
report from the chair

sarah price

I am pleased to report that my second year as SfEP chair has been much happier and less challenging than the first. I was told when I took the role on that it would get easier, but I confess that there were times last year when I found it hard to believe. However, this year has proved to be much more positive.

The council of volunteer directors didn't change very much at the 2009 AGM. We said goodbye to just one council member, training director Caroline Landon. Katharine Timberlake, co-opted in October 2008 to the role of marketing and PR, was formally elected to the council, and Sarah Patey and Gillian Clarke were re-elected as membership director and publications director, respectively.

At the AGM last year, we discussed the difficulty the council was having in finding a finance director. As a result, I was covering that role in addition to being chair. Just to prove that networking is a powerful tool, Penny Williams introduced me to SfEP associate Gordon Hooper over a pre-prandial drink after the AGM and, as a result, we subsequently co-opted Gordon as finance director. With a background in banking, Gordon is ideally placed to look after the Society's finances. His upgrade to ordinary membership came through before Christmas last year and he has been doing sterling (excuse the pun) work as acting finance director since. Gordon will be standing for election at the 2010 AGM.

The work that the council put into strategic planning bore fruition in the autumn of last year with the publication on the website of the SfEP Strategy. As advised in last year's annual report, this document replaces the five-year plan and is subject to an annual rolling review. We hope to publish the 2010 update on the website in September.

In January, we said goodbye to the Society's longstanding editor of *Editing Matters*, Christina Thomas. Christina was highly respected and did a wonderful job in setting up the Society's newsletter and maintaining a very high standard. She is a hard act to follow, but the new editor, Hazel Reid, has taken up the challenge and is already proving a worthy successor.

As always, the Society would not be able to function as efficiently as it does without our office stalwarts. SfEP's executive secretary Justina Amenu went on maternity leave last October and her youngest daughter, Senam, was born in December. We extend our congratulations to Justina and her family. In her absence, Justina's role has been ably covered by Lillian Avon. Lillian has a background in publishing and her enthusiasm for the industry comes through in her work. As Justina decided to extend her maternity leave until September, Lillian is staying on with us until the autumn. We are grateful to Helen Martin, Bridget Buckle, Lillian Avon and Justina Amenu for their hard work and continued support over the past year.

At this year's AGM, three directors are retiring from the council. Lotika Singha has served as conference

director for four years and has built on the work of her predecessor, Jane Ward, to make the SfEP annual conference a truly memorable event. Lawrence Osborn, currently local groups director, will be stepping into Lotika's shoes. Katharine Timberlake is standing down from the role of PR and marketing director after two years. Katharine took the role from 0 to 60 in a time that would make even Jeremy Clarkson gasp. She has set up a committee to support the director in this role in the future and was responsible for initiating the highly successful 'top tips', available on the SfEP website. John Marsden is standing down from the role of technical director after four years on the council. We will miss John's technical expertise.

At last year's AGM, I announced that I would be standing down this year. I have, however, decided to stand for re-election. I am hoping that next year will be as enjoyable as the past one.

It only remains to say a big 'thank you' to my fellow volunteer directors and the people who support them for their time and commitment to the Society. It is a pleasure to work with them.

finance

report for the financial year ending 28 february 2010

gordon hooper

Once again, the financial statements show a healthy balance sheet. This is despite the very challenging economic environment that existed throughout the year.

The schedules on page 9 of the financial statements give details of the income and direct costs for the year, together with the administrative expenses. Although we show a breakdown of the income and expenditure for the different cost categories, 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 increased by 4.69% to £141,150, but the effects of the recession had an impact on our other income streams throughout the year. Income from training – for both members/associates and external clients – fell sharply, the 2009 conference made a smaller than usual surplus, and we also suffered a very large fall in investment income following the collapse in bank interest rates.

On the expenditure side, our salary-related expenses increased, reflecting our need to take on a temporary executive secretary to cover maternity leave. There were also increases in telephone and insurance costs. However, it should be noted that for the majority of our cost categories, expenditure actually fell – often significantly – as a result of prudent cost control.

As mentioned above, our income for the year was affected by the recession. However, the fall – of 5.11% compared to the previous year – was more than made up for by the reduction in expenditure of 6.49% compared to the previous year.

A review of the Society's banking arrangements was undertaken during the year, and new management accounts were introduced to provide the Council with more detailed oversight of the Society's finances. It was also decided that subscription renewal letters will no longer be issued in mid-January, but will instead be despatched at the end of February. This change will take place in February 2011 and is intended to improve our budgetary forecasting ability by ensuring that subscriptions are actually paid in the financial year in which they are due. Currently, a significant amount of subscription income is received before 1 March and this skews our budget forecasts and causes additional work for our accountants.

During the course of the year, the office IT equipment was upgraded, with two obsolete PCs being replaced. In addition, the Society's replacement database was ordered, although this substantial investment will not be reflected until next year's accounts as the initial payment was made after the end of the financial year. Further expenditure will be incurred in 2010/11 on the integration of the new database into the Society's website and the roll-out of a package of online membership services.

Given the current economic climate, we have had to make some difficult decisions. We decided not to increase hourly rates for subcontractors in 2010/11 (including directors' remuneration) for the second year running, and also decided not to increase our suggested minimum rates for a second successive year. In view of these decisions, we propose making no increases in individual or corporate subscriptions for 2011/12. We still expect to cover our costs by employing a mixture of cost control and new income generation activities. However, forgoing a subscription increase means that it is likely that we may have a reduced retained surplus in 2011/12, especially if our costs and/or inflation rates rise. Nevertheless, our accumulated reserves are healthy and will remain available to improve and develop the Society's work as required. Details of the proposed subscription freeze will be discussed and agreed at the AGM.

membership

sarah patey

On 12 July 2010 there were 1260 individuals in membership, categorized as follows:

<i>Membership category</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Advanced	255	260
Ordinary	369	366
Associate	652	634
<i>Total</i>	<i>1276</i>	<i>1260</i>

Given the current economic climate, numbers are holding up reasonably well. We are naturally losing members every year to retirement – and these are likely to be advanced members – so it is very pleasing to see that the number of advanced members is nevertheless growing.

A major part of the membership director's volunteer time for SfEP this year has been concerned with the procurement and installation of the new database. With the help of consultancy from an associate with previous specialist experience in IT procurement, the council selected the offer from Dataware, a highly specialised provider of databases for membership organisations. The core functions of their latest product were

customised for SfEP and installed in the office in early April. At the time of writing, Dataware are customising the online modules, which should smooth members' and associates' dealings with the Society.

There have been encouraging signs that SfEP is increasingly a reference point for editorial workers. The Society was approached by the Society of Young Publishers and by Bookcareers, which gives guidance to individuals wishing to return to the publishing industry after redundancy or a career break. Two directors attended the SYP conference, and one gave a talk to Bookcareers members.

The consultation document sent out in March was returned by 40 people – a disappointingly small sample, but responses were both helpful and informative. The consultation sought input from the membership on the future shape of the Society's relationship with corporate bodies. The vast majority of respondents were keen to continue and develop the relationship, and some very helpful comments and suggestions are being noted by the council, which will bring a recommendation on the issue to the AGM in Glasgow.

local groups and regional development

lawrence osborn

At present, we have 28 local groups covering most of Great Britain (including two in Scotland and three in Wales). Six of those groups are currently without a co-ordinator. A new group for the north-east of Scotland (centred on Dundee) is in the process of formation. For up-to-date information about local group events, see the monthly notice 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).

There has been no progress in the area of regional collaborations with other organisations in the past year.

I have recently sent a questionnaire to all overseas members and associates as a first step in determining how, if at all, the Society can improve the service it offers them.

professional development

wendy toole

The professional development board has continued to work towards producing a series of tests that will evaluate competence in basic skills and help members and associates to move up the membership levels. Our aim is to develop a full syllabus linking these tests with training, mentoring and accreditation.

Interest in our initiative with the City & Guilds Institute has continued, with another Licentiatehip being awarded this year and several advanced members working towards the qualification.

Last year was the third and final year in which we received funds from the Sue Thompson Foundation to help with the cost of additional training for associates who are close to being ready to upgrade. In 2009 six grants were awarded, and we can continue to offer grants to eligible associates until the full funding is disbursed. (Details of how to apply for grants are on the SfEP website.)

During the year a number of members of the admissions panel stood down and we thank them for

their diligence and dedication over the years. New members were appointed and are carrying on the good work. In the year to February 2010, 42 people were awarded a membership upgrade. To help people with upgrading, the admissions panel have recently added an in-depth Q&A document to the website that answers many of the questions that have been asked in the past about eligibility and procedure.

mentoring and accreditation

gerard hill

Mentored proofreading or copy-editing is a way to gain experience of real jobs, while making your mistakes in private with one-to-one guidance and feedback. It is flexible and personal for both sides. Over the past year we have mentored 23 people as proofreaders and 3 as copy-editors. We are always pleased to hear from potential mentors among our advanced members.

During the year 10 people took the accreditation test; three papers are still with an examiner at the time of writing. Of the rest, it is notable that both the people who passed had taken the course Proofreading for Accreditation, but only one person among the other five had done so. There has been no change in the test papers or examiners, and the standard of the test and the pass rate have remained consistent. We have concluded that candidates consistently underestimate the standard required or overestimate their own expertise.

The first proofreading self-tests for the website have been prepared. It has taken longer than we expected to identify and adapt suitable online software, but the first test should go on line soon.

training

wendy toole

In addition to the workshops and seminars available at conference, SfEP offers a full programme of training courses throughout the year. Although most take place in London, courses are also run in other parts of the UK, according to demand.

To ensure that our training programme meets the membership's current needs, we have been developing some new courses. We will be launching 'Introduction to web editorial skills' in autumn 2010 and we expect to offer a new maths editing course early in 2011. We also have further courses under discussion in onscreen editing and retrieving information from the web.

There have been no price increases for our scheduled training courses this year, and in some cases grants to help with costs are available for associates who are close to upgrading.

In-house training is now being very ably promoted by Lillian Avon, and so far this year we have run courses for Kyp Plc and the Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman. Courses are also scheduled for the House of Commons, Lhasa Ltd, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Wales Audit Office.

conferences

lotika singha

The 20th Annual SfEP Conference was held at Vanbrugh College, University of York, 13–15

September 2009. The conference organising committee comprised the conference director (Lotika Singha), the executive secretary (Justina Amenu) and two members (David Penfold and Elaine Pollard). The theme of the conference was 'Editing in the 21st Century', with a good mix of onscreen and paper workshops.

A total of 109 delegates attended the conference, so the numbers were down (138 at Oxford) even though we did not raise the conference fees. We believe the prevailing uncertainty in the economy might have had some impact. This is also reflected in the fact that many more people booked early to take advantage of the early bird discount than in the last couple of years. Another reason may be that we did not have any workshops that particularly focused on proofreading. (However, we will be having two in Glasgow.) The proportion of delegates who were attending conference for the first time was about the same as in previous years (around a quarter) and there were 11 corporate delegates.

One of the key features of the conference is to provide networking opportunities for editorial freelancers. The pre-conference tour of York included about 30 people. Considering the number of people who, in previous years, had said they wanted such an event, the turnout was surprisingly low. However, it was rated a success by those who took part, and everyone enjoyed the accompanying 'treasure hunt'. The ice-breaker quiz on the first night did exactly that, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all and felt to be an excellent way for delegates to introduce themselves to each other. We will do this again. The following two comments sum up the networking aspect of the conference rather well:

- 'v. useful – individual contact and ideas for using SfEP more to recruit further copy-editors' (in-house delegate)
- 'As a prospective freelancer it was invaluable in providing the opportunity to speak to other established freelancers from several walks of life, with expertise in a variety of specialist subjects. I also met corporate SfEP members and was fortunate enough to speak with Judith Butcher herself. I also made contact with a publisher who was recruiting – marvellous' (first-time delegate)

The Whitcombe Lecture was delivered by Richard Smith, editor of *Cases Journal*, and former editor of the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*. Richard spoke about the relevance of paper journals in the electronic age and his lecture was both thought-provoking, inspiring plenty of post-lecture conversation, and entertaining. Another very entertaining keynote lecture was given by David Crystal.

Of the feedback forms received, 97% indicated that the programme was well balanced. Ten of the 12 workshops were new ones. Some generated more interest than others, but there was more in terms of feedback (and mostly good) from those that were attended by fewer people, which means that practically all these workshops could be repeated. The workshops' length was increased this year, but there seemed to be as many complaints about this as there have been about 'not enough time' in the past. But mostly people liked the new programme times, including the extended coffee breaks, as there was plenty of time to network and relax between sessions. There were three seminars, of which one was rated poorly (InDesign for

editors). It was felt that the speaker did not comply with the brief.

We also introduced a new style of surgery this year: the 'something for everyone' sessions. These were six sessions that ran concurrently for 45 minutes each and then were repeated for another 45 minutes so that delegates could attend two of them. The sessions were very successful and seemed to be a good way to test out topics for future workshops/seminars, and also for potential workshop leaders to gain confidence.

The SfEP Linnets gave an excellent performance (as usual) just before the banquet, which was in the form of a 'Rhyme and Dine' evening and included an extra course: a piece of SfEP's 21st birthday cake.

The venue itself had more plus than minus points, and the staff were extremely helpful. Again, feedback was mostly positive, with many more people happy with the accommodation and food than those who were not. There were a few IT problems but these were resolved fairly quickly by the conference IT staff.

So on the whole the conference was a success and we therefore recommend the University of York as one of the fixed venues for future conferences.

internet

nancy duin

The most significant factor of the past year was that John Marsden was unable to continue in the post. of webspinner This meant that, in addition to planning and editing the site, I was also forced to take on the technical webspinning role (physically adding to and updating the content of the site). This involved a steep learning curve for me and resulted in delays in much-needed updates of and innovation to the website. However, after an unavoidable hiatus, I now have a webspinner 'team' in place, comprising John Esperian, Gordon Hooper and Geoffrey Kembell-Cook. Under John Esperian's management, they are already taking on a number of regular tasks that had languished undone, and we are working together to plan for the future.

One new addition to the website that has gone ahead is a 'mini-site' owned by the Southampton Group – the first group site since Glasgow's. I would encourage other local groups to consider doing this and will be happy to guide them through what they need to provide in terms of copy.

A number of soundings were taken from the membership during the year, to decide whether certain changes should be made. These straw polls resulted in the Society continuing to allow both corporate associates and retired members access to SfEPLine and permitting corporates to have access to the SfEPWiki.

The biggest digital change that has occurred during the past year, not just to the website but to the Society as a whole, is the recent installation of a new database. While this is currently being used by the office only, it will eventually have a profound effect on the website, permitting the membership to update their directory and Associates Available entries, book courses and conference places, and much more – all online for the first time. The webspinner team and I are currently liaising closely with membership director Sarah Patey and associate Paul Icke (who has been leading our dealings with the database provider) to alter forms and

other aspects of the website so that they will work with the new database.

Further plans for the website include moving the SfEPWiki inside the website (it is presently reached via an external link) and creating a forum/email mix for SfEPLine. Both these projects, long in the offing, will be led by John Esperian and will, we hope, be completed as a matter of urgency.

The website does bring in some money to the Society. In the last financial year, we earned £670 from Amazon, from the membership ordering books and other things from that firm by clicking on the link on our website's home page. (The other link, for Viking, didn't attract any sales for some reason, although they are beginning to come through again now.) This more than pays for the £98 we spent last year on Google AdWords, which help to drive traffic to our directory.

I offer my thanks: the new webspinner team; Rod Cuff, manager of the SfEP directory; Gareth Haman, SfEPLine moderator, Chuck Brandstater, deputy SfEPLine moderator; Matthew Strawbridge, 'founder' of the SfEPWiki, who has now left the Society; and Justina Amenu (and her temporary replacement as executive secretary, Lillian Avon), Helen Martin and Bridget Buckle, all working hard in the office. And I would particularly like to thank – officially – our former webspinner John Marsden, who worked long and hard for the Society for quite a few years and without whose help the website would not be what it is today.

rod cuff, directory manager

In early June 2010, our online directory of members' services contained 473 entries (against 442 in mid-July 2009), with an average of 140–150 searches per working day in recent months, much as last year. During this period there have been 35 new entries, and around 200 existing entries have been updated, many of them several times. These figures, too, are much as last year.

More members have taken advantage of the freedom to list skills, subjects and clients in an order and quantity that advertises themselves most effectively, or have formatted their free text in several paragraphs and/or using bulleted lists. So I 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@ssep.org.uk. However, it is hoped that this process will change in the near future and instead you'll be updating your own entry online through the new database.

It's been a continuing pleasure to work with Helen Martin, who helps as ever to make the annual renewal process go smoothly.

gareth haman, SfEPLine moderator

SfEPLine currently has 747 subscribers, up from 682 last year. As last year, only a small percentage of new members become contributors and a smaller number still become regular contributors.

It should be noted, however, that a number of these apparent subscribers will be dead accounts/duplicate accounts/accounts not choosing to receive messages. Users frequently create new accounts when, for example, going away on holiday rather than handling their existing accounts properly, or simply block SfEPLine rather than logging in and stopping messages

or asking to unsubscribe. This, and the new policy of allowing retired members to access SfEPLine, has meant it is more or less impossible for me to know whom to delete from the expired membership list without emailing every name on the list individually to check. The membership database could therefore do with a considerable overhaul, but if a move to a forum is imminent, I suspect this would be a wasted endeavour.

The average daily number of posts is currently around 25 on a weekday, up on last year.

The <trivia> tagging system is still in use, though users must now set up their own email filter tags for it to function. Chuck Brandstater remains in post as deputy moderator.

marketing and pr

katharine timberlake

In November 2009, the Society celebrated its 21st birthday. The occasion was marked by the release of 21 top tips from the freelance perspective on how best to make the most of a copy-editor or proofreader. The tips were refined from the membership's suggestions and cover everything from planning the freelance's tasks to receiving the finished edit. The tips have proved very popular – many members visited the tips' web page on the day they were Announced – and we were also able to have them published in the December edition of *Writers' News*. Because many of our members are project managers or managing editors, I collected suggestions from their perspective in May and by the time of the 2010 AGM, we will have the matching set of tips for freelances to use.

There are not many submissions for the Why Edit? project, which started last year to illustrate the benefits of editing in a positive way. The idea is that gradually we will create a bank of examples to publicise the benefits of editing and also to publicise the Society itself. Rome was not built in a day but it was built with a consistent application of mind and, in the same way, if we can all put down our experiences for posterity, we will have something constructive to publicise. I urge anyone who comes across a tricky edit in the course of their work to contact the Why Edit? team.

The list of external contacts was made ready to import into the new membership database in April. Having external contacts lie alongside members' records will streamline and track the conversion of contacts to members. A set of six completely new A5 marketing leaflets will be ready for use by the time of the 2010 AGM. They are to form the basis of a new enquirers' information pack and can also be displayed at trade fairs. Both of these resources will help in any new marketing campaign.

I am standing down at the 2010 AGM. I've enjoyed my time as director and I wish I could continue but I am anticipating other demands on my time in the coming year. The work I've done has been mostly laying foundations for marketing campaigns – the external contacts, the marketing leaflets and the subcommittee of volunteer editors and proofreaders – but I'm proud to have created a couple of great resources – the two sets of tips and the Why Edit? project – that can publicise both the profession's and the Society's points of view. The next marketing and PR director is well resourced to implement the marketing campaign of their choosing.

publications

gillian clarke

This last year has seen a change of editor of *Editing Matters*. Christina Thomas stood down after ten years of excellent work and Hazel Reid has taken up the baton very successfully. The rest of the staff team – Rich Cutler as copy-editor, designer and typesetter, and Rod Cuff as proofreader – remains unchanged. We are very grateful to the contributors – both regular and occasional – who help make the magazine entertaining as well as informative.

The most recent SfEP Guide, *Your House Style*, has been very well received both in and outside the Society. All the Guides continue to sell, proving their worth to the membership at large. A new Guide, *Theses and Dissertations* by Pat Baxter, is to be published in time for the 2010 conference. Copies will be on sale at the conference.

The SfEP guidance on contracts and terms & conditions for sole traders has proved invaluable (it is on our website with the code of practice). Similar guidance for people working as limited companies is in preparation, and it is hoped will be available by the conference. We are very grateful to Joanna Chisholm and her specialist team of Julian Roskams and Jeremy Toynbee for their hard work on this project, which, as with the sole trader guidance, has been looked at by FirstAssist.

The code of practice now has a title – *Ensuring Editorial Excellence* (submitted by Sarah Carr) – and is due for revision. It underwent some minor revision last year but will be looked at in detail by a team headed by Michèle Clarke to ensure that it is totally up to date.