

Ebooks: where are they?

At our June meeting Sherman Young, author of The Book is Dead, Long Live the Book, gave his views on the whereabouts of the ebook. Sherman provided a lively and informative account of the ebook's history, covering technological advances, the array of options and why the slow take-up rate might accelerate in the future.

The ebook has always been just a step away. A decade ago, the promise of Gemstar, the Rocket Ebook and Franklin's lame efforts were always about to herald a new age of electronic reading devices. More recently, the Iliad, Sony reader and the Amazon Kindle have been accompanied by breathless prose from people like me who are mad keen on killing the print book—those who desperately want to conjure the 'heavenly library' out of thin air.

And yet. Every step towards the promised land is accompanied by two steps back—as the hype is beaten to a pulp by a bookreading public wielding B-format paperbacks as weapons.

So, where the bloody hell are they? Why are ebooks still the domain of impassioned ebook geeks? Why have

I only ever seen one dedicated ebook reader 'in the wild' despite the fact that I am overtly looking for them?

'...Serious attempts to replicate the portability, readability and convenience of a book have only been with us for a decade or so.'

Electronic reading devices have been around for as long as there have been computers with screens, but serious attempts to replicate the portability, readability and convenience of a book have only been with us for a decade or so.

A flurry of devices emerged around the turn of the century, all sporting (barely) readable liquid crystal screens and the capacity to carry around dozens of text titles. None managed to gain mainstream acceptance, and while a few generated some publisher support, they could never be considered successful.

'This is a Story about the Future of Reading' shouted the headline of a four-page colour spread in the January 2000 issue of the now defunct *Brill's Content* magazine. The ad went on to outline how Microsoft Reader would 'revolutionise publishing' with a colour-coded timeline that 'represents the best estimates of Microsoft researchers'.

continued on page 2

Inside

New members	2
Accreditation exam	3
Tiered membership	4
IPEd notes	7
News, notices and conference diary	8
Winter dinner thanks	8
A request from the membership secretary	9
Professional development	10

Next meeting: Tuesday, 5 August 2008

Literary agents—the link between authors and publishers

What does a literary agent do, and why are agents so important? Lyn Tranter explains the traditional role of a literary agency, and looks at how the job is changing. She also tells us how to assist authors in preparing submissions for consideration by an agent or a publisher.

Lyn Tranter is the proprietor of Australian Literary Management (ALM), an agency that looks after the business affairs of authors around the world, negotiating their contracts and managing their affairs. She married poet John Tranter in 1968, and has been involved in the Australian writing community throughout her adult life. She was a columnist for *The Australian*, and worked as a literary publicist prior to joining ALM in 1990. She represents—among many others—Debra Adelaide, Andrew Riemer and Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. \$15 for members and students; \$20 for non-members and those who do not RSVP; \$7 for holders of a current concession card or student card. Non-members who book and do not show up must still pay. Please RSVP to (02) 9294 4999 (voicemail) or the email address <editorbruce@optusnet.com.au> by Friday, 1 August 2008.

September meeting: 'Writing at Work', with Neil James from the Plain English Foundation; Tuesday, 2 September 2008.

The projected timeline included:

‘2002: PCs and eBook devices offer screens almost as sharp as paper

2005: The sale of eBook titles, eMagazines, and eNewspapers top \$1 billion

2006: eBook stands proliferate, offering book and periodical titles at traditional bookstores, newstands, airports...

2009: eBook titles begin to outsell paper in many categories

2012: Electronic and paper books compete vigorously. Pulp industry ads promote “Real Books from Real Trees for Real People”

2019: Paper books remain popular as gifts for collectors...

2020: Webster alters its first definition of the word “book” to refer to eBook titles read on a screen’.

Of course, the benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing (and reading past predictions of the future is always amusing). But, sitting as we are, nearly halfway through Microsoft’s 20-year timeline for the electronic book to become ubiquitous, how did they go at playing Nostradamus? The answer has to be ‘not very well’.

In 2002, screens were nowhere near as sharp as paper (although they’re now getting a lot closer). In 2005, the sales of electronic titles had yet to crack \$100 million, let alone the \$1 billion predicted. And, well into 2008, the only ‘ebook stands’ I’ve seen are in bookshops—apparently mirroring the mad idea that record stores once had to set up music kiosks on their own premises.

What’s really happened has been incremental and stuttering. The early ebook reading devices never really caught on. In quick succession, the

Rocket eBook, the SoftBook and the Franklin eBookman all appeared and found only niche markets. Microsoft’s reader software competed with a similar product from Adobe, and managed to get a few publishers onboard, but the devices didn’t gain widespread adoption and the competing formats and lack of publishing support relegated ebook reading to those nerds sufficiently comfortable with the technology to download the appropriate software tweaks.

But communities of ebook readers did appear, and a reasonable range of titles became available for purchase in a number of common formats to feed some small demand that is still very much driven by early adopters.

‘...For years the promise of the ebook was let down by dull, low resolution LCD screens that sent readers searching for their carsick tablets.’

The more successful models of e-reading focused on convergent devices, mobile telephones and personal digital assistants whose primary purpose is not to deliver ebook texts, but which possess screens with sufficient space to make reading reasonably comfortable. But again, this was the domain of savvy geeks keen to boast that they carried the complete works of Sherlock Holmes around on their Palm Pilots. I know, I was one of them.

In the last decade, everything changed, and nothing changed. The market for dedicated ebook reading devices is, on the surface, significantly different from that of 1998.

The ‘big three’ of the moment are Amazon’s Kindle, Sony’s Reader and the IReX Iliad. There are others, of course—the Bookeen, the HanLin and a dozen or so no-name gadgets slapped together in poorly lit factories somewhere north of Shenzhen.

Most of these devices share the use of the holy grail of ‘e-ink’ technology—for years the promise of the ebook was let down by dull, low resolution LCD screens that sent readers searching

for their carsick tablets. The recent development of e-ink—a completely different reflective display system promised to overcome paperback readers’ objections to the new. (See http://wiki.mobileread.com/wiki/E-book_Reader_Matrix.)

Those who have used e-ink devices are generally positive about the experience—except for a slow screen refresh, it appears crisp, clear and is not as tiring as reading other screens. It is, however, only black and white—or unkind people might actually call it very dark grey on very light grey. And it has not yet proven to be the panacea.

Back to the big three though. Each of the machines has a slightly different emphasis.

The Sony Reader was the first electronic ink device to be produced by a company that anyone had heard of. It is tied to the Sony Connect store, and you purchase titles via your computer—and then download to your Reader, in the same way that you might load your Ipod with music.

The Amazon Kindle’s big selling point is its constant connection to Amazon’s growing library of Kindle titles. It works by teaming up with US cellphone provider Sprint to allow you to purchase books via wireless downloads wherever the Sprint network exists, all of which happens invisibly. The cost is incorporated into the price of books, so Kindle users never see a bill from Sprint. So, it’s an incarnation of what I call the ‘heavenly library’ and, from the accounts of people who have used the system, it works very well.

The Iliad does not have the support of a particular online bookstore (although in Australia, Dymocks has chosen to sell it, and it appears that Borders in Europe will do the same). But the Iliad’s claim to fame is that it lets you write in the margins. (Although, as an aside, the ten minutes I played with the Iliad left me disappointed with the software—it felt underdone and needing more refinement and better responsiveness.)

So the current generation of ebook Readers threatens to succeed. Indeed the reviews have been positive.

But where the bloody hell are they? Whilst some early adopters are keen, there has not yet been a mass migration to the world of e. Why are we still in limbo, waiting for the revolution?

continued on next page

NEW MEMBERS

Adam Gill

Jennifer Timms

Helen Odlin

Martin Ford

Hazel Cortez

Fiona Johns

Kristina Proft

Danielle Musicka

Where the bloody hell are they? I think the answer lies in a very simple dichotomy—technological change is relatively easy, but cultural change is much more difficult. And whilst the current generation of ebook readers is technically very close to being pretty close to what is required (and the next generation of devices due in the next five minutes will be even better), there are bigger cultural hurdles to be overcome.

In the main, the debate over the culture of reading and publishing hasn't moved on from a decade ago. The same arguments that were trotted out then continue to be pursued today. A very recent slashdot thread could have been written in 2001, with the same debates about ebooks that we've been having for ever emerging from contributors... 'I prefer real books', 'turning pages is nice', 'price of ebooks is too high', 'nothing compares to paper', 'but free ebooks are cool', 'I read on my Palm V'... and so on.

'...The possibilities of ebooks are not being explored as extensively as they might be...'

If the arguments about e-readers have not really moved on, then they haven't really been addressed by the new generation of devices like Kindle. Or if they have been addressed (by technical improvements in display technology and so on), then the perception—and the culture—of those who read has not been shifted by their availability. At least not on a scale that matters. It merely re-emphasises the fact that it will take more than just a killer device 'by itself' to shift the culture of publishing and reading books.

For ebooks to work, the e-experience has to be better for everyone—the whole process of publishing and reading ebooks has to be better than publishing and reading paper books.

Let's start at the supply end. Until publishers are convinced that there is an advantage in ebooks, they will be reluctant to embrace any shift in format. Just remember, they have been printing books on paper for a very long time.

And, like oil tankers, they are laden with entrenched biases, longstanding

habits and an addiction to the revenue streams of the past and the present. If history is any guide, captains of such vessels are unlikely to change course until they can actually feel the iceberg scraping along the hull.

There are a couple of useful examples of format changes in the music industry—the replacement of vinyl LPs with CDs is an example of the analog to digital shift—albeit with the retention of a physical object. The motivation for record companies was pretty clear though—as well as some advantages for consumers, CDs were cheap to produce—and because they sounded better than vinyl, they provided the industry with the opportunity to charge more per album—an opportunity that was taken up with relish.

'The CD persuaded many music fans to replace their vinyl collection with digital copies of music they had already paid for. And the rise of the CD permitted record companies to double the price of their basic product without incurring a huge uplift in costs.' (See <www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=9735>.)

More recently, it took Napster and the threat of dwindling CD sales to provoke the major record labels into action—business as usual meant that they didn't understand the shift in user demand until it was much too late. And even then, they didn't know how to react. Remember, it is a computer company, not a music company, that is at the vanguard of the digital music revolution.

Book publishers—unlike others in print such as newspaper publishers—have never really had to deal with the possibility of the format shift—although pedants might argue that the introduction of the paperback opened up new markets of readership; so they've not had to grapple with either the opportunities or the crises that other industries have faced. Even now, what *Wired* magazine calls 'technological disruption' is happening in a quite different manner with books. Apart from Google book search, which is perceived by some as a direct threat to book publishing (and is it any surprise that a software company, not a book publishing company, is at the vanguard of the digital publishing revolution?) the actual threats appear tangential.

Accreditation exam

The first accreditation examination will be held on **18 October 2008**.

The examination fee will be \$490 for current members of the societies of editors and \$650 for non-members. Registrations for the exam will open in the first week of July and close on **18 September**. Registrations must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of \$100. For the assistance of candidates, a revised sample exam will be made available on the IPED website. Details are at <www.iped-editors.org>. The NSW society are holding an Accreditation Workshop on **22 August**. See page 10 of this newsletter and the enclosed flyer for details.

There is really no threat to the current method of book distribution, at least not for trade books. Whilst there are some niches that have a strong demand for electronic alternatives to print (and are well-served by publishers) the bulk of the mass-market book trade is safely the domain of print and paper.

Of course, this means that the possibilities of ebooks are not being explored as extensively as they might be—the possibilities of targeting niches, global distribution and ubiquitous access for readers. The opportunities appear rather small compared to the opportunities that the shift to CDs presented to the music business. The actual value of ebook sales remains minuscule compared to the printed book market—with little sign of a significant upward trend. So they are possibilities that the book trade has never had to explore, and probably never wants to explore.

In the absence of a something that actually threatens existing revenue streams, publishers have good reason to ignore possible incremental increases in revenue from niches and long tails.

continued on page 4

Tiered membership

The society's tiered membership system will work as follows.

Categories

This membership year (2008) the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. will offer members the option of three categories:

1. Existing members (as at 31 December 2006) can remain an ordinary member at the current fee (\$70/75) with the current entitlements; or
2. Existing and new members can become a professional editor member at the current ordinary fee with the current ordinary entitlements, provided you have two years experience in a paid editing role and can supply two letters confirming your experience; or
3. Existing and new members can become an associate member at a reduced fee (\$50) with reduced entitlements (an associate member cannot vote at an election, cannot become an office bearer and cannot be listed in the *Editorial Services Directory*).

Phasing in a new system

Before January 2011 all ordinary members will be asked to choose either:

1. Professional editor member status; or
2. Associate member status.

Four years should be sufficient time for those seeking professional status to gain professional experience if they do not already have it.

Experience

Professional editor members must have at least two years in-house experience as an editor or the equivalent freelance or part-time experience. For example, if you worked half-time as an editor for four years (part-time or freelance) then that would be an acceptable equivalent to two years full-time work as an in-house editor. Professional experience must be in a paid editing role. As professional members may have had career breaks, there is no limit on how long ago the professional editing experience was obtained. Professional editor members will be asked to provide details of their experience and two letters (in English) that can be checked by a subcommittee appointed for this purpose. The subcommittee will simply confirm the statements supplied by the third parties. The letters can just be a statement of the years of experience in an editorial role. See the essential **Professional Editor Membership form** for more details about requirements.

Corporate Associates

A new category of Corporate Associates is also available. Publishing companies and other businesses and organisations that support the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.'s aims can become Corporate Associates. For an annual fee of \$400, Corporate Associates of the society will receive five copies of *Blue Pencil* each month and two copies of the *Editorial Services Directory*, five free admissions to each monthly meeting and two free admissions to special events, such as the Christmas dinner. The usual member rates on professional development courses and workshops will apply to Corporate Associates for up to five attendees.

The Committee Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

continued from page 3

I have no idea whether this will go on forever, but until somebody 'shows them the money' the cultural shift towards ebooks will not be driven by publishers, whose motivation is profit.

In reality, there is a threat to the financial viability of book publishers. But that threat does not come from alternative distribution of their own material, but from elsewhere.

The threat is declining readership—the sad fact that 'nobody' reads. Take away a handful of chick-lit and blockbuster novels and most books published are read by a very small number of people.

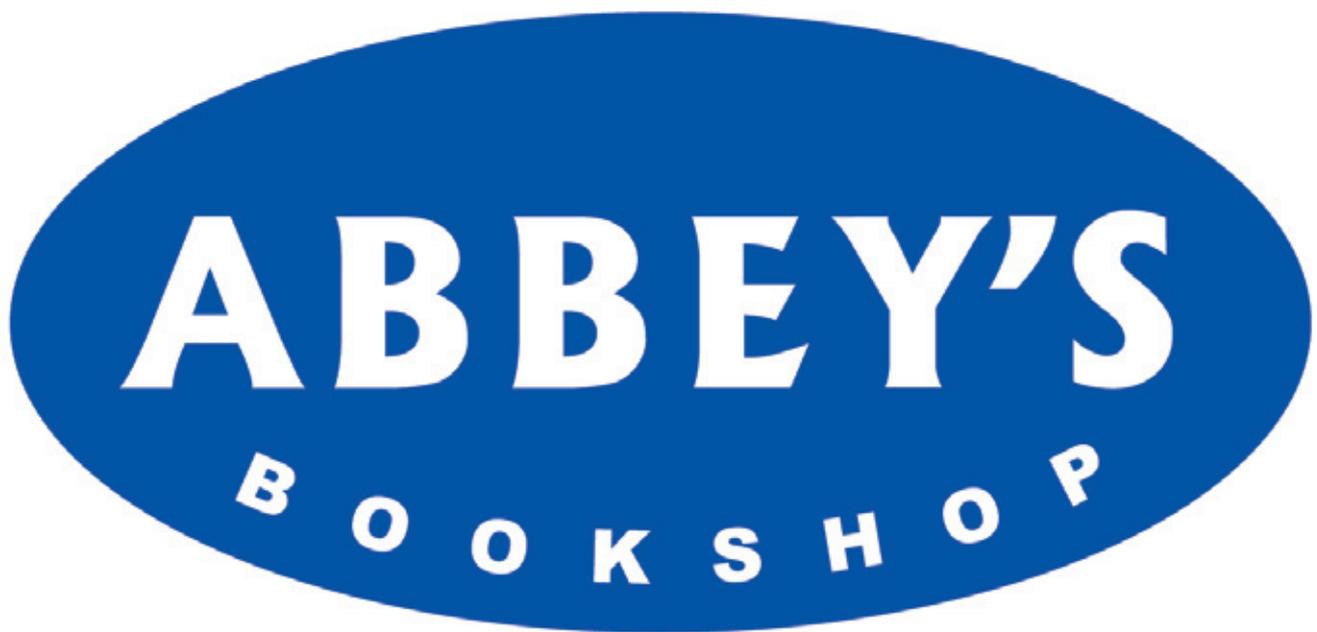
We all know the stats. Half the American population didn't read a single book last year; the figure for Europeans is around 40 per cent; and Australians spend more time watching Harvey Norman ads on television than reading books... I could go on.

The threat to book sales does not come from a Napster equivalent distributing copies of Jodie Picoult's latest novel for free to hordes of college students. It arises because the market for those novels is slowly diminishing over time, under challenge from *World of Warcraft*, *Grand Theft Auto 4*, Facebook and downloaded episodes of *Dexter*.

The instinct from big trade publishers seems to be to compete for shorter attention spans by producing what I call antibooks. Their motivation is to make Facebookers spend \$10 on something they've produced, so long as it is something that simply fits within their existing production processes. So rather than provide a Facebook link to a downloadable ebook, they'd rather sell them a print copy of 'social networking for dummies'. But I digress.

No-one has made it easy for publishers. Like Doug Morris' record companies, the complexity of the

continued on page 6



Congratulations to Abbey's bookshop, celebrating their 40th birthday, and a round of applause for their many years of support for the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

Don't forget the special members discount at Abbey's. After joining or renewing membership all society members receive a ten per cent discount on non-sale items when presenting their membership card—another great reason to join the society and to shop at Abbey's.

Abbey's is an independent and Australian-owned bookshop. It is located at 131 York Street in Sydney, opposite the Queen Victoria Building, or access the website at <www.abbey.com.au>.

situation must be truly confronting. Anyone who has investigated ebooks would be dismayed by the complexity of the market place. There are many possible formats—each of which may or may not be utilised with incompatible copy protection schemes that lock the file to a particular reading device. It is a minefield—and the fact that publishers must take a guess at which format is appropriate for their ebook is a big problem.

A big part of the problem is the effect of cultural habits surrounding territorial and personal copyrights. In order to preserve those habits, publishers feel like they must introduce those unwieldy DRM schemes which only serve to reinforce the existing modes of behaviour—because they make little or no sense in the world of ‘e’.

The combination of hardware and software limitations is a real problem—like forcing modern-day seafarers to navigate the seas with only a compass, a sextant and a pre-Columbus map of the world. If it were possible to make it any harder for publishers to shift their culture, I’d like to see it.

And those same problems apply to shifting the culture of those few readers who actually read books. For users, cultural change will be driven by increased pleasure (convenience, new abilities, better access to more titles) or decreased cost. Or both.

The bottom line for readers is that to succeed, an ebook can’t be as good as a ‘pbook’; it has to be better. And so far the ebook experience is not better than the pbook one—so readers are staying away in droves...

Despite Amazon’s shrill plea that ‘Kindle sold out in 5.2 hours’, they have been hesitant to state actual sales figures—leaving it to so-called analysts to guess, with the most optimistic suggesting that 20,000–30,000 have sold since launch late last year. Or, fewer Kindles sold in six months than Apple iPods sold in an hour. The sales data for the Sony Portable Reader appear to be similarly non-existent; unlike the quarterly rush to announce PSP and PS3 sales data, the Reader seems to have slipped off Sony’s radar.

As for the Iliad, which lacks the marketing clout of either Sony or Amazon, there is even less information. As the only ebook Reader available on the street in Australia, it provides

a glimpse of how we have embraced the new formats. I don’t have official figures, but the sales rep at Dymocks told me that since they had launched the Iliad as their chosen ebook reading device, they had sold around 200. Which is hardly a vote of confidence from the market.

The experience of adoption of new technologies is that, apart from the early adopters, there is a chasm that must be leapt for new technological systems to be adopted by mainstream users. And until the new way is demonstrably better than the old way, the old way remains dominant.

For users, better means cheaper and more convenient. Interestingly, ‘better, cheaper, and more convenient’ often overrides the quantifiable quality of the experience itself. Most people listen on their iPods to music that has been ripped into a format inferior to CDs. But they don’t care—Ipods are cheaper and more convenient. Most people use digital cameras with print resolution that is much, much worse than good old film. But Cybershot cameras are cheaper and more convenient.

‘...The cost of the reading device is significant. Never before have readers had to buy something with which to read a book.’

So what of the current ebook devices and libraries? Whilst the screens might be good enough to read, the depth of content isn’t even remotely comparable. Amazon claims 115,000 titles are available for Kindle. Sony has 50,000 for its Readers, which is worse than most decent bookstores. Funnily enough, it appears that the convenience of instant 24/7 access to book purchasing is not enough when there’s not much to choose from.

And then there’s the cost. Readers might try the new devices if it ended up cheaper than buying good old-fashioned books. But the cost of the reading device is significant. Never before have readers had to buy something with which to read a book. So charging them hundreds of dollars before they can even lay eyes on a

book is bound to inhibit change. In this country, Iliad is \$899. It’s little wonder that fewer people have bought Iliads than have bought my book...

And then there’s the price of the titles themselves. Until they are demonstrably cheaper than the print version, there is no motivation for users to change their behaviour. Just as a test, I went to the Macmillan online bookstore where an electronic version of *The Book Thief* is listed at \$18.14 or \$19.95 (inc GST). I found a paperback edition of the same book at a bricks and mortar shop. Like I said, for e to be convincing, it has to be better than p. And, for most of us, better means cheaper.

I grew up with a printed copy of the *World Book Encyclopedia* in the living room. I have no idea what the actual cost of those books were, but they were expensive—running into the thousands of dollars.

Today, the *World Book* comes on two shiny circles of plastic and is free when you buy some consumer-level computers. It contains not just millions of words but hours of historically significant video clips and audio sound bites and is powered by both a useful search engine, and several means of browsing the information to allow for serendipitous discovery.

Indeed, the market for printed encyclopedias has essentially disappeared. Most have reinvented themselves as CD-ROMs or DVD-ROMs and are sold for a fraction of the price—this reference space is one in which the printed book has essentially died.

Whilst it is tempting to argue that the advantages of multimedia and searchability are sufficiently compelling to drive parents to buy the electronic encyclopedia over the print version, I’d expect that were the prices to be swapped (free books and thousand dollar CD-ROMs), the print version would still be king of the world. So, in this market at least, whilst content might have been king, cost was the motivating factor for cultural change.

Another area that has seen dramatic shifts is academia. Not only are scholarly journals now largely moving online, but so too are scholarly books.

I was stunned when I read a table in my university library’s annual report.

continued on next page

IPEd notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors (formerly CASE) July 2008

In 2007, a proposal put to the societies of editors to establish a representative national organisation was ratified. The objectives of the new body—IPEd—were to serve all professional editors, student and emerging editors, and those interested in editing, by:

- administering a national system of accreditation
- maintaining, updating and disseminating information on professional standards
- working to raise the public profile of the editing profession in Australia and elsewhere
- coordinating collaboration between the member organisations in national initiatives such as conferences
- encouraging the growth and development of the profession by exchanging ideas and establishing links with the educational and the publishing industry
- liaising with educational institutions for the establishment or extension or modification of educational and training provision for editors

- advising individuals and member organisations on issues relating to editing and matters of editing practice
- taking the lead in coordinating national promotional initiatives to support the growth of the profession
- establishing awards for outstanding editors, and seeking grants and sponsorships to support the organisation and its mission
- acting as the representative ‘voice’ of the profession in public statements or comments affecting editors or of interest to them
- forging links with related bodies here and abroad
- undertaking other activities as determined by its governing body.

Now that the first item on this list—a national accreditation system for editors—is no longer just a blip on the horizon, with the first accreditation exam scheduled for 18 October this year, IPEd can begin to focus on some of its other objectives.

As noted in last month’s notes, the area of communication, promotion and

PR was accorded a high priority by the council at its latest meeting. We must raise the profile of editors, not only in publishing but also in the broader milieu of communication, which is, in reality, the business we are in. Education and training is another field to be targeted during IPEd’s first full year of operations. This will initially involve the finalisation of an inventory of existing courses and programs, and the identification of new opportunities. Just one of the areas of great potential here is the specialist training activities currently run by the societies for their own members. IPEd can open such professional development opportunities to a much wider catchment.

Two standing committees—Communication and Professional Development—have been established to carry forward this work. Full details are on the IPEd website.

Ed Highley
Secretary
www.iped-editors.org

continued from page 5

Whilst the number of new print books added to the collection remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2007, there was a dramatic increase in the number of new electronic books added—from 895 in 2005 to 68,000 in 2007. (See http://senate.mq.edu.au/ltagenda/0308/library_report%202007.doc.)

I suspect (although I haven’t confirmed it with our library) that purchase price, together with the space advantage, has spurred their interest in purchasing electronic books.

A quick search of the library catalogue turned up the display technology for these electronic titles. There is no need for a Sony Reader, or an Iliad or a Kindle. All that was required was something that most people already had—a garden variety personal computer and an internet connection.

And the library is probably operating on the assumption that all staff and most students have ready access to the necessary resources and, despite arguments to the contrary, are more than happy to read large amounts of text on a screen.

Which leads to an example of cultural change that has occurred with

existing technology—the rise, in Asia, of cellphone novels such as the *keitai* fiction that is popular in Japan.

A mobile phone novel typically contains between 200 and 500 pages, with each page containing about 500 Japanese characters. The novels are read, page by page, on a cellphone screen and are downloadable for about \$10 each. (See www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2007/01/72329.)

There might be many reasons why the mobile novel has achieved such popularity whereas the ebook approaches pursued in the west appear to be chained to geekdom. For a start, ‘everybody’ has a cellphone—so no further hardware purchase is necessary. Also, Japanese telcos have much friendlier data charges than has traditionally been the case elsewhere—for readers, it’s an attractive medium. Add to that the cramped conditions on Japanese trains and the relative ease of publication and suddenly you have the conditions required for a shift in cultural habit.

So I’ll leave you with that thought—the suggestion that rather than wait for the next spectacular killer ebook-

reading device, what we should be expecting is something along the Japanese experience. As phones morph into multipurpose convergence devices, telcos will begin to treat data more reasonably, and publishers deign to consider the potential of these new formats.



*Sherman Young is a Senior Lecturer in the Media Department at Macquarie University, where he teaches new media theory and production. In addition to chronicling the death of the (printed) book in *The Book is Dead, Long Live the Book* (UNSW Press), Sherman has owned a new media production company which produced multimedia products for corporate types and book publishing companies.*

The Book is Dead, Long Live the Book was reviewed in the May issue of Blue Pencil.

Galley Club Networking Happy Hour, 29 July

The Sydney Galley Club is hosting a monthly networking Happy Hour for anyone in publishing or printing. The next one will be on Tuesday, 29 July from 6.30 to 7.30 p.m., at Level 3, Harbour View Hotel, 18 Lower Fort Street, The Rocks. For Galley Club members drinks are free. Non-members pay a door fee of \$5 and drinks are free thereafter. (Or you could just join the Club: \$50 p.a. or \$20 p.a. student concession and enjoy free Happy Hours every month.) For more information visit <www.galleyclubsydney.org.au>.

Melbourne Writers' Festival, 22 to 31 August

Germaine Greer and Augusten Burroughs will open this year's Melbourne Writers' Festival. The 2008 festival features more than 300 events and 300 participants and will be mostly located in and around Federation Square. There will also be a range of launches at the festival including books by Graeme Blundell and Anita Heiss. Visit <www.mwf.com.au> for details.

Freelancers do lunch, 28 August

The next freelancers' lunch will be held at noon on Thursday, 28 August. The venue is Blue Orange Café at 49 Hall Street, Bondi Beach. Take the 333 or 380 bus from the city and ask for Hall Street, which is right opposite the beach. Mains cost about \$15.

The society organises these informal freelancers' lunches every second month or so.

The invitation to lunch is cordially extended to other freelancers who work in the publishing industry. There is no need to RSVP. See you there!

Galley Club Award winners announced

The 32nd annual Galley Club Awards for Excellence in Book and Magazine Production were presented in

Sydney on 27 June. Awards included Australian Printed Book of the Year, *Icons of Australian Sport: Peter Brock* (Hyperactive Inc.); Non-Standard Item of the Year, *The Waterhole* (Graeme Base, Penguin) (a title which also won Non-standard, Novelty Book or Stationery Item); and Book of the Year, *Shoot: Studio Sessions* (Peter Brew-Bevan, Murdoch). For details about other award winners visit <www.galleyclubsydney.org.au>.

Parallel imports back on the agenda?

The parallel importation of books was on the agenda at the Council of Australian Government (COAG) meeting in Sydney on 3 July 2008.

In a press release Jeremy Fisher of The Australian Society of Authors (ASA) announced, 'Once again, we are going to have to fight to keep our territorial rights. Australian authors need the security of our own market. US and UK authors are not being threatened with an open market. Yet we are. We have to fight.' Responses from Garth Nix and Nick Earls are available on <<http://tinyurl.com/5srzpr>>.

Asialink residencies, closing date 5 September

Applications for 2009 Asialink arts residencies are now open. Up to 40 residencies will be offered nationally in 2009. Asialink residencies offer the challenges and rewards of cultural exchange only possible through an extended stay in-country. Residencies provide an opportunity for Australian arts practitioners to spend up to four months living and working in an Asian country. The Asialink Residency program provides a grant of up to \$12,000 towards travel, living and project expenses and provides a network of initial contacts in the host country.

Residencies will be offered to writers of all genres to further professional development and bilateral engagement in Asia. Arts management residencies

are also available for book industry personnel. Applications for residencies close on 5 September 2008. For more information about requirements visit <www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/artsresidencies>, phone The Asialink Centre on 03 8344 4800, or email <arts@asialink.unimelb.edu.au>.

Australia producing more local books

According to a survey to be published in the September issue of *Bookseller+Publisher* magazine, over 14,000 local books were produced in 2007, which is 40 per cent more each year than previous industry surveys have indicated. Australian data from Thorpe-Bowker's Global Books in Print database indicates that 14,258 titles were published last year by a massive 3937 different publishers. This contrasts significantly with the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, which reported in 2003–4 that just 8602 titles were published by 244 publishers.

The Thorpe-Bowker statistics show that publishers publishing 20 books or less in 2007 were responsible for almost 50 per cent of all book production—about 7000 titles. By contrast, the largest 19 publishing houses, which all published at least 100 local titles each in 2007, were responsible for just 31 per cent of all local titles produced in that year. The analysis also looked at issues such as what subject areas were the most popular. Children's fiction was the most popular, followed by adult fiction, history, autobiography/biography and education.

Winter dinner thanks

A great time was had by all who attended the society's winter dinner in July. Special thanks to Lachlan Jobbins for arranging a most suitable venue and to Nancy Shearer for organising the door prizes. A big thanks also to Abbey's bookshop (see page 5) for their generous donation of prizes.



A request from the membership secretary

I send job ads to all society members with email addresses, and *Blue Pencil* to those who request electronic delivery. Recently, these tasks have become more difficult, as mail servers decide that I (or the optusnet server that processes my outwards emails) am a spammer, and refuse to forward emails from me.

This means that some of you miss out. Please help by asking your internet server to stop blocking emails from me to you. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a single way to do this. The simplest way that works with some service providers is to check your junk folder, and declare that anything from me is not junk (whatever it might look like to you...). Some of you should add me to your 'whitelist', (your provider should have a Q&A page that explains how to do this) while for the rest the simplest thing to do is to email postmaster@<your ISP> and ask for emails from me to be always accepted.

Bruce Howarth
Membership secretary
<editorbruce@optusnet.com.au>

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007; Voicemail: (02) 9294 4999
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Blue Pencil

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Assistants: Angela Damis, Fiona Doig, Julie Harders, Meryl Potter, Nicky Shortridge

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Your comments and contributions are welcome. Mail them to the Editor, *Blue Pencil*, Society of Editors (NSW) Inc., PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, or email the Editor at <bluepencil@editorsnsw.com>.

Copy deadline for the September issue is Tuesday, 12 August 2008.

The views expressed in the articles and letters, or the material contained in any advertisement or insert, are those of individual authors, not of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

Advertising rates

Full page, \$375; half page, \$200 (horizontal only); one-third page, \$125 (vertical or horizontal); quarter page \$100 (horizontal only); one-sixth page, \$75 (half of one column). Inserts: \$200 per hundred for DL-sized or A4 pre-folded to DL size. Circulation: approximately 375. Please note that the committee reserves the right to decide whether advertisements are appropriate for this newsletter.

Membership

Membership of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. is open to anyone working as an editor for publication (print or electronic documents) and anyone who supports the society's aims. Membership is available in different categories.

Membership runs for a calendar year. The 2008 fees are \$70 for ordinary member or professional member renewals; \$75 for new professional members (\$45 if joining after 30 June); or \$50 for associate membership. Interested organisations can become corporate associates for \$400 per year.

To obtain a membership application form go to the society's website <www.editorsnsw.com>, phone (02) 9294 4999 or write to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007.

Listing in the Editorial Services Directory

The society's *Editorial Services Directory* is available online at <www.editorsnsw.com/esd>. New listings and updates can be added quarterly as follows:

- online only: July (deadline 30 June); October (deadline 30 September)
 - print and online: January (deadline 31 December); April (deadline 31 March).
- The cost is \$40 per year (\$20 for new listings received from April to September) in addition to the fee for membership of the society. New listings should be submitted using a template available from Cathy Gray at <esd@editorsnsw.com>.

Committee meetings

All members are welcome to attend the society's committee meetings, generally held each month. Please contact a committee member for details if you wish to attend the next meeting.

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Copy deadline for the September issue of

Blue Pencil
Tuesday, 12 August 2008

Professional development

Grammar for editors

Presenter: Pam Peters, Professor of Linguistics, Macquarie University

Date: Thursday, 24 July 2008

Cost: \$195 members, \$290 non-members

Venue: City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

Editors often feel that they need more grammar, but how much is enough? The major grammars of contemporary English consist of more than 1000 pages, with vast networks of grammatical terms. Editors probably don't need to know all of them—unless they are aiming for a career change. What they do need for the purposes of professional editing is enough grammar to:

- Make the most of dictionaries, style manuals and other language references
- Understand and explain the variable points of current English usage
- Capitalise on language resources for cohesive writing
- Enlarge their repertoire for managing stylistic change.

This workshop is now full and no further enrolments can be accepted. A repeat workshop is planned for February and applicants may register their interest with the professional development coordinator.

Accreditation exam workshop

Presenters: Heather Jamieson, Sybil Kesteven, Pam Peters (New South Wales Assessors)

Date: 22 August 2008

Cost: \$130 members, \$290 non-members

Venue: City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

If you are planning to sit for the first Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) accreditation exam this year, or simply thinking about sitting the exam in the future, this workshop is for you. It will be presented by three New South Wales Assessors who have been involved in the development of the accreditation system and exam, and will be part of the team marking the exam papers. The workshop will be divided into four sections, working through the revised sample exam of 2007 and additional exercises.

To register for a workshop use the enclosed form or download one from the website. Details of payment options, including direct deposit payments, are on the form. For more information about the workshops, email Meryl Potter at <education@editorsnsw.com>.

Workshop bookings

Please note that owing to changes in the booking system this year we will be asking participants to reserve their places at the workshops at least three weeks before they take place.

Call for contributions

Have you been to an interesting conference or event? We welcome your contributions to

Blue Pencil.

We would like to publish your articles, book reviews or letters.

Please email the editor at <bluepencil@editorsnsw.com>.