

## Collective Wisdom

By Ron Sellwood

A few weeks ago I was in Winnipeg for the annual **Manitoba Magazine Publishers' Association** conference. I was there because I'd been invited to speak on newsstand and related issues. The session was called **Maximize Your Newsstand** and proved to be quite lively. One of the more interesting questions centered around what type of information should a distributor be able to provide and how often. Part of my presentation had included samples of detailed newsstand reports and how they can be used to enhance sales. The simple fact is, information collecting and reporting has taken some incredibly long strides in the past few years. It would be nice to report that newsstand sales have followed the same trajectory (though there continue to be bright spots).

It was an honour to be invited to Manitoba and while preparing for the session, I was constantly reminded of the **CMC** and its mandate of offering ongoing training and professional development seminars to peers. My particular skill-set happens to reside with newsstand. Currently, it's a fairly tough game. As the front line player at **Coast to Coast Newsstand Services Partnership** who takes the first call from prospective publishers, I am constantly reminded of how concentrated much of their knowledge actually is. Do they know the challenges of putting copies on the stands for retail sale? No they don't. But really that's fine. Their job is to have the vision, enthusiasm and the talent to make their magazine a reality. Without the publisher, the title does not exist.

As a National Distributor, it's our job to educate them on the details of the game. The fact is the better we do our job, the better chance the publisher has of being on newsstands three years from now, something that will only benefit us all.

While at the conference I was able to attend a session called **Innovative Distribution**. With a title like that, who could refuse? Session leader was **Dorothy Dobbie** (*Manitoba Gardener*) with two special guests **Michelle Hughes** (*Prairies North*) and **Aiden Enns** (*Geez Magazine*). Each of the speakers had their own perspective on what innovative distribution actually meant and the real excitement surfaced when one of the other panelists would say, "what a great idea, I never thought of doing that" as they jotted down some notes. In the current economic climate, each publisher was being forced to examine old ways of doing things while working out new solutions – and today willing to share their ideas with the room. I found myself taking notes as well, thinking that some of what I was hearing was also new to me and more than adaptable to the world of newsstand.

As the publishing climate changes, it's going to take more than individual knowledge to find the solutions. As good as we are alone, the future is most certainly about "collective wisdom" that ultimately holds the key in helping our industry turn the corner. Whether it's advertising, the internet or the latest in digital readers, we are definitely going to need the combined talents of everyone one of us in taking on the challenges and making it through the difficult times ahead.

Thank you **Manitoba Magazines** for inviting me to your conference. Thanks for asking me to share the knowledge I've been lucky enough to acquire over the past number of years. And thank you for sharing back.