

Next meeting

The editor, the writer, the book and its cover

Wednesday, 8 March 2006

Location and time to be confirmed by email.

Alternatively, please visit the website <www.socedvic.org>
for updated meeting details.

There are many 'dramatis personae' involved in taking a manuscript from idea to book or screen. In this March meeting, spend an evening with Pamela Hewitt and Shelley Kenigsberg (NSW) as they delve into the varieties of personalities, strategies, solutions and celebrations involved in getting a manuscript 'cooked'.

About the presenters

Pamela Hewitt is a freelance editor, writer, trainer and proprietor of Emend Editing. Pamela publishes *The Fine Print*, an online journal for editors, writers and developed 'Professional Editing', a series of online training programs for editors. Pamela is a member of the Canberra and NSW societies of editors and has held positions on the executive committees of both societies. She was a member of the National Working Group on Accreditation and is currently a member of the National Working Group on Education and Training.

Shelley Kenigsberg is a freelance editor, writer and trainer, and proprietor of S K Publishing, which she established in 1998. She edits and writes projects for trade, corporate, academic and educational, government and private clients. Shelley is a member of the editorial board of the ezine *The Fine Print*. Shelley has coordinated and delivered the Macleay Diploma in Book Editing and Publishing for the past 14 years. She was President of the NSW Society of Editors from 2001–03, Vice-President in 2004 and is currently the convenor of the Standards Revision Working Group and representative for the IPEd Accreditation Board.

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Changes to Newsletter

We understand the *Newsletter's* significance to members, but after a difficult struggle to get it out to members over the last six months, we feel that it is time to look at other options. Your committee has therefore decided to trial the *Newsletter* in an electronic format for the rest of 2006 and only publish every two months instead of monthly. Other societies have changed over to emailed newsletters successfully, saving considerable costs on printing, handling and posting. By making these changes, we hope we can continue to provide you with a lively and informative *Newsletter*. The immediacy of email when we need to publicise events, jobs or other news also means we can keep you up-to-date on dinner meeting details and training information.

If there is a member willing to take on the *Newsletter* production role for a small fee—'mates rates'—we will then be able to focus some of our energy on other Society matters. Please contact me or our *Newsletter* editor Haya Hussein (email addresses on the back of the *Newsletter*) if you are interested, or wish to comment on any of the above. We appreciate this is a great change, but felt it was a worthwhile option in this electronic age. Any member for whom an electronic version is not feasible can request that a printout copy be sent to them. Please send these requests to Ron Thiele <rthiele@smartss.com.au>.

Liz Steele, President



Dinner meeting notice

Shelley and Pamela ran successful joint workshops on structural editing for the Society of Editors NSW, Hobart and Victoria in 2004 and 2005. They presented joint conference papers at Style Council in Brisbane ('Editing in a digital age') in 2003 and at the October 2005 National Editors Conferences in Melbourne ('Is an e-zine easy?').

Book early to avoid disappointment.

PLEASE NOTE BOOKING DETAILS

Bookings are essential.

The dinner meetings are organised by volunteer committee members—please assist them in this time-consuming task by taking note of the following:

- Book with Helen Bethune Moore <hbmedit@optusnet.com.au>.
- Book **STRICTLY before 5 p.m. on Friday 3 March**. Bookings received after this deadline will not be accepted.
- State if you are a member or non-member of the Society, a member of associated organisations ASTC, AusSI, or if you are a student.
- Give an email address and telephone number.
- If you need to cancel, please email Helen 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.

Membership report

At its December meeting, the committee was pleased to accept to membership of the society Helen Penrose, Eleanor Collins, Fiona Walters, Kelly Styles, Renée Barber, Kirstin Nicholson and Anne Cole as associate members; and Robyn Schorn as a full member.

At its January meeting, the committee also accepted Bronwyn Blaiklock, Stephanie Pearson, Emma Brooks, Kath Selkirk, Alexa Cloud, Zoe Naughton and Denise Lucey as full members; and Marnie Hannagan, Jennifer Hall, Elizabeth Macknight, Virginia Ruchel, Julie Holden, Cassandra Ball, Heather Gallichio, Sally Fearn and Megan Williams as associate members.

Ron Thiele, Membership and Correspondence Secretary

IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors February 2006

IPEd delegates have maintained momentum despite the national torpor that sets in over summer. The Interim Council has taken an important step for IPEd's future by seeking funds from the Copyright Agency Limited. If the submission is successful, the grant will make substantial contribution to our costs over the next three years.

CAL is an Australian copyright management company which links creators and users of copyright material, balancing fair payment to copyright owners with community access to information. Through its Cultural Fund it distributes a small percentage of licence fees to support research, education and cultural development projects that improve conditions for copyright creators and benefit the Australian cultural community.

We believe that IPEd's plans to set up a national organisation and accreditation scheme for editors fit the guidelines of CAL's Cultural Fund, and you'll be hearing more about this submission if it succeeds. Our thanks to Shelley Kenigsberg (NSW), Susan Rintoul (SA) and Katya Johanson (Vic) for their hard work on this.

The Accreditation Board has also been busy preparing its program of workshops to be held in each state and territory. The workshops have the twin aims of informing members about accreditation and identifying their concerns. Although the basic structure of the accreditation scheme has been agreed on, the details are still being explored. Assessors, administrators and potential candidates need to work together on this, so go along to your local workshop and have a say on these plans that are crucial to the profession.

Janet Mackenzie, IPEd Liaison Officer

Your news and views

We welcome any contributions to your Society's *Newsletter*. Please send your letters, articles or issues you would like discussed to Haya Hussein at <hayahu@bigpond.com> or to the address on the front cover of this newsletter.

Dinner meeting report

Accreditation workshop outlines procedure and expectations

by Helen Bethune Moore

The first general meeting for 2006 was auspicious in that it was the first of a series of eight workshops on accreditation to be held nationally. As such, Victoria was venturing boldly into uncharted territory.

Following a convivial barbecue, Katya Johanson, the Victorian IPEd delegate, introduced the workshop and announced the assessors who have so far been nominated nationally to undertake the first round of appraisals. All the Victorian nominees to date were present—Elizabeth Flann, Beryl Hill, Susan Keogh, Janet Mackenzie and Renée Otmar. Assessors from other states will assess Victorian editors, and a full list will be made available as soon as possible.

The aim of the Accreditation Board, according to Katya, is to have the first call for submissions made at the national editors' conference in Hobart in 2007. Katya also spoke about funding: IPEd has submitted an application to the Copyright Agency Limited Research and Development Fund, which, if successful, will greatly assist the accreditation process as well as other projects in which IPEd is involved.

Janet Mackenzie then opened the workshop discussion. She began by emphasising that we are bound by the proposed accreditation scheme, accepted in a national vote, as described in the Final Report of the Accreditation Working Group. The Final Report is available on the IPEd website <www.iped-editors.org>.

Janet pointed out that the Final Report presents only a broad outline of the scheme. The details have to be—and are being—worked out by the Accreditation Board, the assessors, as well as the potential applicants: the members of the eight Australian editors' societies. During the meeting, Robin Bennett, the chair of the Accreditation Board, described the process as similar to unpacking a nest of Russian dolls. Janet saw this workshop as part of this process of fine-tuning the scheme, of getting to the next doll. Janet reminded participants that most working editors will be accredited. Janet said, 'Subject to the views of my fellow assessors, I think the level we should set is that anyone who has been working as an editor for, say, three years can achieve accreditation.'

One of the tasks of the Accreditation Board, Janet said, is to prepare an information kit for applicants, which will set out detailed guidelines and examples of what is required for an application. People should be able to embark on this process

confidently, knowing exactly what conditions they have to fulfil and what sort of evidence is acceptable.

Janet went on to say that the preparation of the application should not be onerous. The Final Report of the Accreditation Working Group states that brevity is a virtue. 'Applicants who present a lot of material don't necessarily prove anything except that they couldn't be bothered to prune the irrelevant stuff,' she said.

Concerns were raised about project managers who may not have had any hands-on editing for some time and their ability to attain accreditation. Janet was quick to point out that editorial management is fully covered in the Final Report.

The view of the Accreditation Working Group is that the application, taken as a whole, should itself demonstrate editorial competence. 'Editors are skilled at structuring and setting out information and presenting it clearly to a target reader, and we want the applicants to show that they can arrange their evidence and their explanation and present this material clearly to the assessors. We want the applicant to set out a case for granting accreditation'.

Janet reminded the workshop participants that 'an editor cannot always achieve perfection—in fact, can rarely achieve perfection'. Accreditation takes into account 'the limitations that can shape a project—the mutable deadlines, the determined authors, the whims of management, the confused clients'.

The importance of the editor–author relationship was also discussed. A testimonial from an author who can support how the editor has improved the 'product' would be favourably regarded. Also, sensitivity towards the author's voice needs to be shown, not written out of existence (unless, of course, that's what a whimsical client wants).

Janet emphasised that people seeking accreditation need to show that they can solve editorial problems within the constraints of a particular project: 'For instance, in selecting an edited manuscript to include as evidence in Part B (of the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*), you don't need to reject all those that have limitations. You can explain in your Part C, for instance, that the brief or the budget permitted only basic copyediting of the manuscript, even though you know the structure could have been improved.

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Us and Them: Arnold Zable



Arnold Zable was born in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1947, and grew up in Melbourne. He attended Melbourne University and Columbia University. He has travelled and lived in the USA, India, Papua New Guinea, Europe, Southeast Asia and China. Formerly a lecturer in the Arts faculty at Melbourne University, Arnold Zable is now

a freelance journalist and teacher of creative writing. His books include Wanderers and Dreamers, Jewels and Ashes, Café Scheherazade, The Fig Tree and Scraps of Heaven. Arnold Zable lives in Melbourne with his family.

What three words describe your relationship with your editor?

With my best editor it has been 'dynamic', 'encouraging' and 'insightful'.

What did you expect from working with an editor? Did your editor surprise you?

I hoped for an editor who was enthusiastic about my work. I was surprised by the degree of genuine support and concern.

Were you happy with what you were able to achieve together?

Yes. It was a productive partnership that has led to three published books, including two novels, in four years.

How critical was the editing process to getting your work to publication?

The editing and publishing went hand-in-hand, because my principle editor is also the publisher.

Some people have described writing as an intensely personal process. Is this so for you? How does your editor fit into this process?

Yes, writing is a very personal process, and my editor fits in by generally reading a completed draft.

How important is trust and respect to the relationship between author and editor? Did you feel your intentions were respected by your editor?

Trust and respect are crucial, and my editor has respected my intentions.

What was the most valuable contribution your editor made?

The most valuable contribution my editor made was to make suggestions that heightened the drama, and tightened the structure of my novels. He had an uncanny ability to detect an absence, and encouraged me to try writing new scenes that would make up for these absences.

What was the least helpful thing (if any) the editor did?

He didn't edit me well enough to win the Nobel Prize.

Would you consider changing your publisher to retain your favourite editor?

Yes, all things being equal.

Please provide a short description of your most recent book and/or of the work you have discussed in the questions above.

The works discussed above are my previous three books, all of which had the same 'big picture editor', Michael Heyward of TEXT. The most recent book is *Scraps of Heaven*, a novel set in an immigrant community in post-war Carlton. The previous novel, *Café Scheherazade*, is set in a seaside café where former refugees tell their harrowing and wondrous tales of survival. The third book, *The Fig Tree*, is a collection of true stories set in Greece, Eastern Europe, Outback Australia and Melbourne.

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Dinner meeting report

This would actually be quite a clever move because it would demonstrate three things:

- that you can do basic copyediting: Standards D and E
- that you can identify the need for structural editing: Standard C
- that you can define a project and work to a brief: Standard B.'

In the ensuing general discussion, people talked about the need for recognition of accreditation from the industry for it to be meaningful. Many people agreed that an accreditation scheme needs to be in place before we can attain that respect, but we also need to have industry support us in our quest for accreditation.

Book review: *At the Typeface*

by Meryl Potter



At the October 2005 Editors' Conference in Melbourne, the Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc. marked their thirty-fifth anniversary with the launch of *At the Typeface*. Rather than offer a simple history of the society, the Victorians have chosen to reflect their history with a selection of articles from past newsletters.

In making that decision they have given us a wide-ranging view of Australian publishing over that period, created an ideal introduction to the industry for newcomers, and given the rest of us a good read. Articles range from short reports on meetings and workshops to longer, more formal papers. The text is divided into 20 chapters, not only on editors and editing, but also on subjects that include the role of the publisher, the business of publishing, the literary scene, production, sales and marketing, and the digital revolution. Pullout quotes throughout provide an extra dimension and also sometimes a commentary on the main story. In the chapter on the digital revolution, for instance, editors are urged to embrace the new technology—but a 1983 quote from John Bangsund points out: 'Computers for editors? Ha! I know publishers who don't provide typewriters for editors' (page 301).

When Janet Mackenzie spoke to the New South Wales society in 2004, she told us that she 'learnt editorial skills from jokes and anecdotes and awful warnings', and you will find plenty of those in here. This is also a book with much helpful advice—whether it's about working with authors, proofreading or setting up as a freelance.

It would have been good to know who everyone is—including a line or two on the background of speakers at the time would have added to the book's value for present and future readers, and current beginners. The editor tells us in her preface that she has chosen 'articles that have an enduring interest for editing and publishing' (page viii), but some have also been chosen for their humour. Nonetheless, it was a serious article that gave me the biggest laugh: in 1987 'Neil also commented that editors no longer concentrate on detail. He suggested that the rise of feminism was the reason for this' (page 71). It seems we just became too uppity to be bothered with the detail and actually wanted a broader knowledge of publishing and to advance in the industry. Elsewhere, editors are criticised for being too narrowly focused on the detail.

Some articles give us a strong sense of being at a meeting, like the one in 1988, where we are told there was 'much muttering and dissension at some tables' and the speaker got 'a subdued sitting ovation' (page 72). In responses to this report in a later issue of the *Newsletter* (page 73), members were taken to task for not being able to take criticism—though one said: 'what I would welcome are concrete

suggestions for training editors, for improving the publishing process to reduce the mistakes that go to press: anything rather than vague complaints' (page 73).

While all of this makes *At the Typeface* a useful reference, it is also a book to read from cover to cover—or at least to dip in and out of until you have read it all. There are hidden gems throughout, and simply reading the chapters with 'editor' in the title will not give you the full picture of the place of editors in the industry (the index is sometimes unreliable—it includes 'criticism of' under the main heading 'editors', but does not include a subentry that brings together praise for editors, which appears in all sorts of surprising places).

A strong theme throughout, not surprisingly, is how we view ourselves as editors and how others see us. Everyone seems to have a view of what we can and cannot do, what we ought to do and ought not to do, and how we should be trained or educated. In 1982 editors were described as 'undervalued, underpaid, and overworked' (page 289)—which sounds regrettably familiar.

In 1987 we hear: 'In his fifteen years in the field... he has observed a general decline in the standards of editing' (page 70). We are still hearing the same thing—I'm surprised that after another 18 years of declining standards we haven't slipped right off the page.

Some speakers said that there was no training for editors in 1970 (page 96), but there are also wonderful stories of 'rigorous training' with those publishing legends Barbara Ramsden and Beatrice Davis. We also get some wonderfully varied advice on how editors should be trained. In 1979 Nick Hudson said 'Give me a graduate who can type and in six months I will give you an editor' (page 108), but by 1994 Steve Roney is quoted as saying: 'If I were designing a curriculum for editors of the twenty-first century, I would like to include the study of poetic theory, classical rhetoric, and drama, to give a feel for spoken language; film; graphic design; database design; the theory if not the practice of hypertext and object-oriented programming; interface design; and game theory. Photography and art appreciation might also be a good idea' (page 112). All I can say is save me from both, please!

In 1994 Wendy Sutherland, with 36 years experience at Oxford and Melbourne university presses at the time, said that 'Being a good editor is a mindset, a personality, an imponderable' (page 163). No mention of typing or the study of rhetoric there.

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The most surprising statement of all comes from 1990, when a report from the executive committee of the ABPA claimed there was a shortage of editors in the country (page 118). In 1995 one editor pleads: 'Stop training more editors and indexers! How is everyone going to earn a living with more and more people entering the field?' (page 111).

As you can see, there is much in this book to entertain, inform and infuriate you—you should definitely buy it.

Meryl Potter is a freelance editor and a member of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. She teaches editing at Macleay College. The Newsletter team thanks Meryl Potter for her permission to reprint this article. This article originally appeared in the newsletter of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc, Blue Pencil, March 2006.

At the Typeface: selections from the Newsletter of the Victorian Society of Editors. Edited by Janet Mackenzie; published by the Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc., 2005; 356 + xii pages; paperback; ISBN: 0-646-45165-0; RRP \$30.00 + \$10 postage. Order from the website: <www.socedvic.org>.

Special offer!

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Random thoughts of a proofreader

by Charles Houen

My current role as proofreader of the *Society Newsletter* has revived memories from a period of more than twenty-five years during which I authored and edited a great many technical and business documents.

My first major experience in authoring and editing documents occurred when I was working in Canada for a Canadian bank in a technical role in the IT division. The bank took great care in ensuring that all of its publications, whether for internal or external audiences, were of high quality. We had detailed style guides for standard document types, though they were not called that. To complicate matters, Canadians have a love-hate relationship with US culture, which they fear will gradually swamp their own. I found Canadian education, culture and politics to be much more similar to ours than to those of the United States. The unending battle against the use of American spelling and styles was not helped by the fact that Microsoft ships its software products with the default choice of US English as the language; many people don't know this, don't care, or overlook choosing their own.

There was also a constant seesaw battle against the American style of writing dates. I managed to resist learning most American spellings and styles, but I still find that I took on some, such as 8:00 AM rather than the Australian form, 8.00 am. Another, more passionate, battle was the one I waged against the imposition of ISO standard dates for use by people in all forms of correspondence and documentation. ISO 8601 specifies a date format of yyyy-mm-dd to avoid confusion in communication across international boundaries; for example: does 01/12/2005 mean 1 December 2005 or 12 January 2005? I maintained that we should use the power of computers to transform the formats that people were familiar and comfortable with to and from the ISO standard in computer-based records, and encourage people to spell out dates so as to avoid confusion (e.g., 1 December 2005).

I have to admit that I have definite leanings toward traditional spellings, usages and styles. I grew up in south-western NSW, a long way from the nearest school. So I did the first five years of school by correspondence with the marvellous Blackfriars Correspondence School, supervised and tutored by my mother, an experienced teacher and a classical scholar in Latin and Greek. Naturally a strong influence, she helped me develop some understanding of etymology; this is why I

still have a problem accepting usages such as 'contrast with' and 'compared to', having grown up with the rule 'compare with, contrast to' that links with the Latin root meanings *cum*, *with* and *con*, *against*. But language changes, as our editor reminds me.

It is very interesting playing even such a minor role as mine in the production of the *Society newsletter*. On the one hand, my task is relatively easy because the authors of articles are professional editors and writers. On the other hand, it could be a dangerous occupation if I irritate those authors with nit-picking pedantry! Fortunately, our editor is a cheerful and ever-helpful guard against my being too zealous. In this role, I have been pleasantly surprised by the very readable text and style guidance of the *Style Manual* and *The Australian Editing Handbook*, and I appreciate the balance and commonsense they both provide. Strictly as an observation, not a criticism, I find it interesting that a profession that sets great store by these authoritative works chooses not to follow all of their recommendations. Our *Newsletter* recently has included examples of these choices such as: a.m., p.m., inhouse, coordinator—perhaps I'm not the only traditionalist!

Since joining the *Society*, it occurs to me that editors must experience stress in working with material and style standards that differ significantly from their own professional writing standards and preferences. I suppose they must be willing to compromise and yet know that they have done all they can to achieve a quality final work. Now if only we had similar 'editors' of the broadcast spoken word to protect us from atrocities like 'bought' for 'brought'!

The wheel will turn full circle for me in March 2006, when I will once more undertake education by correspondence: The University of Southern Queensland's Graduate Certificate in Editing and Publishing, which is a 'distance learning' course provided through a combination of email, Internet and post. After much research, this was the only fully external part-time course I could find, and I understand it was developed with very significant input by the Society of Editors (Queensland). I am looking forward to it; the main problem I anticipate is finding a floor-standing bookstand for the unabridged *Macquarie Dictionary* to bring it within reach of my very small desk!

Dates for your diary

Next meeting

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Application/renewal forms are available from the Membership Secretary or the Society's website: <www.socedvic.org>

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