

The SOCIETY of EDITORS (VICTORIA)

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 9

MARCH 2003

Next meeting

Bulletproofing: How not to die as an editor

With **Jim McCarthy**

Rhumbaralla's Café (The Loft, upstairs)

342 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy (**Not** 23 Bourke Street, city)

Wednesday, 2 April 2003, 6.30 for 7 p.m.

\$25 members and \$30 non-members for a set menu
plus tea and coffee. Drinks at bar prices.

Jim McCarthy is a practising lawyer who for 33 years has been acting for a wide range of clients, including freelance editors and designers. In 1995, he presented a very useful workshop for the Society, based on his *Legal Survival Kit for Self-Employed Editors in the 1990s*. Now it's encore time!

Jim believes that avoiding risk and exposure to it is very much the lawyer's role and responsibility. For the first part of the evening, he'll outline the golden rules that freelance editors should follow if they want to keep everyone happy – including themselves – and enjoy uninterrupted success. He'll then work through a selection of up to six pre-nominated scenarios and the issues that arise from them. Six items that he might take up are:

- protecting editors against claims
- determining editors' legal status when they receive typescripts in various bits
- drafting a standard contract for editors
- explaining the law with reference to public-liability insurance
- providing an update about copyright in relation to the Internet and electronic products
- clarifying the responsibilities involved when editors subcontract work.

If you're one of the many self-employed people who move between the two 'neurotic extremes' of 'How can I get all this work done?' and 'Will I ever have work again?', Jim will be

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one of the most important 'brainiacs' you'll ever meet. Copies of his updated and indispensable *Legal Survival Kit* will be available free of charge to you if you attend the meeting, but no copies will be available for people who can't attend.

Please book with Deb Doyle by either email at <deb@hotlinks.net.au> or phone on (03) 9388 1571, **strictly before 5 p.m. on Monday, 31 March**. When you book, please outline any scenarios you'd like Jim to 'workshop'. Also when you book, please state whether you want a vegetarian (two alternatives), white-meat or red-meat main course so you're not disappointed when the waiters are serving the meals. The menu will consist of two courses: main course and dessert, as well as tea and coffee. Jim McCarthy will speak at about 8 p.m., between main course and dessert.

Members will be interested to know that at the February and March meetings, the number of people who'd booked but who didn't show up, cancel or apologise was nine and twelve, respectively. Your membership fees were used to pay for these people's meals. If you book and later find you're unable to attend, please let Deb or Jo-Anne know before the meeting so we don't waste money again!

Coming up: Wednesday, 7 May: A panel of representatives from Australia's Left and Green print media will discuss the topic *May Day! What's left of the Left?* at Rhumbaralla's (The Loft) in Fitzroy. Please read the next newsletter and our website for more details.



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From the President's bunker

I love hearing from our members (really). Even, I tell myself, if I receive mostly complaints, at least there's a pulse, a sign that our members care. And *how* you care!

This month a lot of people cared about the monthly meetings: I received feedback on (1) the food (delicious, but where's the red meat?); (2) the location of the venue (too far north/out of the city/difficult for parking); (3) the grammar forum idea (don't make it *every* March). As someone remarked recently at a committee meeting, if our members knew how much we agonised over these seemingly mundane matters, they'd be staggered! But we value your input, and we will continue to work towards accommodating as many of your preferences as is humanly possible. So, for future meetings, we've resolved to have meat options (though these will cost more), and to leave the general meeting topic for March up to the committee of the day.

As for the venue, well, we just cannot please everyone. Further, the venue location does not appear to have had a significant effect on attendances – members travel from as far as St Andrews, Emerald, Ballarat and Geelong for the opportunity to hear our speakers and socialise with colleagues. (Perhaps surprisingly, these members *never* complain.) At the start of its term, the current committee spent some considerable time investigating possible venues. Looking at the members' database, we found that most metropolitan members live north of the city, though membership from the southern and bayside suburbs appears to be increasing. It seemed reasonable to hold meetings in or as close to the city as possible (though there had been rumblings about that, too, in the past). Rhumbaralla's in Fitzroy has proved to be a much more hospitable venue for our Society meetings than its city counterpart. Parking may be a problem, but it's worse in the city; public transport is reasonable, though – there are three trams within close proximity of the restaurant. So, the committee has resolved that general meetings will continue to be held at Rhumbaralla's Fitzroy for the remainder of its current term, although we are currently investigating the State Library of Victoria as a possible (no food) alternative for rotation with Rhumbaralla's. If you would like to suggest an alternative venue, do contact Deb Doyle – but before you do so, please make sure it meets the Society's needs for location, menu, price, size and service quality. Such a venue ideally should also have a management flexible enough to accommodate (cheerfully) our often wildly fluctuating attendances; for example, 88 people attended in February, 56 in March (most of these booking at the last minute).

On the subject of bookings, we're in a bit of a quandary about how to deal with some members' apparent, and expensive, memory lapses. These people book to attend a dinner meeting, then fail to turn up. In February, for example, there were 10 culprits, and their non-attendance cost the Society \$270 because we had to pay the restaurant for every booking. Given that the Society already contributed \$2 towards each person's meal (costs \$27, member pays \$25), it doesn't take a genius to work out that it was an expensive night, and unnecessarily so. In addition, because of the number of bookings, we were forced to turn down some people who had tried to book at the last minute. So, what should we do? Should we charge the individuals who didn't turn up, or even send an apology (we know who they are)? Should we increase the meeting price overall so that we can absorb these costs? One member suggests a full and public flogging, but my feeling is that this would be too harsh (apart from being illegal). What do you think? Please email your solutions to me – the best one will be published, hopefully implemented and might even earn you a little prize.

A slightly bigger prize awaits the member who writes in with the best suggestions for promoting the profession of editing to the wider community. If you're not convinced that a promotions campaign for editors is needed, here's a little anecdote that set me off. Recently I participated in a small group discussion with young people who are undertaking a masters program in communication studies. In response to a statement I made about editors needing to be promoted, one participant offered that editors may be reluctant to sell themselves and their services because: 'Most editors come from low backgrounds.' Upon prompting, this apparently knowledgeable young woman explained that by 'low backgrounds' she meant that relatively few editors had obtained higher education qualifications, and most 'were former teachers, weren't they?' This about caps the standard party quip: 'An editor? Oh, you must read a lot.'

To get in on the action, you must write (by email or post) to me with your suggestions by no later than 5 p.m. on Maundy Thursday – judging will take place over the Easter break. The judge's decision will be final, but correspondence may be entered into, just for fun. The winning entries will be published in this column as soon as I can afford the cost of the prizes. Toodle-loo!

Renée Otmar

Edit This!

Course leader: Deb Doyle

Saturday, 5 April 2003, 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

In this intensive, one-day course, you will:

- confirm the differences between editing and proofreading
- clarify what editors do
- complete sentence exercises to revise grammar and punctuation
- learn or revise the standard hard-copy editing marks
- apply the marks to a range of double-spaced sample documents, such as a short book chapter, a newsletter article, a promotional blurb, a set of instructions, a report extract and a letter
- learn how to raise and resolve author queries
- establish and discuss choices to include in an editorial style sheet (word list)
- discuss style guides
- complete a multiple-choice 'style and convention' exercise
- discuss and resolve any editorial queries you have (if you are enrolling you are welcome to email Deb at deb@hotlinks.net.au with items you would like discussed in the course).

DATE: Saturday, 5 April 2003, 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

VENUE: CAE Business Education Centre, Level 4, 253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne. Discount car parking is available at Kings Park, Flinders St (opposite Federation Square). You must have your ticket validated at CAE reception to obtain your discount.

COST: \$120 Society of Editors and ASTC members, \$180 non-members (GST included).

Refreshments are provided but lunch is not.

Bookings close **Friday 28 March**.

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

If you are not a Society member, you can obtain the member discount by applying for membership before the course, but you must arrange this through Brett (tel. 9480 1789 or email brett@wordbytes.com.au).

The course is suitable for both aspiring and practising editors.

Each participant is provided with a set of comprehensive course notes and exercises, and is awarded a statement of participation by Deb Doyle (the Society does not award statements).

Please bring a blue pen, a pencil, correction fluid and an A4-size ruled notepad.

Deb Doyle is a freelance editor, writer, proofreader and editorial-training consultant who works with a wide range of clients in trade, educational and corporate publishing as well as with individual authors.



I wish to attend the **Edit This!** course.

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

\$120 (Society of Editors and ASTC members)

\$180 (non-members)

Name _____

Name on cheque (if different from your name) _____

Address _____

Telephone (business) _____ (home) _____

Email _____

Signed _____ Date _____

The Second Great Grammar and Punctuation Forum (SGGPF)

Held on 5 March 2003 in The Loft at Rhubarb's Café, Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

Are we as editors too pedantic about using the correct word, and refining text and punctuation? From my observation of the enthusiastic attendance and lively discussion at the SGGPF, I suggest that we are not. (Although having read this report, some might disagree.)

Fifty-nine members (most of whom attended) booked in for fine finger food and discussion. Four expert editors provided the panel – Pia Herbert, Anne Calvert, Nick Hudson and Deb Doyle – and the evening began promptly at 7 o'clock. Deb also chaired the evening and began by reading aloud a series of incomprehensible statements and asked if they passed the 'washing test' – if you started to think about something like bringing in the washing after the first or second sentence, they failed. They all failed. Deb went on to point out that any piece of writing should be **Pleasant, Effective, Alive, Clear** and **Enduring** and so make **PEACE** with the reader; not be **Waffly, Ambiguous** and **Ridiculous** and so declare **WAR**. Each of the panellists then spoke briefly about the items they had listed as problems faced by editors.

Pia's topic was dashes – en or em, spaced or unspaced? Publishers are keen for us to worry about them; however, in the corporate world clients really don't understand what the fuss is about! Dashes are an important punctuation mark, and it was agreed that their correct use shouldn't depend on typeface, available space, or lazy keyboard habits.

Nick spoke about worrisome words. He asked, 'At what stage should we, and do we, give up the struggle against a change (grammatical, semantic or in pronunciation) we initially find objectionable?' His first example was the difference between 'may' (it could have happened) and 'might' (it was logically possible but didn't happen). Today, we find 'may' used to mean both when the refinement of 'might' would add clarity.

'Lay' is a transitive verb referring to eggs and tables, and lie is an intransitive verb meaning to repose (horizontally). Again, there is little regard to this distinction by some more modern writers.

'Gender' is, these days, used as a euphemism for biological 'sex' when it really has little to do with it. Gender is a grammatical term referring to nouns and whether they represent masculine, feminine or neuter. In the English language, gender generally parallels sex, but in other languages the distinction is far more important. In French, for instance, a pen is feminine gender. Nick said that he had seen a notice suggesting that 'there were toilets for both genders at the back of the hall'.

Nick pointed out the degeneration in pronunciation of such words as 'gross', 'leverage', 'recreation' and 'book'. He discussed the differences in meaning between 'diffuse' and

'defuse' as an example of the way in which meaning is being compromised.

Anne was interested in quotation marks. Should the punctuation be inside or outside the quotation marks? It is important, although the American custom of always placing it inside is becoming common in Australian usage.

Finally Deb voiced her pet peeves – reification (personification of concepts and inanimate objects), and nominalisation (turning a verb or a clause into a noun). Verbs are action words, the more the better; verbs bring prose to life.

Placing a comma between independent clauses was Deb's next objection. For instance, 'Don't fool yourself, speed kills'. Almost any other punctuation instead of the comma (., : –) would give this statement greater emphasis. Also it is a grave error to omit punctuation between independent clauses, or ambiguous clauses such as: 'Do not empty this unit operates automatically.'

The meeting was thrown open for discussion and this included some of the questions asked earlier and listed on the agenda.

Should we use 'male' and 'female' instead of 'men' and 'women'?

Are we human (and therefore men and women) – or not? 'Male' and 'female' are adjectives; 'men' and 'women' are common nouns relating to human beings. Should toilets be distinguished between as 'male' and 'female', or for 'men' and 'women', or 'ladies' and 'gentlemen'? Are there 'men poets' and 'women poets' or just 'poets'? There are 'male nurses' as distinct from 'nurses' (assumed to be female). You might want to specify your preference for a 'woman doctor', or your child might say that he (or she) has a 'man teacher'.

Hyphens

Hyphens are being used less (because of built-in aspects of Microsoft Word) and more (to save space and because of lazy keyboard habits). It was noted that in the listing of share prices in the *Financial Review* hyphens (instead of unspaced en dashes) were used between spans of numbers.

Should we hyphenate, leave as two words, or close up 'multi-faceted'; 'multi-nationalism'; 'mono-unsaturated'; 'sub-Saharan'; 'macro-economic'; 'non-English(-)speaking background'; 'a light-brown loaf', as opposed to 'a light, brown loaf'?

A minus sign **must** be a spaced en dash.

Hyphens used in compound adjectives are important defences against ambiguity. For example: Nick is a small-business person. Pia is a short-course manager. All high-school students will be drug tested. Anne uses thick baby-wipes. Leave the hyphens out, and your guess is as good as mine. Is Nick small or is Pia short?

Is there a distinction between usage of 'who'/'whom' and 'that'?

The conclusion to this question was that 'who'/'whom' is for use with humans (and beloved pets), and 'that' is for inanimate objects (and non-loved pets).

What's the distinction between defining and non-defining phrases/clauses?

Consider the difference between these sentences:

Employees who work hard will receive a pay rise. (Some will be rewarded for hard work.)

Employees, who work hard, will receive a pay rise. (All employees work hard, and will be rewarded!)

Commas should not be sprinkled indiscriminately through text. When they are used with discrimination they can make quite a difference!

Is the distinction between 'who' and 'whom' becoming redundant?

Here, the distinction is between formal and informal English.

'Who did that bell toll for?'

When answering the phone: 'To whom am I speaking?' is generally responded to with a gasp!

Is it still necessary to surround 'however' with punctuation?

The answer here is that it depends on whether it is used as a connective or an adverb.

'I'm enjoying being here; however, I must leave soon.'

'However tired they were, they persevered with the assignment.'

Yes, the punctuation is necessary, and should also be used thoughtfully with 'nevertheless', 'instead', 'meanwhile', etc.

Bullet points are another burning issue. Should minimal or maximal punctuation be used?

This depends on house style, but generally if the stem sentence is incomplete and ends with a colon, no punctuation

is necessary except for a full stop after the final point. However, if the stem sentence is complete and it ends with a full stop, and if the bullet points that follow are complete sentences they can each end with a full stop. It is no longer thought necessary to use a semi-colon after each point with 'and' at the end of the penultimate point.

Other issues

Please don't say 'At this point/moment in time'. What's wrong with 'now'?

Words that are often used incorrectly are:

- enhance
- actually
- basically.

Other words that are losing their fine distinction of meaning are:

- anticipate and expect
- disinterested and uninterested
- notoriety and notorious
- alright and all right
- round and around
- gourmet and gourmand (you can be both).

Collective nouns that are derived from foreign plurals can be controversial.

- Media: new usage is singular e.g. advertising media (the singular is not 'medium' [table tapping?]).
- Data are always plural.
- Agenda is singular (its plural in English is 'agendas').

However, what is the correct form of the following?

- referendums or referenda?
- formulas or formulae?

The discussion could be endless! Remember that if we didn't worry about the shape of our language (and the shape it's in), we wouldn't have jobs!

Estelle Longfield

Membership report

This month the Society is delighted to welcome six new full members. They are Katie Barnett, who is senior editor with Harcourt Education; Carol Ann, who works freelance, and has done so for three years; Haya Hussein, who has just recently begun a freelance career, after having had extensive editorial experience editing newspapers in Jordan for three years and, more recently, working with Lonely Planet; Talia Katz, who works in-house at Sunrider International, and has worked as editor on *Men's Health* magazine; Martine Leonart now has a freelance editorial consultancy, after being managing editor at

Hinkler and senior editor at Lonely Planet, and assistant editor for *Meanjin*; and Bernadette Zen, who has worked in-house with Media Equation for the past four years.

In addition, the Society is also delighted to welcome six new associate members – Liam Coffey, Jodi Ann Ford, Katherine Iona, Elizabeth McAdam, Deborah Patterson and Olivia Shelton.

The Society extends a very warm welcome to all of you. We look forward to seeing you at our general meetings.



Vern Field

Managing Editor, Deakin University

Vern started in publishing by stapling, folding and mailing the Weekly Book Newsletter while at Uni. She then worked as an editorial assistant at New Scientist magazine and as a general assistant to the manager at Dellasta. After completing her Graduate Diploma in Editing and Publishing, she started at Deakin as an editor in 1997, working on course material. In 2000 Vern taught Editing and Small Press Publishing at Chisholm TAFE and Gordon TAFE, and also acted as Manager of Deakin University Press during its closure. After a break travelling overseas in 2001, she returned to Deakin in Nov 2001 as an editor and in early 2002 was promoted to Managing Editor. She is currently planning another break in September 2003 to have her first baby.

What's the best thing about your job?

Working with a large team of in-house editors.

What's the worst thing about your job?

Do you really want to get me started on this? First, not doing any hands-on editing anymore, and not getting to spend enough one-on-one training/development time with any of the in-house or freelance editors. Then, having to worry about:

- ensuring recognition of the need for editorial involvement in materials developed for online delivery, and working out how and when editors should be involved
- managing the issues of retaining editorial quality in an environment of tight turnaround times and low budgets
- trying to find ways to keep editors motivated when they are having to compromise their standards and work on 'disposable' materials.

What's the best thing about being an editor?

Getting to work with ideas and language.

What was your first editing job?

My first in-house job as an editor was at Deakin, but I had worked before that as a general assistant to the publisher at Dellasta (a small primary maths & science publisher), and had done bits and pieces of casual dogsbody work at D. W. Thorpe, Reed Reference and *New Scientist*.

How did you become an editor?

I did the Graduate Diploma in Editing and Publishing at RMIT in 1997 and 1998, then lots of editing of study guides at Deakin and some Deakin University Press books. I probably only really felt that I had consolidated my skills when I started to teach

editing in 2000. But, even now, I feel that my experience is very limited to educational materials, and I wouldn't know what to do with fiction or highly illustrated non-fiction.

What are the essential qualities of being a good editor?

Caring about the material you're working on, being knowledgeable and passionate but also flexible about language and style, having the capacity to be extremely thorough but also to be able to compromise in order to meet production schedules, being diplomatic, proactive and a problem solver.

What is the most rewarding job you've ever done?

Teaching editing at TAFE (Gordon and Chisholm) (if it paid better I'd do more of it!).

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

Probably stapling, folding and sending out the *Weekly Book Newsletter* every Wednesday while still studying.

Do you prefer to edit on hard copy or screen?

Big structural changes on screen; finer detail on hard copy.

What advice would you give editing students?

Learn to love the *Style Manual*, and read lots of books on style and grammar, so that you can always explain or defend your changes.

What book would you most like to have edited?

Stephanie Alexander's *The Cook's Companion*. What an amazing book! Any fiction or trade non-fiction, particularly cookbooks. I'd love to be able to make a break into that one day.

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 Jo-Anne Bianchi at write_edit@ihug.com.au or 4 Martin Street Belgrave, 3160.

A letter to the editor

Dear editor,

I was happily gossiping to members in a highly enjoyable way at the Don Watson talk when I was shocked to learn that several hundred dollars of members' funds were lost due to meal costs because of people who booked for the meeting and did not turn up, but failed to notify our Meetings Secretary. I am sure that at least some of these 'defaulters' had genuine reasons for not attending, but being an extremely suspicious person (some have said I am paranoid) I immediately became convinced that some of these malefactors were really, well, malefactors.

I am naturally attuned to punitive measures (some have said I am inveterately sadistic), and in the event that this sort of intolerable loss occurs again I suggest the Society considers the following as appropriate corrective measures.

- a) The culprits be persuaded to attend a members' meeting and made to sit at a raised platform facing the loyal and righteous membership.
- b) A gallows and a gibbet be placed in the corner with no purpose in mind other than to cause fear and provoke thoughtfulness as to what is the difference between a gallows and a gibbet.
- c) Meat-loving culprits have a wholesome veggie meal placed before them, and vegetarian culprits have a huge animal fat meal placed before them.
- d) The Society Disciplinary Procedure be read out slowly by our president, with no purpose in mind other than to cause apprehension (and more fear) amongst the entire gathering.
- e) No culprit may rise without having finished a meal, but culprits may bicker amongst themselves re meal-swapping, all such swapping arrangements to be approved or otherwise by the loyal membership according to a 'thumbs-up' 'thumbs-down' process.
- f) The Society Disciplinary Procedure be read out once more and the meeting closed.

Yours sincerely,

[name withheld due to irrational fear of reprisal]

Training news

Deb Doyle is offering another copy-editing course in April, and there is an advert for the workshop in this newsletter. Enrolments may be capped if the figure becomes too high. Readers may have noticed that non-members can obtain the member discount for courses if they apply for Society membership before the date of the course. Quite a few people have taken this option over the last couple of years. However, this enrolment must be arranged through Brett Lockwood (9480 1789 or brett@wordbytes.com.au) or this offer will not apply.

Some members have also requested late enrolments and this is fine by me as long as the course already has the numbers to actually go ahead. This means that if you enrol late, you may not be successful, but I will take enrolments beyond the deadline if this is possible. Of course, if you call the day before a workshop you will probably be disappointed.

Some members do not provide email addresses on course enrolment forms. Course receipts are usually provided by PDF files sent by email, and if your email address is not included or is not legible then there may be a considerable delay in you getting your receipt.

As usual, I would welcome suggestions on training courses. You can send these to brett@wordbytes.com.au.

Basic English

- 1 Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
- 2 Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
- 3 And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
- 4 It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
- 5 Avoid clichés like the plague.
- 6 Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
- 7 Be more or less specific.
- 8 Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
- 9 Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
- 10 Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
- 11 Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
- 12 Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
- 13 Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
- 14 Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
- 15 Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary.
- 16 Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
- 17 Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
- 18 Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth-shaking ideas.
- 19 Puns are for children, not groan readers.
- 20 Who needs rhetorical questions?
- 21 Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
- 22 Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

Dates for your diary

April meeting

Wednesday, 2 April 2003

April committee meeting

Wednesday, 9 April 2003

May meeting

Wednesday, 7 May 2003



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Committee 2002–2003

President

Renée Otmar (In-house) 9278 8131
(Freelance) 9866 4308

Treasurer

Marta Veroni (Freelance) 9383 6717

Secretary/MEAA Liaison

Rob Moore (Freelance) 9534 3344
cq@datafast.net.au

Meetings

Deborah Doyle 9388 1571
deb@hotlinks.net.au

Membership

Helen Bethune Moore (Pearson Education)
hbm@datafast.net.au

Newsletter team

Editor: Liz Steele (Freelance) lzsteele@melbpc.org.au
Layout: Lan Wang (Freelance) lanwang@wovenwords.com.au
Advertising: Vessy Sayce (Freelance) vessaysayce@optusnet.com.au

Training

Brett Lockwood (Freelance) 9480 1789

Minutes Secretary

Catherine Hunt
catherine_hunt@ekno.com

Web Manager

Ann Philpott (Freelance) 9830 0494

Freelance Affairs Coordinator

Kirsten Slifirski (Freelance)
thegirls@labyrinth.net.au

CASE Accreditation Delegate

Janet Mackenzie (Freelance) 5775 2988
jmack@mansfield.net.au

Immediate Past President

Pia Herbert (Freelance) 9380 2223

Honorary Life Members

John Bangsund, Ruth Dixon, Anne Godden, Beryl Hill, Nick Hudson,
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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