

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

August 2005

From the Chair

Our web page

Professional groups serve a variety of purposes, including marketing, education, service and support. The opportunity for members to be able to market their editing skills is a key benefit for the membership of the Society of Editors (WA). Members are able to submit information about their services for inclusion in the Society's on-line directory, which also allows clients to search for editors by their skills and specialities.

For the past few months, your committee has been intent on updating our web page to meet the needs of our members in 2005, and beyond. In particular, Ceri Clocherty, Tom Jenkins and Des Carne have devoted much time and effort to ensure the design provides ease of access for members and prospective clients.

We look forward to the results of this major development and thank those members so closely involved.

Betty Durston

Editorial

I have a positive tale to tell regarding our website – presumably the 'old' one! Whilst I agree that it needed work, I recently had an enquiry from a potential client from interstate who had seen my details on the site and been attracted by my particular interests and skills (in this case travel/environment). This query has turned into a substantial, albeit short-term, contract.

So, never underestimate the value of any web presence, but be assured that our new site will most likely result in many more such enquiries for us all!

Regarding the new 'My favourite word' column: I didn't receive any contributions for this edition. I know we're all busy, but surely some of you have a word you really enjoy using? You need not write a long dissertation about it and it need not be terribly intellectual – something light-hearted would be welcome! So, have a think about it and get back to me in the next week or so.

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming Meetings

August Meeting

Australian Copyright Council Event

'Developments in copyright for the editing and publishing professions'

Come along and learn from a specialist about the latest developments in copyright law, and how they might affect your work as an editor/publisher. After the presentation, which lasts an hour, there will be time for questions and discussion—and cheese and wine!

When: Tuesday 2 August, 6.30pm for a 7.00pm start

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

Cost: \$5 (\$2 concession)

RSVP to Anne Surma, a.surma@murdoch.edu.au by Friday 29 July

IPE Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors (formerly CASE) July 2005

Forming a national organisation

The task of forming a national body to serve the needs of eight independent societies of editors raises many questions, both legal and practical. For instance, should it be an incorporated body, and which state has the most suitable requirements for incorporation? What sort of activities is the new body likely to engage in? The National Organisation Working Group, convened by Haya Hussein of Victoria, will soon be circulating an Issues Paper that examines these topics. The societies are asked to hold workshops in August or September to consider the Issues Paper, and with any luck the feedback will be compiled in time for discussion at the Melbourne conference in October.

2007 conference

As the Victorian committee moves into the final stage of planning for the Melbourne conference, the Tasmanian society is already hard at work on the next interstate extravaganza. Their conference committee, which has been meeting since last November, has set the dates for 2007. Fill in your Coming Events calendar with these: the main conference is in Hobart on Thursday 10 and Friday 11 May, with forums and workshops on the Saturday.

How is the Standards review going?

The Standards Revision Working Group was set up to review the use of *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (2001) by editors, employers and the education sector. The review has been suspended for the moment pending a fuller understanding of the requirements of the accreditation scheme, which will test applicants against the Standards in order to grant accreditation. This use of the Standards has various ramifications, and the revision will go ahead when the requirements are clearer.

National effort

At present the Institute is making a huge national effort, with volunteers committed to eight committees and working groups: the Institute itself; the Accreditation Board; the initial panel of assessors; the National Organisation Working Group; the Promotions Working Group; the Standards Revision Working Group; and state conference committees for 2005 (Victoria) and 2007 (Tasmania).

Despite all the contributions, we are conscious of neglecting important areas. We could use a fairy godmother with a bottomless bucket of money and a truckload of workers. The training of editors needs attention—the Institute would like to coordinate and improve the training offered by the societies, and to work with education providers to ensure that the courses they offer match the needs of industry. A program to mentor junior and novice editors is also on the wish list. Perhaps the surge of enthusiasm that is being generated by the Melbourne conference will provide the volunteers, if not the money, to make a start in these areas.

Janet Mackenzie

IPE Liaison Officer

www.case-editors.org

Book Review

The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White

2000, Longman, ISBN 0-205-30902-X

William Strunk Jr. is the guru of tight writing. So it's not surprising E.B. White, author of *Charlotte's Web* and former student of Strunk's, felt trepidation when commissioned in the 1970s to revise *The Elements of Style*. Since its first printing in 1919, the title still thrives.

The Elements of Style daunts the reviewer as well, not only because your own writing is on display, but also because the title is so widely known. About two weeks ago I was browsing in a bookstore and overheard a woman asking the sales assistant for "the little book of style". The assistant immediately knew *The Elements of Style* was the book being pursued.

This title is so well loved that saying anything negative about it would be like attending a packed church and saying the Bible was poorly written. You'd be asking for trouble. Luckily for this reviewer, trying to find something wrong with *The Elements of Style* is like being asked to improve the jingle to 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'. It can't be done. As with this famous nursery rhyme, *The Elements of Style* is a gem for its simplicity, clarity and elegance. Another word that beautifully describes this book is pithy. Every other book on style you own will seem dreary after you've read Strunk and White.

A wry sense of humour infuses the examples laid out before the reader. For instance, if you ignore Usage Rule 11 you are liable to produce howlers such as, "Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap."

Another gem, Usage Rule 16, is perfect for science writers who want to capture the reader's attention. This rule says: "Use definite, specific, concrete language." It's the difference between saying "A period of unfavourable weather set in" and "It rained every day for a week."

Style Rule 19 (do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity) tells us, "Write things out. Not everyone knows that MADD means Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and even if everyone did, there are babies being born every minute who will someday encounter the name for the first time."

And if you've ever read or heard the advice "omit needless words" (Composition Rule 17), now you know where it was pinched from.

You might find a friend willing to let this book out of his or her sight. But the chances are slim. So if you don't own it yet, buy it. Your bookcase contains a gap that begs to be filled.

Sarah Belfield, SOEWA member

New Members

We welcome the following new members to SOEWA:

Lesley O'Hara, PO Box 306, Fremantle, WA 6959, ohara@globaldial.com

Dov Midalia, 3/63 Broadway, Nedlands, WA 6009, dvm@iprimus.com.au

David Scott, 11 Dutton Cres, Hamersley, WA 6022 davidsco@westnet.net.au

Deadline for September 2005 *Book Worm* issue:

Tuesday 23 August 2005.

All submissions gratefully accepted.

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