board members who were carrying too heavy a load and creating, we hope, more equitable and sustainable positions

The end result of this audit was the creation of one new Board position—the Membership Chair—and the retitling of another, the Digital Media Chair, formerly the Communications Chair. We will be talking more about these new roles in the discussion of our bylaw amendments.

## **2) Regional Affiliates**

For the past few years, we have only had one official regional affiliate, the Atlantic Canada Writing Centres Association (ACWCA). When a group of BC writing centres approached us to ask about how they could become a regional affiliate, we realized that we had no answer to give. At our AGM last year, we ratified a process by which regional groups could seek affiliate status.

I am happy to announce that we now have two official regional affiliates, ACWCA and the BCWCA, and you'll be hearing reports from both groups a little later in our meeting. Our hope is that now that we have a defined process for creating and recognizing regional affiliates, we might encourage other groups that gather outside of official CWCA events to constitute themselves as regional affiliates. We are such a large country, geographically speaking, that regional gatherings are much more accessible to many members than our national conferences.

## **3) Advocacy Work**

Again this year the Board sent letters to institutions making decisions about staffing that we feel undermine the ability of writing centres and writing centre professionals to succeed. This year, the University of PEI advertised a replacement for our former President Robin Sutherland that we felt discredited the professional nature of the writing centre coordinator position. The position was presented as a lower level staff position that required no expertise in writing or teaching. We sent a letter expressing our dismay and surprise about this posting and offered our support to the VP Academic and/or the incumbent in the position to understand the profession.

Going forward, we are looking for ways that we could further, and more positively, advocate for the value of a well staffed and well supported writing centre as a service we provide to our members and their institutions. We would like to act proactively instead of responding reactively to each incident. If any of you have ideas or suggestions for ways to advance this advocacy work, please speak with someone on the Board: we are open to any and all suggestions.

## **4) Membership**

We had many conversations at the Board this year about what it means to be a member of this Association and what the benefits of membership are and could be. With our current budget and staffing, it's hard to imagine building in the membership perks that many of us would like to see, but we all believe strongly that membership in this Association does have value and we want and need to signal that to current and prospective members. While we didn't do as much on this file as we had initially hoped, our conversations did lay the groundwork for the creation of a Membership Chair as a new Board position. It is our hope that this position will oversee and take the lead on various issues related to membership, including making recommendations about fees and terms for membership, as well as identifying and developing possible benefits for members, members-only resources, etc.

## **5) Increased connection to other Associations**

We were happy this year to have had a closer connection with our sister organization, the Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing. Through our VP Sarah King and CASDW's Andrea Williams, our two organizations had more sustained conversations which have resulted in several joint initiatives, including two joint panels at the upcoming CASDW conference, as well as our support for CASDW's application to host the Writing Research Across Borders conference in Banff, Alberta in 2023. We will keep the membership informed of any future joint initiatives, but for this week, I encourage

anyone attending Congress at UBC to try to attend the two CWCA-connected events: the Revision of Statement on Writing Centres and Staffing (2016) panel which will be held on Sunday June 2 at 1:30pm; and the multi-organizational forum on Monday June 3 at 10:15am.

#### **6) Website and social media**

We have worked hard this year to maintain and update our various communications channels, particularly the website and social media feeds, so that members and the wider community can more easily find information about our work. Special thanks to Brian Hotson and the Communications committee who ensured that our communications blanketed every channel. With the introduction of the Digital Media Chair position this year, we hope to continue our communications “beyond the list serve.”

#### **7) Re-organization of our archive**

While not the most romantic task, the reorganization of our archive was a much needed one. Thanks to the efforts of our Secretary, Nadine Fladd, and Communications Chair Mandy Penney, our Google Drive archive is now neatly ordered and easy to navigate.

#### **8) Database update**

Finally, in his role as past-President, Brian Hotson and his team at Saint Mary's took on the task of updating our database of Canadian Writing Centres. Those interested can find a link to the current database on our website under Resources. Brian has provided a form to request changes or additions, so if you don't see your centre or name where it should be, please let us know.

#### **Looking to the future**

It is with mixed feelings that I step down as President of this Association after three years. There's relief, yes, at passing on some of these responsibilities to my capable VP Sarah King; but I have enjoyed and learned so much from working so intensely with this organization. I am incredibly proud of CWCA/ACCR and the work we do, so it was an honour and genuine pleasure to be at the helm for a few years. I look forward to continuing this work under Sarah and whoever our future VP may be—and perhaps without the monthly responsibility of chairing meetings and, you know, the small task of hosting a conference, I might actually have time for some of the projects I had hoped to take on, such as developing a five-year plan for the organization!