

Please note that while our accounts cover the financial year from 1 March 2014 to 28 February 2015, this report also covers the activities of the council and the Society from 1 March 2015 to 1 July 2015, the date of writing.

## Report from the chair

**Sara Peacock**

A lot has happened since I sat down to write my section of the annual report last year, as you will see when you read the rest of this report. I was very pleased and relieved when the motion to introduce the new membership levels was passed with such a high level of support from the membership at the 2014 AGM. The job for this year then became to implement this new structure, and this has proved to be an enormous task, not helped by the problems our website experienced in March – which could not have come at a worse time. At time of writing, in July, we are beginning to see things quieten down on the administrative front although there is still much to do. I am enormously grateful to all the key people who have gone ‘above and beyond’ over the last few months, including our internet director, membership director, professional development director and Admissions Panel, and of course our amazing office staff. I am also very grateful to the members who were so patient with us all when trying to renew or upgrade their membership.

My own major task this year, which pales by comparison, has been to represent the society at an international conference in Toronto (a full report of which will be published in *Editing Matters* after the AGM). This initiative by the Editors’ Association of Canada has laid the basis for an international network of editing organisations in which I hope the SfEP will play an important part.

Last year, I mentioned that the council had begun work on a new strategy for the Society, and unfortunately this had to take a bit of a back seat while we all focused on the membership changes. But we have recently been able to attend to this task again, and we are optimistic that we will be able to share our thoughts with the membership in the autumn.

As this is my last report as chair, I first of all want to thank all the people who work so hard to keep the Society moving forward: our wonderful administrative staff, all the volunteers who work behind the scenes, and the directors, who form an excellent team – I have enjoyed working with them very much. I must thank Sabine Citron particularly, for providing me with such wonderful support as vice-chair; if it weren’t for her, a lot of things would not have got done. I am confident that the Society will be in excellent hands when she takes on the chair’s role.

Although this year has been one of upheaval, I do think the society is in excellent shape, and I hope its current growth and the increasing professionalism of its members will continue. There will be challenges in the future, as continued growth will only increase the

pressure on our administrative structures. Personally, I would like to see more use of outside professional assistance where it can be of use to us – for example in marketing our classroom courses and/or the SfEP Directory. But most of all I want to see the Society continuing to do what it does so brilliantly, which is being a strong community that enables members to support each other and promotes professional standards.

Finally, I thank the Society for having given me the opportunity to be its chair; it has been an immensely valuable experience.

## Vice-chair

**Sabine Citron**

This has been a memorable year for the SfEP. Most of the changes to the Society’s membership structure were adopted at last year’s AGM. As you know, these were intended to make the Society a more professional body. The new structure benefited from extensive feedback from our members up until the last minute, thanks to the forum dedicated to this topic and, of course, to further discussion at the AGM. Since then, the council has spent much of its energy in implementing the new structure at a more practical level, behind the scenes, and this has also resulted in a considerable amount of additional work for our dedicated team at the office in Putney: the wonderful Helen Martin, Bridget Buckle and Josie Davies, not to mention Hannah Moroney (see below). The technical problems we experienced just at the time of the renewals came at the worst possible moment, so this year we are even more indebted than usual to the Putney team for bearing with us without cracking up or giving up.

As vice-chair, I took part both in this year’s staff appraisals and in the interview that led to the appointment of our new office administrator, Hannah Moroney, who has since hit the ground running and has proved to be a valuable addition to the team.

This was also a year of foreign invitations for both Sara Peacock and me. I represented the SfEP at this year’s UniCo conference in Madrid. UniCo stands for Unión de Correctores and is our sister organisation in Spain, with many members in Latin America too. There, I took part in a very enlightening and often depressing round table on conditions for editorial staff in different parts of Europe (more details can be found in the report I wrote for *Editing Matters*). We all agreed that we would keep in touch and try to meet again because, in the same way that many of us enjoy the interaction offered by the forums and other social media, editorial societies can benefit from the experience of others, and there is undoubtedly strength in numbers.

The vice-chair’s first job is to support the chair and the whole of the council. It has been an easy task in the sense that all the directors are a joy to work with, and there is a genuine team spirit among us. We are all very sad that Sara has decided to leave the council. She will be a very hard act to follow as she knows the SfEP so

well and has played a key role in making sure that the new membership structure corresponds to the real needs of its members, always listening to other people's views before making up her mind. I feel very humble as I am going to attempt the very difficult task of following in her footsteps, if the members trust me to do this, but I know that I will continue to be part of a team of dedicated and motivated directors.

## Membership

### John Firth

During this year a long-running project came to fruition: the work of the Futures Group to develop a new membership structure for the Society. After consultation via a dedicated forum, acceptance in outline at September's annual general meeting (AGM), and further consultation (via a survey of Associates in the autumn and the annual membership survey in December 2014), the structure was presented to members on 20 January 2015 and accepted by an online extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in early February. It came into force on 1 March 2015.

The launch was nearly derailed by the February/March 2015 failure of our online systems (see internet report) and by the lack of clarity of the software our database supplier provided. This generated a huge amount of work for our office staff; thankfully, Hannah Moroney joined during this period. Many members intending to upgrade omitted to renew their membership and 'renewals' are still coming in. It appears that membership fell from 1,717 to 1,547, but recruitment continues to be encouraging:

Grade	At renewal 2014	New grade	At renewal 2015	At 2 July 2015
–	–	Retired	24	24
Advanced	295	Advanced Professional	297	314
Ordinary	370	Professional	403	456
Associate	1,052	Intermediate	–	93
		Entry-Level	809	857
–	–	Friend	14	16
<i>Total</i>	1,717		1,547	1,760

Including successful accreditations (see professional development report) 15 subscribers upgraded to Advanced membership, and 48 to Ordinary membership, during 2014/15, more than one-and-a-half times as many as in the previous year. Nearly 13 per cent of those renewing at or after 1 March applied to upgrade, and more than two-thirds of those applications were successfully processed by the Admissions Panel within the first four months of 2015/16. It is also encouraging to see how many people continue to join the Society, and significant numbers are now coming in at grades above Entry-Level.

The Judith Butcher Award for 2014 was given to Averill Buchanan, for raising the profile of the SfEP and the editorial profession, both in Northern Ireland and around

the world. The SfEP has benefited greatly from Averill's forward-looking approach and her calm, thoughtful attitude.

As usual, in November 2014 and May 2015 we carried out surveys of the whole membership, and of subscribers who had decided not to renew. Both surveys provided considerable information to help the council's work: on whether Corporate Subscribers should be given access to the forum, on future development of training courses and plans for future conferences, on names that had been suggested by members for the new membership grades (building on the October survey of Associates) and on what subscribers see as good and bad in the SfEP and how it is run. The council is grateful to everyone who took the time to respond.

The Futures Group (Rod Cuff, Michèle Clarke and Ruth Durbridge) helped considerably to refine the details of the new membership structure and to plan its launch. I should like to thank the group for these major efforts, and in particular for its proactive role on the dedicated forum set up to consult with the membership. I should also like to thank the many members who took the time and trouble to join the forum and share their thoughts, and thus made a major contribution to many aspects of the final structure.

## Professional development

### Jane Moody

I took over as professional development director at the AGM last year, in the midst of the great changeover in the membership system, which was something of a baptism of fire. However, Liz Jones, who moved to be marketing director, was on hand to advise me, for which I am very grateful.

In the year from March 2013 to February 2014 there were 63 upgrade applications, resulting in 48 new Ordinary Members and 15 new Advanced Members. Looking forward to 2014/15, it is already evident that the new online systems and upgrade processes are having a beneficial effect and that members are finding it significantly easier to upgrade using the new online form.

The Admissions Panel has been working hard to ensure that all applications are dealt with fairly and efficiently. Panel members are unsung heroes of our Society. Their diligence and dedication to their task, and the care that they put into each and every form they receive, has been a revelation to me. I hope that they will accept my and the council's thanks for their efforts, which are, of course, carried out alongside their main freelance editorial work.

Six people sat the accreditation in proofreading test in the period March 2013 to February 2014. Unfortunately, all six candidates failed this demanding test.

The importance of continuing professional development cannot be overestimated but it can be hard for more experienced editors to find learning opportunities at a suitable level to meet their needs. The SfEP is continually striving to meet this challenge. Before she handed over to me, Liz organised and ran a very

successful professional development event for editors working in medical publishing, which was held at the Ashmolean in Oxford on 7 April 2014. The day allowed plenty of time to network with colleagues and potential clients while offering experienced editors an excellent opportunity to pursue CPD relevant to their chosen specialism. I hope to follow Liz's example with a day for fiction editors in 2016.

## Mentoring and tests

### Gerard Hill

#### Mentoring

Online booking has been a success. Whereas last year we had one new mentor and 29 new mentees, this year another four mentors started work and 55 people became mentees in either proofreading or copy-editing. We also now offer mentoring in biomedical journal copy-editing.

#### Standards

ISO 5776 Graphic Technology: text proof correction marks, the new international standard based closely on BS 5261, is being finalised as this is being written. David Penfold represents SfEP on the ISO committee; Gillian Clarke and Gerard Hill were also consulted. SfEP's new editorial syllabus is now a standard by which members can judge their skills and knowledge of British editorial practice.

#### Tests

The basic editorial test has been welcomed by those members seeking to upgrade who were previously held back by their non-publisher experience. Despite the high standard, the pass rate so far is 56%. An advanced test is under development. The accreditation test is no longer a good fit with our membership structure or current practice and is being withdrawn from 30 November 2015.

#### Complaints

The complaints and appeals procedures have been updated to match the new membership structure. The panel dealt with two complaints in 2014/15, one of which was very serious. A member claimed a relevant qualification that they did not have and produced work that was so substandard as to be completely unacceptable; this was aggravated by a patronising attitude to the client and other circumstances. The member was expelled and did not appeal.

## Finance

### Report for the financial year ending 28 February 2015

Paul Churchouse

I took over this role at last year's AGM as there was a post to be filled following an earlier departure. I have had much assistance from Bridget Buckle, our company secretary, who helps run the financial side of things and makes sure that the directors submit relevant paperwork

at the correct time. Warrener Stewart, chartered accountants, have once again prepared the annual accounts.

I am pleased to report that the figures for the year ending 28 February 2015 continue to show a healthy balance sheet. The surplus for the year was £124,443 – up 89% from last year (see page 3 of the accounts). You will find more details on income and direct costs for the year, as well as administrative expenses, on page 10.

The 26% increase in net income was largely due to the success of our training courses – notably the online courses – and increased membership numbers. Training made a surplus of £93,725 (up 83%) whilst a further increase in membership numbers raised an additional £39,275, an increase of 19%.

This overall increase in income was only made possible through investment in new courses and through the hard work of many people. Wages and salaries decreased last year as there was one fewer member of staff but a new recruit was appointed to work in the office this year so this figure will rise again. Directors' fees rose by 87% to £39,376, reflecting the fact that we once again have a full complement of directors working hard on your behalf. They contributed over £50,000 worth in voluntary work over the financial year as the first 15 hours of each month for each director are unpaid.

Administrative expenses rose by just £9,932 (5%), partly due to decreased need for investment but also as a result of careful management of resources and the many hours given generously by our large team of volunteers. Apart from the directors, amongst others there is the conference committee, those who contribute to *Editing Matters*, the forum moderators, the social media team members, the local group coordinators, other local helpers and many volunteer proofreaders.

Overall the Society is in a healthy financial position at present but, as it continues to grow, more investment will be required to sustain this growth to ensure that the Society continues to meet the needs of its membership and the industry.

## Training

Stephen Cashmore

Online courses have continued to be popular during the financial year 2014/15, as shown by the following table.

	Registered 2014/15	Registered after 28 Feb 2015
Proofreading 1: Introduction	599	156
Proofreading 2: Progress	132	32
Copy-Editing 1: Introduction	112	40
Copy-Editing 2: Progress	49	8
Brush Up Your Grammar	81	19
Introduction to Fiction Editing	0	6

The surpluses of the three types of training (online, in-house and classroom) for 2014/15 were:

	Surplus (£)
In-house training courses	5,718
Classroom-based courses	5,022
Online courses	82,985

The popularity of online courses has meant that the surplus they generate has continued to grow. Some of this surplus will be invested into creating more courses: several are planned for later in 2015/16 and into the start of 2016/17.

The surplus for in-house courses is also higher than it was for last year (increased by about 50%). During the financial year the office staff were unable to spend time on proactively looking for in-house courses, and the fact that we have seen an increase is because other organisations have seen fit to come to us (perhaps a knock-on effect of our increasing social media presence).

The surplus for classroom courses has dropped considerably (by about 70%). The office staff were unable to spend as much time as they would have liked on setting up classroom courses, mainly because of the big changes to the upgrade system and membership structure, but it is clear that there is anyway a general trend downwards in the uptake of classroom courses. The total number run during 2014/15 was 28, only about half of the previous year, with 189 delegates attending. To a large extent this will be because the online courses are now seen as 'the way to go' by those who want to take a course. However, that cannot be the only reason, because even courses that have no online equivalent are finding it very difficult to recruit enough delegates to make them viable, and many have had to be cancelled. It may be that in today's internet age, more and more people turn to working and learning online, to the detriment of classroom delivery. We will continue to try to promote classroom courses, and will deliver them for as long as demand continues.

Current work in training involves upgrading some of the existing courses, bringing all courses into full SfEP ownership, and creating more courses to build on the sound platform of the entry-level courses already in place.

## Internet

### John Espirian

#### Web-hosting issues

In February 2015, we learned that our web-hosting provider had been bought out. Having been informed that normal service would continue as usual, we soon realised that this was not the case. Technical problems with the service meant that all of our online services, including the website and forums, were unavailable during late February and early March. This came at the worst possible time and delayed membership renewals and conference booking.

We were not adequately prepared to handle these server issues, but as soon as we had completed work on resuming online services, we decided to invest in a private web server that would protect us against this sort of failure. On 9 June 2015 we completed the first part of the upgrade by successfully moving SfEP forums to the new private server. The blog and wiki followed suit on 22 June 2015.

#### Website development

Over the past year and a half, my webspinners and I have been working on a new version of the SfEP website. The new site will use a Content Management System (CMS) that will make it easy for us to allow content authors to control their own parts of the site.

Progress with developing the CMS has been slower than we would have hoped, but we will be in a position to release by November 2015 at the very latest.

#### Webspinners

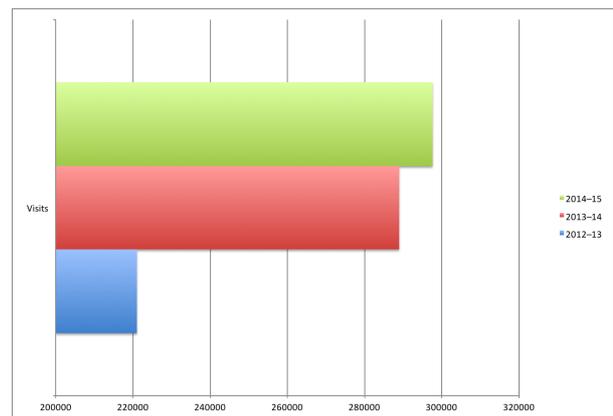
With a lot of extra web-related work likely to be necessary as we make final preparations for the move to the new website, we have decided to take on two new webspinners, which swells our ranks to five webspinners plus the internet director. The new additions are Martin Payne and Merle Read, and we are sure they will fit in well.

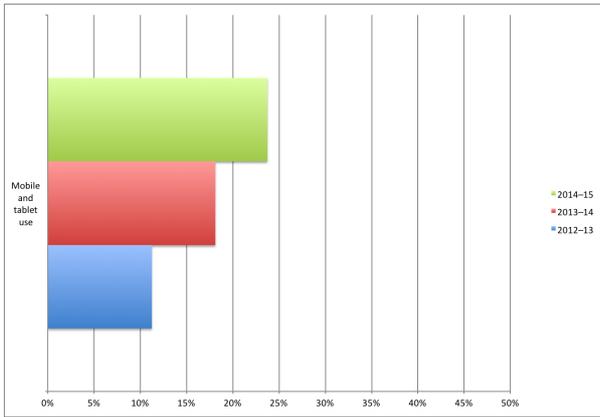
#### Website statistics

In the year 5 June 2014 to 5 June 2015, the SfEP website saw 178,040 unique visitors and 297,677 visits in total (up from 169,666 and 288,904, respectively, for the same period 2013 to 2014). During this time there have been 762,992 unique page views (up from 759,090 for the same period 2013 to 2014).

Visitors viewed an average of 3.26 pages per visit and stayed for an average of 3.23 minutes. UK visitors accounted for 67.9% of traffic, with US visitors second at 11.4%.

Visits from people using tablets and mobiles accounted for 23.7% of all visits, up from 18.1% for the same period 2013 to 2014.





## SfEP forums

Access to SfEP forums continues to be one of the key benefits of membership, and usage of the service demonstrates a good level of user engagement.

These SfEP forums usage figures were collected on 15 June 2015:

Total topics/threads	8,961
Total posts	72,645
Total users	1,652
Active users*	432
No. users with at least 1 post	805
No. users with at least 50 posts	168

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

In April 2015 we decommissioned the mailing lists previously associated with SfEP forums, reducing the administrative load on the internet director and the forum moderators. We have replaced the mailing lists with an alternative email-notification system, and have moved SfEP forums to a new private server (see above) that has significantly boosted the performance of the service.

## Directory manager Nancy Duin

This year (2014/15) the directory started the year with 491 entries and ended it with 484. Of this number, 229 entries were taken by what are now known as Advanced Professional members and 255 by Professional Members. There was a total of 61 new entries, compared to 63 last year: 49 from Professional Members and 12 from Advanced Members. This shows a surprising lack of expansion in the take-up of directory entries, especially now that they are free and now that the membership has grown quite a lot. It may well be that the new membership structure and the significant changes to the upgrade process will result in gradual rather than immediate progress of members into Professional and Advanced Professional status. Perhaps also the drastic changes at the less qualified end of the membership categories have had an impact, and it could be that, once the dust has settled, more members will decide to take entries.

The average number of searches carried out daily by potential clients has also flat-lined. In 2013/14, an

average of 101 searches were done every day; in 2014/15, this figure was 100. More and better marketing of the directory may well increase client interest. This is something the council will try to prioritise next year, now that the new structure is embedded and many technical problems have been resolved.

Directory self-management – when entrants will be able to manage their own entries – should be up and running by the end of the year.

I have received many votes of thanks from entrants who have received work from the directory, and I, too, have come to rely on it for much of my own income. So those clients that use it tend to give work to our members. If you're a PM or an APM, do take out an entry – it's easy and free and I'm happy to help in any way.

## Publications Steve Hammatt

This year has been one of change for publications in some ways, since I took over from Gillian Clarke shortly after the 2014 conference. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Gillian for her wonderful work as my predecessor, and my task has been made a lot easier by the fact that she continued to work on several publications projects after stepping down, greatly easing the amount of work that I had to initially take on. I am very grateful for her help with this and for making the handover so straightforward.

Our *Editing Matters* e-magazine continues to go from strength to strength under the leadership of its hard-working editor, Hazel Reid. She always manages to ensure a series of interesting articles in each issue. Hazel has the assistance of Rich Cutler, Rod Cuff and Peter Millward, and I am grateful to all of them for the high quality of work that they do, and also to those who submit articles for the magazine. However, we do need your help to maintain the excellent content of *Editing Matters*, so please continue to send your articles to Hazel at [em@sfep.org.uk](mailto:em@sfep.org.uk). Although we need articles for the blog too, I see these two SfEP communication outlets as complementing each other rather than competing, for instance due to the varying audiences and the different sizes of the articles that suit the respective media.

The last year has seen an updated edition of a fully revised and updated edition of Anne Waddingham's *Editor and Client* guide. This and contains a host of information about how to work professionally with clients, building a two-way relationship based on trust and respect. The whole range of SfEP guides continues to do well, with *Pricing a Project* by Melanie Thompson seeming to be a particular favourite with newcomers as well as the more experienced.

This year we started to offer the guides as downloadable PDFs via the SfEP online shop. This has proved popular from the outset, with many members finding the

advantages of PDFs (e.g. easily searchable, convenient to carry around on a phone or tablet), as well as their reduced price compared to the print versions, quite compelling.

Another project that I have taken on is the implementation of a new system for sending Announce emails to the membership. This is outside the normal remit of publications, but because of my IT background it was something that I was asked to help with by our internet director, who I was only too glad to help given his very demanding workload. This new system ended up being pressed into action at very short notice when a web hosting meltdown occurred at membership renewal time. It saved the Society a considerable amount of money in terms of postage costs that would otherwise have had to be incurred in sending out renewals manually. It also gives a clearer, more consistent look to our membership communications and provides us with opportunities for improving the engagement of the membership with these emails in the future.

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## Marketing and PR

### Liz Jones

I took over the Marketing and PR role in September last year, having previously served 18 months as professional development director. Before that the post had been vacant for six months, following on from a period of fairly rapid change in terms of MPR directors and other development staff. Directors had been looking after marketing activities relating to their own departments where possible, but the situation was far from ideal.

I have therefore found that this has been a year of picking up various threads and maintaining or reviving established systems and processes. The MPR role encompasses many areas, and relates to communication within the Society as well as providing an interface with the outside world. One of the first things I did once in the post was produce a marketing plan. Some of the areas I looked at I have been able to make progress with, while others will require a longer-term approach and – perhaps – external specialist assistance.

Social media is a well-established success story for the Society. We have a large following on Facebook (12,827 at the time of writing), as well as a healthy following on Twitter (4,722) and LinkedIn (2,702). The social media team – made up of ten volunteers – continue to do a fantastic job of keeping the content we share fresh and interesting, and work together to ensure that posts go out regularly, and that queries and comments are responded to in a timely fashion. This considerable social media reach also gives us channels to publicise our own content, training courses and events such as the conference. Until the end of March 2015 we had a Social Media Manager, Joanna Bowery, who oversaw the social media team. Since Joanna left I have been covering the social media coordination as part of my MPR duties, but this is an interim solution.

The blog, which began in May 2014, has been steadily increasing output and readership. I believe the blog offers us another platform to connect with the outside world as well as our members, allowing us to share information, advice, news and examples of what we do, and what we can offer professionally – as a Society and as individuals.

Members have benefited from some reciprocal arrangements and discounts on events, such as events arranged by the Society of Authors and Bloomsbury Book Club. I have also followed up on and implemented several reciprocal advertising deals with sister societies. In January we sponsored the Inpress Festival of Publishing, which some SfEP members attended.

In the MPR role there is always a certain amount of general maintenance of promotional materials. I have provided new flyers and promotional materials as required throughout the year, arranged to have them distributed at various key events, and hope to build up a more coherent set that can be used in a range of situations in future. For example, I have recently produced some flyers (explaining the benefits of using a professional editor) that members attending literary festivals can request and distribute.

Looking to the future, I believe more support is needed, in terms of both manpower and specific marketing expertise. Exactly what form this support takes needs to be decided as part of larger strategy discussions that are already taking place. Before I step down I aim to leave behind as much useful information as I can to support future planning and decisions, enabling the MPR department to function efficiently to support the strategic aims of the Society, and publicise them as widely as possible.

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## Local groups and regional development

### Lucy Metzger

First, my gratitude to our local group coordinators (LGCs) for their good work in organising meetings, welcoming old friends and newcomers, staying in touch, and collecting and conceiving good ideas for topics and activities. Hundreds of SfEP members benefit from their efforts.

Since my last report, the Edinburgh group has been revived; they began meetings in October 2014 and are going strong. A new Mid-Somerset group, also established in October, is thriving. Efforts to reinvent an Essex and/or Suffolk group, however, have yet to bear fruit. The group formerly known as South Hants is now Wessex. SfEP members in Germany (where we have 12 members), Hong Kong (4) and South Africa (9) have expressed interest in meeting up (sadly not all together ... but see next paragraph).

Another new development is the Skype Club: virtual get-togethers of SfEP members from (so far) Australia, Canada, France, Jamaica, New Zealand, Switzerland, the USA and Zambia as well as the UK. Because participants are located in different time zones, meetings are twinned; each pair has one morning and one

evening meeting on the same discussion topic. Meetings are scheduled throughout 2015.

In June 2014, the North East Scotland and Glasgow local groups held a one-day mini-conference. Two SfEP training points were awarded to each of the 50 attendees. The organisers have put together guidelines for running a mini-conference, which are available from the regional development director.

Communication has been a hot topic recently, with LGCs using their initiative to organise and publicise activities notwithstanding technological hitches. The LGCs have been providing content for the local group pages on the new website. The site will also have regional pages to showcase all the SfEP's activities in every region of the UK and internationally.

Here are some of the things that have busied SfEP local groups in the last twelve months:

- Visits to local businesses – a typesetting company, a printing workshop, a publishing company for a discussion of workflow and the contributions of freelancers;
- Tours of libraries and museums – the British Library (and Magna Carta exhibition), the Ashmolean in Oxford, and the Devon and Exeter Institution;
- Meetings in out-of-the-ordinary venues – the Cheltenham Literary Festival, the Ledbury Poetry Festival, a park for a family-friendly get-together, and along a river for a walk and talk;
- Workshops and presentations – on finance and tax, CVs, ergonomics, marketing and business branding, illustrations, PDF stamps, macros, Word styles, social media, ebooks, *Hart's* and other style guides, ReferenceChecker, setting up a website, and editing and proofreading dissertations;
- Last but not least, in fact perhaps most important of all: a good old chat with like-minded people.

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## Conference

### Christine Vaughan

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The 25th SfEP annual conference was held at Royal Holloway, Egham, on 13–15 September 2014. It was attended by 135 delegates and was very well received, with delegates rating it 'very good' overall (average score of 4.8 out of 5). A number of delegates commented that the programme was particularly good; several mentioned how friendly their fellow delegates were, so that first-timers felt welcome and networking was a pleasure. Feedback also revealed that the conference team's (in particular Maggie Donovan's) efforts to improve the pre-conference information, following negative comments previously, had been successful, with delegates giving the various elements average ratings of 4.7 or 4.8 out of 5. There was inevitably some negative feedback and complaints, mostly relating to the venue and exhibitors' fair. All comments were noted and will be addressed as far as possible. Our aim was to break even, and we came very close indeed, with a shortfall of £327.

At a meeting at the conference, the council voted to hold the 2016 conference at Birmingham Aston.

Plans for the 1st SfEP/SI joint conference in 2015, begun in October 2013, also continued during the financial year 2014 to 2015. By the end of March we had signed a contract describing our joint responsibilities and setting out how the costs, income, payments, and accounting would be managed. We also jointly signed a contract with the venue, the University of York. Preparations began in earnest in October 2014, focusing initially on planning the programme and booking speakers. I have been working in collaboration with Ann Kingdom, former SI chair and acting SI conference director, volunteers Ruth Durbridge (SfEP), Jody Ineson (SI) and Sarah Perkins (SfEP), SfEP sponsorship coordinator Sherona Treen-Coward, and the office staff of both societies.

Feedback from both the SfEP and SI 2014 conferences provided us with lots of ideas and suggestions for sessions. Our main aim was to come up with a programme with plenty to interest all delegates. We knew that we must offer sessions specifically aimed at both editors and proofreaders and at indexers, as well as covering topics of more general interest, such as business skills. All delegates are free to attend any conference session but we wanted to ensure that, for example, an SfEP delegate with no interest in indexing would have just as much choice as at any SfEP conference. The result, we hope, is a tempting mix of sessions that includes something for everyone.

The theme, *Collaborate and innovate*, was chosen to reflect the collaborative nature of the first joint conference itself, as well as the importance of collaboration and innovation in the publishing industry and the individual editorial freelance's career.

Several 'sister organisations', including the NUJ and AFEPI, are entitled to a 10% (approx) discount on the non-member conference fee; in January the council voted to contact a further 11 organisations around the world, offering them the same discount in return for a similar arrangement for SfEP members at their events. Reciprocal agreements were negotiated with eight of these organisations and SfEP members will already have received Announces detailing the discount available to them at various events, including the NIEG (US) conference and MET (Europe) meeting.

Also in January, the council agreed that from 2015 the cost of all free places (for directors and other SfEP officers, including the conference team) and the office staff's accommodation costs will be paid for by the Society out of the AGM budget, rather than subsidised by paying delegates. It was also agreed that any surplus earned by the conference will in future be carried over to help fund the next year's conference.

Since the start of the new financial year (2015 to 2016), we have continued planning this year's joint conference. Booking opened slightly late, on 5 March, following the technical problems that affected our online services at the end of February and beginning of March. At the time of writing, we are expecting somewhere in the region of 115 SfEP and 65 SI delegates. This gives a healthy total of about 180 delegates, but 115 is fewer SfEP delegates than usual; this might be the result of a misconception that the conference will be 'all about indexing'. Another factor could be this year's slightly higher non-resident delegate fees. Nevertheless, it seems likely that we will break even again this year.

With most speakers booked by the end of March, the focus has been on collating information such as the session summaries and speaker biographies and planning other aspects of the programme, from the Tweetup to the Linnets; a second visit to the venue in June will give us an opportunity to review arrangements where necessary and check various details.

In May the council agreed that for the 2016 conference the non-resident member rate (one day's attendance) will be 30% of the resident member rate (compared with 40% usually or 50% in 2015); the non-resident rate for Corporate Subscribers, etc. and non-members will be 40% of their respective resident rates (compared with 60% usually).

Looking ahead, I have also begun the search for a conference venue for 2017, and have details of a number of possibilities to review.

