
report from the chair

sarah price

My first year as SfEP chair has been a challenging and interesting one. Over the past two years, several long-standing members in key roles have retired from the council. At the same time, over the past 18 months, the council has been 'learning' to work with an executive secretary, a role created with the intention of taking some of the operational burden off the volunteer directors. So, I took on the role of chair at a time of change – a somewhat daunting prospect that I tried not to think about too much at the beginning of the year.

At the 2008 AGM we said goodbye to Penny Williams (chair), Shena Deuchars (professional development director) and Matthew Seal (publications director). We welcomed new volunteers in the roles of finance director (Piers Maddox), professional development director and vice-chair (Wendy Toole) and PR director (Katharine Timberlake, co-opted just after the 2008 conference). Inevitably, the council dynamics changed, but this soon settled down and it has been a pleasure to work with the current council over the past year.

This year, the council has been concentrating on strategy, following the 'Looking back, looking forward' session at the 2008 conference. The five-year plan put together when the Society incorporated was due for an update, so we have made that a priority. We devoted most of the January council meeting to strategy, with the help of expert facilitator Christina Thomas, who helped us to 'think outside the box'. In subsequent meetings, it was decided to replace the five-year plan with a 'strategy document' with aims set out for two years. This will be subject to a rolling annual review. The strategy document will be published in September 2009 and will be available on the Society's website under 'About the SfEP'.

One of the highlights of my year was being given the opportunity to comment on the current economic situation in the *Bookseller* on behalf of the Society. I carried out a straw poll on SfEpline to find out whether and how members had been affected. The consensus was that most members weren't feeling any negative effects at the time (quite the opposite in some cases), but that no one was taking this for granted. It is to be hoped that the outlook will continue to be positive for people in the editorial profession.

SfEP's executive secretary, Justina Amenu, has now been with us for 18 months and has made a noticeable difference to the way the council works. Justina is going on maternity leave in November, but expects to be back sometime in 2010. She is arranging maternity cover for her absence, as the council decided it would be a backward step to take back the tasks already handed over.

As always, we value the support of all of our office staff, Justina Amenu, Helen Martin and Bridget Buckle. The Society would not be able to function as smoothly as it does without them. Helen has now been with us for seven years, and Bridget for six – quite an achievement.

At this year's AGM, one director will be retiring from the council. Caroline Landon has served as training director for two years and will be greatly missed. Notably,

she organised a survey of members' working practices with a view to updating SfEP's introductory curriculum, and commissioned a new 'Editing and proofreading music' course from advanced member, Peter Nickol. I attended the pilot run of this course and found it both informative and very enjoyable. I would like to thank Caroline for all her hard work over the past two years.

Unfortunately, Piers Maddox decided to stand down from the finance director role for personal reasons in November 2008. This means that we are currently operating without a finance director. I have been covering this role as well as that of chair, something that would not have been possible without Bridget Buckle, who now carries out all of the day-to-day accounting tasks, and without the help and advice of former finance director, Val Rice. We would like to hear from anyone with accounting knowledge or experience who would be interested in taking this on. Given the work that Bridget now does, it is a much more manageable role than in the past.

Finally, I would like to thank my predecessor, Penny Williams, for all her advice and support over the year. I would also like to thank my fellow council members for their commitment and support over the past year. It has been (and, I hope, will continue to be) a pleasure to work with them. The Society is very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of volunteers.

finance

report for the financial year ending 28 february 2009

sarah price

Once again, the financial statements for the year ending 28 February 2009 show a healthy balance sheet. As a result, the Council has decided to update the Society's database software. The current database has never quite done what we would like it to do, and, with the increase in internet use by other organisations to carry out tasks such as renewals and conference bookings, an update is now overdue.

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 10% to £134,829, compared with an increase of just over 5% in the year to 29 February 2009. Income from training has increased and continues to make a healthy surplus over all. The 2008 conference also made a small surplus despite the Oxford venue being more expensive than venues for previous years.

With the addition of one staff member, our salary-related expenses have naturally increased. However, as intended, directors' hours have reduced by more than 50% as we have moved many tasks previously carried out by volunteer directors to the office. Our accountancy costs have also decreased significantly since February 2008, because our Finance Officer, Bridget Buckle, has taken over some of the accounting tasks that

WarrenerStewart took on in 2007/08, such as payroll. We also now have the chart of accounts set up in the Sage accounting package (thanks to Piers Maddox for initiating this), which has made it easier to generate the management accounts for council meetings.

The expenses incurred as a result of the Society's move to Erico House in May 2008 are all under 'Sundries' in the accounts, given that this (we hope) is not a regular occurrence. As a result of the move, we have reduced our outgoings on premises, as the rent for Erico House is lower than that for Riverbank House, although there is not as much storage space, so we do now pay for offsite storage (included under Office expenses). The Office expenses category also includes the cost of shredding unwanted material prior to the move.

In the current economic climate, we have been more than usually careful with the Society's funds. We decided not to increase hourly rates for subcontractors this year (including directors' remuneration) and have been watching our spending. However, we do need to ensure that we continue to cover our costs and have funds available to improve and develop the Society's work. In light of this, we propose raising individual subscriptions for 200/10 by around 3%. Details of all proposed increases will be discussed and voted on at the AGM.

membership

sarah patey

On 29 July 2009 there were 1276 individuals in membership, categorized as follows:

Membership category	2008	2009
Advanced	258	255
Ordinary	362	369
Associate	634	652
Total	1254	1276

Numbers are holding up, given that this year, again, several long-standing members and associates have retired. Each year numbers of associates join and do not renew, so that overall numbers take a sharp dip once all renewals have been processed, and gradually climb during the rest of the year. The council has discussed this carefully, and concluded that this is a healthy sign that the SfEP is helping interested individuals to explore and assess the option of a career in editorial work. Some stay, which is very pleasing, and others decide after a few months that editorial work is not for them, and therefore do not renew their membership.

The executive secretary has been researching the options for a new and more powerful database, mentioned in the finance report, which is due to be in place and tested in time to process the renewals in February 2010.

Last year's report suggested that the trial reciprocal discount membership deal with the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) might be discontinued, and this has happened. The enthusiastic take-up by SfEP members was insufficiently matched by EASE members, so that the SfEP membership as a whole was in effect subsidising discounts for individuals joining EASE.

The council has approved a reform to the membership structure for the Society's corporate associates and their employees. The reform will take effect at renewals in 2010. It is hoped that this will not only increase membership figures over the next few years but also raise the profile of the SfEP in organisations managing publishing programmes, both within traditional publishing and beyond.

justina amenu, benefits co-ordinator

In September 2008 we negotiated with Virgin Balloon Flights to offer 'adventure packages' to members for half the normal price.

Discounts on Barbara Horn's *Copy-editing* and on relevant books from Oxford University Press and Profile Books are ongoing. We successfully re-negotiated discounts with Scion Publishing for *Scientific Style and Format*. Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain worthwhile discounts on relevant reference books from Cambridge University Press but are currently in talks with Oxford University Press to offer discounts generally on dictionaries and reference books relevant to SfEP members as opposed to specific titles.

The FirstAssist legal helpline received 87 calls from SfEP members and associates between 1 June 2008 and 31 May 2009. The two largest categories of enquiries were contracts (42%) and employment (14%). Remember that you and anyone in your household can get advice on any legal matter – it does not have to be work-related.

We continue to investigate other benefits, and welcome any suggestions and contacts from members. When any are agreed, they will be publicised to the membership. All members' benefits are listed in the Members' area of the website.

local groups and regional development

lawrence osborn

At present, 18 local groups are active, covering many regions of Great Britain (including two in Scotland and two in Wales). Six groups are currently inactive, but members in three of those areas have indicated that they hope to restart them in the autumn. A monthly notice of local group events is now available through SfEPAnnounce. If none of the existing groups suits you, please consider the possibility of starting a new group (see the local group guidelines on the website).

SfEP has begun to explore possibilities for closer collaboration with Publishing Scotland. Any suggestions for other regional collaborations would be most welcome.

professional development

wendy toole

Because of the central importance of CPD for all of us, the professional development portfolio is very large and dovetails with many other areas of the council's work. To share the work in a rational way, it was decided during the year to ask the mentoring director also to take care of accreditation; therefore information, facts and figures on that qualification can be found in the mentoring and accreditation section of this report.

Our initiative with the City & Guilds Institute (C&G), announced last year, whereby advanced members with three years' experience at that level could apply for a Licentiate in Editorial Skills awarded by C&G, has proved a great success. In May 2009 our first licentiates were invited to attend the City & Guilds graduation ceremony at the Merchant Taylors Hall in the City of London to receive their awards. So far 19 advanced members have been awarded C&G Licentiatehips, and we hope that this level of interest will continue.

The admissions panel, who adjudicate on applications from associates and members to upgrade to ordinary or advanced membership, have as always been working very hard. In the year to February 2009, 27

people were awarded an upgrade: 21 to ordinary and six to advanced membership. We want to encourage people to upgrade, and those who would like to but are concerned that their experience or training may not precisely fit the formal criteria should contact the professional development director for advice, as the system has a degree of flexibility.

The Sue Thomson Foundation generously makes funding available to help associates who are close to upgrading undertake additional training so that they can move up to ordinary membership. In 2008, the second year of funding, six applications for grants were approved. We hope that our continuing programme of reminders to associates about the fund will encourage them to apply when they are in a position to benefit. We are currently exploring how to use the grant to also benefit individuals who are unable to travel to any of the venues where training is offered.

The professional development board is in the process of developing a set of tests that will evaluate competence in basic skills and help members and associates towards movement up the membership levels. We are also planning a range of CPD days for experienced members to enable them to refresh their skills and extend their expertise.

mentoring and accreditation

gerard hill

In the last year, 16 people completed mentoring; eight more are in the process. We recruited two new mentors and arranged a training session; mentors now have procedural guidelines. Mentoring is available in proofreading and copy-editing, and a large project gave us a one-off opportunity to offer mentored medical copy-editing to three well-qualified people. Advanced members with projects they cannot manage single-handed might like to consider supervising mentees to proofread or copy-edit material for them, including texts in scientific, technical, medical, legal and other specialisms. Acting on advice that mentoring charges must include VAT, we decided to absorb that, so the cost to mentees is the same.

Over the past 12 months, 17 people have taken the accreditation test, of whom four have passed; four more tests are with the examiners. The pass rate is to be investigated. Accreditation documents have been reviewed with the help of Judith Wardman and Gillian Clarke, who has also written a replacement for the proofreading guidance in Nicola Harris's 1991 book. We have advised on the first draft of ISO5776, intended to be the international standard for marking proofs. PTC have agreed to liaise with us in preparing various future tests on line; the first stage will be a self-test on the website.

training

caroline landon

Building firm foundations for a successful future has been a recurrent theme for council this year. To this end we have decided to develop a core syllabus that will cover mentoring, training and continuing professional development. To make this relevant to our members, we circulated a questionnaire to find out current working practices, as the role of the proofreader/copy-editor has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. The next step, as detailed in the new strategy document, is to use these findings as an input into the syllabus to ensure that our training offerings meet your training needs.

The scheduled training courses continue to run successfully. In the current economic climate, in-house

training has become a more challenging marketplace, but we have made changes to our charging structure that we hope will bring in more work.

One of the biggest changes this year on the administration side is that Justina Amenu has taken over organising the public course schedule and in-house training. A huge debt of thanks is due to Lesley Ward for arranging of the public schedule and Penny Poole for acting as in-house training co-ordinator and to both for smoothing the handover to Justina. As always, a big thank you is also due to our office staff, who continue to administer the programme so efficiently, our team of co-ordinators and day organisers and our excellent team of tutors.

conferences

lotika singha

The 19th Annual SfEP Conference was held at St Catherine's College, Oxford, on 8–9 September 2008. The conference organising committee comprised the conference director (Lotika Singha), the internet director (Nancy Duin) and two members (David Penfold and Robert McGeehan). Sara Hulse raised considerable sponsorship from a variety of organisations (LexisNexis, Oxford University Press, Palgrave, Pearson, Publishing Training Centre, Sage and Wearset).

This conference marked 20 years of the society's existence. For this, we first conducted a competition for the folder cover, which was won by Haydn Cooper from International Baccalaureate, a corporate associate. The design was also used on commemorative mugs that were on sale at the conference. We had a special plenary session called the '20th Anniversary session' at the conference, where a panel of four former SfEP chairs, Michèle Clarke, Kathleen Lyle, Naomi Laredo and Penny Williams, gave presentations highlighting the milestones in the society's development. This was followed by a question/answer session chaired by Christina Thomas. The questions had been sent in advance by SfEP members and were put to the audience who debated them in buzz groups. The answers were summarised by another four panel members, Melanie Thompson, Katharine Timberlake, Paul Crabb and Peter Daniels. The results of the session were informative and have been taken into account in the forthcoming 'SfEP strategy' document. One delegate commented: 'A great way to show just how much SfEP has done and involve us in the future.'

A total of 138 delegates attended the conference. Overall, the organisation was considered good with a balanced programme. Most people enjoyed themselves and first timers felt welcomed. Everybody found almost all the sessions valuable in one way or the other.

The Whitcombe Lecture by Charlotte Brewer on the workings of the *Oxford English Dictionary* was fascinating. David Crystal's lecture 'English on the internet' was superb and thought provoking. Liz Wager's entertaining talk on 'Careering around' was inspiring and stimulating and included valuable points for action. On the whole, an overwhelming majority of delegates gave all three plenary sessions top marks.

Most of the workshops generated good feedback. Many of those repeated from previous years continue to generate interest and several will be repeated again in future conferences. Of the new workshops, the following will also have long-term appeal: copywriting, business editing, and networking skills. All the seminars were well received, in particular the seminar on copyright by Tim Padfield.

Delegates enjoyed the demonstrations and would have liked to attend more than one. However, despite

giving good feedback, they didn't seem to generate significant business for the demonstrators, in particular the ReferenceChecker software. So we will not be having these at least at the next couple of conferences.

The use of personal laptops for computer-based workshops worked much better this time than at Brighton. The workshop leaders felt that they could cope with larger numbers attending the workshops as long as they had another person to help. We ensured that these workshops were allocated to generously sized rooms and that was most helpful. There were some glitches with audiovisual in a few workshops but these were sorted out without too many problems. A little time was lost in a couple of workshops. There isn't much we can do about this, however. It's difficult to predict if such problems will occur and expensive to book a technician to be always on hand – if we had done this, we might not have had any problems but it would have added to the conference costs.

Delegates also found the networking opportunities and the marketplace useful. The SfEPLInnets gave a spectacular performance in the dining hall and the banquet quiz by David Penfold was an excellent ice-breaker. Lionel Browne and his group provided a lot of great music afterwards.

The venue was mostly liked by the delegates. Some people could not connect to the internet in their rooms – unfortunately this problem was difficult to predict and sort out.

The conference continues to largely achieve its main goals of advocating professionalism, helping newcomers and providing networking opportunities. We managed to achieve a balance between traditional publishing and working for non-publishers in this conference and would hope to be able to do this again.

internet

nancy duin

A (good) website is never done, and so it is with the SfEP website: since September 2008, there have been 19 major updates and numerous smaller adjustments, additions and deletions.

The greatest change to the website this year has been the reorganisation of the Members' area. Rather than being a messy miscellany, the content in this part of the website now appears under seven different headings, from 'Benefits' to 'Membership lists'. In addition, we now have the 'SfEP Showcase', where the work of 19 members/associates – ie those whose names adorn the covers and/or title pages of books they have written, co-written, edited or translated – is celebrated. We would welcome more entries. It is also hoped that, by the AGM, new entry and renewal forms for the directory will be available in the Members' area, plus an integrated suggested subject list (updated from the one that used to 'rule' the print version of the directory).

The public website remains structurally more or less the same. However, far more news stories and media releases have appeared, and about a dozen book reviews have been added to the 'SfEP review of books' (in the 'Collective wisdom' section on the home page), plus an increasing number of 'books noted'. In addition, the instructions on how to gain access to the Members' area and SfEPLine have been improved and, as a result, there are now fewer failed attempts than in the past.

In addition to the work the site does to illuminate the lives of members and associates, it also brings in a bit of money. In the last financial year, we earned £762 from Amazon and £94 from Viking, all from the membership ordering books, stationery and other things from those firms by clicking on the links on the website's home

page. Many thanks to all those who do this. The amounts earned covered the £91.88 that we paid for the Google AdWords we use to drive potential clients and members to our site.

The SfEPWiki goes from strength to strength. More than 380 members/associates have signed up as users and, at the time of writing, 202 articles have been created, from 'ADSL' and 'ALT character codes' to 'Working from home' and 'Zipping files'.

In October, I was happy to welcome Gareth Haman, who took over as SfEPLine moderator from Wendy Toole. I would also like to thank the rest of my 'team': John Marsden and Rod Cuff, whose reports appear below, and Chuck Brandstater, who continues to act as deputy SfEPLine moderator.

With all this progress, it is disappointing to report that, through circumstances beyond our control, various web projects have had to be delayed, including moving the wiki into the Members' area and replacing SfEPLine's existing Yahoo! Groups email list with an email/forum hybrid. However, we hope that these will be back on track soon. With the new database in place (see the finance section of this report), we will also be able to push forward our plans for online joining, course and conference booking, and directory updating.

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).

The website has grown, with new sections on in the SfEP 'Collective wisdom' section and further book reviews. The SfEPWiki continues to expand, becoming a valuable resource for members. Many members have now signed up for access and are contributing to the content. It is planned to integrate the wiki with the main website during the coming year, once a few technical issues are dealt with.

The Members' area of the site continues to attract new applicants, the total number of subscribers now hovering around 75–80% of the eligible membership.

rod cuff, online directory manager

In mid-July, the online directory of the editorial services provided by our members contained 442 entries (against 451 a year earlier), with an average of about 140 searches by potential clients and others per working day (125–150). During this period, 36 new entries have been added, and nearly 200 existing entries have been updated, many of them several times. However, more than half of the entries remained as they were a year earlier.

The number of members who have liberated their entries from the restrictions previously imposed by having a systematic print version has slowly climbed. Members have made such changes as listing skills, subjects and clients in an order and quantity that advertise themselves most effectively, or have formatted their free text in several paragraphs and/or using bulleted lists. So I would encourage everyone with a directory entry to take a few minutes to review it regularly – you can make changes to any aspect of it at any time by emailing online-directory@sfep.org.uk.

The renewals process gets smoother and less paper-strewn each year, thanks to the combination of email, credit cards and the admirable Helen Martin in the office. Much time and postage has been saved as a result.

There is more about the directory, including the process for taking out an entry, in the Members' area of our website. It is hoped that advice on creating an entry will be added to this soon.

gareth haman, SfEPLine moderator

SfEPLine currently has 682 subscribers, up from 618 last year. As last year, only a small percentage of these people are regular contributors, but many new subscribers do join in and make themselves known.

The average daily number of posts is around 20, down on last year (but that year's figures were considered high for SfEPLine). It should be noted that, in addition to or instead of SfEPLine, a number of members have moved to services such as Facebook because of their perceived greater user-friendliness.

There have been some personality clashes during the past year, but the Line has calmed down since then. These incidents may have put off new subscribers, but it is hoped that this will not be an issue in future.

The <trivia> tagging system is still in use, though users must now set up their own email filter tags for it to function as the service previously offered by John Marsden has ceased to function.

marketing and pr

katharine timberlake

I was invited to join the SfEP council as public relations director after the 2008 annual conference and the council agreed to co-opt me at its meeting in October. I soon realised that there is a broad range of tasks that have to be tackled if the Society's profile is to be raised and the council agreed to the title of 'marketing and PR director'. I gathered volunteers for a new subcommittee early in 2009, of which, at the time of writing, a dozen are frequently active. They have been invaluable for preparing releases (six in nine months) and, through some agreeing to take on team leader roles, are making inroads on other tasks. One volunteer is recording the amount of time being spent on the different projects, and at least 100 hours were contributed by the subcommittee in the first half of 2009. I am extremely grateful that marketing and PR (MPR) for SfEP is no longer a one-woman band.

The major event of the current year is the Society's 21st birthday, which will be celebrated at the 2009 conference in a variety of ways. Other 2009 projects involve consolidating current resources: updating the contacts list, checking mentions of the SfEP on others' websites, streamlining the preparation of releases and emailshots, and redesigning the information pack for enquirers, with its design intended to form the basis of additional marketing material. In July, the 'positive editing' examples project was launched, which will run over the long term and provide a strong marketing resource that demonstrates both the value of editing and the knowledge base of our membership.

As well as consolidating the current MPR resources and getting up to speed with the other directors' plans, I have spent the first half of 2009 planning the sequence of events for the next two years and identifying the critical tasks that have to be finished before new projects are started. In March, I started collecting website data logs, which will provide base data for assessing the effectiveness of the increase in PR activities to guide future campaigns.

publications

gillian clarke

Continuing the plan to publish short guides on various topics of relevance to the SfEP membership, Christina Thomas has written *Your House Style*, giving guidance on why a house style is so important and how to develop one if there isn't one already in existence. This guide will be published in time for this year's Conference. Also available at Conference should be the second edition of Val Rice's *Starting Out*. They, like the two SfEP Guides published last year – *Editor and Client* by Anne Waddingham and *Developing a Marketing Strategy* by Sara Hulse – are priced at £5. Suggestions for future titles will be welcome.

A major task this year has been the preparation of guidance for the membership concerning contracts/terms & conditions. I have been helped enormously by Anne Waddingham, who has collaborated with me, bringing to the job her experience as a client as well as a freelance. It has been a rather drawn-out process because, just as we think we have it sorted, another query is raised. It is important, however, for the guidance to be as clear and unambiguous as possible, so the delay is justified. The final document, which includes a model terms & conditions, will be ready by the AGM, and will appear on the website in the Code of Practice section. If you are not online, you can obtain a copy by sending the office a stamped self-addressed envelope (to hold five A4 pages), marked 'T&Cs'.

Editing Matters continues to inform and entertain, covering a variety of subjects that reflect the membership's wide-ranging interests. There were the usual six issues plus a Conference supplement. The professional production team continues very successfully under the leadership of its excellent editor, Christina Thomas.