

# **BOOK WORM**

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

July 2005

## **From the Chair**

### **In defence of editors**

To date, editorial accountability does not seem to have been addressed in an open forum; however, a report came to my attention recently that seems to indicate that a change is evident.

As early as 1944, a peer review on scientific misconduct stated that serious abuse of editorial power is rarely publicised, but evidence that it does occur is accumulating.<sup>1</sup> In the review, authors are defended against the actions of editors who republish previously published articles without the authors' permission, sometimes adding reference to their own work.

Recent cases are also reported that beg the question, "How common is editorial misconduct?" Data on authorial misconduct is basic and inadequate, but where editors are concerned there are only stories, and most of these are inconclusive<sup>2</sup>.

If editorial misconduct does happen, why does it happen? Of course it is difficult to explain misconduct in an editorial context; there may be vague ideas but no clear description. It has been suggested that editors are peculiarly unaccountable—perhaps some of the most unaccountable people in the world—because of their traditions of editorial freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Although we have editorial standards, if we were to analyse the situation we would find that we are accountable only to ourselves and to the ethical criteria that governs us as individuals.

How common then is editorial misconduct? The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) was formed in 1997 to address breaches of research and publication ethics; a voluntary body, COPE provides a discussion forum as well as advice for, among others, scientific publishers and editors. The Committee aims to find practical ways of dealing with the issue of misconduct and to develop good practice to include intellectual honesty. For this reason guidelines were developed to address study design and ethical approval, data analysis, authorship, conflict of interests, the peer review process, redundant publication, plagiarism, the duties of editors, media relations, advertising, and how to deal with misconduct.<sup>3</sup>

Should we consider making some time available in future editing courses to include editorial accountability as a topic to ensure that future editors will at least be aware of anomalies that might occur in editing practice? It may be that

editorial misconduct occurs only in the scientific community where editors have control of what is published in their particular journals, which is vastly different from how editorial practice is conducted in smaller organisations and certainly different again in freelance situations where the author's claim to the text is sacrosanct.

Perhaps one of our meetings could provide us with an opportunity to examine the opinions of members on this vexatious issue.

*Betty Durston*

#### **References**

1. Douglas G. Altman, Iain Chalmers, Andrew Hersheimer. Is there a case for an international medical scientific press council *JAMA* 1994;272:166-617
2. Richard Smith, Session 2: Editorial Accountability (Chair: Richard Smith) Editorial misconduct: time to act. The COPE Report 2003.  
[www.publicationethics.org.uk/reports/2003/2003pdf9.pdf](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/reports/2003/2003pdf9.pdf)
3. COPE Report <http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/about/>

## **Editorial**

The only thing I want to say this month is to encourage members who would like to contribute to the Society but are too busy to be on the Committee, to volunteer their assistance in organising one particular meeting – perhaps even just taking on one task for that meeting. It all helps to take the strain off those few members who seem to end up doing most of the work. Call anyone on the list at the end of this newsletter to talk about the possibility of doing this.

*Tanya Marwood*

## **Forthcoming Meetings**

**There will be NO July meeting (except for your dedicated Committee members!)** The next meeting is in August.

### **August Meeting**

#### **Copyright Council Event**

More details of this event will be circulated next month – by e-mail and in *Book Worm*.

**When: Tuesday 2 August;** time to be advised.

**Where: CWA House,** Board Room (3rd Floor), 1174 Hay Street, **West Perth**

**Cost: TBA**

## Report on the June 2005 Meeting:

### Designing the SOEWA Website

At this meeting Des Carne, a member who is a web designer, demonstrated changes he has made to our prototype website—a task he began last November and continued from May this year, putting in many hours.

There was general enthusiasm for new site design and appreciation of Des' hard work. It was agreed that it is still "a work in progress", however!

Des wrote this week:

"The address to view the site is <http://www.hypermax.net.au/~des/editors>

I'm awaiting some editing of the content, to remove redundant material and bring it up-to-date.

I'm also working out a feedback mechanism that is not too intrusive, but which will give me technical information I can work with to improve the performance of the site (not only the filename of the page being commented on, but the browser, version, operating system and screen resolution of the viewer).

Some people with Macintosh computers experience problems, especially with older browsers, and I don't have a Macintosh on which to test the changes I make.

I'm also planning on improving the appearance of the individual members' pages in the register."

Tom Jenkins reports that the following comments/suggestions were made as a result of the June meeting:

1. The artwork and heading at top of home page could be bigger or wider.
2. Wording in "pink panel" on Home and Members pages needs to be rewritten; at present it repeats the top panel.
3. Contact details should be in separate page.
4. Editors/Authors/Publishers/Students buttons were liked.
5. Can font size be variable so poor-sighted can enlarge?
6. CSS and JS buttons: better to use words people will understand?
7. Would the word "Search" be better than the magnifying glass icon?
8. We need to have newer and more numerous examples of our work than at present.
9. In Register Entries, instead of space for BSB/Account Number, put a statement that member "will accept payment by cheque, EFT", etc.

10. Enthusiasm for clients being able to search for an editor by category, but understood it is difficult to do. Perhaps use present categories in database, but refine?

11. In "State Affiliates" should we say "Click to link"?

It was also suggested that members might update their own information on the new site. This idea was rejected, however, on the grounds that it would be difficult to maintain consistency and that the size of our organisation doesn't warrant it, as it's easy enough for the web master to do it as and when needed.

## **CASE Notes (now referred to as IPE Notes)**

Editor's note: Janet Mackenzie sent me these at the beginning of June, too late for the last edition of *Book Worm*. She asked me to let you all know that they are available on the CASE website, [www.case-editors.org](http://www.case-editors.org), soon after the beginning of each month.

### **News from the Institute of Professional Editors (formerly CASE)**

**June 2005**

#### **Inaugural Meeting of Accreditation Board**

"These are all doable jobs," said Robin Bennett, newly elected chair of the Accreditation Board, after its inaugural meeting in Sydney on 21-22 May. Robin and the enthusiastic team are looking forward to tackling the range of tasks needed to make the accreditation scheme a reality.

Present at the meeting were Ed Highley representing IPE, Louise Forster of Canberra, Shelley Kenigsberg of NSW, Karen Disney of SA, Helen Moore of Vic. and Alison Savage of Tas. Robin Bennett represented Qld and Isabel Workman of NSW attended as minutes secretary. Two other representatives will join the Board soon, one from WA and one from the assessors panel.

"It is crucial to have a clearly recognised minimum standard for accreditation so there is no perception of subjectivity in assessment. Applicants need to know exactly what is expected of them," Robin said. To achieve this, the Board will seek input at the October national conference on the level of competence that merits accreditation. This may take the form of a discussion of several sample applications prepared for the occasion.

The Board also plans to keep members informed and encourage feedback with a feature called *Cred Ability*, which will appear regularly in the societies' newsletters.

Besides this, the Board made some decisions and mapped out areas that need research and consultation. These include its own constitution; the appointment of the secretariat; arrangements to cover conflict of interest and confidentiality of

applications; sponsorship and financial management; promotion of the scheme; and legal protection and insurance.

Meanwhile, the National Organisation Working Group is finalising its 'issues paper' and expects to present it to members for discussion in the near future.

*Janet Mackenzie*  
*IPE Liaison Officer*

## **New Members**

We welcome the following new members to SOEWA:

Mags Webster  
Betty Pascoe  
Christine Houen  
Cheyenne Martin  
Peta Carew-Reid  
Carolyn Abbs

For contact details of any of the above, please check the website, or contact the Secretary or Treasurer.

## **New Column: My Favourite Word**

Jan Knight has asked if we might run a regular column for members' favourite words. As a start, she sent this summary of the unusual word 'grok' written by a mutual friend (Katrina Bercov). Thanks, Jan for this great idea; now send me your favourite words, folks!

'Grok' was originally from the 1960s novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*, by Robert A. Heinlein. It is about fully integrating knowledge. Here is his definition:

/grok/, /grohk/

a Martian (yes, Martian) word meaning literally 'to drink' and metaphorically 'to be one with'. To understand, usually in a global sense. Connotes intimate and exhaustive knowledge.

For me, to grok is to absorb or integrate knowledge or a concept such that it becomes part of you. Knowledge is just what we know. Grokking effects HOW we think.

As an analogy which represents the process of grokking, it helps to picture a piece of clay. The clay is you and your existing knowledge and understandings. Now imagine a smaller extra piece of clay representing a new concept or understanding. You stick it to the top of the bigger piece.

It has been firmly, even permanently joined. You fully understand in a literal sense and will now always carry that knowledge with you... but you have not yet 'grokked'.

Now take the two pieces of clay and meld them into one larger ball. That's grokking. The new knowledge has become an integrated and indistinguishable part of you. It's not merely adding itself to your existing knowledge-base but fundamentally changing the size and shape of your understanding.

In the real world, the big piece of clay really represents your consciousness or your psyche's map of the world. To grok is not just to dump new knowledge into an existing framework but to fully integrate it. You allow the new knowledge to actually 'change your map' or change the filter through which you experience the world.

Of course, one can accumulate knowledge—retain one's original shape and perspective by adding a 'clay lump' of extra understanding. To actually grok is to integrate certain understandings into who you are and how you operate and allow it to change your shape.

For example, when living in a different country, a person may understand and follow new social rules 'correctly' on a technical or superficial level but it can take quite a lot of time to 'grok' with it, that is, for the new behaviour to fully sink in and integrate.

Now here's a question... have you grokked this detailed explanation or just understood it?

## **Deadline for August 2005 Book Worm issue:**

Tuesday 19 July 2005.

*All submissions gratefully accepted.*

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