

## Next dinner meeting

### Fishing boats, the First Fleet, and Animal architects

*Author / Illustrator John Nicholson and his editor Sarah Brennan talk about the process of creating illustrated non-fiction for children*

**Wednesday 12 November, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm**

**Lanai Bar – Duke of Edinburgh Room**

**113 Queen St (cnr Little Collins St) City**

**(Car parking on site, kerbside, or near Queen Victoria Market)**

**John Nicholson** is an award-winning author with a passion for the built and natural environment and its impact on human society and history. Born in Singapore, educated in New Zealand and Australia, John worked as an architect for twenty years before starting to write and illustrate children's books full-time.

John lives with his partner and their daughter in a solar-powered house they built themselves in the bush near Melbourne. He relishes the detailed research that goes into his books and is renowned for his attractive and accurate illustration of the world around us. Many of John's books have been short-listed in the Children's Book Council's Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, and four of them – *The First Fleet*, *A Home among the Gum Trees*, *Fishing for Islands* and *Animal Architects* – have won the award.

**Sarah Brennan** has been an editor for over 35 years, initially in academic books (OUP) and most recently in children's books (at Allen & Unwin). Her work has encompassed a great variety of genres, from *Noxious Weeds* of Eastern New South Wales to a Frank Moorhouse novel, to the centenary history of the ALP, board books for babies, and even a book of dog horoscopes.

**PLEASE NOTE BOOKING DETAILS on page 3 of this issue**

## December Dinner Meeting

### Make a date for end-of-year frivolity

Wednesday 3 December 2008, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm

English Speaking Union

146 Toorak Road West (between Walsh and Marnie Streets)

South Yarra (Melway 21 4E)

Keep the date free to celebrate an evening of end-of-year fun and festivity! More details to follow.

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## Registrations for first accreditation exam please organisers

Registrations for the first national accreditation exam for professional editors, to be held on Saturday, 18 October 2008, have exceeded expectations. On 20 September I reported to the Committee that, 'We are going through the roof with exam registrations – currently at 56 and about 180 nationwide.'

I have booked the Wesley College Senior School Study Centre as the venue for first national accreditation exam in Victoria. As registration is still open at the time of writing I do not have a final number for Victoria but due to some registrants deferring until 2009 the number sitting the exam in Victoria will be less than thought earlier. We are delighted though, with nationwide registrations now at 190 and congratulate the IPEd Board, the Accreditation Board and the Assessors Forum for all their hard work and dedication.

An exam preparation workshop was held at the September dinner meeting and is reported on in this issue. Details of the venue, parking and entry point to the school will be available on our website and the IPEd website by the end of this week.

*Liz Steele*  
President



# Exam workshop report

## Report on the exam workshop conducted for members

10 September 2008, Lanai Bar, Melbourne

About 60 editors attended the accreditation exam preparation workshop at the Lanai Bar in Melbourne. Similar workshops have been held in all states and Canberra in the lead up to the exam and have provided a great opportunity for members to get some tips on how to prepare. Rosemary Noble commenced the workshop by reviewing the exam structure and suggesting time people should spend on each section.

The presenters stressed that everyone should take the time to not only look at the sample exam online, but to actually complete it, and to time themselves. They also mentioned that the September issue of the Society of Editors (Vic) Newsletter has some great tips. If anyone does fail the exam, the Accreditation Board will provide feedback in the form of a brief report and some guidance on general areas of weakness, but they won't provide detailed comments on specific questions. People who fail can re-sit the exam once more at a reduced fee.

The aim at the moment is to hold the exam once a year, depending on numbers, perhaps with an additional sitting at the national IPed conference. There has been some interest and enthusiasm from the publishing industry, including one government department already including it as a requirement in their tender documents! In-house editors are encouraged to talk to their managers and seek support if they are thinking of sitting the exam. The accreditation exam is a legitimate professional development activity and fully tax deductible.

At the meeting, about half the participants said they intended to register.

### The Exam

Candidates are permitted to take published references, but not loose papers, into the exam. If you would prefer to use a style manual or house style other than the Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers (6th edition, by Snooks & Co., 2002), make sure you inform the Exam Coordinator beforehand. You will also need to show the invigilator the bound copy of the publication/document (no loose-leaf photocopies will be allowed) on the day, and provide that copy for the examiner to check against while marking. Obviously, if you choose to use an alternative published style manual such as The Chicago Manual of Style, you do not need to provide a copy, but you will still need to inform the Exam Coordinator and write the full title on your exam paper. Rosemary advised people to limit themselves to two or three references that they use regularly in their day-to-day work, and to undertake some preparation by marking specific sections of their references that they may need to refer to during the exam. The more references you bring to the exam, the more time you may waste searching through them.

Preparation is the key to passing the exam. Even the most experienced editor doesn't want any surprises on the day. Ensure you:

- time yourself while sitting the sample exam
- look at the answer sheet and marking guide
- read the general guidelines and Q&A on the IPed website.

Editors may bring in pencils, but the presenters issued a word of caution about the use of pencils on the exam paper. All exams will be scanned for marking, security and archiving purposes, and not all pencils and ink pens scan well. Coloured highlighters should not be used on the exam paper. A list of recommended media (pencil and pen types) is available on the IPed website to ensure editors are able to get the best result in the media they wish to use; the list will also be included in the confirmation of registration letter that will be sent to all registered candidates prior to the exam.

Electronic references are not permitted or possible at this stage. The Accreditation Board is currently investigating options for electronic and/or online delivery of the exam in the future.

The presenters confirmed that overall pass rates would be made public, but individual results would remain confidential, unless candidates indicate on their registration form that they wish to be included in a published list of Accredited Editors.

The Society of Editors (Vic) *Freelance Register* (electronic version) will include editors' accreditation status if requested.

### Marking

The assessors will spend a weekend together to work on marking the exam and participating in moderating sessions to ensure consistency is maintained. All papers will be marked anonymously, which is why candidates will need to write their candidate reference number on each page of the exam booklet. The exam will be well moderated.

### The Workshop

Participants were unanimous in wanting to focus on parts two and three of the exam, so each table discussed those sections and reported back to the group with tips and some questions.

### Part Two

- People felt the time recommended for this section was spot on.
- Most people recommended doing this part first.
- Ensure you read the brief. Don't perform a structural edit if the brief tells you not to, for example.
- Style sheet: if you state that you are using a particular published reference, the assessors will assume you are using it consistently. You don't need to note every single style decision taken during editing.
- Another approach is to imagine you are preparing the style sheet for a proofreader – what information would you supply to them?
- Other people felt it was important to mark all relevant decisions in the interest of showcasing your skill and approach. But try not to overdo it!
- Look at the allocation of marks for each section and spend your time accordingly. If the style sheet is only worth 20 points, but the extract is worth 200, that will give you an indication of how much time to weight each section.
- State up front any global changes, as this will save you time later when you don't have to mark every instance.

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- You will receive two copies of the extract (one printed single-sided, in loose-leaf format, to scribble on and one in the exam booklet, to mark up for submission). Both will have to be submitted, but only the one in the booklet will be marked. The other is for working on. It may not be removed from the exam room.
- Don't get bogged down in heavy-handed rewrites. This exam is about copy-editing, not substantive editing.

### Questions

There are a number of ways to approach the extract in Part 2; to what extent are assessors looking for a particular answer versus a range of options? Assessors will consider a range of options.

### Part Three

- Choose your four questions during your reading time and flag them as soon as you are allowed to write. That way you won't waste time re-reading questions you aren't going to do.
- People felt there was a good range of questions and broad coverage.
- Make sure you get the main points down.
- Don't judge questions on the headings, read what is actually being asked.
- Some people mentioned they referred to their references a lot and it would be useful to tag them.
- Some of the questions were quite leading and this helped a lot.
- Some questions may be about a number of issues, not just one.
- Pick topics you know something about so you can rely on that underlying knowledge.
- Choosing four out of 12 is generous.
- Don't overwork your answers.
- Read the questions carefully.

### Questions

- What if the in-house procedures you follow and are familiar with differ from the standard answers expected from the assessor? Answer the question, read the brief, make sure the assessor can understand your intention.
- What if you do five questions? Will they judge the top four? You must nominate the four questions you wish to have assessed.

### General Exam Tips

- Put your candidate reference number at the top of each page as you work so you don't run out of time to do it at the end.
- Work as fast as you can and as hard as you can.
- Trust your memory, don't feel you have to double check everything.
- Bring post-it notes. If you get stuck on something, tag it and come back to it.
- Don't do what you're not asked to do.
- Watch the clock.

- Loose papers will not be marked.
- Remember, this is an exam. The purpose is to show what you know, even if it's obvious.
- Just because you take a different approach doesn't mean it doesn't have merit. Editorial discretion will be looked upon favourably, as long as your intention is clear.
- Ask yourself: have I done enough to pass?

*Melanie Dankel  
Training*

## Booking details for November dinner meeting

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 Christina Ratcliffe – email preferred – at [quillpower@bigpond.com](mailto:quillpower@bigpond.com) or phone 0400 655 884. (Ask Christina for public transport map if you need one.)
- Please book as early as you can, but definitely before 5 pm on Monday 10 November.
- State if you are a Soc Eds member, or a member of WWC, ASTC, AusSI, or APA, or a non-member student.
- Cost: \$25 members, \$20 students, \$30 non-members. (Pay cash or cheque on the night; no credit card facilities available.)
- Please state if you are a vegetarian.
- If you need to cancel, please contact Christina as soon as possible.
- If you cancel after 7.00 pm on the day before the meeting, the Treasurer will contact you shortly after and ask you to pay as if you had attended.
- People who arrive on the night without a prior booking will be unable to attend.

## Snapshot of Australian editing profession in 2007

Freelance editor, writer and trainer Pamela Hewitt has provided us with her report on the fourth national survey of editors, which was conducted at the May 2007 conference held in Hobart. Pamela writes, 'There were 132 responses to the survey, an increase on the responses to the third national survey of editors, carried out in October 2005 at the Melbourne conference. These surveys are the only comprehensive, national collection of information about editors. Although participation at national conferences is not necessarily representative of all editors, they are excellent opportunities to gather national data and views, and they provide a snapshot of the profession. To allow comparison over the four surveys, the same questions were asked, where possible.'

The full report, 'Fourth national survey of editors' is available on our website <<http://www.socedvic.org/>>

## IPEd notes

### News from the Institute of Professional Editors

September 2008

[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)

IPEd held its AGM on 24 August. It was followed by a meeting of the Council. At the AGM, members received reports from the Chair and Honorary Treasurer, and approved the audited financial statements for 2007–08 and the budget for 2008–09. The Chair's report and the financial statements have been placed on the IPEd website. Members confirmed the nominations of existing councillors, most of them until the 2009 AGM, at which time, under the terms of the constitution, half the members of the Council must retire.

At the Council meeting, the forthcoming accreditation examination was a major agenda item, as was the proposed budget for the year. Statistics on website visitation were a highlight of the report on communication activities: there are now over 1300 visitors per month to <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>, and they stay, on average, for six minutes. The real exam will be on Saturday 18 October at venues in every state and Canberra.

A significant proportion of recent visits [to [www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)] was to the sample accreditation exam by editors with their eyes, no doubt, on the 'AE' postnominal.

The IPEd website is a mine of information on Institute activities. Recent additions include the minutes of the two-day Council meeting and planning session held in Adelaide at the end of May, and a link to <[www.comjobs.com.au](http://www.comjobs.com.au)>, a website listing 'Opportunities and information for professional communicators' that is well worth a visit, particularly if you are in an upwardly mobile mood.

Another recent addition to the website is information on the Barbara Ramsden Award, a national award for excellence in editing created in 1971 by the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW). IPEd and the Society of Editors (Vic.) Inc. are now joint sponsors of the award with FAW.

*Ed Highley  
IPEd Secretary*

## ASTC Conference Sydney, 31 October – 1 November

ASTC, the Australian Society for Technical Communication, is holding its annual conference at Citigate Central, Haymarket, Friday 31 October – Saturday 1 November 2008.

As a collegiate organisation, our relationship with ASTC extends to discounts to meetings and mutual publicity of events. This year's conference features presentations of new technologies and methodologies in the pipeline. At the conference, IPEd's Queensland delegate Robin Bennett will speak about the national accreditation program for Australian editors.

Go to: <<http://www.astcsw.org.au/conference/conference.asp?item=Calendar>> for the latest information and for online registration.

## IPEd is seeking a Company Secretary Institute of Professional Editors Limited Company Secretary

The Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) Limited was incorporated in January 2008. IPEd's mission is to advance the profession of editing. It is owned by member associations of editors in the six states and the ACT. For more information about IPEd, go to <[www.iped-editors.org.au](http://www.iped-editors.org.au)>.

IPEd invites applications for the position of Company Secretary. The Secretary services the IPEd Council in its work, with outsourced accounting and legal support.

The successful applicant will be employed as a freelance contractor, working from their own premises. The estimated requirement is for an average of 15 to 20 hours per month, at \$60 per hour including GST. Applicants will need to have an ABN or ACN. Applications close on 30 November 2008.

Selection criteria and a duty statement for the position can be obtained by emailing the Chair of the Council, Virginia Wilton. Her email address is <[virginia@whh.com.au](mailto:virginia@whh.com.au)>. Please use the following message line: IPEd Company Secretary position\_yoursurname\_yourfirstinitial.

## Regional Network Report

### Regional networkers mind their ps and qs in Warrnambool

On September 11 a group of editors and public relations professionals met at the Regal Café in Warrnambool. My colleague and I had walked there together and on the way she asked, 'We're not going to sit around talking about grammar and punctuation, are we?' I laughed nervously then replied, 'No! It's a networking lunch – a chance to meet some other people. It will be very informal.'

Twenty minutes into our network lunch someone started talking about grammar and punctuation, and then everybody else chimed in . . . except my colleague. I didn't dare look over at her; it felt like I had betrayed her. Fortunately, an attempt to divert the course of the conversation proved successful so there's hope that we haven't lost her.

That aside, a complementary set of personalities ensured that everybody had a chance to converse: the PR mob leading discussions with their lively anecdotes and the editors joining in.

During the meeting I spoke about the activities of the Society: the accreditation exam, professional development opportunities and the *Freelance Register*. The group was pleased to hear about the Society and some expressed interest in attaining accreditation, as well as attending a grammar refresher course.

We all hope to meet up again early next year with the possibility of taking part in some editing training. I wish to thank Liz and Ron for their assistance in helping organise the meeting, and everybody who attended.

*Jayne Harris  
Western District Regional Affairs*

## 5th Annual Northern Notes Writers Festival

YOU'RE INVITED to the 5th annual Northern Notes Writers Festival, 7–16 November 2008. This fun festival celebrates all styles of creative writing from the northern suburbs. There will be writing workshops, poetry and script readings, book launches, panel and author talks and poetry slams in Northcote Town Hall and throughout Darebin's libraries, community centres, bars, cafes and even the streets.

Events are organised by local scribes, overseen by a community committee and presented by Darebin Council and NMIT.

Highlights of the festival include:

- Grand Opening night with visual poetry projections by Voiceprints lighting up the Town Hall
- The Pitch where writers will pitch unpublished manuscripts to local publisher Clouds of Magellan, and Trojan Press will publish the winner's MS
- Poetry Slam-n-Slather with \$100 cash to best poet, then slam poets head out loud to High Street
- Arnold Zable and Antoni Jach in conversation.

Download the full program from <[www.darebin.vic.go.au/festivals](http://www.darebin.vic.go.au/festivals)> or ring Darebin's Cultural Officer on 8470 8458 for a snail-mail copy.

What a great opportunity for editors! We're keen to spread the word about good editing – and good editors – by handing out our brochures at this year's festival and running a short workshop at next year's NNWF – or YOUR local festival.

Email your contacts and ideas to [members@socedvic.org](mailto:members@socedvic.org) with subject line Writers Festivals.

### Nick Hudson has tracked changes leading to the computer age of editing

Honorary Life Member Nick Hudson says that his new 'booklet', *How Things Changed*, is 'designed for those for whom editing is something which happens on a computer screen.'

Writing on 'Nick's Blog' on the Hudson Publishing website <<http://www.hudson-publishing.com/>> Nick says that the book, 'tells them about the joys and perils they have missed – by less than fifty years. Printing technology has changed more in those fifty years than in the previous five hundred.'

*How Things Changed* can be downloaded from Nick's Blog. The Society is delighted that Nick has chosen to share his publication with us. Members will be able to read and engage with the booklet in whatever way they choose.

In particular, Nick is asking members for editorial advice.

'... not just copy editing and proofreading ... but comments on structure and content: where does it lose the plot, where does it get boring and should say less, where is it short on background information and should say more, where is it obscure or incomprehensible, where does it show that its author is out of touch with present practice, where is it just plain wrong (historically, technically, etc)?'

Nick says, 'It is the last chapters that worry me most. I suspect that it may be at best trivial and at worst ill-informed. I had assumed that all editors worked on screen, so I talk at inordinate length about the joys and perils of this. But it seems from things I have read lately that some editors still work on hard copy, perhaps because of the perils I mention, or perils I do not mention. In addition, editors may tell me that some of the problems I describe (e.g. maintaining an audit trails of changes) have been overcome (though if they said MSW's 'track changes' does it I would want to ask some supplementary questions).'

To interact with Nick Hudson, email [travturf@bigpond.com](mailto:travturf@bigpond.com) or contact Hudson Publishing, 9 Panmure Street, Newstead, Vic 3462, (03) 5476 2795 <<http://www.hudson-publishing.com/>>



Nick says of this picture, 'It may not look much like me, but it will be like the one in the book.'

### Retiring member Margot Holden reflects on the value of membership

What does Society of Editors membership mean to you? It meant a lot to retiring member Margot Holden, who sent this note to the Society recently.

'I shall not be renewing my membership this year – I've (finally) retired, closed down the bank account and declined, also, to have an entry in the forthcoming *Freelance Register*. All with some sense of nostalgia but no regrets. The Society was a very important part of my becoming a confident editor, beginning – at 'a certain age' – on a new career with Rigby Education in-house in 1987 (photocopying and writing permission letters etc) and attending Society meetings, doing workshops and finding my way in the profession. After a company take-over in 1990, I decided to go freelance and valued even more the meetings, networking, advice and workshops. I was rarely without work for the next seventeen years and very happy in that work I was.

I'd like to thank you and all the current and past office bearers of the Society, and others, for the wonderful work over the years.'

Best wishes in your retirement Margot!

## Rates revisited

*Freelance editor, writer and trainer Pamela Hewitt has surveyed editors at national editing conferences in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007 about their professional priorities, educational and employment background, special skills and their current rates. Here Pamela reviews the hot topic of rates.*

Seven years ago, I presented a paper to the national conference for indexers and editors held in Canberra. When the Professional Editors' Association decided to hold a meeting on the topic 'What are you worth?' I dug out my old paper to see how much things have changed.

Here, I offer an updated version of what I saw as the situation way back then, with some new ideas for where we might take the debate and the action. Editors, on the whole, are

- highly skilled, combining generalist and specialist knowledge
- highly qualified, almost always with a first degree, and more often than not with one or more postgraduate qualifications
- highly experienced, often with a track record of many years in the industry
- working in industries at the forefront of technological change, at the very heart of the information revolution.

This is looking promising. Surely here we have the cream of the knowledge society, highly prized specialists for the industries of the future. It should go without saying that, as employees, we should command high salaries, a company car and generous executive packages. As freelancers, the sky should be the limit. What wouldn't a corporate client pay for the services of such people?

But wait. There are some other characteristics of the editing trade that I haven't yet mentioned. Consider these

- gaps in national education, training and professional development program
- a predominantly female, underorganised workforce.

Even more damning

- our work is to do with words.

And, difficult as it is to measure, I would suggest that there is another killer factor at play here. As a rule

- we love our work.

We find it stimulating, fulfilling, varied, creative, engrossing.

When all these factors are combined, it turns out that we have a profession where the work is bound to be grossly underpaid. This doesn't mean that we should remain underpaid.

There is a range of options that we can explore as individuals and as members of professional associations to improve the standing of the professions in the industry and beyond. These include

- professional association or trade union membership and activism
- improving our technological skills

- promoting educational pathways for initial training and continuing professional development
- showcasing our skills to business, clients and the public through the activities of professional societies, through partnerships with other professionals ...

My focus is a little more inward looking. While the activities that I have just outlined are vital, there is also a place for taking a step back and looking at how we think about ourselves. At the risk of sounding overly self-analytical, I suppose I am talking about the importance of professional self-esteem.

It's my belief that valuing our services will lead to valuing ourselves and, vitally, in others' valuing our services and us. In order to value ourselves and our services properly, it might be helpful to remind ourselves why our services are valuable.

Why should we value our services?

1. You are good at what you do. You have to be. We all know that in the commercial world, you are only as good as your last job. If you are getting work, especially repeat work or work that comes via personal recommendation, then you must be offering a valuable service.

2. When we offer our services, we bring our knowledge of the trade. In addition, we often bring

- knowledge of specialist fields (languages, academic disciplines and subject areas, technology)
- knowledge of the publication process
- the ability to meet punishing deadlines
- specific negotiation skills for working with authors, designers, illustrators, printers, typesetters, management or editorial boards ...
- high levels of speed and accuracy
- many years' experience.

*Paragons like us would do well not to undersell such virtues.*

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## Freelance Affairs

### Your new *Freelance Register*

By the time you read this, the 2008–09 *Freelance Register* will be getting printed. It has 116 entries, one entry fewer than the 117 entries in the 2007–08 electronic edition. Twenty members dropped out of the *Register* for various reasons, from working full-time in-house to moving overseas, from changing direction to no longer needing to advertise. There are 16 new entries, with some members updating from Associate Member to Full Member status just so that they could place an entry in the *Register*. Three 'lapsed' entrants from past editions have reappeared and included entries this year. Welcome back!

*Philip Bryan*  
Co-Freelance Affairs Officer

### Getting into Editing

One clear message delivered at an almost capacity seminar on Getting Into Editing was that luck, and being in the right place at the right time, was almost as important as qualifications and experience.

The seminar, held at the Victorian Writers' Centre on September 23 in conjunction with the Society of Editors, drew on the varied backgrounds of senior editors Susan Keogh, Anna Macdonald and Mandy Brett plus that of host Bryony Cosgrove.

Between them they emphasised several basic needs for anyone contemplating making a career out of editing. These included perseverance, a thick skin, people skills, a great mind for trivia and clear handwriting.

With Anna's background in magazines, Susan's in technical publications and Mandy's in general fiction the panel presented a usefully diverse range of views.

All agreed, however, no one was in it for the money and that a deep love of words and language was as essential as any academic qualification.

Or, as Mandy so eloquently put it: 'An anal retentive person who really cares where the apostrophe goes.'

Fiction editors, she said, 'have to hear the music and know when it doesn't sound right.'

Bryony urged would-be editors never to play drama queen. 'There is room for only one large ego in the room,' she said, 'and that is going to be the author's.' She said editing was akin to invisible mending.

Anna reminded the audience of would-be editors that the opportunities open to them covered a very wide area of corporate, academic and commercial activity requiring a varied mix of skills on so many different levels – sub-editing, copy editing, structural editing, proofreading and so on.

'You have to work across the board,' added Bryony. 'Keep an open mind, tackle anything and everything. You can't just aim at one narrow area.'

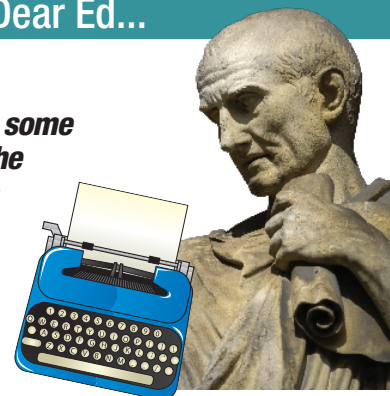
All speakers said anyone contemplating taking an editing course should make thorough enquiries before enrolling. They should check the tutors' qualifications and the subsequent career paths of previous graduates. They also agreed success depended as much on networking and building a reputation as on simply trying to get work.

The coming IPEd examination received a thorough mention from Susan and the evening ended with a solid plug for the work of the society.

The Victorian Writers' Centre is close to finalising its program for 2009, which will again feature several seminars held in conjunction with the society. It will welcome any suggestions for topics and panel members.

*Tony Berry*  
Victorian Writers Centre Liaison Officer

***In this column Ed answers FAQs and some curly ones about the ins and outs of the editing profession.***



*Dear Ed*

*I'm a self-employed editor, but it never actually feels like a business. It's just me sitting on my own in a dusty room.*

*Travis*

Dear Travis

You might not feel like you're running a business sitting at your computer by yourself, but I believe you are, your clients believe you are and, moving up the scale a tad, the Australian Taxation Office certainly believes you are. In fact, the ATO is convinced you're running a business; they'll be around later this month with a bucket asking for donations, so you'd better get used to the idea. (But don't confuse the ATO with that person in the koala suit who sidles up to your car at traffic lights, waving a bucket: same idea, but a much bigger bucket.)

You don't normally think of Peter Carey when it comes to business advice, but I'll take advice where I find it. (Besides, I've had to quarantine the books I read for pleasure to make sure they don't crossover into daylight hours and become work.) As Peter Carey put it in *Oscar and Lucinda*, 'Owning a business is like having chooks'.

Now think about this before dismissing it as just another one of Ed's foibles. Chooks need grain and water. They need protection from foxes. If you want to collect and eat the eggs, the chooks need looking after. When the mornings are frosty and the grass crackles under your feet, the chooks will be happy to see you.

*Ed*

## Membership matters

The society has admitted several new members in the past two months. Welcome to our new full members, Amanda Hayes, Christine Margetts and Sylvia Marson.

Welcome to our new associate members, Charles Arena, Jennifer Bonnie, Jacqueline Capon, Robyn Deed, Ian Findlay, Freya Holland, Michael Martina and Susan Utber.

*Ron Thiele*  
Membership Secretary

By this stage, I hope you are all feeling worthy of respect and recognition. But of what practical use is this knowledge, you might ask yourself, if the marketplace holds your skills in low regard. In what follows, I propose some ways that we might put this 'professional self-esteem' to use.

Next time you provide a quote, or you find yourself negotiating with a client, think of it also as a platform to demonstrate the calibre of your professional skills. The next time you are working with colleagues, think of these activities as a way of increasing your knowledge of the profession. And if you are pressured to undermine your own worth by selling yourself short, think of the effects on your fellow editors.

Here are five ways to consider as avenues to augment the value you attribute to your own services.

1. My first proposal for considering the merit of your own work can be summarised by the word solidarity.

This is a quaint old-fashioned word that I think retains contemporary meaning. If I undercut my colleagues, in the long run I undercut myself. If I sell myself short, I sell my colleagues short. If I don't value my own services, I undervalue the services of my colleagues. I prefer not to do any of these things. I would rather that my colleagues didn't behave this way towards me. Solidarity forever.

2. Improve your position in the industry at the same time as providing benefits to others is a simple one—networking.

Networking through professional associations, at conferences and through more informal groups increases your professional awareness and the value of your work. How? You might find out about new technological developments. You could hear about professional opportunities. A well connected editor can direct a client to an appropriate colleague who has specific expertise for a particular job. This might be experience with a certain kind of software, the ability to understand Russian, a background in astrophysics or expertise in literary editing. That colleague could be you, this time or next time.

Most of us have had the experience of people asking us to help find work or to help find someone with the right skills for a particular job. It helps everyone to put the right team together. As well as letting you know about opportunities, networking can also alert you to problems in your local industry. Networking might let you know about a client who pays late or not at all or about the disadvantages of a new contract under offer. Information like this can stop you from wasting your time and help you to target your services, which is another way of valuing your time and effort.

Our professional associations are networks, as are our personal links with other professionals. In addition, there is room for formal and informal groups of editors to join together to put forward tenders requiring specific combinations of skills and also to balance better the times of flood and famine that we often experience. No one wants to recommend a client whose work is not up to scratch and the best way to find out the calibre of your colleagues is to work with them.

3. Knowing your own worth is crucial when you are negotiating.

Your services will be valued and you will be taken more seriously if you start any negotiation from a position of strength. By this I mean working out your bottom line and deciding your position in advance.

In the negotiating room, don't be tempted to shift from this position unless you are offered some additional element that might make a new deal worthwhile. Put simply, this is another way of valuing your services. It means that in any negotiation you are clear about how far you are prepared to go, and it means that you will never walk out of the negotiating room empty handed. Even if you don't get the contract, you walk out with your professional standards undiminished. You know that you have not undersold yourself (or your colleagues).

4. This leads me to my fourth area, and it is a vexed issue. People don't talk about it much, but it doesn't mean that it doesn't happen. Can I be the only person who has been asked to lower my rates for some special reason? I'm talking about the dreaded D word, discounting.

I don't think that bakers or mechanics are routinely asked if they will bake bread or fix cars for less than their advertised prices: but I know that editors are. Clients sometimes ask for discounts; we sometimes give them. In fact I am not opposed to discounting under any circumstances (although I know that some editors are). What I am opposed to is random discounting. An explicit discount for work you consider to be in a good cause or because the job is intrinsically interesting is very different from a discount because the client is trying it on, or because you feel sorry for the person asking for a discount or because you find it hard to say no. If you let clients know that you are providing your services at a discount rate for particular purposes by writing it into your quote, they shouldn't expect it from you or any other colleague as a matter of course in the future.

If a client genuinely has only so much in the budget for editing, instead of working for less money, it's often possible to negotiate performing a different service that does not involve underselling your skills. It might be possible to offer a manuscript assessment or a chapter edit, instead of the full edit originally discussed, for example.

3. Finally, quoting. Quoting is a very public way in which we tell the world what we think we are worth, by offering to do a particular set of tasks for a specific sum.

Many of you will be familiar with the following scenario: your quote for a job is accepted. When you begin, or part of the way through, you find that the specifications have changed. The job is bigger than the one you quoted on or there are endless meetings that you were not told about or you are asked to incorporate author changes that were not part of the original quotation. Bakers are not expected to throw in extra cream buns, much less to double the amount of bread they agreed to bake for a certain price. Mechanics will charge you more if you bring the car back with a new problem. I have known them to charge twice for the same problem! This is not the place for a detailed discussion of quoting protocols.

But I would say two things about quotes or tenders if you want others to value your services.

- Make sure your original paperwork is very clear about precisely what your quote covers. This can save a lot of heartache. It clarifies your position in the event of any later differences in interpretation of words and phrases in the written quotation such as 'proofreading', 'editing' or 'project management'.

- Resist client requests to perform extra tasks for no extra payment. It sounds so simple, and yet if all the editors in Australia did this, we would find we were not taken so much for granted and our services were valued a great deal more. Overnight, perhaps.

When clients place us under pressure to lower our rates, or to do extra work for no extra payment (which comes to the same thing) remember that behind an hourly rate lurk many hidden costs. In particular, remember that a freelance editor is paid by the hour, by the job, by the page, or, the ultimate in piecework, by the word. Time is certainly money, but time is not our only cost. Freelancers are not paid when they are sick, they do not receive superannuation benefits, recreation leave, long service leave, professional development, they are not paid for the time spent in administration, coping with IT problems, preparing quotations, or for the costs of running a car and upgrading equipment or administering the GST on behalf of the government. So when you fail to incorporate those costs in your services, you are giving them away, as well as your time and your skills.

I resist clients' requests to divulge my hourly rate, preferring to quote on the job. I find this to be an entirely successful work practice. It makes it unlikely that the client will go for the lowest hourly rate on the often mistaken assumption that it is cheaper. An experienced and skilful editor can often quote competitively at a higher hourly rate than a less experienced or skilful one. The quality of the work is a factor that clients would do well to take into account when assessing quotes.

Much of this paper has concentrated on outlining the problems we face in ensuring that our services are adequately valued.

You might ask 'If it's all so hard and so poorly recognised, why do it? Why not be a baker or a mechanic?'

It has been said that doing the work you want to do is worth \$100,000 a year (a comment attributed to Isaiah Berlin). Add that to whatever you earn, and editing starts to look pretty attractive. It's heartening to know that what you do is creative, worthwhile, skilled and absorbing. It's wonderful indeed to find your work satisfying. It's great to be happy with your work. But you might as well be happy and valued.

In preparing my original paper, I tried to get useful data on editors. As I expected, meaningful information was hard to come by. So I conducted a survey, asked editors about their professional priorities, their educational and employment background, their special skills and their current rates. I continued to run the survey at national editing conferences every two years. The captive audience seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

My aim was to provide some useful data for editors to publicise their levels of skill and expertise, and to gather information as a basis for further advocacy work.

The section that most people were interested in was the one on rates. Here is the average taken from the responses to the question about hourly rates, gathered in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007:

\$49 (2001)    \$50 (2003)    \$60 (2005)    \$62 (2007)

We know that many editors charge well below that rate. We also know that it is less than a third of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance rate. I therefore proposed that the Professional Editors' Association (NSW)

develop a recommended minimum rate, publish it on our website and promulgate it through the industry.

Given that \$62 was the average reported rate from the last national conference, I suggested \$55 as our starting point. I thought it was an achievable figure for competent editors to charge. Having a minimum recommended rate advertised on the website will help us educate clients about industry standards and as a guideline, individual editors naturally retain the freedom to charge above or below the recommended rate. It also dovetails nicely with the professionalism that will be generated by the national accreditation scheme which will hold its first exam on 18 October 2008.

The meeting at which I presented the proposal went one better and upped the recommended minimum rate to \$60 per hour with built in CPI increases. Who am I to argue with my colleagues?

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## Bonzer bloke and his website are in need of a mate

*An Australian Internet literary magazine that has been published monthly for nearly a decade is now seeking a new volunteer managing editor. Its originator is understandably ready for a break. Christina Crossley Ratcliffe explains.*

*Bonzer!* began in Melbourne in 2001, the vision of a children's author and newspaper columnist, Alan Wheatley, a newspaper subeditor editor Christina Crossley Ratcliffe (now Soc Ed's bookings officer) and webmasters Bruce Seaman and Queenslander Hennie van Dyk.

The launch was informal and no one quite knew where *Bonzer!* was heading, but we intended it to be a free, monthly online journal by, for, and about seniors. Nearly a decade on, powered entirely by volunteers, it's still free, still published on the first day of every month and, apart from the website <<http://www.bonzer.org.au>> provided by the State Library of Victoria and the Community Development Fund, still 'proudly not sponsored by anyone'. It is non-party political and free of religious affiliation.

The first international Bonzerfest for contributors was held in Brisbane in 2006, and the second will be in Adelaide from 17–19 October this year.

Contributors to *Bonzer!* are either (a) regular editors who write and/or edit their own monthly columns, or (b) occasional contributors who send stories and articles in response to a given theme or as fiction and non-fiction stories they hope to see in print. It nurtures senior scribes, artists and editors – anyone, anywhere, who loves the challenge and potential of Internet communications. The policy is to maintain a good standard of writing that entertains, informs and empowers.

*Bonzer!* has lived up to its Aussie slang meaning of 'excellent' under editor Alan Wheatley's caring encouragement of all involved. As our link-checker John Powell puts it, 'a kinder, more gentle and charming man would be difficult to find.' Now Alan is ready to mentor his successor. If the opportunity appeals, email him on [bonzered@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bonzered@optusnet.com.au) or ring (03) 9779 9006 (Skype friendly).

## Dates for your diary

### November dinner meeting Fishing boats, the First Fleet, and Animal Architects

Wednesday 12 November, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm

### Accreditation exam Saturday 18 October 2008

### December Dinner Meeting Wednesday 3 December 2008, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm



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

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