

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

September 2006

From the chair

You are probably a bit tired of winter but usually it means we get to read more books than usual. If I were to be asked, "Read any good books lately?" I'd have to say "Yes, in a manner of speaking". My "books" were the first of the unpublished manuscripts (1.3 million words to date) entered for the 2006 TAG Hungerford Award. What a joy and a privilege to be a member of the panel of judges entrusted with the blood, sweat and tears of new talent emerging on the WA literary scene. Established in 1988, the award honours WA author TAG Hungerford and his outstanding contribution to Australian literature.

Meanwhile, the Society has enticed some stunning guest speakers after the August break and here's a suggestion where you can be of help and at the same time experience great personal satisfaction. Why not introduce a friend to the Society. We must all have friends who enjoy one aspect or another of the editing world even if it is only mixing with other editors. Yes, I like that word "mixing" and I hope we'll have lots of opportunities to use it before the year's out.

Kerry Coyle

Editorial

Well, last month's reprint of the article about hyphen use has sparked quite a bit of interest and you will see below Allan Watson's response to the issue.

Another somewhat controversial issue is that of membership fees for the various Societies of Editors; Susan Rintoul of the SA Society has written an item about this for us to ponder.

Do any of you have glowing testimonials from clients that might help promote the business of editing? If so, the IPed Communications Working Group would like to hear from you (see 'Testimonials please' below).

On the practical front, SOEWA needs some new stationery designed and printed, as we still only have the old stuff, which doesn't accord with look of the new logo and website. Anyone interested? On the subject of the website, it seems there's some confusion about who is now managing it—it is Des Carne, aided by a sub-committee of rank novices, ie Chris Walker and me! Other members have recently expressed some interest in learning the ropes, which is fantastic, as it's a big job.

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming meetings

September

Three WA book designers, Robyn Mundy, John Douglass and Becky Chilcott will be our guests, showing examples of their work and focusing on their interaction with editors.

When: Tuesday 5 September 2006, 7.30–9.00 pm

Where: CWA House, 1174 Hay Street, West Perth, third-floor Boardroom. (Enter via back door and take the elevator. Free parking is available at the rear of the building.)

Cost: \$2 members, \$5 non-members

RSVP to Kerry Coyle, 9482 3143, kcoyle@westnet.com.au

The **October** meeting will be a workshop on English usage facilitated by James Hansen. Last year we looked in detail at sentence structure, and at the optimum placement of verbs and adverbs. The October theme, for the moment, is still open. James would appreciate suggestions on topics which he may prepare for group discussion. Examples from the work of clients (suitably disguised) would be welcome. Please email your ideas to jehansen@westnet.com.au with the word TOPIC in the subject line.

New SOEWA stationery needed

Does any member of the Society wish to take on the design of our new stationery, incorporating the new-look logo etc? The logo graphics are available from Tom Jenkins and if you are interested in this small project, please contact either **Linda Browning**, 9266 2249, L.Browning@curtin.edu.au or **Tom Jenkins**, 9457 2977, editdesign@westnet.com.au.

Confessions of an unrepentant hyphen-user

One section of Mike Robinson's essay on hyphens in the last *Book Worm* had me cheering. There are a lot of people out there who, while happy about using multi-word compound adjectives, seem to think there's something to be gained by restricting the number of hyphens they use. I can *almost* understand why some limit themselves to a single hyphen, even if I think they're desperately misguided, but I'm baffled at the sight, fortunately rare, of two hyphens when three or four are needed. Still, the single-hyphen heresy is the one we see most, and I like to cite these (real) examples as illustrations of the illogicality of economising on these precious mini-dashes:

'... mad cow-dressed demonstrators ...'

‘... ex-boy band singer ...’

‘Don’t spare the hyphens!’ I say, agreeing wholeheartedly with Mike. And he has my enthusiastic support in his campaign against the creeping scourge of *anymore*, *underway* and their ilk.

Where I find myself in cheerful but robust disagreement with him is in his advocacy for keeping apart words that are commonly joined by hyphens or by nothing at all. Some of his examples are wife-beater, letter-bomb, hand-axe, breast-feeding, show-off, stillbirth, pen-portrait and (gasp) no-one.

My belief (is it a strange one?) is that punctuation (including hyphens) has the primary purpose of clarifying meaning. When a reader is obliged to hesitate over intended meaning, the editor is to blame if something could have been done to mitigate the problem. A hesitation of only a millisecond interrupts the flow of meaning and tires the reader. We give that reader valuable assistance when we issue the clue that a particular word connects in an intimate way with the one that follows it. This can be particularly helpful if the first of the pair happens to fall at the end of a line. Taking one of his examples, I offer this as something to be considered:

Very early on Tuesday morning he posted his former professor a letter bomb. It was something he’d been planning for some time, though ...

But even in the normal case, where the words appear together, the reader would be served by seeing at once that *letter* is joined to the word that follows it—by the hyphen that’s missing in this example. Have a look now at the following sentence. It’s a variation on one I came across recently.

It isn’t hard to see here the acting out of desperation.

Please don’t tell me it’s as easy to comprehend as this version:

It isn’t hard to see here the acting-out of desperation.

Our writer appears to be offended most of all by *no-one*. Interestingly, he neglects to mention *nobody*. (Does he approve of it? If so, why?) Again, the potential for ambiguity highlights the value of having the words linked:

Sergeant Barclay slowly opened the morgue door and switched on the light. Against all his expectations, there was no body there.

Yes, of course, context guides the reader in discerning meaning, but surely editors have a duty to minimise the need for reliance on it.

If we experiment with joining *no* and *one*, following in the footsteps of the forgotten soul who long ago first joined *no* to *body*, we will quickly realise why it never caught on. Does this mean that we’re under some compulsion to leave the words completely separate? The reader (I claim) is helped by seeing instantly that *no + one* forms a unit. Yes, *no-one*!

Anyway, perhaps I've been rising to a bait. Could Mike Robinson have been having us on? After all, his spiel did include these two gems: 'Jef Clark's otherwise-noble piece' and 'the usually-precise prose of *The Spectator*'. Perhaps he had his tongue firmly stuck in his cheek?

Allan Watson

Discussion paper

Societies of Editors members' subscription fees – Future directions

We editors have an exciting time ahead as we see accreditation and a new national body coming together. It's time perhaps to look at our general funding—state as well as national.

Is our funding adequate? It seems that some of the societies in Australia are feeling increasingly constrained by their dependence on volunteer labour and the rising work commitments of committee members. At least two of the societies now pay for a part-time administrator. New costs such as these arise and, even if some societies have funds at present, they still need to look at the future. There is also a need for us to look at the annual funding of our national body. Both these areas would benefit from more funds.

I believe our members' subscription fees are too low. How many other professional bodies do we know that set their rates at less than \$100pa?

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance recently offered members of Australian Societies of Editors a discount if they joined, the fee amounting to \$439.40pa if you earn \$45,000 a year. They call it \$8.45 a week. The MEAA has a diverse membership. How would the profession of editors advance if we put that sort of money into our own societies so they could promote us in every sense at a state and national level?

Here are some other examples of subscription fees to roughly similar professional bodies (I would be pleased to hear of any other fee scales):

Librarians, ALIA— full member \$251 (more than \$30,000pa), reduced fees structure \$126–\$64

<http://www.alia.org.au/membership.benefits/fees.html>

Graphic Designers, AGDA—full membership \$192.50pa

<http://www.agda.com.au/>

Accountants, AFANZ—\$132pa

http://www.afaanz.org/afaanz_member.htm

Hospital Pharmacists, SHPA—full member \$341pa, reduced fees structure

<http://www.shpa.org.au/>

None are less than \$100pa. So what should we be paying? More than \$100pa, I believe.

Generally societies have a diverse range of members, some not working as full-time editors: for instance, graphic designers and others in the publishing industry, semi-retired people, and so on. We have new graduates entering. We welcome our diversity and would never want to deter those members from membership. So we must seriously consider a tiered fee structure (most societies already have one, in any event). A fair system based on total income might look like this:

\$50,000+	\$250pa
\$30,000-\$50,000	\$150pa
\$0-\$30,000	\$100pa

That would mean we would be paying \$5 a week if we earned a decent salary from editing and \$3 a week if we weren't. Would this be onerous? Probably not. But think of what all our societies could do with the extra money to benefit us – to provide more workshops and training courses, run more efficiently, raise our profile, get more work for editors, and much more.

We need to look to our future: to put editors on the map and keep them there, both on a state and national level, we need to consider setting our subscription fees at a realistic level.

Comments are welcome to:

Susan Rintoul

susan@seaviewpress.com.au

Please note: The author is a member of both IPEd and the Society of Editors (SA), but the views expressed here are not necessarily shared by either organisation. This paper is intended only to raise a general discussion throughout the societies of editors.

IPEd notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors

August 2006

The Interim Council will be reviewing progress on all fronts at its face-to-face meeting in Canberra in the first week of August. A full report will follow next month.

The Accreditation Board has almost completed its series of workshops for each society to explain how the accreditation scheme will work and hear members' concerns. Board delegates have begun holding meetings in each state and territory for the initial pool of assessors (the 'distinguished editors') to discuss definitions of competency, methods of assessment, guidelines and *Australian*

Standards for Editing Practice, as well as any other questions raised by the assessors.

The National Organisation Working Group is settling down to work under its new convenor and beginning to look at possible organisational structures.

The Standards Revision Working Group's work is continuing and members nationally will be invited to contribute to an interactive survey where they can comment on suggested revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Following this, there will be workshops in each state to finalise drafts of the revised *Standards*.

The Communications/Promotions Working Group is seeking testimonials that confirm the value of editing, particularly statements that editing has saved money and time. The sources of the testimonials must be acknowledged (and preferably well-known). If you have a suitable testimonial, please obtain the client's permission and send it to the convenor of the group, Kathie Stove, kathie@inwriting.com.au.

Janet Mackenzie
Liaison Officer

Testimonials please

The IPed Communications Working Group has been formed to facilitate promotion of the business of editing and the worth of editors—something we know but those 'out there' don't.

The research hasn't been done so the best we can do in the meantime is gather testimonials that support our assertion of the value of editing. If you have any, please send them to me.

We need testimonials with specifics, something along the lines of "he streamlined the production process so that we saved time and money" or "she picked up mistakes/ inconsistencies that would have caused us embarrassment/cost us money/forced us to pulp and reprint".

If you have any personal testimonials of this type that you would be willing to share, or if you could solicit one from a recent satisfied client, please consider sending them to us. It would be best if you asked the client if they are willing to have the testimonial, and their name and organisation, published so that we can acknowledge them.

All contributions will be gratefully received. Please send to kathie@inwriting.com.au (or phone: 08 8553 1353, mob: 0417 086 870, fax: 08 8553 1355)

Kathie Stove
Convenor IPed CWG

The critic as editor (reprinted, with kind permission, from the August edition of *Blue Pencil*)

At our May meeting, Ivor Indyk presented a talk about the critic as editor, and editing as a form of criticism. Well qualified to discuss both perspectives, Ivor Indyk works as a literary critic, editor and publisher, and is also the Whitlam Professor in Writing and Society at the University of Western Sydney.

I feel a certain embarrassment talking to editors about the mysteries of editing, because I have never trained as an editor, having come to the task from the academy, as a lecturer in Australian literature, as a teacher rather than as an editor.

I co-edited *Southerly*, Australia's oldest literary magazine, in the mid-1990s. An editing job of this kind is taken on by academics as part of their academic duties, and as a path to advancement—it is a duty one performs, without being paid, in one's spare time, as part of one's responsibility to the discipline. Previous experience in editing is not one of the pre-requisites of the job, and it often shows.

In 1996 I resigned from *Southerly*, in the wake of the Demidenko affair, to set up my own magazine. It was called HEAT, partly as an expression of my anger at the situation then prevailing in Australian literature, and partly because I was in my mid-forties, at a time when, if you were past your mid-thirties, you were considered to be washed up—to have little to offer in literary terms. I wanted to show that passion and intensity and commitment to literature was not something transient, was a lifelong affair. You can see that, even when I set up as an editor and publisher of my own magazine, I did so as a literary activist, and not primarily as an editor, though that too was a part of the process. We think of editing as a concern for minutiae and detail, and much of it is of this nature. But I think every editor feels the way large considerations are at work in the smallest detail, how a comma in the right place can alter the meaning of a sentence, how an action in the wrong place, or at the wrong time, can have a decisive effect on our estimation of the character, or indeed of the work as a whole.

When you are editing young and emerging writers, you can feel something even larger at work: their futures as writers, the emerging contours of a new kind of writing. As someone who comes from an academic background in Australian literature, I have always felt my editing activities to be related in some way, however small, to the continuity of this larger cultural entity.

In this respect, I should say that I have found no disjunction between my role as an editor, and my roles as a critic and teacher of Australian literature. I see editing

as criticism before the fact—it employs exactly the same skills as literary criticism, but whereas literary criticism is performed after the work has been completed and published, editing as criticism intervenes in the actual production of the book, not only at the final stage, when it is being readied for publication, but in many cases far earlier, during the process of writing itself.

The benefits of this kind of critical editing for Australian literature, and Australian writers, are obvious. As a reviewer for the newspapers I always found it difficult to criticise the faults of a book which one knew might have been remedied with careful editorial attention. But once the book has been published the text is set in stone. The faults cannot be rectified. The book stands or falls according to the strength of its weaknesses.

Editing of the kind I am referring to, which assumes a relationship of equality between editor and writer, though each brings his or her own skills to the work, troubles the romantic notion of authorship, the cult of the author as individual. Anyone who has worked in publishing knows what a collaborative process it is, and how far the technicalities and technologies of production carry one from the mysteries of individual genius.

There is something mysterious in the creative process that produces great writing, and the first task of the editor is to respect this. But the second, and all the subsequent tasks, involve an intimate involvement—immersion even—in the flow of writing, in a way which often dissolves the boundaries of individual agency. At these points, it is the writing which speaks and moves, and both writer and editor are the mediums through which it achieves its fullest expression.

Our awareness of the power of readers in the whole process of publishing—the way they determine what is given currency, what succeeds and what fails, should leave us in no doubt about the essentially collaborative nature of the book business.

The editor is in a curious position: a reader par excellence, he or she must also identify deeply with the writer, must read the text from the writer's point of view as well as the reader's. It is not easy to act in both these roles at once, as one must—to act as both writer and reader, to be both and not oneself—I think it is this sort of paradox that gives editing its particular power. It is, above all else, an act of empathy, a subsuming of one's own voice and identity to a public voice which is and is not one's own.

Ivor Indyk is founding editor and publisher of HEAT magazine and Giramondo books, and Whitlam Professor in Writing and Society at the University of Western Sydney. A critic, essayist and reviewer, he has written a monograph on David Malouf, published by Oxford University Press in 1993, and essays on many aspects of Australian literature. Details about HEAT magazine may be found on the Giramondo website www.giramondopublishing.com/heat.

New members

Welcome to:

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Darren Speers of 57 Scarborough Beach Road, Scarborough, WA 6019

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All submissions gratefully accepted.

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