

## report from the chair

---

### penny williams

The SfEP will be 20 years old this autumn and we shall be marking the event at this year's conference.

In March this year we appointed Justina Utuka as executive secretary. Her main tasks are to liaise with the council, handle all queries relating to PR, in-house training and membership benefits and act as the Society's company secretary. Shortly after she joined us the SfEP office moved from Riverbank House to Erico House, the other side of the Thames near East Putney and Putney stations. The move went smoothly (and without council involvement!) thanks to the efforts of Helen, Bridget and Justina.

During 2008/09 the office staff will be taking over the scheduling and booking of venues for training courses. Lesley Ward has carried out these administrative tasks for many years and we are extremely grateful for all her expertise and hard work. She will continue to advise the membership and others on SfEP training.

I am pleased to announce that all the Sue Thomson Foundation grants, available to associates needing to take a training course to get those last few points necessary to upgrade, were taken up in 2007. There are still grants available for 2008, so if you think that you are eligible please contact the office for details.

In January the Disciplinary Committee met to consider a complaint about the work of an ordinary member, received in November 2007. A senior SfEP trainer reviewed the supporting material and concluded that the complaint was justified and that further action should be taken. After considering the documentation and reviewer's report, the committee agreed that the complaint should be upheld. In the interests of upholding editorial excellence, at the March 2008 meeting the council voted to downgrade the member's status to associate (see *Editing Matters*, July/August 2008).

During the year we were sad to report the deaths of two longstanding members who had contributed to the Society in different ways: Virginia Masardo and Richard Raper. Virginia, a founder member and staunch supporter of the SfEP, was mentoring director at the time of her death (see obituary, *Editing Matters*, May/June 2008); we are grateful to Gerard Hill for taking over this post (see mentoring report). Richard was a regular conference goer and sponsored the pre-dinner drinks on several occasions.

Three directors joined the council at the last AGM: Gillian Clarke, Caroline Landon and Sarah Patey. I am grateful to them for volunteering for this responsibility and I am equally grateful to my council colleagues and all the other members and associates who have helped the Society for their support, hard work and commitment during the past year.

At this year's AGM, three directors will be retiring from the council. Matthew Seal has served for four years as recruitment director and publications director. He has expanded the *SfEP Guides* series to three and plans are in hand for a fourth for 2009. He also devised a new contract for SfEP authors. (See publications report.)

Shena Deuchars has served for nine years in various posts: internet director, membership director, vice-chair and professional development director. Among other things, she investigated and set up a new membership database and provided technical support for the office staff; was moderator of SfEPLine; set up SfEPLegal and SfEPMedical; and, most recently, worked with City & Guilds to set up the Licenciateship in Editorial Skills for SfEP advanced members (see professional development report).

I too have served for nine years: five years in various posts (PR/marketing, recruitment/benefits, vice-chair) and for the past four years as chair. The experience has been challenging and sometimes frustrating, but above all rewarding. I am looking forward to spending more time with my (growing) family, but I shall miss the contact with my colleagues. I wish them and their successors well. It has been an honour to serve the Society and I am sure that it will continue to go from strength to strength.

## finance

### report for the financial year ending 29 february 2008

---

#### sarah price

As at 28 February 2007, the financial statements for the year ending 29 February 2008 continue to show a very healthy balance sheet. The Society's total assets – less current liabilities – are £93,985. Following the practice set up by our previous finance director, Valerie Rice, this has enabled us to move some money into an account where we earn a higher rate of interest for six months. We have therefore transferred £125,000 into a Treasury Reserve account.

The schedules on page 9 of the financial statements give details of the income and direct costs for the year, and the administrative expenses. Although we show a breakdown of the income and expenditure for the different cost centres, all our income is pooled so that we can use it to fund all our activities and to cover the running costs of the Society. Subscription income has increased by just over 5% to £122,503, while income from training has remained around the same, but continues to make a surplus. The 2007 conference also made a surplus.

Our administrative expenses have decreased from £115,476 to £101,715. We are now sending out more communications by email, thereby reducing our printing and stationery costs by more than 50% and our postage costs by more than 30%. Accountancy and professional fees have both increased, however, because our accountants, Warrenner Stewart, are now doing a lot of the management accounting work previously done by Val and David Rice. Directors' fees increased from £2,830 to £8,017. It should be borne in mind, however, that directors donate up to 15 hours a month to the Society, plus attendance at council meetings, so the directors' fees represent only a small portion of the time given to the Society. We had hoped to have recruited an executive secretary by summer 2007, but this proved

more difficult – and therefore time-consuming – than we had expected. The fruits of our labours eventually paid off and Justina Utuka joined us at the beginning of March. The council is gradually handing over a lot of work to Justina and it is anticipated that the level of directors' fees will be lower in this financial year. Our intention is that the council should become more like a company board, its primary function being strategy and policymaking. Managers (the office staff) will run the Society; the directors will ensure that it is being run well and in accordance with the agreed strategy.

Our existing team in the office, Helen Martin and Bridget Buckle, have continued to give us invaluable support and we thank them for their hard work during the year. I am particularly grateful to Bridget, who has taken on additional responsibilities and given me a lot of help since I took over as finance director in September 2007. I also thank Val Rice for her support over the past six months.

In last year's report, Val stated that we were aiming to increase our subscription income, including fees, to at least 50% of our total income. Last year, this accounted for 45% of the total. This year, we achieved 48.9%, very close to our target. We propose raising all individual subscriptions for 2008/09 by around 5% and the fee for admission to ordinary or advanced membership by a smaller amount. We also propose charging overseas members a £35 joining fee (increased from £27.50), but to discontinue the annual surcharge for overseas members, who will receive *Editing Matters* electronically from March 2009. The joining fee for people in the UK is to be unchanged at £27.50.

## membership

sarah patey

On 31 July 2008, there were 1305 individuals in membership, categorized as follows:

<i>Membership category</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2007</i>
Advanced members	258	254
Ordinary members	362	388
Associates	685	589
<i>Total</i>	<i>1305</i>	<i>1231</i>

The drop in ordinary membership numbers is within acceptable fluctuations. A dozen or so members have retired, and four have suspended or discontinued membership for maternity/health reasons.

On a trial basis, a reciprocal discount deal with the European Association of Science Editors came into operation this year. At the time of writing, EASE has gained a number of appreciative new subscribers from among current SfEP membership, but reciprocal traffic has been slow. Sadly, SfEP cannot afford to subsidize its members' and associates' EASE subscriptions, so unless take-up from EASE improves significantly between now and December 2008, the deal will unfortunately have to be discontinued.

A survey was carried out in autumn 2007 on the extent to which members subcontract to colleagues, either directly or via the Associates Available fortnightly listing. The report is available in the Members' area of the website.

The council is currently examining a possible reform to the relationship between SfEP and corporate bodies associated with it. A questionnaire is being circulated to a sample of existing corporate associates to inform the discussion, and any changes will be announced during the coming year, to take effect at renewals in 2010.

## benefits

gillian clarke

In the past, the benefits that have been negotiated for associates and members of the SfEP have been obtained by various council members. At the first council meeting after the 2007 AGM, it was decided to bring all the benefits aspects under the helm of one director – Gillian Clarke. Subsequently, with the appointment of Justina Utuka as executive secretary, it was felt that obtaining additional benefits for the Society should become one of her responsibilities, thus achieving both continuity and centralized information.

Thanks to Nancy Duin's initiative this year, we have a 20% discount on Barbara Horn's *Copy-editing* (published price £45). And we still have, for example, the discounts on relevant books from Oxford University Press and Profile Books. Efforts are being made to obtain discounts on relevant reference books from Cambridge University Press, in particular *Butcher's Copy-editing* and works by David Crystal.

The FirstAssist legal helpline received 88 calls from SfEP members and associates between 17 July 2007 and 30 June 2008. The two largest categories of enquiries were contracts (30%) and landlord and tenant (15%). Remember that you and anyone in your household can get advice on any legal matter – it does not have to be work-related.

Justina is investigating other benefits. When any are agreed, they will be publicized to the membership. All members' benefits are listed in the Members' area of the website. If there is anything you think we could add to this list, please contact the executive secretary.

## professional development

shena deuchars

Last year, the council reorganized and decided to bring the Society's qualifications and membership levels under the care of the professional development director. This has the advantage of having one person overseeing both the admissions criteria and the awarding of qualifications that form part of those criteria.

In the year to February 2008, 48 people applied for and were awarded an upgrade. Those who would like to upgrade, but who feel that their experience or training does not fit the criteria, should contact the professional development director: the system has a degree of flexibility and we want to encourage people to upgrade.

Last year, we announced that the professional development board would develop a set of tests that would show competence in basic skills and would count towards movement up the membership levels. Progress on this has been slow but we hope that it will increase in the coming year. Five people have taken the Accreditation test in the past year, but no one passed. We hope that the development of entry level tests will enable new entrants to the profession to demonstrate their competence at an earlier stage in order to be able to gain the experience required for a confident attempt at Accreditation.

Hot off the presses, we have announced an initiative with the City & Guilds Institute (C&G). Advanced members with three years' experience at that level can now apply for a Licentiatehip in Editorial Skills awarded by C&G. A licentiatehip is an equivalent qualification to NVQ Level 4 or HND. Successful applicants can use the letters LCGI after their names. We are very pleased to be able to offer this additional qualification to our experienced members.

## **mentoring**

---

### **gerard hill**

In 2007, Virginia Masardo set in motion a review of the mentoring scheme; in November, the council co-opted me to assist. We set up an online panel to look again at our criteria for assessing people's work. These will match up with the criteria used in Accreditation and other tests. Sadly, Virginia died on 3 February 2008. She is fondly remembered, and her work goes on.

Mentoring is available in proofreading and copy-editing. In the last year, 18 people completed mentoring; six more are in the process. To help more associates to upgrade, we are recruiting mentors and arranging training.

## **training**

---

### **caroline landon**

Our scheduled training programme is a continuing success, with courses running in London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow and York. After inviting a number of people to tender, we commissioned Peter Nickol to develop a new version of the Editing and Proofreading Music course. The pilot went ahead in May and was a great success, and the course has now been added to the regular schedule. One of our long-term aims is to ensure that the courses we offer match the training needs of our membership. With this in mind, we have started from first principles and have recently sent out a questionnaire to assess members' current working practices. We will use the results of this survey to design a core curriculum that ensures our training offerings meet your training needs.

As always, a big thank you is due to our office staff, who continue to administer the programme so efficiently, our team of co-ordinators and day organizers, led by Lesley Ward and Margaret Aherne, our in-house training co-ordinator Penny Poole, and our excellent team of tutors.

### **penny poole, in-house training co-ordinator**

Mirroring the experience of many individual SfEP members, I have found that enquiries about SfEP in-house training often come from sources who know precious little about editorial skills, standards or working practices. One of our biggest challenges, therefore, is to identify and analyse a client's corporate training needs (as well as those of individual delegates) in order to deliver an effective, customized programme. It has also become clear that a lot of training buyers make their purchasing decision largely on price and if we are to maintain our high standard of development and delivery, profit margins will almost inevitably come under increasing pressure with the onset of recession.

It's not all doom and gloom! The reputation of tutors who deliver SfEP in-house training continues to grow and several experienced editorial professionals, who are newcomers to training delivery, are keen to develop their training portfolio. This should enable us to achieve a more comfortable position in terms of tutor resourcing.

I am delighted that Justina Utuka, our executive secretary, is taking up the in-house training baton and am confident that she will run with it and promote this important component of the SfEP's training activities. My thanks also to the team at Erico House, whose help and

support have been invaluable during my time as in-house training co-ordinator.

## **conferences**

---

### **lotika singha**

The 18th annual SfEP Conference was held at the University of Sussex, Brighton, on 4–5 September 2007.

A total of 109 people attended, 28 for the first time. Overall, the organization was considered good with a balanced programme. Most people enjoyed themselves and learnt at least one new thing or became aware of other things that although not directly relevant to them were useful to know about. The first-timers felt welcomed and there were several comments about the friendly atmosphere. The banquet picture quiz, prepared by David Penfold, was a great ice-breaker, and we plan to have something similar again.

The Whitcombe Lecture by Andrew Franklin was a runaway success. Comments ranged from 'Interesting to hear a publisher's view of the future' to 'Witty and provocative, amusing, informative, opinionated'. Sylvia Sullivan presented an interesting way of co-operative working and Gill Davies' lecture on the role of the commissioning editor today also went down well. David Crystal's after-dinner talk was highly entertaining.

Most of the workshops generated good feedback. Many that have been run in previous years continue to generate interest and will be repeated at coming conferences. The following new workshops will also have long-term appeal: Development editing; Is working a pain in the neck?; Wild card search and replace; Working for non-publishers; Upgrading your membership.

The online publishing seminar did not get a favourable response. In the editorial outsourcing seminar the background noise (see below) made it difficult for delegates sitting at the back to hear the speaker but there was some lively debate towards the end when the speaker gave his reasons for outsourcing editorial work.

There was little negative feedback about using personal laptops for computer-based workshops, and the workshop leaders felt that they could cope with larger numbers attending the workshops as long as they had another person to help. Computer facilities at conference venues are quite expensive; in addition, we may need to have more than one computer-based workshop in each session owing to the demand as well as the need to provide training in newer technologies such as TeX. We are therefore running laptop-based sessions again in 2008 and will request feedback.

Delegates found the networking opportunities and the marketplace useful. Several people thought the posters were a good idea and added value to the marketplace. However, as presenters do not currently get any brownie points professionally for their efforts, it will be hard to get enough presenters every year. So, despite the success of this new feature, it was decided not to have posters at the Oxford conference.

There were a few issues regarding the venue, such as the background noise generated by the construction work going on in the vicinity, the inability to connect to the internet by some delegates and a few cold showers on the first night. However, on the whole the feedback was positive. The conference venue staff were helpful and tried to sort our problems as quickly as possible, although nothing could be done about the noise from the construction site.

The conference continues to largely achieve its main goals of advocating professionalism, helping newcomers and providing networking opportunities.

## internet

### nancy duin

The basic work of the SfEP website <[www.sfep.org.uk](http://www.sfep.org.uk)> is iterative – that is, we continually tweak it to keep it up to date and to increase its quality. To that end, there have been some 22 regular updates since September 2007, plus many ad hoc changes in between.

As well as keeping the membership informed and enlightened, the website also brings in a bit of dosh. This year, through the links on the home page, we have earned £765.61 from Amazon and £169.37 from Viking. This more than covers the expense of our Google AdWords, which we use to drive potential clients to the *Directory* at a cost of £163.80.

We have also placed 'Amazon Associates' links in the relatively new *SfEP Review of Books*, which is part of the 'Collective wisdom' section accessible from the home page. This is run in concert with *Editing Matters*, reprinting reviews that first appeared in its pages and originating others that, because of lack of space, were impossible to include in print. At the time of writing, there are 62 reviews.

The Members' area now contains lists of members, associates and corporate associates, as well as the ever-popular 'Rate for the job', through which the membership can report actual rates paid by named companies. It is hoped that, in the next few months, the Members' area will be completely restructured, as we plan to add significantly to the existing content, as time allows.

New to it will be the SfEPWiki, which as Wendy Toole notes below, will eventually contain much of the information, experience and wisdom that is offered so generously on SfEPLine. As this report goes to press, there are almost 100 pages of content in the database and just under 200 registered users. The wiki itself was created in February independent of the website by Matthew Strawbridge, and it is hoped to bring it into the Members' area soon. The council has decided that, at least for now, it will remain accessible only to SfEP members and associates, who will also be the only ones allowed to post articles and edit them. We hope, however, to use the existence of the wiki to attract new members; all ideas on how we can do this without allowing 'outside' access would be welcome.

We've been planning for some time to have a pdf archive of past issues of *Editing Matters* (and its predecessors), and this now appears to be close to fruition. It will be available in the Members' area, and we will start with the last two years' worth of issues and gradually add to that. The *Editing Matters* index continues to be updated four times a year by Christopher Phipps – you'll find it in the 'Magazine' section of the website.

An SfEP Members' Bookshop is also planned, again for the Members' area. This will showcase the books that members and associates have written, edited or translated (and had their contribution acknowledged on the title page). We will not be selling books directly from this, but will include Amazon links if available.

I'd particularly like to thank those who have worked on the SfEPWiki from the beginning: Tina Allen, Louise Bolotin, Margaret Corbett, Rod Cuff, Shena Deuchars, John Marsden, Heidi Mason, Matthew Strawbridge, Katharine Timberlake, Ruth Wilson. Thanks also to Jean Rollinson for compiling the SfEP 'Rate for the Job'. And as ever, a big thank you to my 'team': John Marsden, Rod Cuff, Chuck Brandstater and, particularly, Wendy Toole who will be sorely missed as moderator of SfEPLine.

## john marsden, webspinner

As webspinner, I handle the technical side of updates and additions for the Society's website, while Nancy Duin deals with the editorial aspects (structure and content). After the intense activity of last year's complete site redesign, it might not look very different, but lots of 'behind the scenes' changes have been going on.

The site continues to attract an increasing number of visitors. In the 12 months to 30 June 2008, the web server recorded some 7.8 million hits (2007: ~4 million), serving in excess of 1 million page views (2007: ~810,000) to visitors in more than 383,000 sessions (2007: ~286,000). About 48% of these sessions originated in the USA, 29% in the UK, 7% in other EU/Scandinavian countries and 16% elsewhere.

The Members' area of the site continues to attract new applicants, with around 250 having been processed this year. The total number of subscribers is now hovering around 950 (out of a total of about 1,280 eligible) – 75% of the eligible membership.

### rod cuff, online directory manager

The *Directory* continues to thrive in its online-only format, although the number of entries is marginally down on last year (in mid-July, 451 against 466). Following the few glitches of last year, the annual update was carried out relatively painlessly in late 2007.

Although searches per working day averaged 125–150, compared with 150–200 last year, views of members' entries rose again this year to more than 85,500, exceeding last year's figure by about 3%. The *Directory's* busiest day was 3 January 2008, when a total of just under 1,600 directory entries were viewed!

Only a small minority of members have taken advantage of the standing offer to have their entries freed from some of the restrictions that were imposed by the (now defunct) printed version. For instance, members can, within reason, list as many clients and subjects as they wish, are not limited to a single 50-word paragraph of free text, and can dictate the order in which items are listed under any subheading.

We would welcome more use of this freedom, and urge the 50 members who have not included any free text at all to think about how they might advertise their wares to greater effect. Updates can be emailed to [online-directory@sfep.org.uk](mailto:online-directory@sfep.org.uk).

By the time of the AGM, the application form for a first-time directory entry should have been revised and be downloadable from the website.

### wendy toole, SfEPLine moderator

SfEPLine now has 618 subscribers, up from 533 last year. While only a small percentage of these people are regular contributors, it is encouraging that many new subscribers quickly join in and make themselves known.

The average daily number of posts – at about 50 – is relatively high for SfEPLine, but not when compared with other editorial discussion groups. The investigation by certain members into alternatives to the present Yahoo! group system – in particular, a web-based forum – has been shelved for the moment, as lack of time and difficulties in finding a scheme that would allow both email and forum messages have so far proved too much. The transfer of some of the wisdom that is shared on SfEPLine to the new SfEPWiki has, however, been an impressive development.

The '<trivia>' tagging system developed by John Marsden continues to offer subscribers a choice of

whether to engage in water-cooler discussions in addition to those on more serious work-oriented topics or to receive emails relating to the latter only. And members are reminded that they can always opt to receive the digest (each issue of which contains up to 25 SfEPLINE messages).

Chuck Brandstater remains in post as deputy moderator, but I will shortly be leaving my position as moderator to join the SfEP council. I hope to find a replacement before the AGM.

---

## pr and publicity

### sara hulse, pr/marketing consultant

Since stepping down as PR director for the SfEP at the conference last year, I've continued in my role as PR and marketing consultant to help raise the profile of the Society and publicize our events and courses. In recent months, most of my effort has gone into promoting this year's conference and raising sponsorship, together with sending out media releases and improving our contacts with the media, other publishing organizations and various publications. Much of the PR work is being handed over to Justina Utuka in the SfEP office, a job that will be completed in September.

---

## publications

### matthew seal

Last year the publications team considered the challenge of commissioning a full-scale multi-author book on the future(s) of editing. The idea was keenly debated with a panel of advisers, and the outcome was that we decided it was too ambitious, difficult to pull off and unlikely to be cost-effective.

If this plan wasn't to happen as a marker for our 20th (or perhaps 21st) anniversary, or even as a standalone book, we still wanted to offer members and others something to honour these significant birthdays. The obvious, and more achievable, answer was to scale down plans and do something within our grasp, namely commissioning appropriate material in *Editing Matters* and building on what Val Rice had begun in her booklet *Starting Out* (2006).

At the time of writing (mid-July) the publications team is pushing on to produce two booklets, under the new series identity of *SfEP Guides*, in time for launching at our 20th anniversary conference in Oxford. Both cover themes relating to making your way professionally as a copy-editor or proofreader. We are lucky to have secured two experienced authors in Anne Waddingham (*Editor and client: building a professional relationship*) and Sara Hulse (*Developing a marketing plan: cost-effective ways to market your editorial business*).

We have decided to keep these two new publications as printed booklets rather than publishing them electronically, but if readers tell us they want publication in other forms we may review this.

Further titles are in preparation, and this series is planned as a continuing professional extension of our training and other activities.

We have taken steps in the last year to become more professional as a publisher, instituting formal contracts for authors (prepared with the constructive legal advice of the Society of Authors), allocation of ISBNs and continuing print-on-demand publication. Costs are being controlled by producing copies on the new bells-and-whistles office photocopier/printer and keeping the accounting straightforward by offering fees to authors instead of royalties.

## christina thomas, editor, editing matters

Six issues of *Editing Matters* and a conference supplement were produced during the year. The content remains focused on business issues, professionalism, editing, clients and publishing and Society news. The look of the publication has been improved with the gradual introduction of a wider range of photos and other illustrations. From September 2008 a pdf of each new issue will be available in the Members' area of the website at the same time as the printed version; this is viewed as an added benefit rather than the first step in the replacement of the print version by a pdf.