

society for editors and proofreaders

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sfep

upholding editorial excellence

Annual report 2017/18

This report covers the activities of the SfEP Council and the Society from 1 March 2017 to 28 February 2018, the period of the Society's financial year. It does not cover activity between 1 March 2018 and the publication of the report in August 2018 in preparation for the SfEP annual general meeting on 8 September 2018.

Chair

Sabine Citron, chair

This year seems to have been an even busier one for the SfEP Council than last year. Chartership was one of our most demanding and rewarding projects. Gerard Hill, our chartership adviser, and I travelled to London for a string of meetings with sister organisations, our sponsoring government department, our legal adviser and, of course, the Privy Council Office (PCO). Throughout the process, we have been encouraged by the support and positive feedback we have received from so many of our members. A highlight of the year was the acceptance, in January, of the Letter of Intent we submitted to the PCO (see Chartership). While this does not mean that we can take anything for granted, it is a very encouraging sign and definitely an important step in our quest for chartership. Chartership isn't just a trophy; chartered status will give the SfEP the weight and authority needed to regulate the profession, raise standards, highlight issues and gain the attention of government and society, benefiting all its members as well as publishers and the general public.

I hope that we will be able to continue to nurture all the contacts we have established with other organisations through the chartership process. Together with our dedicated external relations remit, this should help us form the strong links that will allow us to grow and thrive as an organisation that is part of a wider world.

Equally important are links between members: one of the strengths of the SfEP is that it helps break the isolation of freelance (and some in-house) workers and enables its members to feel part of a collective of editors and proofreaders who have much in common and are stronger as part of a team. In this respect, I am constantly heartened by the many messages of support and encouragement members have given to our new recruits and to those of us who encounter

moments of doubt. The forums and our other social media platforms are among the most important benefits of membership, and they wouldn't be what they are without each of you. Thank you!

Josie Davies, our office administrator, took early retirement this year, and the rest of the team took over the tasks she had been responsible for with their usual professionalism and can-do attitude. Shannon Humberstone has taken on much of her work as well as added responsibility for the implementation of GDPR (under the guidance of the membership director). Meanwhile our office manager, the wonderful Helen Martin, celebrated 15 years with the SfEP, while Bridget Buckle, expert finance officer, has been with us for 14 years – our dedicated staff have seen many directors come and go.

The SfEP would be nothing without its many volunteers, to whom I would like to extend the thanks of the Society and of its Council: the conference team; the sponsorship and benefits coordinators; trainers and mentors; the admissions panel; ambassadors; local group coordinators and other local helpers; web and social media teams; forum moderators; contributors to *Editing Matters*, Editorial Excellence and social media; volunteer proofreaders; and all those who take on one-off tasks.

As a Council, we have taken many steps this year towards making the SfEP an even better and more professional organisation. We have improved our marketing efforts and the range of our publications and training courses; we have reached out to new contacts and to potential new members. We have also continued to help run the Society on a daily basis, looking after its technical platforms, its finances, its events, its all-important staff and all its people.

Read on to find out more!

Chartership

Gerard Hill, chartership adviser

After a further year of research, preparation and consultation, we submitted our Letter of Intent on 30 October 2017 to the clerk of the Privy Council Office (PCO), who told us on 4 January 2018 that it had been accepted and that we could now proceed to the next stage. With the help of the learned societies' liaison officer of the Foundation for Science and

Technology (FST), we began drafting the required documents: petition, charter, (new) bylaws and list of non-objectors. It is essential that no bodies with an interest in editorial work raise objections to our petition.

The chair and I worked closely together to communicate with 20 possible non-objectors, arranging meetings, briefing them about our plans, responding to concerns and exploring areas of common interest. We attended a Professional Associations Research Network conference, a Westminster Forum event and an FST event, and met regularly with the PCO and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), our sponsor, which was again represented at the SfEP conference. Among the benefits of all these meetings have been membership of FST, access to specialist legal advice, a new training venue, a possible route to accreditation for our training courses, valuable contacts with sister organisations, and insights into their governance, management, training, qualifications and handling of complaints. We explored the inclusion of ‘copy-editor’ and ‘proofreader’ in official occupation maps.

I briefed and consulted members about the name of our chartered body, and my analysis of possible names was posted on the SfEPLine forum to start a lively debate. The thread was viewed over 3,000 times. The Council noted the views expressed in 216 posts and 44 emails before deciding on the name ‘Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading’.

Like the SfEP, the new Institute will be a professional body and non-profit, though not a charity, but its primary aim will be the public interest. It has been complex to evaluate these distinct yet overlapping concepts and thread our way through their legal, financial, ethical and human implications. The chair and I continually reviewed strategy, procedure and progress while keeping the Council, members, staff, non-objectors, DCMS and the PCO informed.

Community

Sue Browning, community director

The SfEP community encompasses all the things that bring us together in support and collaboration, fun and friendship. All these activities rely heavily on

the dedication and commitment of around 80 volunteers: our local group coordinators (LGCs), the social media team, blog coordinator and forum moderators, as well as the web team that supports these activities. So I’d like to start by thanking everyone who gives their time and energy to keep us what we are – a welcoming and supportive community. We are very grateful to you all.

Local groups

We currently have 41 local groups, as well as a Skype Club and SfEPInternational (which exists as a dedicated forum). The year has seen the formation of three new groups covering Northamptonshire, Shropshire/Mid-Wales and Toronto. Countering that, a small number of groups have become inactive, at least in terms of meeting in person. This is due in part to some groups covering a very large area and consequently finding it hard to choose a location that can attract a critical mass to meet regularly. So for the moment, the East of England, Essex/Suffolk and Hertfordshire groups are dormant. Their forums remain open, however.

Our groups are run by volunteer LGCs, and during 2017/18, fifteen of the groups have had a change of coordinator. Thank you to all those whose efforts have ensured our groups remain lively and much appreciated by members, and also to everyone now helping to keep them thriving.

Group meetings take place in various venues, including cafes, pubs and community centres, and even members’ homes, and activities range from an informal chat over lunch to talks from visiting speakers, walks, or day-long training events, often in collaboration with neighbouring groups.

The Skype Club continues to grow rapidly, perhaps reflecting our increasing international membership. The club now ‘meets’ monthly using Zoom (and will shortly be renamed Cloud Club to reflect this), but its aim remains the same: to connect and support members who live overseas or in far-flung places of the UK or for whom attending a local group meeting is impossible.

It was lovely for me to meet some of our LGCs in person at the conference and to learn about their experiences. This year we discussed the perennial subject of keeping the groups viable and maintaining

the interest of more experienced editors while at the same time offering support to newbies.

A highlight of the year was the Scottish mini-conference in Edinburgh on 5 May 2017, organised by Lesley Ellen of the Edinburgh group, with support from the other Scottish LGCs. This attracted more than 90 participants from Scotland and northern England, with sessions on the real rules of English grammar, macros for editing, tools and techniques to help freelancers control their work, and networking naturally and comfortably.

Taking inspiration from the Scottish event in May, the groups in the South West region (especially Liz Hammond and Clare Diston, LGCs of the Bristol/Bath group) have been busy arranging a mini-conference in Bristol for July 2018.

Social media

Our presence on various social media platforms allows us to reach beyond our membership and engage with editorial professionals across the world and to connect with those who might use our services, so it plays a vital role in raising the SfEP's profile. We have accounts on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, run by a 15-strong team of volunteers. Throughout the year, we ran a number of targeted campaigns publicising the conference, membership renewals and the launch of our new training courses, as well as external activities such as our seminar and stand at the 2017 London Book Fair. Regular posts also promote our training courses, guides, blog posts, members' blogs and other resources. And our Friday funny always goes down well on Facebook.

The team deal with many social media queries on membership options and upgrading, training, local groups, and various fine points of grammar and spelling, as well as tactfully fielding some curve balls. We can only maintain this level of outside engagement through the help of our enthusiastic social media team, so once again thanks are due to them for their dedication.

Blog

Our blog is coordinated by volunteer Tracey Roberts and me, and we aim to publish posts that showcase the SfEP and its members. Since March 2017, we have published 28 very varied posts, including a look at the results of our annual membership survey to explore

some of the myths about copy-editors and proofreaders; the joys of co-working; a review of our Liverpool local group at its first anniversary; why there's more to being a proofreader than the ability to spell; why it's worth getting involved in our forums; as well as a post aimed at demystifying the upgrade process, with views from five Advanced Professional Members.

As you might expect, the conference is a rich seam of posts, and we now have quite a range of conference-related content, from articles to encourage the shy, to accounts of attendees' experiences. And this year our parliament of wise owls has brought us the combined wisdom of some of our experienced members on working with non-publishers, editing non-fiction, setting business goals, and working with independent authors.

If you read last year's report, you will know that we reached the finals of the UK Blog Awards 2017. The results were announced at a glitzy awards evening in London in April 2017. Tracey, and Anna Nolan, one of our social media volunteers, attended on our behalf. Although we didn't win (the winners were English Heritage, a much bigger and better-resourced organisation), it was great exposure for the SfEP. Congratulations to all our blog authors for contributing to this success!

Conference

Beth Hamer, conference director

The 28th SfEP annual conference was held at Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire, on 16–18 September 2017. It attracted 152 delegates and was very well received, with delegates rating it 'very good' overall (average score of 4.7 out of 5). Delegates scored the balance and variety highly (4.6 out of 5), and any complaints mostly related to some issues with broadband access and the fact that some delegates had rooms in another building (a situation that was beyond our control). All comments were noted and will be addressed as far as possible. A surplus of £1,483 will be put towards the 2018 conference.

Preparations for the 2018 conference began in earnest in December 2017, with a meeting attended by conference team members Helen White and Helen Stevens. This year we were eager to ensure that there

were sessions specifically aimed at more experienced editorial professionals as well as newcomers, so we hope that everyone finds something suited to their level of experience in each set of sessions.

The 2018 SfEP conference is being held alongside the Society of Indexers (SI) annual conference, with a joint plenary session and gala dinner. I have been liaising with Ann Kingdom, chair of the SI, about the arrangements and will continue to do so in the run-up to the event.

In terms of sponsorship, we added the option of sponsoring lanyards for delegates' name badges and were pleased that this was quickly taken up by PerfectIt. We were also keen to make the exhibitors' fair a bit more enticing for delegates by offering pop-up shops. Sherona Treen-Coward, reprising her role as sponsorship coordinator this year, has continued to build on the good relationships she has forged.

As last year, we offered 10% discounts to nine sister organisations (ACES, MET, EASE, Editors Canada, Editors Guild, IPEd, PEG, UNICO, ISMTE). Most have offered reciprocal discounts to our members for their conferences and other events. We added SENSE, based in the Netherlands, to this list for 2018.

In response to members' requests for more flexible ways to pay for the conference, we introduced two new payment methods this year. First, a super-early-bird discount, which offered 20 places at an additional discount and went on sale in October 2017. These places sold out within an hour. Second, we offered the option of delegates paying a £100 non-refundable deposit at the time of booking, with the balance due in July. We will review the uptake and popularity of these initiatives after the conference before deciding whether to offer them again.

Another new initiative for the 2018 conference was the introduction of a harassment policy in response to a member's suggestion. While we are not aware of any instances of harassment or abuse at any past conferences, the new code provides a clear policy on acceptable behaviour and reassures delegates that we take their safety seriously. It is not, however, intended to stifle debate or the free exchange of ideas.

As mentioned in the 2017 annual report, the 2019 conference will be held at Aston University, a very popular venue when the 2016 conference was held

there. Because of refurbishment work that will be taking place over the period of the conference, we will need to house some delegates in nearby hotels.

External relations

Ayesha Chari, external relations director

The external relations (ER) post was created in September 2016 to help raise the Society's profile, standards and membership numbers by establishing and nurturing ties with universities, publishers, sister organisations and other professional bodies. This second year of the ER post saw headway in the right direction alongside significant progress towards the Society's chartership goal, and new marketing efforts. Both these initiatives are integral to the success of all external links the Society establishes today and in the future.

The year began on a positive note with new contacts made at the London Book Fair (LBF) – including Derby University, the International Society for Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE), the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals – and renewed contact with the National Arts Council, Singapore. Of course, the fair was also an opportunity to meet up with existing contacts – individuals, corporate members and well-wishers. The LBF is now an annual feature for the society (see Marketing and PR).

Among international liaisons, correspondence with the ISMTE led to Hazel Reid, editor of our own *Editing Matters*, writing a piece on the SfEP for the September/October issue of ISMTE's e-zine, EON. We will encourage such exchanges among the society's growing professional network, helped by the SfEP's new external news bulletin (see Information).

In June, a partnership contract with the Editors' Association of Canada (EAC) was agreed, setting up reciprocal discounts for membership, training and conference fees for the long term and adding the EAC to the growing list of organisations with which the SfEP cooperates to offer mutual benefits to members.

In July, following a fruitful meeting with the Society of English-language professionals in the Netherlands

(SENSE), we agreed to collaborate on events of common interest, share training discounts, and encourage information exchange to further our members' continued professional development. Discussions with the Mediterranean Editors and Translators through the summer renewed previous ties and led to plans to share benefits with our respective members.

This year I also established new connections and continued to strengthen existing links with UK organisations. Newly designed leaflets for publishing students were sent to university contacts, some of whom are keen to pursue SfEP input in editorial training, evaluation and curriculum design. Seeds have been planted for developing ongoing partnerships with academic institutions.

Successful meetings and discussions with the National Union of Journalists, University College London, BookMachine, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Book Industry Communication gave rise to fresh networking and publicity opportunities. A common ground of enthusiasm among these institutions was the possibility of planning events with SfEP local groups.

Pivotal to these local efforts was the launch of the ambassador scheme (now seeking volunteers from among Professional and Advanced Professional members to represent the Society at external events), to which members responded enthusiastically. At the time of writing, 14 members had signed up officially and several others have expressed interest in doing so 'as soon as [they] upgrade'. We met informally at the SfEP conference in September, where faces were put to names, and ideas for events were shared; consequently, Jane Hammett organised the distribution of leaflets at MK Lit Fest. (If you would like to do the same at an event in your area, please get in touch with the marketing director.)

Together, we organised three ambassador-led events this year. Rosalind Fairclough represented the Society at the Public and Mobile Libraries Group and Community, Diversity and Equality Group conference in October; Rosalind set up and staffed the stand and presented on how the SfEP can support libraries and librarians to help authors find good editors. Also in October, Alison Shakspeare presented an introductory session on editing and proofreading for undergraduates at Plymouth University. In

November, Dawn Ingram represented SfEP at the Society of Young Publishers' 2017 autumn conference; Dawn was supported by Oxford local group member Piers Cardon. The ambassadors reported back on good levels of interest in the Society. I hope these events are just the start and that the Society will be present at more such occasions each year. A big thank you to all the volunteers, and special thanks to the office staff for support in organising every event smoothly despite last-minute instructions and far-too-tight deadlines.

As I said in my first annual report last year, building relationships is often intangible; however, the Society's growing visibility and strengthening networks continue to be proof of the success of our collective efforts. Although I have stepped down from the Council so the ER post can be filled to cover maternity leave, I am certain my ER task list is progressing in the capable hands of Council colleagues and members alike.

Finance

Mark Robinson, external financial adviser

The financial statements for the year ending 28 February 2018 show a healthy surplus of £70,761 for the year – up from £65,061 last year. Details of the income and direct costs for the year, as well as administrative expenses, can be found in the annual accounts (Report and financial statements).

This year has seen turnover increase from £502,270 to £541,443. Income from membership subscriptions rose from £278,950 to £298,723. Income from training has also continued to increase, to £177,422 this year, which contributes a surplus of £94,372 (£94,736 last year). Further details can be found in the Membership and Training and mentoring sections of this annual report. Membership subscriptions and training fees are our main sources of income.

Figure 1 shows the proportions of income allocated to various types of expenditure in 2017/18.

Administrative expenses are in control and rose by only £5,028 in the year (excluding directors' fees, chartership costs and purchase of courses). This is the result of careful management of resources (and budget allocations not being spent).

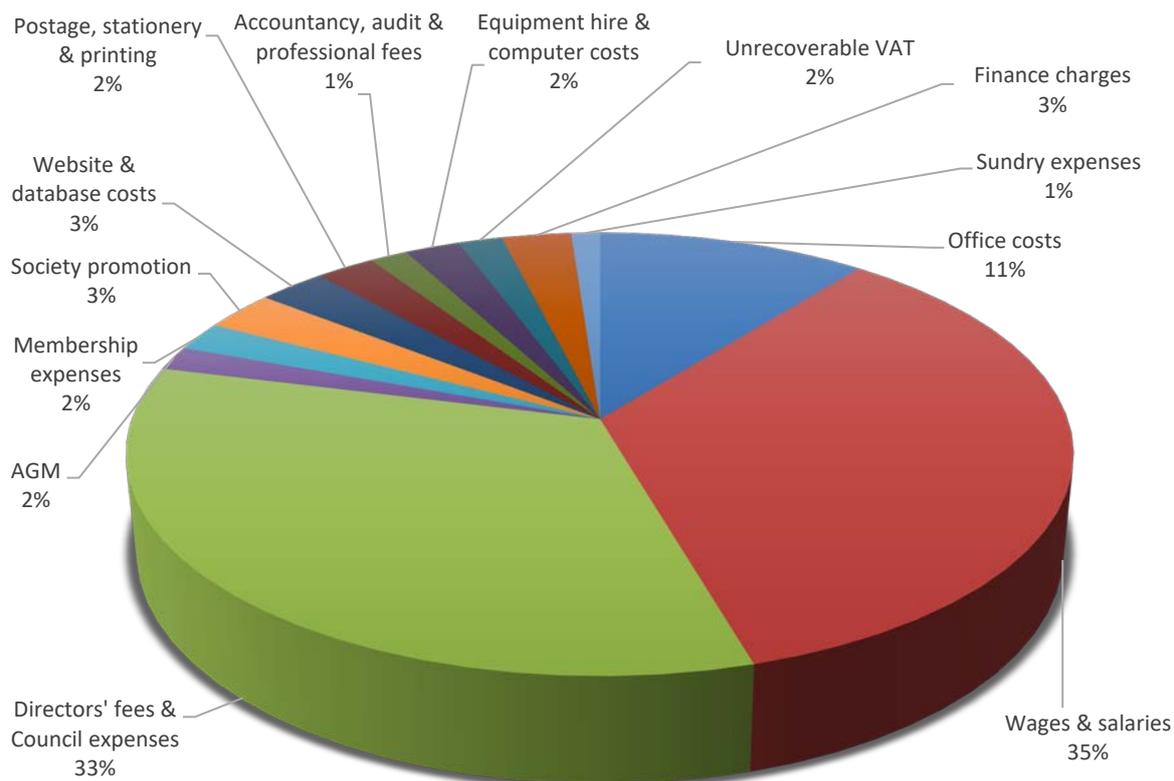


Figure 1 What your subscription pays for

Directors' fees have increased from £65,278 last year to £87,386 this year. This is due to additional time spent on chartership and GDPR, and to a generally increased workload. The first 18.5 hours of each month for each director continue to be unpaid.

The Society is in a healthy financial position at present, which stands it in good stead as it continues to grow and develop and meet the needs of its membership and the industry.

Information

Margaret Hunter, information director

The year was one of change for the information remit, not least because of a change of director. Before stepping down, Steve Hammatt helped our *Editing Matters* team through a major redesign of the look and content of the magazine, and this was met with

rave reviews. He also commissioned a review of our governing documents (which was ably carried out by Advanced Professional Member Melanie Thompson), and this work will be important for drawing up new documents if we are granted chartership.

Our *Editing Matters* editor, Hazel Reid, renewed her contract until 2020 and will continue to develop and improve the magazine. She would love to hear from members with feedback and ideas. Liz Jones was appointed as editor of our new outward-facing e-newsletter, Editorial Excellence. This is aimed at non-members (but members may sign up if they wish) and seeks to spread awareness of good practice in working with copy-editors and proofreaders as well as of the Society and our members.

A new joined-up working initiative is our news hub forum, where our news editors and the directors can share news and information of interest to members and generally keep abreast of SfEP activities and wider happenings.

Another initiative is a new central repository for the SfEP documents, templates and artwork.

Those who have perused Editorial Excellence or rooted around on our website will have noticed two new resources. I started what will be a series of fact sheets on editing topics, which are free for anyone to download. And I'm thrilled that our honorary vice-president, Susie Dent, has agreed to write a regular column for us on 'wonderful words'.

I bid for a higher budget for the 2018/19 financial year to begin a shake-up of our publications and resources offering. I made a start with a new design for our guides to make them more visually appealing. All guides will be updated when they need reprinting. I commissioned new editions/updates of our guides on marketing, on editing fiction, and on proofreading theses and dissertations. We plan to increase the price of our guides to non-members, both to better reflect their good value and excellent content and to improve the benefit to members.

Lastly, I have done preparatory work to ensure that our mailing lists conform to the requirements of the GDPR. That includes setting up two new lists: for subscribing to Editorial Excellence and to receive updates on SfEP training courses.

Internet

John Espirian, internet director

This year has been about consolidation more than major new development, but we still have long-term

plans to expand and improve the way the SfEP website works and how it interacts with our other systems.

I've decided not to stand for re-election in September, which means this fifth year as internet director will be my last. My main task for the remainder of my time is to ensure that all systems and processes have been documented, so that my successor can carry on the work needed to support the Society's online activities.

Website success

The SfEP website has again received more than a million page views this year, with mobile and tablet users accounting for more than 30% of all visits.

Website statistics

The statistics in Tables 1–5 relate to the period 1 March to the following 28 February (29 February in leap years).

SfEP forums

On average, there have been 8 new topics and 75 posts per day since the forums were released in September 2012. The number of active users of the forums has increased, as has the number of people contributing at least 50 posts.

The SfEP forums usage figures in Table 5 were collected on 14 May 2018.

Table 1 Website visitor figures

Period	Total visits	Unique visitors	Page views: unique	Page views: total	Page views: per visit
2010/11	45,795	27,292	128,232	166,565	3.64
2011/12	184,639	106,204	480,327	611,164	3.31
2012/13	205,455	119,458	564,168	733,059	3.57
2013/14	272,130	157,267	714,229	913,881	3.36
2014/15	299,004	178,736	761,059	964,924	3.23
2015/16	279,656	165,802	776,303	995,417	3.56
2016/17	340,120	182,892	880,998	1,115,369	3.67
2017/18	326,734	194,188	897,704	1,020,608	3.48

Table 2 Website visitors by hardware platform

Period	Desktop (%)	Mobile (%)	Tablet (%)
2010/11	98.0	2.0	0.0
2011/12	96.1	3.3	0.6
2012/13	90.7	4.9	4.4
2013/14	83.4	8.5	8.1
2014/15	77.7	11.9	10.4
2015/16	74.6	15.4	10.0
2016/17	70.8	20.8	8.4
2017/18	69.5	23.1	7.4

Table 3 Website visitors by browser

Period	Chrome (%)	Safari (%)	Firefox (%)	IE/Edge (%)	Opera (%)
2010/11	10.7	16.2	31.9	38.6	1.9
2011/12	15.4	19.3	28.9	33.5	1.4
2012/13	22.7	22.4	24.0	26.6	0.9
2013/14	30.0	23.7	19.2	21.1	0.9
2014/15	37.3	22.7	18.1	16.6	0.7
2015/16	41.9	23.7	16.3	13.1	0.7
2016/17	47.3	23.9	13.5	11.0	0.7
2017/18	53.5	23.9	8.4	9.8	0.7

Table 4 Website visitors by country, 1 March 2016 to 28 February 2017

Position	Country	Total visits	Total visits (%)
1	United Kingdom	202,085	61.9
2	United States	34,242	10.5
3	India	16,856	5.2
4	Australia	5,897	1.8
5	Philippines	5,501	1.7
6	Canada	5,201	1.6
7	Germany	3,532	1.1
8	Ireland	3,402	1.0
9	Spain	3,053	0.9
10	France	2,879	0.9

Table 5 Forum usage

Total topics/threads	17,612
Total posts	156,050
Total users	2080
Active users*	606
No. users with at least 1 post	1153
No. users with at least 50 posts	289

* Active users are defined as those who have logged in to SfEP forums at least once in the last 30 days.

Marketing and PR

Denise Cowle, marketing and PR director

I have continued the work of our previous marketing director in developing our marketing plan to build on our current good initiatives and develop new ones. As well as continuing to advertise in appropriate publications and building connections on social media, my aim this year was to have as many SfEP representatives meet as many people as possible to increase awareness of the society, both in the traditional publishing world and beyond.

Events

In this reporting year we had representatives at the London Book Fair (LBF) (March 2017); the conference of the Society of Young Publishers (SYP) in Oxford (November 2017); the Public and Mobile Libraries Group conference (October 2017); and the ELT Freelancers' Awayday in Oxford (January 2018).

I am expanding our display resources for these events, and the plan is to have roller banners and display materials in various locations around the country for members to use to promote us at events. So far, we have them in London, Glasgow and Oxford. If you know of a conference or event that representatives of the Society could usefully attend, please let me know.

If you are interested in becoming an ambassador for the SfEP and representing us at events, please get in touch with the external relations director.

Resources

We have a variety of promotional leaflets, and if you are attending an event where it would be appropriate to promote the SfEP you can order copies of leaflets from the SfEP office. There is also a catalogue of our training courses, which has proved very popular at events. This will be updated soon to include the new additions to our stable: *Proofreading Theses and Dissertations*; *Editorial Project Management*; and *Web Editing*.

Speaking

Speaking opportunities are a fantastic way of getting the message across about the editorial profession – what is involved, how we help people, and how the SfEP supports members in upholding editorial excellence.

This year, Ian Howe gave a seminar at the LBF (March 2017), and Alison Shakspeare gave a talk to publishing students at Plymouth University (October 2017). Sarah Patey and I both had the opportunity to be part of panels – at the ELT Freelancers' Awayday and the SYP Scotland conference respectively – discussing working freelance and how membership of a professional organisation can support you.

Again, if you hear of an event that might be a good fit for an SfEP speaker, let me know.

Social media

I have been working with our community director on how to develop our social media strategy, and I have had help from an external social media consultant, Cathy Wassell. She is helping us create a Facebook advertising campaign to promote both our online training and the benefits of membership, and also looking at how we can use LinkedIn most effectively to reach non-publishers and those who have an editorial role in companies. We are also working on how best to support the social media team, who do a remarkable job for the Society in keeping us visible and engaged across various platforms.

Video

One of the marketing tools I am very keen to exploit is video, and if you plan to attend the 2018 conference in Lancaster, you will spot a videographer there! We will be recording footage to make short promotional

videos for the conference and for the society in general. These will be used on our website and on social media as part of our overall marketing strategy.

Look out for videos on different aspects of being an editor and the editing process over the coming months.

I would like to thank everyone who has volunteered their time to promote the SfEP over the past year, whether that was running a stand at an event, giving a talk, distributing leaflets locally, or liking and sharing our social media posts – your enthusiasm for our profession and the Society shines through, and I’ve no doubt that this has done much to encourage others to sign up for our training or take out membership.

Membership

John Firth, membership director

Results for 2017–18 are mixed: while recruitment has continued to increase, lapse rates appear to have done likewise (though we cannot say for sure: see below). Taken together, this means that our core membership in March 2018 was only 3% above the March 2014 figure. The ‘mix’ of our grades has continued to improve and this was helped by substantial numbers applying to join at grades above entry level (63 during 2017–18, of whom 52 were successful).

As of 28 February we had 2,666 individual members (including 18 Retired Members) and 32 Corporate Subscribers. Of our individual members, 14% held Advanced Professional Membership, 19% were Professional Members and 11% were Intermediate Members: nearly 45% held grades for which they have had to demonstrate training and experience, compared with 33% five years ago. This helps the Society to speak with authority about how our members are raising standards in the profession. The professional development report analyses all applications for our qualified grades received during the year.

In each of the last three years lapse rates have been very high, and we are looking at the many factors in this: technical (email, as reported last year), structural (grades and upgrade requirements) and economic. Moreover, we experience more late renewals than we used to: these reduce the apparent lapse rates; but we will only learn how far by the end of the year.

The graph in Figure 2 illustrates the net effect of the factors I have mentioned (the line shows the average membership across the year, weighted by the number of months of membership).

At the 2017 AGM, proposals for a change to the Friend grade were accepted. Since then two people well known to many SfEP members have been invited to become Friends. I’m delighted to say that both Daniel Heuman (behind PerfectIt) and Anna Sharman (now running Cofactor) have accepted.

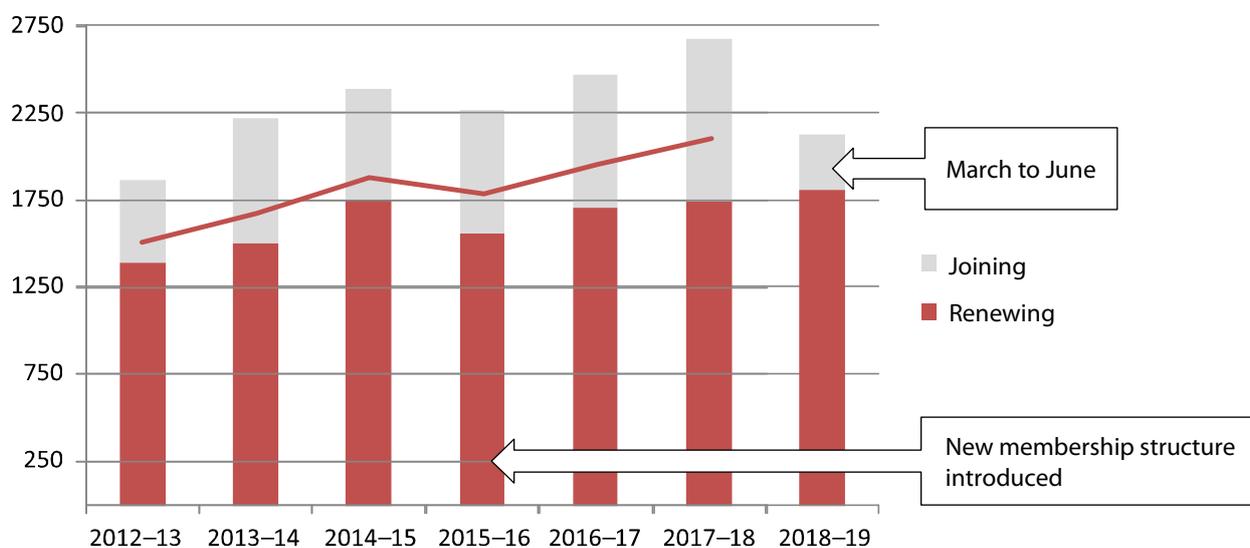


Figure 2 Trends in SfEP membership

Louise Harnby won the Judith Butcher Award for 2017. Members will know Louise Harnby's blog 'The Proofreader's Parlour' and about 'her ongoing support of all proofreaders and editors, through her free provision of PDF stamps, the vast array of resources available freely on her website and also ... her books'. These 'are the most visible of many efforts on behalf of members, as are her always thoughtful, thorough and polite posts on SfEP forums'. She sets 'a great example by showing us how best to market an editorial business'.

As usual, in May and November 2017 we carried out surveys of members: in May a survey of those who had decided not to renew, and in November a survey of the whole membership. The results of the latter support some findings of the 2016 survey (that editors do not need to specialise, do not only or mainly work on books, do not only or mainly work for publishing companies, that most have not 'come up through' publishing). As the terms that publishers offer continue to worsen, it is good to see that so many are taking positive steps to broaden their businesses. The Council thanks everyone who took the time to take part in the surveys.

The year 2017–18 saw considerable expansion of the range of benefits that the Society provides its members, including discounts on a range of publications, training courses and events, so it is with great regret that I have learned that Lydia Wanstall will be ending her period as our benefits coordinator. The SfEP owes her a major debt of thanks.

Professional development

Anya Hastwell, professional development director

The financial year 2017–18 was a transitional one for the professional development remit as I took over from Jane Moody, who then became training director.

Upgrades

In the year from March 2017 to February 2018 the Admissions Panel dealt with 218 upgrade applications from a total of 222 received (down very slightly from the 223 received in 2016–17; see Figure 3): a total of 127 (57%) applied for Intermediate membership, 67 (30%) for Professional membership and 28 (13%)

for Advanced Professional membership; 3 applications for Intermediate membership were later withdrawn, while 1 applicant for Provisional Professional membership allowed their membership to lapse. Some 12 applicants were completely unsuccessful and so remained at the same grade, while 9 were awarded a level lower than that applied for, together representing 9% of all applications. Therefore, the total successful upgrade figures are as follows: 110 were awarded Intermediate (50%), 60 were graded Professional (27%) and 31 Advanced Professional (14%).

The Admissions Panel

The Admissions Panel currently has ten members, who continue to work hard behind the scenes to ensure that all applications are dealt with fairly and efficiently. The Council greatly appreciates the work that every member of the Panel puts into making sure that every application is dealt with fairly and rapidly. The thought and care that goes into each application is a testament to the high standards of the Panel. All upgrade applications are assessed anonymously; the Panel assessors never know the identities of the applicants. If a Panel member thinks that they might have guessed the identity of the applicant, they pass it back to the office for reallocation and take no further part in assessing that particular application. Most applications are handled speedily – often within a few days – the overall average time taken is 14 days. Occasionally, applications take longer than the norm. The reason is most often the time taken by referees to respond to our requests.

Upgrade regulations

The SfEP is a UK-based organisation, and people looking for Professional and Advanced Professional Members in our Directory will expect them to be competent in English. As our membership base becomes ever more global, we are attracting applicants with a wide range of skills, such as translation and checking translated texts, some for whom English may not be their native language. Therefore, the need to clarify an applicant's requirement for competence and practice in UK English has become even more important. While at present the editorial test is used as our gauge of competence, several other options have been considered, such as (a) requiring an English

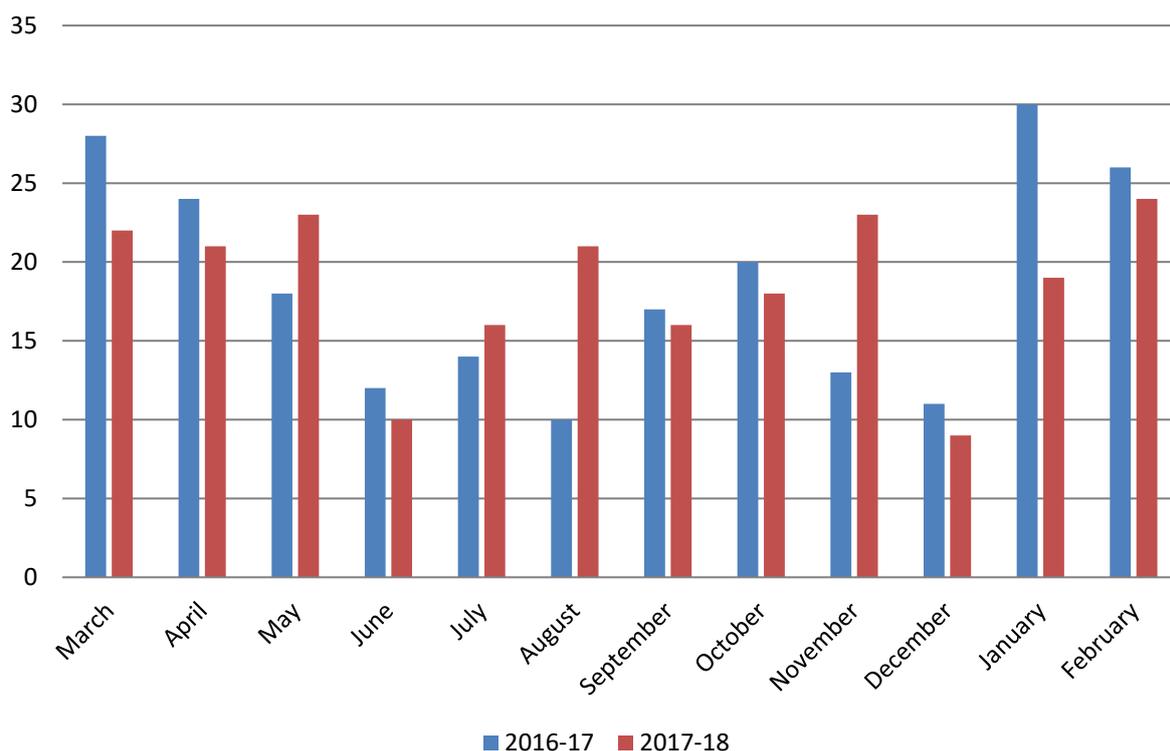


Figure 3 Number of upgrade applications 2017/18 in comparison to the previous year, by month

qualification for non-native speakers (for example, the IELTS Academic test), or (b) introducing a ‘use of English’ element to a new and updated editorial test. Anything implemented will need to be as fair as possible to all applicants, native English or not, and this matter is still under consideration.

Professional development

Continuing professional development is essential throughout a copy-editor/proofreader’s life. We are making plans for a professional development day in November 2018 that we hope will be as successful as those which ran in 2012, 2014 and 2016.

Standards

Ian Howe, standards director

The standards remit was established in June 2016 by Gerard Hill, and a number of objectives for the role were established at that time. Christine Vaughan took over as standards director in September 2016 and further refined these objectives as well as taking significant first steps towards many of them. I picked up the remit when I was elected to the Council in

September 2017 and, while further progress has been made in a number of areas, the primary objectives remain much as they were and it will be important to make progress in them over the coming year.

Complaints

Progress in the standards area was delayed in late 2016 and early 2017 by the need for the standards director to spend time dealing with two challenging complaints, as outlined in last year’s report. We have been fortunate to receive no further complaints since then, although there was one informal enquiry that did not become a formal complaint when it was followed up.

The complaints procedure has since been overhauled, in the light of experience and with the primary aim of ensuring its independence, something that is not only desirable for the credibility of the process but is also what would be expected of a chartered body should our application be successful. Previously, complaints would be investigated by directors, but under the new procedure an anonymous panel of experienced Advanced Professional Members has been established to handle them. Formal complaints will be investigated by members of this panel and their

recommendations will be presented to the Council. Details of the new complaints procedure will be made available on the SfEP website.

Syllabus and tests

The online basic editorial test was launched in late 2014 and the two current tests were updated in September 2016. By the end of February 2018, 168 people had taken the test, with 92 (55%) passing first time and 24 after a resit, an overall pass rate of 69%. The pass rate is in line with projections and has remained fairly steady since the test was launched.

An intended third version of the test has been drafted but has not yet been made available, while the proposed advanced test remains in development and is now urgently needed. Priority will therefore be given to working with TestReach, the software provider with whom the advanced test has been developed, to finalise and pilot the new test. If this is successful, it is intended that the basic test – including the third version – will be moved to the TestReach platform, which offers significant advantages over our current software, Question Writer.

To support the development of the tests, and to tie in with the framework of editorial qualifications agreed by the Council in 2016, the editorial syllabus will be fully revised. As reported last year, there is also a need to prepare new codes of practice for corporate subscribers and for members working on theses and dissertations.

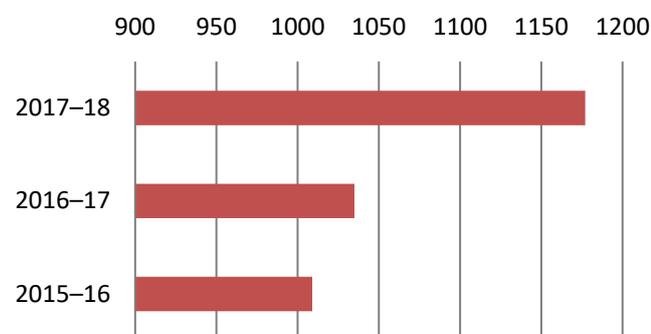


Figure 4 Total number of students registering for online courses 2015-16 to 2017-18

Training and mentoring

Jane Moody, training director

Training

I took over the reins of the training and mentoring directorship with some trepidation from Stephen Cashmore in September 2017. Stephen is a very hard act to follow; he did so many good things for SfEP training and I would like to thank him sincerely for his foresight and organisation in making the transition so easy for me.

Online courses

During 2017-18, the numbers registering for online courses have risen (Figure 4). As in previous years, Proofreading 1: Introduction was the most popular course. Figure 5 shows the number of students registering for each online course during the year.

New courses

Three new online courses were launched at the end of the year: Editorial Project Management, a detailed and advanced course for established editors; Web Editing; and Proofreading Theses and Dissertations.

Workshops

Numbers of students booking for workshop courses have been steadily declining and it has proved to be increasingly difficult to run them without either losing

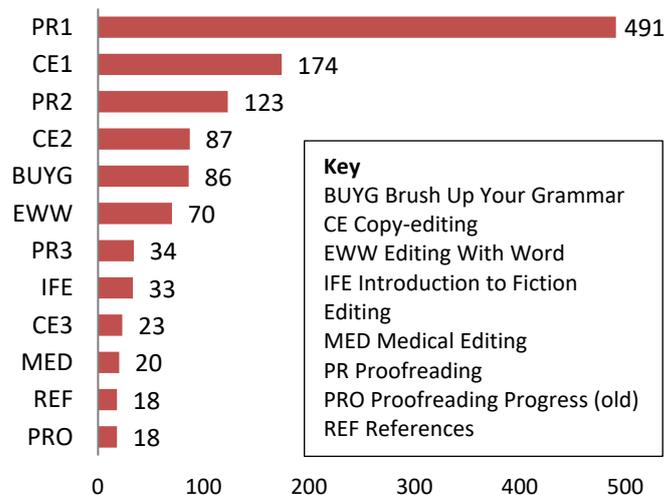


Figure 5 Numbers of students registered for online courses

money or having to cancel through lack of numbers. As a consequence, most courses are unlikely to run more than once in a year. We hope to find new ways of bringing this content to you in the future.

In-house courses

Tailored workshops run for other organisations and companies (in-house) were buoyant in 2017–18 and included courses for such diverse bodies as the Wales Audit Office (proofreading), the Company of Biologists (Brush Up Your Grammar), bmf Business Services (proofreading), eLife Sciences (science editing) and the NHS North East London Commissioning Support Unit (proofreading).

Mentoring

Disappointingly, fewer people signed up for mentoring this year. As this is a one-to-one learning experience, it does not come cheap, but those who have completed the training are always enthusiastic about its great benefits.

Vice-chair

Lucy Metzger, vice-chair

I continued as a member of the strategy group (a committee of the Council). I organised the drawing together of the Council's views and ideas for strategic development, and in September 2017 the Council published its 'Strategic plan for the SfEP': a set of five statements to serve as a framework for long-term planning and for the coordination of the many different strands of the SfEP's activities.

In early 2017 I worked with the standards director on revising and updating our complaint-handling

procedures and their documentation and on recruiting members to serve on a new complaint panel (see Standards).

With steady and exciting progress being made towards chartership, the Council needed to consider, well in advance, what the name of our chartered organisation would be. We opened the discussion up to members, presenting them with the chartership adviser's analysis, and we were delighted with the good ideas and interesting arguments proposed, and deeply impressed with the measured, thoughtful and courteous tone of the debate. I coordinated the Council's extensive discussion of the question, which took place both at Council meetings and on the Council forum, and towards the end of the present reporting period I was preparing the documentation setting out the Council's final decision for members.

I have continued my regular vice-chair duties: preparing the agendas for, and minutes of, bimonthly Council meetings; planning for the annual general meeting (AGM) and preparing the documents for it; and serving as the Council's liaison with our company secretary. I have continued to streamline, systematise and document the procedures for our AGMs and made efforts to improve our process for recruiting new members of the Council. I am repeatedly impressed and constantly grateful for the marvellous support provided by our office staff, Helen, Bridget and Shannon.

I publish Council News to let all members know about the Council's activities. I very much enjoy corresponding with members who have questions or suggestions for the Council, so please get in touch any time. Speaking of SfEP members, you are a wonderful, supportive and fascinating community that I am proud to be part of.