



... *the word*

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (SA)

ISSN 1833-3796

March–April 2008

Next Meeting

Tuesday, 15 April 2008

What it means to live in Adelaide all your life, with Deborah McCulloch

SA Writers' Centre, 2nd floor, 187 Rundle Street East

Deborah McCulloch says that she is nearly 70 and has been around in Adelaide for a long time. Born in Sydney, she modelled herself on the Sydney larrikin, which made for trouble most of her life. Conscious therefore of gender issues, she became a particularly committed feminist in the 70s and was Women's Adviser to both Don Dunstan and Brian Burke.

She has had a varied and interesting life, working in such varied roles as a campaign manager, author, editor, and lobbyist.

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

Please RSVP for dinner by Monday 8 April to <eds@editors-sa.org.au>.

Deadline for copy for the next issue of ... *the word* is [date].

... the presidential word

Susan Rintoul

Forthcoming meetings

We will be pleased to welcome Deborah McCulloch as our next speaker. Deborah is a woman who has made her mark in a huge diversity of fields, including feminism, work against domestic violence and rape, and in health, mental health and ageing. This promises to be a most interesting night.

Congratulations to members

Particular congratulations are in order for two of our members.

Arts SA has reported that at the 12th Biennial of the Festival Awards for Literature 2008 a leading South Australian poet, **Steve Evans**, was awarded the Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship (\$15,000) to write his next book. Arts SA said that Steve's exceptionally well-crafted works captured the attention of the judges.

Also at the Festival Awards for Literature, author Michael Bauer thanked his editor, **Celia Jellett**, who he said helped him to win the \$15,000 award for children's literature. Bauer's book, *Don't Call Me Ishmael* was chosen out of 212 entries. The audience was left in no doubt about the value of Celia's work as editor for the publishers, Omnibus.

Celia is one of our most long-standing and distinguished members; she has been a committee member for many years, undertaking various roles, and she is a member of the assessment forum for accreditation. We are all aware that editors often lack the recognition they richly deserve so it is especially pleasing to hear this.

National issues

Members will have received an email calling for applications for an exam development team for the accreditation exam, which is scheduled for June–July this year.

National conference 2009

A lot of progress has been made in the planning for the 2009 national IPed conference. We have confirmed the Adelaide Festival Centre as our venue, as a South Australian showcase. We have also chosen a conference organiser, and this appointment will enable the committee to focus on the next step: planning an excellent program of speakers. Talks have also taken place with international publishers during Writers' Week, with a view to inviting a distinguished editor to come to Adelaide as a keynote speaker at our conference. We're on track for a conference we'll all be proud of.

If you would like any further information, or if you would like to know more about the conference committee, please email me at <SAPresident@editors-sa.org.au>. We will shortly start a regular column to give you news of the conference. This column will also run in all the newsletters of the societies of editors in Australia.

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Meeting report

Jacqui Cookes, bookseller

Celia Jellett

Mostly Books owner, Jacqui Cookes, who celebrated thirty years in the book trade in 2007, addressed the Society's first meeting for 2008 on 18 February.

The bookshop so much relied upon by south-eastern suburban residents and others is in its seventh incarnation at the Mitcham Village shopping centre. What began in a long narrow space adjoining the newsagency, stocked with giftware and boasting a lottery agency (to help the books along), is now a thriving centre offering its space to two book clubs, a poetry group, books and coffee nights, and launches. In short, it is a real community bookshop. Jacqui spoke of the gulf that separates the book chains and independent bookshops in terms of tracking special orders, finding 'awkward' books and generally being attuned to the interests and tastes of the local community. Mostly Books enjoys intense customer loyalty, and this is evident in sales of new Harry Potter books at recommended retail price, at a time when these books are substantially reduced by the big chain stores.

The last thirty years have seen an explosion in the number of Australian books published, and bookshops such as Mostly Books buy less than one per cent of the new titles shown by publishers' reps. As Jacqui puts it, more than half of these are 'a waste of trees', and as a consequence Mostly Books has on its shelves a collection of books that is different from anyone else's. The shop has always stocked good quality picture books and fiction for children, and staff work hard at keeping 'pulp' books at bay. Staff and customers, including children, read and personally recommend books.

Having now left the management of the shop to others, Jacqui concentrates on the school library side of the business. She now works with librarians' 'shopping lists', recommending books she has enjoyed herself, and visiting remainder houses to stretch the budget further.

Looking back on her years in the trade, Jacqui concluded that the business was a part of her family, and the industry a great one to be involved in. Her current reading includes *Paper empires: A history of the book in Australia 1946–2005* (Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, eds), a recent book covering events and trends in the book industry.

Interesting website

Canadian Editors' Association.

This link is to the Canadian Editors' Association newsletter which, amongst a host of pertinent articles, compares their association with other English speaking editors' groups.

<www.editors.ca/files/AV2007-02_03.pdf>

IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors

Janet Mackenzie, Liaison Officer

Obesa cantavit: the fat lady has sung.

February 2008

On 2 August 1998 the presidents of six Australian societies of editors met in Melbourne to discuss how they might bring their state-based societies together in some way. During the decade since then the societies have chalked up many collaborative efforts, but perhaps the most important is drawing up and agreeing on a constitution that enables them to federate as a national body. On 22 January 2008 the Australian Securities and Investments Commission issued a certificate of registration for the Institute of Professional Editors as a public company limited by guarantee. Special thanks to Virginia Wilton of the Canberra society for her tireless work on the detail of the constitution and to Ed Highley, secretary of the Interim Council, for seeing it through.

Accreditation

Karen Disney of the South Australian society has been participating in national action ever since she attended that initial meeting in Melbourne ten years ago. As the current chair of the Accreditation Board, Karen prodded the board into action after the holidays with a teleconference at the end of January. The major item on the agenda was the arrangements for the first editing examination, including consideration of the feedback from the issues paper circulated in the second half of last year, as well as the costs and logistics of running the exam. The board is working closely with the Assessors Forum, which is responsible for the content and marking of the examination paper. The plan is to hold the first exam in mid-2008.

Website

The IPEd website <www.iped-editors.org> is looking better all the time. It now contains an RSS feed for continuous updates, and a calendar to keep track of professional events. Training officers in particular are urged to post details of their society's programs so that members can plan their professional development. And members are urged to fill in the web user survey—the information you supply will form the basis of a submission to obtain funding that will enable IPEd to sponsor tailored computer training for member societies.

2009 conference

The South Australian society will host our next national conference in Adelaide in October 2009. It seems a long way off, but now is the time to start making plans—saving your pennies or dropping hints to your employer—for this fully tax-deductible expenditure on your professional development.

continued over

March 2008

Over the past two months the work of IPEd has intensified as the new organisation takes shape and begins to implement its accreditation scheme. More than two dozen volunteers across the country are donating their time and expertise to write and review briefs and budgets, prepare agendas and minutes, attend teleconferences, and keep up with relentless email. We are grateful to all those who put so much effort into advancing the profession.

Following the incorporation of IPEd, the interim council is in the process of handing over to the duly constituted council that will govern the institute's affairs. The council consists of one delegate from each member society of editors, and it will have a part-time, paid secretary. The position description for the secretary and other working arrangements are under consideration. Plans are being made for the inaugural meeting of the council, which will appoint an honorary treasurer and approve a budget.

Meanwhile, it's full steam ahead on accreditation. The Accreditation Board has set itself a tight schedule, because it believes that members want to see action on this matter; it expects to hold the first accreditation examination at the end of July. After considerable discussion the board has decided that this exam will be conducted on paper, using traditional mark-up. The board recognises that the online and onscreen proposals offer the possibility of reduced costs and easier delivery—and reflect the way more and more editors work—but has concluded that additional time is needed to research these proposals in detail to determine the best option, accurately cost it and then trial it.

The board has drafted a budget, and it is also compiling a procedures manual to guide candidates and assessors in the conduct of the exam, which will be posted on the IPEd website by the end of April. The members of the Assessors Forum are contributing sample exam questions to a database and are discussing arrangements for marking and moderation. For a full description of the exam, see CredAbility 7 (page XX).

The board has written a brief for developing the first exam, and it will appoint a team—a lead writer, three reviewers and a proofreader—to develop the exam paper and marking scheme. Editors who have at least five years' experience are invited to apply for these positions. Key selection criteria and application forms may be obtained from your Accreditation Board delegate or the website; the closing date for applications is 14 March. [*These were emailed out to members earlier this month—ed.*]

CredAbility 7 Follow-up to Accreditation Workshops

Karen Disney, IPEd Accreditation Board

It's very exciting to be able to say that the Accreditation Board will shortly be announcing the date of the first editing accreditation exam. It's tentatively planned for either the Friday or Saturday of the last weekend in July this year.

So start thinking about it—you could be an Accredited Editor!

Details on the format of the exam and other useful information follow below.

Consultation with members of the Australian societies has played an important role in the development of the accreditation scheme ever since IPEd (then CASE) first began working towards that goal. Between September and December last year, workshops were held around the country to consider and discuss the sample accreditation examination. Editors gave a great deal of thought to the assessment content, the weighting of components, how candidates would approach the exam, and the way the exam would be conducted. Many editors tested themselves by attempting the sample exam and were able to offer especially valuable feedback. The Accreditation Board is grateful to all those who contributed to the review process.

In considering all the feedback, and formulating our brief to the exam development team, we have not been able to act on every suggestion made—sometimes for practical reasons, and sometimes because suggestions have been contradictory. But we are confident that the accreditation examination will be a far more effective and equitable instrument of assessment because of the wealth of constructive criticism and comment received.

One of the most debated issues concerning the exam has been the mode of delivery: whether it should, as originally envisaged, be a hard-copy exam, or whether online and/or computer-based delivery should be offered as well as, or instead of, the hard-copy exam. On this matter, too, we have listened to the views of society members, through the Hobart conference and through written responses to an issues paper put forward by IPEd (July 2007). A subcommittee is currently studying the feasibility and costs of a range of exam delivery options, and the results of that study will guide the board's decision.

In the meantime, the Accreditation Board has reached agreement on the following points, based on feedback from the accreditation workshops in 2007.

Details about the exam

Eligibility

Candidates will not be required to have a nominated number of years' industry experience in order to sit the exam, but the exam will be designed for editors with at least two to three years' experience.

Standards and authority for exam

The exam will be based on the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001).

The *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edn (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), will be the assumed style guide for the exam; however, candidates may nominate, and use, another authority if they feel it is necessary (stating their reasons). The assessors' primary concern will be consistency.

If a question posed in the exam clearly requires an answer involving 'acceptable' usage that candidates disagree with, candidates should demonstrate in their answer that they understand what they are being asked to do, and must justify their preferred usage.

Exam development

The exam development team will consist of one writer, three reviewers who will have considerable input to refining the final exam, and one person to proofread and conduct a timing trial.

All assessors will be asked to contribute suggestions for Parts 1 and 3 (see below), to increase the variety of assessment options.

Exam marking

Assessors will either meet or participate in a teleconference to discuss a range of acceptable answers to exam questions, to ensure that the approach to marking is fair and consistent.

The exam will be scored either Pass or Fail. The pass mark will be 80% of the total number of marks available in the exam. Since the exam is a test of competence (not excellence) in applying Australian Standards for Editing Practice, the Accreditation Board expects that a competent editor with two to three years' experience, or equivalent, will score well above the pass mark.

Exam structure, weighting of marks

(as revised February 2008)

Part 1 will be worth 20% and will include some multiple-choice questions.

Part 2 will be worth 40% and will consist of one passage for editing.

Part 3 will be worth 40% and will require candidates to answer four questions from a choice of twelve.

Exam content

Part 1

- Multiple-choice questions will be included (up to 15% of the total mark).
- The focus of questions will be on correcting errors rather than on rewriting/improving the sentences.

Part 2

- The passage for editing will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam. It will be general, requiring no specialist knowledge of the subject or genre. Minimal structural editing will be required, and candidates will be given explicit instructions on what they are expected to do.

- The passage will be presented double-spaced and in a reasonably large font. Scribble paper will be provided, and candidates may use pencils and erasers when editing.

Part 3

- Eight of the questions offered in Part 3 will be general, testing skills and areas of knowledge that would be expected of editors working in any genre. The remaining four questions will be specialised, but the specialties offered will vary from exam to exam.
- All questions in Part 3 will be of roughly equal difficulty.
- Questions will be open-ended; instead of instructing a candidate to 'Write a letter', they will say, for example, 'Explain what you would do. Write down your conversation, email or other communication strategy'.

Duration of exam

The exam will last for three hours. There will be fifteen minutes' reading time provided before the exam begins, during which no writing will be allowed.

Given that the passage for editing in Part 2 will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam, it is expected that candidates will have ample time for checking their work within the three hours.

Candidates with a disability

The Accreditation Board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, how best to accommodate candidates with a disability. Candidates with special needs should, in the first instance, talk to their Accreditation Board delegate.

In the coming critical months, we will keep members up to date on accreditation news through the CredAbility column in society newsletters, but in the interim you are welcome to contact your Accreditation Board delegate if you have queries or require further information.

Book review

Writing at work: How to write clearly, effectively and professionally, by Neil James, Executive Director of the Plain English Foundation, Allen & Unwin, 2007. RRP \$35

Reviewed by Rosemary Luke

Those who have heard Neil James speak about Plain English at Style Councils or on radio, or who have read his newspaper articles, will be aware that his argument for using Plain English is very persuasive, not least because of the myriad examples he can provide of appalling non-Plain English.

This book is written for 'busy professionals who write at work'. It aims to help them make their writing more effective, by being precise, clear, readable, efficient, usable and persuasive. It stresses the importance of planning and preparation for writing.

Each chapter contains identically headed sections: the toolbox, the living language, and power tools. The toolbox sections are practical, quick reference areas, immediately useful to someone in the middle of writing. The living language sections may be ignored by many busy professionals but will be of great interest to most editors, as they explore the 'intellectual and historical contexts of the toolbox'. There are fascinating excursions into classical rhetoric, traditional grammar, cognitive psychology, etc. The power tools sections offer the advanced or maturing writer more sophisticated and complex advice and examples about the topic under discussion.

In preparing the book, James worked with professionals from the government and corporate sectors. He is especially good when explaining how and why to structure different types of documents in different ways, for different purposes. Also useful is his advice about 'omitting unnecessary words' to paraphrase Strunk and White; applying 'the core message test' is a valuable exercise which could also assist editors wrestling with a too-wordy text.

This book should be bought, probably in multiple copies, by every government department, university, bank, insurance company, real estate agency, etc; and especially by all sections of the Australian Tax Office. Editors will find it interesting and useful, as will anyone who needs to train others to write effectively at work.

Events and awards

SfEP Conference: Twenty-twenty vision

8–9 September 2008, St Catherine's College, Oxford

You can now register for this year's Society for Editors and Proofreaders (UK) conference.

Celebrating 20 years of the SfEP, participants will be looking forward as well as looking back over the two decades the Society has been in existence. The conference program will include a mix of workshops, seminars, plenary sessions and panel discussions.

Speakers at the conference will include Charlotte Brewer, fellow of Hertford College and lecturer in English, Oxford University, and author of *Treasure-House of the Language: The Living OED* (Yale University Press, 2007).

For more details, including how to register, please visit the SfEP website at <www.sfep.org.uk>

D.H. Lawrence Prize for Travel Writing 2008

DEADLINE: on or before 15 April 2008.

The Prize aims to encourage the genre of travel writing as a means of developing understanding among people from different cultures. It is divided into three sections:

- Section A—Published works of fiction

- Section B—Published works of non-fiction
- Special award—Travel reportages

Eligibility

1. Works based on the theme of travel that have been published for the first time in Italian or English after the 31 December 2005 are eligible for entry into Sections A and B. All entries must have been published by registered publishers.
2. Travel reports are eligible for the Special Award if published in Italian or English and distributed by the press after 30 June 2006. Eligible reports can include articles and photographic reports.

For further information please visit the website: <www.provincia.cagliari.it/lawrence>, or email <PremioLawrence@provincia.cagliari.it>.

Editor's Survival Tip #107

Karen Disney

We've all faced it: the moment of blood-freezing disbelief when you pick up your latest publication fresh from the printer and the most appalling typo smacks you in the face.

'Workers returned to their normal shits,' it exults.

'How dare I call myself an editor?' you ask in despair. 'Who needs me if I miss mistakes like that?' Utter misery. Complete loss of confidence.

Well, I'm here to say I've survived and am still an editor despite 20 years of working in a company where engineers will make a special visit to your desk just to gleefully point out such lapses: 'Ha, look what you missed!'. Never mind that you wrestled with 30 pages of their impenetrable prose and converted it to clear, concise and comprehensible English, every editing change an improvement to their work.

My secret tip is to set up a Glory File. It's very simple—every time you receive a compliment, or a nice thank you, or any sign of appreciation, copy the words into the Glory File.

Then, when disaster strikes, get it out and read it. Take heart. You have been a good editor in the past, you are still one, and you can only be a better one in the future.

I set our file up many years ago to protect not just my sanity but that of others in our Communications team. Once a year we have a Glory File Dinner. The whole file is printed off and we take turns reading it out loud—glass of champagne to hand, of course. It's the highlight of our year.

The Glory File will work just as well for a solo editor. There is no better antidote to low morale than reading about your own success!

Writers' Week, 2008

Pam Kelly

My friend and I arrived on Sunday afternoon just in time to sit in the only sliver of shade left at the back of the crowd who had managed to arrive much earlier to gain a seat in the tent to see and hear actor/writer, William McInnes. Dr Nick Prescott, from the English Department at Flinders, was making a valiant attempt to offer the crowd, and McInnes, his prepared introduction; but he had to give up under the pressure of McInnes's quick wit and rapid-fire repartee.

McInnes only sees the funny side of things. Self-deprecating and down-to-earth; an 'ocker' type Aussie bloke from earlier times, he is quick on the uptake. From Nick's first falter in keeping to script, McInnes's sharp but sensitive insight into the silly behaviours of those around him throughout his life had the audience laughing at every tale.

'One person's trauma is another person's party anecdote,' he quipped, summing up his approach to life and the different ways people respond to life experiences. McInnes 'tells stories to communicate something'. He said: 'My mother would often say, "Nineteen hours to have you and for what?"'. We laughed, but it sounded rather harsh. Realising this, he said he never took it that way, he only heard the humour. The close relationship between mother and son was clearly evident.

This was a good session with which to begin Writers' Week. Peter Carey, Ian McEwan, Geraldine Brooks, David Malouf, and Germaine Greer, were just some of the big-name authors attending. As the week progressed the heat and the need to constantly seek shade made Writers' Week an endurance test. Once seated the decision to move and possibly not find a similarly shady spot was a difficult one.

One of the delights of Writers' week is discovering new authors with whom you resonate. A new writer for me,

who I enjoyed listening to immensely, was Scottish crime writer, Denise Mina. Her Glaswegian accent was lyrical. 'Throw a stone in a crowd in Scotland and you'll hit someone who wants to be a crime writer,' she said. She surmised that the reason this genre was so popular is that it provides a modern context for public hangings: 'we read about it instead,' she said.

For Peter Carey, 'the glory of writing fiction is to discover worlds you didn't know,' while author/journalist David Marr posited that 'if you can't surprise yourself as an author you can't (won't) surprise the reader.'

In the session Fictionalising National History, historian Marilyn Lake suggested that, 'history and fiction have more in common than we might think. ... They share many of the same techniques, she said, 'and personalising stories is also what historians do ... we shape the narrative of the stories we choose to tell.' Lake pointed out that historians need to write creatively to convince readers that an event happened. Novelist

Roger McDonald said that for historical fiction the writer decides what [facts] to leave in or out, according to whatever helps the plot.

We arrived half an hour too early to hear Ian McEwan, but we still were not early enough to beat the crowd. We found another sliver of shade on the hill, that lasted briefly, and listened to McEwan read from the book he is currently writing. He likes to try his books out on people to see if they work. A treat for us but a clever tactic. Enticed to buy it but unable to, he had ensured that people would head to the book tent to buy one of his earlier books instead.

We didn't last the week. My friend caved in on Wednesday. I managed to rally on until Thursday, but neither of us could face Friday. Maybe next time the



people gather in the shade at Writers'

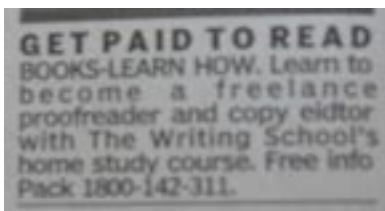
weather will be kinder, and we will live out our dream of lazing on the lawn chatting of things literary over lunch with a wine, browsing in the book tent without melting, and soaking up what should be a pleasant week of literary feasting. Roll on 2010!

Amusements

Unfortunate error

A training provider for editors and proofreaders, advertising in a recent *Hills and Valley Messenger*, was no doubt embarrassed when the advertisement went to print.

'Learn how to become a freelance proofreader and copy editor,' it proclaimed (see image). Training, anyone?



Odd Book Title of the Year

Each year, UK magazine *The Bookseller* offers the Diagram Prize for the Oddest Book Title. The award exists to celebrate the oddities and curiosities in publishing, and to save them from a gloryless death. Some of the short-listed titles for the 2007 prize included:

- *I Was Tortured By The Pygmy Love Queen*
- *Cheese Problems Solved*
- *If You Want Closure In Your Life, Start With Your Legs*
- *How To Write A How To Write Book*
- *Are Women Human?*

If you are intrigued about any of these titles, it is profitable to Google them. But be warned: it's a highly amusing way to lose half an hour!

Society of Editors (SA)

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Membership

To join the Society send a completed application form <www.editors-sa.org.au/pdfs/Membership0708.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.

\$65 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>.

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.