

“The Dawn of the Read”: Attending the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild Fall Conference (2017)

I was pleased to participate last weekend in the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild conference (held in Regina). This was my first time attending, after being asked to participate in a friend’s panel.

At the event, I met at least a dozen Saskatchewan based writers of different genres—fiction, poetry, fantasy, science fiction, non-fiction, etc. Organizers said that they intended the theme of “The Dawn of the Read” to refer to what was “read” in the past (not in the present) tense. That point was illustrated by a spontaneous eruption of book-reading zombies, which intruded playfully on the closing entertainment of the conference!

My 20 minute talk on strategies for freelance non-fiction writing on the Prairies drew thoughtful questions, interest and some laughs about challenges and pleasures. I stressed that we weren’t on the easiest of career paths, but that possibilities for fruitful collaboration with new friends, along with good strategies for reaching new clients, gave me interest in and hope for the future. My



talk will likely become part of a small ebook project in the future, which will then become available on my website. And my website has had an increase in recent viewers that is always welcome!

I found particularly the insights of seasoned children’s fiction writer, Ann Patton (ably moderated by Sharon Plumb), the savvy comments of fellow non-fiction writer Toby Welch (with whom I

shared a panel) and the social criticism offered by award-winning historian Merle Massie (whom I encountered years ago, through U of S) to be especially valuable. But there were “takeaways” from each of the panels that I heard. The event was well organized by Guild staff.

All of those I met were and are hungry to become better writers (assisted, for instance, by the Guild’s manuscript assessment service), to increase our readership and to sell more of our ebooks or books: “Work hard, learn the craft better, and then don’t sweat the critics” was a message that resonated with me. The best artists don’t live in fear or worry of reviews or reviewers. And if we can surrender to the writing, we paradoxically become better in our ability to work.

Which conferences do you attend with colleagues in your industry? Please share your comments and insights with me on the “contact” page of my website. I’d be delighted to hear from you.