

# **BOOK WORM**

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

**April 2005**

## **From the Chair**

### **Program planning**

Our meetings last year lived up to members' expectations, being informative and enjoyable, as well as providing an opportunity for us to get together to share ideas and experiences. This year, we have not appointed a program coordinator; instead, each committee member will select a meeting date and volunteer to coordinate the program for their chosen evening.

Although the enthusiasm and commitment of our program coordinator for 2004/5, Chris Walker, will be a hard act to follow, we would like to plan a similar set of programs with a range of topics of such interest and vitality that it will be a 'must' for members to come out on the evening of our meetings, no matter how fraught with difficulties our day might have been.

To a large extent, the success of this method of program planning will depend on members, rather than the committee. We would like lots of input and support from everyone and look forward to welcoming those who come forward to offer to assist the committee to coordinate and implement their chosen topic.

Of course we will need to have a prearranged schedule to provide guidance, but members can make a significant contribution to meetings that will take us through to February 2006. There will be some flexibility to allow for brilliant ideas and for prospective visitors to Perth who might be in a position to present us with new information.

*Betty Durston*

## **Editorial**

First, I must apologise for the lateness of this issue of Book Worm, due to a combination of circumstances. Thanks for your patience, everyone.

Second, I would like to say thanks to those members who indicated that they liked the new format of the newsletter.

Finally, I recommend that you all look at Janet's 'FAQs' below, as they address most of the concerns we may be feeling about accreditation.

*Tanya Marwood*

## Forthcoming Meetings

The topic of our May meeting will be 'technical issues' relating to editing, presented by James Hansen. More information will be provided to members on this meeting by e-mail, as well as in the next edition of Book Worm.

## New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Danielle Le Moignan, [danielle.lemoignan@student.curtin.edu.au](mailto:danielle.lemoignan@student.curtin.edu.au)

William (Bill) Dunstone, [dunstonw@inet.net.au](mailto:dunstonw@inet.net.au)

Elizabeth (Helen) White-Farr, [mcfarr@karriweb.com.au](mailto:mcfarr@karriweb.com.au)

Suzanne Baker, [sue.baker@tpg.com.au](mailto:sue.baker@tpg.com.au)

Su McLeod

David Scott

For further contact details of any of the above, please check the website, or contact the Secretary (or Treasurer).

## THE PROPOSED ACCREDITATION SCHEME<sup>1</sup>

### SOME ANSWERS TO FAQs

#### From CASE Notes: March–April 2005

*Janet Mackenzie, CASE liaison officer*

#### **How can trainee or junior editors gain sufficient experience to present a portfolio?**

The problem of gaining initial experience is not solved by accreditation, but it is not created by accreditation either. This catch-22—no job without experience but no experience without a job—has always dogged the profession. Certainly it is hard to get a start in publishing, but it is not impossible: thousands of people have managed to do it.

Accredited status is not a prerequisite for entry to the profession but a recognition of achievement. As soon as you can demonstrate to the assessors that you can meet the Standards, you will be accredited. Eventually, we hope, the national organisation will develop a mentoring scheme to assist junior editors, but at present it does not have enough resources to tackle this.

**I am working as an editor but I doubt whether I'm good enough to achieve accreditation. Is it worth applying?**

The accreditation scheme is designed to include all editors, not just the high fliers. If you are a working editor you understand the requirements of the job, as described in the Standards, and you should have no trouble gaining accreditation.

**I am an established editor with secure employment and/or plenty of clients. Why should I bother with accreditation?**

Successful editors have nothing to fear from accreditation and, in the long term, much to gain. One of the main objectives of accreditation is to protect competent, professional editors and their clients from the fly-by-nighters and incompetents to whom all of us have, from time to time, lost a project that subsequently went bad leaving a smell that, quite unjustifiably, clung to us all. If the profession as a whole—students, new starters, developers, highly experienced practitioners—commits to and embraces accreditation, one hopes such occurrences will eventually cease.

Sooner or later too, as accreditation gathers momentum and becomes widely known among clients and in the industry, even highly experienced editors are likely to find themselves in the circumstance where, all other things being equal, it's accreditation that tips the balance in winning a job.

**As an experienced editor, I no longer edit manuscripts; instead I supervise or teach the necessary tasks. Will this work count?**

As the Final Report says, the assessors will give due weight to experience and work history. Editors who have taken on a management or teaching role will not be disadvantaged by the lack of recent hands-on editing experience. Their portfolios could include evidence such as instructions to a trainee editor or a course outline or handout.

**The labour of compiling a portfolio looks huge. What is the minimum I could get away with?**

The extensive list of documents in Appendix 2 of the Final Report is intended to show what types of evidence would be acceptable; you do not have to provide all or even most of them. The Accreditation Board will issue an information kit to applicants explaining exactly what is required.

A portfolio might consist of only twenty well-chosen pages, which may or may not be from different projects, such as:

- author queries (Standards A, B, C)
- design brief (Standards B, D, E)
- 5–10 pages of edited manuscript (Standards D, E)

- testimonials (to cover any gaps).

**The material that I work on is confidential to my employer or client. How can I compile a portfolio?**

The Accreditation Board will set up guidelines to ensure that confidentiality is preserved. Most material submitted will be from projects that are already published, so commercial confidentiality will not apply. In most cases applicants will submit only a sample, not the whole work, and the author, title and publisher need not be identified.

The scheme may experience teething problems with confidentiality, but employers and clients will be keen to cooperate as they come to see the value of accreditation. For many years anonymous samples of work have been used in training sessions and workshops without any objections, and accreditation will soon operate on the same basis.

**Publishing is a small world. What if the assessors know me personally, or we work for the same clients?**

The Final Report states that assessors must exclude themselves from considering a particular application in the case of a perceived conflict of interest, and the Accreditation Board will direct their exclusion if it becomes aware of a conflict of interest.

**What if I decide not to become accredited? How would that affect my prospects for work?**

Our hope is that, over time, employers and clients will recognise the superior quality of work done by accredited editors and will be prepared to pay more for this added value. Non-accredited editors may eventually find themselves at a disadvantage.

**Isn't the scheme skewed towards those who have acquired their skills through work experience rather than education?**

Because formal courses were not set up until the late 1980s many established editors have no editing qualifications, but their participation is essential for the credibility of the scheme. Moreover, many in the profession distrust the adequacy of training courses, believing that subtleties of the editorial art such as negotiating with authors must be learnt on the job. The assessors will take education into account, and qualifications are becoming increasingly important as on-the-job training opportunities become rare in the publishing industry.

**Not all editors work within the publishing industry and some editors specialise in very narrow areas. Are they to be excluded?**

No, the scheme allows for differences in editing practice. The purpose of the work history in Part A of the application is to demonstrate how the Standards relate to the applicant's particular areas of work. Applicants do not have to comply with sections of the Standards that are irrelevant to them. For instance, an applicant who does not undertake a management role need not meet Standard B1.5, how to find and engage members of the publishing team, and one who never works with illustrations or tables need not meet Standards D6 or E4.

**I lack experience in paid editing but I have had plenty of voluntary jobs. Would these count for a portfolio?**

Yes.

**Wouldn't it be easier to have an exam or require applicants to edit a chapter?**

An examination or test is superficially attractive, but difficulties appear when the idea is scrutinised. Some crucial editorial skills, like effective liaison and reliability in keeping deadlines, are simply not examinable. For those skills that are, it would be difficult to devise an exam that fairly tests specialist editors: some work only on print publications and others only on screen publications (web pages), while specialist subject areas range from mathematics, fiction and scholarly books to Aboriginal language materials, business publications and multimedia content. The work of drafting, agreeing on and marking a suitable exam paper each year (or whatever interval is chosen) would be a severe drain on the volunteer labour needed to make the scheme a success.

Moreover, we must assume that accreditation is valuable and that some people will cheat to obtain it, so the questions would have to be kept secret and the exam would have to be held on the same day across the country. An exam would tend to exclude groups such as highly experienced editors, whose participation is crucial to the scheme's success, and editors in rural and remote locations.

**Surely working as an editor should be accreditation enough?**

Yes. Demonstrate in your portfolio that you are doing that competently and you will be accredited.

**Why do I have to reapply after five years?**

In a fast-changing world, editors need to exercise their skills in order to stay up to date. To renew your accredited status you do not have to submit another application: you only have to demonstrate continued involvement in the profession by naming, for example, some projects you have worked on or courses or conferences you have attended.

If this requirement proves onerous for accredited editors or costly to administer, the Accreditation Board may decide to extend the term.

**I usually hand over all my work to my client or employer, or destroy the files. How can I prepare a portfolio?**

Now might be a good time to start preserving suitable samples of your work.

**When can I submit my application?**

The Accreditation Board will hold its first meeting in May 2005 to establish the administration and funding of the scheme. It will then go on to prepare assessment guidelines, appoint the initial panel of assessors and develop an information kit for applicants. It will probably call for applications towards the end of 2006.

1. *The proposed scheme was presented in the Final Report by the CASE Accreditation Working Group, which is available on [www.case-editors.org](http://www.case-editors.org)*

**Deadline for May 2005 Book Worm issue:**

Tuesday 19 April 2005.

*All submissions gratefully accepted.*

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