

The SOCIETY of EDITORS (VICTORIA)

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 2

AUGUST 2002

Next meeting

Editing sports books (and maybe a spot of Stephanie!)

(Note new venue!)

Kri Kri Greek Restaurant

39–41 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne (upstairs)

Wednesday, 4 September 2002

6.30 p.m. for dinner at 7 p.m.

Members \$25, non-members \$30

Drinks at bar prices

Being a star on the sporting field, or an acknowledged expert on the rules of the game, may well mean that you have some interesting stories to tell, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you have the gift of storytelling. Some do, some don't. What special skills does an editor need when called on to edit books about sport? Katie Purvis has volunteered to tell us about her experiences on the field – and perhaps in the kitchen too.

Katie is a senior editor at Penguin Books Australia, where she works mainly on non-fiction titles. Her special areas of expertise are cookbooks, sport and popular culture. Among the authors with whom she has worked are food writer Stephanie Alexander (including *The Cook's Companion*), motivational expert Paul Hanna, historians Geoffrey Blainey and Henry Reynolds, and political/social commentator Bob Ellis.

Recently Katie has worked on *Cooking & Travelling in South-West France* by Stephanie Alexander, *The Australian Rugby Companion* by Gordon Bray, *You Can Sell It!* by Paul Hanna and *Fish Tales* by Paul Salmon. Katie has been at Penguin for seven years and before that worked at Lonely Planet and Allen & Unwin.

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Please book with Deb Doyle by email at deb@hotlinks.net.au or by phone on 9388 1571 before 5 p.m. on **Monday 2 September**. (And please: if you book and later find you are unable to attend the meeting, let Deb know as soon as possible so we don't waste money catering for people who don't turn up.)

Coming up: 2 October – Jackie Howell, 'Shaping the book'. Check the next newsletter and the website for further details.

Accreditation workshop

A workshop for Society members to discuss the Issues Paper of the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) Accreditation Working Group was held on 17 August at the Victorian Writers' Centre. A report from this workshop will appear in September's newsletter.



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News, comments, letters and other material for publication, review or mention in the Newsletter should be addressed to the Newsletter Editor at the address on the left.

From the President's bunker

There's a pile of papers on my desk that looks awfully familiar. Committee papers, minutes, agendas, reports, To Do lists. Like most of you (I'm sure) I really never thought I'd encounter the 'president's pile of papers' again in this lifetime. But, alas, here I am – and loving it!

Seriously, though, I am really quite honoured to be entrusted yet again with this responsibility. It's not one I take on lightly, knowing there are challenges ahead, hours of meetings and reports, as well as the 'stealing' of time from the day job and corresponding attempts to make up for it in the wee hours.

And yet I know that there is a lot of fun to be had in the role and on the committee ... such exquisite anticipation of camaraderie, new friendships and all those clever in-jokes. I have very fond memories of getting to know fellow committee members over glasses of cheap wine served by surly waiters in what by today's standards would be offensive if called 'restaurants'. We also managed to get quite a lot of work done on the Society's behalf. And the fact that these are relatively recent memories (from around three years ago) is more than mildly comforting.

Thus we begin another year in the Society's mission to serve its members. New committee members face a steep learning curve as we enter the 'business end' of our year: planning future events and activities while maintaining the day-to-day running of the Society. Luckily, the 'old hands' happily provide both support and experience.

Some new committee members have hit the ground running. This very issue of the newsletter is brought to you by its brand new editor (Liz Steele) and design/layout specialist (Lan Wang) – a team which came up with strategy, schedule and implementation in the space of around two weeks. You can read more about Liz on page 4.

The other dynamos on this year's committee have already processed eight new membership applications, organised six training courses between now and Christmas, one state-wide workshop and two forthcoming monthly meetings – and that's only the half of it (can I lie down now?). The others are updating the website, paying bills and answering queries from far and wide.

It is important to have confidence in one's colleagues, and I certainly do. It's also important that the Society's members have the same confidence in its committee, so I have decided to bring you the evidence. Hopefully I'll be able to give you a glimpse each month of the view from down 'ere, with snippets of news and (maybe) gossip.

Before I go, a big thank you to Janet Mackenzie for organising the workshop to discuss the Accreditation Issues Paper, and to all of you members for your valued contributions, ideas and comments.

Finally, congratulations to Kerryn Burgess and Trischa Baker – read about their achievements on pages 5–6.

Renée Otmar

Membership report

This month we warmly welcome five new full members to the Society: Amanda Coverdale (Mission Aviation Fellowship), Bridget Blair (Lonely Planet), Eugenie Baulch (Macmillan), Catherine Hunt (Blackwell Publishing), and Clarissa Stein (Papyrus Press). We welcome back Trish Luker who was a member of the Society before leaving Victoria in 1991. She is now back, and working at the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

We also extend a warm welcome to Julie Burbidge and Andrew Tierney as Associate members.

Thank you to everyone who has already renewed their membership. We are trying to get your membership cards and receipts out to you as quickly as possible. Already we've sent out about 150 cards.

Just a reminder to those of you who have not yet renewed your membership, all memberships fell due on 1 July. If you do not do so by **30 September**, you will be deemed to have resigned.

A membership application/renewal form is available for download as a PDF from www.socedvic.org or in the July edition of this newsletter.

Helen Bethune Moore

Training report 2001–2002

(as presented at the Society's July AGM)

Training for the 2001–2002 year was focused on the on-screen editing course, which remains in high demand and was taught six times. One Mac course was taught, and five PC courses. Seventy per cent of those doing the course were Society members. The course remains largely the same as when first taught in November 1999, with some increased emphasis on styles and templates. The other course delivered during the year was 'Intermediate Proofreading', with trainer Deb Doyle. This was very successful, as Deb's courses tend to be, with 17 enrolments, an excellent set of course notes, and very positive feedback from course participants.

Continued on page 5

Fair pay for editors

August meeting report

The value of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) as a union for editors and a recommended minimum hourly rate were two of the topics discussed at our lively August meeting.

We were trialling a new meeting venue, Kri Kri Greek Restaurant in Little Bourke Street, which provided a lavish array of food – all well received by the large gathering.

Guest speaker MEAA representative, Kathleen Hughes, had cancelled her attendance at the meeting earlier in the day, without explanation. To our alarm, we later discovered via another source that union staff were on strike. Thanks to the hard work of Kath Harper and Renée Otmar, a panel of experienced editors was quickly convened to lead discussion on the issues of fair pay for editors and how (and if) the MEAA is fulfilling its role as our union.

Panel members were Accreditation Working Group Convenor and scholarly book editor, Janet Mackenzie; freelance editor, copy writer and trainer, Deborah Doyle; and journalist and editor, Garry Fabian, with input from the Society's former MEAA Liaison Officer, Gill Smith.

Janet Mackenzie, a founding member of our Society, was immediately critical of the MEAA and what they don't do for editors. She continues to pay her union dues 'out of principle', but posed the question of whether it was worthwhile when she felt she received nothing in return from a union that appears to cover too broad a base of membership.

Garry Fabian outlined some of the history of the MEAA and the amalgamation of the former Australian Journalists Association (AJA) and Arts Alliance in the early 1990s. He has been a member of the MEAA since 1986 and is a former member of the MEAA's state branch council. The strain on the union's resources to cover its broad variety of members and the small numbers of editors who belong to the union means that most often its resources are not there to service us, he said. In print media, big house organisations get all the attention, but the union is not structured well enough to service, for example, freelance editors.

President of the Society, Renée Otmar, commented that if a union can't service its members then it has no business being a union. Garry responded by saying there was a strong move within the union for the AJA to become itself again. However, if more people joined the union that was designed to represent them, it could change the union, strengthen it and promote collective action to promote change. Janet Mackenzie commented on how the union's lack of resources was a major worry and asked 'Why would you join a union which appears to be experiencing internal human resources issues to the extent that strike action is being taken against itself?'

The discussion then shifted from the usefulness of the MEAA to the issue of editors' rates of pay and how freelance editors,

who do not have an official scale of pay rates, deal with the issue of being paid adequately for our skills. Deborah Doyle commented that maybe it's because our profession has been female dominated to this point, and because as a gender, we are not particularly good at arguing for what we need. In addition, it seems publishers place less value on the words and the quality of the text than the visual aspects such as design. Perhaps the real issue is we need to place higher value on ourselves and our profession, and need to work harder as a group to promote our skills and adequate rates of pay.

Renée Otmar asked those attending whether they thought it was time for the Society to look at recommending a minimum hourly rate for its members, and there was agreement for the Society to discuss this issue further at committee level. The issue of accreditation for editors was also discussed as a key part of working towards fair pay for editors. Currently, the Society cannot enforce rates of pay if publishers refuse to pay them, but it can recommend a standard starting point and acceptable rates for hard copy and on screen editing and so on.

Rob Moore agreed that the Society could be influential in saying what rates are reasonable for different types of work, and endorsed the need for the Society to take a public position on rates. He also commented that perhaps we could develop a useful way of working with the MEAA on this issue. As our new MEAA Officer, this will certainly be his approach.

The issues of editors negotiating fair rates, undercutting each other, knowing what to charge corporate clients and how to estimate or quote for different types of work were discussed by members from this point. Janet Mackenzie and Brett Lockwood both commented that the provision of equipment and home office costs should always be factored into our fees. Deborah Doyle said it was important to be firm about estimate fees if you are unable to provide a firm quote and even to ask questions of the publisher like 'What is your budget?' when working out your own rates of pay. Most publishers look at how much they will spend on editing a project, not what the current hourly rate of pay freelancers were charging, she said.

A range of other views were expressed by attendees and feedback forms covering some of the issues raised during the evening were collected. The intention is to collate and use this information to lobby for better service for editors from the MEAA, as well as to look at further ways for the Society to support its members.

The committee welcomes any feedback or ideas members might care to share with colleagues about this issue. Please also send your views to Liz Steele at lzsteele@melbpc.org.au for publication in this newsletter.



Liz Steele

Freelance editor, proofreader and writer

Liz Steele began her career in suburban and regional newspapers as a journalist and then editor. She did three years of a Bachelor of Journalism at the same time, but decided to defer the rest and be a sports writer instead. When her three children were all at school or kindergarten, she completed an Associate Diploma of Arts in Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT, working part-time in-house at a graphic art and design studio. After nine years of juggling, she decided to go full-time freelance and feels it was the best decision she ever made. She works for a range of corporate and publishing house clients including RMIT Publishing and the State Government.

What's the best thing about your job?

I can work around my other commitments, pick kids up when I need to and not have to worry about juggling with in-house work time. Oh, and I really love editing too!

What's the worst thing about your job?

The tedious bits like labelling, cross checking, re-numbering pages etc. I also hate not being able to follow a job through to publication if it is to be finalised in-house.

What's the best thing about being an editor?

Seeing a manuscript become a book or worthwhile publication – unpacking the first copies you receive from the publisher and realising all that hard work was worth it.

What was your first editing job?

In newspapers, it was as a relieving editor on 80-page suburbs – very daunting and an enormous amount of work. We did everything from writing stories, doing the sports results and 'advertorials' and real estate to laying out the newspaper under great pressure on a Monday for printing on Monday night. It was a great training ground and I often recommend this to 'wannabe' journalists.

How did you become an editor?

Being thrown into the job as a young training journalist – if you were interested, you were given the opportunity. I have always liked organising and managing projects so I suppose it was an extension of that.

What are the essential qualities of being a good editor?

Good organisation and time efficiency, attention to detail, being prepared to check and recheck to get things right, a love of words and how they hang together and realising you can only do your best as one of the links in the chain.

What is the most rewarding job you have ever done?

Developing a project called *Learn to play* for a first-time author. We shaped this fantastic workbook and play chart out of an idea and it is used by occupational therapists working with autistic children and their parents.

What's the most tedious job you have ever done?

Hundreds of brochures, newsletters and annual reports etc on superannuation.

Which word will you never spell incorrectly again?

Public – somehow it became pubic in a very important Labor Party campaign brochure – it was a proofreading error actually!

Which mistake will you never make again?

Blaming myself for problems that were not my fault. Sometimes the freelancer is just caught in the middle of bad planning and indecision between publisher and author about what a project is supposed to be.

Do you prefer to edit on hard copy or on-screen?

I probably prefer on-screen these days – I didn't think I would ever say that – but it is simple and clean. I do always do a hard copy edit as well – you can miss a lot on-screen while you are thinking about the other tasks.

What advice would you give to editing students?

Ask lots of questions of a publisher or client – and keep on asking them. So many mistakes come from lack of communication. Publishers or in-house editors are so overworked they often don't give you enough information.

What book would you most like to have edited?

Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. A masterpiece.

Your news and views

We welcome any contributions to your Society's monthly newsletter. Please send your letters, anecdotes, details of issues you would like discussed etc to Liz Steele at lzsteele@melbpc.org.au or PO Box 176, Carlton South VIC 3053.

Training news

Renée Otmar and Sally Woollett will be offering a workshop on **'Quotations and Negotiations'** on Saturday 16 November. This will be very similar to the course run by Renée and Sally in late 2000. The 2000 workshop was extremely popular, with 34 enrolments, but a limit may be placed on enrolments for the 2002 workshop, so if you are interested get your enrolment form in! There is an advertisement for this workshop on page 7.

There are currently several 'On-Screen Editing for the PC' courses scheduled: Saturday 7 September and Saturday 14 September; Saturday 21 September and Saturday 28 September; Saturday October 12 and Saturday October 19; and Saturday October 26 and Saturday November 2. An advertisement for these courses appears on page 6. It is possible that another course will be set in November.

Registrations of interest are also being taken for a one-day course on using Word styles and style templates. This course will be scheduled along the same lines as the on-screen editing courses. Please contact me if you are interested in this course.

In addition to advertised sets of dates for on-screen editing training, expressions of interest can be recorded on the Society's training database for future Mac and PC on-screen editing courses. If you register this interest, you will be notified immediately that a prospective set of dates is being considered, and you have the opportunity to enrol at that point, or wait until a more suitable set of dates is scheduled. You can register by contacting me at brett@wordbytes.com.au or on (03) 9480 1789. Full course details are on the Society's website at www.socedvic.org.

If you have an interest in a particular training course, please let me know.

On-screen editing handbook series

The publication of the first of the on-screen editing handbooks will be delayed due to the decision to incorporate extra material into the volume on *Styles*, though publication will begin this year. This series of books is being self-published by Brett Lockwood in association with the Society. It is anticipated that four volumes will be available: *Styles*, *General On-Screen Editing Tools*, *Track Changes*, and *Proofing Tools*. If you would like to be sent more information about the on-screen editing books, or if you are interested in reserving one or more of them, send an email specifying the book/s concerned to info@wordbytes.com.au.

Brett Lockwood

Freelance affairs report

Introducing Kirsten Slifirski

I've been juggling a freelance writing and editing persona with a university teaching persona for about 10 years. Not that I'm into horoscopes, but the *Birthday Book* says I was born on the

day of sensational detail and I find this aspect of editing immensely satisfying. I think this pleasure in word shaping explains why it took me so long to finish my Masters – I just kept editing it.

The bulk of my work has been educational and academic, although I had the great pleasure recently of being a script editor for Charlotte Roseby's film *Still Breathing*. I am also straying into documentation and tender writing.

My cinema studies background gives me an interest in genre as a field of study and I think an awareness of genre is particularly important for editors at a time of such radical cross-pollination in writing. This is often technology-induced as is the working life of the freelancer. Tapping away in a corner of the house in a bad tracksuit, attached umbilically to cyberspace, space and time and family life collapsing around us, we are often the quintessential postmodern workers. And it's not always easy!

Several freelancers have expressed an interest in the resurrection of the freelance lunch – a social occasion for meeting *real* people not just their email aliases – a time for the swapping of stories and useful information: 'how to insert an em dash while mashing a banana', 'how to say "no" when the price is too low' and 'how to blame the courier'! Please email if such an occasion sounds worthwhile.

In addition to occasional social contact, of importance also to freelancers is keeping up to date with technology: pencil versus plastic. Working online – what does it all mean? If the pleasures and panics associated with this question are worth pursuing in a more formal way, email me.

Kirsten Slifirski
thegirls@labyrinth.net.au

Miscellanea

Reward for excellence

Former committee member and Webminder, Trischa Baker, has been rewarded for some of her many other skills at the recent Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing.

Trischa's book, *Essentials of Business Law*, published by Tertiary Press, won the category TAFE and Vocational Publishing. A masterpiece weighing in at about 800,000 words, 33 chapters, 1229 pages (including 50 prelims), it has also been well reviewed in the educational press. Trish says it's a bit big to cart around for light reading on the train, but it is great for putting your budgie down.

She has just completed her second book, *Legal Terminology*, for Tertiary Press and is also co-author of a two-volume book on Word 2000 for legal secretaries.

Continued on the next page

\$500 prize for editing

Kerryn Burgess is the 2001 winner of the Society's \$500 prize as the best graduating student in the editing component in the Graduate Diploma in Editing and Publishing at RMIT. The prize was presented on 19 August at Storey Hall, RMIT.

Kerryn is currently Managing Editor of the Americas regional team at Lonely Planet.

Conference announcement and call for papers

A Style Council conference, featuring the theme 'The digital shift from print to electronic media', will be held in Brisbane, 22–24 November 2002 at Rydges Hotel on Southbank. It is the 12th in a series concerned with professional uses of Australian English to be conducted by the Macquarie Dictionary Research Centre and Style Council Centre.

Issues to be discussed which may be of interest to our Society's membership are 'Editing documents for the screen', 'Educational uses of the Internet', and 'The outlook for e-publishing'.

Featured speakers include Richard Walsh and Peter Spearritt. If you would like to offer a paper relating to any of these topics please send details of the proposed content in a 250-word summary by **13 September**.

Early bird registration for the conference is \$250 (+GST), with full- and half-day rates available on request. For further details,

or to submit an abstract for a paper, please go to www.ling.mq.edu.au/style, or contact Adam Smith at the Style Council Centre on email: asmith@ling.mq.edu.au or phone: (02) 9850 8783.

Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship

In last month's newsletter we profiled this Fellowship which is sponsored by the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the Australian Publishers Association (APA) and the Australian publishing industry.

The Fellowship is awarded biennially and allows the recipient to receive a 12-week attachment to the editorial department of a US publishing house or houses. The Fellowship will be awarded in 2002 for travel in 2003.

The successful applicant will be an Australian-based editor, working either in-house or freelance. The recipient will be expected to have at least five years or equivalent editorial work experience in high quality Australian fiction and non-fiction in either adult or children's publishing.

If you would like further information about the Fellowship or application forms and guidelines, contact janet.mcgaw@publishers.asn.au

The closing date for applications is **Friday 6 September**.

New address

Sue Harvey has a new address: 129 Franklin Street, Eltham 3095, Phone 9439 1264, Fax 9431 6413.

The Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc. presents

On-Screen Editing on the IBM/PC & On-Screen Editing on the Mac

The PC course is scheduled for 7 & 14 September, 21 & 28 September, 12 & 19 October, and 26 October & 2 November.

Trainer: Brett Lockwood

Days:

Consecutive Saturdays,
10.30 a.m–5 p.m.

Cost:

PC: \$286 members,
\$352 nonmembers.

Mac: \$330 members,
\$396 nonmembers.

Enrolment enquiries:

Brett Lockwood on (03) 9480 1789
(day or evening inc. weekends) or
brett@melbpc.org.au

This is a two-day course focused directly on the needs of editors and others involved in preparing publications on word processors. The training vehicle will be Microsoft Word. The teaching and course notes will be applicable to all versions of Word from (including) version 6 (PC) onwards. Extensive familiarity with Word is not required. Classes will be limited to 10 people.

The aim of this course is not to teach Microsoft Word, but to exploit Word and to get participants thinking about 'creative' uses of Word functions in editing on-screen. Many of the standard Word functions, such as copying and moving text, styles, custom dictionaries, Find & Replace, and paragraph formatting, can be exploited in an extended manner to accelerate the editing process. The pitfalls of automated functions in Word is another area covered. File management and file conversion techniques are also addressed, as are Word's proofing tools. Full details on the course are on the Society of Editors' website at www.socedvic.org (follow the Training link). See Training News for further information.

Brett Lockwood has used computers as a PC network administrator, editor, desktop publisher, and teacher/trainer since 1977, and has worked as an editor since 1980. Brett has taught computer applications as Senior Lecturer at postgraduate (Grad. Dip.) level (La Trobe) and recently guest-lectured in the Graduate Diploma, Editing & Publishing (RMIT).

The Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc. presents

Quotations and Negotiations

The Freelance Workshop: Sally Woollett and Renée Otmar

Saturday 16 November, 10.00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Does the idea of submitting a quote make you shudder? Have you ever worked for half of your normal rate because you couldn't tell the publisher that their manuscript needed more than just a 'light edit'? Have you ever had to negotiate a set fee for work of a type you hadn't encountered before? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then this course is for you.

Renée Otmar and **Sally Woollett** share their freelance experiences in difficult situations such as these. They explore how a proactive approach, good communication skills and a good dose of assertiveness can avert many of these problems. The workshop covers the following general themes:

- the importance of good communication
- 'teasing' out the brief before you quote
- editorial reviews
- preparing a quote
- negotiating a rate or project fee
- time management and scheduling
- what to do if something goes wrong
- what to do if the publisher changes the brief
- meeting and breaking deadlines
- terms of invoicing and late payments.

This is a popular and valuable course for freelancers old and new who want to become or keep up-to-date with this critical facet of their business, and in-house editors who envisage going freelance at some stage.

The Freelance Workshop is a joint initiative of Renée Otmar and Sally Woollett. Sally runs a successful freelance editing business and is a past freelance affairs representative of the Society. Renée is currently president of the Society and the CASE delegate for Victoria. Both have extensive experience as in-house and freelance editors. Between them, they have worked on nearly 300 freelance projects.



I wish to attend the **Quotations and Negotiations** course.

I enclose a cheque/money order, payable to the Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc., for

\$130 (member)

\$190 (non-member)

Name _____

Name on cheque (if different from your name) _____

Address _____

Telephone (business) _____ (home) _____

Email _____

Signed _____ Date _____

DATE: Saturday 16 November, 10.00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

VENUE: To be announced in the next newsletter and on the Society website. It will be in or near the Melbourne CBD.

COST: \$130 members. \$190 non-members (includes GST).

Refreshments are provided but lunch is not.

Please book early – bookings close **Wednesday 6 November.**

Enquiries to Brett Lockwood on 9480 1789 or brett@wordbytes.com.au.

Send your application and payment to Brett at PO Box 473, Northcote VIC 3070.

Dates for your diary

Next meeting

Editing sports books

Wednesday 4 September 2002

Membership application/renewal

Must be made by 30 September 2002

Committee 2002–2003

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Colin Jevons, Susan Keogh, Vane Lindesay, Janet Mackenzie, Sally Milner,
Renée Otmar, Teresa Pitt, Yvonne Rousseau, Wendy Sutherland, Basil Walby,
Lee White

John Curtain (d. 1999)

Beatrice Davis (d. 1992)

Frank Eyre (d. 1988)

Stephen Murray-Smith (d. 1988)

Membership of the Society is open to anyone engaged professionally in any aspect of editing for publication, or who has had such experience in the past. Associate membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's activities. Associate members may not vote or hold office in the Society.

Membership application/renewal forms are available from the Secretary, the Membership Secretary or the Society's website: www.socedvic.org

Subscriptions

Full membership \$66

Associate membership \$66

Distant membership \$38.50