

February 2001

CPRS looks to enhance quality of member services

By Natasha Joachim

The CPRS National Board of directors recently made the financial decision to close the national office in Ottawa. The closure of the office will free up 48.7% of CPRS' total revenues spent on operating costs and, as a result, the Board will be able to provide members with greater services while focusing on the Society's financial resources strategically.

The Board has determined that Base Consulting and Management will handle all the administrative services in a more cost-efficient manner. Base's headquarters in Toronto will serve as the CPRS National Office. As a multi-management organization with over 20 years of experience in the industry, Base will be able to enhance member services and potentially add to them as well.

Lisa Homer, APR, has been a volunteer for the organization for the past seven years. This year she is serving as the national treasurer for the executive. "Over the next few months, the Board will be evaluating the time and delivery of the current services to

determine how to best serve the members of CPRS," explained Lisa.

Base has been providing member services since the retirement of Arbo Matilla in June 2000 and will continue to provide members with the same services in both official languages. They have assigned key staff members to work specifically with CPRS members to maintain a sense of continuity and familiarity.

Lisa also commented that, while a few minor bumps are expected in the transition process, Base has the experience to provide CPRS with quality and timely customer service. They will continue to provide reports and contact information while also providing CPRS brochures, membership kits and other documents upon request. With its extensive experience in association and volunteer-related issues, Base will be a resourceful tool to improve the society on a local level by providing best-practice suggestions. Base encourages all members to contact them with any inquiries.

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CPRS • Member Profile

Mervyn Brice

By Catherine Scheers

Transferable Skills are one of the most important aspects of career advancement, or survival, in our new economy. Mervyn Brice, Manager- Internet Development for Clarity, is a prime example. Mervyn parlayed a fairly traditional education and work experience into a senior role in a very untraditional industry. He shows us, by example, that public relations skills can be used in various industries and roles.

Mervyn graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a B.A. in Psychology, then enrolled in the Public

Relations program at Mount Royal College. After graduation in 1995, he joined Telus as a Customer Relations specialist. But excited with the growth of I.T. companies, Mervyn utilized his writing skills to land a job as a copywriter for Tiger



Mervyn Brice

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Town Crier sings an all new tune

By Kim Aasen

By now, you will have received the new Call-For-Entries for the 2001 Town Crier Awards. Immediately, you must have noticed the dynamic new look and fresh new logo that the Town Crier has adopted. But these external changes only scratch the surface of the important work underway this year, that is to increase the value and raise the profile of CPRS Calgary's annual awards program.

Goal one for CPRS Calgary's Awards and Recognition committee, was to dedicate themselves to solving member concerns regarding the Town Crier judging process. "The resulting changes are significant, and demonstrate our commitment to the program's credibility. We have heard and responded to member concerns," explains Melissa Rolfe, the committee's judging coordinator.

Research determined that external judging, conducted to ensure impartiality and anonymity in the process, will improve the image and raise the profile of the award, thereby increasing its value.

A partnership was formed between the Calgary and Winnipeg chapters of the CPRS. Accredited members in Winnipeg have been recruited and will judge Calgary's non-student entries on our behalf. "The Winnipeg chapter thought this was a great opportunity, as they do not have an awards program," comments Rolfe. "It also benefits Calgary's chapter to receive feedback from another public relations community."

In addition to implementing the external judging process, CPRS Calgary has extended its Call-For-Entries to its sister chapter in Edmonton, as well as to IABC Calgary members. It is expected that this will increase competition, resulting in a more valuable award.

"We have successfully heard and acted upon the feedback provided by CPRS and IABC members - making the proper changes to increase the validity and integrity of the award. One way we intend to measure our success, is to track the number and quality of entries we receive this year," says Rolfe.

The bar has been raised for the 2001 Town Crier awards. With a new, more professional image, a revamped external judging process, and an expanded Call-For-Entries, top quality entries throughout Alberta are certain to roll in. The competition has begun, and CPRS Calgary invites you to rise to the challenge.

The Town Crier wants to recognize and honor your excellence in public relations. You are encouraged to celebrate your communications successes, to reflect on your work over the past year and to pull out your best! Entries are being accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Friday April 20, 2001.

Submissions are accepted in the following categories:

- Individual Public Relations Products including: annual reports, newsletters, brochures, displays, audiovisual productions, news releases, feature articles etc.
- Electronic and Interactive Communication including interactive or internet/intranet based communication, web-site communication.
- Local or Regional Public Relations Programs such as: advertising/publicity campaigns, special events, media relations or multi-faceted campaigns implemented locally or regionally.
- National Public Relations Programs that include comprehensive campaigns implemented Canada-wide involving a number of communications tools or tactics.
- International Programs that include comprehensive campaigns implemented for an international audience.
- Internal Communications including multi-faceted public relations programs directed at internal audiences.
- Student Public Relations Programs in two categories:
 - A) for any local or regional public relations program that was produced by a student or group of students for an actual client,
 - B) any public relations plan that was produced by a student or a group of students for a hypothetical client.

Awards are presented at the CPRS Calgary Annual General Meeting and Awards Dinner. For more information visit the CPRS Calgary Web-site at www.cprscalgary.org, or call Susan Elford at (403) 267-6213.

Special thanks to:

Marie Hebson at Karo Design for volunteering her time and expert skill to create the new Town Crier logo and Call-For-Entries brochure and Emerson-Clark Printing Corporation for donating the printing of the materials.

CPRS looking ahead. . .

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Their contact information is as follows:

Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)
250 Consumers Road, Suite 301
Willowdale, Ontario M2J 4V6 Canada
Telephone: 416-496-2010 Fax: 416-495-8723
E-mail: cprs@netcom.ca Web site: www.cprs.ca

*On a national level, Base will strive toward excellence in member services with the guidance of the Board. The CPRS National Board of Directors encourages member feedback and input to ensure that they reach their goal of making the Society the best choice for professionals. **m***

Communication Studies Co-op student

By Erin Maduck

If you are accustomed to memorizing new passwords, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, and employee numbers every four months, chances are you're also familiar with the co-op program.

As a Co-op student in the communications program at the University of Calgary, I have had the opportunity to enrich my largely theoretical education with a practical work component. Integrating these two elements has given me the opportunity to acquire valuable new skills, to network, and most importantly, to prepare for the future.

When I first enrolled in the co-op program I was motivated by the chance to get a head start on the other graduating university students. After all, co-op students can establish themselves while they are in school, and perhaps even secure positions before completing their degrees. But after my first work term, I realized that the co-op program was going to offer more than I bargained for.

By completing work terms in four different companies, I have had the opportunity to test

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Upcoming events

Media Mega Mergers in Canada

Wednesday, February 28th
Westin Hotel, 11:45 Registration
12:00 Lunch & Presentation

Today's news media is full of stories about mergers in the Canadian business community. During the past year, many of the stories were often about the media themselves – a frenzy of media mergers created a new landscape for Canadian news.

How will that new landscape affect the way Canadians get their news? Will balanced, comprehensive coverage be easier or harder to achieve in a more globalized marketplace? What will it mean for the communications professional trying to get messages out to publics?

The answers to these questions and more will be discussed and debated by Bruce Leslie, Director of Communications, CanWest Global and Lydia Miljan, Director Alberta Initiative for the Fraser Institute.

Cost: \$25 Members
 \$35 Non-members
 \$20 Student members
 \$25 Student non-members

Register at events@cprscalgary.org or by telephone at 230-6800.

Cancellation Policy: Cancellations must be received 48 hours prior to event. No shows will be billed.

APRs: This session is worth 0.5 APR maintenance points.

Call for new members

Do you know someone who isn't a member of CPRS but should be? This is your chance to help us inform and recruit potential members. Send along contact information for potential members and your name will be entered in a draw for two nights at the beautiful Delta Lodge at Kananaskis. If the potential recruit actually joins the society, they will also be entered in the draw. The draw will be made at the annual general meeting at the end of the year. Email potential members to Mona@prworkscanada.com (Mona Gauvreau, APR, Membership Chair, CPRS Calgary). **m**

Co-op student. . .

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drive' different industries. I witnessed the pros and cons of careers in many fields before entering the work force on a permanent basis. Having a stronger idea of what I want to do and where I want to do it is going to allow me to choose a career that fits.

In addition to working in different industries, the co-op program provides students with the opportunity to experience different corporate cultures. I have quickly learned what type of setting is best suited to my personality. I know what kind of management style, hierarchy, and work schedule works for me. I also know what does not work.

The co-op program also allows students to see the company from a unique perspective. Having the opportunity to work with different mentors, co-op students often learn more about a company than they ever would as permanent, full-time employees. They are exposed to the company on many different levels providing a rich learning experience.

The co-op program has brought me closer to understanding which career I want to pursue, where I want to pursue it, and how I will go about achieving my goals. It has also allowed me to get to know myself a little better. As a result, I am better equipped to choose the career that is right for me, and the opportunity to make the correct life decisions is definitely worth having to memorize new numbers every four months. **m**

High tech growth opportunities for practitioners

By **Catriona Miller**

In a world that is becoming increasingly digitized, modularized, computerized and neatly packaged in a plastic box, interpreting the language of technology can be difficult. In the high tech industry, acting as a translator is the job of the PR practitioner.

"To work in the high tech industry you have to have an understanding of the technology and also a keen interest in the high tech area," says Shawn Kelly, Wi-LAN Inc.

The difference between public relations in other industries, and PR in the high tech field, is the pace. To keep up, practitioners have to be knowledgeable to properly communicate the company's message to its audiences, as well as act as a filter to make the information make sense to the average person.

Many engineers and scientists have been continually reluctant to share their ideas with the public for two reasons they assume members of the public will not understand and they are trying to stay ahead of the competition. Many companies still do not fully understand the benefits of public relations. Part of Kelly's role is to educate the high tech community about the value of communication. However, she is changing their attitudes toward communication as they realize that the more people understand the technology, the greater the market for that company or product.

Many in the industry still debate whether the public really needs to know about technology issues and whether they are even interested. Often, it is the PR practitioner who makes decisions about what to communicate, thereby influencing the future of technology.

According to Tabitha Beaton of EyeWire, the main challenge to increasing the public's knowledge is to educate target audiences about unfamiliar subjects. She says the public's knowledge of high tech issues is especially important in Calgary, a city known for its oil and gas industry, but where the huge increase in technology-based companies is not widely known. Publicizing high-tech businesses will give Calgarians the opportunity to participate in the city's 'next economy.'

As the number of technology-based positions continue to rise in Calgary, the number of PR positions may also increase. As these companies are forced into public view, they are beginning to realize the value of strategic communications and its impact on the bottom line. **m**

Calgary shows good forum

By Henry Stevens

As part of the re-design of the CPRS Calgary Web site (www.cprscalgary.org) last year, a space was created on-line where CPRS Calgary members can gather to exchange news and views and, if desired, chat in real time.

This forum was created on Delphi.com, and though there's a small core group that makes occasional use of the forum, to become a useful tool, the forum needs a good critical mass of registered visitors who make regular checks on what's happening. So if you haven't had the chance to check it out yet, here are the simple steps to get you connected to the forum.

1. In your Web browser, type in www.delphi.com
 2. In the blue bar at the top, click on "Sign In"
 3. This will bring up a registration page. Complete the requested information and you'll be all signed up. Click on "click here to continue".
- **Be aware that you'll find yourself being presented with some ads for items you likely don't want or need. Those ads are our price for the free forum service.**
4. Once registered you'll be taken to your "home" page on delphi.
 5. Click on "my profile" in the left column. Take a couple of minutes here to create a profile about yourself. This will allow you to share a bit more information about yourself with other forum users. You can include as much or as little information as you are comfortable with. This info can be changed at any time by clicking on "my profile" in the left column.
 6. With your profile complete, click on the link marked "Home" at the top left of the Web page.
 7. Two routes to take now. At some point, plan on taking the "Tour" of Delphi by following the high-profile link near the top of the page. This will help you get the most out of the forums. For now, though, scroll down the left hand column to the bottom of the page, click on "hosts' forum".

8. In the bottom right hand corner of the screen you'll see a text box "enter Webtag". In the text box enter "cprscalgary" (all one word, no quotes) and click on the button marked "GO"

9. The next screen will tell you this is a private group, for which you'll need the group registration code. Enter "ChinookPR" as the group password and click "Submit"

That's it! From there you're part of CPRS Calgary's online water cooler. The forum exists to discuss any and all things related to public relations. Give it a try. The more people using the site, the more valuable it is. See you there. **m**

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Please contact Simon Whitfield at 229-3887 or simon.whitfield@home.com for details or to book space. Next deadline is Jan. 22, 2001.

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Visit our Web site at:
www.cprscalgary.org

Albertans prime for online communications

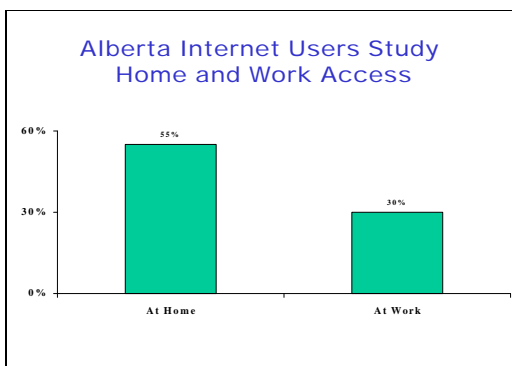
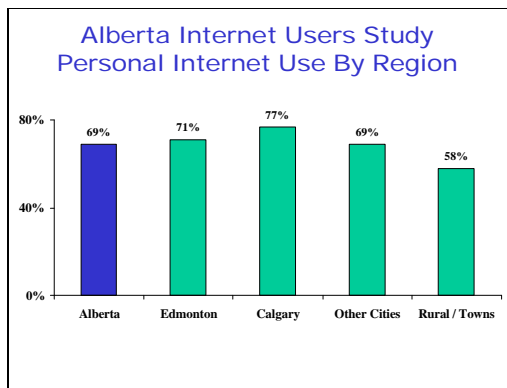
By Beverlee Loat APR, CPRS Edmonton

Recently, 400 households across Alberta were surveyed as part of the Alberta Internet Users Study* which asked occupants about their Internet use. The study found that 69 per cent of Alberta households are online, the highest in Canada, representing a substantial increase from 51 per cent in a similar survey only one year earlier. This information is invaluable for those interested in designing communication strategies.

In asking what people are doing online, a wide range of activities were mentioned (see sidebar). E-mail is the number one use of the Internet (96 per cent) and the main uses of the Web can be categorized generally as research (looking for information on travel, hobbies, etc.). More than 70 per cent of connected Alberta households spend from one to 10 hours a week online. The study also found that most access the Internet from home.

These factors seem to indicate that Albertans are primed as audiences for online communications they are connected, they are spending the time, and they are

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Members on the move

Members on the move

Susan Soprovich is now with GPC Communications.

New transferred members

Gordon Hawker, transferred from Saskatchewan
Elizabeth (Betty) McLennan, transferred from Edmonton

New local affiliate member

Mervyn Brice, Clarity Inc.

Selected Alberta household Internet usage:

- 65% searched for or accessed travel information
- 62% searched for or accessed information on hobbies
- 54% downloaded software
- 52% listened to or downloaded music
- 48% searched for or accessed sports information
- 41% participated in chat forums or chat rooms
- 32% visited newsgroups
- 30% paid bills online
- 7% participated in online auctions

Brice

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Media, now part of Axia NetMedia. Axia became a training ground in the new media business, and soon Mervyn was recruited to manage Clarity's Web site development projects.

Clarity is a local company with national clients in information technology, telecommunications, financial, oil & gas, and entertainment industries. Mervyn acts as a liaison and project manager between clients and internal development groups to ensure the clients' communications objectives are met.

Mervyn first joined CPRS as a student at Mount Royal College. "I used CPRS both as a networking opportunity and means to become familiar with corporate communications. I learned the various aspects of communications and how to do it properly." Now that he has more experience under his belt, Mervyn enjoys learning from CPRS how to fine-tune "subtle" communication skills and "implement good processes which breed good products." He still enjoys the networking and professional development opportunities – "They always get me thinking how can I apply this to the work I do at Clarity." Mervyn also finds the luncheons a great opportunity to "sharpen the saw" and check out "who's doing what" in I.T.

I asked Mervyn how the recent dot-com failures and layoffs in U.S. are affecting Canadians in the I.T. industry. "We don't expect a similar situation in Canada, since most of our work is business-to-business rather than business-to-consumer. Many U.S. firms failed to generate profits for investors, so a correction was due. However a solid foundation has been established and the Internet will not be going away."

The Ottawa Citizen reported on January 17, 2001 that "many dot-com defectors with their prized Net skills and entrepreneurial spirit are able to work their way back to better jobs at traditional companies." And conversely, that I.T. employers are looking for "solid skills in specialty areas, such as finance, marketing or sales, to bring Old Economy discipline to Internet-related business." In our fluid society, it's important to distill our experiences and frame our skill sets to meet the demands of employers and the economy.

Mervyn notes that with the globalization and convergence of new technologies such as wireless communications, personal communication devices and the Internet, there is a lot of room for growth in the I.T. sector, and many opportunities for P.R. professionals. Although we can't control the economy – neither the traditional nor the new e-economy – a solid education, experience, transferable skills and a good network are always a formula for success. **m**

Albertans prime . . .

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looking. Consider also the impact on credibility and persuasiveness of messages that we are "pulled" to, the proven advantages of interactivity for information retention, and the ability to target a variety of audiences and accommodate a variety of information levels within a Web site.

At a minimum, the research confirms the appropriateness for PR practitioners to include the Web in communication strategies. At the other end of the spectrum, there appears to be great opportunity to reach and enhance relationships with your Alberta audiences via the Web.

Beverlee Loat, APR, is an online communications consultant providing PR and Web strategies and is one of the partners in the Alberta Internet Users Study project. Contact her at loat@communicationfrontiers.com or 780/444-3250.


*ALBERTA INTERNET USERS BENCHMARK STUDY RELEASED NOV 2000. Beginning January 2001, quarterly surveys will track Internet usage trends in the province (and western Canada). This research includes an Omnibus Survey component allowing organizations to cost-effectively test their Web strategies and obtain company-specific research data. **m**

Volunteer opportunities

maxim newsletter - Layout and Design

We're looking for one to two people for layout and design of this newsletter. It's a great way to network and develop valuable newsletter design skills and portfolio pieces. Five to six hours are required every second month. Layout is done in Microsoft Word. Contact: monique_chenier@hotmail.com or phone 203-8429.

Archives

Assist with cataloging, organization and maintenance of CPRS Calgary's Archives - representing 40 years of history. Two to three hours a month are required. Contact: eileen.dooley@home.com. 

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