



THE EDITORS

P.O. Box 567,
Neutral Bay Junction 2089

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

The next meeting of The Editors will be held at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre on Wednesday, 22 June, at 6.30 pm. Mike Holmes, Sales Manager for Wiggins Teape, will speak on "Paper: What every editor should know".

If you intend to stay for dinner, please RSVP by Monday, 20 June to Monica Ardill, 406 4288.

Training Workshops

Thank you to those who filled in the training questionnaire at our last meeting. Briefly, results showed that a large majority would like to continue with a two-hour evening session once every six weeks.

Since most people favoured workshop with a key speaker, we have extended the length of the sessions to three hours (from 7 to 10 pm) to allow time for adequate workshop involvement.

Five topics gained more than 50 per cent of the vote: copy editing, scheduling, editor-designer liaison, indexing and word processing. Accordingly, we will deal with each of these topics in random order, depending on availability of suitable key speakers.

Most people were interested in visits to printerries, typesetters, etc., and we are consulting the Galley Club who have conducted several such tours in the past (word processing scored best in this area, too).

Our first workshop will be held at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre on Wednesday, 13 July (we have booked the large meeting room, and tables will be made available for workshop groups). The key speaker will be designer Mike Blore (who worked for some years with large English publishers, and has worked for several Australian publishers including Reader's Digest and Gregory's Publishing Company). The workshop will run from 7 to 10 pm and a fee of \$5 will be charged. Wine and cheese will be served.

The key speaker (followed by questions) will occupy the first hour; after a short break we will divide into small groups, each group including one designer, to complete a workshop project; the session will end with a general discussion of workshop findings.

Details in summary:

DATE: Wednesday, 13 July 1983
TIME: 7 - 10 pm
PLACE: Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
SUBJECT: Editor-designer liaison
KEY SPEAKER: Mike Blore
FEE: \$5

Last Meeting

The meeting of 11 May 1983 was chaired by our President, Desney Jackson. Apologies were received from Jackie Kent, who was unable to attend.

Following the amendment passed at the Annual General Meeting to our constitution, that wording regarding qualification of membership be altered to '...books and editors of scholarly publications', this amendment was again proposed and ratified.

Desney then introduced our guest speakers, Frank Moorhouse, novelist and President of the ASA, Stirling Macoboy, author of many gardening books, including 'What Wildflower is That?', and Gordon Winch, author of reading programs. Each spoke from his own perspective and experience of the varying role of the editor.

Frank Moorhouse began by describing his introduction to the commercial realities of publishing in the person of Gareth Powell, English publisher, who controlled several Australian magazines in the sixties. Gareth insisted that Frank change the title of his manuscript from Sick, Confused, Grave' ("never feed the reviewers") to something more appealing. Frank finally chose Futility and Other Animals, after one of his stories and as an echo of Gerald Durrell's book. It is one editorial act he still appreciates.

While applauding that the 'tyranny of censorship and good taste' has passed, Frank is now bothered in his work as author and editor by what he calls the 'tyranny of the school market'. He sees 'gender dialogue' as crucial to good fiction, and editors as party to the battle with writers to see that children get exposed to what is written on the subject.

In dealing with a manuscript, the editor is also in the position to put his or her finger on 'the sore spot'. Since fiction writers often attempt to cover weaknesses creatively, it's a brave editor who does this - to identify, isolate and confront the author. The author usually knows, and cooperates.

What the author does not bear lightly is what Frank calls 'the urge to secretly improve'. Frank counters this urge with the warning that the author will notice, and will not thank you. He cited the less than secretive improvers on Shakespeare, and Dr Johnson's apt remark to Boswell: "...there is no end to correction." With imaginative work there is the real problem of the role of irrationality, and the level of rationality perceived as existing in the reader.

In Australia, Frank commented, newspapers and magazines particularly have a horrendous perception of the average reader, and will eliminate everything which might confuse or puzzle. In the interest of making all understandable to every reader, democratic as that may be, there comes the idea that there should not be art that is difficult. It is part of the idea of access - but some only have access after a tutorship of learning and experience.

Editors have to be aware that writers work by a dumb intuitive process, and cannot always intellectualise the why of their direction.

The brave editor is not the agent of the reader, but acknowledges many sensibilities at work. It is an advantage to go with the author.

Frank then quoted at length from the author-editor exchanges between Max Perkins (who had most sensibly dissuaded Scott Fitzgerald from the original title, 'Tremalchio in West Egg' to the now famous The Great Gatsby) and Scott Fitzgerald. It seems that patience with genius is an essential virtue.

Stirling Macoboy, author and compiler of numerous coffee table books on gardening had, understandably, a very different relationship to describe. He sees the need for a good relationship between author and editor, and for the editor's role to be taken seriously by publishers as well. In the course of compiling seventeen books, he has found that communications between author and publisher were not necessarily passed on to the editor who has to deal with him. He also feels publishers sometimes place unrealistic demands on both editor and author when an editor is appointed late in the stage of production, with minimal time allotted to the project.

Stirling felt very strongly that there should be an ongoing relationship between the author and one editor from start to

finish. Editors under pressure can easily misunderstand the writer's personal style, his idiosyncrasies, etc. And too often, the editing becomes a chore, if the editor has not been with the book from its conception, and is unsure of his or her role beyond nit-picking over punctuation and the like.

The editor is "frequently walking on eggs", Stirling feels, by the time the book arrives on his desk. Yet, this writer would like editorial help at an early stage - when it is very often unavailable.

Changing editors for the writer means a changing series of relationships, which is not helpful. There are questions of the author's background which are relevant to his writing. It is annoying to see one's buried puns deleted out of ignorance. Like Frank Moorhouse, he pondered on the implication of such deletions for Shakespeare. Items from a writer's background give style. "If all are whipped out, it is not quite the telephone directory, but something like it".

The editor is frequently the author's only contact with the publisher, and style policies are hammered out between them. Stirling recalled his problems with one new editor confronting him with a stylebook which he felt militated against his own, and amounted to a censorship of his expression.

In short, he argued for a continuous relationship with one editor from the time a contract is signed. He felt that a lot of ongoing personal contact is most helpful, and saves a lot of pain the sooner it is established.

Gordon Winch, who is a lecturer in English at the Kuringgai College of Advanced Education as well as the author of successful reading programs, felt that the 'tyranny of the school market' was a myth. In fact, in children's literature, he felt many of the older social constraints on their humour and early sexual explorations have been

broken. He cited The Big Friendly Giant and Ruth Park's recent successful book touching on an adolescent girl's first tentative experiences as instances of highly acceptable, sensitive books written by adults of the way children experience physical realities.

Children's books are, in fact, attracting a great deal of interest. The educational market is, after all, the most financially rewarding, with sales of 100 000 copies a real possibility.

Editorial qualities for educational books require remarkable skills. Educational books are not simply about spelling. There are changing factors in education itself, the altering attitudes and the altering syllabuses. It is ideal if an editor has taught in a specific area.

In this field, too, the editor can give some leadership. Authors are frequently not the best writers. The editor can use real entrepreneurial skills, negotiating with the author, publisher and marketplace as well as other people in the field.

Gordon then wound up the authorial viewpoint with a series of personal anecdotes, which proved that author-editor relations do often have a lighter side, and often lead to an excellent lunch.

In the discussion that followed, Gordon asked why editors didn't organise and demand a course (at a CAE, naturally) that would give them qualifications that would be recognised by society and employers. This led to some heated discussions over dinner.