

The Communicator

— Canadian Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow —

www.CanACT.ca

Fall 2008



What is CanACT?

CanACT is designed for students with a keen interest in agricultural communications. CanACT provides opportunities to gain experience, learn job skills and make connections with professionals in the business world.

To learn more about the opportunities offered through CanACT, join our listserv by emailing: canact@uoguelph.ca or visiting our website: www.CanACT.ca

Alumni are always welcome!



Guest speaker Andrew Douglas, of McCormick Sales Communications Professionals, led a seminar on “How to get your work published” at a Fall CanACT meeting. Hopefully he enjoys his new CanACT coffee mug (thumbs up)!

So you have a Story... Now What?

By Kent Hakull

Andrew Douglas has done it all: freelancing, editing, advertising, public relations work, even creating and publishing his own magazine! CanACT was honoured to have Douglas, a Guelph alum, come to the university in November to speak about his experience in Ag communications and share advice on how students might build up their portfolios by having work published.

“Always write to the audience and have something to value to say!” is Douglas’s first recommendation. Then, when you have a story prepared, send a strategic pitch email to the publication. “Sell yourself, be creative, meet deadlines, keep the word count, always

proofread, do everything perfect,” Douglas says. He suggests approaching Ontario Farmer, Country Guide, Farms.com, AgWeb.com or Top Crop Manager to pitch your first stories, even

“Always write to the audience and have something to value to say!”

though there is little money in Ag-related freelancing. Daily or weekly papers and niche publications are also great places to start. Before you pitch a story, however, read the magazine so you are familiar with the type of content the publication prints and who is reading it, Douglas suggests.

Douglas also spoke about dramatic changes in communications technology. “When I started out,” he recalled,

“we manually pieced together our magazines for publishing with scissors and glue!” Communications today is instant and diverse. Attention-grabbing writing and eye-catching photography, as well as video reporting and web-writing skills are all part of the future, says Douglas; “The true challenge is to know what is new.” Douglas says the relatively sudden shift to more online forms of media coupled with the recent downturn of the economy is frightening for journalists and freelance writers who cannot make a living writing for blogs, but he sees opportunity for young, more tech-savvy journalists who dare to be creative and explore this new frontier. “Publishing a story is not an easy job, Douglas admits, “but rewarding? Absolutely.”

CanACT strives to enhance the connectivity between students at the University of Guelph and Canada’s agricultural communications sector by promoting agricultural communications professions to the student body, providing members with opportunities to improve communication skills, and assisting them in making professional contacts.

Our Mission:

Learning to Communicate Agriculture

By Christine Zettler

CanACT received a unique, "behind the scenes" preview of North America's only Agricultural Communications Diploma program, offered here at the University of Guelph. Owen Roberts, the academic coordinator, was the featured guest speaker at a CanACT meeting this Fall and explained how the program evolved. "It was actually the agriculture industry that was asking for the program, as they want communicators who understand agriculture," he says. With seed money provided from the industry two years ago, the diploma program has grown to involve students and instructors across North America. Since much of the coursework is administered online, professors like Ricky Telg and Tracey

Ann Irani from the University of Florida can teach from a distance and students from Alberta can tune in. Professor Bill DeMarco from Guelph's Centre for Studies in Leadership and Roberts himself also provide instruction. The two-year diploma provides skill development in ghostwriting, photography, campaigning, citizen journalism and ethics. In the final semester, students participate in a virtual internship where they apply the skills they have learned in cooperation with a media outlet, industry organization, professional association or commodity group. As the Ag Communications Diploma program has gained momentum, several substantial entrance scholarships have become available. Sound interesting? Visit <http://www.agcommunications.ca/> or contact Roberts at owen@uoguelph.ca

Message from the CanACT President

Greetings All!

The past few months have been an interesting ride filled with many challenges and opportunities for CanACT as we've undergone transition to an entirely new executive! It's been an enormously exciting journey so far, but really just the beginning as we enter the New Year and launch an array of new workshops, competitions and field trips! Especially exciting is this summer's trip to Fort Worth, Texas, where CanACT member representatives will be attending the annual ACT conference, the Ag Media Summit and the International Federation of Ag Journalists Congress – an incredible once-in-a-lifetime gathering of

the world's top Ag communicators! It's a privilege to step up to presidency this year alongside a strong executive and lead such a diverse and talented group of students with a passion for communications in agriculture! A special thanks to TD Canada Trust Agriculture Services' generous support of CanACT and tomorrow's leaders in agriculture!



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Breakfast with the Best

"Breakfast with the Best" is back for its third year, with new partners and even more participants! Enjoy a continental breakfast, take part in "Speed Networking" and make connections with future employers and ag industry leaders.

Tuesday, January 20, 2009
Peter Clark Hall, 8-10 A.M.

Etiquette Dinner

Back by popular demand, this year's etiquette dinner is sure to be a fun time! Open to active CanACT members, OAC student government and club leaders, and ag industry professionals, this is the most intimate and hilarious networking experience yet! The event will be held Feb 26th. Check website for more details!

ACT Critique and Contest

Please start considering submissions for the ACT Critique and Contest. If you have any questions contact Christine Zettler at czettler@uoguelph.ca.

Summer ACT Conference

CanACT is beginning to fundraise to send members to Texas this summer where the National ACT conference, Ag Media Summit, and International Federation of Ag Journalists Congress are all happening simultaneously! This will be the largest gathering of crop and livestock media professionals in the world! If you're interested in going, email Matt at msetzkor@uoguelph.ca

Winter 2008 meetings

- **Jan. 15 – Networking skills**
- **Jan. 29 - Photography**
- **Feb. 12 – Food Freedom Day!**
- **Feb. 26 – Etiquette dinner!**
- **Mar. 12 – Public speaking**

Meetings are held from 5:30 -7 in UC 334.
Refreshments are provided!

CanACT Officers

Matt Setzkorn – *Co-President*
Christine Zettler – *Co-President*
Heather Donkers – *Vice President*
Amanda Brodhagen – *Director*
Owen Roberts – *Advisor*

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