

## ‘New directions for the Society?’

**A panel discussion during the final 2006 meeting of the Society of Editors (Queensland) Inc. at the Kenmore Tavern**

**Transcribed by Les Savage, speaker secretary**

### **Panel members**

Jill Morris, Publishing Director of Greater Glider Productions

Paul Bennett, of Paul Bennett Publishing (freelance)

Peter Storer, proprietor of Peter Storer Editorial Services

### **Question 1**

#### **What should we be trying to achieve as a society?**

**Jill:** I think we should make our presence felt. We need a good court case about an editing scandal. We need editing as an HSC subject for an OP score. We need an editor as the star of *Australian story*. We need Kylie or Tom to take up editing as their new career. We need to find out that Steve Irwin was really planning to be an editor when he finally gave up crocodile hunting. We need every TV station to employ an editor for the text supers and news headlines crossing our screens. We need newspapers to go back to having editors. We need to make the world aware of how much they need us.

The chartered accountants struck back when accounting moved into everyone’s home PC. We need to persuade the computer-literate population that spellcheck and grammar check are not enough. We need an ‘Edited’ stamp of approval on all printed works. A great logo of accreditation is needed, or perhaps a tattoo for Paul’s forehead would be good: HQAE (Honourable Quality-assured Editor). Like that one? You can’t fix a refrigerator if you don’t have a CFC licence. You can’t build a house unless you have an owner-builder registration and you’ve been to a TAFE course to get one. Why shouldn’t you need an editors registration to release a book? It would be nice if only edited books were able to be sold. Perhaps we need a large *E* in ‘edited’, not a small *e*—which means edited by someone’s sister-in-law who was good at English at school.

We need to make contact with all printers who may be approached by self-publishing authors—the same problem graphic designers must be having in the days when everyone can use PhotoShop. How do graphic designers do it? When all brochures have that digital look, I’m going back to calligraphy and hand-drawn maps.

**Paul:** Mine’s not funny at all! I wish it was. It’s all dead straight! I can’t believe it. I’ll read out what I’ve got here, because it does go on to something a bit better later on.

Our purpose is to help publishing people do better. We can help them do that by providing a place where we can meet and ask each other questions. I'll expand on that later about meeting places—if I'm asked to—because I don't go to many any more. We can help them do that by inviting experts to come and deliver lectures to us—and I don't just mean writers, and I don't just mean people who do editing, but people in publishing generally, because we seem to have drifted away. When we started the Society many years ago, everybody was in it: a lot of designers, who knew what typography meant—they could actually spell it—and people in printing. We don't seem to see them anymore.

Running training courses, especially for new members, which I think we're doing quite well; helping members find work—if there is any work. I'm very pessimistic about this trade, by the way—seriously. If you are young and have decided to go for editing, I think you should do welding. I mean it. People want welders; they don't want an editor. There's enough of us. Keep away!

So we've got to help members find work by providing some accreditation—because that would really help, I think—and by running a sort of labour exchange, because there's no way people can find work through us. It would be nice if we could do that. I don't know how the hell you do it. But this topic is about what we should be trying to achieve, not what we're going to achieve.

**Peter:** As Les mentioned, I was one of the founder members of the Society. Originally, the Society brought together a quite disparate group of people who were working in all sorts of organisations. The only editors who knew each other were working for large publishers, of which there was really only one in Brisbane—Jacaranda Wiley, as it then was—or government departments, some of which had quite large publishing arms back then. Judging by a phone call I received from the Society a couple of weeks ago, I think we may have evolved from a disparate group of people to a rather desperate group looking for a new direction.

One area that has been mentioned was the provision of professional development and training programs. At the time the Society was formed, there were very few editing courses, at least in Queensland. There were some interstate courses at RMIT and Macquarie. Today, you could probably argue there are too many courses. The Society's founders wanted to provide high-quality training opportunities for editors, and I believe this should continue to be one of our core aims.

I agree with my fellow panel members that networking was another original aim of the Society and is still probably one of the most important things today—a mechanism by which people can build networks and help them find work. I was talking to a member just before tonight's meeting, and she said that 95 per cent of her work came via contacts she had made through the Society. This gives you an idea of just how important networking can be.

## Question 2

### What do you think the Society should do more of?

**Jill:** That's a bit of a mixture. Setting up group purchases of computers and software may be useful for us. Setting up practical courses at workplaces instead of editors' cubbyholes—the APA does this very well: takes people out to actually visit printers and binders to see where the revolution is going this year. Binders, et cetera: if you've got any binders left in Brisbane—I don't think there any more, really. Have fun: more parties, barbecues; links with other organisations, artists, writers and copyright lawyers; hold a regional party or a mini conference at the Book Farm, Maleny—at my place, so I don't have to travel—to attract members from the Sunshine Coast to Bundaberg; and perhaps on the Gold Coast. Maybe we could hold that in February—pointing out that it has got an *r* in it—in accommodation houses—with two *m*'s.

In an era when numbers are replacing sounds in New Zealand HSC exams, we could run an Editing Olympics in schools: 'Find 27 mistakes in this text and win a trip to Disneyland', or the National Library, or the Smithsonian Institute, or Dickens's London. That part might be a bit hard to arrange. But we could offer free membership of the Society to TAFE et cetera editing students as a prize in a competition. We could visit the courses and profile the industry's success: show off in a world which has a vested interest in being interested. We could select an Editors Wine. I think one of my first interests in the Society was actually that they were funny people. They were laughing a lot in my swimming pool. I loved them. The second one was when somebody had a wine-bottling party.

We could encourage editors to become the presidents of everything else. That's what the National Party did up at Maleny when the state government fell. They turned up as presidents, secretaries, and treasurers wherever they could take the power in all sorts of other organisations—not a bad idea for the quiet, anonymous, little editors. Take the power and infiltrate!

**Paul:** Next time, I'm not going to come second to her [Jill Morris]. This is all serious again. 'What should we do more of?' Training: it's all very well to say that, but of course if I had to do the training—the training coordination—I wouldn't know what to do; it's very difficult. They're too expensive, these courses. When you go to a commercial course, God knows how they justify it. You go to learn just how to open Microsoft Word, and it's \$350 for a morning, which includes tea and biscuits. We are not nearly so expensive, but we're still too much. I don't know how to do this, and I'm not going to volunteer even to try to help. But it would be lovely if we could run really cheap training courses; and I've got an idea for one which I've spoken to my friend about earlier. But I won't get onto that tonight; she can consider it. So training is one thing we should do more of.

There's a wonderful thing every year called The Style Council, run by Macquarie University, and it's great. I went there and delivered a paper last year or the year before—it was on plain English—and it was really good. I think it would be super if we could perhaps buy a charter flight or get cheap flights—

like Jill said before about buying computers in bulk—so we can get people to go to things like The Style Council, so you can just sit and listen to what the really big shots are doing. We might be able to sponsor the Editor's Prize from *Offpress*, which is if anyone wrote anything longer than three lines, they win, and the prize could be a trip to The Style Council or something like that. But I think we've got to try to expose people to some of the more advanced parts of editing, not just the basics.

Another thing is publicity. We have all said that we want to help people get work, and it's very difficult. So we could perhaps look at paying someone to be a part-time publicity manager. She—there are not many blokes left, so you don't mind if I use 'she', do you? You do? Right, well, put a slash in it then. S/he could draw up a list of employers to send advertising leaflets to—I love prepositions at the end; I don't know if you do—send out sales leaflets and follow up inquiries. S/he could also look at putting our link on associated web sites, so that people who publish—and that's not necessarily traditional publishing, is it, because the Wool Corporation publishes, and so does the Nurses whatever-it-is; they publish stuff—so if we could get to them, I think it would be really valuable if we had a publicity officer who could be perhaps paid to do this promoting.

**Peter:** This was a rather tricky question for me because I've been away from the Society for so long. However, the first thing I looked at was the web site. I don't know whether we've got the resources, but this is an area I feel needs attention. The web site is the 'face' of our organisation and I believe it requires a 'facelift'—perhaps by expanding the home page to introduce the Society and state its aims in a more detailed way. We could describe the different types of editors and the roles they play. Some people who look at the web site wouldn't know what editors do. Perhaps we could include frequently asked questions about editing. We could incorporate articles of wider professional interest—even some reference material—things that are not covered by the *Style manual* or other reference books. We could create a 'Members Only' area to restrict access to those reference materials, rather than having them freely available to the general public.

One important role for the Society—and I don't know how well we've been doing—is to provide a corporate face for editors. The Society should be an advocate for editors in public forums—that is, it should be promoting the profession. Editors must be seen as 'value adders', not as a cost. Many organisations treat editing as something they feel they have to do. They often try to minimise the editorial cost to the extent where quality becomes compromised. Of course, other organisations don't bother with editing at all. For example, I'm a keen share investor, and some of the announcements put out to the stock exchange—especially by numerous smaller companies that can't afford PR departments—are very poorly written and often ambiguous. I believe the Society should lobby industry groups to show how editors can help businesses to communicate concisely, coherently and accurately with their customers, shareholders and other stakeholders. This, in turn, should result in higher sales and further investments for those companies.

In the notes I was given—which were based the responses from the survey—there was a suggestion for improving links with other organisations—perhaps with writers. It concerns me when I hear editors being disparaging about authors in general—although I know I’ve been guilty myself of criticising individual authors too many times. Without authors, we don’t have jobs. Building bridges with authors is one of the most important tasks for individual editors, so perhaps this could be an objective of the Society as a whole.

### **Question 3**

#### **What support can we give to our members?**

**Jill:** I think we need to advertise the accreditation—and I guess they are planning to do that when it happens—with a beautiful logo. For Ecotourism, we have a nice logo with two little ticks which we’re allowed to use from a bromide. It does absolutely nothing for us out there in the world, but it makes us feel good, and it makes people realise that we are serious about our Ecotourism standards. That’s moving along slowly, and maybe the Society of Editors accreditation will move along like that.

We should encourage our members—oh, you’ll hate this—to ask for credits on work. That editors don’t get mentioned on major books has always upset me. At Greater Glider, we do mention our editors. Mary Stabler has had a lot of mentions on books. The Australian Writers’ Guild in this state ran a big campaign—probably about 20 years ago; I’m starting to get old—to get the writer up front at the beginning of the TV series. So Tony Morphet suddenly was sitting out there in front, and you started to hear about Tony Morphet. He wrote the series. Ask yourselves: why have publishers traditionally kept editors anonymous? The day of editor anonymity is dead.

Give all members the opportunity at meetings to tell of the work they’re doing and have been doing. We could put profiles of all members on the web site. Through that ‘Members Only’ area that Peter mentioned, too, you could have your own profile added: what you have been doing lately and what you have just finished—like a set of moveable blogs in a cluster. Are we moving towards an online directory, perhaps? So we should keep the blog up to date with the latest completed jobs, and perhaps links to our own web sites.

We should establish an ethos of sharing. I’ve got a feeling that what we do in a lot of freelance occupations is keep very quiet: talk up how well you are doing, but never really tell your colleagues what you are up to. We somehow must break that down. Bring finished jobs to the meetings of the Society of Editors to be admired, and promote yourselves; and then set up group super schemes so freelancers can survive.

**Paul:** Jill said it is good to acknowledge the editor, but sometimes the publisher says to me, ‘Would you like us to put your name on it?’ and I say, ‘No’, because there’s so much of my stuff they’ve ignored, and they’ve written a lot of claptrap, and so it could be taken two ways. So I wouldn’t want to have my

name in there because I wouldn't want readers to think I had anything to do with it.

So what support can we give our members? The first one is to help some of the senior ones get accreditation so they can say, 'I am accredited. I am registered'. I'm going to Melbourne at the end of this month—with five women, I understand, in a small flat. There's the scandal Jill was looking for. So I'm going down there, and it's all to do with bringing accreditation forward. I'm one of those people who have been invited to read submissions that people put in. I'm a little bit worried about it. But I think there's a slight whiff in the air. I can sniff out that there's a little bit of intrigue. I don't know. But I'll report. When I've been to that thing, when I've met the other editors from other states, I'm going to write a nice, full article for *Offpress* and I'll tell you what I think is going on. So that's one thing we have to help with: accreditation.

The other thing is very difficult, and that is to find a meeting place that people like to come to and that they *can* come to. It's very difficult. How many times have you had to sit and listen to people like me droning on and on, and you think, 'Oh, I wish he'd finish because I want to go home', but you can't get out without embarrassment. It's very difficult. Any useful place must have good public transport and be cheap. I don't think we need to have dinner there. I don't know about you, but I think we are kind of stuck in a rut as to how you are supposed to run meetings: we all meet, then hold a formal meeting, then we have dinner, and then we have a guest speaker; and by the end of the evening you have not spoken to anybody because there's no opportunity to do so.

So I think we need to look at different ways of meeting. For example, perhaps three times a year we could go to a printer or a design studio or a library or anything that has to do with publishing, where we could just have 20 minutes in there and then go for a drink. We could have occasional meetings at members' houses, especially if they're near public transport. You could bring your own sandwiches and beer. You don't have to follow a set pattern. You can be imaginative in our meetings. There's a group of some of our older members who meet once every couple of months at each others' houses. We sit around and get sloshed, but it's still fun. That's an automatic thing that these people are doing, which means that maybe they're bored with the standard format of the meetings. So if you all want to come to my house once a year, you can do that. We could use my shed and talk about anything. Then, for a whole year's meetings, we would only need four or five other members to do the same—and Jill has offered, so there's two.

That's about it. So let's change this panel-in-front-and-congregation-in-the-pews format. How many times have you sat there bored stiff while one person corners the meeting? I really think we should have a look at that. That's enough from me.

**Peter:** I think the most important people to support are the new members, particularly those new to the profession. This is true of any group. I'm a member of several societies, most of which are very good at welcoming new

members on the first night, but they're often not as good at following up. New members need to be made as welcome on the third and fourth meeting as they were at the first. Any perceived barriers to new editors participating and contributing must be broken down.

We have already talked about education and training being very important. We are all still learning. It doesn't matter how long you've been in this business. Editing is such a complex process—almost every job you do throws up a new set of problems to resolve. Many of the newcomers to the profession would benefit from additional tips and training in the use of language; on the other hand, some of our experienced editors could probably learn from the newcomers on how to get the most out of technology—especially as we move rapidly towards the digital age, where the same content may end up in print, on CD and on the Web. If they haven't already done so, many editors will soon need to learn about DOIs, HTML, metadata, and so on. The experts in these areas are not likely to be in our ranks, so we probably have to look externally for some of these speakers and trainers.

I also think the choice of speakers and topics at meetings is important. Perhaps we could find a speaker who can deal with editing issues and policies. We should also look for speakers on broader issues that affect editing, such as copyright and defamation. These topics are very important in most areas of editing, and the relevant laws are changing all the time.

#### **Question 4**

#### **What would members gain from participation in Society activities?**

**Jill:** What have we gained from being members of the Society? What would other people gain? A point about the last one was brought out by Craig Munro, who said that mentorships are starting to be really important in writing; and I think mentorships in editing could well be something that this Society should look at. We have had mentorships already, haven't we, because we are all learning.

Self-esteem; employment; professional skills; network colleagues; friends—I have made some really good friends in this Society—adulation of family and friends. It's actually a very impressive Society, and it's quite funny. And it's prestigious—how about that! It links you into work niches which you mightn't know about otherwise. You could learn detailed business admin skills, which are very important for freelancers; and even perhaps knowledge of the dreaded super schemes that I mentioned before; and an assured income in old age when we can do a job at home quietly as an editor from a wheelchair, in an era when there won't be any pensions.

**Paul:** What can members gain? The best thing I can do is use myself as an example, because I started in publishing late in life and I was semi-green. I've done quite well from being in this Society. When we started in the early nineties, it was at the staff club at the university, and there seemed to be a lot of time to drink and smoke and chat before we got serious. I learnt a hell of a

lot by making jokes with Mary-Jane Bosch, Jan Whelan and a lot of the old hands who used to come. A lot of senior people used to turn up every month, and I learnt a lot by talking with them.

And then I was seduced into this trick where they say, 'We think you really have got a certain something about you that would make you ideal to run this magazine', and of course that's the old soft soap: they can't get anyone to run it, so they suck you in, and I was forced on to *Offpress*; but I thought it was a great honour. I was forced to learn things I didn't know about publishing. I started by fine-tuning my typesetting. I thought I was quite good at typesetting, but I got much better after I'd done *Offpress*, because I used to make up the pages, too, and we were very strict indeed. I mean, multiple columns: the columns had to line up—not now; the columns don't line up any more. I also learnt to make sure everything was perfect in the word-processing program before you wasted time with a made-up document; whereas now, as you know, publishers go straight onto InDesign or QuarkXPress; they don't seem to go through word processing at all.

I used to have to write leading articles, which forced me to find something funny to say about this trade. I was forced to write snippets, which taught me—every time I heard something on the radio—to make notes accurately like a newspaper reporter with all the details; I learnt how to do that. And I learnt to check my facts before opening my mouth—and that helped me with my well-known problem of premature articulation, which I've now got almost under control. Probably the best thing was that when I went for jobs, employers were impressed, you see, and they would say, 'Well, we've seen what you have done. What do you do to help the community?' You'd say, 'Oh, well, I'm the editor of the Queensland editors journal'—you say 'journal' because it sounds posher than 'newsletter', you see, and when you edit a journal for editors you have to really know what you're doing. Of course, they fell for it and you'd get the job. So I told my friend to do that [points to Helena Bond], and she got work from that.

They're the things that I've got from it, and I probably got a lot more out of it than I put in. I'm not going to put any more in because I think I've paid my dues; but I do advise anybody else, if they can, to do something handy and they could make a good job of it. No-one's going to mind if you make mistakes, like the first *Offpress* I did: I indented the paragraphs under headings, which is against the law. And Jan Whelan went off her head: I had to go back and reset it that night. She wouldn't let me send it out. No-one knows that kind of finesse any more; it has all disappeared, which is why I'm so pessimistic. But they're good things to learn, and you'll learn that sort of thing from anything else you do in the Society, and it will help you get work.

**Peter:** It is now becoming increasingly difficult to answer with anything new as we've covered so much ground already and the questions overlap to an extent. I think this is really a chance to summarise. Most of the things that I think members would gain from participation in the Society's activities relate to professional development and training. Learning from each other—whether from experienced editors or newcomers—is very important. I agree with Paul

that a reasonable period of time needs to be allocated at meetings for people just to talk to each other. However, this should not be at the end of the evening, because people will simply go home.

I have always wondered whether or not we should have dinner at the meetings. Perhaps the idea of dinner was to try to get people to sit down and talk and—as I've said—feel that at least half an hour should be allowed for this. Everyone then has a chance to do their networking—which is equally important whether you're a freelancer or working full time.

Freelancers may benefit by joining the freelance register, which gives them a great opportunity to promote themselves. They may also be able to find work from the ads in *Offpress*.

**Craig Munro made comments that included the following points:**

- the Society's early membership comprised mainly book editors
- the term 'editor' is too general and there might be a need for redefinition
- special interest groups in the Society might hold their own meetings with their own agendas.

**Craig's thoughts are expressed in a letter to the editor in the current *Offpress*.**

**Paul:** I think a good thing to do is to describe yourself as a *something* editor. If somebody says what do I do for a living, I say, 'I'm a *publishing* editor', and I try to be specific—because 'editor' is like 'manager', isn't it, or 'director'—you know, the lowest job in the world can be a director, so I think 'publishing editor' is better than 'editor'. And I think the other thing Craig said was that it started off as a Society of book editors. I got the impression when I joined—and it was early—that it was for all sorts of publishing people. Even though it was called 'The Society of Editors', there were a lot of publishing people of all different types. Is that right?

**Peter:** As I recall, when the Society was set up we tried to keep the membership as broad as possible. Many of the 'core group' of people who founded the Society were indeed book editors, but I thought it was very interesting that at the last CASE conference seventy per cent of the attendees said they had never worked on a book. So 'editing' to me is a much broader term these days. There are so many different types of editors, and that's why I said earlier that we need to explain on the web site about the different types of editors and what they do.

I agree with Paul: people like to put a label on themselves to distinguish them from the crowd. If somebody asks me what I do, I tell them that I am a science

editor, rather than just an editor. But there are so many different types of editors, and I wouldn't like to see any sort of exclusion from the Society.

I think dividing into 'subgroups' would be a good idea in certain situations. However, one of the problems I was asked to address at this meeting is declining membership, so the last thing we want to do is to split the Society into smaller parts that are more likely to fold. Restricting the membership to just book editors would merely add to the problem of declining active membership. Paul just mentioned the term 'publishing editor' as being a valuable term to describe what he does. However, in the educational field, the term 'publishing editor' means the acquisition/commissioning person who has probably never edited a book in their life. So these terms can mean different things to different people.

**Karl Craig:** Could I make a contribution about that? I'm a freelance editor, and this month alone I have worked on publishing a work of my own. I've done a major doctoral thesis. I'm working on a novel right now. I have also worked on Web content for a client. I have edited annual statements, and I have done other things as well. I've done work in a number of areas. If I was to stick to only one of those, there probably wouldn't be enough work in this for me. I'd have to go back to engineering or something. The point is: I don't think in the modern world we have too many people as freelancers who work strictly as book editors, or strictly Web editors, or strictly publishing editors or whatever. I think most of our work comes from a variety of sources, and I think the Society has to take account of that.

**Jill:** I would love to get up on a soapbox about small publishers in Australia about this topic. I've talked about big *E*'s and little *e*'s, and I think what we're really against is the change in the world through computers: that everybody has a computer at home with an editing program on it, and everybody has a lady next door who has just edited something. We think that we're different because we're trained and experienced editors. But it's a little bit like that word 'garden'. Maybe I'm getting really old and I'm getting really cross about words, but 'editing' just seems to be a very general term, and I don't mind 'The Society of Editors'; I call it 'SocEd' and I love it. But 'garden' covers everything from planting rainforests to planting pansies. Maybe a new word is going to come up to cover the Society.

**Robyn Heales responded to Craig Munro's issues as follows:**

- in recent years universities have taken up editing courses—for example, the University of Queensland: Writing, Editing and Publishing, and TAFE: Diploma in Editing (Publishing)
- it would be in the interests of the Society to discover what former students have been doing since completing their courses.

**Michael Kuter spoke about the following concepts:**

- training by mentoring
- sharing work in a spirit of cooperation
- appointment of a publicity officer
- the Society exercising a brokering role in routing work to its members.

**An email exchange between Michael and Lorraine Chamberlain on the same subjects is shown below.**

**End of transcript**

[Lorraine Chamberlain, a new member of the Society, emailed Michael Kuter after he spoke informally on mentoring at the last meeting of the Society of Editors for 2006. This is an edited version of his reply.]

Dear Lorraine

Thanks for this.

I surprised myself that I did speak up as I did; I think it was possibly one last despairing butt of the forehead against the brick wall I have been banging my head against for the past eight years.

My responses are intercalated below.

So pleased that you took the time and effort to write; thanks again most warmly.

Cheers

Michael

*Dear Michael*

*I wanted to thank you for your call to mentorship at the meeting of Society of Editors in the Kenmore Tavern last week. As a new member, it seemed to me that you articulated precisely what I had hoped for from the society.*

In the past nine years I have seen close to 100 people enter the profession (or at least, the society) with hopes and ideals, only to leave for a variety of reasons, not the least of which may have been despair, disgust and wonderment that they were left unsupported by the very profession which will soon, and necessarily, rely on those new chums to continue the work and existence of the profession.

Mentoring is necessary for any organisation to encourage and support its members at all levels of their involvement and experience in the profession. You and your colleagues are the future of editing; I think it tragic, short-sighted and selfish for the old hands to leave you to flounder unsupported in those early years when you are struggling to find work, needing experience, finding your way and creating or cementing your role in the profession.

Mentoring (as I see it) is not a parent-child type of interaction, which is essentially a one-way transaction from which the junior participant wants to escape as soon as possible, to attain their independence and 'to stand on my own two feet'. I go further and actively resist allowing my mentoring to be, or even appearing to be, a teacher-student relationship in

which the power relationship is one of superior–inferior and the information flow is, again, essentially one-way. The fundamental of my approach to mentoring is co-operation, sharing between and learning from each other as equals. One of the most valuable benefits of having a mentor is that you have someone of whom you can ask questions without fear of being embarrassed or feeling ashamed to admit you don't know something.

I think most senior editors are reluctant to commit to mentoring because they are concerned it will take more time than they are willing or able to offer, and the rate of pay will be inadequate. That is one of the reasons I proposed 'pairing, sharing and comparing', a modified version of peer tutoring. It begins when a mentor accepts a pair of mentees who agree to co-operate with each other, and the ground rules are agreed upon. When the mentor receives a suitable job, s/he sends each of the two mentees an electronic copy, with whatever brief or instructions the mentor has received, plus any advice or comments that the mentor can offer to induct the mentees.

The mentees work separately, independently and without consultation with their peer, to edit/proofread to text as required, and prepare a style sheet. On completion, they each return their edited/proofread files and style sheet to the mentor, still without having discussed it with their peer. When both mentees have sent their edits to the mentor, the mentees exchange and compare their edits and style sheets, questioning and commenting on the other's work.

The mentor then sends to the mentees the document s/he has edited, and the style sheet. The mentees compare their work with that of their mentor, discover what they and the mentor have missed or done differently, and ask questions of the mentor if they wish. Thus the two mentees gain experience of real-world editing with minimal drain on the mentor's time.

Initially, mentees might be paid nothing, but they do get practical experience on real-world texts, and they can report this experience in their résumés and in their portfolios supporting their application for accreditation. (A logical extension of this proposal, but which is possibly best kept for the future, is to have a panel, perhaps a subset of the Accreditation Board, review the mentees' work using the mentor's as the standard. This would function as an ongoing quality control and review process, allowing surveillance of mentees' standards of work and their progress, and mentors' mentoring.)

Once the mentees' ability has reached a certain standard (in practice: the mentor thinks them good enough), the two mentees would split the mentor's fee to the client in an agreed ratio, possibly 40–40–20%. Mentees I have spoken to have told me that, initially, they would be quite happy to accept 40% of my hourly rate to be mentored, to have the chance to work on real-world texts that they can report in their résumé and put in their portfolio, and to have someone of whom they could ask questions when something odd, unusual or tricky comes up.

Once the work was no longer to be split between two mentees,\* the proportioning of fees would shift progressively in favour of the mentee so that, for a given job, the mentee would do a full edit or proofread, the mentor would check it thoroughly, and a new fee-sharing ratio would be calculated based on the amount of time each had contributed. I envisage that, ultimately, around 80% of the fee charged to the client would be paid to the mentee, and the remainder to the mentor. This assumes that the mentor could check the mentee's work very much faster than the mentor could do a full edit of the original text.

\*The other mentee would be first in line for the next job, which they in their turn would do solo. And of course the mentees would be canvassing for and accepting work on their own behalf and on their own merits.

One point I think is really important: that mentees (at whatever level of skill, knowledge, ability and experience) should be exposed to and work with at least three mentors. Not necessarily spending the same amount of time with each, but definitely getting exposure to

a broader range of materials, experience and knowledge than can be offered by just one person. Mentors might be listed on the SocEds website, showing their work preference or specialty, so intending mentees can choose someone by whom they would like to be mentored.

*I am a recent graduate of the Writing, Editing, and Publishing course at UQ, and made a similar proposal — the establishment of an editing bureau to provide a cadetship for current and recent graduate students. Work would be solicited from government, education, and corporate clients, edited on-line by students in collaboration with each other, and supervised by a nominated academic. I was to be part-time administrator, secretary, project officer, 'whatever-needed' to get The Bureau established.*

Your proposal sounds in its essentials to be closely parallel with, or overlapping, my own. I envisaged the Society as fulfilling the role of *The Bureau*; the Society seems to me to be the logical organisation to do this, not least because it has a more professional cachet than that of a private practitioner. I support these proposals as a way of promoting mentoring and, more than that, of supporting and promoting our members' services in several additional ways; however, I feel that practising senior editors are to be preferred over academics as mentors for introducing mentees to the practice of editing.

I think Paul Bennett's paid publicity officer idea should be explored further; I would add to that proposed promotional role those of canvassing for work from any and all publishers and government departments; distributing the work between those mentees who wish to take part; organising and paying mentees and mentors, and maintaining the quality assurance aspects of mentoring. These proposals would necessarily have to be administered through the management committee of the society and may require changes to our constitution.

*Although the lecturer I approached considered the addition of this 'practical traineeship' to be unnecessary, I remain convinced that this type of experience is indispensable, particularly in the Brisbane area where relevant cadet and traineeships are virtually nil and at a time when criteria for accreditation are under consideration.*

This type of experience is unquestionably indispensable. Mentee sparrows can get the very necessary experience to bridge the gap between classroom and workplace while sheltering under the wing of a professional eagle, or they can get it the hard, bruising way. Being forced into the 'hard way' may explain the poor membership retention rate.

*I would like to be considered for the part-time role of Publicity Officer should the project come to be. I quite understand that an experienced editor, having an established reputation and contacts, may be a better investment as a publicity officer (my own practical editing experience is limited to voluntary editing and proofreading for a non-profit organisation) but I am an experienced office administrator, event manager (work to deadlines), and telemarketer, who only needs a part-time income. I would be delighted to put my time, effort and enthusiasm into making this project work.*

Your offer is very timely; I should like to have the management committee of the society investigate the question of whether we can pay someone, even if only part-time initially. My suggestion was that the person who canvassed for work would be paid out of the brokerage fee that the Society would charge participants in the scheme. The brokerage would be, say, 2–5% of client fees. If someone received a job from the Society which paid them \$1000, they would pay the Society \$20–\$50 as brokerage. The pay to the publicity/promotion officer would have to be reviewed, and the society would have to meet out-of-pocket expenses so that the officer received a fair hourly rate, otherwise it would be unsustainable. The whole concept and practice of brokering publishing work may be unprofitable, but we should give it a try as a way to obtain work for our members, to fund the person canvassing for work, to enable training by mentoring, and to make better known the society's existence and the skills and abilities of its members.

Suggest you get in touch with the Management Committee of the Society ([president@editorsqld.com](mailto:president@editorsqld.com)) and put your offer before them. I have worked with Robin

Bennett, our President, for several years, and I know she is very supportive of any moves which will encourage mentoring and promote the society.

*In any case, thank you for bringing a dynamic proposal to light.*

*Sincerely*

*Lorraine Chamberlain*

I hope it will remain dynamic, and will be brought about before all editing work is exported overseas. I am thrilled by the response to my impromptu address last Wednesday. You, and others like you, are saying 'yes, we want this'; I hope that you in concert will have the grunt to bring it about. The proportion of young members is increasing; in time you will come to dominate the society numerically and, because you believe in it, you may be able institute a sharing philosophy — what I call 'cooperation, not competition'.

Over the past eight years I have put a lot into CASE/IPEd as committee member, Secretary and Delegate for Queensland, so please don't misunderstand me when I say that I think all societies of editors will have to improve our services to members before we see IPed, our peak professional body, wielding some clout in the publishing world. It troubles me that only 22.4% of members voted for accreditation (only 30% voted at all); it concerns me that very few of the people working in publishing are members of the society; I think the poor attendance at meetings and the poor retention rate says that the society is not giving its members enough of whatever it is they want.

I said on Wednesday that we are a knife-and-fork (and wineglass) society; I also say that we can do more to attract and keep members. Also, I would like to see IPed finalise negotiations to establish a group professional indemnity insurance scheme, open to all members of all societies of editors in Australasia.

Being mentored, being offered paying work and having access to a group professional indemnity insurance scheme would be real, tangible, value-for-money benefits for your membership of the society of editors.

**End of email**

**End of transcript**