



BOOKWORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

March 2008

From the Chair

The running of the society is a lot like housework; contrary to what my children seem to believe, it doesn't do itself, and if everyone does a little part of it, everything gets done much more quickly.

You may be busy, but aren't we all? You may not think you have enough experience to be of assistance. You may even think we are doing such a fabulous job that it would be a shame to disrupt the mojo, but we need you. The more people on the committee, or contributing their ideas, the better. What's more, it doesn't have to be a huge commitment that you make – every little bit helps us as a group.

Can you

- Keep an eye on the Yahoo mailing list, making sure new members can access it?
- Distribute Bookworm once a month?
- Every now and then – for Bookworm – write a short essay, review, op-ed piece, report of a month's meeting, or share some tips and tricks you've found work well?
- Join a working group to represent WA nationally?
- Help with the development and running of the website?
- Think of or even deliver an interesting topic for a meeting?
- Come to the meetings an hour early and join the committee?
- Help new members learn their way around the society?

These aren't huge undertakings, but they all add up to a more dynamic Society. When asked their reasons for joining, many members said that they wanted

networking and learning opportunities, so become more involved and achieve your goals!

At the risk of sounding like a motivational tape, make this the year you step up and contribute. I haven't got any free steak knives for the first fifty people who do, but I might be able to swing an extra chocolate biscuit here and there.

All you need to do is contact any committee member and tell us how you think you could help. Even if you can't think of a way, just let us know you're keen to help out and we'll come up with a way for you to do so. (That sounds far more ominous than it's meant to – I promise not to nominate you as the official washer-upper for each meeting or ask you to knit a member's cardie for everyone by the following week!)

Our operators are standing by to take your call now ...

Emma Pearmain

PS: Please remember that the AGM starts at the earlier time of 7 pm in the Boardroom (the room on the third floor with all the editors sitting about in it).

Forthcoming meeting (*please note new date*)

March: AGM and Book Launch

Date: Tuesday 11 March 2008

Time: 7pm

Venue: CWA House, Boardroom (3rd Floor)

1174 Hay Street, West Perth

Parking at rear of building; enter via door from car park

Cost: No charge

RSVP: to <emma007@amnet.net.au>

Following a short AGM will be the launch of James Hansen's *Take Charge! Using Apostrophes and Plurals Correctly*. Copies will be available at a discounted price!

The book will be launched by Dr Carmen Lawrence, currently a Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Western Australia.

Food and wine will be served – come and join in the festivities!

All members and guests are welcome.

Report on February 2008 meeting

Punctuation workshop

The first meeting of the year was a good time to brush up on some grammatical skills with the help of Allan Watson, Carla Morris and James Hansen. The evening began with an 'entrée' of information, a talk by James Hansen on the purposes of punctuation. Afterwards, Allan took over. He had us discussing editing decisions, such as when to change a comma to a semicolon and when to use quotation marks. Carla then took over and led a discussion on the nitty-gritty of dashes. She showed us when to use em dashes rather than en dashes, how to use hyphens properly, and much more.

If you missed out on this valuable information night, don't worry. Contact Rebecca Newman for a copy of the handouts: <rebecca.m.newman@gmail.com>. I would advise keeping them as a useful reference in addition to your style manual.

Claire Gaunt

Howler of the month

It seems to be almost a law of the universe that if anyone in the mainstream media does a story about literacy, it will have a spelling mistake in it. The ABC came to the party on Sunday 20 January on the 7 pm TV news. There was a story about a government program to have Year 1 teachers do assessments of Aboriginal students based on a number of health, social and educational factors. The captions told us that these included 'language competence'.

Mar Bucknell

CredAbility 7:

Follow-up to Accreditation Workshops

Consultation with members of the Australian societies has played an important role in the development of the accreditation scheme ever since IPed (then CASE) first began working towards that goal. Between September and December last year, workshops were held around the country to consider and discuss the sample accreditation examination. Editors gave a great deal of thought to the assessment content, the weighting of components, how candidates would approach the exam, and the way the exam would be conducted. Many editors tested themselves by attempting the sample exam and were able to offer especially valuable feedback. The Accreditation Board is grateful to all those who contributed to the review process.

In considering all the feedback, and formulating our brief to the exam development team, we have not been able to act on every suggestion made – sometimes for practical reasons, and sometimes because suggestions have been contradictory. But we are confident that the accreditation examination will be a

far more effective and equitable instrument of assessment because of the wealth of constructive criticism and comment received.

One of the most debated issues concerning the exam has been the mode of delivery: whether it should, as originally envisaged, be a hard-copy exam, or whether online and/or computer-based delivery should be offered as well as or instead of the hard-copy exam. On this matter, too, we have listened to the views of society members, through the Hobart conference and through written responses to an issues paper put forward by IPEd (July 2007). A subcommittee is currently studying the feasibility and costs of a range of exam delivery options, and the results of that study will guide the board's decision.

In the meantime, the Accreditation Board has reached agreement on the following points, based on feedback from the accreditation workshops in 2007.

Eligibility

Candidates will not be required to have a nominated number of years' industry experience in order to sit the exam, but the exam will be designed for editors with at least two to three years' experience.

Standards and authority for exam

The exam will be based on *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001).

The *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edn (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), will be the assumed style guide for the exam; however, candidates may nominate, and use, another authority if they feel it is necessary (stating their reasons). The assessors' primary concern will be consistency.

If a question posed in the exam clearly requires an answer involving 'acceptable' usage that candidates disagree with, candidates should demonstrate in their answer that they understand what they are being asked to do and justify their preferred usage.

Exam development

The exam development team will consist of one writer, three reviewers who will have considerable input to refining the final exam, and one person to proofread and conduct a timing trial.

All assessors will be asked to contribute suggestions for Parts 1 and 3 (see below), to increase the variety of assessment options.

Exam marking

Assessors will either meet or participate in a teleconference to discuss a range of acceptable answers to exam questions, to ensure that the approach to marking is fair and consistent.

The exam will be scored either Pass or Fail. The pass mark will be 80% of the total number of marks available in the exam. Since the exam is a test of competence (not excellence) in applying *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, the

Accreditation Board expects that a competent editor with two to three years' experience, or equivalent, will score well above the pass mark.

Exam structure, weighting of marks

Part 1 will be worth 25% and will include some multiple-choice questions.

Part 2 will be worth 35% and will consist of one passage for editing.

Part 3 will be worth 40% and will require candidates to answer four questions from a choice of twelve.

Exam content

Part 1

Multiple-choice questions will be included (up to 15% of the total mark).

The focus of questions will be on correcting errors rather than on rewriting/improving the sentences.

Part 2

The passage for editing will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam. It will be general, requiring no specialist knowledge of the subject or genre. Minimal structural editing will be required, and candidates will be given explicit instructions on what they are expected to do.

The passage will be presented double-spaced and in a reasonably large font. Scribble paper will be provided, and candidates may use pencils and erasers when editing.

Part 3

Eight of the questions offered in Part 3 will be general, testing skills and areas of knowledge that would be expected of editors working in any genre. The remaining four questions will be specialised, but the specialties offered will vary from exam to exam.

All questions in Part 3 will be of roughly equal difficulty.

Questions will be open-ended; instead of instructing a candidate to 'Write a letter', they will say, for example, 'Explain what you would do. Write down your conversation, email or other communication strategy'.

Duration of exam

The exam will last three hours. There will be fifteen minutes' reading time provided before the exam begins, during which no writing will be allowed.

Given that the passage for editing in Part 2 will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam, it is expected that candidates will have ample time for checking their work within the three hours.

Candidates with a disability

The Accreditation Board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, how best to accommodate candidates with a disability. Candidates with special needs should, in the first instance, talk to their Accreditation Board delegate.

In the coming critical months, we will keep members up to date on accreditation news through the CredAbility column in society newsletters, but in the interim you are welcome to contact your Accreditation Board delegate if you have queries or require further information.

IPEd Accreditation Board

IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors

February 2008

Obesa cantavit*

On 2 August 1998 the presidents of six Australian societies of editors met in Melbourne to discuss how they might bring their state-based societies together in some way. During the decade since then the societies have chalked up many collaborative efforts, but perhaps the most important is drawing up and agreeing on a constitution that enables them to federate as a national body. On 22 January 2008 the Australian Securities and Investments Commission issued a certificate of registration for the Institute of Professional Editors as a public company limited by guarantee. Special thanks to Virginia Wilton of the Canberra society for her tireless work on the detail of the constitution and to Ed Highley, secretary of the Interim Council, for seeing it through.

*The fat lady has sung.

Accreditation

Karen Disney of the South Australian society has been participating in national action ever since she attended that initial meeting in Melbourne ten years ago. As the current chair of the Accreditation Board, Karen prodded the board into action after the holidays with a teleconference at the end of January. The major item on the agenda was the arrangements for the first editing examination, including consideration of the feedback from the issues paper circulated in the second half of last year as well as the costs and logistics of running the exam. The board is working closely with the Assessors Forum, which is responsible for the content and marking of the examination paper. The plan is to hold the first exam in mid-2008; more details next month.

Website

The IPEd website <www.iped-editors.org> is looking better all the time. It now contains an RSS feed for continuous updates and a calendar to keep track of professional events. Training officers in particular are urged to post details of their society's programs so that members can plan their professional development. And members are urged to fill in the web user survey – the information you supply will form the basis of a submission to obtain funding that will enable IPEd to sponsor tailored computer training for member societies.

2009 conference

The South Australian society will host our next national conference in Adelaide in October 2009. It seems a long way off, but now is the time to start making plans – saving your pennies or dropping hints to your employer – for this fully tax-deductible expenditure on your professional development.

Janet Mackenzie

IPEd Liaison Officer <<http://www.iped-editors.org>>

Wielding the word-surgeon's scalpel at no charge?

[Thanks to Elizabeth McDowall a member of the Society of Editors (Vic) for permission to reprint this article, which originally appeared in that Society's *Newsletter* in October 2007.]

So, you are thinking about becoming a freelancer? Elizabeth McDowall has done her research, and outlines here some things that first-timers should consider.

'So what are you going to do when you retire?' Baby-boomers hear this question daily. My golf handicap being somewhere in the high 200s, I fast came to the conclusion that the answer wasn't to chase defenceless balls across the landscape.

As a government policy analyst, I imagined something involving writing would be a better option. Policy analysts are trained both to research and to consider alternatives. Freelance editing as a 'next career' lent itself to this analysis. I quickly discovered that self-employment is not something to undertake lightly. Here's why.

Besides liking editing, successful freelancers must also be good small business operators. Knowing how to find and be found by publishers, being able to earn sufficient income and knowing how to protect yourself are 'must-have' skills for freelancers. As important is self-awareness: flourishing in a potentially isolated world requires qualities of self-confidence and resilience.

Editing skills are universal: love of language; proficiency in grammar, spelling and composition; broad education; ability to work cooperatively; ability to work independently and make informed decisions; elephantine memory for detail; instinct for recognising patterns, creating categories and organising ideas;

willingness to question assumptions, theories and facts; and the ability to recognise what's missing in content, argument or presentation.ⁱ

Additionally, you must be self-starting, able to work alone and an experienced project manager. You have to: manage time, cash flows and budgets; have marketing ability; understand occupational health and safetyⁱⁱ; know when to get professional advice; and network.

Publishers locate editors in a variety of ways: through reputation, by responses to tenders, by having previously employed you, through personal contact, through industry networks, through freelance registersⁱⁱⁱ, through other advertising and by word-of mouth referrals. Some criteria they use for selecting you are: reasonable rates; your reputation and experience; their estimate of your personal qualities of insight, commonsense and literary sensibility; and your match with the publication type.^{iv}

Freelancers also need to be realistic about potential earnings. Freelance rates should cover both your labour and business running costs: office space and equipment, reference materials, insurance, professional advice, holiday/sick pay equivalents and superannuation. Also factor in a return on investment – potentially thousands of dollars – in capital equipment such as computers and books.

To match current annual Australian average earnings of \$55,660, you would need 24 billable hours a week over 48 weeks at \$50/hour.^v This calculation makes no allowance for business overheads, with a more realistic estimate being at least 25 per cent higher.

Freelancers also need to be wary of underquoting. Underquoting puts your own income at risk and jeopardises your fellow professionals' incomes. If a job is done competently against Australian standards for editing practice^{vi}, it should be valued appropriately.

As even micro-businesses are regulated, get sound professional advice about incorporating or setting up as a sole trader/partnership. Each has different requirements for compliance with federal and state taxation, superannuation and workers' compensation laws.

Protect yourself through contracts setting out clearly what is included and excluded from the project brief.^{vii} Insure against loss or damage to equipment and loss of income from illness or injury. Indemnify yourself against public and professional liability claims.^{viii}

Freelancing promises good, business-oriented editors an exhilarating ride – with all the pleasures and frustrations of dealing with text and all the rewards and responsibilities of being one's own boss.

Elizabeth McDowall

Notes

ⁱ J Eerkes, S Gaitskell, D Mills and J Taylor *So, You Want to Be an Editor* (excerpt), Freelance Editors' Association of Canada, 1991, Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, viewed 30 May 2007, <http://www.editors.ca/join_eac/be_an_editor/so.html>.

ⁱⁱ This includes setting up a workplace and equipment for comfort and safety, avoiding musculo-skeletal injuries and managing stress. See WorkSafe Victoria, *Officewise – a guide to health and safety in the office*, Ergonomics Division, WorkSafe Victoria, Melbourne 2006, viewed 30 May 2007, <<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/WorkSafe/Home/Forms+and+Publ...>>.

ⁱⁱⁱ These are maintained by the various societies of editors. In Victoria, the register can be found at: Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc, *Freelance Register 2007-08*, Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc, 2007, viewed 30 May 2007, <http://www.socedvic.org/cms/image/Image/FLR2007_05-05-07.pdf>.

^{iv} Author's survey of editors and publishers, May 2007.

^v Australian Bureau of Statistics *6302.0 - Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, Feb 2007*, Australian Bureau of Statistics. Canberra, 2007—full-time adult employees' ordinary time earnings.

^{vi} Council of Australian Societies of Editors, *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, 2001, Institute of Professional Editors, Australia, viewed 30 May 2007, <http://www.iped-editors.org/files/CASE_editing_standards.pdf>.

^{vii} A useful contract template is available from the Editors' Association of Canada, *Standard Freelance Editorial Agreement* 1999, viewed 30 May 2007, <<http://www.editors.ca/hire/sfea/index.html>>.

^{viii} A professional indemnity policy is designed to protect the personal assets of a professional against damages awarded against them by a court, or resulting from an approved negotiated settlement, in relation to an act, error or omission committed by the professional during the conduct of their professional business activities. It also covers the costs and expenses of defending claims.

Deadline for April 2008 *Bookworm*:
Tuesday 18 March 2008

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