

## IPEd conference explores editing on the edges

### Being on the autism spectrum can be an asset for an editor.

That unconventional thought is one author Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin will explore in her presentation to the 10<sup>th</sup> Institute of Professional Editors ([IPEd](#)) [conference](#) this month.

Dr Gershwin, a scientific researcher and author of two best-selling books on jellyfish, was diagnosed on the autism spectrum in 2010 and has been active in disability awareness.

Neither of her editors was on the spectrum, but she says autism is a superpower, a disability, a blessing, a curse, a breath of fresh air, and can sometimes be a nightmare for the person with it and people working with them.

“People on the spectrum can concentrate for long periods of time and be very pedantic, with a focus on the little things. Those are great assets for editors,” she said.

Dr Gershwin said she and the editor of her second book, *Jellyfish: A Natural History*, had “growing pains” during the editorial process but are now close friends.

“We had miscommunications because I didn’t understand what he was asking for. You need to be very clear about your feedback if you’re working with someone on the spectrum. He thought he was being clear, but I struggled. Then we got into a rhythm and I asked more questions and he explained things more precisely.”

Dr Gershwin said the editor-author relationship always had challenges but, if one or both had “a neurodivergent way of seeing the world”, that added a complexity to the partnership.

Dr Gershwin is Senior Marine Stinger Advisor with Australian Marine Stinger Advisory Services and is now finishing her memoir about 18 months as a homeless person.

At the IPEd conference, she’ll share more of her thoughts on how an editor can work with an autistic person to bring out the best in their writing and she’ll consider the ramifications of working with someone who doesn’t know they are on the spectrum.

Dr Gershwin is one of an array of keynote speakers for the [conference](#), themed *Editing on the edges*. It was originally scheduled to be in Hobart, Tasmania, but moved online because of COVID-19.

The conference starts with workshops on Monday 28 June (booked separately), followed by guest speakers on Tuesday 29 June and Wednesday 30 June. Conference [registrations](#) are available until 24 June. Discounted rates are available for IPEd members and those of affiliated organisations. [Book now](#) to enjoy a wide variety of speakers across a range of topics.

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