



NEWSLETTER

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November dinner meeting

Book Launch: *Editors in Conversation 2*

Wednesday, 11 November 2009
Also featuring guest speaker Bel Monypenny, Editor of *Voiceworks* magazine.

More information to follow soon!

Please note there is no dinner meeting in October due to the IPEd Conference in Adelaide.

IPEd Accreditation Exam 2009

Approximately 90 candidates across Australia sat the 2009 Accreditation Exam on Saturday, 12 September. In Victoria, 23 candidates sat the exam. The session in Melbourne was expertly managed by invigilators Eve Recht and Beryl Hill, who ensured exam conditions were consistent with other centres nationwide. Ian Willson controlled the traffic and parking arrangements masterfully for a second year, and Liz Steele, Melanie Dankel and Julie-Anne Justus assisted on the day with registrations and the odd hiccup such as a momentarily mislaid exam number.

All candidates were asked to provide feedback after the exam on aspects such as registration procedures, exam venues, preparation workshops and the sample exam. The Accreditation Board is reviewing this and any other feedback received. Markers who constitute the Assessors Forum are now busy with marking and moderation.

Overall feedback is that the second Accreditation Exam proceeded successfully. Results expected at the end of October are awaited eagerly not only by candidates but also by all supporters of the accreditation scheme.

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CONTACT DETAILS

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Email: newsletter@socedvic.org
Web: www.socedvic.org

Dates for your diary

4th IPEd National Editors Conference
8–10 October

November dinner meeting

Editors in Conversation 2 Book Launch
Wednesday, 11 November

Training courses

For details of all training courses on offer, please visit the website training page at <http://www.socedvic.org/training/trainingq.html>

Membership matters

SocEds welcomed seven new members in September. Full members are Brooke Clark and Nicole Hanssen. Associate members are Susan Daskalakis, Marion Groves, Katherine Page, Catherine Peters and Heidi Treloar. We hope you find your membership useful and pleasant.

Ron Thiele
Membership Secretary

Newsletter news

John Bangsund sends his apologies – he is unable to write/compile his [Threepenny Planet](#) column for this newsletter. Yes, we miss his distinctive take on text too – hopefully he'll be back next month.

Meanwhile, any comments, contributions and suggestions are welcome. If you have any [Typos of the month](#), [Say what?](#) bloopers or [On my bookshelf](#) revelations, send them [here](#).

Rachel and Jackey
Newsletter co-editors

Typo of the month

Newsletter co-editor Jackey Coyle-Taylor was

September dinner meeting report

The Lanai Bar had a packed house on 16 September to hear Michael Williams speak about Melbourne's newest literary venture, the [Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas](#) (CBWI). As the centre's new Director of Programming, Michael jokingly wondered why members of the Society 'would be interested in someone whose job is indecipherable', but he went on to share details of his background, flesh out his job description and provide a glimpse of the centre's future.

Michael has always been a passionate reader. At school his best friend was the school librarian and he spent his lunchtimes helping to cover books – 'I was a demon with the Contact!' – but initially he couldn't work out how to turn his love of books into a job. His first publishing job was as an editorial 'dogsbody' at Text Publishing, where he was trained on the job by publisher Michael Heyward, who offered up five rules of editing:

1. There are no 'maybes'. If you can't explain to someone else why a book you've plucked from the slush pile is a 'yes', then it's a 'no'.
2. Don't judge submitted manuscripts as you would finished books. Other editors often described the manuscripts that excited Michael as needing 'a lot of work' and being full of holes. It's more important to think: 'What's the best this book could be?'
3. An edit is one big, long conversation – an attempt to find out if you have the same vision as the author.
4. Part of the conversation is getting the author to reread the book in a different way. Challenge the author as much as you can, knowing they won't take up all of your suggestions.
5. Why are you working in publishing? At some point you have to choose: do you want to be a writer or an editor?

After a job as part of the RRR breakfast team, Michael went to work as a literary scout in New York City, returning to Melbourne to take up the job as the CBWI's Director of Programming.

The centre was created as part of Melbourne's (successful) application for the world's second-ever UNESCO City of Literature title ([Edinburgh](#) was the first; [Iowa City](#), the third). Though the initial mission statement was a bit vague – the centre was meant to be a 'hub' with 'buzz' – Michael sees the CBWI's role as creating a bridge to link events between already existing writing communities – and, importantly, to readers, who often feel closed out from literary events – as well as establishing events of its own.

And indeed the CBWI will provide headquarters for some of the area's key literary organisations: the Victorian Writers' Centre, the Melbourne Writers' Festival, the Emerging Writers' Festival, Express Media, the Australian Poetry Centre and the Melbourne chapter of PEN, to be located over five floors in the State Library's old museum on Swanston St.

Some in these organisations have expressed fears about moving into CBWI, fearful of losing their autonomy, their audience and their events, and wondering why funding isn't going directly to them instead of to construct an entirely new organisation. Michael emphasised that the role of CBWI is to help these organisations – to be the hub at the centre of the spokes on a wheel – rather than set itself up as a rival. The centre's main objectives will be:

1. To make it easier to live as a writer in Melbourne by providing opportunities for journalism and public speaking, as a means of providing support and reducing isolation. (According to an Australian Society of Authors survey, only eight writers in Melbourne currently support themselves entirely from their writing.) One of Michael's ideas is that speaking at a public event at CBWI should be viewed as an act of publication, and writers should be remunerated accordingly;
2. To create partnership events with existing organisations, such as universities. CBWI may need to use other venues for some events, as its 200-seat auditorium won't be big enough for major events. It will also need to focus on specific audiences to bring sponsorship and support;
3. To make its events free, as well as recording them and making them available for downloading, so that writers can be showcased as thinkers and artists, not just as sellers of product. Also, putting on free events after work will make it easier for people to attend, making audiences more likely to

in for a soft landing when she came across artist [Amish Kapok](#). Hmm, a member of a well-padded breakaway Mennonite sect, she wondered? Not even close – he's Mumbai-born artist [Anish Kapoor](#).

Advertising

To advertise in the newsletter, please contact advertising@socedvic.org.

PDF of this newsletter

Download a PDF copy of this newsletter [here](#).

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

THE COMMITTEE



- listen to new writers;
4. To help increase events for smaller, more particular literary audiences who may feel underrepresented at mainstream events (e.g. young writers);
 5. To help link those literary organisations that already do their thing well with the people who want to be a part of their audience, such as help readers find libraries that have good collections of literature in other languages besides English.

Part of Michael's brief is to go outside the core audiences collected by the Melbourne Writers Festival to attract younger writers, to get people into CBWI doing new and interesting things. Accessibility is also the idea behind having 12 hot-desks on the mezzanine, some for writers-in-residence, some for Indigenous writers and some for emerging writers.

Michael hopes the CBWI's website, which is currently under construction (sign up for upcoming news [here](#)), will be similar to [TED.com](#), with an extensive archive of events that have been recorded and can be made freely available. The website will also function as a place of publication, with writing blogs, event listings and links to other interesting events and websites (such as *Meanjin's* [Spike](#) blog), beyond just spruiking CBWI events.

The centre's program will kick off in February 2010, and will run annually from February to November. Michael encouraged the audience to get involved, to help make the CBWI a true reflection of Melbourne's robust literary community. For the CBWI to be a success, Michael noted, 'everyone in this room must feel they have an investment in it'; he closed by saying that he hopes it will be 'a conversation that we all can be a part of'.

Ali Lemer and Philip Bryan

See Kerry Biram's [dinner meeting photos](#).

Membership renewal reminder

If you have not renewed your membership, this is the last newsletter you will receive. Please renew today!

For membership renewal details, simply go to www.socedvic.org/membership/join.html.

Membership renewals were due on 1 July, so they are now well and truly overdue. Members will be listed in our records as resigned on 15 October if their payment for 2009-10 has not been received by that date.

Think of the benefits you'll miss out on if you don't renew your membership:

- employment opportunities through our regular e-list to members of job advertisements and other information
- eleven issues of the society's newsletter each year
- the annual general meeting dinner, free to all members
- eligibility to be included in the *Freelance Register*, an annual directory of freelance editors (full members only)
- discounts on training courses and workshops run by the society
- a program of monthly meetings with guest speakers
- discounts at selected bookshops
- advocacy of professional affairs, including work with societies in other states.

There's plenty of good reasons to renew your membership! Please go to <http://www.socedvic.org/membership/join.html> for details of how to do so.

If you do not wish to renew your membership this year, please let me know by email to members@socedvic.org otherwise you will be listed in the records as no longer wishing to have contact with the society now or in the future.

Ron Thiele
Membership and Correspondence Secretary

TOP

Book review: Word bytes slay weasel words

Word bytes: Writing in the information society

By **Carolyne Lee**

with **Nadine Cresswell-Myatt, Paul Dawson, Adam Deverell, Scott Drummond, Jenny Lee, Winnie Salamon and Lucinda Strahan**

Melbourne University Press

299pp, \$49.99 print, \$39.99 online, \$6.99 per chapter, \$6.99 exercises

<http://www.mup.com.au/page/123>



Does the world need another volume on writing? Browse any search engine or bookshop and you'd be forgiven for thinking the discipline is as oversupplied as our brains are overloaded in this, the information society.

'Good writing matters', the cover blurb says. So this book needs to do exactly what it's promoting – stand out by using the power of the written word, which has 'defied all predictions and refuses to become obsolete'.

Author Carolyne Lee coined the term 'word bytes' to describe writing 'that can get itself noticed, read and retained by readers in contexts of information overload'. Lee compares writing that is catchy but glib and lacking the strength to embed itself in the reader's mind, with word bytes where a great deal of meaning is condensed, like poetry, into a 'certain economy of expression'.

Lee is a writer, teacher and researcher who has taught writing for over two decades and written across the print and online spectrum. For this, her third book, she has gathered a group of contributing writers from colleagues, graduates and students of the University of Melbourne's School of Culture & Communication, as well as diverse communication professionals from both inside and outside academe.

Of the 15 chapters, two-thirds are by Lee. They range from beginning the process of writing the word bytes, to controlling and shaping the work for the reader using the ancient arts of pathos, ethos and logos, then moving into researching and marketing. Each chapter presents an overview of the topic, as well as a toolkit of techniques and working methods – this review is a stab at the suggested structure for writing book reviews – and gives further reading. Other chapters cover op-ed pieces, as well as travel, fiction, corporate and web writing from contributors.

Now to the chapter that grabbed us. Editor extraordinaire Jenny Lee, also a historian and teacher, has written a chapter on editing that illustrates why she has inspired a multitude of university students, first at Deakin then Melbourne, to take up the green (or red) pen. 'If writing is about "getting it out",' she notes, 'then editing is about "getting it right".'

Lee's editing career began in 1982, when she began working on a four-volume, multi-author critical history of Australia. She then edited the literary and cultural quarterly *Meanjin* from 1987 to 1994, worked as a freelance book editor for six years then moved into academe. Her editing CV numbers around 50 books and her own publications include last year's *Making Modern Melbourne* (Arcade Publications).

Jenny Lee defines editing as beginning when the 'first flush of writing ends'. Initially she tackles the importance of the editor establishing a trusting and respectful editor–author relationship. She moves through the structural then copy-editing stages, explaining each topic in conversational word bytes that give both signposts and practical directions: e.g. paper or onscreen? (Lee advises paper for first reading of a long MS, but with an on-screen find and replace if there are distracting minor errors).

The editor's toolkit lists hard-copy references and how to use them, then 10 tips are given and explained for developing constructive editor–author relations. Lee includes her characteristic asides – No 7 begins: 'Offer suggestions, don't issue instructions (a rule I've broken in preparing these points).'

The internet age has made publishing such a democratic process that it's vital the print or pixels both gain *and* hold readers. This chapter will help writers to get their work to a coherent draft stage, and later

during the editing phase with five points for authors such as No 5, headed 'Think twice before you insist on restoring the original wording'.

Contrary to the dire predictions of editors being made redundant by word processors, they are needed more than ever: 'the idea of the unedited publication has turned out to be as unrealistic as the paperless office.' In fact the rapid exchanges afforded by digital technology have opened up possibilities of 'new kinds of writing relationships through collective effort'.

Using an elegant, direct style, this book overtakes the concept of what not to do, eg weasel words, and shows what is required now we've moved through the transition from the introduction of the internet into the present day. The writing style contains none of the obfuscation that mars so much academic text, while offering a depth and range of content relevant to anyone who writes or edits, whether for a living, as part of their job, or is just starting out.

Word Bytes is available to be either read in hard copy (\$49.99) or online. The 14 appendices offer published examples of the featured genres, and exercises to accompany each chapter are available online (\$6.99). In fact, the whole book is available online for download, either in total (\$39.99) or by individual chapters (\$6.99). Available for free download are the prelims containing Carolyn Lee's introduction, the appendices, and the bibliography and book index.

Yes, the world does need this book – whether to devour or dip into, whether as a textbook, a reference or a way to inspire and reimpassion yourself, and anchor your place in this information society.

Jackey Coyle

TOP

IPEd notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors Limited

www.iped-editors.org
September 2009

It is pleasing to report that the total membership of the seven societies of editors that are the members of IPEd increased last year, from 1 489 on 31 May 2008 to 1 645 on that date this year. That's a rise of more than 10 per cent. All the societies apart from Tasmania which, in any case, demonstrated in 2007 that cool-climate editors in a compact society play well above average, showed increased membership, with Queensland recording the biggest rise.

Congratulations are due to the Society of Editors (NSW), which celebrated its 30th anniversary in July. The event was marked with a special dinner at which the guest speaker was Dr Jeremy Fisher, currently the Executive Director of the Australian Society of Authors. Dr Fisher gave a fascinating account of the history of the society, mentioning the many luminaries of editing and publishing – names that will be familiar to many – who have walked its path. It's well worth reading the transcript of his talk, which you can find online [here](#), in the September issue of its journal, *Blue Pencil*.

The 4th IPEd National Editors Conference, in Adelaide on 8–10 October 2009, is now almost upon us but, never fear, you can register right up to the time of the event. The program and an online registration form can be found at or via the IPEd website.

IPEd affairs will be covered in two conference sessions. On Thursday 8 October, in the afternoon, the Accreditation Board will outline its progress and plans, as well as honour our first accredited editors and distinguished editors. The conference program on Friday 9 October will begin with IPEd's annual general meeting, following which Virginia Wilton, the outgoing chair of the council, will outline what IPEd has achieved to date and invite discussion on the challenges ahead. This is your chance to meet the councillors, old and new, hear what councillors and your fellow editors have to say about issues that affect us all and to express your views in a public forum. We look forward to seeing you there.

Ed Highley

Dear Ed ...

Dear Ed

Sometimes I dream I'm checking corrections on sets of pages. It takes all night and I wake up exhausted. What can I do?

Sleepless of Seaford

Dear Sleepless

Often dreams involve mentally practising what you've been doing during the day, allowing your brain to sort and store the memories. I've been having a few editing dreams myself, although in my case they're really après-editing dreams. Last week I dreamt I had flames coming out of my head as I calmly walked across a green field. I woke up thinking it had to be the best dream metaphor ever for 'burnout', and I wasn't too concerned until I looked in the mirror and discovered that my hair was singed.

The flaming-head dream came back to yesterday when I was reading book #418 from my unread books box, Douglas Coupland's *Life After God*. It's an impressive read, like a series of screengrabs from contemporary life compressed into miniature portraits, and it's only been waiting 12 months to be read. A character in *Life After God* says: 'You're always interpreting your dreams ... why not interpret your everyday life as though it were a dream, instead'.

Well, I thought, why not? What about giving less credence to dreams and letting reality get a foot in the door. The first morning of my new interpretable everyday life didn't start well. I had one of those mornings where I couldn't concentrate on work (and, much as I love editing, it *is* work). I couldn't settle down and I couldn't get started. I rearranged my files, sorted out my email in-box, put everything on the desktop where it belonged, then thought, 'This is unproductive. I should stop'. So I did. I went off and tackled the *Age* cryptic crossword, which normally does wonders for my unfocused mind.

I'm not sure how familiar you are with cryptic crosswords, but sometimes the answers flow and sometimes they don't. On this occasion, I couldn't even get one clue. I could not even get started. It wasn't until I reached *20 Down* that there was a clue that spoke to me:

Edit badly, with hesitation and ennui (6).

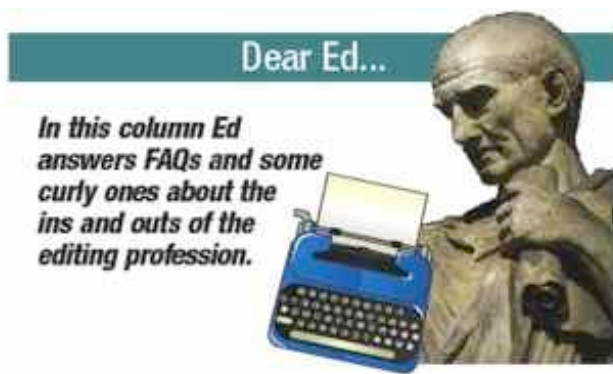
Well, that was me to a T: the hesitation, the ennui, the editing badly. And I couldn't even solve that clue! I knew it had to start with 'ed' but that was it.

I got up early the next morning in a rush to fetch the *Age* and find out the answer. The answer to *20 Down* was unedifying, to say the least:

editor

So in a day I had gone full circle, starting out as a bored and hesitant editor only to receive the answer: editor. It just didn't make a lot of sense. It even had fewer letters, making me somehow feel there was less of me on arrival than there had been on departure. But at least in my haste to get up and get the paper I had discarded the bored and hesitant aspects of yesterday's life.

The scary part about all of the above is that it's true: the flaming-head dream, *Life After God*, the crossword clues. (Well, I had to retouch reality here and there where the paint was chipped.) The only saving



grace was the afterword in *Life After God*, which took me by surprise, hinting that the book had some kind of mental afterlife and that you, the reader, 'needed to wake up to yourself by viewing your life as you would your dreams'.

Make of that what you will.

Cheers,
Ed

TOP

News, comments, letters and other material for publication, review or mention in the *Newsletter* should be addressed to the [Newsletter Editor](#).

Disclaimer: The views expressed by individuals in this *Newsletter* are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc.