



# THE EDITORS

P.O. Box 567,  
Neutral Bay Junction 2089

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

The next meeting will be held at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood centre on Wednesday, 27 October, at 6.30 p.m. Please phone Narelle Konte, 888 2733, by Monday, 25 October, if you will be attending.

Subject: Word processing and its applications to editing and publishing. The speaker is Collyn Rivers, editor of ETI (Electronics Today International) magazine. Collyn will use one of the most up-to-date word processors to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages for people working in the editorial field. (Collyn's technical and editorial background should allow him to present information complementary to that offered by author Tim Hall at a recent Galley Club meeting.)

## Training seminars

Our last training seminar for the year was held on 6 October on the subject of book production. Speaker Barry Smith was most informative, to such an extent that those present asked whether he might return next year to expand on technical details. The Editors would like to continue the training seminars in 1983, and would appreciate comments and suggestions from members regarding topics to be discussed, structure of the seminars and so on.

## LAST MEETING

The last meeting, held on 15 September, discussed the current state of fiction in Australia. As Jackie Kent was overseas, the meeting was chaired by Barbara Ker Wilson, who gave a brief but entertaining introduction to the subject before handing over to the three speakers.

According to Barbara, the recurring rumour that Australian fiction is dying is patently untrue. She divided the mass of fiction writing into various categories as follows: the Literary Novel, kinky sex and violence, 'snuff' novels and romances, picture books (i.e. the return of adult comics), 'no frills' paperbacks (no author credited), children's fiction and 'faction' (fictionalised biographies).

The first speaker, Marianne Bray, worked as an educational editor and is now the proprietor of the Moscraft bookshop at Mosman. In commenting upon the public's book buying trends, she stressed that the Mosman area has a clearly defined social structure - a sort of village atmosphere, discerning people whose ages range widely and who enjoy a reasonable degree of affluence. The most noticeable trend is towards books which espouse the good, old-fashioned virtues in a tale well told. Other types of fiction popular with the Mosman public are fantasy, crimes and mysteries, women's writing (both by women and about women's issues), up-market (literary genre) novels published in

paperback, large 'formula' novels (e.g. Sidney Sheldon, Wilbur Smith), and teenage romance.

According to Marianne, people don't want explicit sex and four-letter words, nor are they interested in poor quality production.

In stocking the bookshop, she considers such factors as binding (paperbacks tend to sell better than cased books, except when the purchase is intended as a gift) and price.

It is important not to underestimate the public intelligence; although most people occasionally buy light, easy-reading fiction, they normally expect a reasonable literary standard. Nevertheless, prize-winning fiction is often slow to sell and few people want the avant garde literary novel.

Our second speaker was Natalie Scott, author of six children's books and an adult novel, Wherever We Step, the Land is Mined. She described her own book as a literary novel, and therefore not 'commercial'.

Natalie, in search of greater competition, chose to publish her novel in London, but believes that publishing overseas can be detrimental to acceptance of the book by the Australian public.

In her various dealings with publishers over the years, she has observed the emergence of a manipulative aspect within the industry. This is noticeable with agents and publishers who attempt to alter the concepts and style of an author, and in publicity and promotion. Natalie felt that this trend was making conditions more difficult for fiction writers.

Michael Noonan, the third speaker, has been writing fiction for 41 years. Over this period, he has developed a fondness for editors and publishers, despite having seen many ups and downs in the industry.

According to Michael, one of the most important attributes for a writer of fiction is an innate love of story-telling. A good narrative with adequate character development is difficult to achieve and requires sensitivity and craft. He draws heavily on past experience, particularly his early years and his time in the Army. He finds his background in radio most valuable, since radio plays require a strong plot and rapid character development. He is always aware of transgressions from his own experience, and believes that every author is ultimately a prisoner of his/her own background.

Michael agreed with Barbara that there have always been predictions of the death of fiction in Australia, but he believes that fiction has never been stronger. In his view, Australian literature is rich in character development, and therefore, ideal for adaptation to television drama.