

## Annual general meeting



*Society members enjoying their meal at the AGM, held on 1 August at the English Speaking Union. Reports from the meeting are included in this edition of the Newsletter.*



*Many of the Honorary Life Members were in attendance at the Society's August AGM.*

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## September dinner meeting

Unfortunately our speaker is now unavailable, so we have had to cancel our meeting for 6 September. Your new committee is meeting on 16 August and will be discussing dinner meetings for the rest of 2006. Details will be emailed to you and will appear on our website.

In the meantime, enjoy the Melbourne Writers' Festival and check out the Victorian Writers' Centre courses for late August and September, including 'The State of Speculative Fiction' with Lucy Sussex, Keith Stevenson and others on 19 September, and 'Introduction to Proofreading' with Ruth Siems from 18 August to 8 September <[www.writers-centre.org](http://www.writers-centre.org)>.



# IPEd Notes

## News from the Institute of Professional Editors

### July 2006

IPEd's Interim Council is making preparations for its first face-to-face meeting since the national conference in Melbourne in October 2005. Delegates will descend on Canberra in the first week of August, and we thank Virginia Wilton and Ed Highley for hosting the meeting and making the arrangements.

At this meeting the Interim Council will review progress so far and chart future directions for the creation of the national organisation. It will also hear reports from the various working groups, and other items on the agenda are finance, the development of the accreditation scheme, news from the societies, and preparations for the national conference to be held in Hobart in May 2007.

After one of its rare teleconferences, the Accreditation Board is completing its current round of consultation with members with the holding of a workshop in South Australia. The first-round assessors, the distinguished editors, are meeting in each state and territory to review the process of assessment and the role they will play. The board has also begun to draft documentation such as the information kit that will be sent to applicants to guide them in preparing their application.

The Standards Revision Working Group, led by Shelley Kenigsberg, has held a teleconference and is making progress with improvements to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. The National Organisation Working Group is recovering momentum under its new convenor, Deborah Edward, and will hold a teleconference this month.

Janet Mackenzie  
Liaison Officer

### August 2006

The Interim Council will be reviewing progress on all fronts at its face-to-face meeting in Canberra in the first week of August. A full report will follow next month.

The Accreditation Board has almost completed its series of workshops for each society to explain how the accreditation scheme will work and hear members' concerns. Board delegates have begun holding meetings in each state and territory for the initial pool of assessors (the 'distinguished editors') to discuss definitions of competency, methods of assessment, guidelines and *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, as well as any other questions raised by the assessors.

The National Organisation Working Group is settling down to work under its new convenor and beginning to look at possible organisational structures.

The Standards Revision Working Group's work is continuing, and members nationally will be invited to contribute to an interactive survey where they can comment on suggested revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Following this, there will be workshops in each state to finalise drafts of the revised *Standards*.

The Communications/Promotions Working Group is seeking testimonials that confirm the value of editing, particularly statements that editing has saved money and time. The sources of the testimonials must be acknowledged (and preferably well-known). If you have a suitable testimonial, please obtain the client's permission and send it to the convenor of the group, Kathie Stove, <kathie@inwriting.com.au>.

Janet Mackenzie  
Liaison Officer



The presenters for the Redact residential weekend have been confirmed. They are senior Victorian editors well known in the profession:

- **Sarah Brenan** (fiction)—Sarah has been editing books for over 30 years. She teaches at the University of Melbourne, and is currently studying for an MA, with a focus on structure in fiction. Sarah is Senior Editor with Allen & Unwin in Melbourne.

- **Glenys Osborne** (education)—Glenys is a freelance editor who teaches editing in RMIT's MA in Communications course. She was formerly a managing editor at Macmillan Education and at Thomson Learning.
- **Paul Watt** (trade)—Paul has over 12 years experience in the publishing industry and has worked for the Gale Group (UK), Addison Wesley Longman and Cambridge University Press. He teaches in the University of Melbourne's Publishing and Communications program and is completing a PhD at the University of Sydney.

Registration forms will be available shortly. In the meantime, to register your interest in Redact, please contact <redact.residential@gmail.com>.

## President's report

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Just on 12 months ago I was honoured to be elected President of the Society, and it has been a most exciting and rewarding year for me and all of our hard-working group.

I was already a member of the Conference Organising Committee so I knew what we had to look forward to in October. However, I certainly was overwhelmed with the success of the national conference, the air of enthusiasm and energy and the pride I felt in what we had achieved for our members and for our many colleagues who attended those wonderful three days. It was an enormous task and although I have already publicly thanked the group who were responsible for its organisation, I would like to do so again—a job well done. I should also say that a very healthy profit from the conference is being earmarked for training development and we are delighted with that.

Part of that great three days was the launch of our book, *At the Typeface*, a collection of articles written over the years by Society members and compiled by Janet Mackenzie. We are proud to say we have sold nearly half of the number we printed, which isn't bad in the first 12 months for an independent publishing project that we have also marketed and promoted ourselves.

Some would say the conference was enough for one year, but it seemed to be a year of great change in other areas too. We did our sums and decided it was time to make the change to an electronic newsletter, following the lead of other state societies. Thanks to the *Newsletter* team of Haya Hussein, currently overseas, Charles Houen, our proofreader, and Lan Wang, the transition has been efficient and fairly painless. We still send out a number of hard copies per month but most members have been very happy with the change.

We have also been busy of late updating and reviewing our website. We are in the process of employing Jorge Silveira, one of our website developers, to maintain and manage the site. Part of this job is to train some committee members on how to upload information regularly so we can better maintain an active, informative and up-to-date website. We recognise that there is just so much we could be doing with the website that we aren't doing at the moment. The wonderful Angeline Yang has saved us this year with her generous offer to be Web Manager and we are extremely grateful for her volunteer efforts.

In the last few months we have discussed closer ties with the Victorian Writers' Centre—and that has to be explored. Possibilities include taking a permanent office in one of their buildings or joining forces with them for the purpose of some training.

We are also going to discuss the possibility of employing an administrative officer for maybe one day a week—someone familiar with the Society and the editing world who could do some of the myriad of tasks your committee do each week. Is

it time for such a role? Many of us think so—some don't—we need to discuss and decide whether we move down that path too.

Another very exciting project under way is the Redact weekend intensive planned for late October. The small group working on this has been inundated with expressions of interest already. We have three excellent presenters lined up and we hope to make it a biannual event focusing on different areas of editing.

We continue to sponsor an RMIT Award and have recently been asked to consider another sponsorship role, in conjunction with the Fellowship of Australian Writers, with the revival of the Barbara Ramsden Award. In the last 12 months, we have also explored improving our relationship with the many TAFE courses in professional writing and editing and hope to do more of that this year. A number of us spoke to these student groups last year and I would like to see us expand that contact. And lastly, we continue to support the hard-working Occasional Series Subcommittee and have just agreed to financially support part of their publishing project. So there is much to think about and work on in the next 12 months, and the committee can only be sincerely thanked for their hard work over this last year.

And that's what I would like to do now. Marta, for your continued exceptional service as training officer and wise counsel; Ron, for your diligence with the membership issues, the e-list and all things to do with correct procedure and protocol (much admired and needed on a committee!); Elaine, our legal, constitutional eagle, freelance affairs expert—ever reliable when you need a considered opinion; Haya—in your absence, our sincere thanks for your hard work as *Newsletter* Editor; Kirstie, for your always fantastic minutes and your clear-headedness—and thanks so much for agreeing to take on the *Newsletter*—you will do a great job; Katya—so cool in a crisis—you have done an excellent job as our IPEd representative and been a much valued committee member; Janet—our mentor, tireless worker, and great ideas person—never leave us; Helen, always generous and hard-working, always offering to help whether with the *Freelance Register* or *Newsletter* and this year as a valued part of the Accreditation Working Group and conference committee—you are a must on any committee; Lydia, an absolute whiz of an organiser, brilliant project manager—what you have done for the dinner meetings and for the conference was remarkable and we are sorry to be losing you; Katherine, ever reliable as meetings assistant and as advisor; Ian, a true gentleman, always there to help under any circumstances; and Rosemary, a more recent addition as web content manager and we are delighted to have you on board—Rosemary let me also thank you publicly for your commitment to Redact and for your exceptional work as part of the conference committee last year. I feel very privileged to be working with you all.

*Liz Steele*

## Membership Secretary's report

The past year, 2005–06, was my second full year as Membership Secretary, and the bulk of the work was ensuring we handled your renewals, change of details and applications for new membership promptly and effectively.

The financial year saw a pleasing increase in our number of members: 77 new members, taking the total from 372 to 449. This was an increase of 17 per cent for the year. While this was less than the 88 new members who joined in the previous year, the slight drop was more than offset by the reduced number of resignations: last year we had 17 resignations, compared to 30 in the previous year.

This steady increase in the number of members is pleasing to us committee members personally as well as good for the Society: it shows we must be doing something right, that members appreciate the services that the Society provides and are prepared to shell out their hard earned cash for them—and also that word is steadily getting out that membership of the Society is a good thing for an editor to have.

This impression is reinforced by our membership numbers for the current financial year. As of this afternoon (2 August 2006), just over half of our 449 members had renewed for 2006–07, almost exactly the same percentage as when I reported to you last year.

I should also say that these membership numbers are in addition to our 16 Honorary Life Members, the state libraries, fraternal organisations interstate and overseas of editors and authors, and bookshops with which the society has regular contact.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those members who applied and/or renewed in a completely regular manner and without the need for any exceptional processing; and also those people who notified us promptly of any change of address or change of email details. Special thanks also to my dear old 84-year-old mother who spent every Wednesday afternoon processing the voluminous membership paperwork.

I would also like to apologise to those people whose correspondence I stuffed up in some way. In my defence, I can only say that if I had a penny for every time I clicked on an incoming Society email, or opened a Society folder on my computer, I'd be a rich man.

Ron Thiele



The 2005–2006 committee

## Freelance Affairs report

Your Freelance Affairs officers are uneasily conscious that the past few years have seen the role focusing almost exclusively on the production of the *Freelance Register*. We have had feedback from various quarters indicating that freelance members are interested in rejuvenating the freelance get-togethers held in the past at lunchtime. We have taken those suggestions on board and plan to organise lunches, or possibly evening events, in the upcoming year.

This year's *Freelance Register* had 98 entries. We printed 700 copies, 600 of which were immediately mailed out to prospective clients in March. Further copies have been mailed out on request. We are continually adding new companies to the mailing list, particularly non-book publishers and government bodies, and would welcome your suggestions and leads for potential clients to whom to send the *Register*. Specific names and job titles are especially useful.

The decision to increase the fee for entries in the 2006 *Freelance Register* was taken because of the substantial amount of money involved in producing it. Fortunately, one of our members offered her services to edit and typeset it, which reduced the cost substantially, but indexing, printing and mailing means we are spending more than three thousand dollars a year on the production and distribution of the *Register* (as will be apparent from the Treasurer's report).

It can be argued that \$120 is a very small sum to be paid for a year's worth of advertising. And it's true that some publishers and managing editors would rather have a hard copy than refer to a website. We also rather like having a 'real' book to refer to, so they're not alone! However, as we all know, hard copies go out-of-date very quickly, whereas websites can be updated as required.

Because of this, and wanting to give members value for their money, we're looking at having the *Register* exclusively on the website, dispensing with a hard copy. In doing this, we could reduce our overall costs for producing the *Register*, a saving which we would pass on to members. The *Register* would be an economical, frequently updated service.

Having the *Register* only on the website would not solve our problems of targeting potential clients. However, tackling this is part of a more general effort to raise the profile of our profession so that people are actively seeking us out. But we do believe the most cost-effective and proactive way forward is to promote ourselves on the Internet.

We'd like to take this opportunity—and we realise you've not had a lot of time to ponder it—to ask a question. Your response will influence the incoming Committee's thinking on the topic. Through a show of hands, who believes we should dispense with producing the *Freelance Register* in hard copy next year? (If you did not attend the AGM but are reading this in the *Newsletter*, please email us with your thoughts: <hbmedit@optusnet.com.au> or <lemur44@optusnet.com.au>).

Helen Bethune Moore  
L. Elaine Miller

## MEAA report

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Now is the time to hold elected officers accountable for broken campaign promises. I quote from last year's Freelance Affairs report, written by me:

Plans for the coming year include the drafting of a standard contract for freelancers, which can be altered to fit particular circumstances.

The coming year has come and gone, with no sign of a standard contract. No doubt many of you who are independent contractors have created your own contracts. I know that even those who do not have their own contract can and do negotiate terms with clients, and understand the prudence of ensuring that both parties are clear about the tasks that will be performed, the fee that will be paid, and what to do if the project expands beyond its brief. However, I haven't abandoned this idea. Indeed, my new job has provided incentive for getting on with it.

In May of this year I started work as an industrial organiser for the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. This is the union that represents 'the people who inform and entertain Australia'—people working in film, TV, live theatre; at the sporting grounds and cinemas; for newspapers and magazines; and in publishing. Not only am I making contact with inhouse publishing staff to assist them with collective agreements that will stand up to the punitive new IR laws that came into effect in March, I have the task of working with freelance writers and editors.

This is harder than it sounds. There's the task of getting around the prohibitions in the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cth) that pertain to organising independent contractors. There's also the 'prisoner's dilemma' involved in convincing editors to charge fair fees when there may be others basing their quotations on half those rates. Finally, there's the question of why you should join a union when the client is not the same as the boss—the boss is you!

I'd like to discuss these issues with all of you, whether you're working inhouse or independently, so I hope you will contact me. This year, with the help of Louise Connor, the Victorian branch secretary of the Alliance, I negotiated a deal in which members of any Society of Editors in Australia get a discount, equivalent to the price of their Society membership, off their union dues, whether new or a renewal. That's \$75 for Victoria. A membership form is included in this *Newsletter*. For more information, please visit the Alliance website at <[www.alliance.org.au](http://www.alliance.org.au)>, or call our Information Desk on 1300 65 65 12.

Meanwhile, that standard contract really is forthcoming this year, and I would be delighted to have input and feedback from you.

L. Elaine Miller

## Accreditation Board Delegate's report

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Helen Bethune Moore served as the Victorian delegate to the Accreditation Board until April, when I replaced her.

The Accreditation Board is a body created by the Institute of Professional Editors, IPEd, to set up the accreditation scheme that was accepted in a national vote at the end of 2004.

The Accreditation Board is consulting and informing members as much as it can with limited resources of time and money. Each society has held a workshop to discuss how the accreditation scheme will work. The Victorian one, conducted by Katya Johanson and me in February, was very well attended and people found it helpful in understanding procedures and expectations. The Accreditation Board is producing a series called *CredAbility* for the societies' newsletters; the articles discuss the concerns that members have raised in these workshops.

The board has drawn up a list of distinguished editors, nominated by the societies of editors, who will form the panels of assessors for the initial round of applications. The list was published in the Victorian *Newsletter* of April–May; our assessors are Beryl Hill, Elizabeth Flann, Susan Keogh, Renée Otmar and me.

These assessors are holding meetings in their home states to discuss the definition of competence and the suitability of *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* as a tool of assessment. The Accreditation Board is working on this in consultation with the IPEd working group that is reviewing the *Standards*. Beryl Hill, Elizabeth Flann and I met early in July; unfortunately the other assessors were overseas at the time but we plan to have another meeting soon.

The Accreditation Board is preparing documentation such as guidelines for assessors, an information kit for applicants and a position description for the secretary to the board. We hope to have these ready so they can be discussed at workshops to be held in November 2006.

The board is also working on other vital tasks such as obtaining funds and developing a campaign to promote the accreditation scheme to employers and educators.

We are always looking to involve more people at a national level, so please consider joining the council or one of the working groups. In particular, both Katya and I are looking for a 'shadow' or alternate, who will sit in on discussions without taking any responsibility until they get a feel for things and decide whether they want to take a more active part. Please speak to us this evening, or contact us by email.

Janet Mackenzie

## Meeting Organisers' Report

Lydia Di Stefano and Katherine Ross shared the organisation and administration of the past year's dinner meetings. All but two of the meetings were held at the English Speaking Union.

**August 2005:** Kerry Greenwood talked about writing crime fiction and how Phryne Fisher, her 1928 lady detective, came to be born.

**September 2005:** Workshop at which Katya Johanson and Janet Mackenzie explained how the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE), now IPEd, formed in 1998 and how the idea of a national organisation dates back at least as far as 1979.

**October 2005:** No dinner meeting due to the National Conference, Editing in Context.

**November 2005:** At the Rathdowne Tavern, Scribe publisher Henry Rosenbloom described his atypical career path in publishing and endeared himself to his audience by describing editors as precious creatures who should be nurtured.

**December 2005:** The Christmas meeting was cancelled due to lack of support.

**February 2006:** The first general meeting for 2006 was the first of a series of eight workshops on accreditation to be held nationally.

**March 2006:** 'From manuscript to final proofs—issues of communication and management' will go down in the Society's history of dinner meetings as the first of its kind. Editors Pam Hewitt and Shelley Kenigsberg sang their presentation at Retro in Brunswick Street. The hilarious lyrics, penned by Shelley and Pam, related the story of a writer approaching an editor to 'publish' her book.

**April 2006:** Simon Johanson, editor of *The Age Online*, Katie Falkiner, online editor for *Destinations* at Lonely Planet, and Heidi Romano, award-winning graphic designer and fine art photographer, discussed the implications, ramifications and intricacies of working with electronic media.

**May 2006:** A panel comprising editing consultant Brigid James, Managing Editor in charge of secondary titles at Macmillan Education Australia Colin McNeil, freelance graphic designer Rebecca Yule and our own Lan Wang discussed the various steps involved in the publishing process from manuscript to final proofs, what is needed for successful freelance and inhouse teamwork and the solving of issues that occur each working day.

There was no meeting in June 2006.

**July 2006:** Joel Becker, Director of the Victorian Writers' Centre, asked 'How many editors does it take to change a light bulb?' He also shared his views on what he described as 'the apparently parlous state of Australian literature in an economically rational, globalised Australia'.

*Lydia Di Stefano  
Katherine Ross*

## Training Officer's report

All workshops have been well attended (to capacity) and some have had to be repeated because of demand. The aim of these workshops is to keep members up-to-date by offering professional training and revision. Please contact the Training Officer if there are courses you would like the Society to offer.

The courses presented this year were:

- Using Word macros for more efficient editing, presented by Catherine Hunt, 23 July  
This half-day course covered:
  - recording macros and assigning them to keyboard shortcuts or buttons
  - find and replace macros and advanced find and replace operations (including wildcards)
  - storing and moving macros
  - suggestions for useful macros for editors
  - troubleshooting.
- Successful freelancing, presented by Renée Otmar and Sally Woollett, 11 and 12 February 2006  
This two-day workshop program introduced the business end of the editing business and explored how a proactive approach, good communication skills and a dose of assertiveness can avert some of the common problems encountered by freelance editors. The workshops were structured to ease participants from theory to practice, with plenty of examples, case studies and common scenarios.
- Advanced Microsoft Word: templates, styles & formatting, macros, presented by Emma Koch, 29 April 2006, repeated 17 June 2006  
The course covered:
  - creating new templates
  - attaching existing templates
  - styles & formatting
  - macros.

*Marta Veroni*

### Receipts for sale of copies of *One of the First and One of the Finest*

At the AGM several people bought copies of the biography of Beatrice Davis, but we didn't record your names. If you'd like a receipt for tax purposes, please email Kerry Biram on <kerry.biram@bigpond.com> or phone 9481 3993 and she will email a receipt. Please indicate if you bought more than one copy.

If you didn't buy a copy at the AGM but would like to, please download an order form from the Society's website <[www.socedvic.org/redirect/pdf/davis\\_book\\_order\\_form\\_1.doc](http://www.socedvic.org/redirect/pdf/davis_book_order_form_1.doc)> and forward it with your payment as directed on the order form.

## Newsletter Editor's report

It's been exactly one year since I started editing the *Newsletter* and, as expected, it's been a pleasant experience to edit the editors. I'd do it again and again if only life was that simple.

The year has been one of many changes to the *Newsletter*, notably to its distribution methods. In April this year, the first electronic newsletter was issued by the Society. And there have been benefits. The process, from editing to layout and distribution, has been simplified. Other benefits have been fewer expenses and the relative lack of restriction on time and copy space. Though we can't completely disregard the amount of pages even in an electronic publication, we don't need to worry too much whether it's one page less or more than usual.

The frequency of the *Newsletter* has also changed. It has gone from being a monthly issue to a two-monthly one. This had to happen because every month was a mad scramble to find enough copy and because full-time work for me was, well, full-time. The former reason is a pity because I feel that matters concerning editing shouldn't ever dry up. Surely there's something new in what we do every day; skills that are supplemented, created or remodelled; technical tips that are passed on or over; processes to be described and decried; words that are discovered or divested of their meaning; usage that is assassinated or resurrected; language that puzzles or confronts. Then, there are all these new environments and contexts for editing: multimedia editing, web editing, Open Access and the multi-coloured roads to online academic publishing, blog-editing, and all that fun. There's certainly a need to know more about what it is that other specialised editors do.

But more importantly, there's also how we're developing as a profession. Students of editing would be happy to know that there is now a substantial amount of material available to use for their research on the editing profession in Australia. The *Newsletter* this year is testament to these developments with regular information on how the profession is moving forward to institute high standards for the profession, and what it is doing to ensure that its professional history is recorded. These are in the form of IPEd Notes, the Occasional Series on Australian Editors and, more recently, CredAbility.

The *Newsletter* has profited from the contributions of those who have felt it was important enough to put pen to paper for it. Whether it was a paragraph, a two-page essay or an official notice, it is an immense service to the members that these are written. Contributors are the ones who convert this tiny publication into a substantial and valuable source of information to members today and to future members. I thank them for their time and effort.

And, of course, the quality of the *Newsletter* this year is due to the impeccable proofreading of Charles and the skillful layout of Lan. Thank you both.

*Haya Hussein*

## Website Content Editor's report

I have recently been co-opted on to the Society's committee in this new role, to take up some of the work of various other committee members by acting as a filter between the Web Manager, Angeline Yang, and the various committee members who add content to the website.

As you would be aware, we launched our new site in 2005 and at present it is receiving about one thousand hits a month from different computers. Jorge Silveira designed and built our new website last year and we are about to launch a more user-friendly version. Watch out for a notice on our e-list about the launch. We are working with Jorge to gradually improve all the functionalities, especially those connected to the membership database and administration.

### Future plans

**Site structure:** The committee has looked at the structure of the site and compared it with the sites of other state societies. Some of these appear to be aimed more at external browsers looking for editors, while others are more focused on serving their members. Both groups are important, so we are discussing the ways we can best serve both groups by making the site easy and inviting for our members to use as well as attractive and useful for non-members to visit and gain information.

**Training:** The latest version of our website has been built using a content management system that should be easier for non-technical people, such as myself, to upload and remove content in a more timely fashion. To this end we have asked for and received a quote from Jorge on a training session for some of the committee and we hope this will occur within the next month or so.

**Procedures:** In order to maintain a high-quality site and model best practice in website administration, I am keen to develop a set of procedures that will outline protocols for authoring, authorising and proofreading copy to be uploaded, as well as serve as a training manual for future web editors.

I look forward to being able to report on these accomplishments next year.

### Acknowledgments

I have already mentioned Jorge Silveira who, as our web developer, has been a delight to work with. I would also like to pay special tribute to our Web Manager, Angeline Yang.

Angeline has been working as our Web Manager for the past year. She is a delight to work with, always good-humoured and patient when it comes to our many requests. Thank you, Angeline, for all of your work for the Society of Editors. I have really enjoyed working with you over the past little while and hope to continue to do so while I and other committee members come up to speed on administering the site.

*Rosemary Noble*

## July dinner meeting report

# How many editors does it take to change a light bulb?

Joel Becker, Director of the Victorian Writers' Centre (VWC), was guest speaker for the dinner meeting on 5 July 2006. Joel started by asking 'How many editors does it take to change a light bulb?' After some banter with the audience, Joel said the answer is 'Don't you mean a light globe?' He would revisit that answer later.

Before addressing his main topic, Joel begged our indulgence for some SBS-style announcements about initiatives the VWC is working on and how the VWC and the Society may be able to work more closely together. The VWC is partnering with the National Trust in setting up nine studios at the Trust property Glenfern, in East St Kilda, which they are leasing to writers for periods of one to six months. There will be vacancies in early 2007. Joel is also talking to the state government about a 'literature hub', which could host organisations like the VWC, Express Media or a National Poetry Centre; it could also provide shared office space for organisations needing part-time offices, like PEN, AWG, ASA, or perhaps the Society of Editors (Victoria). Shared facilities would also include a library, exhibition space, and meeting, workshop and performance spaces. Concerning how the VWC and the Society could work more closely together, Joel suggested courses, seminars and workshops, use of Glenfern, meeting and office space.

Turning to his main topic, Joel gave an overview of the discussion of the state of literature in Australia over the last thirty years, from the time when we first embraced the idea of Australian literature, until the present debate about 'the parlous state of literature in Australia'.

At the beginning of this thirty-year period, literature was heavily subsidised: through the Australia Council and state government arts councils; through a number of publishers who were prepared to take financial risks in publishing emerging Australian writers; by some booksellers, and by the public who, Joel said, bought books by unknown Australian writers simply because the publishers and booksellers made them available. Among the writers who benefited from this support were Kate Grenville, Peter Carey, Elizabeth Jolley, Robert Drewe, Tim Winton and Olga Masters. Publishers and editors had been prepared to take the risk that, although the writers' first books might not make money, they had more books in them. Joel questioned whether some of these writers and books would be able to get published today.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, this sort of risk-taking publishing started to diminish; reviews began to suggest that books were being poorly edited and book quality was suffering. Were too many books being published, and poorly edited? Joel believes that during this period publishers were coming under pressure from marketing and finance departments to meet particular profit goals—conflicting with their passion for publishing Australian works. He believes that, under this pressure, the editing budgets were the first to be reduced; so it wasn't editing

quality that declined, it was the commitment to undertaking enough editing.

From the mid-late 1990s to the present, global publishing has become a reality. The international publishers are controlled from the USA, the UK, or, increasingly, France or Germany. Joel suggested that Australia is 'a small crater on the dark side of the Moon for these global corporations'. Joel believes that these corporations ask 'why spend on Australian publishing when we can bring in our products already published overseas?' The result is that less Australian literature is being published, and the editing is done elsewhere.

Joel cited the real example of Carrie Tiffany's novel *The Cultivator*; in the early part of this millennium, she was getting a lot of interest from publishers, but they all asked her to do more work on the manuscript before coming back to them. Joel was on a panel of three judges for the inaugural Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished work by an emerging Victorian writer, and Carrie's book was awarded the prize of \$15 000 and a structural edit provided by the VWC. After that, the book was contracted first by Picador UK (Joel asked whether in some instances Australian publishers lacked the confidence to publish such a distinctly Australian book until it had an international imprimatur). It was then contracted by Picador Australia and Scribner in the USA, who ran a 30 000 print run of the hardcover edition. Re-titled *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*, acclaim and success followed: the book was listed and short-listed for prizes such as the Commonwealth Writer's Prize Regional, Miles Franklin and others, and has sold nearly 20 000 copies in Australia. To highlight the change in the publishing climate that has occurred, Joel said he believes that had Carrie written her book in the 1980s, an Australian publisher would have provided the structural edit, accepting this as the cost of supporting a promising first-time author.

Joel expressed his anger that the current state of Australian publishing may be resulting in good books, like *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*, sitting in writers' drawers. He wonders if government subsidies, book bounties or other incentives are needed. He related another case illustrating the overriding financial considerations governing Australian publishing: a revised edition of a book that the publisher agreed could sell 5–6 000 copies at \$22–25, but said that wasn't worthwhile. However, he said he isn't completely pessimistic—Australian publishers like Allen & Unwin and Text, and some small independents, are taking risks with quality Australian fiction. On the other hand, it is becoming more difficult to get the Australian public to choose local literature over international works.

In conclusion, Joel said, tongue-in-cheek, that maybe none of this is important—does it matter if everyone talks with a mid-American twang and a light bulb is called a light globe? Does it

*continued on page 9*

# Annual general meeting report

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The English Speaking Union was packed to capacity for the Society's Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 1 August. Those who attended, including a record number of Honorary Life Members, enjoyed a delicious two-course meal provided by a new catering team, following the last-minute withdrawal of the Society's regular caterers. The evening ran smoothly and was greatly enjoyed by all.

The formal aspect of the meeting began with outgoing committee members presenting their reports. Ian Willson, our Treasurer, presented a provisional annual financial report; the final version will be published in the September *Newsletter*. Rosemary Noble, who has joined the committee in the role of Web Content Editor, took the opportunity to thank Angeline Yang for her volunteer services as Web Manager this year and presented her with a token of the Society's appreciation.

The elections themselves ran smoothly, with Liz Steele being re-elected as President. Haya Hussein is stepping down as *Newsletter* Editor and Lydia Di Stefano is stepping down as Meetings Organiser. On behalf of the committee, Liz thanked both of them for their hard work in 2005–06. The committee welcomes two newly elected members: Stephanie Pearson and Melanie Dankel. The roles of the committee members for the year to come will be published in the September edition of the *Newsletter*.

The proceedings then turned to the formal presentation of an Honorary Life Membership to Jackie Yowell. Jackie spoke of how honoured and overjoyed she felt to be classed with the other HLMS, and she thanked the committee for recognising her unique contribution to the editing profession. Diane Brown and Lee White described some of the highlights of Jackie's career, and Jackie herself reminisced about her involvement with the Society in its early days, which included campaigning for better wages for editors and organising training workshops.

A brief question and answer session followed. When asked about the possibility of reviving an award for editors, Jackie spoke eloquently about the merits of such an award in raising the profile of editors on a national level. Acknowledging that it is difficult to determine the criteria for judging an editing award, Jackie suggested that perhaps authors could nominate their editors, rather than having their own work 'docked in'.

Finally, Liz Steele presented two Awards for Outstanding Service to the Society: to Lan Wang and to Janet Mackenzie. Over the past four years, Lan has volunteered her services for tasks as diverse as laying out the newsletter, leading the national conference committee, preparing and distributing a CD of conference proceedings to all registrants, typesetting and organising the printer for *At The Typeface*, and advising the committee on the shift to digital production of the *Newsletter*

and the development of our website. Janet Mackenzie, our 'committee mentor', has represented the Society on the national level since 2001, playing no small part in putting together the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Janet is now our representative on the Accreditation Board, as well as being one of our first assessors. She also compiled *At the Typeface*, and was a keynote speaker at the national conference last October. Her most recent service to the Society is as one of the principal drivers behind the first Redact editing retreat (to be held in Mansfield in October).

Our thanks to Kerry Biram for taking photographs of the occasion. These will soon be available on our website.

*Kirstie Innes-Will*

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## July dinner meeting report

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matter if we don't read some things in an Australian context? 'Far be it for someone with a mid-American twang to try and influence your views', finished Joel.

Joel's talk inspired many questions. The influence of other media on children's attention spans and their ability to deal with literature was discussed. There was also interest about the VWC, how many members it has and who they are; Joel said that their approximately two thousand five hundred members came from varied backgrounds and included students, developing and emerging writers, people interested in recording family histories, and at least some part-time professional writers. He said that at any time there would be perhaps five to seven hundred who publish in some form.

One service the VWC offers is professional manuscript assessments. Joel was asked about the rates paid to the assessing editors, given that the time to assess a manuscript of up to 80 000 words would be at least a day for reading and another to write the report. The advertised cost of such a report is \$360. Joel said that the actual cost is partly subsidised by VWC. Other questions covered how many books VWC members get published per year (about six or seven), how the VWC refers members to editors and agents (to the Society's *Freelance Register*), and the free TAFE and university course information nights run by the VWC.

It was obvious that Joel's talk was of great interest, and a number of members stayed in conversation with him after the talk.

*Charles Houen*

# Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

## Good reasons to join the Alliance

It's a critical time for people working in Australia, and that includes editors.

The Work Choices legislation, which came into force on 27 March 2006, reduces the relevance of awards by getting rid of a range of entitlements. The award that has provided minimum pay and conditions for editors is the Journalists' (Book Industry) Award 1998. Its terms are extremely minimal, to say the least. Moreover, the Federal Government's Award Review Taskforce will further reduce award entitlements.

The new laws also make it unlawful to bargain for things such as protection from unfair dismissal, limits on outsourcing, and 'matters that do not pertain to the employment relationship'—a very wide range, however interpreted.

It is crucial that employees who want to protect their wages and conditions have collective agreements in place, and where employees are members of a union, this is much easier. The conditions we enjoy in Australia are the result of more than a century of active union involvement in the workplace, and the new laws' restrictions on the power of unions pose a real threat to people's financial and job security.

## What about freelancers?

A freelance editor must negotiate his or her own rates. Not only should fees reflect experience and expertise, freelance editors must also factor in personal and business taxes, expenses such as facilities, equipment and an Internet connection, and saving for retirement. Raising your fees is not an impediment to getting work if other editors do so as well. The effect of talking openly with other professionals about fees, and deciding together to raise the 'market rate', is that of powerful collective action.

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance is actively reaching out to freelance workers in the communications industries. In both South Australia and Victoria, freelance writers have started a network, with the help of the Alliance, to share knowledge and discuss issues including contracts, pay and publicity.

## A union is as strong as its members

The Alliance is the union for people working in the areas of media, communications, entertainment, arts and sport. Through the Alliance, people come together to demonstrate that strength comes from numbers, and by working together we have the strength to change things we cannot change on our own.

Registered with the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and in each state, the Alliance is the officially recognised body representing members on all industrial matters, including negotiating our agreements and providing advice on contracts. It uses its influence to lobby government and other industry bodies for strong and independent Australian media, publishing and entertainment industries.

## How much does it cost?

Alliance membership fees are on a sliding scale according to income, with the expectation that a person's membership fees will be approximately 1 per cent of his or her annual income. That's about the same as a couple of cups of coffee a week.

However, recognising that we are not a particularly highly paid job category, **the Alliance is offering a union membership discount for all members of Australian Societies of Editors**, starting in the 2006–07 financial year. New or existing members of the Alliance can receive an amount off the membership fee equivalent to the amount of their Society membership, with proof in the form of a tax receipt.

All membership fees are tax-deductible.

## How to join the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Print out and complete the form on pages 11–12, seal it in an envelope and post to:

Alliance Membership Centre, Reply Paid 70769, Locked Bag 526, Spring Hill QLD 4004 (no stamp required).

## Alliance membership fees

Alliance membership fees are levied annually by Federal Council according to your income and what section of the industry you work in. Some sections also have an application fee.

### Media section

Annual income	Alliance fee level	Weekly amount payable (before Society of Editors discount)
Up to \$14,999	Level 2	\$ 4.81
\$15,000–\$29,999	Level 3	\$ 6.56
\$30,000–\$57,999	Level 4	\$ 9.61
\$58,000–\$74,999	Level 5	\$14.42
Over \$75,000	Level 6	\$18.27

Full and Associate Members of Australian Societies of Editors in all states and territories are entitled to an annual discount equivalent to the amount of their Society's annual membership fee. For example, if you are a Full Member of the Society of Editors (WA) and you earn \$45,000 per year, your annual Alliance membership would cost you \$8.45 per week instead of \$9.61 per week.

More information is available on our website <[www.alliance.org.au](http://www.alliance.org.au)>, or call our Alliance Membership Centre on 1300 65 65 13.

# Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Membership Form

## Personal details

Surname \_\_\_\_\_ Given names \_\_\_\_\_

Title  Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Dr Gender  Female  Male

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ I am an Australian citizen or resident  Yes  No

I have previously been a member of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance  Yes  No

Home street address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Home postal address (if different from street address) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work fax \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile phone \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred email \_\_\_\_\_

Other email \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive the weekly Alliance E-Bulletin?  Yes  No

## Employment details

Current employer \_\_\_\_\_ (or freelance)

Current occupation or job title (e.g. Editor, Senior Editor, Trainee Editor, Editorial Assistant) \_\_\_\_\_

Annual gross salary \_\_\_\_\_ Employment status:  Full-time  Part-time  Contract  Casual

## Society of Editors membership details

(Please enclose a receipt from your Society showing membership fee paid and date)

- |                 |  |   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| <b>Canberra</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$60)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$45)                 |
| <b>NSW</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> New member (\$75)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing member (\$70)           |
| <b>QLD</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$45)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Distant Full (\$22.50)           |
|                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$35)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Distant Associate (\$17.50)      |
| <b>SA</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$55)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$30)                 |
| <b>Tasmania</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$60)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$40)                 |
| <b>Victoria</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Full or Associate metro area (\$75) | <input type="checkbox"/> Full or Associate Distant (\$45) |
| <b>WA</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$60)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$50)                 |

## Method of payment

Cheque or money order enclosed       Credit card (see below)\*       Direct Debit (see below)\*

\* Paying your Alliance fees by periodic deductions saves the union money and we want to pass these savings on to you. If you sign up for automatic deductions (either credit card or direct debit) **we will waive your joining fee.**

For further information, contact the Alliance's Membership Centre for the cost of a local call on **1300 65 65 13**.

## Credit card payment

**To pay your fees by periodic credit card deduction, please fill in this section of the form.**

I would like to pay my Alliance membership fees by credit card. Please debit my credit card for membership fees:

Weekly       Monthly       Quarterly       Half-yearly       Annually

Bankcard       MasterCard       Visa       AmEx       Diners

Card number

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Direct Debit

**Request for debiting Amounts to Accounts by the Direct Debit System to pay Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (form DDR)**

Please debit my bank/credit union account for membership fees:

Weekly       Monthly       Quarterly       Half-yearly       Annually

Name of financial institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address of financial institution \_\_\_\_\_

I/We \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert your surname or company/business name) (Insert your given names or ACN/ABN)

request you until further notice in writing to debit my/our account described in the schedule below any amounts which the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (ABA No. 063704) may debit or charge me/us through the Direct Debit System.

I/We understand and acknowledge that:

- 1 The Financial Institution may, in its absolute discretion, determine the order of priority or payment by it of any money pursuant to this Request or any authority mandate.
- 2 The Financial Institution may, in its absolute discretion, at any time by notice in writing to me/us, terminate this Request as to future debits.
- 3 The User may, by prior arrangement and advice to me/us, vary the amount or frequency of future debits.
- 4 By signing this Direct Debit Request you acknowledge having read and understood the terms and conditions governing the debit arrangements between you and the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance as set out in this Request Service Agreement to be provided upon commencement of Direct Debit.

Customer signatures \_\_\_\_\_

(If joint account, all signatures may be required.)

Customer address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

The schedule \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert name of account which is to be debited)

BSB Number \_\_\_\_\_ Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:** Direct debit is not available on the full range of accounts. If in doubt, please refer to your financial institution.

## Dates for your diary

### Melbourne Writers' Festival

25 August – 3 September 2006

### Victorian Writers' Centre courses

The State of Speculative Fiction, 19 September

Introduction to Proofreading, 18 August – 8 September



If undeliverable,  
please return to  
PO Box 176  
Carlton South VIC 3053

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### Honorary Life Members

John Bangsund, Ruth Dixon, Elizabeth Flann, 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, Jackie Yowell

John Curtain (d. 1999)

Stephen Murray-Smith (d. 1988)

Beatrice Davis (d. 1992)

Anne Godden (d. 2004)

Frank Eyre (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.

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

### Subscriptions

Full membership \$75

Distant membership \$45

Associate membership \$75

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