

Printing self-publishing authors: the delights and the disasters

At the February 2002 meeting, Bruce Welch of Southwood Press discussed the pros and cons of dealing with self-publishing authors and his lack of success in getting them to use professional editors.

The difficulty is, sometimes people want a quality product but they're not always prepared to pay for it. It's one of the dilemmas we'll always have: When do we say 'I'd like to help you but I can't', and when do we say 'I can help you but this is the price', and then watch them drop in shock. You don't know whether to pick them up or just walk quietly away.

A lot of people are getting fed up with imports, with publishers who don't seem to care, and with people who say they can put a book together for them and then fall by the wayside. I got into printing after I did a book for a university caving club, so I understand how people feel when they go to a printer knowing nothing about the process. We always try to encourage people to put quality into the book.

When someone comes to us with a project we always try to provide choices in quality and price. If you want the book to look good, giving us everything in Microsoft Word is all right, but it doesn't have quite the same look as something that is typeset. So we try to encourage authors to agree to typesetting, which we can do or outsource it to a freelancer.

The same thing with a cover—if you're going to sell a book commercially you need a good cover. We prefer to recommend a few people from whom they can get quotes. That way the customer works directly with a designer to come up with a good cover. The same thing would apply with editing.

Typesetting is a little bit different; we subcontract quite a bit of typesetting. Photographs are an increasing problem with book printing because anyone can buy a scanner for \$150 but it's garbage in, garbage out. Printers are ending up with stuff that's been scanned at very low resolution on a scanner with the optics of a Coke bottle bottom, and then people wonder why the printer doesn't produce a good result. It's a big struggle at the moment to say to people: 'You can do it yourself, but this is how it's got to be done'.

It's the same thing with working in Word. It's all right for a word processor

but that's as far as it should go. If you want it to look right you've got to go to a professional publishing package like QuarkExpress, PageMaker or InDesign. I prefer not to call them desktop publishing packages because they are professional publishing programs.

The same thing applies with editing. We've had no success so far in encouraging people to go to a professional editor. However, we will continue to push it, and the next edition of our book *Southwood Press Guide to Book Production* will have a reference to the society. The book roughly follows the

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Next meeting: Tuesday 7 May 2002

Frank Moorhouse on Contemporary myths about publishing and authorship

Frank Moorhouse, well-known and well-loved Australian writer, winner of the 2001 Miles Franklin award for his novel *Dark Palace*, and author of more than a dozen books, including his latest, *The Inspector General of Misconception*, will address the society's next meeting on the subjects of editing and writing.

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 3 May.

Tuesday 4 June: Alan Walker, Trivial matters of indexing

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web site, which is designed to try to help people into publishing. Given that they're going to do it, this will help them through the process. I've been criticised for spending too much time with customers, trying to explain how they can fix their product before they give it to us, because usually it means they'll save money and be happier with the end result.

So the next edition will have lots and lots more suggestions; a lot about photographs; some about typography and I'd welcome, since I'm in the draft stage, any information about editing. That's the thing I'm finding hard: how to convince people that they need to get an editor to look at their work early. It disappoints me greatly that when we organise typesetting, they start making the sort of changes that should have been made at the word-processing stage.

If the smaller printers and publishers, the editors, the indexers and cover designers all work together and refer among ourselves, we can develop a market in Australia.

People self-publish because they are convinced that what they're writing is needed in the market. A lot of them are quite realistic that they're not going to make their fortune out of it, although some, once they get the first book under their belt, think 'that wasn't too hard'. I know of one self-publisher who is doing another book, and they are talking to an editor because they realise the shortcomings of their earlier efforts.

The difficulty is to catch people early enough in the process. You see a lot of stuff that's produced, say, by a local history society, and some of it looks like it was produced with a rubber stamp. It's dreadful that they've gone to all this trouble and the thing is almost unreadable.

Because computers have really taken over, people are able to churn out the most appalling rubbish quite cheaply and they can't understand why it looks pretty crummy in book form when it looked all right on the screen.

You need to ask yourself what sort of self-publisher you should take on as a client because many people do have unrealistic expectations. It's quite difficult and we've had to analyse quite

carefully what work we should do. If someone rings up and wants 100 copies of a children's book in full colour, we have to explain that the set-up cost is \$20,000 and ask if that's really what they want to spend. Usually there's a stunned silence and they ask if it's really that much.

People don't realise that even the crudest junk mail has been crafted by someone who understands words, been put together by a graphic designer, and produced with good film and nice printing. A hundred thousand copies are printed and distributed, so the unit cost is next to nothing. They don't realise that \$10,000 or \$20,000 has been spent before it even goes on the press.

So one of the first things we do is work out whether we can meet their expectations. Generally you have to do that on the phone. I always hate giving out prices, because if you quote too low and then revise the price, they think you're ripping them off, and if you quote too high, they *know* you're ripping them off. It's a dilemma.

Because computers have taken over, people are able to churn out the most appalling rubbish quite cheaply ...

We recently did a marketing exercise to assess dog clients and star products. There's the regular clients who are the cash cow, and the wildcats where you take a bit of a punt by giving a good price and hoping maybe they'll bring in regular work in the future. That's one way you can look at your customers. I have to say, I was reluctant to go through the exercise.

First, we looked at the current margin we put on work—like buying the paper and putting a handling margin on it—and what the revenue potential is for the whole year, because someone who gives you a very small job as a one-off is different from someone who gives you regular work every month.

Then we rated it on our win ratio on quotes. You try to work out when a customer rings up, how are they going to fit in. You ask yourself if you're going

to cut the rate, if you're going to say 'That's the price', or if it's a customer I've got to load it for?

We did the quote-win ratio because there are some people who just use you for a third quote to check they're not being ripped off. There's no future in that.

You need to check if the client has a realistic delivery date. Find out how flexible they are. There are some who will say it's got to be done by a certain date even if they're late giving you the copy. They tell you there's plenty of time and suddenly they're pushing. When you're trying to juggle two or three clients at the one time sometimes you've just got to say I can't meet this delivery date.

If clients have realistic expectations and recognise their work needs editing it's going to be quite a lot of work. You put in a price and sometimes they say: 'Fine'. But when someone says they need some work edited but only want to spend \$50, you say 'It's been nice talking to you'. It also depends on whether it's your core product. You might have a specialist area, say technical editing or children's editing, you have to ask yourself: 'Does the job fit my core product?'

Our core product is black and white or two colours. When it gets into four or more colours, it's a completely different ball game. We can only do limited four-colour. If someone wants to do a hardcover children's book in colour you've got to say: 'Look at what's in the bookshops; it's all printed overseas. Set-up costs are going to be astronomical and hardcover binding is a bit of an issue in Australia. Are you expecting to pay between \$20,000 and \$40,000 for the product?' They usually say: 'No. About \$1,000 or \$2,000'.

We also assess the reprint potential. We store film for people because a reprint means more profit.

Then we rated our clients as A, B, C and D. The star customers are where we get a good margin and the work goes through fairly easily with minimum hassle. The dog customers are when you spend so much time your hourly rate ends up at \$5. Wildcat customers are the real potential, when the first time you do something you may not make a fortune but you're hoping that you're building a relationship with that client. They can also refer work to you. We

sometimes do a job we wouldn't normally do if, say, we've done work for them in the past.

The only other thing is when to bale out of a job. That's the most difficult decision. You've gone a long way down the track. Maybe you haven't really done very much work but, say, in your case, you've got the disk and had a look at it, given them a quote and some comments—when do you pull the plug? We've had to do it a couple of times. I don't actually know the answer. It's a hard decision but you just have to make them sometimes.

What would you say?

'I've done all I can to help you. Maybe you're better off with somebody else.'

Who takes the loss?

We do; you do.

We did a cookbook for a nice lady. She had the money and was doing it for her extended family. But it was fairly poor food photography, we tried to do a cheap cover for her and then she wanted some changes. You don't feel like saying that we've already spent a lot of money on this but we've made absolutely nothing on the job. You can't, in that case, pull the plug, because you just can't do that to some people.

Have you met any bank managers lately?

Luckily I've paid my house off so I don't need to know any. Sometimes you get stuck. We, that is Southwood Press, are dedicated to books or writing, so sometimes you grin and bear it and learn from the experience. We've got someone who chases up potential clients and I say to him: 'If it's a cookbook, in colour—no!' You do have to learn from your experience. You can't really set down guidelines.

Austrade has a scheme called EPICS—Enhanced Printing Industry Competitiveness Scheme—which is for everyone in the publishing industry to apply for grants to fund the sort of things that will make Australia's book-printing trade more competitive, innovative, etc. It's turned out to be extraordinarily difficult to get the funding. Surprise, surprise!

This funding came as a payoff to the Democrats agreeing to the 10 per cent GST on books.

Our marketing analysis has forced us to look at what we're doing, because the

reality is that smaller printers are just disappearing and the bigger people are taking over. It's forced us to look at our customers and sit down and work out the criteria of what we actually do.

A lot of us don't have the luxury of turning away clients when we're freelancing and we just have to service the more difficult clients.

As editors it's also fair to say that we tend not to have the major infrastructure costs that a printer and book publisher has. It's not an actual comparison.

We have about a \$3.5 million or maybe \$4 million turnover. In book-publishing terms that's very small, probably one of the smallest in Australia, as so many of the book-printing companies have been lost in the last few years. So we also can't really afford to turn anything away but these what consultants have said is that you've got to turn some clients away because if you take on someone who's unprofitable, you're going to go out backwards. We do have overhead costs which are quite high. We've been forced to look at things like how much time we spend during the day talking to customers for which we're receiving no money. There comes a point where you have to say you're committed to the industry and have been in it for 30 years.

We've got a job which could perhaps have been produced in our factory a fraction better and the customer's only prepared to pay a quarter of the invoice cost. We're saying: 'No, we're happy to redo the job in total if you're concerned about quality'. Now they're hesitating because in effect they only wanted to beat down the price. It would be cheaper for us to repair the job or sell it at a discount but the issue is: if it's not good enough, we don't want the customer to have it in any case—we're going to reprint it for the same price, because we're committed to a quality job.

If you allow yourself to be beaten down just because, say, they've decided the book isn't going to sell, you leave yourself wide open in future. Your colleagues don't benefit either—no one benefits from everyone slashing each other's throat, and that's what's happening in the industry at the moment, especially between two of the bigger guys. Everyone is suffering. If you do things below cost for long enough, you

disappear. There was another book printing company which was working 24 hours a day and they still went out backwards because they weren't recovering costs.

I think you really do need to watch overhead costs. The pressure is on for you think you must have everything. But what's the point of providing them, if the revenue isn't there to service it. It's madness.

What time period should be employed when invoicing people who are self-publishing—90 days?

No, we've got to cover paper, materials and wages. We used to say 10 per cent deposit, 30 per cent at blue print proof and the balance on delivery. But we've had to revise it to 30 per cent deposit, then 40 per cent, then the balance.

I'm really disappointed with the sale or return policy with bookshops—stock goes into the shops, they don't pay for it, they've got no obligation to sell it, no obligation even to send it back. It's there at somebody's cost for 60 to 90 days and the author, if they're self-publishing and using a distributor, has had to pay the printer. On the current margins we can't afford to carry them. We're struggling at 60 days. The margins have come down. But if you're dealing with a major publisher, you've got to go with the flow and say okay, 60 or 90 days.

We can put in a seven-day invoice and then maybe wait 10 weeks. Would it be wise for us to ask for something upfront ourselves? I know some do that.

Yes, if you approach it early enough and explain that it's a partnership but to make it work, there's got to be some progress payments. Anyone who objects violently is possibly not the sort of customer you want anyway, except the big publishing houses.

It's easier dealing with a decision maker than dealing with a cog in the wheel. That can be extraordinarily difficult and if you think you're going to get in that situation, either bale out or, as I recently did, write a letter saying these are the additional costs for what you've requested and could you please sign off on these. Otherwise you get the situation where the book's printed and they don't want to pay for it. If fundamental changes are required people

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have to understand that there are costs involved and they mount up if they keep changing, changing, changing.

Sounds like annual reports!

Yes, if someone wants a quote on a 32-page in-house publication and you quote on it and then find it's an annual report, you have to re-quote because you know that the thing's going to be re-written three times, after the third printing! It is frustrating. In some cases it may be better to walk away. It's the only way these people learn if you say you're not going to get involved in that silly situation. They have to give you all the information you need so they can get a quality product. This idea of conning you into giving them a low price and then holding you to it when they've not given you all the information just isn't fair.

Do you go to court or avoid it?

Avoid it at all costs.

Recently we had a customer who offered to pay all the money upfront if they could have the book two days earlier than the scheduled delivery date. We couldn't do it and declined the offer, but in the process forgot to get the next progress payment. Then we were running close to the wire, they wanted the job, someone decided to send part quantity out because they had a launch etc. and so we had 10 per cent of the cost of the book when we delivered the job. Then they complained that it was printed too grey. In the end we threatened legal action and received a cheque immediately for the balance.

As a printer, do you have a legal liability?

There was a Michael Jackson book for which they said they had advice to clear them of defamation, but they didn't produce the letter so we didn't do the job. It was probably true, but the content was defamatory. At the moment, we're doing one which goes a bit close to the bone and we've said we don't want to put our name on it. But it would be physically impossible to read everything. I don't think there are any recent cases where a printer copped it. They'd rather go for someone with some assets and we've not got enough. But you don't knowingly print anything which is offensive.

What about the copyright of photographs?

We have to take customers at face value. All we can do is provide them with advice and tell them that most photographs should be referenced. We take reasonable precautions but we can't guarantee we're not breaching copyright. We always advise people to get permission where possible.

How would you see the relationship building between yourself and the editor? Would you ask the editor to work on a particular project, or would you send the author away to contact the editor?

That depends. An editor approached us about freelancing and I've mentioned her to a few clients who've not actually taken her up on it. It depends on the client. Another client preferred to work direct, so I rang the editor and checked if that was okay. I think the arrangement works better if you can work directly with the customer because it's such a personal process. It's the same thing with cover design. Self-publishers want to be involved in that decision. We only do simple covers, say for \$150, not \$650 for a professional cover design.

I often say to people that it's cheapest if you give us the final disk and all we do is output the film and print the book.

I have to say I've been unsuccessful in getting people to get the work professionally edited. I can't seem to convince them that it's money well spent, and I'm not sure what the answer is.

Maybe what's more effective is for us to provide examples of 'before' and 'after'. Maybe we can promote our services not by explaining the technicalities, but by giving clear evidence and that's what sells people.

But you have to get permission from the writer, unless you create your own examples.

If it is typeset, it's more appealing and the eye follows the text. But I've not been successful in persuading people that if they really want to communicate they need to get a professional editor. In a way, it's the vanity publishing issue—you don't spend too much time on it.

From my experience it's the less experienced authors that are the more intransigent, so that's something that we need to be aware of and counter.

How often do you see a book that acknowledges the editor?

I often give people a photocopy which shows the cover designer, the editor, if the typesetting's been done outside, and shows the printer. I encourage them to get an ISBN even though it now costs money. I encourage them to get National Library Australian Cataloguing-in-Publication. It's a complete book so when you go down all those paths you've produced a real book, I suppose.

We've spent a lot of time encouraging people to do the right thing. My hardest job is saying to people, 'you've spent 50 hours scanning this, it's on six or seven CDs, your computer's crashed 10 times, you've used 10 ink cartridges and three days printing it out, but unfortunately it's no good—before this stage, you should have seen an editor'.

For self-publishers, they'd be better off showing an editor a chapter and asking for comments which can then be incorporated into the rest of the writing. You've then got a better idea of how much the project's going to cost. You can only really do it with a team approach because once the thing's all finished and dropped in your lap it's too late. If it's still in what they think of as draft form they're going to be much more open to making substantive changes. But the biggest challenge for us all is how to get to people early in the process.

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 edited Bruce Welch's talk.

Congratulations

Congratulations to life member Jacquie Kent for winning this year's National Biography Award for *A Certain Style: Beatrice Davis*, a literary life, out of a field of 69 entries. Jacquie is a valuable and varied contributor to the editing world. She is a Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellow, has written distance education material, and taught editing for the University of Southern Queensland. Her many titles include six novels for young adults.

CASE accreditation working group

Late last year the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) recommended the establishment of a working group to consider an accreditation system for practising editors. This group has now been formed. It consists of one delegate from the Society of Editors in each state and territory, with Pamela Hewitt participating from New South Wales. Victoria's Janet Mackenzie is the convenor.

The working group's brief is:

- to research how other organisations and professions accredit or certify their members
- to set out the principles which should underlie any accreditation system for editors
- to develop possible models (probably two plus the option of no accreditation) to be put to the members.

Matters that the group will look at include:

- advantages and disadvantages: is it worth it?
- scope: what skills and knowledge should the scheme cover? (see *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*)
- methods: these could include examinations or tests, a portfolio of work, referenced work experience, completion of an approved course, or combinations thereof
- funding: since the industry will benefit from such a system, organisations like the Australian Publishers Association could contribute to its establishment; also investigate grants, government funding, etc.
- enforcement: what happens about complaints? de-accreditation?

• promotion: to practitioners and clients.

The working group will make use of a framework developed by the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. to guide research into the accreditation systems used by other professions. It will liaise with other bodies accrediting editors, including the Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders in the UK, the Editors' Association of Canada and Editforce in Sydney.

So far, the group has made contact with the Australian Publishers' Association, and with CREATE (Culture Research Education and Training Enterprise Australia), the federal government body that oversees assessment in the

publishing industry, and we will maintain liaison with them. Delegates are also in touch with educational authorities and with editing bodies in other countries, including the Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (UK) and the Editors' Association of Canada.

To fulfil its brief to 'set out the principles which should underlie any accreditation system for editors', it is preparing a position paper on 'Criteria for an Accreditation Scheme'.

The group is also investigating the advantages and disadvantages of establishing an accreditation framework,

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L E T T E R S

Myth debunked: Want something done? Don't ask a busy person

Here is some feedback from one of your 'silent' members. I don't work as an editor, although I do a considerable amount of editing as part of my job in NSW Health. Editing is one of the most enjoyable parts of my job, along with the writing that often precedes the editing. I always enjoy *Blue Pencil* and I'm really tickled by things like 'The Doctor is In' and 'What Word is That'. However, when I describe them to my colleagues, I'm afraid it confirms their beliefs about my eccentricity—they don't realise there is a whole raft of people who like things to do with words.

Although I would like to become more involved, I'm already involved in so

many other activities and responsibilities that it's just not possible. From my perspective, the old adage about 'ask a busy person' is a myth—busy people don't have time for other things.

So thank you to those who do devote the time to organising the workshops and monthly get-togethers, produce *Blue Pencil* and the various other activities that the society engages in. I know how much work is involved in running a voluntary organisation and I really appreciate what you do.

Best wishes
Judy Jones

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Courses are presented by Michael Lewis, who has many years' experience teaching professional writing at universities in NSW. Generous discounts are offered to members of the Society of Editors.	
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Business
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Anybody remember *AGPS*?

Like all professionals, people who work with language are in some measure dependent upon reliable works of reference. The recent publication of the sixth edition of what we used to call *AGPS* has caused many of us to ask: ‘So what?’ I reply: ‘So here’s a review.’ The sixth edition of the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* is compiled by Snooks & Co, and is published by John Wiley.

Most of us ‘grew up’ thinking of the earlier editions as the *AGPS Style Manual*, or often just *AGPS*—just as we refer to *Chicago*. The Australian Government Publishing Service no longer stands behind the *Style Manual*; the sixth edition bears the imprint of John Wiley, and carries an overt attribution to the editing team. Will we still call it *AGPS*? *Snooks & Co*, perhaps? My preference is for *AGPS*, simply to maintain continuity when we might be referring to earlier editions. In what follows, for example, I’m chiefly interested in comparing *AGPS 6* with *AGPS 5*.

Now that this eagerly awaited new edition is here, we are entitled to ask: do we need it? No reader of *Blue Pencil* will deny that the book itself fills a great need, but are we really ready for another edition?

My answer is an emphatic ‘yes’, but let’s think first about what we might want

from a new edition. Improvements, of course, but of what kind?

Admittedly, many users of a style manual will often dip into it for pleasure and relaxation, but the main purpose of such a book is as a tool. We go to it for answers to immediate on-the-job needs, under pressure from deadlines, budgets, bosses, and authors. We need to find information quickly; having found it, we need to understand it clearly; having understood it, we need to apply it confidently; having applied it, we need to achieve successful results.

AGPS 6 delivers improvements in all four respects (though this is no reflection on the accessibility, clarity, adequacy, or accuracy of previous editions, and it’s not to say that every change is necessarily for the better).

Times change. Language changes. Readers’ habits and expectations change, and authors and editors must respond to those changes. If a style manual is to be a reliable tool, it must reflect those changes. That is what *AGPS 6* does. Indeed, it includes so many changes that it is really a new book, almost unrecognisable as the offspring of its distinguished ancestry.

The most obvious change is in appearance. The cover, now printed using the four-colour process, is clearly intended to appeal to a wider readership; this is no longer a government publication which just happens to be of value to a specialised non-government audience, but a major contender in an increasingly crowded market. The pages are wider, so that the format is now consistent with many software manuals and other books on our office shelves, and the stock is a little lighter (at the cost of some show-through).

Other changes in appearance bring about significant improvements in accessibility (navigability, if you prefer). Spot colour is used extensively throughout, notably in corner bleeds that highlight chapter numbers and names. Here, I think, is a design error—it would have been very simple to position the bleeds down the outer edge to form a thumb index, instead of positioning them

all in the same corner. (But there must be some scope for further improvement, to justify *AGPS 7*!)

The first two-page spread of each part outlines the part’s contents, and again makes heavy use of spot colour. Within each part, each chapter has its own table of contents, with first- and second-level headings clearly differentiated. This use of clear and frequent headings has allowed the old practice of numbering each paragraph to be discontinued. This is a mixed blessing; the numbers unquestionably disrupted the reading flow, but they made it very easy to refer to a specific point during a telephone or email discussion. We will now have to use the page numbers and headings instead.

The increased page width has been turned to good account. Most body pages feature a wide outer margin which contains frequent asides—tips, examples, or clarifications. This is a growing (and welcome) trend in informational texts; the marginal notes do much the same job as footnotes, but are more attractive and less disruptive, and help draw attention to key sections of the main text. The wider pages also permit a three-column index, which shaves a dozen pages off the back of the book. Just as well; the fifth edition’s 468 pages have increased to 550 in the sixth.

No doubt as part of the orientation to a wider market, the content has changed in some interesting ways. There is now a substantial discussion of the publishing process, with special (and welcome) emphasis on planning. Questions of design—informational as well as visual—are dealt with very effectively in limited space. Publishing for electronic media, notably but not exclusively the web, is necessarily covered in some depth.

Everything, so far, cries ‘new’. And certainly there is much new content. But what of the nuts and bolts? What of the advice about grammar, punctuation, typography?

Well, it’s all there, except that it, too, is new. Much of the advice is the same,

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Internet humour

The following are some of the winners of the “worst analogies ever written in a high school essay” contest in the Washington Post Style Invitational:

The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease.

The politician was gone but unnoticed, like the period after the Dr. on a Dr Pepper can.

She caught your eye like one of those pointy hook latches that used to dangle from screen doors and would fly up whenever you banged the door open again.

AGPS

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of course, but the expression of that advice has been revised. The result is a noticeable improvement in clarity—in reader-friendliness, if you like. *AGPS 5* and its predecessors were undeniably clearly written, yet the formality of a government publication was never completely absent. *AGPS 6* uses the language of the real world to convey real information to real readers. Here's a brief example, first from *AGPS 5*, at the beginning of para 13.54:

'Legibility and readability are fundamental to good typography. They may

seem the same, but there is an important difference. Briefly, legibility relates to the clarity of the image when reproduced in printed matter, while readability relates to the ease and comfort with which the matter can be read.'

Here's the equivalent from *AGPS 6*, on page 324:

'Readability and legibility are both fundamental to good typography. Briefly, readability relates to the ease and comfort with which the material can be read and legibility relates to the clarity of the lettershapes when reproduced.'

I would have added a comma after 'can be read' in the second sentence, but there's no denying the overall improvement.

To repeat: yes, we do need *AGPS 6*. It's comforting to see so many well-known names, including several members of this society, among the project team and the contributors. Comforting, because we know that the people who put this admirable work together are people like us: people who know and love our language, and care about effective communication. They have recreated, rather than merely revising, an indispensable tool for everyone writing, editing, or publishing in Australia today. And if they still fail to make a firm recommendation in favour of the serial comma, perhaps that's another change scheduled for *AGPS 7*.

Michael Lewis

Correction to AGM minutes

The gremlins were at work when the minutes of the 2002 AGM were published in the April issue of *Blue Pencil*, and a paragraph was missing from the section about CASE. The section should have read:

'In a brief CASE update, members were referred to the report of the October CASE meeting which was published in the December issue of *Blue Pencil*. Particular attention was drawn to the financial implications for the NSW society. It is proposed that CASE meet twice a year, for which the cost to NSW would be approximately \$1200 per meeting. No objections to this expenditure were voiced.

Pamela Hewitt was introduced as the NSW society's representative to the CASE accreditation working group. She would welcome any comments and suggestions about accreditation from members.'

Accreditation

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and continuing to research how other organisations and professions handle accreditation. A report on these issues will be published in the societies' newsletters to get feedback from members.

A teleconference of delegates was held on 21 April. Watch *Blue Pencil* next month for a report.

Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please contact Pamela Hewitt at emend@cyberone.com.au

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007; Voicemail: (02) 9294 4999
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/socednsw/>

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 May issue is Monday 8 April.

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.

2002 COMMITTEE

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NOTICEBOARD

The Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. lists courses for the convenience of members. Please note, this is not an endorsement.

Training

Canberra Society of Editors

Effective Project Management

Monday 13 May 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Canberra Business Centre, Bradfield St, Downer

Bookings: Cathy Nicoll; phone: (02) 6259 2984

\$50 (members of the society) or \$90 (non-members) to PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603.

Australian Society of Indexers

May 3, 10 & 17

Introduction to Book Indexing

University of New South Wales

May 24

Computer-aided Indexing

University of New South Wales

May 25–26

ACT Region Branch Professional Development Weekend

Ranelagh

House, Robertson, NSW

Contact: <http://aussi.org/dates.htm>; phone: 0500 525 005.

Events

Varuna, The Writer's House book launches

Saturday May 11, 2 p.m.

Deb Westbury's *Flying Blind*, her first collection with publishers Brandl&Schlesinger.

Saturday May 25, 2 p.m.

Triple book launch

American poet Devin Johnston's new collection *Telepathy*, published by PaperBark Press; *Duty*, the first collection by Blue Mountains poet Geraldine McKenzie; and *Summer*, by Martin Harrison

Contact: varuna@varuna.com.au; phone: (02) 4782 5674.

NSW Writers' Centre

6–7 July 2002

Popular Writing Festival

Held in conjunction with Selwa Anthony Literary Agency.

A weekend of readings, panel sessions, book launches and author talks

Volunteers welcome.

Contact: Irina Dunn, phone (02) 9555 9757; email nswwc@ozemail.com.au.

Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing

Call for papers, deadline 1 June 2002

Books and Empire: Textual Production, Distribution and Consumption in Colonial and Post Colonial Countries

Conference: 30 January–1 February 2003, University of Sydney

Contact: <http://idun.itsc.adfa.edu.au/ASEC/HOBA..html>