



Bookworm

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

September 2008

From the Chair

Hello members,

Yes, it's Bookworm again, and yes, everywhere you look it's coming up accreditation. Other than world domination, our plan is to inundate you with accreditation information until you have no choice but to sit for it.

For those of you steadfastly refusing to join us on the Dark Side, here is an abbreviated version of my Presidential message:

Exam exam exam amusing mention of my children exam exam exam some sort of science fiction/pop culture reference that in all likelihood only I understand exam exam exam come to meetings.

Exam,

Emma

Meanwhile, over here in Sitting-the-Exam-Ville:

By now I hope you've all had a chance to take a look at the two sample exams on the IPEd website, just like me. I also hope you've all had a chance to have a practice run at the exam, in a pseudo-real scenario so that you can gauge how you'll fare at the actual exam, just like, well, someone who is not me. That is, unless the exam is going to be held in my office, with Bon Jovi playing quietly in the background, a dog's heavy buttocks resting on your foot so you can't move, the phone ringing, and two small children sniggering behind you as they hilariously press the lever on your chair so you keep going up and down. (If it is, I'm impressed at the specific-ness of our Accreditation Board's preparation. Also, I'm going to need more chairs. And dog posteriors.)

Shockingly, I didn't do too well at that first attempt – which was good in a way as it made me shake off a little of the blasé attitude and actually try properly on the second version. I've also stopped being so cheap and actually ordered some more up to date reference books ... and even cracked the spine on one (even if it was just to look up how important editors are. Short answer? Extremely).

Long story slightly shorter, I'm taking it seriously, and you should too; accreditation is a good thing for us individually and as a profession. That's why September's meeting is one you should really try to get to. It's your opportunity to ask any questions and salve any worries you have about the exam and how to prepare. It will give you some guidance on how to study and what to do on the day – apart from actually telling you what to write of course. I asked, but that kind of 'help' seems to be seen less as 'help' and more 'kind of defeating the point of the exam' by the bigwigs.

So I hope to see you there at the swanky new CWA House (**remember the meetings have shifted to the new CWA building next door to the old one**) for some swotting goodness.

Emm Pearmain

President

PS: I forgot to reference any sort of science fiction after all, but feel free to consider that a clever ploy to check if you were reading everything or not. I know I'm going to.

Spotlight on the editor

Polly Delany, Freelancer

Member of Editors WA since 2007, new member contact and general committee member

I have always been a big reader. My mother insists that I taught myself – aged two – to read *Green Eggs and Ham*. Well, how can someone not enjoy 'Would you like them on a train? Would you eat them in the rain? In a box, with a fox ...' and other such innovative rhymes many times over?

After high school, acting and theatre seemed like the best career path and I started my English degree with a Theatre Arts Major at Curtin University. Being taught creative writing by Elizabeth Jolley was a real eye-opener. (Very messy handwriting saved me from ridicule whenever someone tried to read my rough notes.) I got a high distinction in her class and was over the moon!

I loved the theatre more though. I discovered the joys of stage managing, which requires being the director's voice in rehearsals, and running the performances by telling everyone – the lights, sound, actors, set movers – when to go. Oh, the power!

With my next qualification in Stage Management from the WA Academy of Performing Arts under my belt, I moved to England, where I fulfilled my dream of working in the West End. I was an assistant stage manager (which is the position with all of the work and none of the power) and only lasted a week, but I was in love.

Unfortunately, England didn't love me back, and I came home to Australia to recover from a serious throat infection. I was forced to admit that the high stress and long hours combo wasn't me any more.

Then Emma Pearmain gave me a job proofreading a booklet on dealing with nut allergies, and I had found my new home. I could be bossy, and powerful: 'the comma should go here, not there!' I could work at home in my pjs; and I was reading all the time and able to justify it because I was 'working'.

I have edited a couple of books, and I don't enjoy it nearly as much. Writers are as touchy as actors and I have long joked about my belief that the theatre would work much more smoothly without actors – and editing books would be easier without the authors.

And that is the joy of proofreading. You deal with the editor rather than the author, and they want you to find all of the little mistakes. I know this preference is unusual but I get a little rush when I find a slip.

Thank heavens for editors, proof readers and stage managers!

We'd like to hear from other members – simply send 350 words about yourself to rebecca.m.newman@gmail.com and we'll put you in the spotlight! (If you are a member of Editors WA but you're not actually an editor, we'd like to hear your story too. We'll change the section's title for that month!)

Forthcoming meeting

September: Preparing for the accreditation exam

Date: Tuesday 2 September 2008

Time: 7.30 pm to 10 pm (note extended time)

Venue: CWA House

1170 Hay Street, West Perth (**this is the new building, adjacent to the old CWA House**)

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

RSVP: **essential** to <acurtin@highway1.com.au> by 31 August

If you're planning to sit the first Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) accreditation exam on 18 October, this workshop is for you. It will be presented by a panel of four: WA assessors Janet Blagg and Anne Surma, along with Accreditation Board delegate Amanda Curtin and alternate delegate Wendy Bulgin, who are also exam candidates.

Anyone interested in attending the workshop is strongly advised to attempt the sample exam beforehand (available on the IPEd website, under Accreditation <www.iped-editors.org>), under the conditions set out on the covering page. We will be discussing the sample exam in detail, and if you haven't attempted it, you will lose the opportunity to (a) assess whether you're ready for the exam; (b) note what you might need to brush up on; (c) note any questions you might have; (d) familiarise yourself with what we will be discussing.

We can't emphasise enough that attempting the sample exam, and learning from that experience, is the best exam preparation you can do, and will also maximise what you will get out of the workshop.

To help the panel respond to your needs, please email any questions you have to <acurtin@highway1.com.au>. Of course, it's fine to bring your questions along on the night, but sending them beforehand will help us to ensure that we cover as many issues as possible at the workshop. Similarly, if you have any useful suggestions arising from your experience with the sample exam that you are willing to share with your fellow candidates, please email those, too, or bring them along.

To quote from the exam's Lead Writer/Developer, Meryl Potter: 'Accreditation is about recognising editorial skills, not excluding people from the profession ... We're not trying to lay traps or trick candidates with sneaky questions on obscure things. We do want people to pass!' That is the goal of everyone involved in the process: the IPEd Council, the Accreditation Board, assessors, the exam development team and your society's committee'. [For more from Meryl Potter, please see the Q&A in this issue.]

Exam candidates in regional WA

If you are an Editors WA member from regional WA and you're planning to sit the IPEd accreditation exam on 18 October, please let the committee know (contact details on last page). We will try to assist by finding you a billet if you need one.

Report on August 2008 meeting

'Speed dating'

Having received a rather plaintive message when recently overseas ('Writer needed for next meeting report STOP Desperate STOP Come on Tatum, you promised EXCLAMATION MARK STOP'), I figured it was about time I put my hand up to contribute to *Bookworm*. I admit I was rather regretting that decision when I saw the August meeting topic on the Editor's WA website: 'speed dating'. There must be some mistake, I thought. What on earth could be the connection between dating, speed and editing? Ready connections can be found between 'speed' and 'editing' (editing *with* speed and editing *on* speed are two that spring to mind), but 'dating' was harder to fit into the mix. I was flummoxed, yes, but also mildly intrigued.

As it turned out, speed dating is Editors WA code for a 'get to know your fellow members' evening. I was both relieved (that I could keep the roses and chocolates for myself) and delighted (to have an opportunity to put faces to some of the names that appear in my email inbox). According to the esteemed members of our committee it attracted 'the best turnout ever' at a meeting. It was certainly popular with the ladies – Allan Watson being the only male among our *Homo editors* sub-species willing to brave it. And although fluorescent light replaced

romantic candlelight, there was wine and cheese to soften the atmosphere and loosen our tongues.

Polly Delany, our intrepid Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening, began by asking us to say a little about ourselves and whether we were a 'pen or pencil person'. I am still not sure of the significance of the pen or the pencil test (I was a pen), but Polly said we had confirmed her 'suspicions'. [I think Polly found she had purchased the right ratio of pens to pencils as quiz prizes! - Ed.] We were then asked to split into groups representing fiction or non-fiction editing, freelance or employee. It quickly became clear that the freelance fiction editors were the strongest beasts of the bunch, confirming my own suspicions.

Once we had worked out where we each stood in the pack (and had ventured a short chat with those on 'the other side'), we all returned to our seats to participate in a pop-quiz. There were some rather entertaining questions, my favourite being:

Q: What is the name given to words with capitals in the middle, like iPod and YouTube?

A: Camel case.

I don't think anyone got that one, but winners were grinners for the rest of the quiz with pretty pencils and cornstarch pens given out as prizes.

At the conclusion to a very enjoyable evening, Polly asked us to identify our 'punctuation personality' and find others of the same bent. I determined that I was a semicolon, for no other reason than that I am a champion of that woefully ignored punctuation mark. But others had more compelling reasons for choosing their particular punctuation personalities. Those who chose the question mark saw themselves as having curious personalities and always questioning their authors; the comma people had cause for pause; and the ellipsis people were enigmatic, indicating something left out and mysterious.

As for the parentheses people ... there was only one, so the search is now on in the society to find another to join our lonely parenthesis. As editors, we all know that a single parenthesis just won't do and we surely cannot ignore the seriousness of the situation we now find ourselves in. Perhaps this is reason enough to declare that, while this speed dating session was a runaway success, another such evening is desperately needed.

Tatum Hands

New members

Welcome to these new members who recently joined Editors WA:

Rachel French

Barbara Temperton

CredAbility 8

After years of hard work and preparation by volunteers around Australia, we're heading down the straight. The Accreditation Board expects to hold the exam on 18 October, from 1.00 to 4.15 pm in Perth and 2.00 to 5.15 pm in every other capital city (except Darwin).

Registration will be open until 18 September.

A revised sample exam, guidelines for applicants and Q&A are available on the IPEd website. If you are unsure whether you are ready to sit the exam in October, try 'sitting' the sample exam under exam conditions.

Your society will help you prepare for the real thing by providing a pre-exam workshop; these workshops will be held across Australia in August and September [*see notice in this issue*]. If you have already registered or are considering registration for this exam, you will have the opportunity to use the sample exam to practise answering the type of questions you will find in October.

This exam is a worthwhile investment in your own career as an editor. If you have been considering sitting the exam and have no reason to defer it until 2009 or later, don't wait! Register now!

Remember that the exam fee is tax-deductible.

To obtain information about the exam, workshop, or any other aspect of accreditation, contact your Accreditation Board delegate, Amanda Curtin, <acurtin@highway1.com.au>.

IPEd Accreditation Board

IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors Limited

August 2008

The organisation and running of the first accreditation examination on 18 October 2008 is currently the primary focus of all IPEd groups. The Accreditation Board is meeting fortnightly by teleconference to complete the large amount of work that remains to be done over the next month or so to ensure that the exam, which will be held simultaneously in every state capital city and Canberra, runs smoothly for all.

All you need to know about the examination can be found at <www.iped-editors.org>. Also there, you will find details of how to register, something that must be done by Thursday 18 September. The list of registrants is growing daily, populated by editors who realise the value that the postnominal 'AE' (Accredited Editor) will have in their working life.

To further help candidates for the examination each of the state and territory societies will be holding an examination preparation workshop for its members.

Check the IPed website or your society's website for details of these events. Attendance is recommended for all who have registered, or intend to do so.

The Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Professional Editors Limited (IPed) will be held by teleconference on Sunday 24 August. The agenda can be found on the IPed website. When the budget for 2008-09 – an item on the agenda – has been adopted by the Council it will be put up on the website, as will be the audited accounts for 2007-08. The AGM will be followed by a meeting of the Council.

The 'Upcoming events' field on the IPed website is open to all societies and other bodies interested in editing, publishing and associated endeavours. To get an event listed there contact <webadmin@iped-editors.org>.

Many editors might be surprised to discover that they can join a union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), which is for people working in book publishing, website production, public relations and advertising, as well as journalists, photographers, musicians, actors and others in TV, radio, theatre and film. Membership rates vary depending on income. The Alliance is currently offering a membership discount to members of all Australian societies of editors. Details can be accessed via an item on the IPed website home page.

Ed Highley

IPed Secretary <www.iped-editors.org>

IPed accreditation exam: advice and guidance from the exam's Lead Writer/Developer, Meryl Potter

How will the exam be marked?

The exam will be marked by a team of 10 assessors, appointed by the Accreditation Board. Soon after the exam, the assessors will meet over a period of three days to be briefed by the exam development team and to begin marking.

The assessors will be provided with an answer guide and marking scheme to use as a starting point, but we will rely on discussion of the group over the three days to make decisions on variations. We will also rely on the skills of these highly experienced editors to make decisions on what is acceptable. The answer guide is a guide, not a rulebook, and we expect there'll be substantial variation across the answers because of the very different backgrounds, training and experiences of editors across the country.

The exam is intended to test for competence (not excellence) against Australian standards for editing practice (CASE, 2001). Competent answers should get full marks for the question. Giving full marks for something is always difficult, even for experienced markers (especially editors, I'm thinking, because we are always holding out for perfection!), but markers will be both encouraged to do that and reminded always by their marking sheet of what is needed for a pass.

How difficult will the exam be?

The exam is not intended to include trick questions or to 'catch people out' with obscure details. The exam aims to match the Accreditation Board's requirement that anyone with two to three years' full-time or equivalent experience could comfortably achieve the 80 per cent pass mark (and 65 per cent in each part). The exam will be passable without being too easy (the accreditation has to mean something!), or expecting candidates to match the answer guide precisely or find every tiny hiccup.

Is the sample exam a good indication of what to expect?

Definitely. Now we have four energetic editors, from different specialities, committed to creating the actual exam and I think we have refined the process enormously.

In Part 1 of the exam (short sentences to be corrected), do candidates need to be alert for errors of fact?

No, you are not expected to check errors of fact. And candidates should try not to be distracted by doing additional edits as that will take up valuable time.

In Part 2 of the exam (extract for editing), does a candidate have to pick up every mistake and address every editing matter in order to pass?

No. The edit doesn't have to be perfect and pick up every little thing. We don't all edit in the same way – we all notice different things, and we all do a better job given the time for a second or third round, but that doesn't mean the first edit is a bad edit. You'll see in the sample exam that there are many more marks available than are needed for 'full' marks in the edit. One thing I'd watch: avoid big chunks of deletion or rewriting. In the sample exam, for instance, there is a clear instruction in the brief not to rewrite or worry about structure. So even if you find the text irritating, follow the brief you have been given.

Do you have any advice for candidates who are preparing for the exam?

Follow the instructions on the note added to the sample exam, and do work through the rest of the paper once you have done your exam under exam conditions – this is all we have as a 'curriculum' for preparing for the exam. And definitely read through Janet Mackenzie's *The editor's companion* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) or Elizabeth Flann and Beryl Hill's *The Australian editing handbook*, 2nd edn (John Wiley & Sons, 2004), to fill in little gaps in knowledge, remind you of things you haven't done for a while, and also the language of editing, which does vary quite a bit. You might even want to take one of them into the exam.

[For a suggested reading list and more information about what candidates can take into the exam, see *Your guide to the 2008 editing exam*, on the IPed website.]

How much time should candidates spend on each section in the exam?

Record how long each task takes while you're doing the sample exam so you can work out the timing that best suits you before you sit the exam. Remember that basic rule of exams – spend the most time on the bits where you'll earn the most marks. *The following are suggestions, for guidance only:*

Part 1 (worth 20 per cent): 30 minutes maximum, including time to review answers

Part 2 (worth 40 per cent): one hour + 15 minutes to review

Part 3 (worth 40 per cent): one hour (15 minutes for each of four questions) + 15 minutes to review

I would edit the extract (Part 2) first. Then I'd do the other bits, leaving a good 15 minutes at the end to review Part 2. That gives a tiny valuable separation from the first edit, so you can come back to Part 2 with fresh eyes. But that's what I'd do – everyone should plan ahead for what might suit them best.

What about the 15-minute reading period?

I think I'd go straight to Part 3, pick my questions there, and then spend the rest of the reading time doing a first read of the extract (Part 2).

Is there any opportunity for candidates to provide feedback on the sample exam?

I'd be interested in any feedback on the sample exam, via the IPed website [see under Accreditation, then Sample Exam: 'click here to tell us what you thought'] or via Accreditation Board delegates – especially about what questions people have attempted in Part 3 and what they thought of them.

Any final words for candidates?

Accreditation is about recognising editorial skills, not excluding people from the profession. The exam is being set with the expectation that people with enough experience will achieve the 80 per cent to pass. We're not trying to lay traps or trick candidates with sneaky questions on obscure things. We do want people to pass! We're taking setting the exam very seriously – everything is going through several revisions – but we will also rely on the considerable and varied experience of the assessors who'll be doing the marking.

Further information for candidates is posted on the IPed website <www.iped-editors.org>. See (under Accreditation):

Exam guide (Your guide to the 2008 accreditation exam)

Q&A (Accreditation Q&A)

Sample exam

I'm doing the exam. Are you?

'You can't set up shop as an accountant just because you like numbers, so why should you be able to set up as an editor just because you like reading? Accreditation is important because it sets a minimum standard of what it means when someone says "I'm an accredited editor"; it shows that we take our profession seriously, which is the first step in convincing others to do the same.'

Emma Pearmain, President, Society of Editors WA, editor for 8 years

'This move towards accreditation fits very well with my personal belief that editors need to be able offer clients objective proof that they can do the work required of them. I am registering for the October exam and hope very much to be able to add AE to my Grad Dip and other qualifications when I tender for editing work.'

Rosemary Luke, Past President, Society of Editors, South Australia and experienced editor

'I intend to sit the exam because I believe that only an accreditation system set up by and for professional editors will deliver the recognition and rewards that we deserve.'

Virginia Wilton, Canberra, Chair, IPEd Council; Director, WHH Publishing and very experienced editor

'I'm doing the exam because passing it will give me confidence in my abilities and credibility with potential clients. I think putting it off is not going to make me better prepared; we use the time we have and it's not going to get any easier. If I am realistic about my skills then I will pass. At my age I am keen to build up my editing credibility and this is the best way.'

Jamie Miller, Tasmania, editor since 2006

'I hate exams but I'm sitting for this one on principle. Unless we do this there will be no way to differentiate competent editors and those who aren't. It is the only way for the profession to get the recognition it deserves.'

Carla Morris, Western Australia, editor since 2004

I am planning to do the exam because I am curious to see how I will go. I don't need the accreditation for my work but I am self-taught and a specialist literary editor. So I want to see how I fit with the whole range of editing and test myself in areas that I never attempt in my work. I like a challenge and I view this as a learning experience. For young people I think this exam and accreditation are essential.

Edith Speers, Tasmania, with 12 years of professional editing experience

Guidelines and Q&A at <www.iped-editors.org/content/accreditation-program>

Register at <www.sapro.com.au/iped/register.htm>

Deadline for next *Bookworm*:
Tuesday 23 September 2008

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