Editorial

You will have noticed that the previous issue (32.1) was rather late. As I write this (June 15), we have good reason to hope that this issue will have a postmark to match its cover date. Perhaps a word or two of explanation is in order. To begin, I myself had an extremely hectic academic year, 1997-98, which I do not expect to repeat in the coming semesters. Because the material for the blues issue came from a variety of sources (i.e., each song had a different author, and the issue was largely given over to songs), it took longer to select items and to get permission to use them. Finally, once the material was selected, most of the songs had to be transcribed, and then Michael Pollock (who did much of the transcribing) had to prepare camera-ready versions of them.

Unless and until we can afford to buy him a proper music program, this means that Michael lifts each note from a palette, using his mouse, sets it into place, gauging a reasonable line length as he goes along. . . . It takes time. (And Michael deserves a serious round of applause from all our readers for the time he puts into both transcribing—about which he is probably excessively diligent—and the finishing of these pages. Without him, you’d get a considerably uglier Bulletin. If you don’t believe me, look at some of the back issues (say, from a decade ago), in which lead sheets were sometimes pencilled by me or my kids . . .

I don’t know when or if we’ll be able to buy Michael that program—I hope that sooner or later we can at least reimburse him for out-of-pocket expenses. At least one member has claimed that, given the Society’s (lack of) funding, the proposal we brought to last year’s AGM (that the editors of the Bulletin be remunerated if/when the money is available) is, at best, nutty. Perhaps, though we have barely begun to seek further revenue, so it may be too early to laugh at us.

Our first sally has been promising. You may have noticed on the inside cover page of the last issue (or of this one) that we’ve been awarded a grant from SOCAN. John prepared the application in the early weeks of this year; he deserves the applause for this piece of good news—the money promised us from SOCAN will eliminate the shortfall that we experienced during the previous two years, so we can be assured that, if membership doesn’t drop, we can produce that same Bulletin that we’ve offered for the last few years.

Errata: Our goal is to produce a Bulletin that is on time more often that not. (Given that we had to miss an issue last year, we’re a bit embarrassed about the tardiness of the first issue of ’98.) I suppose it’s too much to hope that we’ll ever produce an erratum-free issue, but, still, some foulups are embarrassing. Howlers from 32.1. Introducing the conceptual blues festival, I promised readers “nine songs by nine singers.” Anyone who can count noted that there were eleven. In the words of Ishmael Reed, they “jes’ grew.” The address given for George W. Lyon in the list of Society Directors is out of date. I currently reside at 1908—49 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2T 2V2. My other data remain as given. [GWL]

1997 Members Survey

Membership forms and membership renewal forms include a few questions which we ask members to respond to. In 1996, we tabulated the results of the responses we received; the results were printed in the Bulletin (31.2, p. 28). The 1997 results are now available for comparison.

Let us stress that this is not a scientific survey. Some people likely responded in 1996 but not in 1997; some people (e.g., overdue members) had forms which did not include the questions. The results are interesting to give a broad, informal picture of the Society’s members and their language backgrounds; they likely don’t prove anything.

We had 104 responses in 1997, compared to 90 in 1996. Of these, 93 (89.4 per cent) gave their first language as English; in 1996 it was 78 (86.7 per cent). Seven (6.7 per cent) stated that their first language was French; in 1996, six (6.7 per cent). Four (3.8 per cent) people reported a first language other than English or French, compared to eight (8.9 per cent) in 1996.

Nine responders (8.7 per cent) have English as a reasonably fluent second language (it was 10, 11.1 per cent, last year). Forty-six people (44.2 per cent) say they read reasonably fluently in French, although it’s not their first language (the 1996 result was 46 (51.1 per cent)). Thirteen (12.5 per cent) read fluently in at least one language other than English or French, compared to 14 (15.6 per cent) in 1996.

It might be significant, in the present-day Canadian situation, that 53 responders (51.0 per cent) have French as either a first or a second language; it was 52 (57.7 per cent) in 1996.

Lastly, 38 of the members who responded (36.5 per cent) admit to an academic affiliation, compared to 27 (30 per cent) in 1996.

The questions on the current forms are unchanged, and are being tabulated for 1998. Note: specialized questions related to the Journal are included with this issue, and for new members; please take the time to respond if they apply to you. [JL]