

# The SOCIETY of EDITORS (VICTORIA)

## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 10

APRIL 2004

### Next meeting

#### ***The technology involved in setting up (or upgrading) your freelance office with Lan Wang***

**Rhumbaralla's Café (The Loft, upstairs)**  
342 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

**Tuesday (yes, TUESDAY), 4 May 2004**

6.30 for 7 p.m.

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

If you're a new freelancer setting up your office, or even an 'old' one, you will benefit from hearing the word on how to set yourself up with the right equipment for the job. Choosing a computer? What features do you need to consider? How and why to connect to the Internet? Precautions to be taken? Do you need your own web page as a promotion tool? Plenty of guidance and then time for a real nuts-and-bolts question-and-answer session afterwards.

Lan has been interested in technology ever since she bought a Commodore 64 computer in 1984. Imagine her delight when she discovered that she could both indulge this passion and earn a living by becoming a freelance editor, typesetter and website developer. She has a library of computer magazines and books that would rival anyone's *National Geographic* collection, and delights in applying the information from them to her daily work. She claims not to be a nerd, but this has yet to be proved.

Bookings are essential:

- Book with Kerry Biram – email preferred – at <kerry.biram@bigpond.com> (or phone 9481 3993).
- Book strictly before noon on **Monday, 3 May**.
- Indicate if you're a member, student, ASTC member, or non-member.

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- Choose from the vegetarian, vegan, white-meat or red-meat main course, and the cake or fresh-fruit salad for dessert.
- Give a contact phone number or email.
- If you need to cancel, please email or phone Kerry as soon as possible so we don't waste money on catering for people who don't turn up.
- If you cancel after 7 p.m. on the day before the meeting, the Treasurer will contact you shortly after and ask you to pay as if you had attended.

### CASE national conference proposed for Victoria

The Society of Editors (Victoria) is currently working on a proposal to host the next Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) national conference for editors in 2005. We need volunteers to help with pretty much everything. At this stage we would like to hear from you if you are interested in volunteering to help with the planning and organising of the conference. It's an opportunity to help plan what is sure to be an exciting and historical event.

Please contact Renée Otmar if you would like to be involved, email <office@otmarmiller.com.au>.



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Telephone 03 9513 6608  
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# Professional indemnity insurance – Freelance Affairs report

by L. Elaine Miller

In recent months, Kirsten and I have been getting queries from freelance editors whose contracts (especially contracts with government agencies) require them to take out professional indemnity insurance. This raises several questions:

- 1 What is it?
- 2 What sort of liability would a client be worried about, such that they would require an editor to have insurance against it? In other words, what are they asking the editor to insure himself or herself against?
- 3 What does this say about the relationship between the material being edited and the editor's responsibility for it?
- 4 This would be an additional overhead cost for freelance editors. Are clients requiring such insurance therefore willing to pay more?

Professional indemnity insurance is different from public liability insurance. The latter is the type of insurance that protects you (or your business) against litigation if a client, other visitor, or staff member hurts himself or herself on the premises.

Professional indemnity is in effect a way for companies to shift the responsibility for content onto the contractor who edited it. The examples that spring to mind include, of course, defamatory material, but also errors or omissions that may have harmful consequences. For example, a travel guide specifies the wrong voltage for a country whose electrical appliances have different voltage from that used in Australia. A less dramatic case would be misrepresentation of the

causes of a change of government policy. To allege defamation of the parties involved might seem a bit of a stretch, but it is a fairly broad legal category and organisations are increasingly concerned to cover all contingencies.

Many of us do not feel that we're in a position to knock back work just because we may be opposed, in principle, to the implications of such a requirement. Moreover, once we've agreed to take on a project, we may feel there's little room, in terms of time and budgeting, to quibble over the terms of the contract. And while some clients may be prepared to pay a higher rate to cover the cost, many are not. A 'standard contract' is just that – one size fits all – and assumes the maximum possible risk, whether the contractor is an editor working on a 'white paper' or an engineer working on a bridge.

The insurance question is one of concern nationwide. Robyn Colman, of the Tasmanian Society of Editors, has been researching the question, and has written an informative article presented on page 3. It contains some solid and constructive ideas, treated in an objective and even-handed way. Note also her questionnaire presented below.

I would draw your attention in particular to the option of refusal, and (even more crucially) of letting the relevant state and federal ministers know our position. As with many other issues affecting workers, the key is right here:

'If enough of us were to do it, employers might have to reconsider.'



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## Insurance questionnaire

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- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Have you been required to take out insurance in order to fulfil a contract?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No (go to question 4)</p> <p>2 If 'Yes', what kind and level of cover was required?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Public liability<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Professional indemnity<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of income<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Accident<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Workers' compensation<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>3 Have you retained, or do you intend to retain, that insurance after completing the work?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>4 Have you ever refused work because of insurance requirements?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No<br/>If 'Yes', did you tell the employer why you would not take on the work?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> | <p>5 Can you recommend an insurance broker or insurance company?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No<br/>If 'Yes', please give details:</p> <p>6 Do you have suggestions for other editors facing the insurance requirement?</p> <p>7 Do you have suggestions for action that Societies of Editors could take either individually or collectively?</p> |
|--|--|

*Thank you for making time to answer these questions. Please post your reply to Robyn Colman, 250 Churchill Avenue, SANDY BAY TAS 7005 or email it to <words@word-wise.com.au>.*

# Insurance and the freelance editor

by Robyn Colman, Society of Editors (Tasmania) Inc.

Do freelance editors need insurance? It seems that government agencies, in particular, are increasingly requiring it of us. People are asked to sign contracts that stipulate anything from public liability cover of up to \$10,000,000, to professional indemnity insurance, personal accident and illness insurance, loss of income insurance, and workers' compensation. For the one-person business based in a home office and with annual taxable income that is probably under \$60,000 a year, these are stiff requirements.

Unfortunately, because ours is an uncommon profession, insurance companies put us into a 'miscellaneous' category, often with high-risk occupations. This means that even when a broker acts on an editor's behalf, the cost of basic cover for public liability and professional indemnity is likely to be about \$2,500–\$3,000 a year.

Recently I talked to a lawyer at the Arts Law Centre of Australia about these contractual requirements. He explained that while an organisation's 'standard' contract may stipulate insurance cover of various kinds, we are quite within our rights to negotiate. Indeed, I have found in some cases that if I can talk directly to the Contracts Manager (or whoever is responsible for contracts) it is possible to have contract clauses deleted or reworded once the responsible person understands the nature of the work I am undertaking. It may mean my volunteering to accept whatever risk is involved, but it can be done. Negotiating via a project manager can work well if they are savvy, but sometimes it can just make things more confusing and difficult. It's often hard to know which way to play it.

Of course if the job is going to bring a substantial amount of net income, it may be worthwhile complying, at least for the duration of the contract. The Arts Law Centre's website has some useful facts sheets about contracts <<http://www.artslaw.com.au/reference/infocontracts/>> and public liability insurance <<http://www.artslaw.com.au/reference/publicliability02/index.html>>. I understand that the Centre is also about to launch a book about insurance, though details are not yet available on its website.

It's worth noting too that under some organisations' guidelines, competitive quotes and contracts are not required for jobs costing under \$10,000.

Another option is to refuse to join in. It is always possible to turn work down if the conditions are unreasonable. It hurts, of course, but there is an argument for jacking up, and if enough of us were to do it, employers might have to reconsider.

A fourth option in a federal election year, when small businesses are clearly on politicians' minds, is to nag the relevant ministers. When enough of us wrote to Sensis to ask for an 'Editors and editing' category in the Yellow Pages we were successful. It is a fact that 'standard' contracts requiring us to have insurance similar to a building contractor's or a medical practitioner's are simply inappropriate for our kind of work. Perhaps if enough of us can make the point we could get some action.

Relevant Australian government ministers are:

Joe Hockey, Minister for Small Business and Tourism, PO Box 1107, North Sydney NSW 2059 or email <[J.Hockey.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:J.Hockey.MP@aph.gov.au)>.

Senator Nick Minchin, Minister for Finance and Administration, 423 Henley Beach Road, Brooklyn Park SA 5032 or email <[senator.minchin@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.minchin@aph.gov.au)>.

Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, GPO Box 3513, Sydney NSW 2001, or email <[senator.coonan@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.coonan@aph.gov.au)>.

Bob McMullan, Shadow Minister for Finance and Small Business, GPO Box 1947, Canberra ACT 2601 or email <[Bob.McMullan.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Bob.McMullan.MP@aph.gov.au)>.

Most states and territories have a minister responsible for small business who could also be approached. Victoria's Minister for Small Business is Marsha Thomson, Level 23, Nauru House, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 or email <[marsha.thomson@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:marsha.thomson@minstaff.vic.gov.au)>.

Meantime, if you care to complete the 'Insurance' questionnaire on page 2 and send it back to me, I'll be happy to collate the information and publish it later in the year. If you are prepared to add your name and contact details I won't pass them on.

## 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](mailto:lzsteele@melbpc.org.au) or to the address on the front cover of this newsletter.

# **Analysis of second national survey of editors (July 2003)**

**by Pamela Hewitt**

The second national survey of editors was conducted at the conference, 'Beyond Gutenberg and Gates', held in Brisbane in July 2003. There were 96 responses to the survey, almost double the responses to the first national survey of editors, carried out in April 2001 in Canberra at the 'Partnerships in Knowledge' conference.

Although participation at national conferences is not necessarily representative of editors as a whole, they are excellent opportunities to gather national data and views, and they provide a cross-section of the profession. The same questions were asked in both surveys to allow comparison over the two years.

As it was held in Brisbane, there is a disproportionate representation of Queensland editors. The same was true of the first conference, where editors from Canberra were over-represented.

## **So who is an Australian editor?**

- The female domination of the field continues, although it is not quite as marked as in 2001, with 85% female respondents and 15% male.
- The age breakdown shows that while the profession is ageing, with 63% of respondents over 45, 17% are under 35 and 20% between 36 and 45.
- Editors are highly qualified. A small group (5%) listed a diploma as their highest qualification, but the remaining 95% of respondents had a degree, graduate diploma, masters degree, PhD or a combination of more than one qualification (38%). Several respondents noted that they had two or more qualifications at the same level.
- 85% of respondents had also undertaken specialist professional courses (a significant increase on 66% two years ago), with more than half (56%) having completed four or more courses.
- Around half (52%) of respondents had more than 10 years' experience as an editor, and there was a large group (30%) of relatively new entrants with 1 to 5 years' experience.
- Most reported other relevant professional experience, including researcher, teacher, author/writer, librarian, journalist, trainer, university lecturer, management consultant, technical writer, policy document writer. Many people listed several previous careers.

- About half the respondents were full-time editors (51%), with the rest describing themselves as part-time (21%) or working as an editor in addition to other employment (24%). The remaining respondents were no longer working in the field.
- Around a quarter described themselves as copy editors (24%), 32% were substantive editors and 9% saw themselves as primarily project managers. A significant group (17%) indicated that it wasn't possible to distinguish – they performed all these roles, or it depended on the day. A further 15% used other titles to describe their primary role, including managing editor, creator of materials, communications consultant, publisher and website editor.
- Exactly a third were employees, and just over a half were freelance, with 3% combining both. Another 11% did not fit these categories, some specifying their employment status as long-term contract, casual or voluntary.

## **Rates**

It was interesting to see very little change in the reported rates charged. The average hourly rate was \$50, virtually the same as in 2001. Once again, there were huge variations, with the lowest reported hourly rate for editing \$20 and the highest rate \$140. Rates for some services were higher (project management at \$65 and document development at \$73), while others were lower (proofreading \$40 and indexing \$45). Manuscript assessment came in with a large variation of \$57 per hour or \$320 per manuscript, which would work out at well under half the average hourly rate.

It may be that the 2001 figure was slightly high, owing to the over-representation of Canberra editors, and the 2003 figure slightly low, since Queensland rates tend to be lower than the national average. An analysis of the state and territory breakdown of rates gives the following averages for charged freelance editing: ACT (\$73), South Australia (\$60), Tasmania (\$53), NSW and WA (\$50), Victoria (\$49), Queensland (\$45). While there was a fairly good number of responses from ACT, Queensland, NSW and Victoria, the sample sizes from Tasmania, South Australia and WA were very small.

There were many comments on rates. A familiar refrain was that they are 'too low for the services provided'. Many gave reasons for charging low rates: 'discounts to needy students', 'getting the work is more important than the rate', 'clients

will not pay higher rates'. Several people expressed a desire for guidance on the appropriate rates to charge. 'A session on how to charge would be good', 'guidelines are needed on rates and quoting for newcomers', 'would like to know more about setting fees', 'it's difficult to know what to charge, what the market will bear – I don't want to price myself out of the market or undercut colleagues'. It's common to charge different rates for different clients, and different jobs. Some discount for 'worthy causes' and some charged higher rates for corporate and government work. A final comment sums up many people's views: 'It's time to move on rates. Editors must work together.'

## Challenges

Keeping abreast of technology was the most commonly listed challenge facing editors (61% of respondents checked this item, of whom a third rated it as number one), followed by increasing income (50%) and extending skills (46%). Other challenges people mentioned included defining career goals, combating the undervaluing of editors, convincing website developers of the need for editors, educating academics about the value of editors and convincing clients of the editor's contribution. Accreditation rated a couple of separate mentions.

There was a big increase in interest in professional development, with 79% of respondents citing this as a development they would like to see, 44% of whom listed it as their number one priority. A greater advocacy role for societies was the second most popular choice of priority for the next two years (61%) and the third priority was national activities for editors (38%). Interestingly, there was less interest education and training in educational institutions. This was down from the second most commonly listed item in 2001 to the fifth item in 2003.

Other developments respondents mentioned were the desirability of accreditation, the need for mentoring schemes for less experienced editors, more opportunities for regional editors and the need for editors to improve their knowledge of related fields, such as design, changes in production and how they impact on editing.

## Subject areas

Most editors are generalists, with 80% of respondents checking two or more subject areas, and 20% specialising in a single subject area. The four most commonly checked subject areas were humanities, education, science, and health, in that order. Subject areas that respondents added to the list provided included social welfare, government documents, investment and finance, art catalogues, histories, computing,

engineering and cycling, rock climbing and mountaineering, with the attached comment that 'believe it or not, these subjects have magazines that require editors'.

Final comments that people made covered many of the areas surveyed above, and more. Here's a selection.

- I think computer literacy is an editor's greatest professional asset after sound general education and editorial training.
- Survey of software in use by editors would be useful. A website of all formal editing training available to Australians, hosted by one of the societies would be a help to many editors.
- The profession is ageing! Where are our successors?
- There is a real challenge in the area of website development to connect the role of the editor into the website development process. The importance of content on sites is still not recognised by some sections of the industry – the role of editing is even harder to promote. However, it opens up a lot of possibilities in terms of employment and increasing the general profile of editing as a profession.
- There should be greater opportunities for entry into editing (i.e. freelancing). Must be industry recognition for those with editing qualifications, and an accreditation process would be an excellent way for new editors to be recognised as professionals and quickly gain credible employment as freelancers.
- The future of our profession is in cooperation not competition.

## Put in your diary – Annual General Meeting

Venue to be announced in next newsletter.

**Wednesday, 14 July 2004**, 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m.

Free for members; there will be a charge for non-members.

As is traditional, at this year's AGM, the Society will pay for members' food, but not drinks. Non-members are welcome to attend, but pay for their own meal, and are ineligible to vote on any motion presented at the meeting.

Please book with Kerry Biram by email at <kerry.biram@bigpond.com>.

# Nightmare on Em street

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## April dinner meeting report by Averil Lewis

Around 25 people attended the April meeting to share and compare their editorial 'horror' stories. Because the usual area was not available, we sat downstairs and confided to a sympathetic audience our own private editorial nightmares.

First came tales from academic publishing, and the biography of a little-known poet. Back in the days of bromides, somehow a line had dropped off the bottom of the page, which meant a problem with page continuity. Luckily, this did not constitute a major problem. The Vice-Chancellor eventually noticed the error, but apart from this no one else seemed to notice. Another publication which had five lines missing and five lines repeated also went unnoticed for two years.

Academia seems fraught with its own publishing problems, especially the issue of staff egos and the list of staff qualifications which appears at the front of university handbooks each year. One editor was dismayed to receive a call from a rather angry VC, whose lengthy list of qualifications (including PhDs) had mysteriously been transposed with a rather lesser DipEd belonging to a contract tutor.

Contents pages are another tricky area. One example for a book on insects listed the page numbers for a completely different, condensed version, which made no sense at all. Another contents list had been computer generated, which had converted smart quotes to square brackets. Another TOC listed an index which had somehow gone missing altogether. Yet another index had somehow undergone a global change, which meant that every letter 'j' had been capitalised!

Printers and typesetters came in for their share of the blame. One book had all the colour plates placed at the very front. One typesetter had included the editor's circled directions ('leave this page blank') in the final copy. One magazine editor was mortified to discover her article, previously signed off and letter perfect, now contained a completely unrelated paragraph, in the printed copy. Worse still, this magazine had a worldwide circulation.

Then there were typos which somehow, some way, had slipped through, often despite checks by several people:

'extention cord', 'pubic policy', 'mulitmedia', 'trajedy'. Embarrassingly, 'prostate' appeared erroneously on the program for a convention. Forty thousand copies of the travel book 'Westen Europe' were printed despite several different people signing off the cover! Wrong years or wrong dates could also be problematic.

Ironically (or perhaps appropriately?), a text on LSD used for psychotherapy appeared with the spine printed upside down and with mismatched cover and title pages! Spines were also a bit of a minefield, often overlooked in the rush to publish. Miscalculating the spine width meant an entire book had to be pulped. On the other hand, 'Voo. II' went unnoticed on another spine until it was due to be republished years later. One editor recalled that she never liked to look at a book once it was published for fear of finding a mistake. Murphy's law was realised when she attended a launch and opened a copy only to discover the author's name had been misspelt.

Protocol was another area of discussion. One editor was horrified to discover that the publisher had overridden the author's directions, deleted all male gender references and inserted a global change (he/she). Although well-intentioned, this was a religious text and the end result was a nonsense.

Mischief could also be involved. The annual report of a significant government department in Canberra was tampered with, when someone altered the artwork to remove Parliament House on the cover. The result was a blank map. Next day the Canberra Times reported, 'Canberra has been taken off the map...'

How were these problems dealt with? Sometimes pulping was the only answer. Sometimes the erratum slip was enough of a quick-fix. Sometimes a 'tip in', where the corrected page was inserted before printing, fixed the problem. And sometimes, quite simply, in the end nobody noticed anyway. And as Susan reminded us, there IS a difference between embarrassment and disaster!

## ABOUT US

### Meredith Butler

Editor in Communications and Publications Unit, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, and freelance editor



*Meredith Butler has been a freelance editor for eight years. She has also worked as a journalist, library assistant, laundry attendant, youth worker and radio producer. In 2001, she swapped the joys of freelance work for the challenges and rewards of part-time work in a busy communications team in the alcohol and drug sector.*

#### **What's the best thing about your job?**

Helping transform academic studies, research findings and clinical knowledge into practical, reader-focused resources. Working with some great people who share a strong commitment to community education, social change and policy reform.

#### **What's the worst thing about your job?**

Not having enough resources to carry out all the fantastic ideas that are presented to us. Having to do more proofreading than I'd like.

#### **What's the best thing about being an editor?**

Working with a diversity of people, words and ideas. Working with a wide range of authors to solve the specific puzzle of better communication for each new job. The satisfaction of watching it all 'come together' into a cohesive and well-structured publication.

#### **What was your first editing job?**

Other kid's school projects and (later) student union and community activist publications (unpaid). My first paid editing work was a Masters thesis on the chemical composition and operational use of sheep dip (for the all-inclusive fee of \$500!). It took me two solid weeks, I learnt everything there is to know about sheep dip, and I discovered why editing theses is a really bad practice (I've never touched one since).

#### **How did you become an editor?**

Looking for a change of occupation after a work injury, I enrolled in a Diploma of Arts in Professional Writing (yes another one, Bryony!) and discovered that people actually make a living out of what I'd always done as a hobby

– mucking around with other people's words. After finishing the course, a group of us worked as editors and desktoppers on some large government and educational projects (a great way to gain basic experience and develop skills) and have subsequently continued as a loose network of freelancers, an invaluable source of job contacts and professional support.

#### **What are the essential qualities of being a good editor?**

A passion for knowledge and for clear, succinct communication. A creative approach to problem solving and a boundless capacity for lateral thinking. Patience for highly repetitive and unglamorous tasks like checking facts and permissions, proofing, and caring about getting style and consistency right when no one else could care less.

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

I'm really enjoying the freelance work I'm currently doing in the area of online delivery of health information. The challenges of editing complex health information for online publication to a general audience are many, but the positive feedback when you get it right is very gratifying.

#### **What is the most tedious job you've ever done?**

A directory of Victorian government and community services, which involved hours of checking details against database printouts and proofing telephone-book-style copy.

#### **Which mistake will you never make again?**

Believing in the concept of a 'light' edit.

#### **Do you prefer to edit on hard copy or on screen?**

On screen, but hard copy is still invaluable for getting an overview of a MS, complex structural editing and final proofing.

#### **What advice would you give to editing students?**

Get out and meet people and listen to their advice. Read lots. Acquire excellent administration, project management and people skills – it's not enough to just be 'good with words'.

#### **What book would you most like to have edited?**

The latest edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*, if only for the research opportunities and lively discussions surrounding the addition of words such as 'quiche-eater', 'desk wallah', 'fuckwitted' and 'dead meat ticket' to the official lexicon of Australian English.

## Training report

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### Editing for On-screen Publishing

The workshop held 3 April was very successful, and the participants discovered some of the secrets to editing for online publication.

Did you know that we read 25% more slowly and comprehend less when reading on screen?

Three rules of on-screen editing

- 1 Keep the writing succinct
- 2 Edit for scannability (users scan rather than read)
- 3 Break up long sections of information

We also learnt how to use links effectively.

There were some exercises for us to hone our new skills on, and generally the morning went all too quickly.

Thanks to Lan Wang for sharing her knowledge with us and I look forward to hearing Lan speak at the next general meeting.

### Further courses

Unfortunately, the Project Management workshop had to be postponed at very short notice and is now scheduled for later in the year. We are trying to bring forward the Structural Editing workshop to late June, so watch this space for further details.

Is there a course you feel you need? Are you someone with skills to offer the other members of the Society? If so Helen and I would like to hear from you. Please email your suggestions to Marta at [bohemian@melbpc.org.au](mailto:bohemian@melbpc.org.au) or Helen at [hbm@datafast.net.au](mailto:hbm@datafast.net.au).

### Membership report

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This month the Society welcomes four associate members: Lydia Di Stefano, Karen Disp-De Boos, Barbara Clay and Rebecca Heitbaum.

Don't forget everyone that from next month, it will be time to renew your memberships. Forms will appear in the *Newsletter*, as well as being available on our website.

### Editors on the shelf

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with Sally Woollett

**Title** *Years of Wonder – A Novel of the Plague*

**Author** Geraldine Brooks

**Reader** Liz Steele

#### In a nutshell

Would you agree to quarantine yourself in a village wracked by Bubonic plague so as not to spread it further? In 1666, the villagers of Eyam in southern England agreed to do just that, despite the daily agonising deaths of family members and friends and the prospect of not surviving themselves. This well written, most enjoyable book by Middle East journalist and former war correspondent Geraldine Brooks is graphic, inventive and based on an amazing true story. The characters are very real and grapple with a range of challenging moral issues and devastating life events. Geraldine Brooks is also the author of *Nine Parts of Desire* and *Foreign Correspondent*.

**The verdict**  Read it  Take it or leave it  Pulp it

Email your literary lowdowns to Sally at [<wools@bigpond.net.au>](mailto:wools@bigpond.net.au). If you disagree with or support someone else's verdict, email and tell us why.

### Some useful software for the freelance office

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How do you figure out how much time you spend on a project? Do you work it all out manually on a scrap of paper or in a spreadsheet? If so, have a look at some of the wonderful shareware programs out there which can do all of this for you.

A good time billing application should not only automatically track the time you spend (and therefore the amount you charge) on any particular project, but also be able to assign different hourly charges for different tasks, projects or clients, generate simple invoices, and export the data to a spreadsheet or database.

You could, for example, try a program called TimeSlice® (you can download a Mac or Windows demo from <http://www.timeslice.us/>, and if you like it, buy it online for US\$49). Once you set up a new TimeSlice file for a project, all you have to do is use the start, stop and pause buttons, and at the end of the project, you can look up the final tally and generate an invoice. This can save you an enormous amount of time and effort and will provide you with an accurate record of all your past jobs. It will pay for itself in no time!

TimeSlice isn't the only time billing program available by any means. You can search for others at <http://www.download.com/> (or any other software database website) by typing in 'time billing' in the search box. Prices range from free to a few hundred dollars, and generally you get what you pay for.

# Findings of the website usage and feedback survey

By Ann M. Philpott

While it could be argued that a total of 31 respondents for the e-list (29) and newsletter (2) website surveys is not a representative sample of our membership, this sample nonetheless has provided some useful data about members' usage of the Society's website as well as a few common observations.

The survey sought to examine individual website page usage for the Society's <www.socedvic.org> website. Members were asked to indicate which one of three options most closely resembled their usage patterns, with the options being once or twice a year, monthly, or twice a month or more.

Nine respondents said that they did not use the website because they were happy with the printed information

supplied by the Society in the newsletters. Some of these people also added that they were too busy to use the website.

Of the 22 who filled in the usage questionnaire, about equal numbers visited the **Home** page either monthly or once or twice a year, and about half visited the **News** section once a month, while a little less than a third visited the **News** section once or twice a year. The **Meetings** information page was most often checked out by respondents once or twice a year; less than a third checked it out monthly. The **Training** information page was visited by about half the respondents once or twice a year; the remaining respondents were virtually split between visiting this page once a month and visiting it twice a month or more.

The **Contacts** page, where the names and contact details of committee representatives can be found, the **Membership** information page with downloadable forms, and the **Freelance** page, where the *Freelance Register* can be viewed, were equally the most commonly visited pages in the survey, and they were all, (with a small exception), only visited once or twice a year. The **Freelance** page was visited twice a month by one respondent and monthly by two respondents, but the vast majority of respondents only visited the **Freelance** page once or twice a year.

The viewing of past and current newsletters on the **Newsletter** page was done most commonly by respondents once or twice a year, with only four respondents doing this monthly. The **Links** page, where useful or interesting websites about editors or editing can be found, was also most commonly visited once or twice a year, with a small number of people visiting this page monthly, or twice a month or more.

A large number of respondents visited the website for news about or publications by **CASE** once or twice a year, with two visiting our site monthly for this information and one visiting our site twice a month or more for this data.

These findings indicate that to date, the Society's website has not been considered by the general membership as an important tool for acquiring regular information about the Society or its events. It appears to be mainly used on a once or twice yearly basis.

As we did not give the respondents the option of specifying the number of times a year they estimate that they have visited a particular web page on our site, it is possible that they may have viewed pages thrice yearly, bi-monthly (that is, every second month) or on quarterly basis. Checking the 'once or twice a year' box meant that their usage of a particular web page was nearer to this option than the monthly option.

## Website redesign report

Graham Hill of Deakin University, Burwood Campus, late last year offered the Society of Editors the opportunity of having Deakin's web design students redesign our website according to our own objectives and as part of their course and assessment requirements.

Our major objectives for the site are:

- to embrace a more professional, modern look that reflects our embracing of technology and the future
- to acquire a site that is easier and quicker to navigate. There should be home and major page buttons on each page, and minimum scrolling
- to save members and the committee time and effort in terms of sending and receiving information and payment. We have asked for electronic online payment facilities and forms.

To date, President, Brett Lockwood and I have had two meetings with the five students who are responsible for redesigning our site. They are Yale Wang, Justin Ng, Andrew Mead, Ashok Manandhar and Henry Chan.

The Committee has selected one prototype website out of a choice of three for further development. It is envisaged that the website will be ready around mid-year and go online in July.

This is an exciting opportunity for the Society to bring one of its communication tools up to a new level of functionality and professionalism.

*Ann M. Philpott*  
Web Manager

*continued on page 10*

The findings also reveal that members are impressed by the quality and timely nature of our printed newsletters. Many members find them wholly sufficient for their information needs.

There were a lot of interesting comments that were one-off comments or suggestions. I have not mentioned them here as I wish to convey an overview of the collective response. I have taken these individual comments on board where possible with regard to the redesigning of the Society's website.

In addition to the general observations and findings mentioned, there was one other collective response. The **Links** page

was well received by those who used it. Several respondents wrote that they were surprised by the range of material found there. The survey even inspired one member to check out the **Links** page for the first time. He was suitably impressed and called for more links to be added. So, if any member out there has a great link that he or she uses or would recommend for professional editors, please email me the details and I shall put it on our site! Email me at <annp@mydesk.net.au>.

I wish to send all respondents a big thank you for taking the time to help our Society by providing valuable feedback on our website. Much appreciated.

## Handy hints for the editorial computer

### Keep your numbers and units stuck together

Following up from my last hint, I've been asked how to solve another common Find & Replace... issue – that of replacing the normal space between numbers and their units with a non-breaking space. This is a useful way of making sure you never get bad breaks in the middle of, say, '20 kg' or '55 cm'.

Again, the wildcard facility in Word will do this quickly and easily. The instructions are similar to the hyphen Find & Replace... mentioned in last month's *Newsletter*.

*Note:* If you have been using Track changes..., you will need to turn it off before you do this Find & Replace..., otherwise it won't work properly.

- 1 Go to Edit > Replace...
- 2 Make sure the 'Use wildcards' option is selected.
- 3 In the 'Find what:' box, type in the following:  
([0-9]) (<[A-z]@>)  
note there is a space between the two bracketed expressions
- 4 In the 'Replace with:' box, type in the following:  
\1 ^ s \2  
note the '^ s' means a non-breaking space
- 5 Click on 'Replace All'.

#### Brief explanation

The '[0-9]' means find any digit. The round brackets mark this as one instance of what you want to find. The first angled bracket in '<[A-z]@>' means find the beginning a word. '[A-z]' means find any letter, whether upper or lowercase, the '@' sign means to repeat the last find (in this case, any letter) and the second angled bracket



means to continue this search until the end of the word. Thus the first line finds every instance of any digit which is followed by a space and any word.

In the second line, '\1' says to repeat whatever it is that was found with the first set of round brackets (in this case, a digit) and '\2' says to repeat whatever was found with the second set of round brackets (in this case, a word). The '^ s' indicates a non-breaking space. Thus, the text will be replaced with whatever the original digit was, followed by a non-breaking space, followed by whatever the original word was. This allows you to just change the space, without having to know exactly what numbers and letters are surrounding it.

*If you have any queries or suggestions for this column, please email Lan Wang at <lanwang@wovenwords.com.au>. These and other tips are available online at <http://www.wovenwords.com.au/tips.html>*

## Miscellanea

### ***The Australian Editing Handbook***

The original edition of this wonderful editing resource by Elizabeth Flann and Beryl Hill has been reprinted by John Wiley and Sons and is currently available in good bookshops. The second edition is in preparation and will be published in early 2005 by John Wiley and Sons.

### **Editor wanted – *Aurealis***

*Aurealis* magazine, the longest running Australian magazine of speculative fiction, is looking for a new editor or team of editors to take over from the current editor, Keith Stevenson, from October 2004, for a two-year period. This position can be based anywhere in Australia.

*Aurealis* sells via direct subscription, a number of retail outlets, and has agents in America and the UK. It is produced twice a year (in April and October) and has Australia Council funding for two issues in 2004. For further information about *Aurealis* see <[www.aurealis.sf.org.au](http://www.aurealis.sf.org.au)>.

This is an unsalaried position. Applications close **Friday, 28 May 2004**.

Send applications, CVs and queries to both of the following email addresses: *Dirk Strasser* – Publisher – <[straz@fhills.hockey.net.au](mailto:straz@fhills.hockey.net.au)>, and *Keith Stevenson* – Editor – <[keith.stevenson@optusnet.com.au](mailto:keith.stevenson@optusnet.com.au)>.

### **AUSTRALEX Conference**

The Biennial Conference of AUSTRALEX (Australasian Association for Lexicography) will be held at the University of Sydney on **Monday, 12 July 2004**, hosted by the Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney and the Department of Linguistics, and the Dictionary Research Centre, Macquarie University.

The conference will take place over one day. It will consist of papers, a session on place-names, and the Biennial General Meeting of AUSTRALEX. A modest conference fee (approx. \$30) will be charged to cover costs, including refreshments.

The conference follows a meeting of the Australian Style Council (9–11 July) and directly precedes the Australian Linguistics Society Annual Conference (July 13–15), which is being held at Sancta Sophia College.

Contact the conference organisers at <[australex@arts.usyd.edu.au](mailto:australex@arts.usyd.edu.au)> or Pauline Bryant at <[pauline.bryant@anu.edu.au](mailto:pauline.bryant@anu.edu.au)> for accommodation and other inquiries.

For further information, and for details of how to submit a paper for this conference, visit the conference website: <<http://conferences.arts.usyd.edu.au/index.php?cf=5>>

### **Access to medical book collection**

The Society of Indexers has access to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Special Exhibition to be held during the Annual Scientific Congress in May.

This special exhibition consists of material on the history of the College, the Cowlshaw Collection, historical surgical instruments, such as an amputation knife used by Lord Lister, artefacts, books and architectural pieces in the College's courtyard. The Cowlshaw Collection is a large collection of books on medicine and related subjects, containing many early, classic and rare editions. It was purchased in 1943 from the Estate of Dr Leslie Cowlshaw, a physician and bibliophile in Sydney.

**Date: Thursday, 13 May**, 4–6 p.m. (guided tour), and afterwards dinner at a nearby restaurant. Meet in the foyer of the building at College of Surgeons' Gardens, Spring Street, Melbourne. RSVP to Jenny Restarick by **Saturday, 1 May** at <[jenny.restarick@csiro.au](mailto:jenny.restarick@csiro.au)> or to (03) 9528 2539 (H).

### **Australasian Online Documentation and Content Conference**

AODC 2004, the 7th Annual Australasian Online Documentation and Content Conference, is the biggest annual event for people involved in corporate documentation, online Help, Web authoring and technical writing. The Conference will be held at the Manly Pacific Hotel in Sydney, **28–30 April**.

The speaker list features 12 experts, including Char James-Tanny, Dave Gash and Gerry Gaffney. The Conference is also a place to network with other documentation professionals and see what's new at the Trade Exhibition.

AODC is jointly hosted by HyperWrite and WritersUA, organisers of the Online Help Conference in the US.

Keep your skills up-to-date, and learn new techniques, tips and technologies. Register at <http://www.aodc.com.au/>.

## ***Dates for your diary***

### ***Next meeting***

**Tuesday (NOT Wednesday!), 4 May 2004**

### ***Annual General Meeting***

**Wednesday, 14 July 2004**



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## **Committee 2003–2004**

### *President*

Brett Lockwood (Freelance)  
9480 1789  
brett@melbpc.org.au

### *Treasurer*

Susan Keogh  
8671 1413  
skeogh@cambridge.edu.au

### *Membership and Correspondence*

Rob Moore (Freelance) 9509  
7067 / 0411 950 649  
cq@datafast.net.au

### *Meetings*

Kerry Biram (Freelance)  
9481 3993  
kerry.biram@bigpond.com

### *Web Manager*

Ann Philpott (Freelance)  
9830 0494

### *Minutes Secretary*

Anne Löhnberg  
annelohn@tpg.com.au

### *Training*

Marta Veroni (Freelance)  
9383 6717

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

### *Freelance Affairs*

Elaine Miller 9504 6880  
lemur44@optusnet.com.au  
Kirsten Slifirski  
thegirls@labyrinth.net.au

### *CASE Accreditation Delegate*

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

### *Immediate Past President and CASE Delegate*

Renée Otmar (Freelance)  
9372 5868  
office@otmarmiller.com.au

### *Newsletter team*

*Editor and advertising:*  
Liz Steele (Freelance)  
lzsteele@melbpc.org.au

*Layout:* Lan Wang  
lanwang@wovenwords.  
com.au

*Proofreading:* Anne  
Findlay (Freelance)  
afindlay@netspace.net.au

John Bangsund, Ruth Dixon, Beryl Hill, Nick Hudson, 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)  
Anne Godden (d. 2004)

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](http://www.socedvic.org)

### **Subscriptions**

Full membership \$66  
Associate membership \$66  
Distant membership \$38.50