

Blue Pencil

Newsletter of
the Society
of Editors
(NSW)

ISSN 1030-2557

PO Box 254 Broadway NSW 2007

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June 1991

Next meeting 2 July 1991: Business management for freelance editors

Find out how other freelance editors do it! Hear how you can run your editing business more successfully at the July meeting.

Three guest speakers will be discussing their own freelance and/or editing services as well as answering questions from the audience.

Theresa Moody-Bloom is a freelance editor and writer who also runs Epany, a single-person company. Claudia Findlay edits journals, fiction and children's books and manages Puddingburn Services, an editorial and related services company. Our third guest speaker will also be an experienced freelance editor.

When: Tuesday, 2 July 1991 at 6.30 pm.

Where: The Bowlers Club, 95 York Street (across from the York Street entrance to BBC Hardware). Parking is available under the Bowlers Club at a cost of \$5. The carpark entrance is in Clarence Street.

Cost: Wine, soft drinks and Chinese finger food will be served. \$5 for members; \$10 for non-members and members who do not book by 28 June.

RSVP: Friday, 28 June to Michael Wyatt (phone 281 0460), or to Janine Flew (phone 887 0177).

The Society books and pays for catering for all those who say they are going; if you can't make it, please let us know! Thank you.

List of Society Members 1991 (pages 2-3)

One of the important functions of a society such as ours is to facilitate networking among its members. Included is a list of current financial members of the Society. This will allow you to keep in contact with people you have met at meetings or had other dealings with.

If your name does not appear on the list, this is the last *Blue Pencil* you will receive (unless you requested us not to publish your name). If you wish to continue as a member of the Society, please telephone Derek Barton on (02) 929 5677.

There are two surveys with this month's *Blue Pencil*

Survey for FREELANCE EDITORS

Please return to the Society of Editors by 10 July.

For further details see page 4.

Survey for ALL EDITORS

Please return to the AJA by 12 July.

The AJA book industry questionnaire is examining the training and education needs of editors. It is intended that the information gained will assist in the establishment of a training syllabus from which promotion through the new book industry award grades will be based.

Society of Editors (NSW)

List of Members 1991

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List of Members 1991 (continued)

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Mr Paul	Cliff	(067) 728-598
Ms Margaret	Holmes	(044) 465-164

June meeting: Lisa Highton on career paths in publishing

At the Society's meeting on June 4, Lisa Highton, Publishing Director with Collins/Angus & Robertson, gave an interesting talk to over 40 members about career paths in publishing and what she looks for when recruiting new staff.

Lisa has been in publishing for 19 years, starting in sales and marketing as a secretary and publicity assistant, and then progressing to editorial in 1974 through educational publishing. As there was little scope for vertical promotion in those days, most promotions were achieved by zigzagging between companies, but now in big publishing houses it is possible to stay in house for several years and to be promoted through the ranks.

The Collins and Angus & Robertson companies merged about two years ago, and now Collins/A & R is the second largest trade publisher in Australia next to Penguin in Melbourne. The company produces about 300 titles a year across the whole spectrum of books, plus about the same number of reprints; a total of about three and a half million units were produced last year. It publishes a wide range of products — children's books, literature, biographies, gardening and cookery books, international co-editions and stationery. Because of the wide range of publications there is great scope for people to find their own niches and areas of specialisation.

The Collins/A & R publishing division is self contained, with a total of 43 staff — five publishers, 15 editors, three rights and contracts people, eight designers, 11 freelance editors, six production people and four administration staff. The company employed six new editors this year out of 400 applicants — Lisa having the unenviable task of reading through every application.

Such a large number of applicants shows that publishing is no longer the dead industry it seemed a few years ago, when many publishing staff were being deflected into more glamorous fields such as media and public relations.

Lisa told us of some the things she looks for when reading through applications. She considers it almost essential to have a degree of some kind, at least as a point of reference if nothing else. She looks at people's CVs to see where they received their training and therefore what sort of editorial standards they are used to maintaining — the educational and legal publishers are seen as good training grounds, but in trade publishing little formal basic training is given, it is mostly osmotic.

From the 400 applicants, 70 people were interviewed and 25 were short listed before the final six were chosen. When asked by a member of the audience what she looked out for in an application, Lisa listed illiteracy and spelling errors as being factors which would result in an application being discounted immediately. She also looked for any comparable experience, and checked to see if they had been working for a company that would not have provided good training. A person's technical skills are not always given top priority; intelligence, common sense and people skills are also important. Lisa sees editors as needing a type of sales skill so they can network around the office and sell themselves successfully to publishers authors and designers. They also need a lot of diplomacy and charm, which includes knowing both how to get what you want in a charming manner and when to back off. An editor who can associate with an author in such a way as to leave the author liking the company once the book is published is an asset. Honesty, particularly the ability to admit your mistakes before it is too late to fix them, is also valuable!

Lisa was asked whether Collins still read unsolicited manuscripts. The company receives about 2500 of these a year and they are given only moderate priority due to the expense of dealing with them: only two or three a year would be accepted.

Janine Flew

Freelance editors

Survey of income and expenditure — freelance publishing service providers

Accompanying this month's *Blue Pencil* is an important survey which we are requesting all freelance editors to complete.

The result of this survey will assist the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) formulate a recommended hourly rate for freelance editors which will be widely advertised within the industry.

The survey seeks information on an anonymous basis about monthly income and expenditure, chargeable and non-chargeable hours worked, and average numbers of weeks worked per year.

A comprehensive checklist is provided with the survey to assist you in completing the questionnaire — do *not* return the checklist!

Please fill in the survey and return by 10 July to:
Freelance Survey
Society of Editors
PO Box 254
Broadway NSW 2007

More from the Australia Council

As well as the editor-in-residence programme (*Blue Pencil* May 1991), the Literature Board of the Australia Council is developing an editor's fellowship project which would fund the attachment of an Australian editor to a US publisher for up to three months. US publishers approached by the Board's New York publicist have expressed their willingness to participate in the scheme.

The Board envisages that the selected editor would have at least five years' experience as an editor and would spend the attachment working either in house or as a freelance editor. The editor would have her or his air fare paid and receive a living allowance for the period of the attachment.

Applications from interested editors will be invited by advertisement. Selection of a US publisher and development of a programme of work would be negotiated with the assistance of the Literature Board.

As with the editor-in-residence programme, the Society is interested in members' comments about the fellowship proposal. Comments should be sent to the Society's PO Box and opinions will be conveyed to the Literature Board.

Society of Editors (NSW) Committee

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Anyone wishing to know more about the Society may write to PO Box 254, Broadway, NSW 2007 or telephone 901 9033 and leave a message. Members are welcome to call committee members.

Meetings of the Society are held on the first Tuesday of the month.

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Blue Pencil is published monthly, except November and December, by the Society of Editors (NSW).

Copy deadline for July issue: 5 July 1991

Printed by Posh Printing, Surry Hills.

Correspondence from readers is welcome!