

She 'wouldn't be dead for quids'

Selwa Anthony has been described as the 'fresh air' in publishing. Her working life has been devoted to books, first as a bookseller and for the past 15 years as a literary agent, finding and managing new talent. Here is her exciting and inspiring story. She spoke about her life in publishing at the society's April meeting.

I'll give a brief background to where I am today and how it all happened. I was born in Cowra, New South Wales, not Cairo, Egypt. I say that because people often judge your looks and think 'what country did *you* come from?' I'm a passionate Australian. My father arrived from Lebanon at the age of 21. He was a learned young man who met and married my mother who came from a small village in Lebanon. I had the privilege of watching a beautiful marriage with a wonderful mother and father.

My parents opened a drapery store in Cowra, with menswear on one side and ladieswear on the other. I grew up as the fourth of seven children. My dad called us his seven little Australians. He was an avid reader and took to Australian literature. He introduced me to many Australian authors who were published at the time.

My father was so proud of this country and what it gave to him. He always said to us to be very thankful that you were born in Australia. My parents didn't speak anything except English to us, and being in a country town, it was important that they didn't separate themselves from the typical Aussies of the time. We're talking the 1930s and 1940s with a business that looked after the farmers of the area. My mother had farmers' wives who just adored her.

My marketing and selling expertise definitely comes from my mother as I watched her from behind the counter. Everything was in that shop—ribbons, make-up, a fur coat. If you wanted a man's suit, it was made to measure.

At the time, my mother was having children about every 18 months and she was running a business. She only took time to have the children and then she was back down in the shop. The young girls who worked for her became babysitters as well because she was a saleswoman. So I guess my background has been in retail.

Where I am today is because, as Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz* had a yellow

road paved with bricks, mine seemed to be paved with books.

When I was about eight, my father handed me a little orange, folded card. 'Now walk up to the council chambers at the top of the street and you'll be in for a big surprise. I walked through the door into what was Cowra's first public library. It was just like a lolly shop.

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Next meeting: Tuesday 4 June 2002

Alan Walker on the 'Trivial' matters of indexing

Alan Walker is the Vice-President of the Australian Society of Indexers. He has been a full-time freelance indexer for the past 20 years and was awarded the medal of the Australian Society of Indexers in 1989 for his index to *The New Penguin Literary History of Australia*.

According to literary commentator Padraic P McGuinness, 'The skills ascribed to librarians by the [NSW Industrial Relations Commission] . . . are usually quite trivial matters of classification and indexing', (*SMH*, 2 April 2002, p.13). Alan will canvass a number of topics of mutual concern to editors and indexers, including:

- What indexers expect of editors.
- Pay rates and employment conditions for editors and indexers.
- Opportunities for joint activities, including planning for the international conference on indexing to be held in Sydney in September 2003.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney (between Park & Bathurst streets, near the Pilgrim Theatre and Pitt Street Uniting Church; the closest train station is Town Hall), 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. \$13 for members; \$16 for non-members and those who don't RSVP; \$7 for holders of a current Centrelink or DVA concession card. Please RSVP to 9294 4999 (voicemail) or brhed@pnc.com.au (email) by Friday 31 May.

Tuesday 2 July: TBA

Selwa Anthony

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I wandered around, took out a book and read it that day. I went back after school the next day and took out another. This went on for about two weeks—I was reading a book a night. Then one day the librarian stopped me and said, ‘You can’t keep on doing this. You can’t take books and not read them. It’s silly!’ I can still remember the tears welling in my eyes because *I had read them*. ‘But I do read them’, I protested. ‘Well then, I’ll ask you some questions’, which she did. I answered them all and from that moment I was her pet. It was beautiful.

At about 13, I wanted to get some part-time work after school and during the school holidays. I got a job at Strong’s Newsagency opposite my parents business. The newsagency had a corner with a few books. I found myself going straight there and displaying the books. So for the next five years that corner turned into a little bookshop which is still there today, so again something was drawing me towards books and retail.

When I finished school, my older sisters decided they were going to travel overseas, a common practice in the ’50s. Dad said the four of us had to go together or not at all. I went to Sydney to get a job at David Jones to save for the trip. On a form at David Jones you had to tick to say where you’d like to work in the store. I ticked fashion and then I saw books and ticked that. I went to the book department and had no idea what it was going to be like. It was the beginning of one of the most wonderful periods of my life, working with books in retail.

The woman in charge of the book department, which was a good half of the lower ground floor at the time, was Nan Jacka. She was in her late 30s, very well presented, articulate, and loved what she was doing. She ran a very tight ship. She taught me every aspect of bookselling. At the time there were no computers of course. If the last copy of a book was sold, you filled out an index card and ordered more.

You got to touch books, know where they were, do book displays. I worked there for 18 months. My sisters and I travelled overseas and when I returned I didn’t go back to books, but met and married in 1962. I thought I was going to be a very happy wife and have a few

children and have a husband who was going to support me. I had no ambition other than to be a good wife and mother. But it didn’t happen that way.

Fourteen years later, with two little girls, the marriage finished and I needed work. I’d done various jobs part-time during my marriage but never any bookselling through this time. I contacted the Grahame Book Company where I’d worked before having my first child. It was on the corner of Pitt and Hunter just before Australia Square was built. The bookshop was in an extremely upmarket area in the heart of the city and catered for the finance, legal and medical professionals in the city. The bookshop was beautiful—timber bookshelves, marble columns and floors, three huge shop windows—and sold mainly technical books and popular bestsellers.

One of the managing directors remembered me and employed me again as a sales assistant at the bookshop. Sadly, when I returned to Grahame’s, it was no longer the place I remembered. In 10 years it had changed dramatically—the timber was hidden by plastic shelving, carpet covered the marble floors—it looked like a second-hand bookshop.

I mentioned the potential of the shop in a couple of conversations with the bookshop owners. They asked me if I would manage the shop. Now I really hadn’t managed anything as big as this in my life, but there was something stronger telling me to do it. I needed that job, I had two children to support and no maintenance from my ex-husband. I took the job and the owners gave me total control over buying stock and hiring staff, and within 18 months it was back to its original state. In that time we turned it around to the best bookshop per square foot in Australia. For the next 18 years I was retail and merchandising manager for Grahame’s.

I also had a regular book program on 2UE with Ian Parry-Okden where I talked about books for three hours every second week. I would grab stock from the shop and talk about books people hadn’t heard of and test the market. For example, *A Fortunate Life*—I read it and believed it would become an Australian classic. I talked about it with Ian and made people aware that it was available. At the time no other bookseller had it in stock so they had to come to Grahame’s or order copies over the phone. I didn’t talk about whatever was big or popular

at the time because everybody would be talking about that. For me to get people to come all the way to the bottom of the city, I needed them to want books that other shops didn’t carry or didn’t know about. I did book spots with Bill Collins on his *Midday Movie Show* on Channel 10, introducing new titles to the viewers.

Colleen McCullough had just published *The Thorn Birds*. She had appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as the Australian author with the biggest ever book deal—US\$1 million for the paperback rights to the book. I was so excited to see that an Australian author could do it. People were often coming into the bookshop searching out a really good Australian novel. We had them, but they were either literary or published in the UK and resold into Australia. *The Thorn Birds* was what was needed to promote Australian popular fiction. When I heard Colleen was coming to Australia for an author tour I contacted the publishers, Harper & Row, to organise a signing session at Grahame’s. I was confident I could sell 500 copies, so I ordered that amount at a 50 per cent discount on a firm sale (no returns).

The three large windows at Grahame’s were a major selling space, so three weeks before the signing session I emptied all the stock out of the windows and replicated the cover of *The Thorn Birds*—a sparse tree with two white birds. We put up a sign ‘*The Thorn Birds* are coming. Limited stock. Place your order now. Signing session on . . .’ We sold quantities of the book before Colleen even arrived.

Then Colleen arrived. We had the table set up with coffee, sugar, ashtray, and white and pink flowers to give her (all her favourite things). She swept into the shop with that wonderful big laugh of hers. She’d just done a signing session in David Jones’ lingerie department and wasn’t too impressed so far. She walked in and said ‘My God. A real bookshop.’ She was so excited. The signing lasted two hours. That day she had *Four Corners* following her, doing a story. As she walked out of the shop I said ‘Colleen, stand under the Grahame’s sign, will you?’ I can still remember her big laugh. As we said goodbye I asked her to drop in and have coffee if she was in town. Three weeks later she walked into the shop just before lunchtime and said ‘You want to have that cup of coffee, darlin’?’ The friendship happened that

day. I took her home to meet my mum and they got on like a house on fire. Every time she came to Australia she'd visit my mum until my mother died in 1985. They were very close. My friendship with Colleen is still strong today.

In mid-1983 I left Grahame's and worked in other areas of book retail. If someone had said to me when I started at Grahame's that I wouldn't always be working as a bookseller, I would have disagreed. They were the greatest years of my life, especially the last eight.

In 1988 I became a full-time literary agent almost as a result of interviewing Colleen on radio. My last radio spot was an interview with Colleen. Ian Parry-Okden asked me what I was going to do next. Colleen jumped in and said 'She's going to become a literary agent.' At that stage I didn't even know they existed. With 300,000 listeners I agreed and decided 'that's what I'm going to be'. I got my first manuscript the following week and so my career as a literary agent began. The one area of the market where I saw a gap was popular fiction. That was the beginning of my business and the focus on mainstream fiction.

The first author I took on was Evan Green, with a book called *Alice to Nowhere*, which was made into a two-part miniseries. Seven books later, we did his last novel *Clancy's Crossing* before he died.

My first female author was Jennifer Bacia, followed by Di Morrissey. The rest, as they say, is history.

This is where we're getting to editing and what is really needed for popular fiction. An editor who understands this particular area of publishing is very important. It is quite different from literary editing, as popular fiction can be over-the-top at times.

There is a huge demand for good popular fiction editors. Publishers are always looking for people specialising in this area to send manuscripts out for reports, to do structural editing and work quite closely with the authors. An editor guides the author into pulling the threads of the storyline together—keeping some of the over-the-top quality, but also making it believable.

What about someone taking on someone else's writing and presenting it as their own?

It's difficult because people often get an idea at the same time or read an article

and think that it's their idea later on. I've never had anyone get into trouble, but I've read things and realised that I knew where the idea came from.

What about the copyright issue, especially when you are crossing genres? Say someone quoting someone else and not accepting the responsibility that they have said it?

Publishers are being very careful now and say no if they can't get it clear. I say to my authors not to put anything in that's going to identify someone.

Could you comment on whether the process of contract negotiation has changed over the years?

Contracts have changed in the last 10 years. They're getting tighter and clearer, especially compared with film contracts. Australian and New Zealand rights for all my authors remain here. I will never sell a book overseas if I can sell it here. I make this very clear to my clients.

What do you think of agencies that appraise manuscripts?

I'm not very fond of them because many appraisals I have seen have come from people who don't know the genre, don't know the market and sometimes don't seem to know the industry. You can't just get someone who likes reading, but doesn't know the industry. They might give writers a false sense of hope at times.

What if you had an assessment from a senior editor?

I'd take it seriously, particularly if I knew of their industry background. I think if you see something that you really feel is fantastic, it's often okay to talk to an agent and say you think it has potential and find out if there is a market for it.

Have you noticed with the move of editors out of publishing houses into the freelance world that the relationship between editors, publishers and authors has changed a lot?

Yes, it has. But I think there are more editors working outside the publishing houses that are really good and I'd prefer to see them getting work than some of the in-house editors. There might be a particular editor who would be very suited to a particular project, and if I've got a book that I know two or three publishers want, I offer it around on the basis that a particular editor gets the job.

There's more working out than in, which is sad in some ways. They take their knowledge, which was built up over a period of time, with them when they leave publishing houses.

I always say to my authors 'It's your book; your baby. Your editor is there to help you with the birth, so if he or she gets too rough and manhandles it, you've got to stop them. It doesn't happen very often, but if they mention it to me, I can go in diplomatically and say to the editor they are getting a little too heavy.'

What's the scope for a person in your field?

Unlimited. It's so exciting because I don't know what's coming my way from one day to the next. It's really trying to keep on top of it. I get nervous when I've got more than six manuscripts around that haven't been read and answered. I don't like to keep authors waiting either because that's a nail-biting time for them.

What's your success rate with all these manuscripts?

My success rate would be about 90 per cent. I take things on because I'm very passionate about them. I'll phone a publisher and talk the manuscript up.

How many manuscripts do you get that you don't take on?

I've lost count—but as I said my success rate is about 90 per cent.

All the time as a literary agent I'm using my bookselling experience. I didn't go to university. I haven't got a BA or anything apart from good hands-on experience. I hold yearly seminars for my authors, by invitation only, and we have the SASSY awards—Selwa's Author Success Stories of the Year—with little black statues that are similar to my logo. My authors get up to speak and learn how to present themselves. The Popular Writers' Festival at the NSW Writers' Centre included all of my authors. I'm looking forward to the next one on 6 and 7 July. It's like a family. I wouldn't be dead for quids, as they say.

Views expressed in this article are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the Society of Editors.

Georgina Frampton transcribed and Carey Martin and Merry Pearson edited Selwa Anthony's talk.

Making the most of your business

Members of the society and others were certainly re-energised, re-focused, and ready to do business after attending the marketing segment of the Department of State & Regional Development's workshop series for people running home-based businesses. Linda Hailey, from Hailey Enterprises Pty Ltd and who wrote *Kick Start Marketing* (Allen & Unwin), and Leo Lawrence presented the workshop, and their comments are summarised here.

They began by emphasising that everyone is trying to sell someone something and that everyone is overloaded with marketing material and information from mail, email and the telephone. To stand apart from the pack, when we market ourselves and tell people who we are and what we have to offer, we have to be clear, precise and direct. To perform well, we need to know who our prospective clients are and what they want. We have to sell our services extraordinarily well in a tight marketplace so that we can survive as business-people. As relative novices in marketing and self-promotion, we need to know the rules before we sell our services or ask for money.

Rule No 1: Never use research as a decision maker or as a crutch. Research can only help you avoid mistakes.

Congratulations ... again

Once again we congratulate Jacqueline Kent for being a great editor, great writer and great representative of our profession.

Last issue she won the National Biography Award for her work on editor Beatrice Davis. This month it's for the Nita B Kibble Literary Award for Women Writers described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as 'prestigious'.

She's also been nominated for the non-fiction prize in this year's NSW Premier's Literary award—the winners to be announced later in May.

Will she make it a hat trick next month?

Rule No 2: The average client does not exist; you have to market yourself differently to each person you talk to.

Rule No 3: Narrow the target group so you can customise your services, then concentrate on the middle level in that group.

Just as you can't sell beer to someone who only drinks cocktails, your awareness of the market is as critical as your communication of the benefits of using your service. You have to ask yourself a very important question, 'What am I selling?' and keep your reply simple and pragmatic.

To make yourself more attractive to your clients, you need to include a bundle of benefits in your services, at an affordable price. Tailor your services to your clients by developing different packages for different clients. Don't be so busy that you don't have time to send a 'With Compliments' slip or a card every few months to be remembered. Your clients leave because they believe you don't love them. Customer service is as much about happy clients as about money. Clients are buying good feelings or solutions to problems, so add a WOW! factor to everything you do.

Your makeover in selling yourself and your services begins with your image. Your name, logo, stationery, marketing material, website, address (that is, Suite No. 1, not Flat or Unit No. 1), office decor, personal image, vehicle, and staff, should reflect where you want to go, not where you have been. Your brand, your image, your speech, must match your service. Instead of any old answering machine message, try one that says how great you are going and what you are doing. It is cheap, cheerful, and effective advertising.

Once you have your image in place it is time to tackle the heartburn and ask for the appropriate amount of money for the job. The easiest way to calculate how much you think your services are worth per hour is to estimate what would be a reasonable annual income. You only have a maximum of 1800 hours of your time to sell someone, so if you think you can live on say \$50 000 a year then divide it by 1800 hours to give you an hourly rate. Once you have your hourly rate add 50 per cent for self-esteem, and more for other expenses, then stand in

front of the mirror and say over and over 'I am worth \$. . . an hour' until you believe it. Then, and only then, can you pick up the telephone to talk to your client.

You must talk price early and talk price often. 'By the way, it will cost . . .' and 'I will have it ready in . . . weeks time.' When you sell your services, sell a bundle of benefits not just a single service, so add, 'By using me, I will not only edit your manuscript but I will also . . .' Your pricing will position you in the marketplace, so make sure it gives the right message too.

Don't give yourself and your skills away. Money doesn't come easily, so don't let it go easily and certainly don't do something that risks your image. Answer your client's unwritten worries and concerns by being pro-active at the beginning of a project, not aggressive and miserable at the end. Add value to your services.

Do not agree to a discount for them. Ask for progress payments upfront and spell them out. Move with the times. Add services that will give you a competitive edge. Follow up your clients with a telephone call. Tell your clients they can ring you as often as they like—forever if need be. Always ask them the question, 'By the way, what do you need?' Use every piece of technology to stay in contact with your clients—text messages, a website, and so on.

This is only a small extract of the information the Department of State & Regional Development has to help small businesses. It's great if you can contact them before you go into business, and they recommend staying in touch with them for at least five years to maximise your chances to create a profitable and healthy way of life doing something you love. And remember that if you have trouble asking for money or surviving in business, there are people who can help you. Free mentors and general business help are available through Business Enterprise Centres that are scattered throughout New South Wales. You can see for yourself what the Department of State & Regional Development has to offer at <www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au>.

Ginny Lowndes

Deleting the headaches from quoting

'Would you give me a quote for editing this, please?'

We've been down this path before, but it is a perennial problem, so perhaps another look at quoting won't go amiss at the start of a new editing year.

If we all worked in offices and employed staff and were members of a union, perhaps our hourly rates would be pretty much determined for us. But we don't, and we aren't. Some of us have high overheads to consider, families and homes to maintain, staff including graphic artists, office workers, other editors and so on to think of and budget for.

The vast majority of us, however, work at home, alone, often in a corner of the living room, sometimes sharing the family computer with children doing homework—maybe the house is paid off, maybe there's another breadwinner, maybe this is more of a hobby than a career, occasional rather than full-time.

None of that is anyone's business but our own. Whatever our situation, we are all expected to have professional standards and maintain a professional image in the eyes of our clients—in Canberra that means very largely the public service.

So how do we arrive at a reasonable fee for the work we are about to do? In my early editing days, I used to phone around a group of editors working on documents similar to those I was editing, and chat with them about fees. I would get a rough idea of where fees were at the start of that particular year. As time has gone on, and I have gained experience and a clientele, I have pushed my basic fee up to a point that seems fair for the job and doesn't seriously undercut people who have much bigger overheads than I have.

But there should be a formula for arriving at a fee for any job. Can we devise one by trying to answer these, and probably many other, questions?

- What level of edit is the job?
- What other responsibilities go with the job (for example, project management, indexing)?
- What proportion of the MS can you winkle out of the client for assessment?
- Is it representative of the whole document?
- Is it purely editing, or is some tuition or explanation expected on the side?

- How well qualified/experienced are you as an editor?
- Can you work confidently alone, or do you need help/mentoring?
- Can you work on-line?
- Can you meet all of the criteria set down by the client?
- Are the sample pages sufficient to assess the level of edit etc required?

The lead article by Helena Bond in the October 2001 edition of *Offpress*, newsletter of the Society of Editors (Queensland) Inc, raises a number of issues related to quoting, and ends with the experienced quoter's solution:

'I've trimmed my quoting time down enormously. I kept detailed statistics until I could see patterns emerging, then I analysed those figures to understand how many words I do an hour for each service.

'So when I'm asked to quote, I get a word count, then check my rate and speed for the service required. After that it's just simple mathematics to get the hours for my schedule and the dollars for my quote. Add any standard extras, like a loading for jobs with extra-tight timelines, allowances for meetings, etc., quick reality check on a sample of the document, and hey presto, the quote's ready.'

I can relate to that approach—I use it myself. But is it as simple as that for the new editor? I don't think so. New editors worry over whether something is really

just a proofread, or rather a proofread with a bit of copy-editing thrown in, and if so, should they charge at the copy-editing rate or what? And anyway, what's the copy-editing rate this week for people with not much experience yet, and heck, what's 'substantive editing' anyway? If you have to turn a sentence upside down for it to make sense, is that substantive editing? Or only when you have to rewrite whole slabs? And how many meetings can you charge for? And who pays for the depreciation on your computer and other equipment, not to mention the horrendous insurance you have to carry these days?

And let us not forget a formal letter that sets out what has been agreed to (in public service editing, this will be a contract that you can have amended if need be). And at any time during the assignment, there must be more formal letters setting out any variations that have occurred and confirming phone conversations etc.

The questions are seemingly endless, but as a group I suggest we ought to be able to come up with a formula to help us all when it comes to dealing with that most difficult part of editing—quoting.

Elizabeth M. Murphy

This article is reprinted with permission from the January 2002 issue of The Canberra Editor.

L E T T E R S

Praise from the reviewer, reviewing the reviewer who reviewed the book

I was delighted to read Michael Lewis' review of *Style Manual*, 6th edition, ('Anybody remember *AGPS*?') in the May 2002 issue. I was a member of the book's review panel. It was an exciting, challenging job working with Loma Snooks and her team, and I felt quite overwhelmed to be 'reviewing' chapters written by Australia's experts!

I can't claim credit for any of the value the book provides—as a reviewer, I had the easy role of simply commenting on the content. The hard work was done by

the writers. But I can assure you the project was a massive undertaking, professionally managed, and an honour to be associated with.

Susan McKerihan

Plain English consultant

PS: I'd like to add my thanks and congratulations to those of Judy Jones, who wrote in the last issue. I am also a 'silent' member who appreciates the hard work done by the committee, although, shamefully, I have not yet found the time to make a contribution or offer my help.

Online training opportunities for editors

Training for editors seems to be a hot topic these days. More institutions are offering training and if accreditation becomes a reality it will become even more important.

Given this focus on training, we've instituted this column to talk about relevant training that's on offer around the world—yes, the world because some of it is online—and the news as it filters through the grapevine.

First of all, the Introduction to Book Indexing that was to be run at the University of New South Wales through the Faculty of Commerce and Economics Continuing Professional Development in May has been postponed until later in the year. Check the following website for this course and others:

<<http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/2001bestsellers.html>>.

Second, some of you probably already know about the the Copy Editors List run from Indiana University, but if you don't, you may want to check it out. The

group is quaintly known as the CELery, and members as CELmates. One can only wonder at the CELmates appellation and think of how many freelancer editors spend their days chained to desks and computers!

The following is an edited discussion from the CELery which occurred recently about online training:

A question came into the CELery about a \$500 general grammar course through UCLA. The subscriber was asking for advice before paying the \$500 and also asked: 'Had anyone taken or heard good things about online copyediting courses offered through an accredited university'.

Stephanie Fysh <sfysh@sympatico.ca> replied, giving some information about Ryerson University in Toronto which, she says 'will be putting its Publishing Certificate program online, beginning in September of this year. One of the first courses will be Copyediting. The course is being put together by four professional

editors who all teach the course in-class; I'm the first online instructor. As far as I know, there's no reason you need to be a Canadian resident to take the course—just be prepared to learn Canadian spelling and usage :-). The relevant links are all at <<http://ce-online.ryerson.ca/ce>> (the Ryerson University Continuing Education division). Courses are described under the Publishing Certificate. The new online courses will, sometime this summer, appear on the Distance Education—Open College pages.'

The courses are not there yet, but keep checking if you're interested.

Nancy Ranney <n.ranney@attbi.com> proffered this alternative. 'If you don't need the credit, there is an excellent copyediting course offered by correspondence through Editcetera (see info@editcetera.com). The instructor is Amy Einsohn, author of *The Copyeditor's Handbook*, University of California Press, 2000. I took her course (in person, not by correspondence), and can provide details...'

Alana Laurence Inugai <alana@laurenceenterprises.com> said: 'I second Nancy's recommendation of Amy Einsohn's class through Editcetera. Additionally, I recently took two online courses through EEI Communications in Alexandria, Virginia. I recommend the course Introduction to Copyediting: A Review of Grammar & Style. (It uses Mary Stoughton's *Substance and Style: Instruction and Practice in Copyediting*, and *The Great Grammar Challenge*.) Grammar for Professionals (This one was so basic that it may not be worthwhile, especially since Introduction to Copyediting covers most of the same material.)

'These were inexpensive (\$99 each), and EEI provides certificates of mastery of subject. Their online course catalog is at <<http://www.eeicomcommunications.com/onlinetraining/catalog.htm>>.'

If you want to become a CELmate, sent a blank email to <copyediting-lssubscribe-request@listserv.indiana.edu>.

While these courses are US-based, it indicates the wealth of available training. From a brief look they seem to cover all bases and, from the comments above, do not necessarily need to be university-sponsored to be quality packages.

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Self-publishers recognised

The University Co-op Bookshop at Bay Street, Ultimo, has launched a section for self-published authors.

On 17 April, the retail manager, Francis Richardson brought together Pat Woolley, director of Wild and Woolley, Rob Pullan from the Australian Society of Authors and World War II veteran, Arthur Pike, a successful self-published author, to talk to guests about self-publishing and its place in Australia.

Richardson noted that many bookshops were not interested in self-published books because it meant significant increases in paperwork—separate accounts for each author/publisher—and because there was no infrastructure to market the books. However, he also said that he felt there was so much talent in this now established section of the publishing market that it deserved more space and that he was making a stand for all self-published authors by dedicating space in the bookstore to them. He also noted the incredibly broad subject matter, from family histories to cooking to novels.

Rob Pullan suggested that for many self-published authors, the hardest thing was distribution. The panel advised having

a distributor on line early in the writing process. Some, such as Tower Books, deal with self-published authors but not many. He also noted that the next edition of the Australian Society of Authors' magazine *Australian Author* would carry articles about self-publishing.

Pat Woolley is a publisher for self-publishers. She remembered early in her career turning down at least one book that went on to be a bestseller—Kathy Lette's *Puberty Blues*. She advocated not just one book launch but as many as you could stand. Author Arthur Pike supported this, telling tales of his book launches from his home town of Nimbin through to Byron Bay and the Gold Coast.

From the speakers and the wealth of books on display, it was clear that self-publishing has become a credible industry in publishing, particularly when, as Woolley pointed out, so many of the large publishers are putting out fewer books. This is supported by reports that HarperCollins, the Murdoch-owned publishing house, has cut staff by up to 50 and intends to trim its output to the most profitable books.

Carey Martin

Homing in on honing in?

Last Friday's edition of *The Australian* included a supplement about super-annuation. The cover page of the supplement listed a number of articles, and in the middle of the bottom line—in 14-pt bold caps, no less—was 'BERNIE FRASER TO HONE IN ON FEES'. This usage is increasingly common, but my negative reaction doesn't diminish with exposure. Yet, as with most popular solecisms, its origins are probably not hard to find, and perhaps even make a certain amount of sense.

The traditional (and correct) expression is 'home in on'. It isn't very traditional; the *OED*'s first citation dates from 1920. Its origin can be traced back to homing pigeons, and then to the idea of a radio listener 'homing' on a signal. There seems to be some suggestion of error correction; if you've used a radio with a tuning knob and dial lately, you'll know that it's generally necessary to turn the knob in alternate directions, by a decreasing amount, until you've found the right spot. It isn't very far removed from what is sometimes called finetuning.

Some sophisticated and expensive radio equipment of my younger days had

Online learning continued from previous page

The ability to participate online is ideal for those of us who are not in a position to attend regular classes. They also seems to be broken into reasonably sized segments that students can complete in less than one of Australia's 14-week semesters. This can be useful considering our fluctuating work flow.

Should/could our own training programs be more like this? Possibly. If accreditation proceeds, then a possible subsequent step would be to construct our own, or approve of, suitable programs of education. Your feedback and thoughts on the issue of education for editors, its place in our environment, and the society's role in providing or assessing it are welcome. Send your comments to Carey Martin (contact details on back page) for inclusion in a future column.

a separate 'finetuning' knob, with a lower ratio of frequency change to knob rotation.

The verb 'hone' doesn't seem to have much to do with this kind of process. It means 'sharpen finely', and is usually done with a whetstone. You begin with a fairly sharp instrument; after honing it, you have a very sharp instrument.

This makes 'honing one's skills' an appealing metaphor. For all sorts of reasons, skills can lose their fine edge, so honing them to bring back that fine

edge is a sensible thing to do. But we can describe the same process, or at least a very similar one, with another metaphor—we can 'finetune' our skills. So someone who has never used a whetstone, and has no feeling for the real honing process, can easily make the mistake of equating honing with finetuning, and thus with homing in.

Perhaps that subeditor wasn't totally off the planet. But he (or she) was still wrong.

Michael Lewis

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

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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 runs for a calendar year. 2002 fees are \$50 for new members (\$30 if joining after 30 June) and \$45 for renewals.

For a membership application form, phone (02) 9294 4999, write to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, or download an application from the society's website at <http://www.users.bigpond.com/socednsw/>

Blue Pencil

The society's newsletter, *Blue Pencil*, is published monthly, except for a combined January/February issue. Your comments and contributions are welcome. Mail them to the Editor, *Blue Pencil*, Society of Editors (NSW) Inc., PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007. Deadline for the July issue is Monday June 10.

Advertising rates:

Full page, \$150; half page, \$80 (horizontal only); one-third page, \$50 (vertical or horizontal); quarter page \$40 (horizontal only); sixth page, \$30 (half of one column). Inserts: \$75 per hundred for DL-sized or A4 pre-folded to DL size. Circulation: approximately 350.

Listing in the *Editorial Services Directory*

Listing costs \$40 and is available only to members of the society. The fee covers listing in both print and online versions. The online version is updated every three months. New entries should be submitted in .rtf format, using a template available from Cathy Gray at cgray@mpx.com.au. Updates can be made to contact details only for existing entries. Deadline for the next update is 30 June 2002. Contact Cathy for more information. A new print edition is due to be published in 2003.

Committee meetings

All members are welcome to attend the society's committee meetings. Contact a committee member for details if you wish to attend the next meeting.

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NOTICEBOARD

ESD update deadline

The deadline for this quarter for new entries and updates to existing entries in the society's *Editorial Services Directory* is 30 June. If you need to change the contact details in your entry or submit a new entry, contact Cathy Gray at cgray@mpx.com.au.

NSW Writers' Centre workshops

Develop your editing skills

The aim of this eight-day workshop, presented by Maggie Aldhamland, is to develop participants' knowledge of all aspects of the editorial process from manuscript to published document. The course is suitable for people contemplating employment in publishing, those newly employed in the industry, and people in the industry who wish to acquire additional skills and a broader overview of the whole publishing process.

Maggie Aldhamland is a freelance writer, editor, project manager and trainer with more than 20 years' experience, first in teaching and then in publishing.

Saturdays and Sundays, in May and June, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Members: \$550; members' concession: \$440; non-members: \$770.

Grammar refresher:

Improve your writing through simple grammatical techniques

This course, presented by Charlotte Clutterbuck, is designed to alert writers to the most essential grammatical choices that affect the impact of writing: parts of speech or word classes; basic sentence structure; and key features of the verb. All points will be illustrated with examples from literary and non-literary texts. Participants will receive handouts and work sheets, and the course will include a demonstration of how to use a computer's grammar checker to improve the readability of your work.

For the past fourteen years, Charlotte Clutterbuck has been developing ways to use grammatical techniques to assist student writers. She has taught creative writing, business writing, and academic writing to a range of students in universities and adult education. She has a PhD in English and is currently teaching senior English at Abbotsleigh.

Saturday, 24 August, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Members \$60; members' concession \$50; non-members \$90.

For information about both of these courses, contact the NSW Writers' Centre by phone at (02) 9555 9757; by fax at (02) 9818 1327, or by email at <nswwc@ozemail.com.au>, or visit their website at <<http://www.nswwriterscentre.org.au>>.

Annual Book Design Awards

The Australian Publishers Association will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of their Annual Book Design Awards at a cocktail party to be held at Murdoch Books, Millers Point, at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday 19 June. Julie McCrossin will be MC for the evening, and awards will be presented in 20 categories.

Email Sara Lovelock at <sara.lovelock@publishers.asn.au> or Libby O'Donnell at <libby.odonnell@publishers.asn.au>, or phone (02) 9281 9788 for information or for a copy of the awards short list.