



40 Years of  
Style

1970  
2010

Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc.

*40th Anniversary Celebration*

Thursday 9 December 2010  
The Wheeler Centre, Melbourne

# On Our 40th Anniversary

*By Melanie Dankel, President of the Society of Editors (Victoria)*

Welcome to the Society of Editors' (Victoria) 40th anniversary. It's fitting we celebrate this milestone at the Wheeler Centre – the centrepiece of Melbourne's UNESCO City of Literature initiative – which represents books and the literary community of which we are an important part.

From humble beginnings back in 1970, when an enthusiastic group of editors gathered to discuss starting a society of editors, to our 500-plus-strong membership today, the society has gone from strength to strength thanks to the dedication of its members.

Much has changed over the years: we've charted changes in technology, diversification of product and industry, and ever-evolving language. We've achieved a lot – the introduction of the RMIT diploma in Editing and Publishing, the advent of IPEd and the national conference, the Australian Standards for Editing Practice, and most importantly, a national accreditation program. I am continually impressed by our strength as an organisation.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the hard work of the many people who have been part of the society's colourful journey. To the founding members, who couldn't have possibly imagined where we would be 40 years on, we're grateful for your foresight. To the Honorary Life Members who have contributed so much to editing as a profession and to the society, we're thankful to you for paving the way for future generations. To the previous committees who have inspired us, we acknowledge your valuable contribution. And to the current 2010 committee, thank you for your work to ensure the legacy of the society. These remarkable people are evidence of how much can be done with passion, dedication and the desire to make a difference.

But most of all, I'd like to acknowledge the editors who have come along tonight to celebrate this milestone. You are part of a prestigious group and are surrounded by some impressive colleagues.

So congratulations to everyone who has contributed to the Society of Editors (Victoria), whether as a member or as a committee volunteer. I hope you are as proud as I am to be a part of such a fantastic organisation.

## OUR HISTORY **1970s**

**1970 • Founding group meet to discuss formation of a society for book editors.**

**1970 • First 'open' meeting; group to be called Society of Book Editors.**

**1970 • First formal meeting held; election of committee.**

**1971 • Name amended to Society of Editors.**

**1971 • First monthly meetings held with guest speakers.**

**1971 • First Barbara Ramsden Award presented to Michael Cannon.**

**1975 • Helps to establish Caulfield Institute of Technology's Words into Print course.**

# Australian Publishing in 1970

*An excerpt from Janet Mackenzie's report written for the 25th anniversary, January 1996*

Australia was a very different country back in 1970. It was simpler and smaller and narrower. If we examine the state of Australian publishing at that time, we can see that it's part of a story that is continuing – the decay of imperial connections, the commercialisation of mass culture, the rat-race of galloping technology, and the increasing domination of multinational conglomerates. The vast majority of books sold in Australia were published overseas: the ratio was about nine to one. Many Australian writers were expatriates, and the major writers who lived here often chose overseas publishers for their books.

The Book Bounty had been introduced in 1969, but government patronage of writers was negligible. The Commonwealth Literary Fund paid small subsidies, but the Australia Council and large-scale federal support for the arts did not appear until a couple of years later, under Whitlam. There were fewer literary prizes – there were no Premier's Awards in either Victoria or New South Wales, no Age Book of the Year Award. There was no Public Lending Right or payment for photocopying. The effects on authors' incomes may be imagined.

Despite the handicaps I've outlined, Australian

publishing was in a healthy state. Production of Australian books had almost doubled in the preceding five years. Angus & Robertson in Sydney had long dominated the scene, although UQP and Jacaranda in Brisbane were just beginning to challenge its supremacy in fiction and poetry. In Canberra there were ANU Press and the government publisher, AGPS; in Adelaide there was Rigby. But most Australian publishing took place in Melbourne.

Many Australian subsidiaries – Nelson, Longman, Cassell, Macmillan, Coffins, Penguin, Heinemann – were all struggling for independence from their

British parents. A few people at Penguin had broken away to found Sun Books in 1965. One by one, Rigby, Jacaranda, Cheshire, Lansdowne, Sun Books and Lloyd O'Neil fell to overseas capital. There were widespread fears that domination by overseas-owned publishers would lead to cultural impoverishment.

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**“Publishing was leisurely, and dedicated to quality in a way that's impossible now.”**

## 1970s

**1975 • Celebrates fifth anniversary.**

**1976 • First residential seminar offered, on “the context of the editor's role in contemporary publishing”.**

**1976 • First *Freelance Register* published.**

**1976–77 • Attempts to establish a postgraduate diploma of book editing at RMIT.**

**1977 • AJA award extended to**

**include book editors.**

**1978 • Residential seminar held at Glen College, La Trobe University.**

**1979 • Offers Introduction to Electronic Editing course.**

These fears were to prove false; not only did Australian branches win recognition of the need to serve the Australian market, but several independent presses were founded in the next few years, including McPhee Gribble and the Fremantle Arts Centre Press. In 1970 Anne Godden and Al Knight were working at Nelson and dreaming of Hyland House. Sally Milner was gaining the experience that would enable her to found Greenhouse Publications. Before long, the Lonely Planet people would be collating their first book by hand on the kitchen table.

What was the position of editors in 1970? It's important to realise that there was no training for editors then, no pay scale, no career structure, no security. In fact, there was no general recognition, even in the book trade, of editing as a worthwhile or necessary task, let alone as a profession. If you did come across a trained editor, he was likely to be British and male, except for the pioneers Beatrice Davis and Barbara Ramsden, who were already becoming legends. Despite these two remarkable women, editing wasn't a career that one chose; for a 'girl' who was 'brainy' it was a congenial way to occupy her time until she got married.

I want to stress also how isolated editors were. All of us had fallen into the job by chance.

If we were lucky, we had two or three colleagues in the same firm – beyond that, there was no contact between editors, no knowledge that other editors were even working in Melbourne. Not only were we isolated, but our jobs were ill-defined. It was a dogsbody job – editors were useful for stocktaking in the warehouse and sorting out the blocks in the store, that sort of thing.

In 1970, there were no marketing people breathing down our necks about making 40 per cent on overheads. We were isolated not only from other editors, but also from commercial reality. Publishing was leisurely, and dedicated to quality in a way that's impossible now. At MUP, editing a bibliography meant walking over to the Baillieu Library – a pleasant 15-minute stroll, a chance to get out of the office – and checking every entry against *Books in Print* and the British Museum Catalogue.

Publishing firms then were run by bookmen, not by accountants. Nobody even dreamed that bookmen might become bookpersons. Publishing was called, without irony, 'the gentlemen's profession'. Looking back, it seems a simple and innocent world – as well as sexist, colonial and xenophobic. But then, nostalgia isn't what it used to be.

## 1980s

**1980 • Celebrates 10th anniversary.**

**Early 1980s • Absorbs the Imprint Society.**

**1984 • Reopens negotiations with RMIT for a diploma course.**

**1985 • Celebrates 15th anniversary.**

**1986–87 • Honorary Life Membership (HLM) established and awarded to inaugural recipients Lee White, John**

**Bangsund, Ruth Dixon, Frank Eyre, Basil Walby, Wendy Sutherland, Stephen Murray-Smith, Teresa Pitt and Beatrice Davis.**

# The Beginnings of the Society

*An excerpt from Janet Mackenzie's report written for the 25th anniversary, January 1996*

I had an invincibly middle-class upbringing, but somewhere along the way I got the idea that unions are a good thing. At MUP one day, I was chatting over morning tea with the other junior editor, whose name was Jan Llewellyn, and I asked her, "What union do we join?"

She answered, "The AJA, I suppose". "The AJA?" I said. I remember that I was quite scornful about it. "What has the AJA got to do with us? We're book editors!" I must have been reading the *Chicago Manual of Style* or something. Since then, of course, with some urging from the society, the AJA has done much for book editors. But as a result of that conversation, Jan Llewellyn arranged for me to meet her friend Ruth Dixon, who at that time was at OUP. Ruth had had experience in London, where publishers actually talked to each other and staff knew each other and they mixed socially and things like that. So ... oh look, all those early meetings run together in my mind. What I remember about them was the sheer excitement – there was a real delight to find there were other editors! We were really pleased to find people who understood the jargon. Here were people you could talk to about bleeding plates and bastard titles and they knew you weren't swearing! I remember we spent quite a lot of time swapping stories about our working conditions. Some of us were expected to edit manuscripts while perching on windowsills. Some of us were expected to type while balancing a typewriter on our knees. I remember strongly that sense of validation: "There are others like me, others who care passionately about words and ideas and books".

Of course we unanimously decided that a society of editors should be formed. There was no need for incorporation in those free and easy days, and I think we adopted aims and objectives, at least provisionally, at the second meeting. There were some embarrassing features at the beginning – we narrowly avoided calling ourselves The Galley Slaves, for example.

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## 1980s–1990s

**1988 • RMIT establishes the Graduate Diploma in Editing and Publishing.**

**1989 • HLMs awarded to Anne Godden, Vane Lindesay, Sally Milner and Beryl Hill.**

**1990 • Celebrates 20th anniversary.**

**1990 • Victorian Ministry of the Arts approves \$3000 grant to publish copy-editing handbook.**

**1991 • Publishes *One of the First***

**and *One of the Finest: Beatrice Davis, Book Editor* by Anthony Barker.**

**1994 • *The Australian Editing Handbook* by Beryl Hill & Elizabeth Flann is published.**

There were several meetings after that. I can remember only one committee meeting. It was in the boardroom at FW Cheshire, and I thought Basil Walby was in the chair, but he strenuously denies this. I suppose, if I was the secretary, it must have been then. Perhaps I volunteered to take the minutes.

But that’s really all I have to say. My recollections of the society terminate abruptly at that point, because I left on the obligatory trip overseas in mid-1971. When I returned some years later I chose to live in country Victoria, and as a

**“As a society, we have obtained the recognition and status for our work that was totally lacking way back in the past.”**

result I’ve been unable to play much part in the society’s affairs. But personally, I am grateful to the society for the many benefits it has provided in my working life. Over the years, I have watched with delight as it has grown in numbers and in stature. Doubtless other speakers will describe the society’s manifold achievements, and thank the many dedicated committee members who have done the work.

I’ll sum up by saying: tonight we can indulge in some self-congratulation and feel proud of what we have achieved. As a society, we have obtained the recognition and status for our work that was totally lacking way back in the past, in that other country where we lived in 1970.

## 1990s—2000s

**1995 • Celebrates 25th anniversary.**

**1995 • HLMs awarded to Nick Hudson and Colin Jevons.**

**1996 • HLMs awarded to John Curtain and Janet Mackenzie.**

**1998 • First website launched. *Freelance Register* published online for first time.**

**1998 • Hosts meeting of state presidents; Council of Australian Societies of Editors**

**(CASE) is formed.**

**2000 • Celebrates 30th anniversary.**

**2000 • HLMs awarded to Susan Keogh and Renée Otmar.**

# The 15th Anniversary: Oh, What a Night!

*An excerpt from Teresa Pitt's report of the 15th anniversary, June 1986*

It was only in 1982 that the Society of Editors was proposing to change its name to People in Publishing and effectively to disappear as a professional association and pressure group for editors.

Four years later, the society is a thriving and influential organisation. This was very clearly demonstrated by the success of the 15th Anniversary Dinner, held at Queen's College on Thursday 31 October 1985. One hundred and twenty people made their regard and support for the society very evident by participating in the anniversary celebrations, and many others sent apologies and good wishes for the society's future.

The committee had great hopes for the success of the evening, but the reality exceeded them all. Old friends renewed their acquaintanceship, former committee members reminisced about their time with the society, new members gained insights into the society's origins and history, publishing deals were struck, lots of wine was drunk, some outrageous behaviour was witnessed and in general everyone had a very good time.

We know this because we received many, many phone calls and comments congratulating us on such a splendid celebration.

Sue Ebury of Thomas Nelson, Sally Milner of Greenhouse Publications, and Basil Walby of the CSIRO were the guest speakers. They amused us with reminiscences and spoke seriously about the role of the Society of Editors, and each one gave credit to the society for its continuing activity on behalf of editors on several different fronts. "We have come a long way, but there's a long way still to go" was the gist of it all.

**“Lots of wine was drunk, some outrageous behaviour was witnessed and in general everyone had a very good time.”**

The committee was extremely gratified at the wonderful response to the anniversary dinner and would like to thank everyone who came along to demonstrate their interest in and support for the society. The evening showed very convincingly that the Society of Editors is a thoroughly professional organisation and one held in high regard by people connected with the book industry. May it continue to grow and flourish.

## 2000s

**2001 • Helps prepare Australian Standards for Editing Practice and National Policy on Editing Theses.**

**2003 • Society provides seed funding for the first national**

**CASE conference.**

**2004 • Hosts first meeting of the Occasional Series on Australian Editors (OSAE).**

**2004 • HLM awarded to Elizabeth Flann.**

**2005 • Hosts the biennial national conference, Editing in Context.**

**2005 • Celebrates 35th anniversary.**

# The 20th Anniversary

*An excerpt from Tess Moloney's report of the 20th Anniversary, January 1991*

One can only wonder what strange forces were at work to bring 104 members and guests to the society's 20th anniversary celebration. We know the drawcard was not the persistent rumour that Basil Walby would leap naked from our special birthday cake, for when Teresa Pitt first heard of this, she was seen to turn pale and had to be helped to a chair and given a glass of cold water. Similarly, Lisa Berryman trembled alarmingly and looked haunted. Other reactions were noted – there was a rush to the bar from one table, sobbing for double whiskeys, and 23 resignations were recorded on the night.

After the initial scare a nervous calm prevailed. Dinner was served, after which the well-known stand-up comedian Johnny Curtain went through his polished act to a background of giggling acclamation.

All threats of a Lady Godwalby stunt passed when our birthday cake, smothered in tacky toffee topping, was produced. It soon became apparent how preposterously difficult it would be to leap from its interior: one would indeed have a sticky end.

A grand night with grand company. "There were no regrettable incidents", said a relieved President Janet Mau. "Most regrettable", responded disappointed John Bangsund, who, it turns out, was the originator of the failed birthday cake stunt. But our 21st looms – and who knows?

**“A grand night with grand company. ‘There were no regrettable incidents’, said a relieved president.”**

## 2000s

**2005 • Supports launch and becomes a member of the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd), formerly CASE.**

**2005 • Negotiates a discount on MEAA membership for members of**

**all Australian societies of editors.**

**2005 • Publishes *At the Typeface: Selections from the Newsletter of the Victorian Society of Editors* (edited by Janet Mackenzie).**

**2006 • Presents first Outstanding Service Awards, to Janet Mackenzie and Lan Wang, for “significant contribution to the society and its members”.**

# Memories of the 30th Anniversary

*By Susan Keogh, November 2010*

It was a more low-key affair than the 40th. It was held at the Retro Café, 413 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, on Thursday 26 October 2000, a departure from the usual meeting spot at the time (the Metropolitan in Little La Trobe Street). Lucy Davison was president at the time.

In the words of the newsletter:

“Past anniversary celebrations have looked back and celebrated the history of the society and the editing profession as a whole, providing valuable opportunities to reflect on where we started and to celebrate what we have achieved. As we are embarking on a new century, the 30th anniversary represents a good opportunity to look to the society’s future and think about where the society and the profession are heading. With this in mind, we have asked Michele Sabto, recipient of the inaugural APA John Curtain Educational Editorial Fellowship, to speak to us about ebooks and e-editors.”

(Michele had spent time in the USA investigating online publishing as part of the fellowship.)

I chiefly remember the night because it was the night I became an Honorary Life Member – of which I had been given an inkling, but the inkling itself came as a complete shock – and I’d been flat-chat organising some of my mentors to come so that I could thank them. It was also the night that Renée Otmar became an HLM.

“It was the night I became an Honorary Life Member – of which I had been given an inkling, but the inkling itself came as a complete shock.”

So I have a very happy, if fuzzy, recollection of the HLM announcement bit. Of Michele’s talk, alas, I don’t remember a thing ...

## 2000s

**2006 • HLM awarded to Jackie Yowell.**

**2006 • First Redact training intensive weekend held in Mansfield.**

**2006 • Co-sponsors the Barbara**

**Ramsden Award with the Fellowship of Australian Writers.**

**2006 • Reinstates monthly lunches for freelance editors.**

**2006 • Develops formal relationship with the Victorian**

**Writers Centre (VWC) and begins co-hosting VWC events.**

**2007 • Funds OSAE to publish *Editors in Conversation*.**

**2007 • HLM awarded to Ruth Siems.**

# The 40th Anniversary

*By Nick Hudson, Honorary Life Member and guest speaker at the 40th anniversary celebration.*

There is only one thing about me which is unique. I am, I believe, the only person in the world who is an honorary life member of both the Australian Publishers Association and the Victorian Society of Editors. This is not, however, a mark of peculiar merit, but an accident of history.

When I started in publishing in 1958, the Society of Editors did not exist, but had it existed, most of the members of the Australia Publishers Association would have been eligible for membership. Almost all the CEOs who attended APA meetings were also their firm's commissioning editors; most performed the functions of managing editor; and almost all of them had practical experience of content, structural and copy editing. They included the dominant elders of the APA, George Ferguson of A&R, Andrew Fabinyi of Cheshire and Frank Eyre of OUP,

**“Whether they will all get edited is uncertain. But all of them will *need* editing, so let's hope.”**

By the time both groups existed and started awarding life memberships, things had changed radically, and the APA had become a forum for accountants and marketing folk. I was one of a small band of people who were eligible for life membership in both societies; others

included Lloyd O'Neil and Hilary McPhee, both of whom were more distinguished in publishing and editing than I ever had been – so it is not simply an accident of history but a gross injustice of history that I am the only claimant to the double crown. All I can say is that, accidental and unjust though it is, I am very proud to be able to make the claim, and particularly proud to have been invited to speak on this historic occasion.

So, having been given the chance to say something, what shall I say? We live in interesting times. In my latest little book, *How Times Changed*, I identify two revolutions which have occurred since I started in publishing: the litho revolution of 1964 and the Mac revolution of 1984, which put the typesetters out of business. Now we are faced with two more: the digital printing revolution, which is seeing the end of litho printing; and the ebook revolution, which will see a radical reduction in the range of books which appear in printed editions – but a huge increase in the number of books written and published. Whether they will all get edited is uncertain. But all of them will *need* editing, so let's hope.

## 2000s

**2007 • Develops a standard freelance contract to be modified and used by editors.**

**2008 • Hosts first national accreditation exam for Victorian examinees.**

**2008 • Second Redact intensive training weekend held in Mansfield.**

**2009 • Appoints administration officer to aid committee members, particularly with**

**bookings for dinner meetings and training events.**

**2009 • Funds OSAE to publish *Editors in Conversation 2*.**

**2009 • Supports OSAE archives deposit with**

# Then & Now

## 2010 COMMITTEE

President	Melanie Dankel
Newsletter Editors	Kirsten Rawlings & Melanie Sheridan
Membership & Correspondence Secretary	Ron Thiele
Dinner Meetings Organiser	Ali Lemer
Freelance Affairs	Fran Madigan
Website Manager	Irina Fainberg
Training	Ann Philpott
IPEd Council Representative	Rosemary Noble
Accreditation Board Representative	Julie-Anne Justus
Industry Liaison Officer	Sharon Lapkin
MEAA Representative	L. Elaine Miller
Immediate Past President	Liz Steele
Financial Officer	Charles Houen
Administrative Officer	Lu Sexton

## FOUNDING COMMITTEE (1970)

President/Chairman	Peter Hammond
Secretary	Janet Mackenzie
Treasurer	Sue Bevan (Ebury)
Meetings	Hedley Finger
Newsletter	Di Goodall
Training	Ruth Dixon
Publicity	Hedley Finger

## Thanks

The society would like to thank the following people for their assistance: Melanie Dankel, Irina Fainberg, Nick Hudson, Susan Keogh, Ali Lemer, Janet Mackenzie, Tess Moloney, Teresa Pitt, Melanie Sheridan, Liz Steele, Kirsten Rawlings and Michael Williams.

Content on pages 3–8 reprinted with permission from *At the Typeface: Selections from the Newsletter of the Victorian Society of Editors*.

Design and layout by Lauren Egan.

## 2000s

Australian Manuscripts, State Library of Victoria.

2009 • First electronic edition of the society's newsletter produced.

2009 • Negotiates with

AON insurance for discounted professional indemnity insurance for members.

2009 • Hosts second accreditation exam for Victorian examinees.

2010 • Third Redact intensive training weekend held in Geelong.

2010 • Celebrates 40th anniversary.



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