

# ... the word

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (SA)

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January–February 2007

## Next meeting Monday 19 February

**SA Writers' Centre**  
2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street East

**Guest:** Lucy Potter

**Topic:** On being a grammar nut

Lucy Potter is a lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Adelaide. Her academic interests include the Renaissance playwright Christopher Marlowe, in particular his first play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and its relationships with Aristotle's theories about tragedy and with Virgil's *Aeneid*. Lucy is also a writing consultant for government departments and private businesses. Her other interests include studying Latin, and she admits to being a 'grammar nut'.

Lucy will talk about how and why she became a grammar nut, what this involves, which references she swears by, and how her interest in all things grammatical influences her teaching and her work.

Members are invited to join the committee and the guest speaker for dinner at Café Michael, 204 Rundle Street East, at 6 pm.

If you wish to come to dinner, please respond to <eds@editors-sa.org.au> by Friday 16 February.

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**Deadline for copy for the next issue of ... the word is 2 March**

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## ... the presidential word

Rosemary Luke

Happy New Year to all members of the Society of Editors (SA) and to readers of ... *the word*. As we welcome new newsletter editors Celia Jellett and Leticia Supple, we warmly thank Peter Carter for his work as editor from 2004 to 2006. Peter's advanced IT skills took the publication further into the electronic world, adding illustrations and other enhancements.

Your committee made an early start and is planning an interesting year of activities for South Australian editors, wrapped around the Institute of Professional Editors National Conference in Hobart from 9 to 12 May. There was a strong contingent at the Melbourne conference last year and we hope to see a similar number of South Australians in Hobart to enjoy a stimulating professional and social program (see more elsewhere in ... *the word*). Importantly there will be one conference session at which we will outline our plans for the 2009 conference in Adelaide and woo delegates with some local specialties. New volunteers for the conference planning subcommittee, led by Susan Rintoul, are still welcome.

Our local 2009 program is being developed by Pamela Ball, Carolyn Cockburn, Loene Doube and Susan Rintoul. Please direct any ideas/requests for meetings and workshops to them using the Society's info email address.

We have decided to base this year's program of meetings and workshops around the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, for two reasons. Each year we gain a significant number of new members, many of whom are associates and/or new to the profession; we feel a responsibility to offer these members sessions which provide useful

professional development and continuing education within our profession. Secondly, national accreditation of editors is moving closer, under the aegis of IPEd, the Institute of Professional Editors. Accreditation will acknowledge editors' competence against the Standards, so it seems useful for even experienced editors to look again at the skills and knowledge that underpin editorial work. We hope that this will happen in a way that is both informative and entertaining and look forward to our first meeting in February, when Lucy Potter will look at language issues pivotal to Standard D.

As in the past, meetings will be preceded by dinner at a nearby restaurant; all members are invited to join the committee and guest speakers for a quick bite before meetings.

With best wishes for a happy, healthy and successful 2007.

## ... Christmas dinner

Susan Rintoul

It was good food, good fun and good company at last year's finale, our Festive Christmas Dinner and mini-Quiz Night at Juno Café on 13 December.

Emcee for the evening, Marcus Brownlow, kept the questions and wry comments flowing. The quiz part was challenging, and only half a point separated the winners from the runners-up. Special thanks to Rosemary Luke and Kate Phippard for designing some fiendish questions.



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## November meeting: Penelope Curtin: books in my life

Val Mobley and Marianne Hammat

On 16 November 2007, a small but select group of members gathered to hear long-term member, Penelope Curtin, reminisce about the role books have played in her life – a large part it turns out, as Penelope has been a reader, writer, editor, librarian and even a bookseller during her career.

Penelope's love affair with books began in childhood with a home that was full of books. She told us about her earliest memories of her mother reading Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* and her resentment at not being allowed to read Enid Blyton. Her reading prowess must have been considerable, because at the age of 14 or 15 she was devouring Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*, and even George Bernard Shaw's plays tucked inside her school geography textbook.

Penelope's working life began, appropriately enough, as a cataloguer with the National Library of Australia. Her obsession with detail started then, an obsession that has served her well in her subsequent work as an editor. Before long Penelope was asked to work on the Australian National Bibliography; she also edited the first volume of *Flora of Australia*. Both projects gave her a lot of satisfaction and did no harm at all to her budding credentials as a talented editor.

Coming to Adelaide as a newlywed, Penelope soon gained work as a head cataloguer and then as an editor. She held editing positions with TAFE and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, before winning a very rewarding position as State Literature Officer for Arts SA. In this role Penelope supported writers and writing organisations across the state. Her career profile was on the rise and Penelope won a British Council fellowship that led to a rewarding overseas study tour where Penelope attended the famous Hay Festival of Literature in the UK and met many prominent writers.

Back in Adelaide Penelope's experiences and overseas contacts contributed to the development of Writers'

Week and also led to the foundation of the Chair in Creative Writing at Adelaide University (first held by Tom Shapcott). Penelope and Tom became famous for the 'literary lunches' that they held regularly, and to which aspiring writers would be invited. Out of these lunches came a book of poems written by these writers. Penelope blames her 'champagne-damaged memory' on these lunches, but they obviously linger in her mind as a golden time when she and Tom could foster writing talent in the Adelaide equivalent of a European 'salon'.

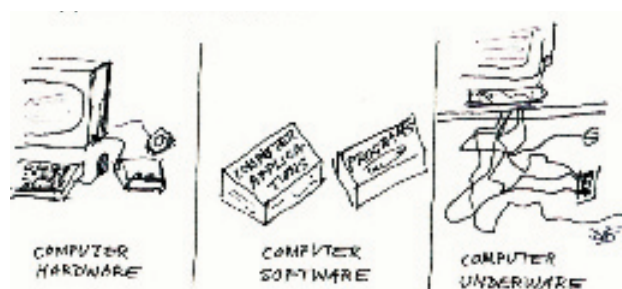


Books then took on a different role in Penelope's life, when she left Arts SA to set up her own specialist book shop. This adventurous move led to notoriety when censorship reared its ugly head and she was threatened with prosecution over a particular book in her shop. All ended happily when there was no prosecution. (The book was auctioned and purchased by the Barr Smith Library for \$1300). However, the

shop did not prove a success, and after six years Penelope was back doing what she always did so well: editing.

As Penelope told us, editing sustained her through those difficult times, and she has since worked as a freelance editor for some major clients here and interstate. She still loves books, plants and gardens, and has enjoyed overseas travel with her daughter on many occasions. Her friends are always encouraging her to write about her experiences, and one day she feels there is some creative writing in her head that might emerge. In the meantime Penelope remains of course an avid reader, and she mentioned some novels that have impressed her in recent times. These include: *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernieres; *Music & Silence* by Rose Tremain; *Lighthousekeeping* by Jeanette Winterson; *Old Filth* by Jane Gardam; and *The Sea* by John Banville.

Who knows where Penelope's love of books will lead her next? We were entertained and intrigued by her story and felt privileged to share some of her memories.



... missed metaphor

David Schubert

## **IPEd notes**

### **News from the Institute of Professional Editors**

Janet Mackenzie  
Liaison officer

The IPEd website <iped-editors.org> is gradually adding more items and developing more functions, thanks to the hard work of our expert web manager Mike Purdy. Take a tour to catch up with IPEd's achievements and recent initiatives.

An important document on the website describes IPEd's current structure and functions and lists the members of the Interim Council and the various working groups: in time, of course, this outline will be replaced by a formal constitution agreed on by members nationwide. Under the heading Accreditation there are nearly a dozen items; the Accreditation Board is working on several more, which will be posted as soon as the drafts are agreed. The site also provides *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* and the policy on editing theses developed jointly by IPEd and the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the site is its interactive capability which enables editors across the country to join in discussions on matters affecting our profession. Editors Forum is a public space in which anyone may post a question or a comment. At present it contains a brief discussion on methods of strengthening our societies; more contributions on this and other topics would be welcome. (The list comma, anyone?)

Another forum is Edwiki, which enables registered users to edit and comment on the documents it contains. At present these include a paper on setting up the national organisation of editors, and a questionnaire on the revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. It's easy to register, and we urge you to take part in these exciting developments that can defeat the tyranny of distance and bring editors together in a national conversation.

The website also hosts also several forums with restricted access, which enable the Interim Council and the various working groups to perform their functions and to collaborate in drafting documents. This frees them from administrivia such as organising email, filing agendas and minutes, and keeping track of successive drafts. As IPEd volunteers develop expertise with these interactive methods, their workload will be reduced and their productivity will improve.

The website will keep you in touch with national activities until the next issue of IPEd Notes appears in your society's newsletter in February 2007.

## **IPEd assessors forum: First meeting, 2–3 December 2006**

Paul Bennett

What a productive meeting!

Fourteen assessors from across Australia met in Melbourne to formalise the requirements for editors who wish to be accredited by IPEd. We covered a lot of ground over the two days, and the meeting ended with a fruitful outcome. In summary, we concluded that accreditation by portfolio submission is the ideal, but it's also a complex process that needs to be implemented gradually to ensure its efficacy and sustainability. For the meantime, we propose an initial, basic accreditation step involving a nationwide test of copyediting and other essential skills.

### **Problems foreseen with portfolio assessment**

The Assessors Forum expected there'd be some problems in assessing applications by portfolio (prepared in accordance with current requirements):

- Detailed assessment criteria will be needed to ensure consistency across the system. The time taken to develop and approve these is likely to cause considerable delay in accreditation for Australian editors.
- Considerable time and costs are likely be required to assess portfolios and for meetings of assessors panels. Assessment of individual applications and portfolios is likely to take about 20 hours per application. This translates into an application fee of about \$1200!
- There may be a 'logjam' with the first flush of applications, many of which may not meet the criteria for full accreditation and this will take up assessors' time unnecessarily.
- Initially, assessors may encounter difficulties in ensuring confidentiality of applicants.
- Applications and portfolios are likely to require considerable time to prepare.
- Applicants may need to submit more than one editing project to demonstrate a range of skills.
- The application limit of 100 pages is too high (should be 30–50 pages).

### **How do we feel about a base-level editing test?**

The Accreditation Working Group had already ruled out a test because it could foresee problems in security, labour, remote sites and possible alienation of senior editors. The Assessors Forum, however, thought that these problems could be alleviated by early planning and a good dose of creativity on our part. In contrast, the problems we foresee with portfolio assessment require a lot more thinking, planning and time.

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We propose to devise a test made up of a manuscript sample and short-answer questions to test for basic copyediting skills. The test would not replace the portfolio, but rather would provide, simultaneously, a basic level of accreditation and the ability to roll out the accreditation scheme pretty soon — by mid-to-late 2007.

### **Problems foreseen with a base-level accreditation test**

Even though we propose a base-level test, we can see that we may have to overcome problems with:

- coordination of the test across the different sites
- the need to provide remote and regional editors (and those with special needs) with equity of access
- departing from the model approved by vote of the state and territory societies and getting approval for a new model
- the need to set criteria and assign weighting to sections of Standards
- time taken to prepare tests, sample tests and answers and other support materials/activities (such as workshops).

### **Benefits of a base-level accreditation test**

- Simple objectives: screen-out people who are obviously not yet experienced enough to be called an editor, provide beginning/junior editors with a base level of accreditation (not possible under portfolio-only assessment), provide opportunity for an advanced-level portfolio assessment to be developed — career advancement, recognition for senior editors.
- Simpler to administer than portfolio applications; for example, it could be held on the same day around the country, with invigilators.
- Easier for applicants — less preparation time.
- Easier to ensure fairness and consistency.

### **How would the test work?**

The test would be conducted once each year (initially at six-monthly intervals), on the same day in every capital city and at other approved locations. The possibility of email or web-based testing will be investigated to help editors who have difficulty reaching a set venue for various reasons.

The test would be marked ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ only — that means you’ll be assessed as competent or not. Applicants who fail the test would be able to request a report on their performance.

### **How will editors be accredited?**

An editor who passes the test would gain certification as an IPed Accredited Editor. Accreditation at the advanced

level would be through a portfolio, the requirements for which we plan to revise in the coming months.

### **So what happens next?**

Our recommendations will be presented to the Accreditation Board, IPed and the state and territory societies for consideration. We’ll keep you posted through newsletters and the IPed website.

### **Conclusion**

By the end of the meeting we agreed to call this group the IPed ‘Assessors Forum’. In the spirit of IPed and its predecessor, CASE, the Assessors Forum will work towards consensus in all decision making. We believe that the model we propose offers the best solution to ensuring that IPed can offer all Australian editors a fair, consistent and economical accreditation scheme.

### **Want to find out more, tell us what you think?**

If you’d like to find out more about the recommendations proposed by the Assessors Forum, or if you wish to comment on these recommendations, please see the IPed webpage at <[iped-editors.org](http://iped-editors.org)> or contact your society of editors.

## **Institute of Professional Editors national conference**

### **From inspiration to publication**

9–12 May, Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart

From Inspiration to Publication will promote excellence in communication, focusing on three strands – science and education editing, public sector and corporate editing, and general fiction and non-fiction editing. As well as a stimulating program of presentations and workshops, there will be a lively open-to-the-public forum, a cocktail reception hosted by the Governor at Tasmania’s historic Government House, and a dinner at Wrest Point.

Speakers include Nobel Prize winner Professor Peter Doherty, an Australian researcher in the field of medicine who understands communication in science and education; Yvonne Rolzhausen, a senior editor at *The Atlantic* magazine in the United States and an authority on fact-checking; and Saul Eslake, the ANZ Bank’s Chief Economist and chair of the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board.

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## From the coalface

*Under this heading in future issues, members of the society will be discussing their current projects. I have volunteered myself on this occasion – Ed.*

Sometimes I'd like to have a good talk to JK Rowling and let her know how much her scribbles have affected not only the global economy but also my daily workload. Not being a Harry fan myself, I nevertheless find myself working through a mountain of fantasy novels and wondering what happened to good old Australian dun-coloured realism, where men were laconic and women were given to killing snakes with their bare hands. I work on a number of books at any one time at Omnibus Books, a children's publisher, but most of them are fantasy. I am currently working on the second book of a trilogy by local author D.M. Cornish called *Monster Blood Tattoo*. Book One, *Foundling*, was published in the US with Penguin Putnam and in the UK with David Fickling Books, and I worked closely with the US copy-editors on their edition. Book Two, as is often the case (JKR again), is twice as long, and will also involve collaboration with US editors. I have worked on some exciting projects with US publishers. One was exciting because the publisher's email was not working at all for the duration of the copy-editing process and the lead-up to the co-printing. Emails were exchanged with the freelance editor at her home address, and there were some interesting telephone calls at odd hours of the night. It's always interesting to send some bad news to the US and come to work expecting the reply first thing in the morning. This will be my lot for the next few months as I work on *Lamplighter*. D.M. Cornish's writing is characterised by a love of language, and his fiction is particularly rewarding to work on, directing me to the very large *Oxford Dictionary* to distinguish for myself the real words from his imaginative coining of words. My favourite of these so far is 'furtigrade' for secret stairway. The deadline looms, however, and so I had better stop enjoying myself and get on with the work.

Celia Jellett

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### IPed national conference continued

Delegates wishing to attend the 2007 Style Council will find that the IPed conference segues gracefully into the Style Council event on 12 May. Details and registration information for Style Council will be available soon at <ling.mq.edu.au/style>.

**Note that the earlybird registration rate ends soon, so it really is time to get organised to attend the conference.**

## Welcome to new members

**Jane Batchelor** has been editing for more than three years, and is currently employed as a publications writer/editor for UniSA's marketing unit, writing and editing copy for the university's promotional and corporate publications. Her interest in editing evolved out of a long-time love of writing – the perfect way to combine both passions! Eventually, Jane hopes to try her hand at editing manuscripts and developing her freelance business.

**Merrilyn Larusson** has recently moved to Adelaide and reports that she is enjoying the city and its lifestyle very much. Most of her editing clients are university faculty in Canada and here in Australia. Occasionally, she edits newsletters for a baby and parenting website, a welcome change from academic manuscripts.

As event manager for Arris, a communications company of the University of Adelaide Waite campus, **Jess Moschetti** organised the Waite Festival, a celebration of food and wine held in November 2006. Jess has a background in print and online media, and was editor of *Kids in Adelaide* magazine.

**Bernadette Quail** has completed a course in editing and proofreading and is looking to freelance as an editor after long experience in database management and related administrative work for Adelaide City Council.

**Leticia Supple** is a graduate of the UniSA course in professional writing and communication, with a focus on technical writing and editing. She has been working as a freelance, and is currently editor/publications officer in a general practice training program for the medical profession. She publishes fiction on vibewire.net and reviews for <fasterlouder.com.au> and UniSA's *Entropy*. She is also studying for a PhD on the POW account written by Australians held in the Asia theatre from 1942 to 1945.

### Pencil it in

The Writers' Centre has confirmed our general meeting dates for:

Wednesday	23 May
Tuesday	24 July
Wednesday	26 September (AGM)
Thursday	22 November.

Please put them in your diaries.

## Society of Editors (SA)

### Contact details

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to the Editor: <eds@editors-sa.org.au>

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President, Rosemary Luke:  
<SAPresident@editors-sa.org.au>

Treasurer, Nena Bierbaum:  
<SATreasurer@editors-sa.org.au>

### Membership

To join the Society send a completed application form <[www.editors-sa.org.au/pdfs/SocEdsMship%20Form05-06.pdf](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/pdfs/SocEdsMship%20Form05-06.pdf)> to the address above, or by email to <eds@editors-sa.org.au>.

Membership of the Society is open to anyone who is engaged professionally in any aspect of editing for publication, on a full-time or part-time basis, or who has had such experience in the past.

Associate membership is open to any interested person.

Subscriptions and freelance register fees are due on 1 July each year. You need to be a full member to be included in the freelance register.

\$55 full membership  
\$30 associate membership  
\$60 freelance register

If you have an inquiry about your membership status, please send an email to: <eds@editors-sa.org.au>.

### Freelance register

The Freelance Register is available at: <[www.editors-sa.org.au/FRregister/FreelanceRegister.htm](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/FRregister/FreelanceRegister.htm)>. Please contact the Society if you'd like your details to be included. Full membership is required for inclusion.

### Society meetings

General meetings are open to all members and prospective members and are held (unless otherwise indicated) in the Seminar Room of the SA Writers' Centre, 2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street East, with drinks from 7.15 pm.

## National treasures from Australia

### State Library of South Australia

25 January–25 March

Venue: Flinders City Gallery, ground floor, Spence Wing.

To share Australian library treasures with the wider community, the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) and the National Library of Australia have organised a national touring exhibition, National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries. This landmark exhibition tells a rich and remarkable story about our history, our nation, our treasures ... and our libraries. It brings together, for the first time, more than 170 extraordinary items that have shaped our nation. One of the most popular items on display is Sir Donald Bradman's bat.

The exhibition is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm, and entry is free.

## Dictionary wit—Macquarie Online

There is a tradition in English dictionaries of including amusing definitions which capture the sense of the word in an engaging and witty way. Dr Johnson is remembered for many such definitions. Take, for example, his entry for oats:

A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

Dr Johnson did not hold a high opinion of creature comforts in Scotland.

In more modern dictionaries, Chambers is known for the odd moment of wry humour, as in the following:

*éclair*, n. a cake, long in shape but short in duration, with cream filling and usu. chocolate icing.

Macquarie Dictionary is developing this tradition by inviting members of the public to submit witty definitions for inclusion. The definition must, as the Chambers definition does, satisfy the normal dictionary expectations as to explanation of meaning, but give it that little added spike of humour.

Any word can be chosen from the *Macquarie Dictionary*. A prize consisting of a print copy of the *Macquarie Dictionary* 4th edition will be offered each month to the winning definition selected by the publisher.

To enter the competition, visit <[macquariedictionary.com.au](http://macquariedictionary.com.au)> and go to *Dictionary Wit*.