

# Blue Pencil

Newsletter of  
The Society  
of Editors  
(NSW) Inc.

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August 2009

## Editing in a publishing house

*The editor's position in a publishing company has changed over the last 30 years. At our June meeting, Anne Reilly, senior editor at HarperCollins, spoke to members about current practices and her experiences of the different approaches used in publishing legal, trade and illustrated books.*

Publishing is a big, dynamic industry, and I guess the reason that so many editors stick with it for the long haul is that we are all constantly learning. Editing is a great career if you have an enquiring mind and I presume that all of us share that curiosity.

Most people in the book industry sense that we are about to see a great wave of change sweep through. Once Apple launch a clever and reasonably priced e-reader/multi-purpose device, who knows what will emerge: for the consumers of books and other forms of popular culture, and certainly for authors and editors. Terms like 'the digital revolution' and 'e-publishing' are bandied about a lot but, in trade publishing, we are yet to know what they mean. In my view it is advisable for all of us to surf that wave, to embrace the opportunities it brings. Even five years from now things are likely to be much different.

Editorially, will new jobs evolve? I wonder whether scales will drop from people's eyes and they will realise just how skilled my former colleagues at Reader's Digest were—the clever

people who worked on condensed books. A lot of people believe that texts and novels may well shrink, or need to become more succinct and 'soundbite-like', when repurposed as e-books. We may well see the revival of condensing skills.

In fiction editing, perhaps a new niche will emerge: will some editors

be tasked with embedding clever links into books with complex plots, so readers can jump around and still have an exciting, rich, non-linear reading experience? Some people foresee editors embedding links that enable readers to explore images, maps, back story, intertextuality, various kinds of

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**Next meeting: Tuesday, 4 August 2009**

### The Author and the Editor

As part of our series of talks paying tribute to the establishment of our society 30 years ago, editor Diane Jardine and author Larry Buttrose, who have worked together on two of Larry's non-fiction titles for New Holland Publishers, will speak about how editors and authors produce books.

Larry has written more than a dozen books, both fiction and non-fiction. He will reflect on his experiences of the editing process for both these types of publications and consider what a writer is looking for, what a writer considers a good working relationship and the optimum outcome. Diane will discuss how editors work with writers and how this fits within the publishing process to create a publication that satisfies everyone.

**Larry Buttrose** graduated from the University of Adelaide—where he is currently doing his PhD—became a journalist with the ABC, and later a freelancer. A poet, novelist, travel writer and essayist, Larry is also a playwright and screenwriter. His most recent work for New Holland is *Tales of the Popes: From Eden to El Dorado* and in production at the moment is *Speeches of War and Peace*, due for release in October.

**Diane Jardine** has been in the publishing industry for more than 17 years and in that time has worked across the spectrum of publishing with various academic, trade and custom publishing houses and also worked in magazine publishing. She has worked as a freelance editor with many of Australia's top trade publishing houses and now works as an in-house commissioning and project editor for New Holland Publishers.

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 attend must still pay.

Please RSVP to (02) 9294 4999 (voicemail) or to the email address <editorbruce@optusnet.com.au> by Friday, 31 July 2009.

**September meeting: Self-publishing with Maureen Shelley author of *Eat Happy*.**

### Inside

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reference and cultural context on their own little side journey. Who knows?

For a possible taste of the future, have a look at the website <www/wetellstories.co.uk>. It is a nifty dabble in innovative web-based fiction developed by Penguin UK: see how a handful of writers are reinterpreting classic texts for the digital age, for instance weaving in Google maps to the text of *The 21 Steps*.

### Training in the 1990s

Up until roughly a decade ago, the majority of editors had started out with Law Book Company, CCH or Butterworths.

When I joined Butterworths, in 1991, there was something in the order of 60 on the editorial staff. Only a tiny group worked on books; mostly people worked on looseleaf services, whereby subscribers received updates—little bundles of pre-punched pages—and filed them (according to painstakingly-worded instructions) in special ring binders.

Although a good friend and fellow ex-Butties editor describes working there as ‘factory editing’, certain aspects about it now seem almost too good to be true: there were three trainee editors in my intake and we were put through four weeks of full-time in-house training—on full salary—with a wonderful trainer. That sort of thing does not happen any more.

As part of our training, we paid a visit to the vast, slightly Dickensian, production department, where all the typesetting, proofreading, printing,

shrink-wrapping and warehousing was managed. They showed us the hot type (the old metal compositing system). It was 99 per cent superseded, but it was instructive to observe how far things had come in the evolution of typesetting and printing. Unless I am mistaken, the era of huge typesetting and printing departments on site is a thing of the past. At HarperCollins, putting out 120 or so new books a year, and also managing massive numbers of reprints and reformatting, we have used two in-house typesetters, and occasionally freelance typesetters.

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### ‘If you had made a mistake it was public and totally mortifying.’

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Another training day was spent working with proofreaders. Checking and proofreading was managed a very particular way and involved two people. One person would do the ‘call out’ while the ‘copy-holder’ would check that the new proofs matched the call-out. They would stop the call-out if they needed to mark in any corrections on the proofs or to double-check.

Above all, we were trained to be fastidious copy-editors and taught to adhere strictly to the house style: no exceptions. When we had passed through the training and become desk editors, we worked with a blue and red pen taped together. All textual matter had to be written in blue; all mark-up symbols in red. We would sub our pages, get them checked by our manager, send the pages downstairs to the production department, where the copy would be set and proofread and sent back up to us to do final checks and to get sign-off. There were no computers involved, of course.

### Educational publishing

After Butterworths, I joined the staff of Ashton Scholastic (now known as Scholastic), in educational publishing. There I graduated to having a computer. At Scholastic the in-house designers were in charge of the look and feel of the books. Our staff proofreader, Jim, would check everything we did. If Jim found you had made an error, as opposed to a slip, and felt you would benefit from some instruction, he would pop around and give you a quick, memorable

lesson, passing on knowledge accrued over decades. Proofreaders such as Jim were once to be found in workplaces all across the city. There were large teams of proofreaders working on daily newspapers, for instance. However, once bean-counters cottoned on that there were these things called spell-checkers, that all changed.

There were quite a number of designers. (My feeling is that there are far fewer in-house designers around now.) They used to prepare bromides, which involved photographing the text and artwork onto special bromide paper (like photographic paper). The back of this paper was then waxed, and it was all mounted on boards. Last-minute corrections or changes would be made by taking a scalpel and carefully lifting up the offending section, pasting in a new bit of bromide, or perhaps by carefully touching up a tiny bit of text with a very fine Rotring inkpen. The boards would be sent away to be composed, photographed, and the very expensive film would be processed to produce the first round of proofs. These were blue and were called ‘dylines’, and you would check them to make sure all the pages had been correctly imposed (that is, made up into a section, in a multiple of eight pages). Any corrections involved doing fresh sets of bromides and more cutting and pasting. If you had made a mistake it was public and totally mortifying. It would slow everything down and do terrible things to the budget. Often there would be a stoush between the publishing house and the photographic house, trying to assign blame (and therefore the bearing of costs) for any mistakes.

By comparison, checking proofs today is a breeze. Most books go disk to plate—no film is involved—and the electronic files are simply uploaded to the printer via an FTP site.

### Illustrated books

My next place of employment, Reader’s Digest, opened my eyes to working on large illustrated books and to books as a global proposition. The systems there were highly evolved. They had massive budgets and lengthy lead-times: starting with the brainstorming of concepts, to the detailed proposal, or blue book, testing in different global markets and various kinds of market research. There

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### NEW MEMBERS

Anaik Alcasas  
Stuart Bevan  
Tom Green  
Barbara Koeppl  
Claudia Koch-McQuillan  
Mran-Maree Laing  
Katherine Leong  
Jessica Luca  
Sarah Masters  
Susie Munson  
Belinda Vance

# Preparing for the 2009 accreditation exam

## It's a new exam

The exam this year will be at least 90 per cent different from the 2008 exam and the sample exam, and you should not expect to see questions repeated from last year. A new extract will be provided for Part 2 of the exam.

The allocation of marks remains the same: 20 per cent for Part 1 and 40 per cent each for parts 2 and 3.

This year, the Part 2 extract will be provided as four loose sheets so they are easier to handle. The style sheet and page for writing queries for the author will be in the bound exam booklet. Make sure all pages go into the plastic envelope at the end of the exam.

One question from Part 3 will also be provided as loose sheets. These pages must go into the envelope as well, whether or not you attempt this question.

Write your candidate reference number on all loose sheets.

This year 30 minutes will be allowed for preparation: 20 minutes for reading time and 10 minutes for writing candidate numbers on every page.

## Some lessons from the 2008 exam

### *Manage your time*

Stick to the allocation of time suggested in the note to the sample exam (most people last year did finish the exam). There is no point in achieving 100 per cent in one part of the exam if you fail to complete other sections. Every exam room has a large clock, so keep an eye on it. Remember that doing a written exam is a skill in itself that needs practice. Before you go into the exam, decide on the order you will tackle questions, and work out the times to start each section so there are fewer decisions to make on the day. We recommend you allow 30 minutes for Part 1, and 1¼ hours each for parts 2 and 3, including review time. This reflects the allocation of marks across the exam.

### *Editing questions in Part 3 and the extract in Part 2*

We realise that candidates will be working under pressure in the exam, and that you would normally check your work carefully, which you may not have time for in the exam. We have allowed for this by generally allowing a safety margin of marks, so that you can pass and even get full marks

without doing a perfect job. We think this is a commonsense approach to exam conditions, rather than a matter of accepting second-rate work.

## The accreditation exam and the sample exam

The sample exam has been revised this year to make the format of questions more like the style of questions used in the exam. Questions in Part 3 are generally broken into sub-questions to make the direction of answers clear—there will be no ‘essay’-style questions where only one question is asked.

A new extract has also been prepared for the sample exam. This focuses on sound copyediting skills and also includes a substantial table to be edited and marked up. You should always expect something in the extract in the exam that tests more than language skills, like the table in the new extract in Part 2 in the sample exam.

The sample exam gives you an idea of the style of questions and the kind of subject matter that you might find in the exam itself. You should not expect to find the same content in the final exam. If similar content does appear in the exam, you should take extra care to read the question, as it may be slanted differently from the sample exam.

Work through the sample exam under self-imposed exam conditions and mark your work using the answer guide. Recognise areas where you could have done better, and work on improving them. Spend some time reading and reminding yourself where things are in the *Style manual*. It's worth setting some time aside in the weeks leading up to the exam for reading or working through the remaining questions from the sample exam and honing your exam skills.

If your work has become very specialised over the years, you might also want to refresh your memory on the basics.

### **A *Style manual* update**

A query arose from the sample exam last year about the duration of copyright as described in the answer guide. The *Style manual* was produced before the most recent changes to the copyright law—it does not, for instance, include information on the change to the duration of copyright, which is now

life of the creator plus seventy years, and matters such as moral rights and parody. To bring yourself up to date on copyright matters, visit the Copyright Council's website <[www.copyright.org.au/publications/infosheets.htm](http://www.copyright.org.au/publications/infosheets.htm)> and look at the free fact sheets there. You can take these into the exam only if you have them bound (you can just use the comb or wire binding that office machines can do).

## What you should take into the exam

There is limited time for looking things up in the exam. Take a small dictionary that is easy to use and will fit on your desk, and Snooks & Co.'s *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (you can tag pages for quick reference) as a minimum. If you have a specialist reference or dictionary you use regularly, take that, too, but do limit the books you take, for your own peace of mind.

You can take *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* into the exam and things like Copyright Council fact sheets (mentioned above) provided they are bound.

You might also want to take a ruler and calculator (but it must be stand-alone, not part of another electronic device such as a mobile phone).

### **Part 1**

*Do only what you need to*—Part 1 requires you to answer twenty questions, but you can answer all twenty-four questions. Answering all questions allows you to pick up some bonus marks in Part 1, but it's not a good idea to do that unless you finish early and have plenty of time.

### **Part 2**

*Pay close attention to the style sheet you create*—a sound copyedit usually depends on creating a sound style sheet. If you are not used to using a style sheet when you edit, read up on the topic in the books recommended in the note to the sample exam. This is worth 20 marks in Part 2, which can make the difference between a pass and fail in that section. You gain marks in Part 2 for a sound edit, not just the number of changes you make.

In the case of the sample exam, for instance, including a note in your style sheet that ship names are shown in

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italics will get you marks not only for the ships that you have marked as italic in the extract, but also the names already in italic—that is because you have shown your decision in the style sheet. This applies, for example, to things like the treatment of dates, numbers and measurements, too.

*Good mark-up of the extract*—manuscript editing should be completed in the spaces between the lines, like the sample mark-up of the extract in Part 2 on the website. Many candidates also used proofing symbols, placing edits in the margins. No one lost marks for working this way, but it does make the edit unnecessarily difficult to follow, and above all it wastes time!

You will be able to work more quickly, more efficiently and more clearly if you do an editorial rather than a proofreading mark-up. Start practising today if that's not the way you usually work, but rest assured that markers do not deduct marks unless errors are introduced to the edit.

### Part 3

Answer only four out of the 12 questions in Part 3. You must answer four complete questions and cannot answer parts from various questions to make up the 20 marks.

If you are asked to answer, for example, four of six sub-questions in a particular question in Part 3, just do the four, unless you know you have plenty of time, as answering extra sub-questions in Part 3 will not let you pick up bonus marks. Markers will count the marks from the best four answers to sub-questions, so only do the extra work if you have some spare time at the end. Don't answer extra sub-questions unless you finish early and have plenty of time.

### Specialist questions

When the first sample exam was tested, people asked for some specialist as well as generalist questions in Part 3. Each year, four specialist questions will be included. It's unwise to think that you will be able to produce a good answer to these questions from general editorial knowledge. There are still eight generalist questions from which you can choose.

*Don't touch the specialist questions in Part 3 unless you're a specialist*—you need to have professional experience in the area to answer these questions properly. The structured sub-questions mean you won't be able to bend a question into a more familiar area, as

markers will be looking for a sound knowledge of the topic. In 2009 the four specialist questions are questions 9–12 in Part 3.

### Follow the brief

Just as you would for an editing job. Most questions will provide a brief or outline the situation under discussion, and questions are very specific. Make sure you read carefully—you can't use highlighters on the exam paper, but you may find it useful to underline significant parts of the brief and question to help you stick to the point in your answers.

### Accreditation matters

The exam development team aims to provide a fair exam that tests all the standards in the Australian Standards for Editing Practice. It is recommended that editors do not attempt the exam unless they have at least two to three years' full-time editing experience, or equivalent. IPEd has established the accreditation scheme so that experienced editors have a qualification that indicates that their work is of a high professional standard. You should therefore expect the exam to challenge you and demand maximum effort from you over the three hours. It is not meant to be 'easy'.

## Tiered membership

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

### Categories

This membership year (2009) 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 current *Editorial Services Directory*, five free admissions to each monthly meeting and two free admissions to one special event per year, such as the Christmas dinner. The usual member rates on professional development courses and workshops will apply for up to five attendees from the Corporate Associate organisation (a saving of approximately \$95 per person).

**The Committee**  
**Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.**

## 30th anniversary dinner

The venue for the 30th anniversary of the society's founding was a private room in the historic building that houses the Italian Village restaurant with a view over Sydney Cove to the Opera House. The evening began with pre-dinner drinks and an opportunity to mingle before dinner.

After the welcoming address by Pam Peters we had the opportunity to examine the contents of our fabulous goodie bags, put together by Susie Pilkington, which included a copy of the multi-award winning novel, *The Slap*, by Christos Tolkias.

The guest speaker, Jeremy Fisher, shared his recollections of thirty years in the industry in a talk that was both nostalgic and thought provoking.

Last formality of the evening was ceremonial cutting of the anniversary cake—the most enormous chocolate cake that took two people to transport it to the restaurant. The cake was sponsored by The Plain English Foundation and bore the message 'and here's to the next 30 years'.

The main organisers were Catherine Etteridge, Hillary Goldsmith and Susie

Pilkington. Special thanks go to The Dockside Group and our sponsors.

### Prizes

In keeping with the 'salute to the seventies' theme, the evening's prizes included CDs and DVDs featuring music and movies from the time. Big thanks go to De Agostini for kindly donating prizes from their *Classic Australian Movie Collection* – DVDs of two of the best Australian movies from 1979, *Mad Max* and *My Brilliant Career*. Our competition for the best 1970s item of clothing or accessory yielded three prize winners: Juliet Richters for her inspiring collection of retro badges, Richard Blair for his jacket and Sarah Murray-White for her 'peace' shirt. Special mention also goes to Dee Read and Abigail Nathan, who wore their genuine 70s articles (top and jacket respectively) with much style, and to brave Keith Sutton for his flamboyant tie. Congratulations and thanks to everyone who raided their wardrobes and paid homage to the fashionable era in which our society began.

## Thanks to our sponsors



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## IPEd notes

### News from the Institute of Professional Editors Limited, July 2009

Many editors took advantage of the early-bird discount and registered for this year's accreditation examination by 30 June. Registration for the exam, which will be held on Saturday 12 September, remains open until Friday 31 July. You can register online at <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>.

The other big event for the profession this year is the 4th National Editors Conference from 8 to 10 October. The conference is being organised by the Society of Editors (SA), an esteemed member of IPED, which has chosen the marvellous Adelaide Festival Centre as the venue. Program details and an online registration form can be found at <[www.editors-sa.org.au](http://www.editors-sa.org.au)> or via <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>. There are discounts for early-bird registration by 14 July.

The Annual General Meeting of IPED will be held in association with the national conference on 7 October. One item on the agenda will be the appointment of new councillors (each member society has one delegate to the

Council). Some existing councillors may seek to be nominated again as delegates from their society; others may wish to retire: check with your committee.

The Institute of Professional Editors Limited is a not-for-profit Australian company (ACN 129 335 217) limited by guarantee. The councillors are directors of the company and carry the responsibilities of such. They play a crucial role in pursuing IPED's overall objective: 'To advance the profession of editing'. The IPED Council needs people not just with experience in editing but also with skills in all the other fields in which it must operate, including finance and administration, website development and maintenance, publicity and promotion, and professional development, to name a few. Their work is challenging and interesting. You might like to consider if there is a role for you on the Council.

The Council met by teleconference on 14 May and 17 June. Two sessions

were needed to complete a packed agenda. Topics discussed included the budget for 2009–10; organisation and implementation of the 2009 accreditation exam; a proposal for an annual professional development calendar; the need for a national 'brand' for the profession; upgrading of the IPED website; and the urgent need for Council 'succession planning'. An on-screen exam working party headed by the NSW Councillor Pam Peters reported good progress and an excellent response to the call for volunteers for the trial on-screen exam held this month. We'll look at the outcome of that in a future IPED Notes.

When confirmed, the minutes of the latest meeting will be placed on the IPED website.

**Ed Highley**  
Secretary  
[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)

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was a hierarchy of extremely skilled and experienced editors able to provide on-the-job mentoring. The project team, including staff and freelancers, was likely to include picture researchers, tiers of authors, researchers, illustrators, map-makers, indexers, or possibly other specialists, like recipe developers, recipe testers and so on. The team would work exclusively on that one project for a good year, often longer. At Reader's Digest I learnt about putting in the utmost care to ensure accuracy, quality and to preserve the reliability of the brand. The schedules were realistic and allowed time to agonise over copy-fitting, hyphenation and so on. You got it spot on; nothing less was acceptable. I have heard that there have been adjustments and contractions there and that originating massive illustrated books is no longer an everyday occurrence. I gather that the scale of the books has come down but certainly not the quality.

After a brief stint freelancing, I entered the world of trade publishing—that is the commercial end of book publishing, whereby the books are sold primarily in bookshops. Legal publishing, educational publishing and illustrated book publishing all reach their end users via other means, or channels. It is now trade publishing that I know most about.

### Trade publishing systems

A massive change to the trade publishing industry has been the adoption of BookScan, a transparent subscription-based system that logs book sales at point of sale. Almost all trade publishers have a fair idea of the numbers of sales all the other publishers are achieving, broken down any way you like, for example, by genre or title or publication month. That link between what we do in putting a book together and marketing and selling it, and how consumers respond, is now much more front of mind. I am not sure if that consciously affects our practice editorially, but I do feel that all the editors are better informed than ever about how the business works and what is going on in the industry.

Systems software has made it easier to access data and consequently there has been a reduction in the number of meetings. HarperCollins has a system called BooksPlus that is a huge database of titles. Each week, we insert

a brief description of where we are up to with our titles and that allows all the stakeholders to access that information at any time. The relevant information is also siphoned off into the weekly production report. This is all relatively painless compared to days of old spent in interminable production meetings when you would rather be attending to your deadlines.

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**'My job is to ensure that the book the publisher envisages is the book the publisher gets.'**

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Technology has driven down the headcount in editorial, typesetting, design and production. The move towards outsourcing skills such as editing, proofreading and indexing has also meant that the in-house editor probably does more managing than they would have 30 years ago. Consequently, the role of the Society of Editors, especially in producing the *Editorial Services Directory*, is a vital one.

If you are working in-house, training is provided when a new technology or system is brought in. You can compare notes with your colleagues and before you know it, what seemed impenetrable is part of how you operate day-to-day. Freelancers need to keep their ears to the ground to find out what new technological developments are coming through and how they need to respond. Designers accept the need to constantly upgrade their software and hardware. Editors may increasingly need to do the same. What hurts there is that freelance editors tend to have low incomes. While freelancing, I dreaded having to make any outlay on computers or software, simply because it was such a huge deal financially. But as I said earlier, it is important to surf that new wave of technology.

As I talk about day-to-day practices, I run the risk of being very HarperCollins-specific. What I do know from my several years of freelancing is that every house is different. At Pan Macmillan, the editors work closely with the publishers on the structural edit. Consequently, they give a very detailed editorial brief to a freelance editor. Allen & Unwin rarely edit in-house; Random House do. Penguin do a lot of editing and proofreading on their kids' titles in-house.

At HarperCollins there are six people responsible for acquiring books for our local publishing program. We have a children's publisher, two fiction publishers and three non-fiction publishers. When a manuscript comes in it will land on the desk of the Managing Editor, who will distribute it to one of the seven HarperCollins editors. There are no hard and fast rules for who receives what, but obviously individual editors have preferences and also particular strengths. When I look at the books I am working on, I see a mixture of kids', fiction and non-fiction titles.

### Managing a project

What does it mean when I am allocated a book? Getting a book ready to go to the printer is a project and it is my responsibility to manage the project. My first conversation will be with my managing editor and my second will be with the book's publisher. The publisher has had to make a comprehensive business case for this book, so they have a vision for it—what its angle is, what kind of a read it will be, how it will be packaged, its price point and so on. Once I know all this, I nut out my strategies then work with the author and all the people who will have a hand in the book's production. My job is to ensure that the book the publisher envisages is the book the publisher gets. I have to make contact with the author and to give that author a schedule so that they are ready to check pages when they come in and so on. I have to see that the book is ready for dispatch to the printer by the date set on the production schedule; and that the marketing materials are ready at the time they are required. I will attend a couple of meetings about that book's cover. I will sit in on the meeting where the sales and marketing people discuss how they plan to create a splash for the book and to generate sales—and I will do everything I can to support all of those endeavours.

### Using freelance editors

Depending on my workload and my personal tastes, I may edit the book myself or I may enlist the services of a freelance editor. That choice is mine. If I organise someone else to edit the book then I would describe myself as project editing the book. Sometimes this is known as production editing.

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Even if someone else edits the book, I will remain very hands-on: I will read it to brief the freelancer; and I will proofread the work or check on the typesetting. I will certainly be on the phone and emailing the author constantly and be their number one point of contact in-house as their manuscript goes through all the steps to becoming a book. The freelancers do not have access to the authors. When my job is done, my colleagues in publicity will take over that daily contact with the author.

I tried my hand at a production editing role but quickly found I missed the opportunity to do hands-on editing. When I looked around, I realised that only a few publishing houses could offer me that opportunity to edit. That is what I love doing.

My belief is that it is very important to find the right person for the editing job. If possible, take the time to choose your freelancer and give them the kind of support they need to get on and do their job well. Those phone calls with freelancers when you find out what they enjoy doing are of considerable value.

I also know from having worked as a freelancer that it is perplexing that you may not hear from an in-house editor for months at a time—and you tend to wonder what you have done wrong. You have done nothing wrong. If it is an editor's practice to try to match the freelancer's background and skills to the book, it means that they are probably working with a range of freelance editors. With the HarperCollins system we are often working on quite disparate books. Never be shy about emailing to say you are available.

A huge part of my job is liaising with the author. The interpersonal relationship side of the job is something I enjoy. I am aware of the fact that I am the face of the company for that author, even if I rarely meet them in person. Yes, another change is the demise of the book launch, which is when once you might have looked forward to meeting your author. But launches are deemed to be expensive and generally to have little or no impact on sales.

### **Diversity of genres**

Something people often want to know is how an editor can work across lists; how can you edit a health book, then a bird book, move to a cookbook, and perhaps after that tackle a political

biography? Remember that in trade publishing, your reader is unlikely to be a highly specialised reader on a topic. The idea is that if a general reader picks up that bird book, the introduction and how-to-use sections may switch them on to a brand new interest. Another key point is that your author is your expert, so you do not need to be an expert to begin with; you ease your way into the topic in the same way as your 'general reader' is going to. Can I point you back now to my opening remarks about how editors share that quest for knowledge. When your managing editor tells you

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### **'The tentative quality of the pencil edit is particularly important when you are dealing with literary writers...'**

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you are going to have a book to edit about ancient Rome or about rhyming slang or someone's memoirs, you get excited as you are about to go on an intense journey.

You can always obtain a second point-of-view: try to find the most suitable person to do the editing or proofreading of a book that is somewhat more specialised. If you trawl through the Society of Editors' *Editorial Services Directory*, you are bound to find someone with the right background. Cookbooks are very picky, I find.

The principle of checking some good examples of a genre is a useful one. What can you learn from how other editors have structured a book, how they have dealt with certain features either editorially or design-wise? You can also speak with your colleagues. One of the nicest things about working in-house is the opportunity to canvass opinions about different issues that crop up.

### **Working with authors**

Editors need to have a reasonable general knowledge, an enquiring mind, a facility with language, good concentration and attention to detail and great negotiating skills. You engage your author in a huge conversation about their work. You are a very special kind of reader for them, asking them for clarification, for more information, possibly pointing out where they may do well to prune. If you spot a problem, you toss around ideas with your author about a possible solution and out of that

conversation they will come up with sharper ideas and effective solutions. If you do your job well, the author will be excited about communicating well with their potential readers.

So, how do you have this special conversation with your author? Mostly, at HarperCollins, we do hard-copy edits—because it is the easiest tool for authors to follow, especially new authors. The work is portable and requires no batteries. As the editor, you print out that double-spaced manuscript and off you go marking up in the traditional way. In addition you write lots of notes to the author in the margins. Because you are probably working in pencil, it is all beautifully tentative. They are in no doubt that you are making suggestions and are clear that they are the author and can say 'No', 'Yes', or perhaps develop a fresh approach. They might add a little note of their own to you.

This tentative quality of the pencil edit is particularly important when you are dealing with literary writers—writers who are on top of their craft. These writers are looking for an assiduous reader. Any sense that the work is not one hundred per cent theirs is unwelcome.

This is a time-consuming conversation and, when it is over, someone has to key in the agreed changes and then flow the Word document into the typesetting template. That means you need plenty of time; something that tends to be in short supply.

On the other hand, some books appear to be natural candidates for on-screen editing. My experience is that many authors find the concept of the on-screen edit slightly uncomfortable. However, over time, will younger authors, for example, come to demand it more and more?

Well, like all editors, my life is a series of deadlines and I may have overshot this one. Thank you for your kind attention. And may we all have happy and fulfilling lives in our various cultural endeavours.

*Anne Reilly is a senior editor at HarperCollins. She has been involved in publishing since 1991 and has worked for large publishing houses including Butterworths and Readers Digest.*

## **Freelancers do lunch, 27 August**

The next freelancers' lunch will be held at Jan's Cafe, Crown Gardens, 63 Crown Street Woolloomooloo, at noon on Thursday, 27 August. Mains cost about \$10 to \$14. The cafe is two blocks down from William Street. Buses 324, 325, 326 and 327 for William Street leave the city frequently.

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!

## **Melbourne Writers Festival, 21 to 30 August**

Full details of the program for 2009 are now available on the official website at <[www.mwf.com.au/2009/](http://www.mwf.com.au/2009/)>.

## **Indigenous Literacy Day, 2 September**

The Indigenous Literacy Project (ILP) is a partnership between the Australian Book Industry and The Fred Hollows Foundation that raises funds to purchase and supply books and other culturally appropriate material to remote communities where The Foundation works. The third Indigenous Literacy Day will be held on Wednesday, 2 September 2009. On that day participating bookshops, publishers and businesses will donate a percentage of their sales (or make a donation) while schools hold fundraising activities.

## **Asialink residencies, closing date 4 September**

Applications for the 2010 Asialink arts residencies are now open. 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. Residencies will be offered to writers of all genres to

further professional development and bilateral engagement in Asia. For more information about requirements visit <[www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/)>.

## **History Week, 5 to 13 September**

History Week showcases the rich, diverse history being produced by organisations and individuals across the state. During History Week, various institutions across NSW open their doors to present the latest in historical research and fascinating stories about our past. To view the full program of more than 200 events visit <[www.historycouncilnsw.org.au/](http://www.historycouncilnsw.org.au/)>.

## **Brisbane Writers Festival, 9 to 13 September**

Details of the program for 2009 will be published in *The Weekend Australian* and on the festival website at <[www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au](http://www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au)> on Saturday, 1 August.

## **PLAIN Conference, 15 to 17 October, Sydney**

The PLAIN Language Association International (PLAIN) is holding its seventh biennial conference in Sydney from 15 to 17 October 2009. The conference, with the theme 'Raising the Standard', will be hosted by the Plain English Foundation. Details are available at <[www.plainenglishfoundation.com](http://www.plainenglishfoundation.com)>.

## **Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers Conference, 15 to 17 October, Sydney**

The 2009 conference of the ANZ Society of Indexers will be held at the Citigate Central Hotel, 169-179 Thomas Street, Sydney with the theme 'The Practice of Indexing'. The conference will concentrate on practical, 'how to' aspects of indexing. The organisers wish to encourage new indexers and people interested in indexing to attend.

Special information sessions will be arranged for people new to indexing. Conference information and updates can be viewed at <[www.anzsi.org/site/2009\\_Conf\\_news.asp](http://www.anzsi.org/site/2009_Conf_news.asp)>.

## **Frankfurt Book Fair, 14 to 18 October**

The website for current information and daily updates about the fair in 2009 is <[www.buchmesse.de/en/fbf/](http://www.buchmesse.de/en/fbf/)>.

## **Translation of Mexican Literary Works into Foreign Languages (PROTAD)**

The PROTAD initiative invites applications for economic support to translate and publish Mexican works. More detail is available from the Embassy of Mexico website <[www.sre.gob.mx/australia](http://www.sre.gob.mx/australia)>.

## **Newcastle freelancers' lunch**

Members from the Hunter region left their end of financial year commitments behind and spent part of Tuesday 30 June 2009 lunching at the old Customs House Hotel in Newcastle. It is the first time members in the Hunter have got together and they plan to try and do it quarterly, with talk of another event in October. While the group was small, the experience and specialist areas were varied, covering everything from memoirs and maths to indigenous languages and architectural engineering. All had a lovely time and the risotto proved a winner!

## **Productivity Commission report released**

The final report on parallel importation of books released by the Productivity Commission on 14 July recommends that current restrictions be lifted and that the changes be phased in over a three year period. The report is available from <[www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/books/report](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/books/report)>.



## **National Editors Conference, 8 to 10 October, Adelaide**

The program for the fourth 2009 IPEd National Editors Conference is now available from the website <[www.editors-sa.org.au/](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/)>. Registrations can be made at <[www.sapro.com.au/editors/register.htm](http://www.sapro.com.au/editors/register.htm)>. Earlybird registrations for the conference have now closed. The cost for the full conference is \$485 for society members.

The welcome party will be held at the University of South Australia and the civic reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Adelaide in the Queen Adelaide Room of the Adelaide Town Hall. A conference dinner will be held at the National Wine Centre.

Keynote speakers include Neal Porter, Julian Burnside, Wendy McCarthy and Natasha Stott Despoja.

## **More advice on the Accreditation Exam**

Members intending to sit the exam may also benefit from reading the notes prepared for the 2008 exam published in the September 2008 issue of *Blue Pencil*—which is available on the society's website.

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007; Voicemail: (02) 9294 4999  
<[www.editorsnsw.com](http://www.editorsnsw.com)>.

## **Blue Pencil**

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**Copy deadline for the September issue is Tuesday, 11 August 2009.**

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 400. 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 2009 fees are \$70 for ordinary member or professional member renewals; \$75 for new professional members (\$45 if joining after 30 June); \$50 for associate member renewals or \$55 for new associate members. Interested organisations can become corporate associates for \$400 per year.

To obtain a membership application form go to the Society of Editors (NSW) website <[www.editorsnsw.com](http://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](http://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](mailto:esd@editorsnsw.com)>.

## **Committee meetings**

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

## 2009 COMMITTEE

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### Regional members

Regional members living more than 200 km from Sydney may receive a 40 per cent discount on the cost of the society's workshops (excluding computer-based workshops).

## Professional development

### Writing and Editing for the Web REPEAT WORKSHOP

**Date:** Thursday, 20 August 2009

**Time:** 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

**Presenter:** Simon Hillier

**Venue:** City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

**Cost:** \$195 for Society members, \$290 for non-members

This workshop is designed for people building a new website or improving current website copy, or for anyone writing and editing for the web who wants to understand its potential challenges and opportunities. You will receive up-to-date practical guidance, tips and language tools to enhance your internet writing and editing skills. Group and individual exercises are included. Cost includes lunch and refreshments. Please register by Thursday, 16 July 2009.

### Copy Editing—Getting Started

**Date:** Thursday, 13 August 2009

**Time:** 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

**Presenter:** Meryl Potter

**Venue:** City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

**Cost:** \$195 for Society members, \$290 for non-members

This interactive workshop looks at the skills copy editors need and their role in the publication process—from book publishing to the corporate world. While this course assumes no previous knowledge, participants might find it useful as a refresher or to help prepare for the accreditation exam. Cost includes lunch and refreshments. Please register by Thursday, 23 July 2009.

### Successful Proofreading

**Date:** Thursday, 10 September 2009

**Time:** 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

**Presenter:** Meryl Potter

**Venue:** City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

**Cost:** \$195 for Society members, \$290 for non-members

This practical, interactive workshop covers proofreading from first pages to printer's proofs. It explores the different demands of proofreading at each stage of the publishing process. Cost includes lunch and refreshments. Please register by Thursday, 20 August 2009.

### Manuscript Assessment and Reader Reports

**Date:** October/November 2009

### Plain English

**Date:** To be advised

### Thesis Editing

**Date:** To be advised

**Copy deadline for the  
September issue of**

*Blue Pencil*

**Tuesday, 11 August 2009**

To register for workshops use the enclosed form or download one from the website. Please note that workshops require a minimum of 10 registrations by the closing date to go ahead.

For more information about the workshops, email Meryl Potter at <education@editorsnsw.com>.