

# The Farm Journalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN FARM WRITERS' FEDERATION



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## Co-chairs named for IFAJ Canada congress

Owen Roberts and Lilian Schaer of the University of Guelph have been named co-chairs of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) annual congress which is coming to Canada in 2011.

Owen, a CFWF senator, has long been a champion of IFAJ and was instrumental in bringing the congress to Canada.

Lilian is co-chair of this year's CFWF conference in Belleville, Ontario, and in her second year as president of ECFWA.

Both Owen and Lilian have a history of involvement with farm writers, agricultural communications and journalism, and conference planning. As well, Lilian is fully fluent in German and has a good grasp of French.

As co-chairs of IFAJ 2011, Owen and Lilian will oversee numerous subcommittees, and help to guide the overall direction and finances of IFAJ 2011.

They are hoping to engage the creative thinking and participation of their fellow CFWF members for this endeavour, as well as Guelph's agricultural communication students.

"We're excited about this opportunity to showcase the diversity and innovation of Canadian agriculture to the world," says Lilian. "We're looking forward to working with farm writers and our government and industry partners across the country to make this a successful event."



Owen Roberts (left) and Lilian Schaer (above)

IFAJ congresses are a focal point for the federation's yearly activities, and draw up to 300 delegates from all parts of the globe. Member countries vie to host the congress, for the opportunity to show their nation's agri-food sector to the world, welcome their colleagues, share ideas and build global networks.

IFAJ 2011 Canada will be held at the new Guelph conference centre, adjacent to the University of Guelph, the Ontario AgriCentre and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (One Stone Road) complex. The centre, which will be completed this fall, features a 148-room hotel and nine meeting rooms – including a ballroom – with capacity for up to 500 people. Nearby hotels will accommodate the overflow IFAJ delegates.

Typically, IFAJ congresses include opportunities for delegates to tour interesting agricultural and cultural sites, participate in professional development seminars, hear from leading speakers on current trends and issues and gather story ideas through interviews with local spokespeople and experts.

Pre-conference programs are being discussed for both western and eastern Canada.

For further information, you can contact Owen (owen@uoguelph.ca) at 519-824-4210 Ext. 58278 and Lilian (lilian@uoguelph.ca) at 519-824-4120 Ext. 53781.

The 2007 National Agriculture Awareness Conference will be held in London, Ontario, May 22-25, 2007. For the latest information, visit the conference website: <http://www.naac-cnsa.ca>

## Commentary . . .

# The Media: Messengers for Change

By Henry F. Heald

Despite the low level of respect for the media among the general public, the communications industry, as the largest business in the world, has the responsibility to lead society towards sustainability based on sound moral values.

The world faces major moral problems and the organized religions seem ill equipped to deal with them. The Christian Church is preoccupied with proving the divinity of Jesus and helping the poor, but seems unable to persuade its followers live by the truths preached by its founder. The Church has failed to zero in on Jesus' chief target – the rich and powerful who most need to understand the message of humility and compassion that he taught.

Yes, Jesus cared for the poor and the downtrodden, but the thrust of his message was for the policy makers in the Establishment. That is why they killed him. Much of what is good in society is the result of individuals living out their faith, but much of what is evil in society is the direct result of the churches' hierarchies' refusal to walk in the footsteps of their founders.

--We have an economic system that has no plan to ensure that everyone has enough to live in dignity.

--We have what we call a "correctional system" which is really a penal system. It punishes offenders, but has no real concept of correcting anything or anyone.

--We have an educational system that trains people to get jobs, but doesn't educate them to live in a global society where sharing is the only way that works.

--We have an agricultural system that produces more food than is needed by the people who have the means to buy it, but no way to convert the hungry poor into paying consumers.

--We have a world body – The United Nations – which is certainly not united. It

serves only as a platform for each one's national proclamations and legitimizes undemocratic regimes which should be dismissed as pariahs.

The only force that can bring about change on the massive scale required is the communications media. Unfortunately it is so seriously divided and confused about its role that it is more often part of the problem than a key to its solution.

Everything we have learned since we finished school – as well as much we learned while we were in school – comes from the media. The one thing that makes humans different from any other species on the planet is our ability to think beyond our immediate environment and to debate abstract ideas. Whether that is a gift from an all-powerful God or the result of evolution and natural selection, is irrelevant.

I personally believe in an omnipotent creator who steered evolution to bring us to where we are today. But that shouldn't hinder the creationist or the atheist from joining in the task of making the media the vehicle for the salvation of the planet.

Almost every reporter, editor, broadcaster, author or artist believes that the media have a responsibility to steer society towards sustainable moral values. Then why don't they do something about it? For the same reason that the practising Christian in the pew doesn't challenge the clergy; for the same reason that the honest accountant doesn't challenge the crooked boss. It is fear of being victimized or ostracized by the CEO's of the Establishment. For journalists there is the added incentive that dirt pays better.

William E. Porter, a retired British journalist and book publisher living in France, has written a book called "Do Something About It". It is the story of how he overcame his fear of ridicule and challenged his media colleagues to make the communications industry the pioneer of a just,

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honest, creative global society. The International Communications Forum, which he founded, has been bringing media practitioners together for some 15 years now, to look at the challenges facing their industry.

Fundamental to his plan was the more basic decision to practise what he talked about: to admit his own failures to live up to the values he espoused and to put right what was wrong. Honesty with oneself is the necessary first step in remaking the world. It is the same for the clergyman, the business manager, the farmer, the prison guard, the politician, the mother, the teenager. If we wait for religion to do it, it won't happen. It is up to the mass media, including the entertainment media, to make it the popular thing to do.

We praise the investigative journalist who finds where the dirt is hidden and exposes it; who flushes the cheats out of the back rooms and makes them be honest about their misuse of public funds.

But we also need investigative journalists who will find and expose the hard working men and women who play by the rules and set honest values and high

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This story first appeared in Ontario Farmer

## AgRadio moving to small-farm programming

The farm-radio service is dropping markets, focusing on issues relating to smaller farms

By Frances Anderson

“We're moving away from agri-business and putting the culture back in agriculture.”

That's how Dennis Guy, the president, founder and general manager of the Ontario AgRadio Network describes programming changes planned for next month.

Across the province, farmers tune in

daily to one of 13 radio stations that carry Guy's Foodland Forum, which includes market reports and AgriNews. However, come Feb. 12, 2007, they'll have to look elsewhere for their market reports as “we will no longer be doing markets,” Guy told Ontario Farmer.

Instead, programming will focus on one of four themes: food crops, livestock, technology and finance, and health (food

safety) and environmental issues.

“It'll be very interview-oriented,” said Guy. The segments will be shorter - 90 seconds as opposed to three minutes - but the radio programming will be augmented by an expanded version of the same story, on a web cast, accessed through the internet.

“We can get relatively high quality audio to anybody, anywhere that has a telephone line - no matter how slow,” through “streaming” said Guy, adding “we've been doing it for six months.”

The shift in programming reflects a shift in the agricultural economy, said Guy, admitting he's been struggling with the transition. Even as AgRadio was growing market share in a shrinking market, three years ago, Guy knew there was a problem: “There's not enough commercial-oriented agribusiness farmers out there to require a mass media.”

Since he announced the programming changes, Guy has had calls from farmers accusing him of abandoning them. He replies: “I'm not abandoning farmers. I'm abandoning agribusiness.”

After all, if a farmer gets a cheque from government to plant his crop “who's getting the cheque?” In many ways, agribusiness first abandoned radio. “Advertising has dried up considerably in the last year and half,” said Guy.

That's because there are so few commercial farmers left it's more cost effective for them to do direct advertising, or put the money into the sales force.

The mass market for farming is now the small farmer.

“It took me a while to get my head

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standards for society. Stories about the hockey coach who teaches young players good sportsmanship and fair play and stands up to the self-important parent who wants his/her child to be the star. Or about the schoolteacher who gets to know her/his students and helps them overcome their problems - academic or social. The honest politician who catches the people in his constituency who fall through the cracks in the social safety net and gets them the jobs or the training or the welfare they need and are entitled to.

Often it will be the journalists themselves who will need to have the courage to be honest with their readers, their colleagues, their supervisors and themselves. Honest about their personal lives, their practices, their work, their goals and their motives.

Most media corporations have a Code of Ethics that their employees are expected to live up to. Presumably the owners and managers are also expected to live up to it. Finding loopholes to avoid obeying their Code seems to be more the norm. Ethics are simply moral standards. As one Russian journalist remarked at a meeting of the International Communications Forum, “I always thought the Ten Commandments made a pretty good Code of Ethics.”

Basic moral standards practised on the job, in the home and in the secret recesses of the mind. That is what will build a sustainable global society. Moses spelled them out for the Hebrew refugees fleeing Egypt. Muhammad spelled them out for the nomads in the Arab deserts. Dozens of spiritual leaders over the centuries have spelled them out for their followers. Jesus of Nazareth encapsulated them in his Sermon on the Mount, reinforced them with the parables he told his followers and backed them up with the way he lived and the way he treated people.

They can be summed up as honesty, purity of motive, forgiveness, humility and compassion. And where better to demonstrate them than in the media that billions of people read, watch and listen to every day.

*Henry Heald is a past president of both the CFWF and the ECFWA. He serves in a voluntary position as the Canadian representative of the International Communications Forum: [www.icforum.org](http://www.icforum.org)*

around this," Guy admits. "I had to get over my snobbishness that 'these are just hobby farmers'."

You can't limit the definition of a farmer to folks that make the majority of their income from farming. You have to get past the wallet, and realize it's a mindset, he says.

In fact, Guy's own experience is typical of his new target audience. He worked with his father cropping 1500 acres of land in Kent County in the 1970s and 80s. But today, he and his wife own a 50-acre farm where they grow soybeans and oats and raise ring-necked pheasant and Cornish hen for meat.

For the last decade, Guy said he's been telling commercial farmers they need to connect with consumers. The "Farmers Feed Cities" campaign is an attempt to do this, but it's a day late and a dollar short," said Guy. "Farmers are saying, we're going broke so you've got to support us."

"I think you've got to give consumers a reason to be loyal. One of the things is to grow something that they want to buy locally. Agribusiness isn't going to do

that."

But, Guy says, there are 75,000 small farm families across Ontario that can grow something they're proud of, as opposed to an undifferentiated commodity.

These small farmers have three important things in common: they live on their property; the property is in excess of three acres (too much to leave in lawn) and more than one per cent, but less than 50 per cent of their income is derived from the property.

Age-wise, these are baby boomers. The majority have higher education, a high percentage are business owners or executives and most are within a 20 to 40 minute commute from a major urban centre. Their total family income is more than \$75,000 and if these people want something for their farm, they're going to buy it.

This is AgRadio's new target audience.

"This kind of programming is not just interesting to small farmers, but also consumers," said Guy. "I'm hoping we will have a lot more stations take up our programming because it's of more interest."

## Member News

**MARILYN WHITE** has left the Poultry Industry Council to rejoin Canadian Poultry Magazine at Simcoe as publisher and sales manager.

White was editor before she moved to the Poultry Industry Council in 2005.

Kristy Nudds remains as editor of the national magazine.

**ART STIRLING**, Biotechnology Affairs Manager with Pioneer Hi-Bred Ltd. of Chatham, Ontario, and long-time CFWF member, was elected Councillor in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent last November 13. With a four-year term of office ahead of him, Art is looking forward to the new challenge.

## What exactly is leadership? And what is leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

It's a question put to over 50 leaders in a series of conversations for "INSPIRING LEADERSHIP", in a new radio documentary series about leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The series speaks to contemporary leadership, best practices, and the challenge of leading.

The series begins January 20th at 8 a.m. on the CKUA Radio Network, Alberta. The 20-part series will be online, inclusive of many 'web extra' audio files and support material at <http://ckua.com>

You'll hear from people at the top of their game: Preston Manning, Elizabeth May, leading academics like Henry Mintzberg, and business leaders such as Charlie Fischer and Eric Newell.

The complete article is at: [http://www.edmontonians.com/Don\\_Hill.htm](http://www.edmontonians.com/Don_Hill.htm)

You can listen to a 'sneak preview' of INSPIRING LEADERSHIP at: <http://www.appropriate-entertainment.com/> (click on the 'what's new' prompt).

*Don Hill is a 'thought leader' with Leadership Development at the Banff Centre. He is also an award-winning writer and broadcaster with a large footprint on the internet. For more details visit: <http://ckua.com> or*

## Are you a writer who wants to get your book published but doesn't know how to go about it?

The Writers' Union of Canada (TWUC) is offering the Professional Development Workshop "How to Get Published and Survive as an Author" in St. John's, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Kelowna and Vancouver, in Feb. and March 2007.

Merilyn Simonds, author of *The Convict Lover*, Ken McGoogan, the award-winning author of *Fatal Passage* and *Lady Franklin's Revenge* (formerly a journalists and literary editor), and Deborah Windsor, executive director of TWUC, will provide key information about the business of writing at each full-day event.

The workshop is designed to enhance the careers of book writers, whether unpublished, emerging or established. The workshop answers important questions like who publishes books in Canada and how do they do it? Where did all the bookstores go? Can an editor do that? What does the World Wide Web mean to the writer? How does anybody make a living at this?

TWUC is charging \$45 to cover costs of the workshop, including lunch. For information on dates, location, registration, go to <http://www.writersunion.ca/registration06.htm>

## Communication students have busy semester at Guelph

The fall semester was a busy one for University of Guelph's SPARK writers and agricultural communications students. Some notable achievements:

### Latest Research magazine launched

The latest issue of University of Guelph *Research* magazine was released last November. It is a split publication highlighting Guelph research – one half of the magazine dealing with Health and Nature, and the other the Nature of Health. The 52-page magazine features articles by nine student writers: Alicia Roberts, Rebecca Moore, Kim Waalderbos, Heather Filby, Kate Roberts, Arthur Churchyard, Jen Christie, Katie Cheesmond and Katie Savage. Check it out at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/publications/Assets/PDF/ResearchMagazine/latest.pdf>.

If you would like your name added to the Research mailing list, please contact Lilian Schaer, Office of Research, University of Guelph, at [lilian@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lilian@uoguelph.ca) or 519-824-4120, ext 53781.

### Tractor Tug for Tots

Four agricultural communications students helped make children's dreams come true by raising money for charity, through a new initiative called Tractor Tug for Tots. It featured 30 eight-person teams who pulled a 17,000-pound John Deere tractor 150 feet as quickly as they could across a finish line. The event was organized by the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) Class of 2008, with help from local sponsors and the Sunshine Dreams for

Kids Foundation.

In the agricultural communications class, students reviewed and edited news releases promoting the event. Brett Gamble, Brendan Zettler, Katelyn McEachren and Amy Meekes were among the organizers of the highly successful event, which raised \$12,000 for Sunshine Dreams for Kids, a charity that helps fulfill the dreams of children living with severe physical disabilities or life-threatening illnesses. The tractor pull's success exceeded organizers' expectations – their original goal was to raise \$4,000.

### Royal success

Katie Cheesmond, a member of Guelph's Canadian Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (CanACT) club, captured third place in the Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. CanACT Vice-President Katharine Found and former CanACT members Jennifer Peart and Jennifer Christie were all finalists in the competition, receiving honourable mentions. Amy Meekes, a CanACT member and agricultural communications student, also participated in the contest.

The 2006 event attracted 13 participants from across the country. Each contestant is required to speak in either English or French for five to seven minutes on one of five topics addressing current issues in agriculture. Six finalists are chosen from the preliminary rounds to compete for the top prize. Rebecca Hannam of Guelph was the winner of this

year's competition.

Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture is a public speaking competition held annually at the Royal, and provides an opportunity for youth aged 16-24 to hone their public speaking skills in a public forum, while at the same time educating an urban audience about agricultural issues.

### Food, health and agriculture

A publication co-ordinated by SPARK and a poster of research facts written by University of Guelph agricultural communications students were front and centre at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto this past November. The special issue of MaRS Landing's *The Satellite*, a quarterly newsletter linking agriculture, food and human health written by University of Guelph SPARK writers, was launched and distributed at the Royal. And a large, colourful panel featuring consumer-friendly facts on food and health research at the University of Guelph was part of the *Journey to Your Good Health* display.

*Journey to Your Good Health* is an interactive exhibit designed to educate and entertain the whole family about making the best food choices for good health, and understanding the research behind the production of Canada's abundant food supply. MaRS Landing was launched in 2002 to connect agriculture and food, and veterinary and rural-related discoveries with medical, scientific and health advances in Ontario.

For more information, visit [www.uoguelph.ca/research](http://www.uoguelph.ca/research).

**COMMENTARIES. UPCOMING EVENTS. NEWS. APPOINTMENTS. YOU NAME IT!**

**Please send your contributions, anytime, to Connie Duivenvoorden ([agrofare@telus.net](mailto:agrofare@telus.net)), for publication in the next issue of *The Farm Journalist*.**

## Apply now for Guelph's agricultural communications diploma

Applications are being accepted now for the University of Guelph's graduate-level diploma. The first student has been admitted already for the 2007-2008 cohort, which begins this September.

The program ([www.agcommunications.ca](http://www.agcommunications.ca)), offered through the Office of Open Learning and the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), is the first of its kind on Canada.

The 18-month, five-course program combines technical skills and applied theory in journalism and communications, with a focus on issues specific to the agri-food and environmental sectors. Graduates will be able to present and represent agriculture and food production in an understandable, balanced way.

Program development was overseen by an advisory committee with representatives from media, the agri-food sector and academe. An international panel of instructors and coaches will lead students through a series of on-line distance learning components. This will be augmented by three on-campus sessions. By being web-based, it can bring in students and teaching professionals from anywhere in the world.

"We've designed the program to be accessible and flexible, to fit the schedules of working professionals," says Owen Roberts, the program's academic co-ordinator.

A video about the agricultural communication program has recently been posted on YouTube, along with other videos that the students have produced. Check it out at: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=mk3a2p88gUw>

Graduates will be prepared to immediately participate in the media or in agricultural organizations and industry as valuable, analytical, trained employees. They will be well versed in agricultural production and issues, they will be equipped with strong communication skills, and they will be current on the latest technology.

Support for this program has been provided by a number of industry partners including Ontario Pork, Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited, Syngenta Crop Protection Canada, GROWMARK Inc., and the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

For more information, contact Owen Roberts ([owen@uoguelph.ca](mailto:owen@uoguelph.ca)) at 519-824-4120 Ext. 58278 or Lise Smedmor, the manager of program development in the Office of Open Learning, at 519-824-4120 Ext. 53412.



## Supreme Court rules on freelance copyright case

On October 12, 2006 the Supreme Court of Canada arrived at a decision in the class-action suit Heather Robertson, et al. v. Thomson Corporation, et al.

The judgment states: "The central issue on this appeal is whether newspaper publishers are entitled as a matter of law to republish in electronic databases freelance articles they have acquired for publication in their newspapers — without compensa-

tion to the authors and without their consent. In our view, they are not."

The ruling in favour of freelance writer Heather Robertson has upheld freelance writers' ownership control of the work they produce (a fundamental tenet of copyright law), and helped to clarify the legal position of independent media workers in their contractual relationships with clients. Ms. Robertson's class-action suit sprung from a dispute with The Globe & Mail

newspaper over the reuse of her freelance work in certain online databases, a use Robertson insisted she had not contractually permitted and for which she was not compensated.

Full details can be found at the Supreme Court website: <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2006/2006scc43/2006scc43.html>

*From a news release of the Professional Writers Association of Canada.*