

A History of the Northwest Independent Editors Guild:

REFLECTIONS ON OUR 10th ANNIVERSARY

by Sherri Schultz, co-founder

PIONEER DAYS

The Northwest Independent Editors Guild began as a group of eleven editors who met in Seattle freelance developmental editor **PHYLLIS HATFIELD**'s living room in August 1997. Phyllis and co-founder **SHERRI SCHULTZ** were interested in meeting other freelance editors and possibly forming a group that would meet on an ongoing basis, somewhat like New York's Independent Editors Group (www.bookdocs.com), which had been founded a year earlier by a friend and mentor of Phyllis's.

To compile the mailing list for this "freelance editors' gathering," Phyllis and Sherri pooled their Rolodexes and asked clients for the names of other freelancers they worked with. They then mailed out an invitation via the U.S. Postal Service. (They may have also communicated with each other via land-based phones.)

Attending the first meeting were **SIGRID ASMUS, ANNE DEPUE, ANDY ENGELSON, PHYLLIS HATFIELD, MARNI KEOGH, CAROLE LEVINTHAL, PRISCILLA LONG, SHERRI SCHULTZ, SHARON VONASCH, CAROL WEILAND, and PAT WELCH**, many of whom are still Guild members today.

The agenda was simple: editors introduced themselves and talked about how a group might benefit them. Some basic themes emerged. Members thought a group could help freelance editors:

- get to know others who work with words
- gain a sense of having colleagues rather than working in isolation
- build a network of people we can refer jobs to and get referrals from
- familiarize each other with professional standards and resources
- define our career path
- learn about other kinds of available editorial work
- find out about others' subject expertise
- learn from others about issues related to working at home

These goals continue to guide the Guild today.

At the outset, membership in the group was free, since we had no expenses. We met every other month in a Seattle café or bookstore or, more frequently, in a member's home. Before long we used the new communications technique of e-mail to vote on a name for our group, and "Northwest Independent Editors Guild" emerged as the winner.

At our first meetings, we simply socialized and discussed editing issues; in 1999 we began to have more formal meetings with guest speakers. Since then, Guild meetings have evolved into a lively forum for education and networking; speakers have included "A Word a Day" creator Anu Garg, Seal Press founder and Guild member Barbara Sjöholm, and literary agent Elizabeth Wales.

After about a year we began meeting in public places in Seattle, which over the years have included Elliott Bay Book Co., Seattle Central Community College, Town Hall, the Phinney Neighborhood Center, the Wit's End bookstore, the Fremont Library, and our home since 2003, Richard Hugo House.

BECOMING AN INSTITUTION

Our first public event was the first annual Northwest Bookfest in Seattle, in 1998, where we had a booth. In 1999 we developed our first promotional materials:

- We printed our first Rolodex business card.
- Member **AMY SMITH BELL** wrote and designed our trifold brochure.
- Co-founder **SHERRI SCHULTZ** wrote and designed our website, www.edsguild.org.

All three of these pieces are still in use today, though our website has expanded considerably since then. It now includes a job board, archived notes from most of our meetings, information on editing resources and classes, and even quizzes on how to be a good editor and how to be a good client. Most of the information is available to members and nonmembers alike. The recent addition of a site map, authored by member **BETH CHAPPLE**, helps users find all of the treasures within.

The flurry of activity in 1999 caused us to institute an annual membership fee to cover our expenses: \$10! Keeping membership affordable has always been a high priority for the Guild; despite the organization's expanded activities and services since then, today's annual membership fee is only \$30.

In 2000 we formed a steering committee to guide the Guild. The eight founding members were **SIGRID ASMUS, AMY SMITH BELL, MIRIAM BULMER, BRIE GYNCILD, RANDY HILFMAN, SHERRI SCHULTZ, DIANE SEPANSKI, and DAVID WILLIAMS** (four of whom are still on the committee!). In later years the SC welcomed **DORENE CARREL, BETH CHAPPLE, ANN GOSCH, SUE MANN, JOAN PLIEGO, SUE RIDGE, and HEIDI WRIGHTSMAN** for



VISIT OUR WEBSITE, WWW.EDSGUILD.ORG

terms of varying lengths. SC members have played an invaluable role in the continuation of the Guild.

Also in 2000, Guild members **KRIS FULSAAS**, **RANDY HILFMAN**, and **DIANE SEPANSKI** began team-teaching a one-day class on Careers in Editing and Proofreading through Seattle's Discover U. The course is still offered regularly; later instructors included **BETTY FAULKNER**, **KIM RUNCIMAN** and **JULIE VAN PELT**.

In 2001, members **CYNTHIA AHLQUIST**, **BETH CHAPPLE**, and **BETTY FAULKNER** developed a Hands-On Proofreading Workshop; later, **BETH CHAPPLE**, **LINDA CLIFTON**, and **ROBIN IRELAND** developed a one-day class called Become a Copy Editor. Other instructors of these courses have included **SALLY ANDERSON**, **AMY SMITH BELL**, **PAMELA FASSETT**, **ROBYN FRITZ**, **JULIE MONAHAN**, and **IRENE WANNER**. The Proofreading Workshop is still offered today.

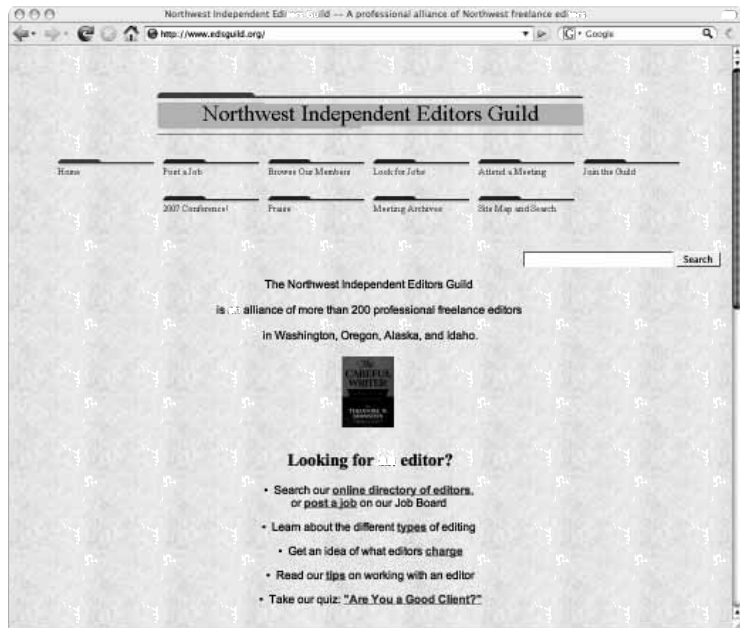
In 2001 the Guild began an electronic discussion list to help members communicate with each other. Members use the list to ask for help and advice, share resources, publicize events, and much more.

NEW CHAPTERS

Our active Portland chapter began when member **SUE RIDGE** volunteered her considerable energy to coordinate Guild activities in the Rose City. In 2003 we held a summer kickoff weekend of events in Portland that included a talk by the warm and generous Dennis Stovall, head of Portland State University's Center for Excellence in Writing and the student-run Ooligan Press, and a celebratory dinner at McMenamins Kennedy School. A number of Seattle members joined several dozen Portlanders for this memorable weekend.

Since Sue's move to Seattle in 2006, Portland's chapter has been led by a spirited group of volunteers including (but definitely not limited to) **SUE MANN**, **STEVE BIELER**, **ANNE DUJMOVIC**, **TIM McLAUGHLIN**, **HALLE REESE**, **HILARY RUSSELL**, and **MARTHA WAGNER**. Members meet for dinner every other month. Guest speakers at Portland meetings have included writer Deborah Donnelly, editor Karen Kirtley, and personal historian Julie Zander. Portland's chapter has had a public presence at a plethora of events, including the annual Wordstock book festival, the Central Library's annual Writers' Resource Fair, a Willamette Writers conference, and an Association of Personal Historians conference.

In February 2006, member **ANN GOSCH** created a South Sound chapter, which meets every other month for informal socializing and networking.



STAFF

In the fall of 2005 the Guild hired our first staff member, part-time administrative assistant **ANNE MOREAU**, who has proved herself worth her weight in red pencils.

During the Guild's early years, co-founder **SHERRI SCHULTZ** did much of the administrative work to sustain the organization. Before the creation of the steering committee in 2000 and Anne's hiring in 2005, Sherri served as the Guild's treasurer; electronic discussion list moderator; website developer, writer, and webmistress; meeting coordinator (including securing rooms, arranging for speakers, sending meeting reminders, and facilitating meetings); marketing director (placing ads, having promotional literature printed, writing some promotional literature, reserving booths at public events, recruiting booth volunteers); and all-around "buck stops here" gal.

Today, thanks to the work of all the people mentioned in boldface above (and many more), especially the Guild's extraordinary steering committee and administrative assistant, Sherri happily serves as the Guild's treasurer, as a steering committee member, and as an enthusiastic cheerleader for the many others who have joined her in devoting their energies to the Guild.



Beyond the Red Pencil

TENTH-ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

At the November 2005 potluck, the Guild steering committee asked for suggestions for future Guild activities. One of the most popular ideas was a one-day conference. **MARGUERITE LANGLOIS, BILL THORNESS, KYRA FREESTAR,** and **BETH CHAPPLE** offered to explore this idea. Their efforts resulted in the Guild's first full-day conference and tenth-anniversary celebration, held at North Seattle Community College in the spring of 2007 and attended by more than a hundred editorial enthusiasts.

FINALLY...

Over the past ten years, the Editors Guild has grown from a handful of freelance editors with similar clients, interests, and backgrounds to a diverse group engaged in almost every kind of word-related job in the Northwest. Today we have more than two hundred members, about 45 percent from the Seattle area and 10 percent from the Portland area. Our other members are located throughout Washington and Oregon, and we even have one Alaska member.

In addition to their Guild activities, members are spreading the wonder of words throughout their communities in other ways. Member **RANDY HILFMAN** is a ubiquitous figure on the adult spelling bee circuit; many Guild members are involved with the University of Washington's Editing Certificate program as students, instructors, or advisory board members; and our members are regularly called upon to speak about writing and editing, in venues ranging from Richard Hugo House's "How to Get Published" series to the Pacific Northwest Writers Association's annual conference to the Real Change/Seattle Public Library "Out of the Margins" workshop series.

All of us involved with the Guild look forward to enjoying the continued growth of the organization as the publishing industry changes, as our membership continues to increase, and as our members' interests and needs develop and evolve. Join us for the ride, and explore what lies . . . ***beyond the red pencil!***

