

BOOK WORM
NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.
SEPTEMBER 2001

I can only suppose that, like me, readers are grateful for the articles in this issue of Book Worm that have been lifted, with permission, from the newsletters of sister organisations. (Grateful too to Lorna de Courtenay for tracking them down.) But it would be nice to receive a local offering or two once again. – Ed.

FROM THE CHAIR

The committee recently endorsed Betty Durston as SOEWA's delegate to the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE). Betty, as most of you know, is immediate past president of SOEWA, a current committee member and our education and training coordinator. She has coordinated the highly successful 'Practical Editing' courses run by SOEWA, in conjunction with Women in Publishing, almost since their inception, and has a keen interest in the issue of accreditation for the editing profession. I would like to thank Betty for taking on this important role for the society.

Betty's first task will be to attend the next CASE meeting, which is being held in Sydney on the weekend of 19–21 October. In preparation, we will be devoting the next SOEWA general meeting to a discussion of national issues (see below), using a discussion paper (attached) prepared recently by the Tasmanian Society of Editors as a stimulus for ideas.

Please try to attend, if at all possible: the society really welcomes your input on these issues, and it will make Betty's task easier if she goes to Sydney with a clear sense of what Western Australian editors want. Written responses would also be appreciated, if you are unable to attend.

Congratulations to Wendy Bulgin and Helen Bradbury, editors of John Taylor's *Between Devotion and Design: The Architecture of John Cyril Hawes* (UWA Press), which has won the Australian Christian Literature Society's Christian Book of the Year Award for 2001.

Please note below the advance notice for our November meeting, which will be held on a Wednesday rather than Tuesday, and will take the form of an excursion to Parliament House to see how Hansard is edited. Our thanks go to Bryce Moore for facilitating this meeting. And finally, in the wake of these past few weeks of terror and despair, I wish you all hope.

Amanda Curtin

OCTOBER MEETING

National Directions for the Editing Profession

On the agenda for the CASE meeting in October are issues such as accreditation, a national web site, publicity and promotion, ethics, and the structure of CASE. The Tasmanian society has presented CASE with a discussion paper (attached), and we would like to canvass *your* thoughts and ideas about these issues. Please join us for what is sure to be a lively discussion.

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When: 7.30 p.m., Tuesday, 2 October 2001

Where: Tresillian Community Centre, 21 Tyrell Street, Nedlands
(street parking)

Cover charge: \$2

LOGO

Watch for SOEWA's new logo, which will be launched in the next issue of *Book Worm*.

ADVANCE NOTICE: NOVEMBER MEETING

The Editing of Hansard: Excursion to Parliament House

When: Wednesday, 7 November 2001

Arrangements for this excursion are currently being finalised, and further information will be available once we have an idea of numbers. Places will be limited, so reserve yours now. RSVP to Amanda Curtin, tel/fax 9377 2091, email curtin@highway1.com.au

GRAMMAR WATCH

We're indebted to the redoubtable Amanda for this illuminating titbit:

A television commercial for a women's magazine that screened during August announced: 'Drug-free at last, baby number 2 has turned Jason Donovan's life around'. I'm sure we're all relieved to hear that that baby's clean.

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new member: Don Williams

JARGON EMULATION TABLES

We follow the provision last month of that very useful editorial tool, the Buzzword Calculator, with the Jargon Emulation Tables. Once you have mastered them, you will be better equipped than ever you were to convert vapid reports into a superior form of gibberish. The utility of the system can be illustrated by choosing any four-digit number between 0000 and 9999. If you chose 7492, for example, your next step would be to take phrase 7 from Table A, phrase 4 from Table B and so on, giving you 'Based on real-time projections, the consolidation of complex production dynamics maximises the probable payback performance by adding cost-effectiveness to a fully integrated support program'. You can't say fairer than that, can you.

Table A	Table B	Table C	Table D
<i>1 Notwithstanding these considerations</i>	<i>1. much of the residual policy structure</i>	<i>1. presumes that substantive performance characteristics will be added into</i>	<i>1. the fundamental process of assessing all default conditions</i>
<i>2. As a concomitant element</i>	<i>2. a significant and effective communications interface</i>	<i>2. postulates a state-of-the-art framework within</i>	<i>2. a fully integrated support program</i>
<i>3. Therefore,</i>	<i>3. the immediate transference of associated technology options</i>	<i>3. anticipates a proactive strategy in order to implement</i>	<i>3. the primary interdependence within established parameters</i>
<i>4. consequently</i>	<i>4. the customisation of product peripherals</i>	<i>4. recognises a meaningful systems engineering framework for subsequent transfer into</i>	<i>4. the synchronous acquisition of compatible hardware</i>
<i>5. as an inherent factor,</i>	<i>5. the evolution of a definitive marketing platform</i>	<i>5. will present the balanced time/cost affinity that is required for</i>	<i>5. a functionally independent subsystem group</i>
<i>6. Established on embedded logic contingencies,</i>	<i>6. the consolidation of complex production dynamics</i>	<i>6. suggests that an interactive response review will be applied to</i>	<i>6. a satisfactory trade-off between user-defined models</i>
<i>7. Based on real-time projections,</i>	<i>7. a reciprocal interweaving of ongoing capabilities</i>	<i>7. implies a sustainable timeframe</i>	<i>7. most standardisation routines</i>
<i>8. Within this specific context , for example,</i>	<i>8. any previously adopted mission statements</i>	<i>8. Will be responsive to and can be balanced with</i>	<i>8. the initiation of monitoring programs</i>
<i>9. Hence,</i>	<i>9. presumes that substantive peerformance the modular analysis of field trialing against pre-determined limits</i>	<i>9. maximises the probable payback performance by adding cost effectiveness to</i>	<i>9. the development of virtual data networking</i>
<i>0. In the context of precise targets,</i>	<i>0. the organisational criterion that naturally obtains</i>	<i>0. requires an operational deduction transfer in order to procure</i>	<i>0. a measured management stance in relation to concurrent developments</i>

Pursued with diligence, the method will enable you to prepare complete reports that are totally devoid of content if you are ever required to do so. When editing an existing report, simply find a phrase in the table that is similar to one you have encountered in the document, and take it from there. With practice, you will find it useful to incorporate sentences in ADCB, DACB and BACD order as well as to follow the standard ABCD pattern. The use of such phrases as ‘It goes without

saying' and 'It will, of course, be appreciated' can be added with advantage in many cases.

BECOMING AN EDITOR

What follows is the text of a leaflet put out by the Society of Editors (SA). It is taken from a recent issue of the organisation's newsletter and reproduced with permission. Some of the references are local, but most of it has general application.

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I'm passionate about the English language!

So how do I become an editor?

This leaflet, produced by the Society of Editors (SA), is intended to provide general advice to anyone interested in words and language, and who wants to become an editor. One aspect of editing is careful checking of facts, and so we would advise from the outset that you seek information from more than one source. Don't just take our word for it. Providing an answer to the frequently asked question 'So how do I become an editor' is by way of asking several more:

What is an editor?

Who employs editors?

What do employers expect?

How do I go about gaining the qualifications and experience to work as an editor?

What future is there in being an editor?

What is an editor?

Anyone who writes and re-reads what they have written and then changes their writing for the better could be said to be an editor. All writers are, or should be, editors. Most writers also know that getting someone else to look at what they have written is invaluable in improving their work.

This leaflet is about the professional editor who is paid to look at what

someone else has written and to advise the writer on how to make that writing more effective in communicating to the intended audience.

The term ‘editor’ can cover a range of roles — there are news editors, book editors, managing editors and editors of collected works. Many working editors are the faceless and often unacknowledged people behind the scenes who work on a set of words in that interval between when they are written and when they are finally published, in whatever form.

The key concepts here are ‘writing’ and ‘publication’. Someone writes with a particular ‘public’ and a particular purpose in mind. An editor helps a writer to best reach their intended audience and achieve their intended effects on that audience. So, editing is about helping the writer get the language right for the intended audience and for the medium of publication. An editor may collaborate with graphic artists, designers or audio technicians to make sure written and spoken words, pictures and sounds work together to tell the same story. Emerging information and communications technologies are changing profoundly the concepts of authorship and publication, and hence of editors.

Pamphlets, brochures and web sites, real estate blurbs, posters, performance or music programs, cookbooks and recipe cards, limited editions or popular press, academic monographs, teaching and learning resources, advertising and promotional material, signage, calendars and annual reports . . . words are everywhere, and everywhere they benefit from the attention of someone whose profession is to make words as effective as possible.

Who employs editors?

We assume that you want to actually earn a living, or part of a living, as an editor. It is

therefore essential to look at the industries that value editors and pay them for their services.

South Australia has a number of small, local print publishers, but by no stretch of the imagination can it be construed as a major centre for publishing. The major publishing houses for books and magazines are in the eastern states and overseas. While technology theoretically permits editors to work from anywhere in the world, current employment practices tend to mean that telecommuting is mainly for trusted staff who have an established track record. The chances of getting a reasonably paid job as an editor of fiction in South Australia are slim.

What are some of the other industries that might employ editors?

The arts industry puts together programs, catalogues and policy/research documents. Most industries require documentation of work practices (manuals and the like), annual reports, publicity and marketing material. Depending on the size of the industry, this may be done in house and an editor might be included in the team, or the editing might be outsourced to a freelancer. Education is a large industry sector with a heavy reliance on documents. Community organisations and governments want to reach a range of audiences. Each of these areas has different requirements as to audience, writers of various skill levels and funding bases.

What do employers expect?

Employers expect cost effectiveness. The amount they spend on an aspect of their business needs to provide good value. They don't necessarily want the cheapest. Employers expect quality. They expect an editor to appreciate the need to balance time, cost and quality in writing and publication. They appreciate advice and suggestions about how best to achieve their purposes within these constraints. Employers expect evidence of capability. They want to satisfy themselves that the person or firm they are going to entrust with part of their business is up to the job. Academic qualifications are one indicator, but proven track record and excellent references are probably more valued.

You need to be able to talk to employers in these terms and provide evidence of your abilities.

How do I go about getting the necessary qualifications and experience to work as an editor?

A potential employer will want to make a judgement about your capacity to deliver on a particular task, and will probably look at a number of indicators of your capabilities. A qualification from a recognised educational institution provides you with credentials in a particular academic discipline or professional area. The more closely a qualification is related to the business of writing or publication, or the specialist area of knowledge of a potential employer, the more valued it will be.

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If you are looking for a course, the web is an invaluable tool. You can look up every major educational institution — locally, nationally and internationally — and see what they have to offer. There are courses at TAFE, and at university at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as external study options. Academic qualifications, though necessary, are just the beginning. You also need skills, qualities and abilities in areas such as teamwork, interpersonal skills, understanding of business processes and realities, reliability and even creativity and flair. And professional editing skills can be developed only with practice. It is important therefore that you build up an evidence base for these, for example references from other employers or a portfolio of work. If you haven't been employed in a relevant area, try at least to do some volunteer work to provide evidence of your capabilities.

In 2001, the Council of Australian Societies of Editors produced *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, which sets out the knowledge and skills needed for editing practice. This is a useful document for self-assessment. You can find it at <www.editors-sa.org.au/html/

case-standards.htm>

What future is there in being an editor?

Global economic, social and technological changes have a rapid and substantial effect on local conditions. It is important to maintain your employability by scanning the global and local environments and taking active steps to keep abreast of change.

Major changes to publishing wrought by technology and global economics have substantially reduced in-house editing worldwide. At the same time, communications and information technology have made the world wide web available at the corner café. The internet is a relatively new but rapidly growing medium for words. These shifts affect the employment and employability of editors, and so it is important to keep learning, to keep re-inventing your skills, and to be ready for new opportunities.

What we can say is that as long as words are our major form of communication there will be a role for people who can enhance the effectiveness of words, whatever label we give that role. Organisations like the Society of Editors try to assist their members by providing opportunities to get together and discuss areas of interest, by disseminating relevant information and through advocacy for editors and editing.

WEB SITES

Those with an interest in the web could find <BrandingYourselfOnline.com> worth a look.

MORAL RIGHTS ENHANCE CREATOR'S WORK REPUTATION

This article, by Josephine Brown, was published in the June 2001 issue of Offpress, the newsletter of the Society of Editors (Queensland). It is reproduced with the permission of the author and the society.

Australian Bookseller & Publisher's January/February 2001 edition (page 19) ran a comprehensive story on the Copyright Amendment (Moral Rights) Bill 2000, which came into effect last December. This bill introduces moral rights protection for Australian creators of literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, and film-makers. Here is a summary of certain points, which comes with a recommendation to read the excellent original story, 'Lessons in Morality' by Michelle Atkins. You could also check out the Australian Copyright Council's web site on <www.copyright.org.au>.

Moral rights

In copyright law, these relate to a creator's reputation in relation to their work. They are personal rights that complement existing economic rights. They are automatic, unlike in the UK, where authors need to assert rights. There are three moral rights: of attribution, of integrity and against false attribution.

- The right of attribution = the author's right to identification as a work's author, including reasonable wishes for identification in a particular way, or in a reasonable, clear and prominent form.
- The right of integrity = the author's right not to have their work prejudicially altered, e.g. destroyed or defaced, without their written consent, or treated derogatorily to distort or mutilate it or to dishonour the author's reputation. This right applies to all works (except films) created before or after the Act, whether or not the author is alive, but only covers infringements occurring after 21 December 2000.
- The right against false attribution = the author's right not to have authorship falsely attributed to another, or for anyone to connive at such a practice.

Moral rights, previously recognised implicitly in Australia, are now

formalised in the new Copyright Act. Such rights apply to individuals, not corporations. These rights (except for film) usually last for the author's life plus fifty years. Written, artistic, musical and dramatic works are covered, as are computer programs and cinematograph films.

The article discusses infringement of moral rights, defences and remedies to infringement, consent and its ramifications, the need to take care when seeking permissions, and electronic publishing. As in most situations in life, not just in publishing, it's wise to be honest and aware and to keep communicating.

IS BOOK EDITING BECOMING EXTINCT IN AUSTRALIA?

This article is by June Kant, and it is reprinted from the May edition of Offpress, the newsletter of the Society of Editors (Queensland) with the permission of that organisation and the author.

It is generally agreed that publishing house structures no longer provide sufficient support for editors. A symptom of this malaise is the currently perilous role of the book editor. Is there a crisis in the world of book editing here in Australia or is there, more seriously, an insidious evolutionary decline taking place? Drusilla Modjeska certainly warned of the latter several years ago, writing in the *Australian Review of Books* (June 1999) 'I fear that if publishers continue to skimp on editing, books will become merely commodities, and that the language that holds us all will contract and become less flexible, less amenable to precise meaning.' Her concern arises not because the discipline of language 'matters as much as polluted water, earth and air, but because it also matters.' She concluded her thoughts on a discouraged note, fearing that, unless the culture of publishing returns to its former role of ensuring the integrity of language and text, the editor will certainly become an endangered species.

Charlotte Wood, writing in the 'Review' section of the *Weekend Australian* that same month, held a similarly pessimistic view of the chances of survival for the fiction book editor. In her informative article entitled 'Making a Difference', she sees current trends as perilous, rather than merely in crisis, and asserted that 'In a climate where books are increasingly judged by their gorgeously designed, expensively printed and relentlessly marketed covers, quality editing seems to have become dispensable.' 'The history of writing has been bound up with the history of editing and publishing. If that intellectual nexus is broken, we are in dangerous territory indeed.' Drusilla Modjeska

The view is shared by Bryony Cosgrove, an editor with twenty years' experience, who is concerned that 'a reasonable amount of (her freelance) work comes straight from authors or literary agents . . . paying for the structural editing they don't think they're going to get from publishers'. The trend of modern-day mentors is also a threat to the role of editors. 'There are two sorts of editing', says Modjeska. 'There is structural editing that involves (at its best) a lot of talk through a lot of drafts as a book and its ideas take shape. This, once the joy of publishing and writing, rarely happens in the present climate. Which is why the 'mentor' seems to be taking over from the editor. But they are not the same role . . . I don't think it's lost on anyone that it's happened because of the absence of editors in publishing houses with the time, inclination and experience to sit down and talk, read and engage with an author through the long process of writing a book.'

The current shoddy editorial support for new writers led Peter Bishop, the director of Varuna Writers Centre in Katoomba, NSW, to devise Varuna's first 'editorial mentorships'. Bishop says the new writers who entered the program received the detailed attention that is now lacking in the normal publishing process. The danger is that publishers may be willing to accept this provision of structural editing and take even less responsibility for it themselves.

Such tendencies certainly indicate poor chances of need to establish a 'council of peers' or similar . . . , a terminal condition. A crisis situation, on the other hand, would imply a chance of improvement, hope for a reversal of the condition. The ailment is best described by Modjeska: 'As the orientation of the publishing industry moves more and more towards marketing, the process of editing has become undervalued, underpaid and less and less understood. Publishers are rarely intellectuals any more, in-house editors are on their way somewhere else, and freelance editors are paid so little that to survive they often have to take on too much work to do it properly . . .

The history of writing has been bound up with the history of editing and publishing. If that intellectual nexus is broken, we are in dangerous territory indeed.' Acceptance of this situation as a challenge to find a remedy, rather than an inevitable process of decline, requires a catalyst and that, thankfully, is already present in the form of the newly developed *Australian Standards for Editing*. This is a positive undertaking, and it is by such actions that an upswing from the crisis will be brought about.

From various directions positive action is being mooted. Hilary Beaton of the Queensland Writers Centre acknowledged in *QWC News* (April 2001) 'a need to establish a "council of peers" or similar, where the level of discussion is high and the conversation eloquent. The concept of a salon for the industry should be developed, as quality of life is reflected by the conversations we have,'

Sophie Cunningham (trade publisher at Allen & Unwin) is another optimist. 'It sounds a bit New Agey, but if everyone is more assertive things will change. Editors need to say, "I'm not going to work on that book unless I'm paid properly". We need to lobby managing directors to put more time and money into it. It will mean fewer books but those published will be better and more lasting.' It is, I believe, by such fundamental actions that the turning point of the crisis will be successfully negotiated. It is this attitude that may ensure that the

dinosaur syndromedoes not prevail.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION: Friday, 26 October 2001

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