

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

December 2004 – January 2005

From the Chair

We are at that time of the year again: Christmas, the season of good will and charity ... and so soon.

We all know that Christmas is the one tradition that is almost universally celebrated. Christmas carols reverberate relentlessly, television and radio ads bombard us with gift ideas for our loved ones, children draw up lists for Santa to come ‘ho ho ho-ing’ down the chimney (or through the door) to fulfil, and people ask for charity for themselves and for others. If nothing else, Christmas is a time to give and to receive; it has become a time that we expect ourselves to be generous and forgiving—not always an easy task—but it does happen in the true spirit of this season of joy and exaltation.

Added to these pressures, this year we, as editors, have another important issue to consider: accreditation.

No doubt members will have voted by now, or are planning to do so within the next few days, and we await the result with anticipation and some apprehension. Voting systems, by their very nature, generate a level of anxiety and, even at this micro level, this seems to be so.

However, apart from these diversions, on behalf of your committee I would like to offer to members our sincere wishes for a joyous Christmas and bright editing-filled New Year.

Betty Durston

Editorial

One of the advantages of being the editor of a publication like Book Worm is that I get to see lots of new editing books—and even get sent the occasional complimentary copy! So, I have to admit that the folks at John Wiley have sent me a free copy of the latest edition of *The Australian Editing Handbook* in the hope that I’ll promote it to you all. This is a good incentive, for a tight-arse like me! Nevertheless, having looked it over, I can honestly say that the new edition looks very useful ... there’s a whole section on ‘Editing on screen’ and another on ‘Editing electronic publications’, a task that many of us will be

increasingly undertaking. I'm not sure if the new edition is in bookshops yet, but contact Carol at John Wiley (see details in separate section below) to check.

Apart from that, I only wish to say that I hope you will want me to keep on as your newsletter editor next year! I have learnt so much from doing just one year of the job—especially from Michele, who is away and could not proofread this edition, so thanks to James for looking over it. I would also like to wish everyone a good break over the holidays and look forward to seeing you all next year.

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming Meetings

The first meeting for 2005 will be on February 1. Further details will be circulated closer to the time.

Society members will also be advised of the time and place for the SOEWA's AGM, which will be in March.

Report on the November meeting

Chris Walker

'Works completed / Works in progress'

The November meeting demonstrated the wide range of work that is taken on by our members. Those present gained an editor's eye view of the production of:

- nursing and other professional groups' journals
- books on local football personalities
- cook books (which, judging by the tone of those who reported on these, our members don't have a taste for—anyone looking for a niche market?)
- a photographic exposé
- a collection of essays on world politics
- a manual given to patients with heart conditions as they leave hospital
- a work of children's fiction
- a first-time novella, and
- reports written by geologists and geophysicists.

We saw that the editor's involvement with the manuscript often involves far more than the marking up of copy, and that he/she must manage an entire project, balancing the demands of authors, publishers, and graphic designers—to name a few. Thus the editor needs far more than a sharp eye and a 'head full of grammar'. One member likened the editor's role to that of a midwife—perhaps with comparable highs and lows!

One member spoke with satisfaction of a work which she had championed—being convinced that it was superior to other books in its field in the marketplace—and whose author she then coached through several re-writes to a final manuscript that was 'divine', only to feel crushed by an alarming choice for the book's front cover! Apropos this, it was commented that, on average, a book's cover material has twenty seconds to grip the potential buyer—who typically spends about three seconds evaluating the front cover and seventeen seconds reading material on the back cover. It's a rather disheartening thought for those who invest hours on the material *between* the covers!

Hearing about different members' professional highlights over the past year was entertaining. That the biography of a West Australian football hero reached the copy editing stage in near perfect condition (having only 'a few' spelling and grammatical errors!) produced gasps of incredulity. Sighs of envy greeted one member's announcement that a talented children's author had given her 'free reign' to re-shape her manuscript, and the shrewd dealings of another member with an author whose manuscript he definitely did not want to see published drew a chorus of laughter. Having viewed the manuscript, this editor asked the author some rather sharp questions, including how the market for the book differed from that of another work the author had recently published, and whether the author could explain some basic errors of fact that the work contained. The result—an 'extreme pleasure', according to this editor—was that he never heard from the author again!

Of course, there were some assignments that members recalled with less glee. Two editors present spoke of assignments they had completed in less-than-desirable circumstances, for which their sole condition had been that their names appeared nowhere on the publications. Despite this, both editors' names did appear in the acknowledgements; for one the note of thanks did not mention his editorial role, to his great relief!

Another member spoke of their first assignment editing a fiction manuscript, a first-time novella. Before this editor received the novella, the work had been stripped from one-hundred-and-twenty pages to forty pages. It was with

some anguish that the editor recommended (as had others in earlier readers' reports) that the story needed more detail and that some of the characters that had been shed should be re-introduced—forty pages just wasn't enough.

Several members recounted challenges they had faced when advising on the layout and design of books. Having one's advice heeded as to the location and presentation of pictures and captions, the choice of front covers, and other design-related issues is difficult, especially if the editor is viewed solely as the 'words expert'. The Society's Vice-President, Ceri Clocherty, a trained graphic designer, suggested that the strategic use of 'designers' jargon' (for example, 'deep etching', 'motion blur' and 'saturation') could help editors gain a hearing. Another member has enrolled in a short course on design to acquire some new skills.

It was heartening to learn about the quality publications that the Society's members have contributed to, and stimulating to hear about the skilful manner in which they have responded to numerous challenges.

The Australian Editing Handbook

Fully revised and updated second edition

Perfect for trainee editors, or established editors who want to refresh their skills, authors, or anyone working with the written word.

As editors are now required to work in many different media, *The Australian Editing Handbook* discusses editing within the contexts of book publishing, newspapers, magazines, websites and on-line newsletters. With chapters on the publishing industry, the role of the editor, specialist editing, on-screen editing, and the editing of electronic publications, this updated edition takes into account the changes and challenges facing editors today.

Through its many working examples and explanations for every possible editing query, plus helpful tips and checklists, readers will learn the technical procedures and practical skills for dealing with mark-up, illustrations, copyright permissions, preliminary and endmatter, proofreading, even writing cover blurbs, as well as how to efficiently manage schedules and costs.

The handbook is written by Elizabeth Flann and Beryl Hill, and published in paperback for \$44.95 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd.

Phone (02) 9856 0243

or e-mail Carol Warwick on cwarwick@johnwiley.com.au for your copy.

“Oops! References”

Betty Durston

It is usually quite a time between any works I have had published and when I can actually read what I have produced. I did so before my recent trip to Sydney only to find that I had not referenced my, *From the chair* (October 04/Lynne Truss). It is important that this be put right because, not only should one acknowledge one's sources, but also the references concerned are especially interesting and stimulating and likely to be useful to members. They are:

Janet Maslin, April 2004. *Hark, Abused Punctuation: This Writer Feels Your Pain*, The New York Times: Premium Archive Published: 04-08-2004, Late Edition-Final, Section E, Column 3, p.94.

<http://query.nytimes.com.gst.fullpage.html>

Edmund Morris, April 2004. *Punctuation and Its Discontents*, The New York Times: Book Review Desk 04-25-2004, Late Edition-Final, Section 7, Column 1, page 7. p.94. <http://query.nytimes.com.gst.fullpage.html>

SSTC Newsletter: The Newsletter for technical authors, technical illustrators and information designers. December 2003. p.6.

<http://www.istc.org.uk/site/newsletter.asp>

Unwin Trust UK-Australian Fellowship

Applications are now invited for the 2005 Unwin Trust Fellowship, which enables a member of the Australian book trade to visit the UK for up to 3 months. All working in Australian bookselling and publishing are eligible. Applicants are asked to put together a proposal to carry out a project which will both enhance their own understanding of the UK book trade and will provide a means to increase understanding of each market by the other.

It is envisaged that the successful candidate will have at least three years experience in the book industry, and a clear view as to how the experience gained will be of benefit to their career. They should also expect both to participate in a number of workshop/seminars on their return, and to take part in briefings in the UK if appropriate.

The judges will be looking for original and constructive proposals, and applicants should also provide a timetable and approximate budget. It is expected that time spent in the UK will be between two and three months and the Trust will provide funding for travel, accommodation etc. up to £10,000.

The inaugural fellow in 2003 was Lorien Kaye, who spent three months in the UK, researching the UK book trade, and focusing on collaboration between publishers and booksellers. Her report can be found on the APA website at <http://www.publishers.asn.au>. The 2004 fellow was Rebekah Cohen from National Gallery Publishing in the UK. She is currently completing her project in Australia on museum and gallery publishing.

A detailed career CV should be provided, along with at least two written references. Appropriate confirmation from employers that sufficient leave of absence will be granted should be provided.

Please apply in writing to Susan Bridge, Director, APA, Suite 60/89 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW, 2007. E-mail: Susan.Bridge@publishers.asn.au

Completed applications must be received by 30 January 2005.

The Unwin Charitable Trust actively supports book-related projects in the UK and it owns Book House in London which is home to the Publishers Training Centre and Book Trust.

Deadline for February 2005 *Book Worm* issue:

Tuesday 17 January 2005.

All submissions gratefully accepted.

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