



... the word

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (SA)

ISSN 1833-3796

March–April 2014

Next meeting

Wednesday 23 April, 7.30 pm

SA Writers' Centre
2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street, Adelaide
Access is via the stairs from Rundle Street or by lift accessible through Café Brunelli.

Career pathways – panel presentation

Editing careers are many and varied. Have you ever wondered what other editors do or how they got into their particular field? At our next meeting four of our members will talk to us about their very different career paths.

Mary-Ann Came AE

Mary-Ann completed a Bachelor of Journalism degree and started her career as a writer and editor of business and industry magazines. She then moved into public relations, writing and editing copy for media releases, newsletters, corporate profiles, brochures, websites, adverts and tender submissions. She is currently freelancing and is the South Australian editorial contractor for *The Senior* newspaper.

Dani Cash

Dani established Page & Pixel Communications in 2010 after a career in marketing communications for corporate and non-profit organisations in Australia and the United Kingdom. Now, with more than 20 years' communications experience, Dani specialises in writing, editing and designing business communications tools for small to medium enterprises, non-profit organisations and government.

Penelope Curtin

Penelope began her working life as a librarian in the National Library of Australia. She began editing after being appointed Central Office Librarian at the South Australian Department of TAFE. In 2006, she opened a bookshop and ran a parallel editing business. Penelope now works full-time in her editing business, although life has provided other professional diversions, one being as co-director of *The Body in the Garden*, a crime and garden writers' festival held in the Adelaide Botanic Garden last October.

Alastair Sarre

Alastair Sarre has an honours degree in forestry and a graduate diploma in professional communication. He

began his career as a forester working for a mining company in Western Australia, and since 1992 he has earned his living by writing and editing, mainly on forestry. He has worked for international organisations based in Yokohama and Rome and travelled widely for his work. He is also a novelist: his first novel, *Prohibited Zone*, was published by Wakefield Press in 2011, and his second will be published this year, also by Wakefield.

If you would like to join us for dinner beforehand at **Café Michael, 204 Rundle Street**, please email rsvp@editors-sa.org.au. Dinner is at member's own expense.

Welcome to new members

The Society of Editors (SA) gives a warm welcome to our newest members:

**Angela Lush
Stacey Roberts**

The presidential word

Marianne Hammat AE

Behind the scenes the Committee has been working to establish a Communications team, focusing on member communications and promotion of editing to clients and employers in SA. We are already seeing the benefits of a coordinated communications approach and I hope that you will notice more updates on the website and some great ways of sharing our activities with members on social media and in our newsletter.

Contents

Next Workshop: Ebooks 101	2
February Workshop report	3
2015 IPEd/ANZSI conference - call for papers	3
Accreditation exam	5
Notes for exam candidates	5
Q&A with Mark Tredinnick	5
March meeting report	8
National Mentoring Program: SA	9
The benefits of mentoring	9

Check out 'Q&A with Mark Tredinnick' on page 5. Mark was the guest speaker at our March meeting; he generously answered some thoughtful questions for our newsletter report.

Thanks to our Program Coordinator, Pamela Ball, forming connections with the Arts Council of Australia, the Society was invited to the Drinks Reception for the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs), who were in Adelaide for Writers' Week. Katy and I rocked up on a very hot Tuesday evening and had the opportunity to talk to some very interesting publishers from near and far. The reception was opened by a smoking welcome to country as members of the Kaurna people cleansed us with smoke from a fire in the courtyard of the Art Gallery. We got the goss on the direction of crime fiction and interactive publications, and had the opportunity to congratulate Laura Kroetsch on a fantastic Writers' Week.

In this edition, our Newsletter Editor, Adam Jarvis, has reported on the Examination Preparation workshop, which reminds me that registration for the accreditation examination in May closes on **Monday 7 April**.

On page 5, a recently accredited editor—Mary-Ann Came—has written about how accreditation has benefited her. She found "the discipline of preparing for the exam, writing the exam and achieving accreditation ... incredibly personally satisfying". She feels that studying for the exam helped her to master a few things that she battled to get right (and we all have those!) and to gain more confidence in her editing skills, and it sparked her interest in other areas related to editing. If you have two to three years' editing experience, accreditation is within your grasp, so why not give it a go. Head to the IPEd website to find out the details

http://iped-editors.org/News_and_events/View_News/Exam_registrations_open.aspx

The other deadline that I would like to bring to your attention is the closing date for the call for papers for the 7th National Editors Conference, Write Edit Index, which is being held in conjunction with the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers in Canberra from 6 to 9 May 2015. Expressions of interest are due by **Friday 30 May 2014**. Members have been emailed details about the call for papers, but if you have missed it there is more in this edition of the newsletter and on the IPEd website:

http://iped-editors.org/News_and_events/View_News/Write_Edit_Index_Call_for_papers.aspx

At our next general meeting in April, we will have an interesting panel of editors talking about how they got where they are today. The road to a career in editing is many and varied and inevitably of interest to editors at any stage of their career. So save **Wednesday 23 April** in your diary for a night out with the Society of Editors. I hope to see you there.

Next workshop: Ebooks 101 for Editors, 31 May

*In May, join us at an intensive workshop on editing ebooks – an essential skill for any editor who wants to get digital! Workshop leader **Sarah Fletcher** spoke to Katy McDevitt AE about all things ebookish.*

Experienced ebook editor and trainer **Sarah Fletcher** will be leading a one-day workshop, '**Ebooks 101 for Editors**', on **Saturday 31 May**. If you were in Perth for the 2013 IPEd conference, you'll already know that Sarah is an inspiring and informative presenter about the purpose and practicalities of e-publishing. For all of us, this workshop will be a chance to strengthen our knowledge of ebook publishing practices and to try out some of them for ourselves. **Get ready to hone your ebook editing skills – and bring your laptop!**

A great time to get into ebook editing

It's a great time for editors to prepare for a deeper involvement in ebooks, as the publishing industry is in transition from thinking about the ebook format as a literal copy of the printed book to more complex and interesting formats. Sarah is looking forward to seeing more interactive reference works that take the form in more experimental directions, and you may want to check out app producers such as Touch Press and Nosy Crow for examples of ebook publishing that's already heading in those directions.

How Sarah got started

So, how did Sarah get into ebook publishing? She aspired to be an editor from childhood but as she grew up it seemed, she says, 'an impossible dream'. But not so! When she graduated, she became a publishing assistant in the Children's department at Random House Australia, and worked her way up to the role of editor.

Sarah is also a voracious reader of ebooks, which she has been reading for around 12 years now. Initially, though, she found their poor quality frustrating – and this motivated her to become part of the conversation about how to publish them more successfully:

The more ebooks I read, the more avoidable errors I started to see, and the more frustrated I became. So when the editorial department I was working in started to produce ebooks, I made sure I contributed, mainly in terms of helping develop quality assurance processes. Nowadays I work on ebook projects as part of my freelance practice and I enjoy training other editors to work in this area. I wouldn't call myself a guru yet – the field is so big and changes so fast that it's impossible to know everything. Working on ebooks can be very humbling! However, I like to think that I'm constantly pushing myself to get better at what I do.

Transferable editing skills – and some new ones

Many editors are adding ebook publishing skills to their professional skill-set, and most, Sarah thinks, find the mental and emotional aspects of the switch more challenging than the technical part. She offers some reassuring advice on this, as it's really a case of 'getting your hands dirty', and it's 'remarkable how many of the skills and attributes of the print-focused editor are directly applicable':

Working on ebooks, you need to be able to help the author make decisions about content and structure. Just like print books, ebooks need a guiding hand to ensure consistency and accuracy. The main difference from print-focused editing is that you need to be able to keep a wider variety of reading environments in mind as you work (e.g. tablets, smartphones, e-ink reading devices), and know enough about digital readers' needs to make informed decisions about presentation of content. It's also a good idea to be familiar with some code – mainly HTML, XML and CSS. Editors who have blogged or done any web editing have a head-start here.

Even if the thought of learning all those codes makes you sigh with pre-emptive exhaustion, it's not all bad news on the technical front. Most of us are already used to editing onscreen, so how transferable are our existing techie skills? Very, says Sarah – good onscreen editing discipline underpins good ebook editing too:

The skills involved in onscreen editing are more relevant to ebook work than many people realise – particularly Word styling, version control and using macros. If hard-copy editors are looking to start working on ebooks, I'd recommend that they brush up their onscreen editing skills as well.

Client expectations of ebook editors

The one critical skill that all clients need from editors – whether they're a tech-savvy publisher or a newbie ebook author – is expert communication. Again, that's something that professional editors working at a high standard already do well, of course, but ebook editing brings new challenges here too. Sarah sees clients dividing into two main types and, as she explains, this affects the nature of the editorial input they need:

E-publishing clients come with a wide range of experience and expectations. At one end are those who know they want to get into digital publishing, but have no idea how to go about it. They may be looking for the editorial professional to act in a consultant capacity: defining what is and isn't possible, guiding decisions, perhaps managing a team of specialist

suppliers. This can be very satisfying and stimulating work, but can also lead to cost and time overruns if projects aren't clearly defined.

At the opposite end of the continuum are very knowledgeable and empowered clients. They may ask for more specific skills, such as content strategy advice, or quality assurance for niche ebook formats. These clients may have more concrete expectations, particularly about the standard of work the editor supplies.

How to compete for ebook editing work

Ebook work can be very competitive, and the price-sensitivity of much ebook publishing means that clients sometimes source their editorial and publishing services offshore. In Australia, though, there are plenty of small presses and independent authors looking for ebook editors. And, says Sarah, the rise of digital-only presses means that it has 'never been easier to start your own publishing company, although it's probably as difficult as ever to make it a long-term success'.

With the right skills and the same commitment to editorial standards we use in the rest of our professional lives, ebook editing can be a great way to expand your editing portfolio. Suitably qualified editors are in demand, particularly as there are not yet many editors and production staff who have specific ebook skills, particularly in Australia. Sarah encourages more editors to work on ebooks even if it means she'll be competing more for work herself in the future, as she wants to see the Australian e-publishing industry flourish and grow – and the more editors focus on ebook editing, of course, the higher the quality of the publishing we'll achieve.

Sarah Fletcher is a freelance editorial consultant with a life-long passion for words. Sarah brings with her years of in-house experience at trade publishing houses, including her current role as Commissioning Editor at Koala Books, Sydney. Sarah's services include proofreading, structural editing, project management, commissioning, consulting, presenting and ebook quality assurance. You can find Sarah online at her website (www.sarahjfletcher.com), and connect with her at LinkedIn (au.linkedin.com/in/sjhletcher).

We hope you'll join us at Sarah's workshop on 31 May, to pick up essential skills for ebook editing – and do tell colleagues and editorial friends about it! To register, visit our booking site:

<http://may2014workshop.eventzilla.net/>

Write drunk, edit sober.

– Ernest Hemingway

Workshop report

Preparing for the Accreditation Exam

Adam Jarvis

Meryl Potter is an IPed Distinguished Editor who has had more than 30 years' experience in the publishing arena and has pretty much worked across the full range of editing and publishing. Meryl is a writer and project manager, and also teaches editing at the Macleay College. Perhaps more pertinently, Meryl was the Chief Examiner for the 2008 and 2009 Accreditation Exams, making her the perfect choice to run a 'Preparing for the Exam' workshop (as she has done before) for our Society.

I had attended a similar workshop (also run by Meryl) in the run-up to the accreditation exam in 2012, and although I decided not to sit the exam that year I'm ready to take it on this time around. The primary purpose of these workshops is firstly to ascertain whether attendees themselves feel that they have the skills, expertise and confidence to attempt the exam—after all, before you pay your registration fee you want to be fairly sure, don't you?

The other purpose of the workshops is to sharpen up some of the skills that we, as editors, think that we 'know' but, when tested, find that we need to practice to be able to perform at the level needed for the exam (you need to achieve 80% to pass).

A fair amount of time in this workshop was devoted to the manual mark-up of texts, since this component comprises 40% of the exam. Some attendees were (unsurprisingly) a little unfamiliar with hard-copy mark-up given most editors work onscreen, but bear in mind that the exam isn't about testing your notation skills (though knowing at least some of the standard mark-up symbols will help you squeeze more edits into your valuable exam time). It is about the thinking and decision-making that you do while you're editing, which underpins all changes we make to text, and being able to make smart, speedy editorial choices is essential to get the job done in the exam.

Anyhow, I was glad that I remembered some of the 'devil scratchings' that I had learned at uni—so termed by my then 17-year-old stepdaughter, who had also thought that the *Style manual* had something to do with fashion—*quelle* disappointment!

During the workshop we examined the structure of past exams and also attempted some questions under a bit of time pressure. In her inimitable way, Meryl eventually got us all to view the exam as if it were an editing project, albeit with an extreme deadline.

Meryl broke the exam down into its parts and explained the rationale for the marks scheme in each of them, suggesting strategies for deciding what priority to place on each section.

The most important lesson that I took away from this workshop was Meryl's extremely pragmatic and procedural approach to the exam in terms of project and time management—something we could all learn from as editors.

Our small but enthusiastic group of exam hopefuls got a highly personalised 'master class' in editing, for the

bargain price of \$20, subsidised by the Society. We most certainly got our money's worth, and then some! If you're thinking of registering, the deadline is **7 April**, so it's time to decide.

Write, Edit, Index: Call for papers

2015 Australian Conference for Editors, Indexers and Publishing Professionals, Canberra, 6–9 May 2015



Deadline Friday 30 May 2014!

The conference committee is inviting expressions of interest to present papers on broad topical areas about editing and indexing for the conference in Canberra, 2015.

The conference will focus on contemporary and emerging issues in editing and indexing, including but not necessarily limited to:

- best practice/innovative practice in editing and indexing
- research relevant to editing, indexing, publishing
- digital publishing
- ebooks
- information technology developments and trends
- information accessibility
- education and professional development
- professional issues
- business practices
- editing/indexing particular formats/document types/publications types
- taxonomies/controlled vocabularies in indexing
- industry trends
- case studies.

Expressions of interest (up to 200 words) in presenting a paper or participating in panel or round table discussions are due by **Friday 30 May 2014**.

You are welcome to share this notice with interested friends and colleagues.

The committee reserves the right to select papers appropriate to the program.

Please send your submissions to writeeditindex@gmail.com.

For more information, please visit the conference website at <http://writeeditindex.net.au>.

Accreditation – it's not too late!

It's *still* not too late to register to sit the accreditation exam – but there are only a few days left.

Accreditation helps you gain recognition for your skills as an editor. Editors who pass the accreditation exam are certified by the IPEd Accreditation Board and can use the postnominal AE (for 'Accredited Editor').

By applying for accreditation, you are supporting the drive for high standards of competence in the editing profession and demonstrating a commitment to your own professional development. The more editors who are accredited, the more successful IPEd and your Society will be in raising the profile of professional editors with clients and employers nationally and locally.

Mary-Ann Came AE (see profile on page 1), who will be speaking at our next general meeting, shares her thoughts on the benefits of accreditation.

Much of my career has revolved around writing, communication and editing and so embarking on the accreditation exam was a natural fit with my existing qualifications, skills and experience. At first, I felt daunted and overwhelmed with the amount of work involved and at times anxious as to whether I would get through it all. I felt like I didn't know where to start, but soon developed a process and a rhythm and the preparation became easier.

Preparing for the accreditation exam was like undertaking a refresher and update course on steroids. Having studied a Bachelor of Journalism, there were aspects of the accreditation preparation which I had done before, but it was great as a refresher and forced me to tackle my own professional 'demons' —mastering those few little things which I battle to get right! I also learned new things particularly in relation to book editing, thesis editing and citation.

The accreditation has certainly given me more confidence in my editing skills, but also given me confidence in my core functions in corporate communication, public relations and writing and is a great addition to my resume. It has also sparked my interest in indexing and I have undertaken some freelance indexing work.

More than anything though, the discipline of preparing for the exam, writing the exam and achieving accreditation were all just incredibly personally satisfying —well worth it.

The next IPEd accreditation exam will be held on 3 May 2014 in each of the state capitals (subject to demand). **Applications are open and the closing date is 3 April 2014.**

For detailed information about the exam and how to register, visit the IPEd website at <http://iped-editors.org/Accreditation.aspx>. If you have any questions, please contact Val Mobley <val.mobley@gmail.com> or Adele Walker <adeleanderson@aapt.net.au>.

The exam – notes for candidates

Those who are intending to or considering the accreditation exam should thoroughly peruse the updated notes for candidates, kindly provided by our Committee representative Val Mobley. The updated and amended notes are available via this link:

http://www.editors-sa.org.au/News_and_events/Notes_on_the_accreditation_exam_2014.aspx

Thanks also to Birgitt Olsen for making these notes available to all on our Society's website.

Q&A with Mark Tredinnick

*Our March speaker, poet and editing guru **Mark Tredinnick**, spoke to Katy McDevitt AE ahead of his thought-provoking talk to the Society during Writers' Week. Here it is!*

Q: You're in Adelaide for Writers' Week, where you're taking part in two sessions. What are you expecting to be highlights of your time in SA?

I'm talking about poetry and love with Mike Ladd, and I'm on a panel with Lisa Jacobson (poet and novelist) talking form in poetry and prose. I'm looking forward to both sessions and listening in on lots of others. I thought I might catch "The Seagull" and "An Iliad" at the theatre, too. And some music. I'm teaching two workshops at the SAWC, too: The Little Red Writing Workshop (I ran that on Tuesday 25) and tonight, Nothing But the Truth (creative nonfiction).

But I'm most looking forward to some downtime between gigs. I have poems to write and fee-paying work (editing and writing) to finish, some books to read, and a decision to take about who wins the nonfiction category of the NSW Premier's Prize this year. I'm staying in a cottage in the garden of my friends Steve and Rebecca. That is a lovely experience, in itself, especially in weather as lovely as this. On the weekend, I may get out into the hills. Failing that, I'm five minutes from the beach at Semaphore, so I'll get myself down there for a walk.

Oh, I'm also going into a school on Friday to talk with years one and four about the life of a poet.

But most of all, I'm looking forward to meeting some of the world's finest editors on Monday night, when I talk with the Society of Editors.

Q: You've been known to pick up a red pen in the past, with lots of editing experience under your belt. How did you come up with the idea for your series of editing and writing books?

Most of the editing I do these days I perform on my own work: my poems, my essays, my blog posts, my prose books. More than half of the work, the hard and

loving labour, of writing is rewriting and unwriting and finishing and finishing again. Among other things, a writer must learn to become her own editor, her own first reader—to practise tough love all afternoon on what she drafted all morning. I like what William Faulkner says: “I write to please myself, but I make myself very hard to please.” Learning, by reading and thinking and practising, as much as you can about syntax and style, is the larger part of how the writer makes himself hard to please. Listening to good music, and walking in the world, and falling in love are other ways. These days, to make up the gap between what poetry earns and what a mortgage and a family cost, I still edit other writers’ work. Some of them are corporate clients; some are poets and essayists and novelists. But I prefer to work at the macro level. Line editing is like weeding, and since I spend my days weeding my own work, and the work of my writing students, I have no weeding mojo left when I look at the manuscripts of others.

But you asked about the series of books. I wrote them because I could; I wrote them because I thought they might be useful; I wrote them because I thought they might sell, and if you live off writing, and what you love best to write are poems, you’d better write the odd bankable book. When I say I wrote the books because I could, I mean I had, in 2005, been teaching creative writing (poetry, creative nonfiction, nature writing, fiction), functional writing and grammar for ten years, after a career in book publishing (as an editor and acquisitions editor), and my writing books—first the red, then the green, and finally the black—grew out of what and how I’d been teaching (and learning) all that decade. Since then, they’ve replaced the photocopied notes my students used to get. But the books have all reached a readership far beyond the students I teach. That is what I hoped might happen, and it is a delight and relief that it has.

One thing I learned from my years in book publishing (Butterworths, Allen & Unwin, Harper Collins) was that good writing books sell and keep selling. I published Patti Miller’s *Writing Your Life* at Allen & Unwin in 1993, and it’s selling these days better than it ever did. So I had some inside knowledge. All I had to do was write a book (or three) and make it (them) good. Seems I have.

I wanted books that would speak to writers of many kinds and ages and skills and needs. The books have found many of the markets I had in mind.

At the launch of the red book, Patrice Newell described it as *The Joy of Sex* for writers. And I suppose that’s the kind of book I wanted to write. Sentences, too, can be sexy. And there is no end to the erotics of grammar.

Q: You’ve published *The Little Red Writing Book*, *The Little Green Grammar Book* and *The Little Black Book of Business Writing*. How did you decide on which colour goes with which book, and can we expect to see more colours from you in the future?

I approached UNSW Press (now New South) with the idea for a series of writing books, starting with a book of style. I the title *The Little Red Writing Book* had already come to me. My wife claims she coined the idea, and though that’s not how I remember it, it’s the kind of cool idea she comes up with, so let’s say that happened. I had in mind the speech music of “red” and “writing”, and the various connotations of the words in the title: manifesto, Chairman Mao’s *Little Red Book*, *The Little Red School Book*. And a self-deprecating joke: “the little-read writing book”. The other colours chose themselves: Green for Grammar; Black for Business. I’d had in mind Purple for Punctuation, but I covered that in the grammar book, and one or two others.

But there will not be, I don’t think, any more in the series. Unless perhaps it’s the *Purple Poetry Book*. And something chartreuse for Children. And once I had an idea for *The Little White Reading Book*, but that book, which I am still (theoretically) writing has a better title now, and isn’t part of the series: *Reading Slowly at the End of Time*.

Q: You’ve described grammar as “the set of rules you’ll need to know and sometimes cleverly break, but never forget, if you want to write with grace or cool or circumspection”. Which “rules” do you love to break, and what do following and/or breaking them bring to your writing?

Theseus in Act 5, Scene 1 of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* says: “And as imagination bodies forth the forms/ Of things unknown, the poet’s pen/ Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing/ A local habitation and a name.” Writing is an art, and art is nothing unless and until it takes form. And then it is its form that works or doesn’t work to translate, as it were, the untranslatable world, to say what any human feels but few find ways to express or to transfigure into the kind of form a poem is, a sentence (like “Rage, rage against the dying of the light”), or a story or a whole book. And one gives to airy nothing a form, a local habitation and a name in words, formed into phrases, made into clauses and set down in some script so that they make the music of what the writer meant to anyone who cares to read them. Writing entails not just sentiment and imagination and invention and madness: you perform its alchemy in sentences and lines and stanzas and paragraphs; you make “memorable speech” (Auden’s definition of poetry) by choosing the right words and putting them in the right order. Right in grammar, as a starting point; right in style for advanced writers.

“Master the rules”, wrote the poet Basho; “break the rules”. In writing, that paradise, grammar is the set of rules one must master—to body forth ideas and feelings and episodes of memory and dream and make the sculptures of voice writing is. And Basho’s right—and not just for writing. Nine tenths of the work in any field that counts, is mastering simple but difficult rules (structural, aesthetic, ethical, musical, intellectual, in the case of writing; one-tenths of it is transcending the

rules. Bending them, like chords, but always remembering them.

I love to break all the rules in this way and for these reasons. I seem to especially like sentence fragments. Like this. Or this. Sentence fragments—unsound sentences. I like writing unsound sentences for the same reason I like enjambment in poetry (breaking a line mid-phrase): both practices work like soft electric shocks. They unsettle and arouse.

Oh, and I insist on breaking all pedantic usages, which never were grammatical rules: I never start a sentence with “However”; I often start one with “And” or “But”; I like to begin with “Because” and end with a preposition, and split an infinitive now and then; I hate full stops after pp and ff, where the *Style manual* still likes them.

My guiding principle is the thesis of *The Little Red Writing Book*: write like the best conversation you never heard. Write it like you talk it, only better.

Q: I read your fascinating account of how you grew into poetry at your website, where you explain your commitment to 'making beautiful sense' through your poetry (I love that!). How has your practice as a poet changed your writing or helped you understand language differently?

Poetry has given me licence to stop explaining myself. It has taught me to be taut. It has embedded a lyric bias, and it has schooled me in speech music and the uses of rhythm. It has shown me the magic of metaphor. Poetry is what you get when you ask more of language. When you allow it not just to mean, but to be; not just to signify, but to sound; not just to evoke, but to evoke. Poetry, it has been said, is language on fire. And it works on language the way a fire works on a forest: it burns it back and regenerates it. Poetry has done this for my writing; and good poetry does this for all our writing.

Poetry has improved my prose, and it's helped me understand what I never understood about my prose: I always wrote with my ear and insisted on good rhythm, sometimes at the expense of perfect sense. I am a lyric writer; I think I came out that way.

Another thing. “Prose,” wrote Octavio Paz, “is language making sense. Poetry is language making love.” I quite like making love. Most of us do. But poetry, I've learned, is language doing love's work among us, in many senses of the word “love”. Telling, often, hard truths so beautifully or powerfully, they stay said for centuries. I need such language; we all do. Turns out, I also need to make it.

Q: You're talking to the Society of Editors (SA) about “The Republic of Sense”, about which you say that “We need better writing for political as well as artistic reasons—for ethics as much as for aesthetics”. Can you talk to us about why this is dear to your heart, and in what ways you see writing contributing to contemporary political debate?

I wanted to talk on this theme because it dawned on me recently that I am passionate about it. “The struggle to improve our sentences,” I write in the red book, “is the struggle to improve ourselves”. And improving our sentences to improve the integrity and wealth of each life and all our lives: this seems to be part of my calling. A central part.

Just to say two things briefly.

“How I write is who I am,” wrote Joan Didion. I think that's true for each of us and for all of us as cultures or societies. I don't much like most of the language of what passes for public discourse, political debate, nor the prose of governance and commerce. In Australia, it seems to me both careless and pompous. Passive aggressive and defensive. I think that how we speak and write articulates values that prevail in my country and in the west; which is to say, I don't like how we write because I don't like who that says we are; and I think that writing better—with more humanity and grace and integrity—would make us better. Would change those values. Improving our sentences would improve our selves.

I recently discovered that the President of the Press Council of South Africa, Joe Thloloe, a significant black leader, rated my red book his favourite writing guide. What he liked about it, he said, was my insistence that writers have duties of care they ought to take seriously: to the language (to keep it healthy and use it sparingly); to every reader (to respect their intelligence and not waste their time); to their people and their cause and their places, to their past and present and future—to serve them well with words. I was touched that this sentiment of mine, this sense of duty, mattered so much to a writer for whom good and bad language, honest and dishonest sentences, are a matter of life and death.

Each of us and all of us would do well to work out who we want to be, and since a part of being involves language, we'd do well to work out how to write to be the person and the people we want to become. Write the way you'd like democracy to run, I say in the red book. “Be the change,” said Gandhi, “you want to see in the world.” And start with your sentences, because nothing in this world is as powerful.

We gratefully acknowledge Adelaide Writers' Week for agreeing to Mark's participation in this event.



Meeting report

Mark Tredinnick

Adam Jarvis

Mark Tredinnick, prize-winning poet and author of *The Little Red Writing Book*, was our special guest speaker (courtesy of *Adelaide Writers' Week*) on 3 March.



Mark Tredinnick addresses Society members

Photo: Katy McDevitt

Summing up the bloke who is Mark Tredinnick is a little tricky, perhaps even more so after listening to him speak at our last general meeting for the best part of an hour. I have done the research and read some of the books, including his much awarded and lauded poetry, and am still somewhat in awe of the man's achievements. I'll try not to turn this into a hagiography.

I first came across Mark's work in the form of two prescribed texts in the UniSA 'writing' degree I completed a couple of years ago—*The Little Green Grammar Book* and *The Little Red Writing Book*. Along with the *Style manual* and *Macquarie*, these are books that I keep close and refer to on a regular basis, simply because they are engaging, easy to use and really useful! I intend to purchase his very aptly titled *Little Black Book of Business Writing* very soon.

Mark titled his talk for us as "The Republic of Sense", shamelessly flagging his alliance with the Republican movement in Australia and also noting the depths to which public discourse has sunk in this country (I'm sure that very few would disagree on the latter). He alluded to and expanded upon this theme throughout his talk.

The self-described "lapsed lawyer", who also holds a PhD in literature and ecology, as well as an MBA, was a book editor and publisher for ten years. He launched the talk by telling us how he was somewhat unwittingly involved in his latest project, an essay titled "**A Peaceable Revolution**" in the 2013 book *Project Republic*, a collection of essays which argue for Australia

becoming the "republic we should have become years ago."

Although fairly wide-ranging, Mark's talk mainly focused on his thesis that, as proposed in his *Red Writing Book*, our writing reflects who we are, so that any effort to improve our writing (along with the necessary discipline and thought process around this) will thus equate to self-improvement. Further, he expanded this analogy to liken the state of our public discourse and politics as a reflection of who and where we are as nation.

Indeed, Mark said that the Australian Constitutional Convention held under the Howard government was aptly named, as we are generally all fairly "conventional", likening our reluctance to break ties with Britain as "...teetering on the edge of leaving home" (at the age of 35), which is probably a fair analogy upon reflection.

On public discourse, Mark said that in this, for the most part, there are: "...two modes of Australian prose, which are larrikin and careless, or it's pompous." He then went on to explain part of what he thinks is the logic of the Republican movement in Australia, stating: "...I'd like a republic for itself, but I'd also like a republic ...because you have to write your own story".

Mark added that in the realms of government and bureaucracy we tend to "...write excessively formally", whereas central to his main thesis is that "Good writing is talking tidied", a sentiment that I'm sure many would agree with.

He then went on to say: "True writing is a human thing, derived from speech...It is respectful to the reader by not wasting time or 'buggering' the language up." Mark stated that even in the context of formal writing, or perhaps even more so: "the point is the point, which should be stated clearly", adding that good prose is generally the product of many drafts and rewrites: "in contemplation of the reader's humanity."

Reinforcing this ideal, he cited David Malouf, who espouses the "elegance, beauty and rhythm of a sentence" as opposed to the polysyllabic clichés of business speak that we are generally served up. On this note Mark says: "Too much writing is transacted which forgets the humanity of the enterprise."

On how to approach writing and the spirit in which it should be conducted, Mark left us with many memorable quotes, firstly telling us to "think of the grown up in a hurry, because that's who they are!" and write "as if you were talking to your mother" (i.e. be respectful and don't lie!) Indeed, Mark suggested that we give our reader "*more* respect than we think they deserve", borrowing a sentiment from the Hindu belief system "From the god in me to the god in you."

Mark again focused on the notion that our writing is a manifestation of ourselves, citing author Joan Didion, who said: "I don't know what I think until I write it down" and suggesting that "The struggle to improve our sentences is the struggle to improve ourselves", adding "The way we write betrays who we are."

He then revisited the Republican debate, and (as above) suggested that Australia as a nation is ready to "leave home" in order to write its own story and forge its

own path. However, Mark also reflected that our government reflects the “personality” of our nation, and that perhaps this currently lacks some humanity, stating: “We tend to preclude a kind of deep humanity from our leaders...we’re not comfortable with it.” Thought-provoking stuff indeed!

Mark told us of how his ‘mind map’ method of drafting the outline for a piece of writing (which he terms in the *Red Book* as “Think before ink”) was extremely useful in composing his essay for *Project Republic* while facing a tight deadline. He recommends this approach with just about any writing project.

Finally, Mark explained that he felt compelled to contribute in his chosen field out of a sense of duty, something which he thinks we should all do in life with whatever gift we have been given. He stressed, though, that in his field of endeavour “The first duty of obligation is to the language itself”, a sentiment which should resonate with editors.

To conclude his talk, Mark read us one of his poems “**Resistance**” from his book the *Bluwren Cantos*. An informative Q & A followed and some attendees had a chance to chat with Mark one-on-one with a glass of **Bremerton Wine** or two.



As above, this was the first general meeting at which members enjoyed our new wine sponsor’s product, gratis. The Society would like to acknowledge **Bremerton Wine’s** contribution which, I am sure all will agree, helped make our meeting a more convivial occasion.

Bremerton Wines is located at Langhorne Creek, just under one hour’s drive from Adelaide. The cellar door is open seven days a week from 10:00 am until 5:00 pm.

You can find out more about Bremerton here:
<http://www.bremerton.com.au/>.

Mentoring program now available to Society members!

Not long ago, the Canberra Society of Editors set up a **National Mentoring Program**, and your Society has recently joined the scheme. We think that SA editors will get huge value out of this new professional development option, and we hope that many of you will join the program as a mentee or mentor (or both!).

As a first step, the national coordinators and the Society have appointed Katy McDevitt AE as the local coordinator. Katy has previously mentored an aspiring editor for IPAA (SA), and has a strong interest in helping

emerging editors develop their careers. (You can read below about what Society member gained from her menteeship.) Katy is the local contact point for applicants to the scheme and will source a suitable mentor to partner with each mentee.

We’re officially launching the SA program at our general meeting on **Tuesday 17 June**, with a short presentation followed by a networking event for interested people to meet and discuss their aspirations and plans. We’re aiming for as many mentees and mentors to be accepted into the program before that date as possible in order to hit the ground running at this meeting. Accordingly, we strongly encourage anyone interested to email Katy for an initial chat:
katy@kmeditorial.com.

*On the topic of mentoring, one of our members, **Carolyn Carter**, recently undertook a mentoring program. Carolyn has kindly put together the following piece telling of the benefits she gained from this experience.*

The benefits of mentoring

Carolyn Carter

After making the decision to change to a career in editing, I joined a nine-month mentoring program run by the Institute of Public Administration Australia (SA) and was matched with a highly qualified and experienced editor, Katy McDevitt AE.

There were a few nerves present at our first meeting, neither of us having participated in a mentoring program; however, we quickly developed a good rapport and organised to meet regularly. We explored in detail my career aspirations, strengths, areas for development and the steps required to achieve my goals. My personal learning style, prior experience, skills and abilities were always taken into consideration when planning ways to move forward.

The benefits of the mentoring experience were many and varied. These included having a thoughtful and knowledgeable person to act as a sounding board and provide valuable advice on aspects such as:

- membership of relevant professional organisations
- relevant resources
- networking
- strategies for approaching potential employers
- job applications and interviews
- training and development (including industry-specific software).

My self-awareness, confidence and skill levels increased considerably and continue to do so as I achieve goals and create new ones.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know and work with Katy and to continue our relationship beyond the mentoring program. The National Mentoring Program presents an ideal opportunity to develop this kind of professional partnership and I hope to see the scheme achieve widespread success.