

SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' RESPONSES

EAC Questions on English-language Email Forum

1. Introduction

At its September 2003 meeting, the EAC/ACR national executive council provisionally adopted two documents relating to the operation of the English-language members' email forum (or "the list"). These documents are

- draft guidelines for participation on the list; and
- draft mandate for the list administrator, who oversees participation on the list and adherence to the guidelines.

Both guidelines and mandate were adopted on an interim basis and will be subject to members' approval at the 2004 AGM.

The national executive council requested the Member Communication Committee to obtain feedback from members on the guidelines and mandate. The executive council indicated that it might revise the guidelines and mandate in response to that feedback.

In addition to seeking responses on the guidelines and mandate, the Member Communication Committee sought feedback on other aspects of the list that had come to its attention.

The Committee circulated a survey form to EAC members on 17 December 2003. The deadline for responses was 19 January 2004. After completing its initial analysis of the responses, the Committee reported back at the national executive council meeting in February 2004.

The Committee's final analysis is attached below for the information of EAC members.

The national executive council will report out to members on proposed next steps.

2. Summary of Responses

Total responses: 87

Late submissions were not considered.

Of these responses, 29 (33%) were generally positive, 20 (23%) were generally negative, and 21 (24%) were generally mixed. A further 17 responses (20%), mostly non-list users, did not convey any opinions about the list.

Q1. How long have you been a member of EAC/ACR?

• 1 year or less	15	(17%)
• 2–5 years	30	(34%)
• 6–10 years	14	(16%)
• 11–14 years	10	(11%)
• 15 or more years	5	(6%)
• Not specified	13	(16%)

Q2. Do you currently work in-house or freelance?

• Freelance	60	(69%)
• In-house	13	(15%)
• Both	5	(6%)
• Not specified	9	(10%)

Q3. Are you a subscriber to the English-language members' email forum ("the list") and do you receive the messages?

• Subscribers	55	(63%)
• Non-subscribers	31	(36%)
• Not specified	1	(1%)

Q4. If you have not subscribed to the list, what are your reasons for not doing so?

Thirty of the 31 non-subscribing respondents gave reasons. In many instances, they gave more than one reason.

Ten respondents had never subscribed, while a further 13 had discontinued their subscriptions. Three respondents were not sure whether they had subscribed or not (i.e., they received what they considered to be much email from EAC/ACR, but never responded). Four respondents did not specify whether they had ever been subscribers.

Reasons for not subscribing

• Didn't know about the list and the opportunity to subscribe	5
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- Felt the list wouldn't be interesting or informative 1
- Haven't considered subscribing (1 year member) 1
- Still figuring out available resources 1
- Difficulty in signing up & never tried again 1

Reasons for unsubscribing

- Too much chat, politics, too many members ignoring rules 6
- Security concern (i.e., sending ID & password in one message) 1
- Temporarily off list, trouble re-subscribing 1
- Trouble accessing Web site and re-subscribing 1
- Lurked only 1

Other comments

- Too busy, no time 9
- Too much time-wasting frivolous chat 7
- Too many postings 3
- Low value/time ratio 1
- Lack of professionalism 1
- Lack of subject-line discipline and courtesy 1
- Soapbox for a few members 1
- Heavy-handed list administration 1

Q5. What do you use the list for?

Fifty-four of the 55 subscriber respondents commented on their use of the list. Again, many gave more than one reason:

- Sense of community, support, get to know people 26
- Ask questions and solve problems (business, technical, grammar, usage, etc.) 25
- Learn new things; keep up with issues (EAC, industry standards) 22
- As a source of information 14
- Personal professional development 10
- Answer questions, help others 8
- Business-related information 7
- Chat 6
- Entertainment 6
- Humour 5
- Job postings and leads 5
- To hire editors, translators, etc. 2
- General interest 2
- Lurking 2
- For feedback 1
- Whenever necessary and useful 1

Q6. Please provide your feedback on the interim guidelines for the list and the interim mandate for the list administrator. We are interested in your plaudits, your criticisms, and any suggestions you may have to clarify and improve these policy documents.

Forty-seven respondents (54%) commented on the draft guidelines and mandate.

Guidelines

- Guidelines satisfactory 16
- Guidelines satisfactory but wordy 2
- Guidelines could provide more info on professionalism 1
- Guidelines should emphasize etiquette 1
- Provide list manager with a more detailed set of management guidelines, in addition to the existing general guidelines, to guide successive managers 1
- Guidelines should provide technical how-to (e.g., how to reply to digest items) 1

Mandate

- Mandate satisfactory 17
- Documents need clarifying & improving 3
- Is a separate mandate document necessary? It overlaps with the guidelines 1

General comments and suggestions

- List is overly managed 5
- More power to administrator is positive 4
- Post short form of guidelines regularly (10 commandments?) 3
- Have two separate documents, one a formal policy covering disciplinary matters, the other an informal guide much as we have now 1
- Ability to suspend is positive 1
- Religious/political chat should be prohibited (see Copyediting-L) 1
- List person should provide written reasons to participant for suspension/exclusion. Participant should have right of appeal to board within 30 days against permanent exclusion 1
- Keep tag list to a minimum 2
- Tags are useful 1
- Like to see full set of tags 1
- Tags: TOOLS too restrictive – expand TECH 1
- Tags: move THANKS to courtesy section 1
- Remove HELP as a tag (in subject line can cause trouble with the list software) 1
- MEMNEWS confusing 1
- For content issues, administrator should be accessible via an editors.ca address (draft guidelines give the current administrator's personal address) 2
- Keep signatures short 2
- Hard to navigate through messages (differentiating quotes from new material) 1
- Incorporate hot links (for subscribing, etc., and to outside resources) 1

- Discourage long quotes with one-word answers 1
- Provide summaries of long posts at the top of the post 1

Q7a. How often do you consult the list archives?

- Regularly 1 (1%)
- Occasionally 30 (35%)
- Never (includes some who did use at one time) 42 (48%)
- No response 14 (16%)

Q7b. Do you find the search tools useful?

- Very useful 6 (7%)
- Somewhat useful 11 (13%)
- Not at all useful 20 (23%)
- No response 50 (57%)

Q7c. What, if any, improvements to the search tools would you suggest?

Twenty-three respondents made comments and suggestions.

Negative comments

- Not useful; completely useless – need proper search tools 8
- Thread (and date) searches are useless 4
- Not much luck finding things with keywords 3
- Difficult to use 3
- No HELP function 2
- Confusing, not pertinent results 2

Miscellaneous comments

- Didn't know archives exist 1
- Heard people complain about it 1

Suggestions

- Should be able to search by name, date, subject 5
- Hire someone to index the archive 1
- Should be able to use multiple keywords 1
- Make them easier to work with 1
- Check out other archives for ideas that work (e.g., YahooGroups) 1

Q8. How do you access the list and the Web site?

- Dial-up 27 (31%)
- Broadband 39 (45%)
- No answer (mostly non-list users) 21 (24%)

Only two respondents commented on access problems (procedural rather than technical).

Q9. Please tell us of any other of your likes and dislikes about the list, and any suggestions you may have to improve it.

Forty-eight respondents (55%) made additional (specific or general) comments.

Positive comments

- Generally happy with forum (morale booster, source of wisdom, good balance) 6
- A main benefit of membership, successful EAC initiative, valuable resource 5
- Don't fix what ain't broke, no more restrictions 2
- Digest works well 2
- Fairly well-run list 2
- Enjoy the banter and camaraderie between regular contributors 2
- Forum very useful for quick answers when needed (despite the chat) 1
- Like: opinions & advice from around country 1
- Like: effort that goes into helpful responses 1
- Tags have improved things a bit 1
- I'm more tolerant now with irrelevant material – delete key easy to use 1
- Love the list; chat could migrate off-list more often 1
- Current list administrator is good 1
- Serves its purpose, but not for me right now 1
- It's a lifeline 1
- I like it very much 1

Negative comments

- Too much chat (see PWAC solution – separate list solution) 6
- Too much chat, off-topic, inanity 4
- Members can be intolerant 2
- Too much chat; Toronto-centric 1
- Signal/noise ratio too low (symptom of freelance/in-house mix?) 1
- Digest: too much irrelevant stuff – more moderation would be good 1
- Digest: mostly irrelevant junk, too much personal information 1
- Digest: too much quoting 1
- Dislike: time it takes for some posts to appear 1
- HTML messages hard to decipher 1
- Leery of more exposure to spam 1
- Thinking of quitting forum (too much chat) 1

Suggestions

- Encourage good subject lines (and change when subject evolves) 5
- Keep acrimonious exchanges to a minimum 3
- Cut down on chat & overheated discussions 3
- Digest: would be good if topics hotlinked to items 2
- Limit posts to business (no chat) 1

- Promote concision: many members too wordy & quote too much 1
- Use “folders” for different purposes (main mailbox, humour, tech help) 1
- Use forum only for editing queries & solutions 1
- If you ask for feedback off-list, supply your email address 1
- Use more tags (digest user) 1
- Could be greater emphasis on opportunities, networking and knowledge sharing 1
- Look at the Electric Editors email list 1
- Less democracy, more benign dictatorship 1
- Summarize this survey for list members 1
- Hold seminars re proper and concise and relevant posting 1

Miscellaneous

- Lurker: doesn't know how to reply from digest 1
- Online directory results in spam; not enough jobs to justify 1

Additional notes on responses to survey

The survey was sent to members as both email text and an RTF attachment. Responses came in four formats:

• email	67	(77%)
• RTF	16	(19%)
• DOC	3	(3%)
• WPD	1	(1%)