



# THE EDITORS

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Registered for posting as a publication. Category "B"

NEXT MEETING ... NEXT MEETING ... NEXT MEETING ... NEXT MEETING ...

The next meeting will be held at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre at 16 Fitzroy Street, on Wednesday February 22 at 6.30pm. Guest speaker is:

Thomas Keneally

Subject:

Editors he has known (Australia, U.S., U.K.)

It is important for our caterers to know how many will be staying for dinner. Please phone Monica Ardill on 406.4288 by Monday 20 February, if you are attending.

## CATERING:

Meetings begin with wine and cheese and end with dinner. The cost for the full evening's facilities, including dinner, is now \$10.00. Without dinner, the charge is \$2.00.

We would like to record grateful thanks to our three staunch caterers - Janet Champion and her daughter Victoria, and Val MacLennan - who produced such excellent meals at last year's meetings, despite our erratic timekeeping. They have kindly agreed to continue the good work.

We hope to provide tables this year, so that everyone can eat in comfort.

## LAST MEETING

The guest speaker for the meeting on 26 October was Myra Lee, Manager of Ashton Scholastic's Children's Book Club.

In getting the best books possible for the book club, it is important

to find out what interests children. Even so, children are apt to change their mind and because of schedules, Myra has to endeavour to anticipate their requirements six months ahead of time. Trends have changed over the years, though there are those books which prove as popular today as when Myra came to Australia, in 1968.

In the early days there were very few paperbacks and the range of Australian books, in particular, was very limited. In 1968, picture books topped the list with titles such as Who took the farmer's hat? (which still sells today) and the Spook series (the ABC want this for 1984). In 1969, How animals sleep, El Blanco and Ice Station Zebra were most popular: in 1970, Lucky and the giant and books of jokes and riddles: in 1971 science fiction started to become a prominent part of publishing, though it has faded a little in Ashton's lists. Perhaps, Myra suggested, television has over-saturated the subject. In 1972, dinosaurs were at the top of the list, followed closely by war stories. Ghost stories were, and are still, used quite often. These provoke the greatest number of letters but Myra feels that there is a place for them in children's literature. In 1974, films had the greatest impact of any media, on children. Television is too superficial, Myra said. Films such as El Blanco, Ice Station Zebra, through to David Cassidy films, The Empire Strikes Back and the Herbie series will always sell well if included on the list.

Books which contain swearing and too much sex are not on the list. How to ... books (though not the English version, which generally covers indoor activities), science (including scientific experiments) sell well. Interest in the E.T. story book was phenomenal and it, together with The Lettering Book, was one of the best sellers - a print run of 30,000 was repeated several times.

Knitting and sewing books for the 7 - 11 age group sell very well, though there is a need for basic instruction-type books. There are phases when adventure books don't sell and currently, there is little demand for puzzle books.

There has been a rise in popularity of sports books with How to play ... proving the most popular.

Myra said that at the risk of sounding sexist, she felt that it is important to cater for boys. Girls will read books aimed at boys, but not vice versa. As for romance books, children are tired of having their problems aired in books. The English have tried to do school-girl romance but the books are not particularly good. Romance is not

the 'hot property' that it was. Fantasy game books - dungeons and dragons - are most popular with the 12 - 13 year-olds (in which dice are used in conjunction with the books), and a new concept in books of 'make your own ending' is also selling well. Computers, Myra believes, will have a great impact, though not on reading. Computers might require children to think, but not to read to any great extent. Myra could not envisage children secretly taking a computer to bed, hiding under the bedclothes (though someone suggested that the warm, green glow of a computer might be preferable to a book and a cold torch!). Osborne have brought out computer books for children which are proving popular, and a Creepy Computer Book has just been published.

Myra felt that there are very few Australian publishers doing children's books and there is nothing coming through for the 10 - 13 age level in particular. She said that it is very disheartening that no one seems to be writing children's books. Cookery books for children tend to be nothing but illustrations with difficult recipes. Horses and simple picture books for the 7 - 9 age group are still popular but there are very few books catered for this age range. This prompted Barbara Kerr-Wilson to propose a motion that this society deplores the decline in children's publishing and to request that this subject be raised at the next executive meeting of the ABPA.

The motion was seconded and Barbara agreed to draft a letter to the ABPA.

#### FUTURE MEETINGS

Meetings for 1984 will be held on:

- 4 April - Annual General Meeting
- 23 May
- 4 July
- 22 August
- 3 October
- 14 November

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Three members of the present committee are retiring, and we would like to record our thanks for all the hard work they've put into making meetings and training sessions a success, and producing the newsletter.

Desney Jackson will stand down as President in March; Sandy Richardson has retired as Business Secretary; and Daphne Rawling, who has worked

as one of the Newsletter Editors for several years, has recently retired from McGraw-Hill and is leaving shortly for the snow-bound U.K. for an indefinite stay.

These three positions will need new incumbents, and nominations for all committee positions will be welcome on the forms mailed prior to the AGM on 4 April. Jo Rudd is acting as Newsletter Editor until the AGM.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 1984 are now due and a subscription form is enclosed. Please complete and return promptly. Membership still costs only \$10.00 per annum.

#### COPYRIGHT PROBLEMS

We have renewed our subscription to the Australian Copyright Council, which entitles any member to consult the Council regarding copyright issues. We also receive their monthly bulletin, which may be borrowed from the President.

#### EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE EDITORS

EASE was formed in 1982 to promote improved communication in science by providing efficient means for cooperation among science editors. Membership is open to editors of serial and other scientific publications, and individuals representing science publications or publishing bodies. Annual subscription is \$18.00, which includes three issues a year of the newsletter, Earth and Life Science Editing. Further details available from the President.