

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

March 2005

From the Chair

The Society of Editors (WA) Inc President's Report for the Year 2004/5

The Society has seen several major achievements over the past year and your committee has worked harmoniously and productively in their endeavours to meet the needs and interests of our members and to provide programs to stimulate discussion.

Significant events in 2004/5

Nationally

1. Accreditation

This was surely the most significant work of state-based societies, whose representatives (working through the Council of Australian Societies of Editors) successfully developed a plan for accreditation. The plan was adopted by the Council and put to the vote of members of state societies in November of last year. It was voted in by a credible margin of 78% of those members who voted.

2. Conference

The theme of the third national conference is 'Editing in Context'. It will be held in Melbourne in October of this year and will include Janet Mackenzie as a keynote speaker. The conference is sponsored by John Wiley & Sons and this will further reinforce the importance of the role of editors in publishing.

Locally

Further recognition of the editor's role occurred locally this year, when the Society of Editors was invited to have a representative on the Board of the State Literature Centre (SLC). The Centre's new Constitution will enable any organisation, association or group, where 'literature' or 'literary activities' are the primary function, to become full members of the SLC.

Mentoring program

Under the WA SLC's strategic plan for 2004-06, the SLC is to work with selected member groups to increase their membership and revenue and assist with improving their organisation's professional capacity.

The WA SLC has invited the Society of Editors (WA) to be involved in a project designed to place young emerging writers and/or illustrators with editor-mentors (as distinct from writer-mentors). The proposed project will give these writers the opportunity to work with experienced structural editors; it will also affirm the role of editors in the publishing process.

The SLC has applied to the Australia Council under their Young and Emerging Artists Initiative for funding for the project and will be notified of success or otherwise in the next month or so.

It is rewarding for the Society in general and editors in particular, that in 2005 the SLC selected the SOE (WA) as its member group for this project.

Writers' Week

The Society was also involved in the Writers' Week Workshops this year:

Janet Mackenzie was invited to run a workshop for writers titled, *'Editing your own work'*. Amanda Curtin joined Janet for this session, which was productive for writers because they were able to participate actively, having been asked to send in several pages of their work beforehand. The workshop was based on improvements to their text, without the identity of the contributor being revealed.

The Society also participated in Rob Finlayson's session, *'Road Map to the Writing Scene in WA'*.

Drive to increase membership

As always, our commitments included increasing our numbers, and our Treasurer, Linda Browning has indicated that our membership has increased by eight during the past year, bringing it to a total of 86 members. Any member wishing to see the Treasurer's Report for February 2004 - January 2005 may contact Linda (see details at the end of the newsletter).

Web

Our Vice President Ceri Clocherty has taken on the role of looking after the website and, although we have had some initial difficulties we are confident that, with Ceri's commitment and skill, we will soon see an improvement in the service.

Practical Editing

The *'Practical Editing'* course continued with UWA Extension, although we do receive enquiries and requests from other organisations.

Since its inception in 1998, *Practical Editing* has become a feature of two UWA Extension programs each year, and the numbers of enrolments are maintained throughout each course. It has now been developed as a one-day course, rather than a two-hourly course run over six weeks.

Seminars and meetings

The annual combined Women in Publishing (WA) and SOE (WA) seminars continued their record of success with a well-attended program on mentoring, held in September, which included members of the Small Business Development Corporation in a panel discussion on the value of mentoring.

Other programs developed and implemented by our coordinator Chris Walker were interesting and topical and included: a panel of authors and their editors who discussed how their working relationships developed and the value of those relationships to the published work; a computer training evening; several networking evenings where members were able to share ideas and experiences and discuss their reference tools; and a panel discussion with the Society and representatives from Media Arts & Entertainment where the topic of 'bad payers' was discussed.

Christmas function

The Christmas function—held at the Cblue Restaurant in Cottesloe—attracted fewer members than we had hoped, but we all know there are many commitments and calls on peoples' time during the pre-Christmas period. Members who attended were treated to good company and lively conversation interspersed with a selection of dishes from a set menu.

Closing remarks

I am grateful to, and on your behalf thank, your committee, for the many hours spent sharing ideas with members and with comparable organisations to extend and enhance the influence of the Society, and for the subsequent hours spent in bringing the plans to fruition. Stronger links have been forged with Women in Publishing, UWA Extension, the WA State Literature Centre and the Festival of Perth through Writers' Week, to name a few.

To have chaired the Society over the past year has been a pleasure and a privilege and it is with the assurance of a positive year ahead that we advance to this year's program of decision-making and events. Your committee thanks you for your continued support and contribution without which, we assure you, the Society's achievements would not have been possible.

Betty Durston

Editorial

I presented the following brief report at the AGM:

Book Worm Editor's Report for the 2005 AGM

I have learnt a lot since last year, when I took on the task of compiling and editing of the Society's newsletter. Some of this increase in knowledge I can gratefully attribute to our newsletter proofreader, Michèle Drouart. In other aspects of the task, Betty Durston and James Hansen have been particularly helpful.

I would like to thank all those of you who contributed articles to Book Worm over the past year. Whilst I have not had much feedback on the content or style of Book Worm under my stewardship, I assume that members are finding that it meets their needs and expectations. I therefore take this opportunity to say that I'm happy to continue as its editor if the members feel this is appropriate.

Most members present expressed positive sentiments about my editorship of this newsletter—which was gratifying—though one comment was made about the unnecessarily large font of the body text in previous editions. I have now adjusted the font from Perpetua 14pt to Book Antiqua 12pt; please let me know if you like this better or if you wish to revert to the old format.

Listening to Janet Mackenzie speak about the process of accreditation at the AGM (see Tom Jenkins' report below) I feel more relaxed about it and also pleased to know that we're so far ahead of all other English-speaking countries in our commitment to professionalism in our work.

Members wishing to know who was elected to the various committee positions of the Society should look at the contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming Meetings

The topic of our April meeting concerns how to preserve and enhance your professional reputation, a topic raised by one of our members recently. She posed the question in an e-mail to our Meetings Coordinator:

“...what to do about editing work you do that is not followed through on, and the piece is published/issued with the original errors that you corrected, and your name as having edited the piece! Also, the question of how to be acknowledged for work you have done. Many things appear that one has worked on and there's no mention of an editor. Sometimes that's fine, but sometimes not. How to handle?”

When: Tuesday 5 April, 7:30pm until 9:00pm

Where: Tresillian Community Centre, 21 Tyrell St, Nedlands

Cost: \$2

RSVP to Chris Walker, cdwalker@ca.com.au, by **Sunday 3 April**.

Report on Janet Mackenzie's talk about Accreditation

Tom Jenkins

Accreditation is going ahead. Now we need the organisation to make it work.

That was the positive message brought to our March 1 meeting by Janet Mackenzie, Honorary Life Member and committee member of the Society of Editors (Victoria) and convener of the Accreditation Working Group.

Janet described the steps that must be taken to have accreditation in place by the end of 2006.

She pointed out that CASE, the Council of Australian Societies of Editors which acts as our national body, was not a legal entity and therefore had no executive power and could not handle money (the administration of accreditation will need funding). CASE would probably become incorporated and might change its name. A session at the national conference in Melbourne in October would look at this.

There were already some hopeful signs regarding funding. A number of institutions, such as universities, had responded positively to suggestions they might support the work financially. There could be other sponsors. The Literature Board of the Australia Council was sympathetic.

An Accreditation Board, made up of representatives from the States, should meet in May this year. Their task will be to form a Panel of Assessors, made up of distinguished editors, to prepare an information kit for accreditation applicants. These assessors may be offered fees for their work.

Janet recalled that in earlier papers on accreditation, it has been established that entry to accreditation will be by submitting a portfolio of work. Though a maximum of 100 pages had been specified, a portfolio might be as little as 20 pages.

Responding to questions, Janet said that electronic editing would qualify, as would the work of, say, Anne Surma, who teaches writing and editing at Murdoch University. Editing did not need to be "hands-on"; if you were helping to produce other editors, your work would be acknowledged. It was recognised that flexibility was needed and no-one should be afraid of accreditation.

It would be available only to members of societies of editors, but it was not proposed that accreditation should be a prerequisite of society membership. Some state societies (though not all) had open membership (WA does, as does NSW) and it was not intended to impose change on them.

Janet said that Australia was ahead of Britain, Canada, the US and New Zealand in its progress towards accreditation. We should use every chance to exploit our skills, to give our profession its rightful place in communication.

Report on February Meeting

Getting Paid on Time!

Chris Walker

The meeting began with Mar Bucknell giving a somewhat alarming account of his experience with a non-paying creditor. Though the outstanding fee was relatively small, as Mar had finished the work on time and on budget, he determined to pursue the client for the amount owing. This proved to be a costly course of action, in terms of time and money. Mar made many phone calls that were not returned, undertook no small amount of research into the most appropriate legal course, conducted a company search to ensure the right corporate entity was being pursued, filed a court summons and, drawing a deep breath, prepared to appear in court.

The matter was pursued at the Small Disputes Division of the Local Court and, in an unexpected twist, was finalised on the morning Mar was due to appear in court, when he received a very surprising (and very early!) phone call from his client, offering an out-of-court settlement. As a result of this experience, Mar contacted the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance, who informed him of the notoriety of the client. (Note: the Courts of Petty Session, Local Courts and the Small Claims Tribunal will be amalgamated into a single Magistrates' Court in May 2005. Information on courts is available at www.justice.wa.gov.au).

Richelle Moran, a Small Business Services officer with the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC), circulated two SBDC 'small business briefs' – *Credit Management* and *Recovery of a Debt* – which, if heeded, should help prevent editors finding themselves in positions similar to that Mar found himself in. (For those not at the meeting, these documents can be obtained from the SBDC website: www.sbdc.com.au). Richelle spoke of the range of cases the SBDC is contacted with – from the mechanic whose only point of contact with a non-paying client is a mobile phone number through to companies who are seeking to recover tens of thousands of dollars – and she stressed the importance of self-employed people making written contracts a set part of their business practice. Richelle suggested that standard documentation and procedures could help de-personalise the debt recovery process.

The next guest for the evening, Michael Sinclair-Jones, spoke of his experiences as a freelance writer, as well as those in his capacity as secretary of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. He outlined the Alliance's 'three steps' of debt recovery. The first of these is a 'friendly' phone call. The second is a sharply worded letter followed by another phone call. Michael noted that as this letter was from an institution acting on behalf of an individual member it usually

carried extra weight. The third step was a visit to the party owing money – a step not for the faint-hearted, but one that was usually successful (and that Michael had grown accustomed to).

More generally, Michael noted that many would-be clients are somewhat cavalier about paying for intellectual property, seeing it as ‘public good’. As a result, the onus is on people like journalists and editors to value their specialist skills and to price them accordingly. Among other things, Michael suggested obtaining the direct line, and if possible the mobile telephone number, of the person responsible for making payments; ensuring a written contract was in place with the client – whether by e-mail or a more formal document – so that a paper trail was in place should the matter require legal action; and being aware of copyright issues associated with individual publications and charging accordingly.

As president of the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance, Greg Cohen recalled some of his more colourful actions on behalf of the Alliance’s freelance members. Threatening suppliers with the removal of their product from retail outlets because a component of it – that part for which the Alliance member had not been paid – was breaching copyright, and informing retailers that the person supplying them with the goods had not paid for some part of it, were two more dramatic yet usually effective measures. Once, Greg phoned several of a company’s creditors to get a feel for the overall liquidity of the company. He then reminded this company that the Corporations Act (section 459E) contains provisions for a creditor owed at least \$2,000 to make a statutory demand for payment on the company and that if this demand is not met a creditor could apply to the court to have the company wound up. Not surprisingly, upon finding out that he was aware of their less-than-robust financial position and the its potential legal ramifications, the company suddenly became more willing to pay! Greg noted that as an incorporated organisation, SOEWA could, if necessary, act on behalf of its members.

After the meeting, Michael Sinclair-Jones provided SOEWA with a copy of the pro-forma contract that the Alliance makes available to its members. This document is included as an attachment and can be used by SOEWA members when preparing their contracts.

Deadline for April 2005 *Book Worm* issue:

Tuesday 22 March 2005.

All submissions gratefully accepted.

Contacting SOEWA

President: Betty Durston, bdurston@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

Secretary: Kerry Coyle, Kerry.Coyle@wanews.com.au

Assistant Secretary: Sandra Roe, roewriters@ozemail.com.au

Treasurer: Linda Browning, 9266 2253, L.Browning@curtin.edu.au

General committee members

Ffion Murphy, 9450 1546, f.murphy@ecu.edu.au

Anne Surma, 9287 1494, asurma@murdoch.edu.au

Ceri Clocherty, clockers@istnet.net.au

Chris Walker, 9228 0793, cdwalker@ca.com.au

Tom Jenkins, 9457 2977, editdesign@westnet.com.au

Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Newsletter

Editor: Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Proofreader: Michèle Drouart, 9382 2930, drouart@webace.com.au

SOEWA Web Site: <http://www.editorswa.iinet.net.au>

Web editor: Ceri Clocherty, clockers@istnet.net.au