

# **BOOK WORM**

**NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.**

**April 2004**

## **SOEWA AGM 2004: Report from the Chair**

### ***Meetings***

Once again, our meetings and education evenings this last year have been varied, informative and lots of fun too! We've had presentations on defamation, on grammar and usage, on the use of discriminatory language, on quoting. Some sessions have been presented by our own members — thanks to you all; others have been run by outside guest speakers. We also had a couple of informal networking evenings, which always go down well.

In September, the society's annual joint function with Women in Publishing ran under the banner of the Phoney Festival. Held at the magnificent Royal Perth Yacht Club, the evening involved an assessment and evaluation — by a panel of experts — of submissions from anonymous entrants of a schedule and quotes for a hypothetical publishing project.

In November 2003, our meeting consisted of a workshop to discuss the draft proposal for a system of accreditation, drawn up by a sub-committee of CASE (the Council of the Australian Societies of Editors). We had a highly productive four hours going through the document in detail. It was particularly gratifying to have relatively new members also come along and have their input into what may be — if an accreditation scheme is eventually approved by the membership around Australia — a significant development for the profession. Feedback from SOEWA has been forwarded to the accreditation working group. They are now drafting a final proposal for accreditation. It is hoped that this will be ready later this year. Members around the country will then be asked to vote on whether to approve the scheme.

### ***Marketing***

It's been rather a quiet year on the marketing front. Nevertheless, our various activities as individual members and as a group or sub-group themselves serve to heighten our profile and to promote the editing profession as a significant one.

As a result of a long process of lobbying and cajoling, on a national basis, the profession has had a significant coup — in relation to marketing opportunity. In 2005

there will be a category in the Yellow Pages listings headed 'Editors &/or Editing Services'.

Unfortunately, despite several requests, no one from WA came forward as a delegate for the CASE working group on promotions. It's never too late to join, and activities are still at an early stage, so no doubt a WA delegate would still be welcome.

### ***CASE and the national scene***

The accreditation working group has been very hard at work, producing the results mentioned above. Many thanks to Betty Durston, who has worked so diligently as part of that group.

The first editors' conference was held in Brisbane in July 2003. Organised by the Queensland society of Editors, it was a great success, and there are plans to hold another conference, at another venue, yet to be confirmed, in 2005.

The promotions working group, as I've mentioned, was formed in the last few months and has begun work on devising broad strategies and specific activities that will help promote the profession.

A working group has also been established to investigate the path to be taken towards incorporation of CASE. At the moment, the Council has no legal status. With the likelihood that some kind of accreditation scheme will be approved, a national body to administer that process would have to be established.

Finally, this year saw the launch of the CASE web site. It's currently at the skeletal rather than the muscular and meaty stage. But it's certainly a great resource around which a significant body of information can be built.

### ***Thanks & Acknowledgments***

Before moving on to reports from other areas of SOEWA, I'd like to thank everyone who has made a contribution of time and talent over the last year. This includes all the presenters at our meetings; all committee members (Betty Durston, James Hansen, Linda Browning, Ffion Murphy, Amanda Curtin and Michele Crawford); Betty Durston and her team (including Alan Watson and James Hansen) who continue to run our editing courses; the *Book Worm* team (Chris Nagel, editor, who recently handed over the role to Tanya Marwood, and Michele Drouart, the proofreader); our *Book Worm* distributor and e-mail group coordinator, James Hansen (the latter responsibility has now been handed over to Anita Berryman); and our web site administrator Colin Muller.

### ***The Committee***

Last of all, a word about committee positions. As you all know we are going to be electing members to office-bearing positions this evening. It looks as though a couple of those positions may remain vacant. At last month's meetings members indicated that a move to bi-monthly meetings was not an option they'd necessarily like to entertain. Unfortunately, unless we have a robust committee and enough members to make it viable, we will have no option but to pare down our offerings.

*Anne Surma (Immediate Past-President)*

### **Editorial**

Updating what our esteemed Past-President, Anne Surma has said above, at a recent committee meeting Betty Durston has agreed to take the position of SOEWA President and Ceridwen Clocherty has agreed to be our Vice President. This means that — with continued support from its members — SOEWA can offer a full and varied program for the year ahead. Thanks, Betty and Ceri!

It is wonderful to see our Women in Publishing (WA) colleague, Carla van Raay, in the Top 20 booklist with her autobiographical work *God's Callgirl*, a good (and at times racy!) read to which I can proudly claim some input. It's the kind of book that took a lot of courage to write, laying bare as it does the innermost secrets of Carla's life, yet at the same time making her experiences relevant to many readers.

At present I'm tacking a 'self-publishing' type manuscript — you know the sort, those over which one needs to grit one's teeth! I am occasionally rewarded by some small gem, however, which reminds me that we all have something worth saying, even if it's buried under a whole lot of you-know-what! Our job, as editors, seems to be to pare the latter down to minimum. This project is also proving to be great practice in 'speed-editing', having been granted only 20 hours to work on almost 400 pages of fairly badly-written text!

Anyway, I hope to see you all at the next meeting (see below). Until then, I wish you happy word-smithing.

*Tanya Marwood*

### **Forthcoming Meetings**

#### **APRIL MEETING:**

#### **Wine, Cheese and Networking**

SOEWA's first informal meeting for 2004 will be on **Tuesday 6th April, 7.30pm** at the **Tresillian Community Centre, 21 Tyrell St, Nedlands**. Enjoy an informal evening, which will include:

- an introduction to the new committee and office bearers
- the chance to meet new members
- the opportunity to renew membership for 2004 (the Treasurer will take renewals on the evening)
- discussion with colleagues over wine and cheese.

RSVP: 4th April 2004

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*NB \$2.00 cover charge*

The **May** meeting of the Society will be as follows:

**When:** 7.30pm, Tuesday 4 May 2004

**Where:** Tresillian Community Centre, 21 Tyrell Street, Nedlands

### **Report on February Meeting**

The problems of sexist attitudes embodied in language are as alive as ever, said Janet Blagg at the Society's meeting in February. But she cast the issue as it faces editors in a way that was fun, informative and thought-provoking. Her provocative title, "Taking the 'dick' out of dic(k)tionary — non-sexist writing for enthusiasts", was the introduction to a lively discussion. Janet edited the 3rd edition of the Heineman Dictionary and edits books produced by the Fremantle Arts Centre Press. She said that most official publishers use the plural with the indefinite singular. "I do it every time," she said. "In time, we will all say a mind of their own — it's a matter of usage."

Other points she made on non-sexist language include:

- If you know it's a man or woman, use it. Don't pretend it's gender-free.
- The word man is no longer generic. We can't say it any more and be understood as meaning men and women. Language and culture go in tandem. Get further in and 'unpack' it.
- If authors always refer to a child as he, girls completely cease to exist.

She said the problem with political correctness was that blanket solutions might not apply. "I much prefer to look at each individual aspect and thing," she said.

One of her main messages was that editors should wave the flag for visibility for women and children. “Consciously write women in,” she said. “There are no easy solutions in that there is not one way of addressing every problematic word,” she said. “But it is important and can be fun to deal with the issue. Is there an elegant solution or do you leave it?” She urged writers and editors to read widely and think deeply on the topic.

“If you are really in a hole and don't have the time to think it through, OK, take the short cut. But if you can take the time to work it out, sometimes you can make changes that really do matter.

“There is plenty of evidence that careless language compounds social injustice both by disempowering the marginalised group, and by feeding the assumptions of those who believe non-males, non-whites, non-English first language speakers are substandard, unimportant,” said Janet.

The February meeting also discussed whether SOEWA should continue to meet monthly or change to two-monthly meetings. Issues include the workload on the committee organising the meetings and the benefits of frequent contact between members. The matter was left open for discussion.

*Kerry Coyle*

**Deadline for May 2004 Book Worm issue:** Tuesday 20 April 2004. All submissions gratefully accepted.

**Further 2004 Book Worm deadlines**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
June 2004	Tue 18 May
July 2004	Tue 22 June
August 2004	Tue 20 July

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