

## From the President



### Where there's writing, there's editing...

I didn't get to nearly as many sessions at the Perth Writers' Festival as I'd wanted. There was so much to experience; it's overwhelming trying to get to everything. And what talent we have! Pulitzer Prize-winning writers and intellectuals to children's and youth writers, and contemporary Indigenous chick-lit; it was a smorgasbord of ideas from young, old, new, established and emerging writers in the region. At twenty-three years, Jack Heath has just published his sixth book, is an award-winning writer, is Young Australian of the Year, and has his own Wikipedia entry; Dr Anita Heiss has just published her chick-lit novel *Manhattan Dreaming* and is about to release *Paris Dreaming*, both of which involved research in New York and Paris. She's also huge fun! Society members Amanda Curtin and Georgia Richter chaired sessions and contributed their own publishing experience.

Three writers who write about travel in various ways are so much more than travel writers. William Dalrymple, Nicolas Rothwell and our very own Stephen Scourfield discussed their disparate perspectives on India, the north of Western Australia and beyond. William is loud and confident, Nicolas a sensitive intellectual, and Stephen a keen observer of human interaction with the land. Our perspectives and interactions with the landscape were a major theme throughout the festival. Mark Tredinnick and Barry Lopez are two of the world's most prominent award-winning nature writers. Their inspiring philosophical words dealt with identity, the physical landscape and the human culture that are intricately balanced. I couldn't

begin to summarise their ideas here. Tom Keneally, Irvine Welsh, Hugh Mackay, Sara Foster, Anita Heiss, Alex Miller, Monty Don, Don Watson, Morris Gleitzman, AC Grayling – an array of writers covering every genre. I wish I'd seen more. Some of the sessions are podcasts on 720 ABC website so download them to your favourite media and have a listen: <http://www.abc.net.au/perth/topics/arts-and-entertainment/books-literature/>.

Rest assured, with the abundance of writing in this country there will never be a shortage of work for editors.

Happy editing

*Robin*

**Robin Bower — President**

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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Tuesday 23 March 2010 at 7.00 pm**  
**(Please note the time is 7.00 pm and not 7.30 pm)**

Reports from the Office Bearers  
Election of Officers for 2010

To follow the AGM  
Amanda Curtin will inspire us with  
'The publication journey of *The Sinkings*'

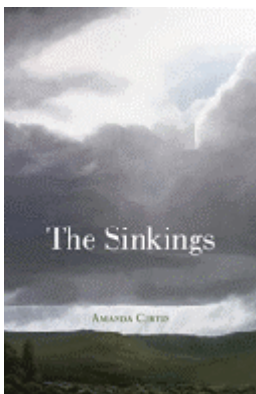
**Venue:** Subiaco Community Centre (Activity Room), 203 Bagot Road, Subiaco. Enter by the glass double doors opposite the courtyard (Activity Room is on the left)

**Cost:** \$2 members; \$5 non-members

**Parking:** street parking and Crossways Shopping Centre car park opposite

**RSVP** <[Cheryl.Bettridge@det.wa.edu.au](mailto:Cheryl.Bettridge@det.wa.edu.au)>

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***The Sinkings***

Author: Amanda Curtin

Publisher: University of Western Australia Press, 2008

*The Sinkings*, Amanda Curtin's debut novel, takes its name from an old campsite near Albany in WA, where the dismembered remains of a human body were discovered in 1882. The murder

victim was identified as an ex-convict called Little Jock, a sandalwood harvester well known around the south-west.

While Little Jock was a real person, and his murder at the 'Sinkings' was an actual event, Amanda Curtin has imagined her way into Little Jock's story, retelling his life and revealing this convict wasn't quite what he seemed.

The story is narrated by Willa Samson, a reclusive editor dogged by the grief, guilt and love for her estranged daughter. As Willa begins to piece together the tragic story of Little Jock, she is confronted by her personal story of family tragedy and the haunting realization that the mysteries of the past can never be fully revealed.

*The Sinkings* is an absorbing and detailed story of prejudices, past and present; the agony of secrets and impossible ethical questions; and a mother's love.

Compiled by Mabel Kaplan from Peter Mares interview with Amanda Curtin on the ABC Radio National's Bookshow <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/bookshow/htm> (transcript), Angela Meyer (<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/>) and Kathy Hunt in *The Australian*, 23 August, 2008

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**DEADLINE**  
for copy for the  
**NEXT ISSUE**  
of *Bookworm* is  
**Tuesday, 6 April, 2010**



## Spotlight on Josephine Smith

[<josmith@wordsmith.com.au>](mailto:josmith@wordsmith.com.au)

My introduction

to the Society was unexpected. At my very first meeting (AGM 2007) I volunteered to be Secretary; it must have been the heady feeling of being out by myself for the first time without baby in tow that inspired me! At the time I felt a complete fraud as I had only done one piece of paid work as an editor and here I was, surrounded by experienced, professional editors.

In previous lives I've worked in the UK as both a government research scientist and as a Chartered Accountant. Emigrating to Perth inspired in me another change of direction with a new home, new job and new family on the way. In 2007 I started freelancing as WordSmith WA and my first areas of work had an accounting flavour; namely, proofreading financial statements and company reports.

Three years later and I am now an Accredited Editor and have worked on a wide variety of projects. My favourite work is as assistant editor for the international journal *Brontë Studies*. The editor lives in Canada and the journal is published in Leeds, which is close to Haworth and also to my hometown of Halifax. I have always had an interest in the Brontës and their work and this is a great way to further that interest.

We are enjoying our new life in Pemberton. There is such a community spirit here and the countryside is spectacular; Cameron (3½) and Alec (1½)

just adore playing outside so much. I am still freelancing part-time to keep me sane, and will look to expand the business as and when family life permits. Meanwhile, I am volunteering for the Pemberton Community Newspaper and I must be missing the committee meetings more than I realised as I have also volunteered for the local Playgroup committee – as Secretary!

### Quirky Quotes

#### about writers, editors and books

It seems to me that those songs that have been any good, I have nothing much to do with the writing of them. The words have just crawled down my sleeve and come out on the page.

~Joan Baez



It's not plagiarism - I'm recycling words, as any good environmentally conscious writer would do. ~Uniek Swain



I am returning this otherwise good typing paper to you because someone has printed gibberish all over it and put your name at the top. ~English Professor (Name Unknown), Ohio University



Substitute "damn" every time you're inclined to write "very;" your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.

~Mark Twain



When you are describing,  
A shape, or sound, or tint;  
Don't state the matter plainly,  
But put it in a hint;  
And learn to look at all things,  
With a sort of mental squint.

~Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll)

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Rebecca Newman reports  
**February 2010 meeting**  
**Michael Sinclair-Jones: The Media & Arts Alliance -  
why join?**



*Michael Sinclair-Jones is the Branch Secretary of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and talked to SOEWA members about the alliance at our February 2010 meeting.*

Michael began his talk by explaining that the alliance is part of the federal union registered in every Australian state, boasting 20 000 members nationally. Members are mainly journalists, actors, musicians, dancers, singers and performers and come from backgrounds in TV, radio, print, freelancing, PR and government departments. Approximately 50% of WA members are freelancers such as journalists and photographers.

Although membership is made up of a diverse group, all are considered to be part of a cultural industry and share common issues.

**Would editors be eligible to join the alliance?**

Freelance, in-house and magazine editors would qualify under the media section, while fiction editors would qualify under the art section.

**What does the industrial union do?**

- Makes wage agreements with employers (usually 3-year deals).
- Organises strikes, if necessary (such as those at the *West Australian*).
- Represents freelancers who are not on someone's payroll and who have contracts specifying services and payment deadlines etc.
- Chases bad debts.

**What the alliance can offer freelancers:**

- Help chasing bad debts!
- Their magazine, *Walkley*.
- Seminars on tax, deductions you can claim, how to set up your business etc.
- Professional networking. (The Press Club is not directly a part of the alliance but it offers a discount to alliance members.)

The success of the alliance can be measured by recruitment results, the wage deals bargained and by verbal feedback at the AGM.

Following some questions about chasing bad debts, Michael emphasised that you should always get agreements in writing. Even an email confirming the details of a verbal arrangement is sufficient to be seen as an agreement once the client has emailed their acceptance. An official contract agreement is preferable, and makes chasing bad debts more straightforward. The alliance has templates/pro-formas you can use by crossing out irrelevant sections to create your own contract.

In the discussion that followed, SOEWA members mentioned the worth of having a sheet that lists what your services include, with explanations to educate clients. (Jan Knight's were noted to be a good example!).

Further information about the alliance can be found on their website [www.alliance.org.au](http://www.alliance.org.au) or by calling the inquiry desk: 1300 656 512.



## A warm welcome to new members



Suzanne Srdarov of Hamilton Hill

Roslyn Ross of Mt Hawthorn

Tony Proffitt of Dunsborough



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### ... from the Editor's Notebook

While our president was enjoying other aspects of the WA Writers Festival, I was savouring a windswept breakfast at the Matilda Bay Tearooms with members of SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators).

Among those present was Western Australian children's author Sally Murphy. I chatted to her about her latest book, 'Toppling', released by Walker Books just this week. 'Toppling' is Sally's second verse novel and since I had been lucky enough to receive a review copy, I took it with me for Sally to sign.

Everybody needs a hobby, and in 'Toppling' the main character, John, is into domino toppling. A strange behaviour, he admits.

*'Some kids collect model cars  
or aeroplanes  
or stamps  
or Game Boys.  
I collect dominoes.'*

Domino topplers get only a few moments of glory as they watch several hours' or days' worth of their work falling down.

But you and I know, there are other kinds of toppling – especially as one gets older – and I have the grazes to prove it. For John, though, toppling dominoes is his hobby. It is not his whole life. And when, at school one day he finds out that Dominic, his 'best mate and not just because his name sounds like domino' is in danger of toppling, his own world begins to topple. He wants to know the truth about his friend.

'Another sad one,' says Sally as she hands the book back to me.

I didn't agree. Sensitive, yes! Sad, no!

Sally Murphy has a gift for getting inside the hearts and heads of middle-graders and exploring the myriad ways they deal with family stuff, loneliness, feelings of isolation and sickness.

#### So what is a verse novel?

Since the narrative does not rely on rhyme or a set pattern of rhythm what makes it a verse novel?

The poetry of a verse novel relies on

- shorter lines and line drops to create a rhythm that approximates human speech without the use of complex punctuation;
- fewer words to convey atmosphere and plot;
- imagination. It asks the reader to experience the story in a way that does not tell all, and relies as much on the space between the lines as it does on the words themselves;
- voice to convey emotions, details, and nuances in a way that prose can't always accomplish.

According to Emma Dryden of Dryden Books, 'A verse novel is, and should be, first and foremost a novel, with a compelling storyline and plot, richly developed characters, and a distinctive narrative voice. ... A good verse novel has a such a strong and mesmerisingly compelling story line, characters and voice that the reader does not even recognise they are reading poetry at all.'

Having read both of Sally Murphy's verse novels - 'Pearl verses the World' and 'Toppling', I would have to agree.

You may like to check Sally's blog at <http://sallymurphy.blogspot.com>

## *IPEd Notes*

News from the Institute of Professional Editors Limited

[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)

March 2010

Big news to start 2010: our South Australian colleagues have offered IPEd an open-ended, interest-free loan of \$5,000 to redesign and reorganise the content of the IPEd website. The IPEd Council has accepted this very generous and welcome offer. Upgrading the website to improve its functionality and better reflect the purport, aims and aspirations of our profession has been a project on the council's agenda for some time, but its implementation has been, until now, impeded by a shortage of the wherewithal to do so. The work is now under way, managed by IPEd's Communication Committee (CommComm) headed by Rowena Austin (SA). In consultation with councillors and other interested parties, the committee has drafted a site map and is seeking expressions of interest from web-design firms familiar with the needs of professional associations.

Another current CommComm project is the production of a brochure designed primarily to promote to employers the use of professional editors. The text of the brochure has been finalised and a designer is now being sought. Copies of the finished product will be distributed to our member societies. It should prove to be a useful tool for individual editors as well as for corporate promotion activities.

IPEd has produced its first 'annual' report, which covers the period between its incorporation on 22 January 2008 and 30 June 2009. The report can be found on the IPEd website and the member societies have been asked to distribute it with their newsletters. This first report gives details of the establishment of the company in addition to annual financial and operational information, and lists the achievements of the period covered.

All aspects of the 2009 IPEd accreditation exam, held on 12 September last, have now been finalised. A detailed report on the exam can be found on the website. No exam will be held during 2010, but the Accreditation Board has begun work on the 2011 exam, including research into the possibility of an onscreen option.

Over the Christmas – New Year holiday period, IPEd-appointed adjudicators Stephanie Holt (Vic.) and Virginia Wilton (Canberra) completed judging of the sixteen books entered for the 2009 Barbara Ramsden Award for excellence in editing and made their recommendation to the award committee. The award is a major literary prize for a book in any field of literature. It is a joint activity of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW) and IPEd, and recognises the contributions of both author and editor to the final work. The name of the winning book remains secret until announced by FAW. We'll let you know when the cat is out of the bag. The list of books from which the winner was chosen is on the IPEd website.

During the IPEd national conference in Adelaide in October 2009, Pam Hewitt (NSW) collected data for her latest national survey of editors, this one being the fifth. The data from the 89 respondents indicated, among other things:

- a possible movement back to in-house editing and away from freelancing
- a reduction in usage of the terms editor, copyeditor and substantive editor in favour of, for example, project manager, communications manager and writing consultant
- the emergence of professional development as a clear first priority for editors
- an increase in the reported national average hourly rate to \$66, up a modest \$4 an hour since the 2007 survey.

The full report is on the IPEd website.

The next IPEd national conference will be in Sydney next year with our colleagues in the Society of Editors (NSW) as our hosts. The IPEd seed fund of \$2,000 to help support the planning and organising of the national conferences has now been transferred from SA to NSW.

The IPEd Council is exploring the possibility of creating a peer-reviewed 'IPEd Occasional Papers' series with the aim of encouraging editors and those working in editing-related fields to share their ideas, views and reflections on editing as theory, as practice and as a profession. All such papers would of course be good, but the best of them might warrant special presentation at, for example, our national conferences. Feedback on the proposal, via your society's councillor, would be welcome.

*Ed Highley*  
Secretary