

REVISITING CCP MISSION AND STRUCTURE AT 60

A report by Bill Fledderus, CCP Vice-President
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The Canadian Church Press has for 60 years served as an association of communications professionals who serve Christian audiences. It has offered networking, professional development and mutual encouragement to editors and staff at national and regional organizations, particularly staff involved in the production of periodicals.

Changes in the world of communications and publishing – both mainstream and in the Christian sector – have accelerated in recent years, influenced by sweeping societal changes in technology, business models and population demographics. Advertising practices have changed, printing and mailing gotten more expensive, digital communications options generally gotten simpler and cheaper.

Changes have also occurred in the Christian communities we serve. Some Christian institutions that conduct publishing and communications have shrinking populations and shrinking budgets, which have led to decisions to downsize or close publications, or to switch to digital communications such as e-newsletters. Others have restructured away from the independent business model of mainstream newspapers and magazines towards in-house communications. Some Christian charities have hired more staff to produce news-like PR materials, and many editors are now involved in marketing.

The CCP has traditionally focused on printed periodicals and their staff. Although the CCP has opened membership categories for web-only publications and for individual freelancers, their numbers have so far remained small. Participation in the CCP has been highest among editors, but has been slim among other communicators such as staff in circulation, marketing and public relations, videographers, copywriters working mainly on websites, podcast creators, bloggers and other communications workers.

The volunteer executive that leads the CCP is drawn almost entirely from salaried editors at print periodicals, a pool that has shrunk in the last decade, as many venerable print newspapers and magazines – those that have traditionally helped to support the CCP with membership dues and participation – have closed. Many people with title “editor” nowadays have assumed responsibility for a wide range of other communications work, as organizations struggled to adapt to the increase in electronic communication and to stretch each dollar as far as possible.

These closures and lack of success at inviting other communications staff to participate could mean the CCP organization might lose the critical mass needed to support the organization. This is not to say the CCP is in some kind of financial crisis. Not at all. It is still a financially viable organization. Rather, it’s possible that our changing communication environment might *eventually* mean an end to our mandate and a shutting down of our operations. If we see that as a possible future, then now is the time for prudent action to secure as healthy an organizational future as possible.

Currently the CCP is not an incorporated charity. It is a loose association with a bank account, with volunteer leaders who run a well appreciated annual contest, convention and a few other activities. There are challenges that come with being small, but our size also allows for flexibility.

What future would we like for the CCP? Is the status quo acceptable? Should we consider ways to revitalize the mission and membership?

Many other writing/editing associations have restructured in recent years. For example, the American Society of News Editors.

1. In 2009, the organization dropped "newspaper" from its name, citing a desire "to reflect the fact that we serve editors who are leaders in delivering news on multiple platforms."
2. It merged with the Association of Opinion Journalists in 2015
3. Involving digital-only news organizations has been a "slow slog" for the ASNE, it reported in 2015. "About 5 percent of our members are from digital sites. Cost is an issue, so a lower-price membership category [for digital] is on the way."
4. In 2016 it began basing its membership fees, instead of on print circulation, on monthly unique website visitors: www.poynter.org/2016/american-society-of-news-editors-undergoes-digital-revamp/433269/.
5. It created a "new, lower-priced membership tier" to cultivate up-and-coming news executives and welcome journalists from its merger with AOJ.

Another example is the Canadian Business Media association (CBMA). In January 2017, Canada's national association for B2B media voted unanimously to dissolve the association and merge with Magazines Canada, the national trade association for all magazine media. Quote:

This is a history-making move for the two associations, which will join their impressive legacies, stretching over 40 years for Magazines Canada and 95 years for CBMA.

Under this agreement, all CBMA members will be incorporated into Magazines Canada's membership. With the addition of former CBMA titles, Magazines Canada's membership grows to nearly 400 magazines, including 125 business media titles. Magazines Canada has also created a new business media advisory committee to advise its board of directors and ensure that the association effectively serves its B2B magazine members.

"Magazines Canada has been a leading supporter of the B2B industry for many years now, and this merger is a great step for our sector. It strengthens our voice on the national stage and improves our ability to coordinate on projects that will mean a brighter future for business media," said Scott Jamieson, Vice Chair of Magazines Canada's board of directors and Director of Content and Engagement for Annex Business Media, a CBMA member.

"This move is exactly what we need to do to align our efforts to build a foundation for a stronger trade press in the future," said John Kerr, CBMA President and CEO of Kerrwil. "In a digital age,

having both the consumer and trade press under one roof just makes a ton of sense and I am personally looking forward to rolling up my sleeves to support the next efforts."

The merger was unanimously approved at a special meeting of the CBMA's membership on November 29. As Magazines Canada members, former CBMA titles will be eligible for exclusive member services and discounts on events such as the Business Media Leadership Summit on February 6–7, 2017 and the national MagNet conference on April 25–28, 2017.

The CBMA also brings to Magazines Canada its annual awards program in honour of Kenneth R. Wilson, which recognizes the best of the Canadian business press, including multiplatform content and design. The CBMA Board had previously decided it would not hold the awards in 2017 due to the planned merger with Magazines Canada. Plans for 2018 will be based upon the recommendations of Magazines Canada's new business media advisory committee.

Seeing these kinds of changes happening elsewhere should embolden us to consider changes to revitalize the CCP. Here are three of the most obvious options to start with.

1. The CCP association could put new energy into recruiting new members within the current membership criteria. This would probably require additional volunteer labour. If we think there are lots of potential new members out there, and that we have a good range of benefits to offer new members, this could be a wise choice.

2. The CCP association could alter its membership criteria to encourage new kinds of members.

Currently, here's what we say on our website about membership:

The Canadian Church Press offers two types of membership options: Periodical Membership and Associate Membership.

Periodical Membership: CCP membership is open to periodicals published in Canada which serve church constituencies and which are circulated on a national or regional basis. Periodicals circulating primarily in a single parish or single community are not eligible. [Prices follow, including a separate price for website membership.]

Associate Membership: Associate membership is open to former editors of member publications who desire to continue personal affiliation, to individuals who have a professional interest in religious journalism and to journalists specializing in religion reporting for newspapers and consumer magazines.

As you can see, there is no mention of communications officers (and there are many at both churches and at Canadian Christian charities), broadcasters in radio or TV, publishers, those who work in social media or video production, etc.

A proposal to widen membership was put forward but voted down at the 2014 AGM. Here is the text from that time:

Resolution: To expand the membership and redefine the role of Canadian Church Press to embrace the wider Canadian Christian communications community

WHEREAS: When Canadian Church Press was formed more than 50 years ago church-based, denominational publications were the primary source of communication, and the formation of CCP provided networking, professional development and mutual encouragement to editors and staff of church publications, and

WHEREAS: During the same time period the concept of having a church communications or public relations department was in its infancy, and

WHEREAS: over the past half-century church communications has expanded beyond the printed page and currently more than 70 percent of CCP editors are engaged in social media, public relations and other non-editorial communication functions, and

WHEREAS: the establishment and growth of para-church and Christian non-profits has expanded the need for ongoing communication in print and digital media, and given rise to the growth in the number of communications professionals, and

WHEREAS: there is no formal national organization where Christian communication professionals in Canada can find networking, professional development and encouragement in their work.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT:

1. Canadian Church Press expand its membership to organizations and people engaged in Christian communication in Canada
2. The CCP executive develop a new membership criteria to reflect the organization's expanded mandate and present the new structure to the 2015 Annual General Meeting
3. The CCP executive explore the best structure for the organization (non-profit, status quo etc.)
4. The executive present to the 2015 Annual General Meeting a new name and structure for the organization that maintains the current Christian and Canadian identity while including its new mandate (i.e. Christian Communicators and Publishers of Canada – CCPC)

The implications of this kind of change would likely mean corresponding changes in the annual awards contest so that the work of all members might have a category to compete in. It would change the content of the annual convention as well, since new categories of members might want new types of workshops focused on the kind of work they do. Likely other changes would naturally flow from these.

3. The CCP could consider increased partnership or affiliation with likeminded associations.

Cooperating more closely with a bigger-sized group might mean being able to offer additional benefits to members such as webinars. A bigger pool of expertise gives us more people who can learn from each other.

Two main avenues might be pursuing partnerships or affiliations with other Christian groups or with mainstream groups.

Christian ones include:

1. The Word Guild, a “community of more than 325 Canadian writers, editors, speakers, publishers, booksellers, librarians and other interested individuals who are Christian. From all parts of Canada and many denominational and cultural backgrounds, we affirm a common statement of faith and are united in our passion for the written word.” This organization emerged from the evangelical Protestant community, but is now intentionally broader in membership. It has charitable status.
2. Associated Church Press, which exists “to promote acquaintance and fellowship among members in the United States and Canada, to foster collaboration among staff of its member publications and its individual members, and to stimulate higher standards of religious communication to enable its members to serve and challenge the Christian community to live out its faith and to strive for peace, justice, and the common good in contemporary society.” This organization emerged from mainline Christianity in the USA.
3. Evangelical Press Association, “a professional organization of Christian publications: magazines, newspapers, newsletters, and content-rich websites. EPA’s purpose is ‘to strengthen evangelical periodicals through inspiration, instruction, and networking.’ A key member benefit is the annual conference, which brings together leaders in the industry for a time of training, networking and encouragement.” This organization emerged from evangelical Protestant Christianity in the USA.
4. Association of Roman Catholic Communicators of Canada “represents faith-based women and men across Canada working in the area of church communications, including diocesan personnel, members of religious communities, those working in Church media, Catholic school boards, healthcare institutions or other church-related organizations and associations.” The CCP’s own Sue Newbery also works for them. (Note that ARCCC has connections with two larger groups, the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada, our partner at this year’s CCP convention in Quebec City, and with SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication, for professionals in the communication media, including radio, television, cinema, video, media education, Internet and new technology. SIGNIS is a non-profit organization with representation from over 100 countries.)

Mainstream groups that CCP might partner with include:

1. [Magazines Canada](#), the “national trade association representing Canadian-owned, Canadian-content consumer, cultural, specialty, professional and business media magazines. French and English member titles offer a wide range of topics including business, professional, news, politics, sports, arts and culture, leisure, lifestyle, women and youth, made available on multiple platforms. The association focuses on government affairs, services to the advertising trade,

circulation marketing and the development of career skills for and the recognition of excellence among the people who work in Canada's magazine media."

2. [News Media Canada](#), formerly Newspapers Canada, a merger of the Canadian Newspaper Association and the Canadian Community Newspaper Association
3. [Editors Canada](#), "promotes professional editing as key in producing effective communication. Our 1,500 members are salaried and freelance, working with individuals and organizations in the corporate, technical, government, not-for-profit, academic and publishing sectors across the country and around the world in English and French."
4. [Canadian Society of Magazine Editors](#) (Toronto-focused)
5. [Canadian Association of Journalists](#), the national voice of Canadian journalists

There are various downsides that make some partnerships unlikely:

- US-based conferences/conventions (e.g. ACP, EPA) are a possible hurdle to building Canadian community. However if we think Canadians can afford to fly to US conventions, we should consider that there can be Canadian breakaway gatherings within them. Or it might be a good idea to talk about merging with a group like ACP on the condition that a Canadian subgroup continues to organize a Canadian conference each year?
- A group entwined with the leadership of one particular church family, e.g. ARCCC, may not be interested in broadening itself, or might leave those outside that family in a minority that doesn't serve their interests well.
- Merging with a large secular group might mean a lessening of Christian community within the larger and more diverse association. To do it successfully would require negotiating the existence of a Christian sub-group like the business association the merged into MagsCan and preserved its own awards contest.
- Some associations focus mainly on newspapers or magazines (or broadcasters). Although the CCP has maybe 50 mags now, it also still has at least 10 newspapers. MagsCan, despite its name, has numerous newspaper-style members including the Anglican Journal (see at <http://magazinescanada.ca/member-directory>).
- The CCP does not currently include many journalists/writers or broadcasters, so a group like CAJ is not currently a good fit, although that could change if the membership composition of CCP changed as the result of a new initiative to invite more people doing journalistic work.
- Similarly, TWG has been somewhat skewed towards novice writers more interested in self-publishing books (its directory lists 54 professional members, and elsewhere suggests 350 total members). However its leaders have repeatedly communicated that the TWG places a high priority on growing its professional side, and partnership discussions could actually lead to change in the composition of the TWG community. There is of course something to be said for an organization including both veteran/professional media works and novices.
- Membership structures and fee levels of other groups could also make partnering awkward in some cases. For example, both Editors Canada and TWG have individual memberships, which are very different than the CCP's title-based membership (Editors Canada: \$277 per person. TWG individual: \$105 professional, \$65 affiliate/associate, \$30 student.)

- MagsCan: base fee \$500 per title plus additional fees based on other criteria
- ACP is based on print circ:

▪ Below 5,000:	\$150.00	5,000 – 9,999:	\$225.00
▪ 10,000 – 19,999:	\$280.00	20,000 – 29,999:	\$350.00
▪ 30,000 – 49,999:	\$390.00	50,000 – 74,999:	\$425.00
▪ 75,000 –	\$475.00	Indiv.:	\$75 reg; \$50 student Print
		Newsletters:	\$150. News Services: \$250. Website-only: \$175
- As a reminder, current CCP costs are also based on circ:

▪ under 4,999	\$60
5,000 – 9,999	\$90
10,000 – 24,999	\$105
25,000 – 49,999	\$140
50,000 – 100,000	\$175
Over 100,000	\$215
▪ Website Membership	\$60

What seems most sensible to you? Would you support the CCP executive to strike a committee to investigate and report back about affiliation/partnership options? Given the concerns above, perhaps that investigation could be narrowed to these four: ACP, Editors Canada, MagsCan and TWG?

Your feedback on any aspect of this report is welcome, c/o CCP executive member [Bill Fledderus](#). The CCP executive leaders have read over this report and commend it to your examination.

Summary

It can be argued that the CCP is lagging in adapting to major changes in the industry landscape where CCP staff work. For the future health of the organization, it may be wise to consider possible revisions to our recruiting practices, our membership definitions and structures, and/or possible partnership activities with other organizations.

This report recommends the following actions:

1. CCP executive seek confirmation from the membership about the need to pursue options to revitalize and secure the future of the CCP association. The mandate for these actions will be sought:
 - a. By distributing this report and asking for email feedback. It could be emailed to members and posted as a reference on the CCP website.
 - b. By holding a discussion based on this report at the 2017 AGM and/or a 2017 constituency-wide videoconference.
2. Besides the future options identified in this report, CCP exec invite members and other interested parties to suggest additional options for the future of the organization.
3. The CCP executive establish a broad-based, representative ad hoc committee to survey the membership, look at all options, and present recommendations at the AGM in 2018.