

# Blue Pencil

Newsletter of  
The Society  
of Editors  
(NSW) Inc.

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October 2008

## Literary agents—the link between authors and publishers

*At our September meeting Lyn Tranter, proprietor of Australian Literary Management, gave us her view of changes in the publishing world and shared anecdotes about her experiences as a literary agent.*

When I was thinking about doing this talk one of the people I hearkened to was Lucy Montgomery who was one of my favourite writers as a child. I'm sure you know she wrote all of the *Anne of Green Gables* books. She sold the rights to the first book for \$100 and spent the rest of her life trying to get the copyright back, which she never succeeded in doing. She needed an agent. She really did.

Some of you might be familiar with the background of literary agents in this country but probably some won't so I'll just give a brief rundown. About 30 years ago now Curtis Brown set up for business. Based in the UK they came out here to colonise, as they do, and for many years they were the only agency. Then approximately 25 years

ago Caroline Lurie set up Australian Literary Management in Melbourne and five or six years after that asked me to join to set up a Sydney branch. At the same time Jill Hickson (Wran) also set up her agency and many others followed. Altogether now there are probably close to 20 accredited agents in Australia. I think it's important to look at accreditation because it's a very scary thing that anyone can just set up and say 'I'm a literary agent' and pop their moniker on the door. After I joined Caroline we'd often talk about setting up an agents' association. It

was one of those endless conversations because there were accredited agent associations in the UK and USA. We finally got around to doing it about seven years ago. It's called ALAA, Australian Literary Agents' Association, and we have a code of ethics that members must adhere to.

One of the main reasons it started up was that there was a woman – I won't name names for obvious reasons but she did work freelance for many years and at Penguin – who set herself up as an agent. I had an author ring me

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**Next meeting: Tuesday, 7 October 2008**

### Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship Report

Colette Vella presents a report on her research project for the 2007 Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship: the relationship between US authors and their editors. She will speak about the role of the editor in nurturing the author and their writing in a competitive and commercial publishing world, and the ever-growing part played by literary agents in this relationship. She will also give her impressions of editing in the USA in general.

Colette Vella has worked as a book editor for 14 years, beginning as a trainee editor at HarperEducational Publishers and moving on to become editor and then senior editor at Allen & Unwin. There she worked across their various lists, and had the privilege of being involved with many talented authors and in several award-winning books, including two Miles Franklin Award winners. In 2004–05 she spent a year in London at Granta Books. She then moved to Murdoch Books as their editorial manager and, following her three-month stint undertaking the Beatrice Davis Fellowship in the USA, she took up a new role as commissioning editor of fiction and narrative non-fiction for their Pier 9 imprint.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. \$15 for members and students; \$20 for non-members and those who do not RSVP; \$7 for holders of a current concession card or student card. Non-members who book and do not show up must still pay. Please RSVP to (02) 9294 4999 (voicemail) or the email address <editorbruce@optusnet.com.au> by Friday, 3 October 2008.

**November meeting: Eve Abbey on 40 years of bookselling and publishing in Australia; Tuesday, 4 November, 2008**

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and tell me she'd just been charged \$15,000 for her manuscript to be edited by this agent. I said, 'Well that seems an extraordinary amount of money to me.' She said, 'Yes and she hasn't been able to secure a publisher and I'm not paying and she's suing me.' The case went to court down in Bendigo and they did find that there was a case to answer and that the agent was able to charge a fee as you would if you were a freelance editor. This is a few years ago now and so the author did end up paying \$4,000 which was the current rate (and probably not much more now I would think; editors are notoriously badly paid). So that really spurred me on to say, 'We've just got to do something about this. There's got to be a scenario where agents are not able to charge fees. That's got to be the real core of the whole business... that you take an author on, you develop them, you work with them, you find a publisher for them; but you never at any stage charge fees or editorial fees and all you do is take a commission from the money that you earned.'

#### **Becoming a literary agent**

If anyone is thinking about setting up as an agent you can go to the ALAA website and see what the membership terms are and what you have to do.

Basically agents must have been in business for three years representing authors or have been responsible for the execution of ten contracts. Agents who have earned over \$250,000 in commission in a two-year period also qualify. No agent will be admitted if they are employed by a publisher, obviously. No agent shall charge a reading fee or an editor's fee and if they do they will not qualify for membership.

#### **Industry changes**

What I want to talk about now is how the industry has changed for me in the past eighteen years. The biggest change

is that the publishers are no longer looking at unsolicited manuscripts. Now I've had people say to me, 'This must be terrific for you. You'll get all this work.' In fact it's just been a disaster for most agents because we're inundated, utterly inundated, so much so that I know very few agents who will ever look at an entire manuscript. I only look at a one to two page synopsis and two sample chapters. A lot of agents have now closed their books. They just cannot cope with the volume that is coming through. The publishers have done this for one reason and one reason only and that is just pure cost cutting. They used to employ people who'd go through the slush pile and

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#### **'The problem is that it's too much of a bookshop type book.'**

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now they don't and those that say they do I actually don't believe them.

So in that way it's not terrific and it's very hard to get an agent and it's very hard to get a publisher. It's a real catch-22 for everyone. The point I want to emphasise is that if you are approaching an agent you've got to do it in the most professional way to try and get their eye and for the agent or myself to know that the person applying is serious and wants a career as a writer. I'm not interested in doing single books at all. I'm interested in taking someone on who wants to go on and develop and do many projects.

#### **The acquisition meeting**

The other thing that's changed too has been the acquisition meeting. When I was first in the business you would get a manuscript, get it to the stage where you could present it to a publisher, know which publisher you thought it would be best suited for, or a commissioning editor who would like this type of book, and they would generally make a decision. An offer would be made, we would discuss terms and then the publisher or commissioning editor would go to the sales and marketing people and say, 'Here it is guys. You think up some clever, wonderful way of selling this book.' And that's gone. That no longer exists whatsoever and it doesn't exist globally. What we have now is sales and marketing sitting in on acquisition meetings. What sales

and marketing have said over the years is, 'You're giving us these turkeys. We can't sell them so we need to see that we've got something, a product, that we can actually sell.' This is a very difficult situation. I was at the London Book Fair this year talking to a publisher from Simon & Schuster who had joined an agency that I actually use as a sub-agent. I asked, 'Why did you leave the dark side? Why did you come over to us?' He replied, 'Well, I was trying to push this particular book and there was this young person from sales and marketing who kept saying "No, I don't think we should take this book on" and finally I said to her, "Why not? What's wrong?"' and she said, "The problem is that it's too much of a bookshop type book.'" And we both laughed but I know exactly what she meant.

#### **The UK situation**

That's what's happened in the UK. It would be a terrifying scenario if it happens here but hopefully it won't. Their world's dividing into two groups – supermarkets and chain stores such as Tesco; and Waterstone's which are the big independent stores that control the High Street. Five per cent of the bookshops in the UK are independents as opposed to here in Australia where it's 25 per cent. This is a really crucial factor because at 25 per cent of the market the independent bookshops can actually make a book succeed but in the UK at five per cent they can't. So the publishers have got to get their books into the supermarket. The supermarkets are doing the most extraordinary discounting such as 'buy one book, get two free', that sort of thing and they also want a certain type of book. The real focus in the UK at the moment seems to be the misery memoir. And then we've got Waterstone's.

I had lunch with a publisher from Fourth Estate and asked him how it was going with Waterstone's. He said, 'We had a sales conference recently and we thought we'd be selling Waterstone's books that we've got from the Fourth Estate but it wasn't actually like that.' What Waterstone's did was sell to the publisher what they could do for them. They were saying if you've got a new Ruth Rendell out or a new John le Carré what we will do for you

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#### **NEW MEMBERS**

**Julie Adams**

**Leeza Baric**

**Monique Choy**

**Jeanette Durick**

**David Leyton**

**Jane Sexton**

**Roslyn Weaver**

# Workshop report: Preparing for the Accreditation Exam

*Due to overwhelming demand, the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. held a second Preparing for the Accreditation Exam workshop on 13 September, presented by Fiona Doig, Heather Jamieson and Sybil Kesteven.*

Accreditation has been the buzzword in editing circles for the past few months, and judging by the turnout to this workshop, the first exam is going to attract a lot of candidates. The preparation workshop on 22 August was booked out almost immediately, and the second workshop on 13 September saw more candidates eager to gain tips from such experienced editors and New South Wales assessors.

The purpose of the workshop was to guide potential candidates through the different parts of the sample exam, suggesting things to look out for, giving advice on how to approach it and giving people a chance to ask questions.

The presenters were senior editors who have been involved in the development of the IPEd accreditation system and exam. Assessors Sybil Kesteven and Heather Jamieson were accompanied by Fiona Doig (standing in for Pam Peters, who presented Part 1 in the workshop on 22 August).

Workshop participants came from a variety of backgrounds—book publishing, magazines, corporate communications and writing—and had a range of experience as in-house and freelance editors. Some were relatively new to the industry, whereas others were old hands who were curious about the benefits of accreditation. Discussion was lively and everyone had a chance to get involved and ask questions.

All participants had been encouraged to attempt the sample exam before attending the workshop. While some were initially undecided about whether to sit for the exam, most had made up their minds by the end of the day.

The workshop began with an introduction to Part 1 and some sample copy-editing questions from Fiona Doig. Part 1 of the exam involves correcting issues of grammar and punctuation—not style. Candidates were warned not to attempt to rewrite the test sentences (much to the frustration of the writers in the room!). We learned that the examiners are testing our ability to pick up errors and fix them—not to rewrite or alter the writer's style.

Most of us thought Part 1 would be easy, but it required careful attention. Fiona warned us, 'If you think the sentence needs rewriting, look for the error. Common errors like homophones and mistaken usages are easy to miss.' One participant noted: 'What I thought would be easy required meticulous attention.'

Sybil Kesteven then introduced Part 2, the copyedit of a longer extract. She stressed again that rewriting and structural editing are not required—the focus is the edit, not the content—and reminded everyone to follow the brief provided. The actual edit is worth 200 marks, with 20 more marks each for the style sheet and author queries. She noted that it isn't necessary to find every tiny error, just to produce a sound edit according to the brief.

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**'...the examiners are testing our ability to pick up errors and fix them...'**

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For those who hadn't done hand mark-up for some time, Sybil advised us to familiarise ourselves with the symbols in the *Style Manual* and in Janet Mackenzie's *Editor's Companion*. But the important thing is to practise. Because of the time constraints in the exam (1 hour plus 15 minutes to review), she recommended following Mackenzie's program for an editing project from chapter 9 of *The Editor's Companion*. She also stressed the importance of creating a comprehensive style sheet and choosing reference materials carefully.

Heather Jamieson and Sybil then took participants through each question in Part 3 of the exam, where candidates choose four questions from a selection of 12. This section includes four specialist questions, but Heather advised us not to be wary of attempting these without experience in the speciality. In her refreshingly straightforward style, Heather stressed that accreditation is about competence, not perfection.

The workshop ended with a Q&A panel, and each of the presenters gave their top tips for the exam. Heather suggested her recommended books: the *Style Manual*, an editor's handbook (either Mackenzie or Flann & Hill) and a good dictionary (Macquarie or Oxford) that you know and trust. She also said, 'Be strategic. Assess the questions before trying to answer them, and plan your time carefully.'

Fiona and Pam Peters advised thoroughly reviewing chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the *Style Manual* (on grammar, spelling and punctuation), plus chapters 10 (abbreviation) and 11 (numbers and measurement). 'Know your references well—it's not good enough to just flip through them on the day.' Another recommended book was Pam's *Cambridge Guide to Australian English Usage*.

Sybil also said to come prepared. 'Read the instructions carefully, and pay close attention to the briefs.' She mentioned that most questions in Part 3 could be answered in point form, and stressed that candidates should write neatly, allow time to review and keep an eye on the clock.

All presenters stressed the importance of thoroughly familiarising yourself with the sample exam, and carefully reading all the materials on the IPEd website at <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>.

They reminded us that accreditation is about recognising editorial skills, not excluding people from the profession. Editors with at least two to three years of in-house experience, or the equivalent, should have no major difficulties in completing it. Having said that, the workshop was an invaluable experience for all who attended. Thanks to Heather, Sybil, Fiona and Pam, and to our Professional Development Coordinator, Meryl Potter, for organising it.

As one attendee at the first workshop said, 'I can't imagine anyone taking the exam without having done the workshop.'

**Lachlan Jobbins**  
Committee member

# Tiered membership

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

## Categories

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

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

## Phasing in a new system

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

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

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

## Experience

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

## Corporate Associates

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

## The Committee

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

## New authors win inaugural PM's Literary Awards.

The inaugural Prime Minister's Literary Awards were announced on 12 September. Despite a short list that included well-known expatriate authors Germaine Greer and Clive James, the two winning works were penned by first-time authors.

The winner of the \$100,000 fiction award was *The Zookeeper's War* by Steven Conte. This powerful novel of both a marriage and a city collapsing is

set in Berlin during the Second World War and confronts not only the brutality of war but the possibility of heroism. It was described by the award judges as a striking first novel, enriched by formidable research and a breadth of historical imagination.

*Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers*, by South Australian museum curator Philip Jones, won the \$100,000 non-

fiction award. In this book Jones takes Aboriginal artefacts from the museum shelves and traces their stories to reveal charged and nuanced moments of encounter in Australia's frontier history and create a vivid picture of Australia's past. The award judges described the book as a work of elegance, simplicity and outstanding clarity.

For more details visit the website <[www.arts.gov.au/pmliteraryawards](http://www.arts.gov.au/pmliteraryawards)>.

## IPEd notes

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

IPEd held its AGM on 24 August. It was followed by a meeting of the council.

At the AGM, members received reports from the Chair and Honorary Treasurer, and approved the audited financial statements for 2007–08 and the budget for 2008–09. The Chair's report and the financial statements have been placed on the IPEd website. Members confirmed the nominations of existing councillors, most of them until the 2009 AGM, at which time, under the terms of the constitution, half the members of the council must retire.

At the council meeting, the forthcoming accreditation examination was a major agenda item, as was the proposed budget for the year. Statistics

on website visitation were a highlight of the report on communication activities: there are now over 1300 visitors per month to <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>, and they stay, on average, for six minutes. A significant proportion of recent visits was to the sample accreditation exam by editors with their eyes, no doubt, on the 'AE' postnominal. The real exam will be on Saturday, 18 October at venues in every state and Canberra.

The IPEd website is a mine of information on institute activities. Recent additions include the minutes of the two-day council meeting and planning session held in Adelaide at the end of May, and a link to <[www.comjobs.com.au](http://www.comjobs.com.au)>, a website

listing 'Opportunities and information for professional communicators' that is well worth a visit, particularly if you are in an upwardly mobile mood.

Another recent addition to the website is information on the Barbara Ramsden Award, a national award for excellence in editing created in 1971 by the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW). IPEd and the Society of Editors (Vic.) Inc. are now joint sponsors of the award with FAW.

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

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## Columnist acknowledges role of editors

Buried deep within a full page article entitled 'Dead-wood festivals' by Tim Blair in the *Daily Telegraph* on Saturday 30 August are a few lines that will bring comfort to many an editor.

The article is a humorous commentary on the prevalence of writers' festivals in this country, alluded to by our keynote speaker Lyn Tranter at the August meeting. Blair writes, 'I believe we are in danger of being swamped by

writers. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. For evidence of this, simply visit an Australian writers' festival.'

His observations about writers include:

'Also, if you ever get a chance to read their untouched copy, many of them can't actually write. At least one Editors' Festival should be held every year to thank the mostly unknown souls

who wrestle Australian writers' work into something publishable.

'It wouldn't be a very colourful event; no talks, no Welcomes to Country, just a lot of shattered people drinking heavily and complaining about shifts of tense within paragraphs and abuse of the active voice.

'It'd be like an SBS documentary, except in English. Red Pens In The Sunset, they could call it.'

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## Conference volunteers

If you believe that the society adds something worthwhile to your life, think about helping us to run it. We also need you to consider how you can contribute to the 2011 national conference to be held in Sydney. And, do not forget we would especially like to hear from all society members with a proposal for the 2011 conference theme.

**Please forward theme proposals to '2011 conference in Sydney' care of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.**

## 2008 Society Christmas Party

### Tuesday, 2 December

**Don't miss a special night of good food, good fun and good company.**

**Put this not-to-be-missed date in your diary now.**

**Please check the website and our next newsletter for more details.**

is give you window space in all the Waterstone's stores, we'll put you near the cash register, we'll put you in the catalogues, we'll falsify the 'staff picks' and we'll charge you £50,000. That's the situation they've got. So here at least we do have the independents. I'm sure you all know or have read about the chains changing hands but we don't have this split system as it were. Even America is better because you have Barnes & Noble and Borders. So we've got a little bit of room to move but if things travel the way they have in the UK we're in real trouble.

### **The agent's role**

So, what do people expect of an agent? And what can go wrong? This is something that's really perplexed me over the years because I think some authors don't have a clear idea of what we do and they will often perceive us as someone like Harry M Miller for example. These are what I call media agents. They totally take care of a person and they charge a lot more than literary agents. I had one author and after we'd done one book together she left. She said, 'Oh you're never there for me'. And that's right I'm not. I'm there at the beginning, for the building up and the developing and the selling and trying to get as good a deal as I can and also for trade in overseas rights. But I don't want to go to the book launch. I don't want to be a cheap psychiatrist. I don't think I should have to go to the ghastly number of literary festivals that we have now that drive me insane. Why should I have to do this? The expectation that an author has of what an agent does is something that they should think fairly carefully about.

### **Manuscript auctions**

I'd just like to briefly touch on auctions. They are something that I never used to do all that many of and am now finding if it's the right book and it's something I'm hugely confident of then I will. What that means is I put out a proposal to a select number of publishers that I think will be interested in the title and I give them a day to come back to me. Sometimes I have to ring them up and say, 'Don't forget. Today's the day.' It's quite a good way of moving the process along or speeding it up because I will often say get back to me

in five weeks whereas otherwise with publishing houses it will take them two to three months. It never used to be as long as that. And again this is related to whether they have an acquisitions meeting or not. They used to have them every week, sometimes twice a week, but now it's only once a fortnight. So the auction is a way of speeding up the process.

Can it go wrong? That's the other thing. When people ask 'How does it work? What do you do?' It all works on the one level but then you can get bizarre scenarios. One that happened a few years ago was with a very high profile woman who was involved in environmental and political issues and I auctioned the book. But she was a very controversial figure and it went out to

### **'...if things travel the way they have in the UK we're in real trouble.'**

eight publishers and seven came back and they all passed and said no. And then the eighth came in and said, 'Do you think I could get it for \$60,000?' and I said, 'Oh, I think you could get it for \$60,000.' We all had a fantastic celebration...then they got sold two weeks later. A merger. The publisher left. A new publisher came in and said, 'I won't do the book. I won't pay you the money.' We'd agreed on it. We'd done all the initial contractual things. Anyway through a miracle of miracles I did actually get paid for it and I did go back and sell it to another publisher. So that was a nice outcome. I cite that as an example because it does vary. It's happening now more and more of course because there are so many mergers going on.

### **Rights**

Normally I always say I want the rights. I will just sell the ANZ (Australia/New Zealand) rights to the Australian publisher. They know the territory. There's a lot of resistance now on that. Quite a few of the publishers want to control the world rights. Often I'll let them because some of them are good, some of them have good rights departments. Others are appalling. They take the rights and just sit on them and don't do anything. But I'm very proactive with rights selling and

I try to get to at least one major fair a year. Preferably not Frankfurt, which is just a complete bloodbath as far as I'm concerned. But London is becoming a far more interesting fair. A lot of the Americans are coming over whereas a lot are not going to Frankfurt because of the difficulty and because it's so extraordinarily expensive.

I think an agent can be good with this because of the volume. If you're, say, selling rights to a particular company and a large one, like Penguin or Random or one of the big guys, they've got a pile of books they are trying to sell. What I take is this brochure which I print with each page individually on the authors and titles that I think may interest publishers. There are about 16 titles in there. When you're at these fairs you usually get 20 to 25 minutes with each person. One of the people at Random House who went to Frankfurt last year had 120 appointments in three days. So you're going, you're really going. With that many books and that many appointments by the end of it you're exhausted. So an agent, I think, can provide that personal touch of going straight to the publisher in a particular territory or working really closely with their sub-agent.

Some publishers are terrific and I have to say, in the last 10 years, a real force in Australian publishing in terms of rights has been Michael Heyward. I'm sure most of you know him from Text Publishing. He's taken some people who have been around for quite a while now such as Peter Temple, a very fine crime writer, who had been with three or four different publishing houses but had never been published overseas. Last year he won the Golden Dagger award in the UK. Michael is a very good and vigorous rights seller so it does change and as an agent I'm more flexible than I used to be.

### **Editorial role**

What is the editorial role of the agent? I think that's something that might interest you all a lot. Once you had a book and said, 'I think that's got enormous potential. I think we can really do something with this.' Those days are not there any more. I think most of the publishers want to look at a work that doesn't require a huge amount of in-depth editing. So this is

where, as an agent, you have to present a book where you can not only see the potential but can say this is going to work. So a lot of agents are taking on that editorial role. It's something I happen to enjoy. I like working with authors on their books. Nothing I say is carved in stone and I'm not a trained editor but I do think I have a fairly good gut reaction to it. That is a thing that has changed drastically too.

**Success story**

I thought I'd talk for a minute too about Debra Adelaide's book *The Household Guide to Dying*, which was just published in June in Australia and New Zealand. Debra came to me with that book about a year ago and I just loved it. I thought there were a few problems but nothing serious. It was such a great story. It had huge emotional pull which is something that people are looking for with literary fiction these days. It ended up being the perfect scenario, which is just wonderful.

I put it out for auction here. It got a great deal of interest and finally I concluded and gave it to Ron Morrison, an editor who I'd dealt with before with Gao Xingjian. So Pan got the rights for the book here. Frankfurt was coming up last October and I sent it to my sub-agent in London and she sent it out. HarperCollins made a preemptive bid. That is where they come in with an offer that is so large that it will knock

everyone out—and they did. They offered £187,000. And we had 24 hours to make a decision.

We were then about two weeks before Frankfurt. Another thing that has changed greatly is technology so everything can go out electronically. Just like that it goes to France, Italy, Spain or Germany. So when they were at Frankfurt they had it there so we then conducted mini auctions in Frankfurt. We sold rights for over a million in that three-day period. So it was a wonderful thing to be able to make my author a wealthy woman and change her life, which it did. Then we sold into America and also into Canada.

The Canadian sale was one of my favourites. We had two publishers fighting over the book and we got to a point close to \$100,000 and no-one was going to go any further. The story of *The Household Guide to Dying* is about Delia who is dying, who has two children, keeps chickens. It's a terrific but very sad story. One Canadian publisher wrote in her letter not to me as the agent, and not to Debra, but to Delia and said how much she wanted to publish her in memory of her death. Of course she got the book. That was one of those situations where everything worked, it all went so beautifully. It is just coming out in the UK, is in translation and will be published early next year in Europe and America next

year...and we're now talking film rights.

**The future**

The other thing that's interesting is ebooks. One of the things we did recently with the agents' association was to get four of the major publishers to come and talk to us about ebooks. We held a one day forum at CAL, which is a fabulous organisation, and that was a really good thing to do because we were all running a bit in the dark about what to do with ebooks. My particular feeling is that I don't hold out much hope for ebooks' future. I think it's going to be very interesting for certain types of books and it's no coincidence for example that Lonely Planet sold when they did because obviously a book that you can put into a hand-held device when you are travelling and backpacking around is a great thing as opposed to lugging a big book around. So guides are the type of thing where e-books are going to go. In terms of fiction or crime books, I don't think it's going to rock our boats, certainly not in my lifetime. I may be wrong. Unless they get those palm holders down to \$50 to \$60 and they're now around \$400. I can't imagine it happening

*Lyn Tranter is proprietor of Australian Literary Management. ALM's website is <www.austlit.com>. Lyn represents fiction and non-fiction authors including Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian.*

**Order form: Editorial Services Directory 2008–09**

The *Editorial Services Directory 2008–09*, published by Society of Editors (NSW) Inc., is now available. It has all the usual features including freelance editors listed by various categories such as Services Offered; Types of Published Material they have worked on; Subject (or Genre) specialities; together with an individual directory entry for each freelance editor. The price is \$20 per copy, which includes postage. A 25% discount applies for orders of 10 or more directories.

I would like to buy.....copy/ies of *Editorial Services Directory 2008–09* @ \$20 per copy (postage within Australia included) for a total of \$.....

Name:.....

Organisation:.....

Address: .....

.....

Cheque/money order, made out to Society of Editors NSW, enclosed for \$.....

Or please charge \$.....to my credit card:  
 Bankcard    MasterCard    Visa

Credit card number:  
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Name on credit card:  
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.....

Please return the form and payment to the society at PO Box 2229, Rose Bay North, NSW 2030 or by fax to (02) 9337 4126.

## Frankfurt Book Fair, 15 to 19 October

The website for current information and daily updates about the fair in 2008 is <[www.buchmesse.de/en/?](http://www.buchmesse.de/en/?)>.

## Freelancers do lunch in the Blue Mountains on Halloween Friday 31 October

The next freelancers' lunch will be on Friday 31 October at the Grand View Hotel Bistro, Wentworth Falls in the beautiful Blue Mountains. Mains range from \$15; they also take dessert seriously. The hotel is a short walk from Wentworth Falls station and there are some spectacular longer walks to help you justify dessert. The Grand View would like some idea of numbers so please RSVP to Bruce Howarth ([editorbruce@optusnet.com.au](mailto:editorbruce@optusnet.com.au)); he'll be happy to give you information on how to get there.

The society organises these lunches every second month or so. The invitation is cordially extended to other freelancers who work in the publishing industry. See you there!

## Annual Conference, Society for Technical Communication (NSW), 31 October to 1 November

The conference will be held at Citigate Central, Haymarket. Sessions include 'The good, the bad and the ugly' presented by Roger Swift, Senior Editor at the Department of Veterans Affairs; 'Seeing the wood and the trees: structure mapping for longer documents' presented by Dr Neil James of the Plain English Foundation; 'The Don't Panic Guide to annual report production' presented by Helen Lewis, Consultant. See the website for more detail, <[www.astcns.org.au](http://www.astcns.org.au)>.

## The Sixth International Conference on the Book, 25 to 27 October

The Book Conference is held annually in different parts of the world. In 2003

it was held in Cairns, Australia. This year it will be in Washington, DC, USA. One of the themes this year is 'Editors' Designers' and Typesetters' Ways with Words and Images: Past, Present, Future'. Details are at <<http://b08.cgpublisher.com/>>.

## The Editorial Services Directory 2008-09 is now available

Members who have advertised their services in the *Editorial Services Director 2008-09* should receive their complimentary copies soon. Copies can be purchased for \$20 (including postage) by contacting Terry Johnston. See the order form on page 7 for details.

## ASA donates to Indigenous literacy

The Australian Society of Authors has donated \$3,078 to the Indigenous Literacy Project—one dollar for each of its members. The Indigenous Literacy Project is a joint initiative of the Fred Hollows Foundation, the Australian Booksellers Association and the Australian Publishers Association. See the website for details of how you or your company can become involved, <[www.worldwithoutbooks.org](http://www.worldwithoutbooks.org)>.

## Barbara Jefferis Award

The Australian Society of Authors has announced the opening of the Barbara Jefferis Award for 2009. Valued at \$35,000 the award is offered for 'the best novel written by an Australian author that depicts women and girls in a positive way or otherwise empowers the status of women and girls in society'. Entries close on 28 November 2008.

## 2008 Whitley Award Winner announced

The Royal Zoological Society of NSW has announced the winners of the 2008 Whitley Awards for outstanding publications that deal with the promotion and conservation of Australasian fauna. This year's Whitley Medal winner is *A Fragile Balance. The extraordinary story of Australian marsupials*, by Christopher Dickman.

Certificates of Commendation were

awarded to publications in 11 other categories ranging from technical references to children's books. The Whitley Medal is only awarded when a publication has made a landmark contribution to the understanding, content or dissemination of zoological knowledge. It is the most sought-after prize in zoological publishing in Australia.

The awards are a tribute to Gilbert Whitley (1903-1975) an eminent Australian ichthyologist, who was Curator of Fishes at the Australian Museum from 1922 to 1964 and an active editor and writer in zoology.

## 2008 Queensland Premier's Literary Award Winners

The 14 winners of the awards in 2008 shared in a total prize money of \$225,000. Winner of the Fiction Book Award was Helen Garner for *The Spare Room*. Winner of the Non Fiction Award was Craig Sherbourne for *Muck*.

## Vale Pat Skinner

Ann Hobson has advised of the recent death of Pat Skinner. 'Society member, fabulous editor and author Pat Skinner died recently a very short time after being diagnosed with cancer. She was 48. A memorial service will be held at 12 noon on Saturday 27 September at the Duck Pond, Royal Botanical Gardens, Sydney.

### Have you used your free meeting voucher?

With just two meetings to go before the end of the calendar year there's not much time left to use your free meeting voucher. All members were sent a voucher for one free meeting when they joined or renewed their membership.

If you haven't been to a meeting yet this year you've missed some fabulous speakers. Why not come along in October to hear Collette Vella or November to hear Eve Abbey?



## The Editor's Job Market

**The Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. offers publishers the opportunity to advertise positions vacant, by email, free of charge. Reach the editors of New South Wales by using this free service to our members.**

● **Publishers: please send us your ad as a PDF or Word document and we will distribute it by email to our members. You are assured of wide distribution among your target audience.**

● **Members: please supply or update your email address so that the society can email you notices of jobs for editors.**

**We welcome advertisements for all editorial roles from trainee to publisher, for permanent, temporary or freelance jobs.**

**Email Bruce Howarth:  
<editorbruce@optusnet.com.au>**

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

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

### **Blue Pencil**

Editor: Denise Holden

Assistants: Fiona Doig, Catherine Etteridge, Julie Harders, Meryl Potter, Nicky Shortridge

Printer: Complete Design, Marrickville

Published: 11 issues a year (including 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, or email the Editor at <bluepencil@editorsnsw.com>.

**Copy deadline for the November issue is Tuesday, 14 October 2008.**

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

### **Advertising rates**

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

### **Membership**

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

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

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

### **Listing in the Editorial Services Directory**

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

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

### **Committee meetings**

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

## 2008 COMMITTEE

**President: Michael Lewis**

*Email:* <president@editorsnsw.com>

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**Editorial Services Directory coordinator: Cathy Gray**

*Phone:* (02) 9331 4731

*Email:* <esd@editorsnsw.com>

**Catering officer: Nancy Shearer**

*Email:* <catering@editorsnsw.com>

## Professional development

### InDesign for Editors (CS3)

**Date:** Thursday 13 November, 2008

**Time:** 9.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

**Presenter:** Alpha Computer Consultants

**Venue:** Level 3, 123 Clarence Street, Sydney

**Cost:** Members only \$350 (lunch and refreshments included)

Editors are increasingly being asked to use InDesign for revision and copy fitting, and may also find more opportunities available to them if they are adept in desktop publishing. This course is designed specifically for editors, and we have negotiated a significant discount for members.

Topics covered include an introduction to InDesign; preferences; working with and formatting text, text wrap, paragraph and character styles, text controls, type composition and working with tables.

If you have no knowledge of design terminology or familiarity with design issues, we strongly recommend you read the relevant sections of part 3 of Snooks & Co's *Style Manual*, 6th edition.

Course includes: a folder of easy-to-use course notes for both PC and Mac, with screen shots, certificate, 12 months help desk support (via email to reinforce the learning) and repeat any public course within six months for free (conditions apply). Each student will have their own work station. Adobe certified instructor.

**Special notes:** This class filled very quickly when last run, so we recommend early application, with payment, to secure your place. Reservations without payment will not be accepted.

We have also reserved Thursday 20 November for members, and we will offer this date if the first class fills.

**Regional members:** Unfortunately we cannot offer our usual discount for regional members as the cost is set by the supplier.

### Grammar for editors

**Presenter:** Pam Peters, Professor of Linguistics, Macquarie University

**Date:** February 2009

**Cost:** TBA

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

Copy deadline for the November issue of

*Blue Pencil*

Tuesday, 14 October 2008