**Fonds Description**

**Title**  
Kootenay School of Writing fonds

**Date(s) of creation**  
1984-2006

**Extent**  
1.89 m of textual records and other material

**Administrative history**  
The Kootenay School of Writing (KSW) grew out of the creative writing program at David Thompson University Centre (DTUC), Nelson, British Columbia. Established in 1979, the program ended when DTUC closed in 1984 following budget cuts by the provincial government. A collective of former DTUC instructors and students organized under the name the Kootenay School of Writing, and began to offer writing courses in Vancouver in the fall of 1984 and Nelson in the fall of 1985. Colin Browne and Fred Wah, both former DTUC writing program coordinators, were chosen to head the Vancouver and Nelson programs respectively, and the Kootenay School of Writing was incorporated as a non-profit society in September 1984.

Following the collaborative and non-hierarchical ethos of the DTUC program, the Kootenay School of Writing operated using a volunteer-based collective structure, with the role of the Board of Directors being largely symbolic; administrative decision-making was shared among collective members. Initially, the primary activities of KSW were focused around education, but readings also constituted a significant part of programming. Two colloquia organized by KSW – New Poetics (1985) and Split/Shift (1986) – brought writers from across Canada and the United States to Vancouver, and emphasized KSW’s interest in the intersections of language, politics, and class. Over time, the focus of KSW’s activities shifted from courses to events.

Through the 1990s, KSW experienced difficulty maintaining financial stability. Conflict arose amongst members as to whether the School should undertake administrative re-structuring, transitioning to a more formal organizational structure with designated roles and responsibilities. Comprehensive re-structuring was ultimately abandoned in favour of creating a part-time administrative position, which was filled by collective members on a rotating basis. The City of Vancouver withdrew its operating grant for KSW for the 1998 fiscal year, giving rise to various fundraising activities, including a benefit reading by Michael Ondaatje.

The Kootenay School of Writing continues to function as a hub for avant-garde poetry in Vancouver. In 2008 a third major conference, the Positions Colloquium, brought numerous poets from across North America to Vancouver for five days of readings, discussions, performances, etc. At the time of writing (Summer 2013), however, the future of the organization is uncertain.
Custodial history
The fonds was held by the Kootenay School of Writing collective until the bulk of the material was transferred to Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books in 2004. Remaining material was donated by KSW collective members in subsequent years.

Scope and content
Fonds consists of the administrative records of the School, copies of communications and promotional materials, and audio recordings of talks and readings. Records in the fonds include correspondence, grant applications, collective meeting minutes, budgets and annual financial reports. Communications and promotional materials include press releases, brochures, and posters.


Source of title
Title is based on the provenance of the fonds.

Immediate source of acquisition
The majority of the material was purchased from the Kootenay School of Writing collective by Simon Fraser University Library, Special Collections and Rare Books in 2004. Remaining material was donated by KSW collective members in subsequent years.

Physical description
Includes 84 photographs : prints, 51 photographs : negatives, 376 audio cassettes, 9 audio discs, and 1 computer disk.

Accruals
Further accruals are expected.

Related groups of records in different fonds
Related groups of records held at SFU Special Collections and Rare Books include the Jeff Derksen / Writing magazine fonds (MsC 105) and the Lisa Robertson fonds (MsC 38).

General note
More information on the administrative history of KSW is available in Geoff Laurenson’s paper “The Kootenay School of Writing: History and Evolution of Administration, 1984 – 2012” (Appendix I).
Series Descriptions

Series 1: Society administration

Date(s) of creation
1984-2003

Extent
19.5 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Series consists of records pertaining to the core administration of the School. Series is divided into four sub-series: General society administration records (1984-1997); Annual general meeting records (1986-2003); Annual report (1985-2003); and Collective minutes (1984-2000).

Sub-series 1.1: General society administration records

Date(s) of creation
1984-1997

Extent
5.5 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of records pertaining to the core administration of the School, including the School’s constitution and bylaws and Certificate of Incorporation.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.

Sub-series 1.2: Annual general meeting records

Date(s) of creation
1986-2003

Extent
2 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of the minutes of the Kootenay School of Writing’s annual general meetings.
Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged chronologically.

Sub-series 1.3: Annual report

Date(s) of creation
1985-2003

Extent
3 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of the Kootenay School of Writing’s annual reports.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged chronologically.

Sub-series 1.4: Collective minutes

Date(s) of creation
1984-2000

Extent
9 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of the minutes of the meetings of the Kootenay School of Writing Collective.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.

Series 2: Office administration

Date(s) of creation
1984-2003

Extent
28 cm of textual records
Scope and content
Series consists of records pertaining to the day-to-day administration and functioning of the School. Series is divided into two sub-series: Correspondence (1984-2001) and General office administration records (1984-2003).

Sub-series 2.1: Correspondence

Date(s) of creation
1984-2001

Extent
6 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of correspondence with writers, publishers, bookstores, and prospective course participants, among others.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged chronologically.

Related records in the fonds
Correspondence pertaining to the New Poetics and Split/Shift colloquia can be found in Sub-series 4.3 (Colloquia and special events).

Sub-series 2.2: General office administration records

Date(s) of creation
1984-2003

Extent
22 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of records pertaining to various aspects of day-to-day administration, including office, mail and phone logs, mailing and member lists, and building lease documents. Includes administrative records pertaining to the Nelson KSW. Also includes a records inventory compiled in 1998.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.

Restrictions on access, use, reproduction and publication
Access to some of the records in this sub-series is restricted due to personal information.
Series 3: Financial records

Date(s) of creation
1984-2006

Extent
55.5 cm of textual records
1 computer disk
2 photographs

Scope and content
Series consists of records pertaining to the management of the School’s finances. Series is divided into three sub-series: Public funding (1984-2006); Private funding (1984-2002); and General financial records (1984-1999).

Related records in the fonds
Financial records pertaining to the New Poetics and Split/Shift colloquia can be found in Sub-series 4.3 (Colloquia and special events).

Sub-series 3.1: Public funding

Date(s) of creation
1984-2006

Extent
27.5 cm of textual records
1 computer disk

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of grant applications, correspondence, and other records pertaining to civic, provincial, and federal funding for the School.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.

Sub-series 3.2: Private funding

Date(s) of creation
1984-2002

Extent
11 cm of textual records
Scope and content
Sub-series consists of information about, and correspondence with, prospective private funding bodies.

Sub-series 3.3: General financial records

Date(s) of creation
1984-1999

Extent
17 cm of textual records
2 photographs : b&w and col. prints ; 12.5 x 18 cm and 10 x 15 cm

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of financial ledgers, bank statements, and receipts. No comprehensive financial ledgers exist for the period 1996-1999; for this reason, receipts and other routine financial records have been retained. For years where comprehensive financial ledgers were kept, individual routine records have been removed.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged chronologically.

Series 4: Programming

Date(s) of creation
1984-2002

Extent
56 cm of textual records
105 photographs

Scope and content
Sub-series 4.1: Course files

Date(s) of creation
1984-1998

Extent
13 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of participant lists, correspondence with instructors, and
descriptions of courses and prospective courses.

Restrictions on access, use, reproduction and publication
Access to some of the records in this sub-series is restricted due to personal
information.

Sub-series 4.2: Visiting Foreign Artist residencies

Date(s) of creation
1987-1991

Extent
1 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of records pertaining to the Canada Council for the Arts’ Visiting
Foreign Artist program, including correspondence with writers and the Canada Council
and media releases.

Sub-series 4.3: Colloquia and special events

Date(s) of creation

Extent
26 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists predominantly of records pertaining to the New Poetics (1985) and
Split/Shift (1986) colloquia organized by the School. Types of records found in the sub-
series include correspondence, meeting minutes, programming and publicity materials,
and financial records.
Sub-series 4.4: Publications

Date(s) of creation
1996-2001

Extent
10.5 cm of textual records and other material

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of copies of the School's W publication and records related to the production of W, including submissions and annotated proofs. Sub-series also contains an annotated proof of Writing Class: The Kootenay School of Writing Anthology.

Physical description
Includes 51 photographs : b&w negatives, 51 photographs : b&w prints ; 2.5 x 3.75 cm on contact sheet 21.5 x 28 cm, and 3 photographs : b&w prints ; 20.5 x 25.5 cm

Sub-series 4.5: General programming records

Date(s) of creation
1984-2002

Extent
5.5 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of records pertaining to programming generally, such as programming statistics, as well as records related to non-course programming.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.

Series 5: Publicity

Date(s) of creation
1984-1998

Extent
17.5 cm of textual records
28 photographs
Scope and content

Sub-series 5.1: Brochures

Date(s) of creation
1984-1991

Extent
6 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of proofs and copies of Kootenay School of Writing brochures.

Sub-series 5.2: Press releases

Date(s) of creation
1984-1993

Extent
2 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of copies of press releases.

Sub-series 5.3: Posters and general publicity

Date(s) of creation
1984-1998

Extent
9.5 cm of textual records
27 photographs : b&w prints ; 2.5 x 3.75 cm on contact sheet 21.5 x 28 cm
1 photograph : b&w print ; 14 x 21.5 cm

Scope and content
Sub-series consists of copies of posters, reading notices, and other publicity materials.

Arrangement
Sub-series has been arranged by the Archivist.
Series 6: Professional associations and external organizations

Date(s) of creation
1985-1995

Extent
12.5 cm of textual records

Scope and content
Series consists of records pertaining to the School’s involvement with various professional associations and external organizations, including the Association of National Non-profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC), the Federation of BC Writers, and the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres (PAARC). Types of records found in the sub-series include meeting minutes, meeting participants’ packages, correspondence, and external organizations’ publications and publicity materials.

Series 7: Audio recordings

Date(s) of creation
[1985-2006]

Extent
376 audio cassettes
9 audio discs

Scope and content
Series consists of audio recordings of readings, lectures, and panel discussions, and book launches.
**File Descriptions:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX</th>
<th>FILE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE(S)</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>KSW financial statements [Incorporation]</td>
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<td>Registered charity status</td>
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<td>Transfer credit, etc. 1986</td>
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<td>AGM [Annual general meeting] 1995</td>
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<td>AGM [Annual general meeting] 2001+2002</td>
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<td>Scope and content: File also contains 2003 Annual report</td>
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<td>Annual report 1998</td>
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</table>
Subseries 1.4: Collective minutes

| # | Subseries | Description | Dates
|---|-----------|-------------|-------
| 2 | 1 | KSW minutes – 27/07/84 up to Dec. 31/1985 | 1984-1985
| 2 | 3 | Collective meeting minutes Feb. 01-1990 - 10/01/91 | 1990-1991
| 2 | 4 | Collective minutes 07/02/91 – 17/11/93 | 1991-1993
| 2 | 6 | KSW collective minutes 98-99 | [1998]
| 2 | 7 | KSW collective minutes 99-00 | 1998-2000

Series 2: Office administration
Subseries 2.1: Correspondence

| # | Subseries | Description | Dates
|---|-----------|-------------|-------
| 3 | 1 | Correspondence – in | 1984-1994
| 3 | 2 | (General) correspondence – out | 1985-1994
| 3 | 3 | General correspondence – in 1995 | 1995
| 3 | 4 | General correspondence – out 1995 | 1995
| 3 | 5 | General correspondence – out 1996 | 1996
| 3 | 7 | General correspondence – out 1997 | 1997
| 3 | 11 | KSW internal correspondence 98-99 | 1998
| 3 | 12 | Correspondence: writers | 1990-1994
| 3 | 13 | Misc. correspondence | 1995-2001

Scope and content: File also contains correspondence with KSW’s lawyer relating to the failure to file annual reports for 1998 and 1999.

| # | Subseries | Description | Dates
|---|-----------|-------------|-------

Scope and content: File also contains the text for a speech written for the ‘convocation’ of people who purchased ‘degrees’ from KSW as part of a fundraising campaign.

Subseries 2.2: General office administration records

| # | Subseries | Description | Dates
|---|-----------|-------------|-------
| 3 | 15 | Office log | 1997-1998
| 3 | 16 | Mail register | 1985-1988
| 4 | 1 | KSW mail log 91 | 1991
| 4 | 2 | [Phone log and mail log] | 1985-1986
| | | Dates of creation: Phone log is for 1985-1986; mail log 1990 | 1990
| 4 | 3 | Long-dist log 85-6 | 1984-1986
| 4 | 4 | [Address book] | [198-]
| 4 | 5 | KSW subscribers (members) | 1985-1987

Restrictions on access, use, reproduction and publication: Access to some of the records in this file is restricted. Please consult staff for more information.

| # | Subseries | Description | Dates
|---|-----------|-------------|-------
| 4 | 6 | KSW mailing lists – old outdated | 1987-1990

Restrictions on access, use, reproduction and publication: Access to some of the records in this file is restricted. Please consult staff for more information.
### Series 3: Financial records

#### Subseries 3.1: Public funding

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<td>City grant 1997</td>
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<td>City grant 1998</td>
<td>1997-1998</td>
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<td>City grant 1998 – appeal – letters of support</td>
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<td>15</td>
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**Subseries 3.2: Private funding**

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<td>Endeavour</td>
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<td>Ford Foundation</td>
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<td>The McLean Foundation</td>
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<td>Richardson Century Fund</td>
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The Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation 1986
Vancouver Foundation – 1985 1984-1985
KSW – Witter Byner Foundation 1986
Woodlawn Arts Foundation 1986
Job Dev. grant 94 (VCA [Vancouver Cultural Alliance]) 1992-1993
Current funding work 1985-1986
KSW degrees and donations, Fall 93-Spring 94 1993-1994
British Council 1997 1997
British Council 1999 (Oliver) 1999
Edgecombe 1998
Fundraising 2002 2001-2002

Subseries 3.3: General financial records

10 6 Budgets 1985-1991
10 8 Financial statements 1984-1996
10 9 [Credit union] 1995-1997
10 10 [Receipts and ephemera] 1996-1997
Scope and content: Includes photographs 68.1 and 68.2
11 1 [General financial records] 1996-1999,
Scope and content: File primarily contains routine financial
records from the period where comprehensive financial ledgers
were not kept. Similar records for years where ledgers were kept
have been removed.
11 2 [BC Tel and Sprint] 1996-1998

Series 4: Programming
Subseries 4.1: Course files

11 3 Long Distance Blue Pencil Café 1985
11 4 Fiction Workshop [1985]
11 5 Journalism 1984
11 6 Literary Groceries – students 1984-1985
11 7 Production Workshop 1984
11 8 Comedy as Literature [1985]
11 9 Editor to Author Winter 85 1985
11 10 How to Get Started [1985]
11 11 Journalism I Winter 85 1985
11 12 Barry Broadfoot: Writing Oral History – Fall 85 1985
12 1 Blue Pencil Café - Sat., Nov. 16/85 1985
12 2 Fall 85 course ideas 1985
12 3 Creative Journal Wksp [Workshop] Fall 85 1985
12 4 Feature Writing Fall 85 & Spring 86 1985-1986
12 5 Fiction Workshop Fall 85 1985
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<td>Marketing the Magazine Article - Saturday, Oct. 19</td>
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**Subseries 4.2: Visiting Foreign Artist residencies**

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Subseries 4.3: Colloquia and special events

13  15  New Poetics account  1985-1986
13  16  [Split/Shift] Colloq. [Colloquium] mailing list  1986
13  17  Unfinished New Poetics business  [1985]
13  18  [New Poetics] Colloquium registrants  1985
13  20  Raffle tickets  1985
13  21  Publicity  1985
13  24  Poetry talks coll. [colloquium]  1985
14  1  [New Poetics] Colloquium inquiries  1985
14  2  [Split/Shift] Colloquium inquiries + correspondence  1986
14  3  [New Poetics] Colloquium correspondence  1985
14  4  S/S [Split/Shift] billets  1986
14  5  Split/Shift Colloquium archives  1985-1986
14  7  [Split/Shift] Colloquium – Funding and finance  1986
14  8  Three-Day Novel Competition – Operations  1986
14 10  Split/Shift clip file  1986
14 11  Split/Shift tapes  1986
14 12  Split/Shift registrations  1986
14 13  [Split/Shift] poetic statements  1986
15  1  Canada Council Split Shift readings  1986
15  3  Split/Shift poster  1986
15  4  [Split/Shift] participant’s package  1986
15  5  Split Shift participants  1986
15  6  Split/Shift operations  1986
15  7  Work writing colloquium – minutes  1986
15  8  Split/Shift travel arrangements  1986
15  9  Blaser/Thesen promo  1997
15 10  SFU Blaser conference  1995-2000

Subseries 4.4: Publications

15  11  W – submissions  2001
15  12  W1 – archives copy  2000
15  13  W2 – archives copy  2000
15  14  W2 – 2000  2000
15  15  W3 – archives copy  2000
16  1  W3  2000
16  2  W4 – archives copy  2001
16  3  ‘Writing Class’ (anthology) proof  1996-1999

Scope and content: Includes photographs (68.3n-68.53n, 68.3p-68.53p, 68.38 (large print), 68.44 (large print), 68.53 (large print). ) Set of negatives encompassing 68.32-68.53 was labeled “Tony Lopez Nov 96.”

16  4  [Annotated proof of Writing Class]  1999
Subseries 4.5: General programming records

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<td>Institute for the Humanities</td>
<td>[2002]</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Misc. Loose Poetry (newspapers)</td>
<td>1984, 2002</td>
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<td>Studies in Practical Negotiation</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Programming statistics</td>
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<td>KSW course completion certificate record</td>
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Series 5: Publicity
Subseries 5.1: Brochures

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<td>Summer 85 brochure</td>
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Subseries 5.2: Press releases

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Subseries 5.3: Posters and general publicity

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<td>Invitations</td>
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<td>Scope and content: Includes photographs 68.54p-68.80p and 68.79 (large print)</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>VLC [Vancouver Literary Calendar] events</td>
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Series 6: Professional associations and external organizations

19  16  Literary agents  1986
   Scope and content: File also contains ANNPAC Management Committee meeting agendas and minutes
20  4  Canadian Poetry Association  1986
20  5  Community Arts Council  1990
20  6  Federation of BC Writers  1985-1986
20  7  New Westminster Continuing Education  1985
20  8  North Shore Continuing Education  1985
20  9  F.E.A.C. [Freelance Editors’ Association of Canada]  1985
20 10  League of Canadian Poets  1986
20 11  PAARC [Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres]  1996
20 12  Playwrights’ Union of Canada  [1985]
20 13  Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild  1985-1986
20 14  SOCAN [Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada]  1995
20 15  Québec conference  [1986]
20 16  The Vancouver Project (Douglas)  1989-1990
20 17  Writers’ Union of Canada mailing list  [1985]

Series 7: Audio recordings

BOX 21 AUDIO TAPES #1 – 52
1A Carla Harryman/ 1B Sharon Thesen
2A Ron Silliman/ 2B Susan Howe
3A Daphne Marlatt/ 3B Daphne Marlatt
4A Daphne Marlatt/ 4B Bruce Andrews
5A Michel Gay/ 5B Bob Perelman
6A Gerry Gilbert/ 6B Nicole Brossard
7A Michael Palmer/ 7B Michael Palmer
8A Barbara Einzig/ 8B Barbara Einzig
9A Steve McCaffery/ 9B Diane Ward
10A Carla Harryman/ 10B Carla Harryman
11A Lyn Hejinian/ 11B Bob Perelman
12A Bob Perelman/ 12B Bob Perelman (2 copies)
12A Steele, Whitehead, Strang/ 12B Blank
13A Charles Bernstein/ 13B George Bowering
14A Lyn Hejinian/ 14B Lyn Hejinian
15A Michel Gay/ 15B Michel Gay
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<td>Ron Silliman / 20B Ron Silliman</td>
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<td>Bruce Andrews/ 21B Bruce Andrews</td>
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<td>Barbara Einzig/ 23B Barbara Einzig</td>
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<td>Gary Whitehead/ 31B Jean McKay</td>
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<td>Kirsten Emmott/ 45B Phil Hall</td>
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<td>Pam Tranfield/ 48B Pam Tranfield</td>
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<td>Stephanie Smith/ 51B Stephanie Smith</td>
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**BOX 22 AUDIO TAPES #53 – 123**

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<td>Roger Taus/ 55B Roger Taus</td>
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<td>Anselm Hollo/ 63B Victoria Walker</td>
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<td>Roy Kiyooka/ 64B Roy Kiyooka</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>Paul Dutton/ 68B Paul Dutton</td>
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<td>69</td>
<td>Western Front/ 69B Billy (Zonko) Little</td>
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70A Tsunami / 70B Fissure Benefit
71A Robert Mittenthal/ 71B Jeff Derksen
72A Colin Browne/ 72B Fred Wah
73A Clark Coolidge/ 73B Clark Coolidge
74A George Bowering/ 74B George Bowering
75A Gary Whitehead/ 75B Noel Hudson
77A Steve McCaffery/ 77B Steve McCaffery
78A Steve McCaffery/ 78B Steve McCaffery
79A Steve McCaffery/ 79B Steve McCaffery
80A Steele, Lusk Trujillo, Farrell/ 80B Stetar, Haraldsson, Robertson
81A Kati Campbell/ 81B Kati Campbell
82A Clemens Rettich/ 82B Clemens Rettich
83A Mina Totino/ 83B Mina Totino
84A Peter Culley/ 84B Peter Culley
86A Judy Radul/ 86B Judy Radul
87A Jeff Derksen/ 87B Jeff Derksen
88A Charles Bernstein/ 88B Charles Bernstein
89A Charles Bernstein/ 89B Charles Bernstein
90A Barbara Einzig/ 90B Barbara Einzig
91A Dennis Dennisoff/ 91B Deanna Ferguson
92A Steven Forth/ 92B Norma Cole
98A Calvin Wharton/ 98B Calvin Wharton
99A George Stanley/ 99B Sharon TheSEN
100A Peggy Kelley/ 100B Peggy Kelley
107A David Arnason/ 107B David Arnason
111A Roy Kiyooka/ 111B Roy Kiyooka
113A Alan Davies/ 113B Alan Davies
114A Alan Davies/ 114B Alan Davies
118A Steve McCaffery/ 118B Steve McCaffery
119A Goh Poh Seng/ 119B Alfonso Quijada
121A The SELF / 121B discussion panel
122A Panel on Narrative / 122B Panel on Narrative
123A Mittenthal, Creede/ 123B Doug Stetar

BOX 23 AUDIO TAPES #124 – 190
124A Clark Coolidge/ 124B Lyn Hejinian
125A Dorothy Trujillo Lusk / 125B Dorothy Trujillo Lusk
126A Cummings/ 126B Robertson, Smith
127A Clark, Strang/ 127B Kevin Davies
128A Lusk, Farrell/ 128B McKinnon
129A Kevin Killian/ 129B Judy Radul
130A Abigail Child/ 130B Dodie Bellamy
131A Clark Coolidge/ 131B Clark Coolidge
132A Lee Ann Brown/ 132B Lee Ann Brown
133A Clark Coolidge/ 133B Clark Coolidge
135A Beyond TISH/ 135B LAUNCH
136 Bruce Boone/Bataille
137 Bruce Boone/Bataille
138 Nancy Shaw / Radio Freerainforest 22 July 1990
139 open discussion (unmixed) taped at 15/16 by Paul Mutton
140 Paul Mutton for Co-op Radio 102.7 FM
141 Norma Cole Sept. 29/’90
142A Lyn Hejinian : Strangeness/ 142B Lecture & talk at The Western Front 6 October 1988
143A Steven Forth/Deanna Ferguson/ 143B Peter Culley
144 Karen MacCormack
145 Karen MacCormack
146A Norma Cole 146B Steven Forth
147A Eric Selland, Catriona Strang/ 147B Discussion
149A Stephen Rodefer, Benjamin Friedlander/ 149B Discussion
150A Stephen Rodefer, Benjamin Friedlander/ 150B Discussion
151 Laura Moriarty KSW 10 July, 1991
152A Evan Burton/ 152B Gary Whitehead 27 July 1991
153 Christopher Dewdney Sept. 21/91
155 Maxine Gadd 14 December 1991
156 Marwan Hassan reading at the KSW 10th January 1992
157 Bill Berkson/ Jerry Schroeder 11 Sept. 1992
158 Janice Williamson reading at the KSW 27 March 1992
159 Catherine Bennett reading at the KSW 27 March 1992
160 FreePress Festival 16 April 1992
161A Mike Turner, Brian Dedora/ 161B Deanna Ferguson
162 Kevin Killian : House of Forks
163A Melissa Wolsak/ 163B Gerald Creede
164 Dodie Bellamy
165A Tony Ruzza/ 165B Jeff Derkson
167 Jean Day 18 July 1992
168A Steve Farmer/ 168B Dan Farrell
169 A. Cage 19th September 1992
170A Christine Stewart/ 170B Judi MacInnes
171A Dan Farrell/ 171B Suzanne Buffam
172A Roy Miki/ 172B Maxine Gadd, Catriona Strang
173A Ashok Mathur/ 173B Andrew Payne
174A Judith Copithorne/ 174B Peter Culley
175A Colin Smith/ 175B Roy Kiyooka
176A Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, Barry McKinnon/ 176B Gerry Gilbert
177A Yasmin Ladha/ 177B Jery Schroeder, Nancy Shaw
178 Tsunami Benefit at the Western Front, January 30, 1993
179 Tsunami Benefit at the Western Front, January 30, 1993
180A Larissa Lai, Catriona Strang/ 180B Catherine Bennett
181A Steve McCaffery/ 181B Kathryn MacLeod, Dave Ayre
182A Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, Judi MacInnes/ 182B Robert Mittenthal
183 Gail Scott 14 May 1993
184 Dodie Bellamy, Gail Scott “Feminist Autobiography”
185A Jamie Reid/ 185B Pindar Dulai
186A Ted Byrne/ 186B Susan Clark
187A Colin Smith/ 187B Renee Rodin
188A Michael Barnholden/ 188B Paul Kelley
189A Dennis Denisoff/ 189B Deanna Ferguson
190A David Bromige October 10, 1993
BOX 24 AUDIO TAPES #191 – 276
191 Duncan McNaughton
192 Duncan McNaughton
193 Maggie O’Sullivan
194A Maggie O’Sullivan/ 194B Jeff Derksen
195A Joe Ross/ 195B Douglas Messerli
196A Catriona Strang, Lisa Robertson/ 196B Yasmin Ladha
197 Nicole Brossard
199 Makeda Silvera
200 Mark Nakada
201A Peter Cummings/ 201B Jacqueline Larson
203 Gary Whitehead
204 Charles Watts
205A Gregory Scofield/ 205B Ann Jew, Erin Soros
207A Alice Burdick, Raspal S. Pal/ 207B Melissa Wolsack
208 Roy Miki
209 Erin Moure
210 Pasquale Verdiccino
211 Kathleen Fraser
212 Hilary Clark
213 Hilary Clark
214 Eileen Myles
215 Dennis Denisoff
216A Dodie Bellamy/ 216B Kevin Killian
217 Jodey Castricano
218 Abigail Child
219 Leslie Scalapino
220A Karen MacCormic/ 220B Steve McCaffery
221 Margaret Christakos
222A Brian Dedora/ 222B Stuart Ross
223A Michael Turner/ 223B Deanna Ferguson
224A Jam Ismail/ 224B Lisa Robertson
225 Rae Armantrout
226A Elizabeth Willis/ 226B Peter Gizzi
227 Robert Hogg
228 Nicole Markotic
229 Lisa Pasold
230A Sharon Thesen/ 230B Robin Blasser
231A Rob McLennan/ 231B Clare Latremouille
232A Matthew Stadler/ 232B Dodie Bellamy
233 Darren Wershler-Henry
234 Dionne Brand
235 “What About Bliss” workshop 235A Mike Barnholden, Shelly McIntosh, Sarah Wakefield/ 235B Meredith Quartermain, Lorie Weidenhammer
236 Caroline Bergvall
237A Laynie Brone/ 237B Tom Raworth
238 Clint Burnham
239A Mary Margaret Sloan/ 239B Robert Gluck
240 Colin Browne
241A Susan Holbrook/ 241B Jeff Derksen
242 “Open Letter: Disgust & Overdetermination: A Poetics Issue”. Contributors: Mark Nakada, Deanna Ferguson, Clint Burnham, Rob Manery, Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, Jeff Derkson
243A Niko Vassilakis/243B Maxine Gadd
244 Colin Smith launching “Multiple Poses”
245A Melissa Wolsack/245B Lori Weidenhammer
249A Karen X. Tulchinsky/249B Suzette Mayr
250 Michael Barnholden with Chris Barnholden
252A Deanna Ferguson/252B Tom Raworth
256 Norma Cole
260 Douglas Oliver
261 Michael Barnholden/ Ted Byrne (reading dedicated to Charles Watts)
262 Robyn Laba reads the work of Mina Loy
264 Robert Hogg
265 Barbara Guest
266 ‘Vancouver Walking’ Meredith Quartermain
267 Dan Farrell Sept. 05/99
268 Louis Cabri & J. Turner
271 Peter Nicholls
272 Peter Nicholls
275 Time Mechanix #1 Edward Byrne, Barnholden reads Dorn

BOX 25 AUDIO TAPES [unnumbered] DATED
Thursday May 12: Transparency: Steve McCaffery
March 27th: Western Front: Phyllis Webb Tribute #2
February 29th: Clayton Eshleman
May 4th: Dorothy Lusk, Robert Mittenthal, Judi Maclness
March 1: Artists/Writers Talk: Stan Douglas
1974 Robin Blaser @ Western Front
Aug.24, 1985: New Poetics Colloquium: Carla Harryman
Nov. 15, 1987: Steve Benson
1988: Helen Dickson, John Brazier, Charles Watts
July 10, 1991: L. Laura Moriarty
August 2, 1991: A. Lee Ann Brown
Sept. 4, 1991: A. Abigail Child
Sept. 18, 1991: Rhona Murray/ P.K. Page
Sept. 21, 1991: Christopher Dewdney
Sept. 24, 1991: Christopher Dewdney/ William Wang
Sept. 27, 1991: David Bromige
Oct. 5, 1991: Peter Culley
Oct. 10, 1991: KSW at W.I.S.E.
Nov. 29, 1991: Tom Rowarth
Feb. 11, 1992: Bill Berkson
May 19, 1992: Mike Turner, Brian Deebra, Deana Ferguson
May 21, 1992: Dodie Bellamy
June 13, 1992: Jeff Derksen/Lisa Robertson
July 18, 1992: Jean Day/ David Bromige
Oct. 30, 1992: *Capilano* Booklaunch & Reading
June 12, 1993: Ted Byrne, Susan Clark
Nov. 6, 1993: Makeda Silvero
Nov. 7, 1993: Douglas Messerli/ Joe Ross
Oct. 39m 1994: Nathaniel Mackey
1995 Robin Blaser
June 1, 1996: Jam Ismail/ Lisa Robertson
Mar. 29, 1997: Adeena Karasick
Sept. 27, 1997: “What About Bliss?”
Feb. 5, 1998: Foundational Narratives
Mar. 21, 1998: Colin Smith launch
May 2, 1998: Tsunami/Fissure Benefit
Aug. 15, 1998: Dierdre Kovak/ Gerry Gilbert
Jan. 9, 1999: Stephen Rodefer
Jan. 23, 1999: Norma Cole
May 3, 1999: Ted Byrne/ Tom McCauley
June 1, 1999: bill bissett
Aug. 14, 1999: Barbara Guest
Oct. 25, 1999: Susan Holbrook
Apr. 6, 2000: Derksen Talk
May 6, 2000: Aaron Vidaver, “Spatial Fantasy : From Charles Olson to
Detroit”, Barrett Watten, “Zone : The poetics of space”
July 3, 2000: jw curry
Nov. 2000: Robertson-Sitwell
Nov. 2000: Ashok Mathur, “Racializing Space : back to the ANZA”
Nov. 2000: Braithwaite, Samuels
Nov. 5, 2000: Norman Fischer
Jan. 7, 2001: Lisa Robertson
Feb. 6, 2001: *Time Mechanix* (Roy Miki, Roy Kiyooka)
Apr. 3, 2001: *Time Mechanix 11*: Paul Celan/ Rob Manery
Apr. 23, 2001: Denise Riley
Apr. 29, 2001: Peter Culley
May 13, 2001: Aaron Vidaver
May 14, 2001: David Fujino

**BOX 26 AUDIO TAPES [unnumbered] DATED**
June 5, 2001: *Time Mechanix 13*: Wayde Compton on Dickson & Gibbs
June 24, 2001: Michael Barnholden : “Means of Production”
Aug. 27, 2001: Ted Byrne launch of *Beautiful Lies*
Oct. 2001: Louis Cabri talk on Bruce Andrews
Oct. 25, 2001: Louis Cabri talk on Earle Birney
Nov. 10, 2001: Bernadette Mayer
Nov. 11, 2001: Bernadette Mayer
Nov. 24, 2001: Dan Farrell
Feb. 22, 2002: Kevin Killian
Feb. 23, 2002: Dodie Bellamy
Feb. 24, 2002: Kevin Killian/ Dodie Bellamy
Mar. 23, 2002: Zytle Shaw
Mar. 28, 2002: Roy Miki launch of *Surrender*
Apr. 6, 2002: Geraldine Monk/ Alan Halsey
Apr. 20, 2002: Myang Mi Kim (2 copies)
May 5, 2002: Sharla Sava
May 11, 2002: Renee Rodin
May 12, 2002: Aaron Vidaver launch of Sabotage
May 19, 2002: Nicholas Boroli/Diana George (2 copies)
June 9, 2002: Clint Burnham/ Chris Stroffolino
Nov. 17, 2002: Discussion of Hardt on Pastants featuring Robert Mittenthal
Aug. 16, 2003: Colin Browne/ Rue Armentrout Ground Water
Aug. 22, 2003: John Havelda
Oct. 18, 2003: Petter Culley relaunch of Hammerton”
Nov. 28, 2003: John Wilkinson
Mar. 6, 2004: Juliana Spahr
June 3, 2004: Eric Giraud
July 22, 2004: Brandon Brown/ Jamie Reid
Oct. 29, 2004: Marina Roy
Oct. 31, 2004: Lisa Robertson reads @ Artspeak
Nov. 12, 2004: Nicole Markotic/ George Bowering
Dec. 2004: Kevin Nolan, Susan Clark, Pete Smith
Apr. 2, 2005: Before the War: Scalapino, O’Leary, Gizzi, Schwartz, Collis
May 1, 2005: David Fujino
May 13, 2005: Steve McCaffery

BOX 26 AUDIO TAPES [unnumbered] [undated]
Western Front: Susan Lord, Gerald Creede
Aaron Vidaver/Roger Farr: “protest genres and the pragmatics of dissent”
Charles Bukowski reads his poetry
Passing the Buck: preconference event for Writing through Race
Rob Manery
Bp Nichol celebration 1
Bp Nichol celebration 2
[bp Nichol?]Festival opening
Rachel Blau
“An Objectivist Panel”
Nancy Shaw & ? reading from “Sceptocartic”/ Phil McCrumb
Ghosts of 3 a.m.
Poetics: Form & Structure: Watts, Butling, Finkelstein, Byrd
Anne Stone/ Gail Scott
Kenneth Patchen/Al Neil Quartet
Jam ismail
Deanna Ferguson “& weep for my babes”
Clark Coolidge Polaroid
Self, Other, Community I
Talk (?)
Reading (?)

BOX 26 AUDIO TAPES [cd’s]
Feb. 1988: Steve McCaffery talk on de Sade
Feb. 1988: Steve McCaffery reading first set
Apr. 2004: Catriona Strang/Nancy Shaw
Apr. 2004: Barry McKinnon
Oct. 4, 2006: Alan Davies reading
July 15, 2006: Improvisations around: Oppen, Mullen, Perelman, Retalback
Wilke

**BOX 27 AUDIO TAPES BLASER CONFERENCE**
1 Panel #1 – First part: Watts, Penberthy, McClure, Gizzi, Boughn, Tarn, Prevallet
2 Panel # 1 – Conclusion
3 Panel #2 – Composition & Performance
4 Tape #4 – Festival Opening: Bernstein, Webb, Marlatt
5 Tape #5 – Festival Opening (conclusion): Marlatt, Cole, Palmer, Strang & Houle, Ondaatje, Blaser
6 Translation & Poetry: Cole, Palmer, Vanderbore, Browne, Joris
7 Translation & Poetry (conclusion): Joris, Verdicchio, Hilary Clark.
Reading: Boone, Schelling, Verdicchio
8 Heterologies: Susan Howe, Steve Dickison
9A Heterologies (continued)
9B Ethics & Aesthetics: Lisa Robertson & Jerry Zaslove
10 Ethics & Esthetics: Ann Waldman
11 Ethics & Esthetics (conclusion): Lisa Robertson & Jerry Zaslove
12 Reading #3 - Poetics: Theory and Practice: Finkelstein, Rasula, Bromige
13 Reading #3 - Poetics: Theory and Practice (conclusion): McCaffery, Rachel Blau Duplessis
14 *Heterologies* (conclusion): *Eros & Poesis*: Sharon Thesen, Bruce Boone
15 *Heterologies* (conclusion): *Eros & Poesis*: Kevin Killian, George Stanley, Robin Blaser, Bruce Boone
16 Panel #6 Discussion - Pauline Butling & Wystan Curnow and Charles Altieri
17 Panel #6 Discussion – Rasula, Zonko, Finkelstein, Quartermain, Don Byrd, Altieri, Alan Golding, Robin Blaser
[unnumbered] “A festival opening”
[unnumbered] Robin Blaser reading *The Recovery of the Public World*
[unnumbered] Selections from the Blaser Conference II: David Marriott, Don Byrd, Charles Altieri, Robin Blaser
[unnumbered] Blaser Festival Final Reading II
The Kootenay School of Writing: History and Evolution of Administration, 1984 - 2012

Geoff Laurenson

ARST 530: The History of the Canadian Administrative System.

December 12, 2012.
The Kootenay School of Writing society (KSW) has a long and complex history. It has evolved significantly from its beginnings in Nelson, British Columbia in 1984, into a mainstay of avant-garde poetry in Vancouver. Despite these changes, there has been no change in its name, leading to confusion concerning the School’s present structure and functions. By 1999, after many such changes had occurred, Klobucar and Barnholden observed that “few facts…can be gleaned from its misleading name”, “it is not in the Kootenays, it is not a school, and it does not teach writing.” (Klobucar and Barnholden, 1999, p.1) The use of the word “School” gives a false impression of “a formal structure with staff and offices” (S. Collis, personal communication, December 5, 2012), whose introduction the School has always resisted. Additionally, the activities of KSW as an organization are often conflated with those of a community of individuals that grew around it. In order to navigate these causes of confusion, and for the present purpose, I will examine the evolution of the structure of KSW as a formal organization. In order to do this I will draw upon research conducted on the Kootenay School of Writing fonds, held at Special Collections and Rare Books, Simon Fraser University and a number of interviews with collective members. This research has revealed that the structure of the KSW developed as a response to the prevailing context, leading to the adoption of a unique ‘collective’ structure. However, as KSW assumed increased responsibilities, the structure waived, and with the onset of financial difficulties, the

“We will not be understood.” (Kootenay School of Writing motto)
School was forced to redefine it functions and there was debate about restructuring. Such restructuring did not occur, and KSW has struggled to survive ever since. It remains an important space for poetry readings and other events in Vancouver, but it has clearly lost momentum, and without stable finances, struggles to maintain consistent programming.

In order to gain a full understanding of The Kootenay of Writing, it is important to examine its predecessor organization, the creative writing program at David Thompson University Centre (DTUC), located in Nelson, British Columbia. The writing program at DTUC was founded in 1979 by a group of writers including: Fred Wah, Tom Wayman, and Daniel McFadden. (Wiens, 2001, p.1) DTUC differed from a conventional university, as it was a non-degree issuing institution, but credits could be transferred. After formation, DTUC “began offering short, intensive workshops in almost every area of wiring, including poetry, prose, journalism and… scriptwriting.” (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 24) The DTUC writing program was first coordinated by Fred Wah (1979 – 1982), and afterwards by Colin Browne (1982 – 1984). The structure and programming of the new writing program was influenced by previous experiments in education and avant-garde movements in poetry.

The context in which DTUC arose affected its structure and programming. From the 1960s through to the 1980s Nelson identified as being home to many left wing intellectuals, writers, and artists. (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 19) Additionally, the physical isolation of Nelson is said to have allowed more freedom in programming (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 19) Additionally, at this time, the avant-garde writing and ideas of the Beat movement and San Francisco Renaissance poets, along with those of Black Mountain College were being filtered into Vancouver through Warren Tallman, Professor of English at The University of British Columbia. (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 21) During his education at UBC Wah was a student of Tallman, and became exposed to these movements. This is influence is demonstrated by the development of a “progressive pedagogy” at DTUC under the coordination of Wah and Browne. (Klobucar
and Barnholden, p.19) DTUC soon gained a reputation for being “one of the most dynamic and innovative writing programs in Canada if not the continent.” (Wiens, p. 1) Despite its influence on the developing literary community, the writing program at DTUC was to be short-lived. In 1983, with the re-election of the Social Credit Provincial government, “a series of deficit cutting measures” were announced as part of a program of “restraint.” (Wiens, p. 1) These cutbacks were particularly heavy in education (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 6) DTUC soon attracted the attention of these reviews, and it was announced that DTUC would close on 1 January, 1984. (Ormond, 1991) Before the university was closed, many proposals were made to save DTUC, including its fledgling writing program. In April 1984, DTUC issued a press release announcing that “the school will establish two campuses-at-large, one in Nelson… and the other in Vancouver. Past and present faculty of the School will continue to offer instruction and direction to apprentice writers.” (KSW fonds, Press Releases) This initiative did not materialize, but set the stage for events to come. On 1 May, 1984 after months of tense negotiation concerning the future of the institution, the provincial government finally closed the university, arguing that the “cost per student to operate was too high compared to other universities and colleges in the province.” (Ormond, 1991) Many members of this community saw this as a targeted political gesture, leading some to speak of the closure as a “form of social exclusion” in response to the radical nature of DTUC. (Klobucar and Barnholden, p. 25) The attempts by DTUC to save its writing program may have failed, but the student union still held the lease for the Student Union Building until 1992. (KSW fonds, Nelson - KSW) This loophole provided a much-needed foothold to a group of ex-DTUC faculty and students that were beginning to organize themselves. This collective came to be known as The Kootenay School of Writing.

On August 21, 1984 a press release was issued that announced that “former students and faculty [of DTUC]… will offer courses this fall in Nelson and Vancouver as the Kootenay School of Writing.” (KSW fonds, Press Releases) Fred Wah and Colin Browne, former program coordinators at DTUC are chosen to head the KSW writing program. Wah is installed as head of KSW Nelson, and Browne is to lead the branch in Vancouver. (KSW fonds, Press Releases) This press release added that “besides Wah
and Browne, former writing faculty members Paulette Jiles and Tom Wayman and graduate students Jeff Derksen, Alicia Priest, Calvin Wharton and Gary Whitehead” would also be involved in the newly created KSW. (KSW fonds, Press Releases). It can be seen that the selection of faculty and instructors emphasized the connection between KSW and DTUC. Additionally, the brochure for the Fall term of 1984 begins by declaring that “The Kootenay School of Writing is a continuation of the Writing Program of David Thompson University Centre.” (KSW fonds, Brochures) In defining the structure of the writing program at DTUC the founders looked to an unconventional model, the experimental site of postsecondary education, Black Mountain College. (Klobucar and Barnholden, 1999, p.25) It can be seen that the new Kootenay School of Writing mirrored many aspects of the structure of Black Mountain College, along with its “anti-academic spirit.” (Harris, p. 15)

Black Mountain College was established near Asheville, North Carolina in September 1933, during a period of intense educational reform in the United States. (Harris, 1987, p. 1) For founder John Andrew Rice, who had recently been controversially dismissed from Rollins College in Florida, Black Mountain College would be “the ultimate test” of a different approach to postsecondary education. (Harris, p. 8) The programs offered at the College emphasized flexibility, had no required courses, and made students responsible for what they learnt. (Harris, p. 6) Black Mountain College differed from other institutions it attempted to “educat[e]…the whole man…head, heart, and hand.” (Harris, p. 15) This aim was to be achieved by the participation of both students and faculty in an active “community experience” (Harris, p. 8) that included living and eating together on campus, and work on the College farm.

The structure of Black Mountain College reflected Rice’s dissatisfaction with traditional, “autocratic” powers structures, such as those he found at Rollins. (Harris, p. 6) When the College was created the “principles of democracy were…applied not just to the classroom, but to the entire structure of the college.” (Harris, p. 6) Administrative structures at the College also resisted such top down power structures by making the faculty the owners of the College, and “legal controls from the outside” in its decision to
avoid trustees. (Harris, p. 6) Instead, funding for the College was gained through private donations, often through the personal connections of individual faculty members, most notably Ted Dreier. (Harris, p. 14) Administrative matters were handled in meetings of a “Board of Fellows” which was “elected from the faculty by the faculty.” (Harris, p. 6) Students attended these meetings, and sometimes were sometimes elected to the Board. (Harris, p. 6) Additionally, the position of “Rector” was created to chair meetings of the Board, and acted as a representative of the College. (Harris, p. 6) Although an important position, the Rector had no formal power, and had to rely on persuasion. (Harris, p. 6) The College is described as being “for the most part responsibly administered”, (Harris, p. 244) but relied heavily on a high level of participation of a few influential individuals, such as the Rector, to hold the structure together.

Despite the successes of the College, “between 1949 and its closing in 1957, Black Mountain College underwent a radical transformation.” (Harris, p. 168) This transformation included the disintegration of the College’s loose social structure and evolution into an artistic community. (Harris, p. 182) Also, by this time there were pressing financial burdens, a need to restructure administration, and internal debates concerning direction of the College. (Harris, p. 169) However, these problems were difficult to address due to the unwillingness of the faculty to make changes to the structure of the College, such as the attempts to give the Rector increased powers in directing administration. (Harris, p. 244) The structure of the College, and the coinciding lack of accreditation as a university also made it difficult to secure donations (Harris, p. 52) Such donations, which were numerous in the beginning became inconsistent, and “it was primarily the sacrifice of the faculty”, through reducing their own wages, “that enabled the college to survive” (Harris, p. 52) Many of the characteristics, both positive and negative, of Black Mountain College are reflected by the Kootenay School of Writing.

The Kootenay School of Writing was incorporated as a non-profit organization on September 18, 1984 under the provisions of the British Columbia Society Act. (KSW fonds, Record-keeping Procedures) Incorporation under the Act required the KSW to
have a Board of Directors, which would be elected annually. (KSW fonds, Record-
keeping Procedures) The Board of Directors is composed of respected members of the
literary community including: local publishers, academics, and former collective
members. (Collis, 2012) However, despite being a formal part of KSW’s structure, the
role of the Board is largely “hands-off”, or symbolic in nature. (Collis, 2012) KSW, like
Black Mountain College, is described as being a “leaderless movement”, where
“whoever has volunteered to be on collective and attend meetings participates
democratically in running it.” (Collis, 2012) However, despite the emphasis on
participation, it is not the case that the involvement of each member of the collective
was equal, where “several prime movers” usually had a greater influence. (Wiens, 2001,
p.2) As in case with Black Mountain College, KSW relies on the extraordinary efforts of
a handful of individuals to maintain its structure. The collective meets either weekly or
bi-weekly. (Collis, 2012) Collective meetings have a “semi-bureaucratic” structure,
including an agenda, but often turn into reading groups or intellectual debates. (Collis,
2012)

The collective is responsible for administration and programming, and “all decisions are
made [in meetings]”. (Collis, 2012) These decisions and activities of the collective are
documented in records such as: minutes, grant applications, correspondence with
funding agencies, and office logs. (Wiens, 2001, p. 12) This emphasis on recordkeeping
by the KSW “appears disjunctive when read alongside the poetic texts” (Wiens, 2001, p. 12),
but such records were essential to secure funding, manage finances, and support
decision-making. However, the records themselves are often informal in nature, lacking
standard forms, and in written in extremely messy handwriting. Additionally, the records
that contain the most information about the KSW are often those that originated from
external bodies, particularly in the area of funding.

In an application for the Canada Student Loan program in 1985, Browne describes the
KSW as a “faculty-run collective.” (KSW fonds, Canada Student Loan – Designated as
“Eligible Institution” App’n) Browne goes on to outline their mission, “to operate, within
B.C., a post-secondary facility which will offer to interested members of the public a
course of instruction, education and training in the theories, skills, and crafts of writing.” (KSW fonds, Canada Student Loan – Designated as “Eligible Institution” App’n) As the mission statement suggests, at this time education was their primary function, and remained that way until around 1990. The courses offered by KSW were intended to be flexible, affordable, and catered to the needs and existing skills of students. (KSW fonds, Canada Student Loan – Designated as “Eligible Institution” App’n) In the early years of the organization, readings and other events were a significant, but smaller part of their programming, along with the publication of Writing magazine, and acting as a gallery space for local writers.

With these details finalized, the Vancouver campus, located at 1045 W. Broadway, opened in the Fall Term of 1984. Classes in Vancouver were taught by: Tom Wayman, Jeff Derksen, Colin Browne, and Gary Whitehead. (KSW fonds, KSW Course Completion Certificates) The Nelson branch starts offering courses later, opening its doors on the 9 October 1985, in a room of the former DTUC Student Union Building. (KSW fonds, Nelson-KSW) Classes were taught by: Fred Wah, Irene Mock, and others. (KSW fonds, Nelson-KSW) Both campuses offer a wide selection of courses at this time, which can be seen in the brochures printed by the KSW. Courses varied, but were generally in the areas of “creative writing (poetry, fiction, scripts), literary theory, journalism, book publishing and design.” (KSW fonds, Canada Student Loan – Designated as “Eligible Institution” App’n) These courses were offered within a diploma that normally lasted four terms. (KSW fonds, Canada Student Loan – Designated as “Eligible Institution” App’n) However, like its predecessor DTUC, as well as Black Mountain College, KSW was not a degree issuing university. KSW aimed to work around this by gaining recognition of their courses, so that credit could be transferred to other universities such as SFU, UBC, and The University of Victoria. An example of this was the attempt to transfer credit to UBC in 1985 for Journalism courses completed at KSW. This attempt was limited in its success, as UBC did not have a dedicated Journalism program until 1996, and as such would only transfer credit on a case-by-case basis.
Despite such setbacks, the period of 1984 – 1987 was clearly the most successful for the KSW. During this time enrolments were at their highest, and provided a significant amount of revenue to the KSW. In 1985, revenue from courses and workshops was given as $14393. (KSW fonds, Funding City of Vancouver Grant Application 1986) This revenue was also supplemented by generous cultural grants from the government, such as the Explorations Program of the Canada Council (1985), which gave the KSW over fifteen thousand dollars to continue to hold “Literary Groceries” workshops. (KSW fonds, Press Releases) These workshops positioned established writers to give new writers tips on “everything from tax tips to publishing procedures.” (KSW fonds, Press Releases) In addition, KSW consistently received funding from City of Vancouver, individuals and other private donors.

However, by the end of 1986 change was in the air. This is reflected in the minutes of the KSW from July 18, 1986, where it is acknowledged that “KSW- Vancouver - is becoming more a gallery than strictly a school – more performance oriented, inter-arts stuff, writer-in-residence as well as on-going courses. Changing focus makes [KSW Vancouver] more eligible for grants.” (KSW fonds, Nelson KSW) KSW started strong, forming a revolutionary alternative to institutional education. However, its ability to secure funding was, like Black Mountain College, being diminished by its unconventional structure. As one collective member explained, “KSW often does not get funding because of this lack of formal structure.” (Collis, 2012) Additionally, the reliance on the Collective members, and not paid administrators meant that KSW inefficient at applying for grants. As financial burdens set in, it was forced to rethink its focus. In its brochure for 1987 the KSW does not mince words, it is in debt by four thousand dollars. (Brochures, Box 11, KSW fonds) They go on to ask for donations from the general public, offering incentives in the form of copies of Writing and reduced prices for courses. (Brochures, Box 11, KSW fonds) In addition to financial problems, the problem of “burnout of faculty” is also looming. (KSW fonds, City Grant 87 – 91) As a partial solution to this problem the KSW moves into their new, cheaper headquarters at 152 W. Hastings, a very rough part of the downtown Eastside. This was to be the first of numerous relocations between 1987 and the present. These moves were disruptive to
programming, evidenced by the minutes of the AGM for 1994 where it is mentioned that less events could be put on because of the move and recent renovations. (KSW fonds, AGM 1994)

In the period of 1989 to 1992, the situation worsens, the publication of Writing is discontinued and both Jeff Derksen and Nancy Shaw leave to pursue further education. (Wiens, 2001, p. 4) As was the case with Black Mountain College, the loss of key collective members amounted to a loss of direction and ability to make the collective structure bear fruit. This connection is demonstrated dramatically in the case of KSW Nelson, where “Wah’s departure in 1988 for Alberta…effectively removed Nelson from the literary radar screen.” (Wiens, 2001, p. 2) By 1990, it was acknowledged by the KSW that in light of dwindling course attendance, the focus of KSW should be placed on the more successful events including “smaller seminars, lectures, panel discussions, readings and weekend colloquia.” (KSW fonds, City Grant 87 – 91) Additionally, by this time SFU and other organizations were offering courses in creative writing, and it became apparent that the gap that existed in 1984 had been filled. (KSW fonds, City Grant 87 – 91) By 1995, things are looking very bleak indeed for the KSW.

The Annual General Meeting of 1995 includes internal disputes between Victor Coleman and other collective members. (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) Coleman insisted that a more formal administrative structure, with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities, was required if the KSW was to continue. (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) Coleman’s plan for restructuring featured the hiring of an “administrative director”, who would “take responsibility for all grant apps, and approaching agencies/foundations” (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) Coleman also emphasizes that lingering disagreements between the collective members “threaten operations” and must be resolved. (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) Other members of the collective did not agree, and bitterly opposed the imposition of a formal hierarchy. (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) However, like Black Mountain College, such reforms to the structure did not occur, and KSW’s situation worsens. In 1995 George Bowering, a long time member of KSW, wrote that “KSW should do one of two things: 1) disband and say hello to a new world order” or “2) restructure, along lines
something like those suggested by Coleman.” (KSW fonds, AGM 1995) KSW did neither, but chose instead to compromise and hire a part time administrative assistant, however there were no changes in the responsibilities of the collective. (KSW fonds, Record-keeping Procedures)

After 1995, the KSW experiences further financial hardships. 1996, in an attempt to address pressing financial difficulties, the KSW launched a fundraising drive where they sold fake degrees, the drive was successful in the short term, but did not address long term issues. (KSW fonds, KSW Posters) During this time period KSW “reached the point of nearly folding…however the energies of Michael Barnholden – helped maintain consistent and important programming at KSW.” (Wiens, 2001, p. 4) The fact that Barnholden did this is consistent with KSW’s history, where prominent collective members take charge of the direction of the organization and programming. However, the financial problems of the KSW deepened in 1997, when the City of Vancouver, a consistent source of “about a quarter of the non-profit centre’s budget for thirteen years”, announced that “KSW’s $3,500 operating grant” would be cut. (Robertson, 1998, p. 35) City officials felt that KSW was not delivering enough in terms of community engagement, and had failed to develop a base of “paying audience members and donors.” (Robertson, 1998) In the aftermath of these cutbacks, Robertson explains that “Michael Ondaatje offered to help bail [KSW] out…rais[ing] $6,000 by giving a poetry reading to a sold-out audience of five-hundred people.” (Robertson, 1998) After 1998 the KSW experienced somewhat of a revival, putting on a significant amount of events between 1998 and 2002 (Vidaver, A List of Events, 2002)

Such rapid fluctuations characterize KSW’s experience in the 1990s and 2000s. During this time KSW “periodically collapses” and “looks for new people to reinvigorate [the organization].” (Collis, 2012) However, membership of the collective was a “rotating door”, which had an impact on the direction of the KSW. (Collis, 2012) New members of the collective have new ideas of what KSW should be and the direction that it should take. An example of this is the involvement of Aaron Vidaver with the KSW after completing a project in 1998 to survey KSW’s records and make recommendations
concerning recordkeeping. In 1998, in his report ‘A Study of the Record-Keeping System of the Kootenay School of Writing Society with Recommendations’, Vidaver explains that in addition to the “explicit...educational function of the Society”, KSW is responsible for “promotion of culture and the function of promoting political activity”, which is “carried out through talks, lectures, panel discussions, and colloquia.” (KSW fonds, Record-keeping Procedures) The idea of KSW members having radical political views is not new, but KSW as a whole never suggested that it had a formal political function. Vidaver’s explanation of the KSW’s structure and functions suggests a deeply confused organization and a loss of direction. The emphasis on KSW’s perceived political function appears again with its support of the Woodwards building squat of 2001, where Vidaver acted as a “key organizer.” (Collis, 2012) However, this political ‘function’ is not consistent, which is supported by Collis’ statement that “activists are dissatisfied with KSW...[and] view it as not much of an activist group in reality.” (Collis, 2012).

In the 1990s and 2000s, along with lingering financial problems, the most pressing issue for the KSW has been attracting new members who will participate. As was the case in the past, the future of the KSW, for better or worse, is inextricably linked to the health of the collective. As one collective member pointed out, in light of the aging membership of KSW, “it will take some young, energetic people to keep it going.” (Collis, 2012) Another collective member expressed frustration that in 1990s and 2000s many members show a great deal of energy at the beginning, but fall short of “consistent engagement”, due other commitments such as education. (M. Barnholden, personal communication, 2012) Other barriers, including changes in welfare regulations and rising cost of living in Vancouver, mean that people are unable to volunteer time to the KSW. (Barnholden, 2012) Additionally, the “strong convictions” of KSW members often contribute to its reputation as a “closed space” that makes “outsiders feel intimidated” (Collis, 2012) Facebook and the KSW website offer the KSW opportunities to engage with their community and to publicize events, and these have been used successfully in the 2000s. The ongoing relevance of KSW is seen to lie in the fact that it “provides an audience” and “is identified as the place to read in Vancouver, provides an important
venue for avant-garde poetry readings. Other institutions cannot fill this role.” (Collis, 2012) KSW still has a reason to exist, but without a strong collective, or significant restructuring, it seems doubtful that it will.

The Kootenay School of Writing fonds, held at Simon Fraser University, give a fascinating and rich insight into operations of the Kootenay School of Writing in Nelson and Vancouver. In particular the materials in the fonds evidence a distinct change in function from the provision of postsecondary education to a heavier focus on events. The former function is often obscured or minimized in writings about the School, leading to confusion. However, knowledge of the early years of the School is essential in order to understand the history and the reasons behind its collective structure. In many ways, KSW followed the example of Black Mountain College, both in its structure and aims. However, in doing so it encountered similar problems including funding difficulties arising from its unconventional structure, and resistance to restructuring in the face of collapse. However, unlike Black Mountain College, instead of folding KSW has decided to continue on with a changed focus, the success of which is yet to be determined.
Bibliography


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