



The Society of Editors WA

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

February 2007

From the chair

At the start of another year of events for the Society, let me recall some advice given to Olympian Herb Elliott by his coach Percy Cerutti. "The only justification for you devoting part of your life to this (sport) is that you're going to grow into a better human being," he said. That's the way I choose to think about the hours (and years) we put into reading, writing, researching, designing and all the other skills required in publishing and communications. We're (mostly) the better for it.

Your support and the committee's passion for the Society as an organisation have made a winning combination for years. The range of activities and services continues to attract interest - ideas and articles in Bookworm, the website www.editorswa.com, email exchanges, moves towards national accreditation, guest speakers at monthly meetings and a growing membership.

Members are also invited to give a little extra for a term - consider joining the committee for an insider's view of what makes your organisation tick and have your say on its future directions. You'd be very welcome.

This could be a year for change in other ways. I know it has been for me already. Last month I gave up journalism for a new career as a research officer for a Member of Parliament. Interesting times ahead.

If you have any ideas for the Society (or how to be a good researcher!), please email me at kcoble@westnet.com.au or contact any members of the committee before our first meeting of the year. Good luck for the year,

Kerry Coyle

Editorial

Book Worm time again already! I hope everyone had a good break and that 2007 looks promising. I really did enjoy the little piece 'Spell Cheque' that Cheryl Bettridge sent out on the network in the week before Christmas. It reminds us all that machines can't replace us just yet - not by a long chalk, it seems!

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming meetings

February: New Directions in Accreditation

When: Tuesday 6 February 2007, 7.30–9.30 pm

Where: CWA House, 1174 Hay Street, West Perth, Handicraft Room, Ground Floor (please note that this is not our usual meeting room), enter from rear of building (Free parking is available at the rear of the building.)

Cost: \$2 cover charge for members, \$5 for non-members

RSVP to Amanda Curtin, phone/fax 9377 2091; e-mail acurtin@highway1.com.au

As outlined in this issue of *Book Worm*, the IPed Assessors Forum is proposing substantial changes to the accreditation scheme. Our first meeting for 2007 will provide an opportunity for you to learn more about the forum's deliberations from Janet Blagg, who attended on WA's behalf, and to raise questions and voice your impressions on the new approach being proposed. Your feedback will help the Accreditation Board to plan the next crucial steps, so please come along and get involved.

Report on November meeting:

True-blue editors — they can write as well

Many Society of Editors (WA) members are highly skilled and well experienced in the art of editing. How delightful then to discover that a number of them are also very talented creative writers. At our November 2006 meeting, four members took up the invitation of the SOEWA Committee and in a relaxed and informal manner, read examples of their work.

Janet Blagg began the evening with a one-page piece that rather defies classification, as, indeed, does Janet herself. Not poetry but flavoured with metaphors and dream-like images; not short story although demonstrating plot and denouement; not art criticism (even though it's about the painting called 'The Potter's Wife') but replete with detail and insight; not a play, despite its dialogue, its ironic asides and rapid changes in scene. How shall we categorise it? To quote Janet: "Let's say she left him. Or she didn't. It doesn't matter."

"She is looking down on the sea strand of the green ocean country of her girlhood fantasies. Here be dragons. Dolphins leaping. Whales blowing. Islands drifting."

My favourite lines, those, but then I am a dragon-lover. You are sure to be captured by something in this piece, suffused as it is with originality.

Elizabeth Tuetteman's poems offered insights into three roles in the poet's life: 'mum' to a new puppy, grandmother and woman with cancer. The theme of pain runs through them all: the poet mourning for a lost puppy, the thwarted child casting herself face down on the floor and the cancer sufferer regretting the mixed feelings, the mixed messages, partway through her treatment.

“...the pain of loss
is selfsame it seems
the attachment we feel
so similar
human and animals...”

In the earliest poem, the pain is resolved as the child bounces up again.

“Challenged
But not defeated
Eager
To taste life.”

The later poems conclude with the sufferer’s reality.

“...for loss is loss
and grief is grief.”

I hope there will be more poems to affirm again the energetic, joyful moments in life.

Christina Houen uses a conversational voice and naturalistic dialogue to convey very powerful images of parting and death in her poem, ‘Your Last Mosaic: Elegy for Eve’. Two brief moments are captured: the couple’s parting at the door of the operating room, and the survivor picking up shells on their dawn beach.

Re-reading the poem several months later, I find myself regretting that its first hearing was mixed up with remarks about this poem’s comma controversy. True, we in the audience strongly supported the poet in her decision to retain the comma in the line: “This morning he walks the beach, picking up shells”. And, yes, we were surprised that the editor refused the poem from the anthology because the poet would cling to the comma. But somehow this anecdote drew a gauzy layer between me and the poem. Only now does its depth ring through my head.

Michèle Drouart’s whimsical, quietly girlish voice was perfect for her delightful poem, ‘Letter to John Howard’. Under her innocent, clear-eyed, naive words runs a current of strongly felt, stinging criticism of the federal government’s policy on refugees. The words ooze respect and humility. The content, however, is full of sly and subtle digs which satirists John Clarke and Brian Daw would be proud to claim.

The poet begins by seeking clarification of her nationality:

“given the decisions
of you and your buddies
lately (no, not mates ... buddies),
can I be assured
of my nationality?”

A further element that is flapping on the edge of my consciousness is the way phrases seem to resonate with pollicie-speak and pop culture. For example, "... that I am an Australian." sets up echoes of the current unofficial national anthem, 'I am, you are, we are Australian'. And when I read the line, "What proof can I proffer?" the word 'poofter' floats up in my mind.

In a particularly telling metaphor, the post pictures her baby self, tumbling out of her mother's body:

"and into the sea of life,
a child overboard
without a passport."

Jan Knight

A message from James Hansen: Working with aspiring writers

Some aspiring writers at the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre, Greenmount have asked me to bring to the attention of the SOEWA membership that they are interested in the possibility of having their work edited by professionals. Although my first reaction was to refer KSP to the web site Register, I was persuaded that it might be more useful to bring their basic requirements to the attention of our membership who would then, as individuals, if they so chose, make their details available to the KSP committee. This committee would then create a database for KSP members to consult and follow up by contacting and negotiating with individual editors.

The areas of writing that the KSP members are most active with are as follows:

- General Fiction
- Speculative Fiction
- Poetry
- History and Biography
- General Non-fiction (including Journalism)

The kind of details that you supply are entirely up to you, as are the rates of payment and mode of interaction. My feeling is that many of these aspiring writers (who, by the way, have considerable talent) have not had much experience of working with editors. A request such as this is quite new and something of a breakthrough.

Anyhow, if you are interested, e-mail your details with the words EDITORS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST in the subject line to the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre. KSP's e-mail address is

kspf@iinet.net.au

The Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre is located at 11, Old York Road, Greenmount, Western Australia 6056. Telephone/Fax: (08) 9294 1872. For more details of KSP, go to their website at <http://kspf.iinet.net.au/>

I am a member of KSP myself (as are several of our members) and could give you more background, should you wish: phone 08 92931972 or email to jehansen@westnet.com.au

James Hansen

Howler of the Month

Given that it's the page they use to pick on everyone else's mistakes, you'd think that the editors at The West would take special care with Inside Cover. But, no. This clanger from Debbie Guest appeared on Boxing Day:

"I kept telling him I'd have a train into Mandurah by the end of 2006, and low and behold we did," Alannah told IC.

A film review in the same edition referred to a 'right of passage'. Keep those editorials on poor literacy standards coming, folks.

Mar Bucknell

French

In courses I have run in editing and publishing, I have warned that using foreign phrases (or quotations in any language) without checking can get you in trouble.

Late in November, my newspaper contained a "Summer Reading Guide" put out by the admirable Bookcafé. The publication, twice on its front cover and three times on the back cover, puts Bookcafé's accent round the other way, like this: Bookcafé. It's the same on their website, so I suppose it must be deliberate, like the double-f. There is a list of credits on the back cover which says "cover illustration and lettering: Michael Leunig." I suppose clever Mr Leunig did it that way to make it different, but it doesn't do much for correct use of accents, does it? How would you pronounce café with a grave accent?

I also recently visited the website of the designers of this year's visually pleasing and effective Perth Festival brochure. "Block Branding" has this: "Founded on April 1, 2002, Block is a brand development and management agency. Block offers a range of visual communication services to its clients. Some choose Block's services on an al-a-carte basis . . ."

I imagine it helps if you bring your own French. I seriously doubt *that* is a deliberate mistake.

Perhaps one way to raise the profile of our profession would be to write politely to Bookcafé and Block. I saw a chalkboard outside a local shopping centre advertising its "gourmet butcher." When I suggested a better spelling at the butcher shop, the guy laughed and said, "I'll tell the boss – he wrote it!" It was unchanged the next day, but a new notice has since appeared, with "gourmet butcher" on it.

Keep trying!

Tom Jenkins

Mangled Metaphor

I've long been a fan of the mixed metaphor. One book I worked on had the Indonesian economy 'on the cusp of an abyss'. But as more and more people get jobs in journalism when they can barely read and write, I am seeing more mangled metaphors, where someone has heard a phrase, but doesn't know what it means, nor how to spell it, then applies it in its mangled form to somewhere it doesn't belong.

So in *The West Australian* I read, 'The High Court's dismissal of the challenge to John Howard's industrial relations laws had given the Commonwealth free reign over the States, which could now become no more than "impotent debating societies", dissenting justices said yesterday.' (15 11 06, p. 13.) I hope it was Rhianna King who came up with the howler 'free reign', rather than Justices Callinan and Kirby. It's disturbing that anyone who is employed as a writer would use a metaphor when they don't know what it means.

Rhianna, it's only a century ago that almost everyone in Australia not only knew what 'free rein' meant; they had actually experienced what it was like to give a horse free rein.

Mar Bucknell

IPEd Assessors Forum: First meeting, 2-3 December 2006, Melbourne

What a productive meeting!

Fourteen assessors from across Australia met in Melbourne to formalise the requirements for editors who wish to be accredited by IPEd. We covered a lot of ground over the two days, and the meeting ended with a fruitful outcome. In summary, we concluded that accreditation by portfolio submission is the ideal, but it's also a complex process that needs to be implemented gradually to ensure its efficacy and sustainability. For the meantime, we propose an initial, basic accreditation step involving a nationwide test of copyediting and other essential skills.

Problems foreseen with portfolio assessment

The Assessors Forum expected there'd be some problems in assessing applications by portfolio (prepared in accordance with current requirements):

- Detailed assessment criteria will be needed to ensure consistency across the system. The time taken to develop and approve these is likely to cause

considerable delay in accreditation for Australian editors.

- Considerable time and costs are likely to be required to assess portfolios and for meetings of assessors' panels. Assessment of individual applications and portfolios is likely to take about 20 hours per application. This translates into an application fee of about \$1200!
- There may be a 'logjam' with the first flush of applications, many of which may not meet the criteria for full accreditation and this will take up assessors' time unnecessarily.
- Initially, assessors may encounter difficulties in ensuring confidentiality of applicants.
- Applications and portfolios are likely to require considerable time to prepare.
- Applicants may need to submit more than one editing project to demonstrate a range of skills.
- The application limit of 100 pages is too high (should be 30–50 pages).

How do we feel about a base-level editing test?

The Accreditation Working Group had already ruled out a test because it could foresee problems in security, labour, remote sites and possible alienation of senior editors. The Assessors Forum, however, thought that these problems could be alleviated by early planning and a good dose of creativity on our part. In contrast, the problems we foresee with portfolio assessment require a lot more thinking, planning and time.

We propose to devise a test made up of a manuscript sample and short-answer questions to test for basic copyediting skills. The test would not replace the portfolio, but rather would provide, simultaneously, a basic level of accreditation and the ability to roll out the accreditation scheme pretty soon – by mid-to-late 2007.

Problems foreseen with a base-level accreditation test

Even though we propose a base-level test, we can see that we may have to overcome problems with:

- coordination of the test across the different sites
- the need to provide remote and regional editors (and those with special needs) with equity of access
- departing from the model approved by vote of the state and territory societies and getting approval for a new model
- the need to set criteria and assign weighting to sections of Standards
- time taken to prepare tests, sample tests and answers and other support materials/activities (such as workshops).

Benefits of a base-level accreditation test

- Simple objectives: screen-out people who are obviously not yet experienced enough to be called an editor, provide beginning/junior editors with a base level of accreditation (not possible under portfolio-only assessment), provide opportunity for an advanced-level portfolio assessment to be developed –

career advancement, recognition for senior editors.

- Simpler to administer than portfolio applications; for example, it could be held on the same day around the country, with invigilators.
- Easier for applicants — less preparation time.
- Easier to ensure fairness and consistency.

How would the test work?

The test would be conducted once each year (initially at six-monthly intervals), on the same day in every capital city and at other approved locations. The possibility of email or web-based testing will be investigated to help editors who have difficulty reaching a set venue for various reasons.

The test would be marked 'pass' or 'fail' only — that means you'll be assessed as competent or not. Applicants who fail the test would be able to request a report on their performance.

How will editors be accredited?

An editor who passes the test would gain certification as an IPEd Accredited Editor. Accreditation at the advanced level would be through a portfolio, the requirements for which we plan to revise in the coming months.

So what happens next?

Our recommendations will be presented to the Accreditation Board, IPEd and the state and territory societies for consideration. We'll keep you posted through newsletters and the IPEd website.

Conclusion

By the end of the meeting we agreed to call this group the IPEd 'Assessors Forum'. In the spirit of IPEd and its predecessor, CASE, the Assessors Forum will work towards consensus in all decision making. We believe that the model we propose offers the best solution to ensuring that IPEd can offer all Australian editors a fair, consistent and economical accreditation scheme.

Want to find out more, tell us what you think?

If you'd like to find out more about the recommendations proposed by the Assessors Forum, come to the SOEWA meeting on 6 February (see notice).

IPEd notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors

November 2006

The IPEd Interim Council is considering a paper prepared under the auspices of the National Organisation Working Group. Entitled 'Establishing a National

Organisation', it sets out the purpose, background, legal standing and management of such an entity. It also lists the functions that the entity will carry out and outlines five suitable business activities that could generate income. The paper will be posted on the website www.iped-editors.org and all members are invited to contact their society's IPEd delegate with comments and suggestions. Also on the website, we are now posting the minutes of IPEd Interim Council meetings: click on 'Meeting Minutes' on the home page to access them.

The Interim Council is developing strategies to ensure that its sub-groups work effectively with each other. The Accreditation Board, for instance, needs to collaborate with the Communications Working Group to develop the publicity strategy for the accreditation scheme. As part of the developing sophistication of the profession's national network, the convenors of the working groups will hold their first teleconference in November and plan to continue interaction by this and other means.

The Standards Revision Working Group is due to put a draft of its revised Standards up for members' approval and discussion. Making use of online technology, the group will be seeking members' input via the IPEd website; the text of the first redraft of Standards will be posted as a wiki – interactive software that allows anyone access to read and write and edit text on the web (think 'Wikipedia'). Soon all members who register will be able to access the redrafted Standards and edit or alter the wording, punctuation and format. The working group will monitor the changes that people suggest and incorporate worthwhile ones into its final stages of revision.

The Accreditation Board has postponed the workshops that it had planned to hold in November to discuss drafts of the documentation that will accompany the accreditation scheme. These are beginning to constitute an impressive pile of paperwork; eventually it will include an information kit for applicants, guidelines for assessors, a procedures manual, guidelines for handling complaints and appeals, a business plan and a position description for the accreditation secretary. The drafts necessarily incorporate many decisions about the actual operation of the scheme, and the board decided that they needed more work before they were submitted to the membership for comment. The documents will be posted on the website as they become available; societies will hold workshops to discuss them in early 2007 and/or invite members to contribute by e-mail.

About a dozen assessors, representing all states and the ACT, will attend a national meeting on the first weekend of December to discuss the accreditation scheme in Melbourne. At present the assessors are preparing dummy applications that present a range of challenges for the assessment process, and they will work through these over the weekend to develop their joint understanding of what constitutes competent editing.

IPed Notes: December 2006

The IPed website is gradually adding more items and developing more functions, thanks to the hard work of our expert web manager Mike Purdy. Take a tour to catch up with IPed's achievements and recent initiatives.

An important document on the website describes IPed's current structure and functions and lists the members of the Interim Council and the various working groups: in time, of course, this outline will be replaced by a formal constitution agreed on by members nationwide. Under the heading Accreditation there are nearly a dozen items; the Accreditation Board is working on several more, which will be posted as soon as the drafts are agreed. The site also provides *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* and the policy on editing theses developed jointly by IPed and the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the site is its interactive capability, which enables editors across the country to join in discussions on matters affecting our profession. Editors Forum is a public space in which anyone may post a question or a comment. At present it contains a brief discussion on methods of strengthening our societies; more contributions on this and other topics would be welcome. (The list comma, anyone?)

Another forum is Edwiki, which enables registered users to edit and comment on the documents it contains. At present these include a paper on setting up the national organisation of editors, and a questionnaire on the revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. It's easy to register, and we urge you to take part in these exciting developments that can defeat the tyranny of distance and bring editors together in a national conversation.

The website also hosts several forums with restricted access, which enable the Interim Council and the various working groups to perform their functions and to collaborate in drafting documents. This frees them from 'administrivia' such as organising e-mail, filing agendas and minutes, and keeping track of successive drafts. As IPed volunteers develop expertise with these interactive methods, their workload will be reduced and their productivity will improve.

Janet Mackenzie
Liaison Officer

New members

Welcome to:

Alex Gerbaz of Unit 1, 7 Riverselea Ave, Maylands, WA 6051

E-mail: agerbaz@upnaway.com

Deadline for March 2007 Book Worm issue:

Tuesday 20 February, 2007

All submissions gratefully accepted.

Contacting SOEWA

President: Kerry Coyle, 9482 3143, kcoyle@westnet.com.au

Secretary: Cheryl Pech, 0429 990 384, cherylpech@graduate.uwa.edu.au

Vice-President: James Hansen, 9293 1972, jehansen@westnet.com.au

Treasurer: Linda Browning, 9266 2249, L.Browning@curtin.edu.au

General committee members

Anne Surma, 9287 1494, a.surma@murdoch.edu.au

Tom Jenkins, 9457 2977, editdesign@westnet.com.au

Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Amanda Curtin, 9377 2091, acurtin@highway1.com.au

Emma Pearmain (new member contact), 9243 5045, editor@manaia.com.au

Janet Blagg, janetblagg@aapt.net.au

Newsletter

Editor: Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Proofreader: Michèle Drouart, 9382 2930, drouart@webace.com.au

SOEWA Web Site: <http://www.editorswa.com/>

Web editor: Des Carne, des@netcall.com.au