

Blue Pencil

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (NSW)

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May 1990

Next meeting 6 June 1990

The role of an agency

What is the value of a specialist agency for media people? Greg Dickens, general manager of The Journalists' Agency, says that a specialist agency invests in people. After running costs are set aside, the commission charged by the agency is used to promote new and better-paid sources of work and to finance training programs that better equip people to handle new opportunities.

Greg has worked as a journalist in the United Kingdom and Australia for over 20 years. Before he joined The Journalists' Agency he was a freelance organiser at the AJA. Greg will be speaking at our next meeting on Wednesday 6 June on the role of an agency.

The meeting will be held at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli, at 7.30 pm. Wine, soft drinks and eats will be served at no cost to members; non-members will be charged \$5.

RSVP by telephoning Michael Wyatt on 699 9491 during business hours, or on 332 1414 after hours.

Editorial

What makes a good editor?

To all of you reading this who, like me, avoid editorials as didactic, subjective sermons, you are excused. To the rest of you who are still reading, I have a question. What is it about words that makes us all continue reading in the faint hope that a nugget of gold lies within? It

rarely does (and in this case it definitely doesn't), but as we continue to read every piece of text or manuscript that comes across our desks or is found on a nail behind a wooden door, what perversity keeps the hope springing eternal?

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Now that the Society of Editors has defined more accurately its membership as being open to all print editors, what is it that we have in common? We have all arrived from different directions and from different backgrounds, with no unified professional training or approach to words, and we work for vastly different readerships. We have moved sideways or backwards, fallen or been pushed into editing. (Be honest. Did you want to be a print editor when you grew up?) So what is the common link?

As editors, fame, fortune or even a modicum of power are not for us. Our responsibility is to save the writer from blushes by ensuring that no error of fact, grammar or spelling remains to haunt her or him. We have, rightly, no power to rewrite, recreate or stamp our own imprint on

what the writer has written. We must cajole, grovel, nag and humour the writer to produce what is required when it is required—if it turns out a bummer it is all our fault and if it is read with interest and enthusiasm by the intended reader it is thanks to the brilliance of the writer.

A good editor does good by stealth. You can always tell when a bad editor (or no editor at all) has been at a piece of writing—the winces and snorts of the reader say it all. But when a good editor has been at work there is nothing to show that she or he has been there, since the editor's main, indeed only, function in life is to ensure that nothing intervenes between the writer's ideas and the reader.

So if this piece of writing has given you an idea to nod or shake your head over, it is all my doing. But if

Society of Editors (NSW), PO Box 254, Broadway 2007

Committee 1990

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Anyone wishing to know more about the Society may write to PO Box 254, Broadway 2007 or telephone any committee member.

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON MEMBERS' NEEDS

Please return this questionnaire by 13 June 1990 to: The Membership Secretary, Society of Editors, PO Box 254, Broadway 2007.

Venues

Please number 1 to 5 in order of preference. Mark with a cross any you can't attend.

- Inner city
- Lower north
- Inner south
- Inner east
- Inner west
- Other: please specify

Meeting type

- | Dinner | Wine and nibbles only |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |

How much would you be willing to pay for dinner (excluding wine)?

- Under \$15
- \$15-\$20
- \$20

Days

Please number 1 to 5 in order of preference. Mark with a cross any that you can't attend.

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

Starting time

Please number 1 to 5 in order of preference. Mark with a cross any that you can't attend.

If dinner

5.30

6.00

6.30

7.00

7.30

8.00

Other: please specify

If wine and nibbles only

Why do you attend meetings of the Society of Editors?

Please number 1 to 5 in order of preference.

To hear interesting speakers

To find out what's going on in the editing world

To meet other editors

To make business contacts

Other: please specify

Attendance

How often Have you attended meetings over the last 12 months?

Every meeting

Almost every meeting

About half

Fewer than half

One or two

None

If you have attended half or fewer, is there any change that we could make that would cause you to come more often? If so, please tell us:

Topics

Please list any topics you would like covered:

Please list any speakers you would like to hear:

Would you be willing to speak at a future meeting? If so, please enclose your name and telephone number separately.

Experience

How long have you worked in the print media?

- Less than a year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- Over 10 years

Topics

What other activities, such as seminars and workshops, would you like to participate in? Such activities may attract a charge.

- Half-day seminars
- One-day courses
- Week-end courses
- Trips to plants (such as typesetters or colour separators)
- Other: please specify

Please list topics

Your background

Are you an editor? Yes No
If so, are you in full-time employment
 free-lance

If you are not an editor, what is your usual occupation?

Thank you for your help.

some blemish has caused you to wince and throw it down in disgust before completing it, it is all the editor's fault! It is the editor's fault because she commissioned the wrong person to write, provided an inadequate brief or failed to iron out the lumps and bumps in the writing.

An editor is indeed a poor and humble beast!

Lesley Dow

Lesley. You did leave out all those commas on purpose, didn't you. You were, I trust, just testing? Editor

May meeting

Book Editors' Industrial Award

Toni Payne from the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) was our guest speaker at the May meeting of the Society of Editors (NSW).

During the national wage case last year (involving the two instalments of 3% increases agreement), the AJA and the Australian Book Publishers Association (ABPA) got together to discuss ways of restructuring the Book Editors' Industrial Award. The existing award contains only four classifications (trainee editor, assistant editor, book editor and senior editor); award salaries are low and there is no mention of training, VDT rates, or permanent part-time rates.

The AJA asked that the trainee book editor's salary be set at 115% of a metal tradesperson's salary, that is \$468 gross per week. It also asked for four salary steps at the book editor level and three steps at a senior editor level, and it suggested that progression from trainee book editor to book editor should be automatic after twelve months. Salaries within this new structure would range from \$25 494 for a Book Editor Grade 1 to \$42 328 for a Senior Editor Grade 3.

The union also asked that editors who use computers receive a 6% VDT allowance.

The ABPA has agreed to the proposed restructuring; salary scales are still being negotiated.

Toni told us the AJA hopes to encourage unionisation in book publishing and is setting up a book editing section. This will meet regularly to discuss industrial and professional issues and may organise seminars from time to time.

The AJA also plans to admit freelance book editors to their freelance register service. This provides a clearing house for freelance work for photographers and journalists. Prospective employers have to agree to pay award rates before the service will accept their jobs. The union is attempting to negotiate with the ABPA a freelance editing rate of around \$25 an hour.

For freelancers who are interested in joining the union, the cost is \$175.50 a year plus \$50 entrance fee. If you already belong to another union or can plead hardship, the AJA may offer you a reduced membership rate.

Tasmania

On 26 and 27 April The Society of Editors (Tas) held two one-day workshops on producing annual reports. The tutor was Alan Bridges, who lectures in management accounting and management information systems at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, Sydney. The first workshop dealt with the purpose and effects of

annual reports, the second with the practicalities of producing them.

Ann Greenwood, secretary of the Tasmanian Society of Editors, has very kindly sent us a full report of the workshops. If you would like to read it please contact our librarian, Kim Anderson, on 888 4111.

Elsewhere in NSW

Society of Business Communicators

At their May luncheon the Society of Business Communicators invited

Muriel Walton to speak on "How to organise a successful function".

The Galley Club of Sydney

At their May meeting the Galley Club invited Chris Oldfield, Public Affairs Manager of the Forestry and Paper Division of North Broken Hill Peko, to present a talk on "Forestry, paper and the environment".

The Galley Club's May newsletter contained the president's report, the winners of the 1989 Galley Club Award for Excellence, the treasurer's

report, and a questionnaire to find out what Galley Club members want from the club.

Questionnaire

Enclosed with this issue of *Blue Pencil* is a questionnaire designed to enable the Committee to tailor the Society's activities to members' needs. Please bring the questionnaire to the June meeting, or post it to reach us by 13 June.

Membership renewals

Members who have not paid their \$25 membership fee for 1990 will be removed from our mailing list after this issue. Please send in your subscription as soon as possible. Thank you.

Introduction to Printing

Enclosed with this issue of *Blue Pencil* is a flyer advertising a course on "Introduction to Printing" to be run by the Society of Business Communicators during July.