

REPORT

IPEd National Survey of Editors, 2011

The Institute of Professional Editors (iped-editors.org) surveyed Australian editors from June to August 2011, using an online survey that, with the Australian Publishers Association and the societies of editors, it advertised widely. The survey builds on and expands the surveys conducted by Pamela Hewitt AE at previous national editors conferences and the joint Australian Society of Indexers – Canberra Society of Editors conference in 2001, making this the sixth such snapshot of the profession.

IPEd.

To advance the
profession of editing

There were 345 responses¹ in 2011, more than in previous years surveys, which were restricted to conference participants.

The responses collected at the 2009 national conference suggested that employed editors were starting to outnumber freelancers, but, in the latest survey, freelancers once again make up the majority of respondents (53% freelance; 24% employed; 20% a mixture of both). It is possible that the 2009 result reflects responses from those who were funded by employers to attend the conference.

Slightly more respondents (38%) work part time than full time (32%). The remainder either have editing as one part of a broader job description or edit in addition to other employment. Forty-six per cent of part-time editors gain more than half their income from editing. Eighteen respondents are employers, most engaging fewer than 10 editors.

The typical Australian editor, on the basis of these results, is: female, aged between 46 and 55, living in Victoria, with between 11 and 20 years editing experience. Sixty per cent of respondents have a degree, 34% hold a graduate diploma, 21% have masters degrees and 10% have completed doctorates.²

IPEd Accredited or Distinguished Editors made up 33% of respondents. Thirty per cent of non-accredited editors who responded plan to seek accreditation; 30% do not and 40% are not sure. When talking about the benefits of accreditation to their editing practice, accredited editors speak of:

- providing increased confidence for themselves and clients
- gaining more work
- acquiring a qualification when they have no other formal qualification
- seeing exam preparation as important professional development
- making the profession more professional.

¹ The ACT response was lower than membership of the Canberra Society of Editors would predict; winter illnesses meant notice of the survey was only sent out close to the survey closing date.

² The survey did not ask for highest qualification only; there were 594 responses from 337 answers.

Forty-one per cent of respondents have seen no benefit from their accreditation qualification, but many of them have been accredited only since passing the exam held in May 2011.

Comments from those who say they will not seek accreditation fall into these themes:

- I am nearing the end of my editing career.
- I do not see the need for accreditation: clients have never asked for it; I do not believe I would gain more work with the qualification; I have a good permanent job etc.
- I have other Australian Qualifications Framework–recognised qualifications and/or long experience.
- The exam is expensive.
- I have problems with the exam; waiting for an online exam; I have a disability; I live in a regional area.

The private sector provides just over 50% of editors' income, closely followed by the public sector (40%) and not-for-profits (14%).³ A relatively high proportion (45%) of editors undertake pro bono editing for up to a quarter of their work.

Most editors work, in diminishing order of numbers, in the fields of education (including educational publishing), general publishing, government and the public service, science and the environment, and law. Just over 40% of respondents described themselves as general editors, but many further qualified that description. Specialists span the full range from fiction to technical writing; education to law; tourism to Australian Research Council grant applications; magazines to bilingual multimedia; ancient languages to trade publications.

Unsurprisingly, 84% of respondents' work is with print materials; 24% is on online materials.⁴ Eighty-six per cent work onscreen and 19% with hard-copy mark-up.⁵ PCs are used by 71% of respondents and Macs by 23%, but at least one respondent would have liked to be able to answer 'both'.

³ Some respondents marked two sectors.

⁴ Some respondents marked two types.

⁵ Some respondents marked both.

Of 321 replies to the question on income ranges, percentages were almost equal (20–22%) for income ranges less than \$10,000, \$21–40,000 and \$41–60,000. Only six respondents earn over \$100,000.

Compared with 2009 results, the average hourly freelance rate has fallen: from \$66 to an average of \$62. Most freelancers (73%) charge between \$40 and \$79. IPEd is often asked about rates, and the need for guidance on rates was also raised in survey responses; IPEd may want to do some work on this in 2012. A question asking about different rates for different types of work was poorly engineered, caused much frustration and elicited few responses; it will be improved for the next survey.

Respondents were asked to list their three main challenges as editors, producing the breakdown shown in Diagram 1.

The question about professional development (PD) provided interesting results. Only 228 people responded; 117 skipped it. Of the 228, 14 felt they have no need for professional development or were unsure what they needed. Location and time pressures made it

difficult for six. Of the remainder, many listed multiple areas of PD need, of which by far the most common were:

1. Technology⁶
2. Exposure to and training in digital media of many types
3. Training in word processing and design software—specifically Word, InDesign and Photoshop
4. Professional development for small businesses—marketing and promotion, time management, quoting and contracting etc.

A significant number of respondents are also interested in PD that covers:

5. Grammar—usage and style
6. Project management.

And several would like more networking and mentoring opportunities.

⁶ It was not always clear what respondents meant by 'technology'; many of these answers may also belong in groups 2 and 3. However, there was a strong focus on keeping informed about new developments in technology related to editing, including social media.

Diagram 1: Challenges for editors in 2011

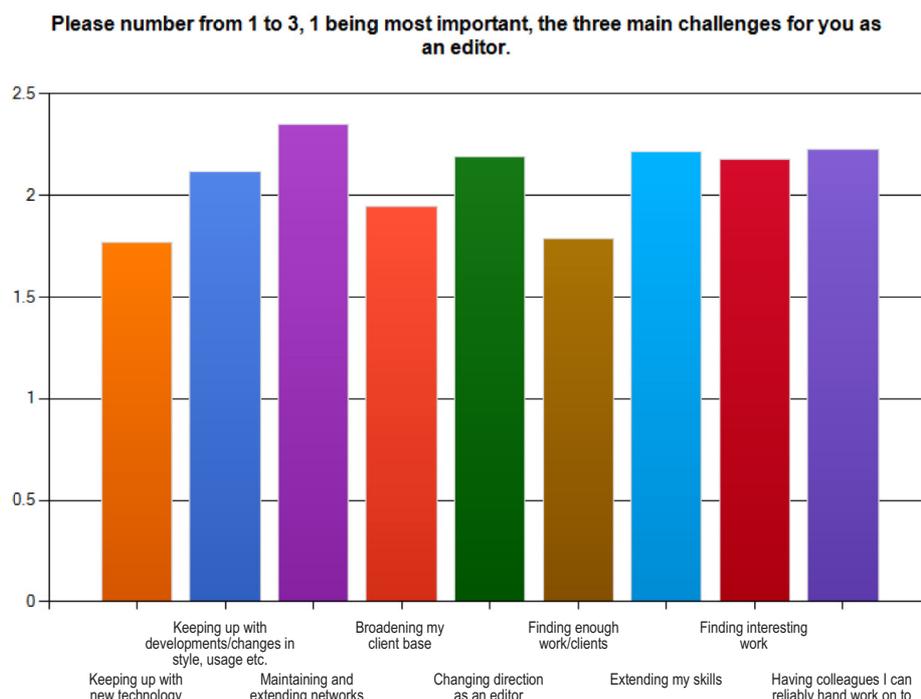
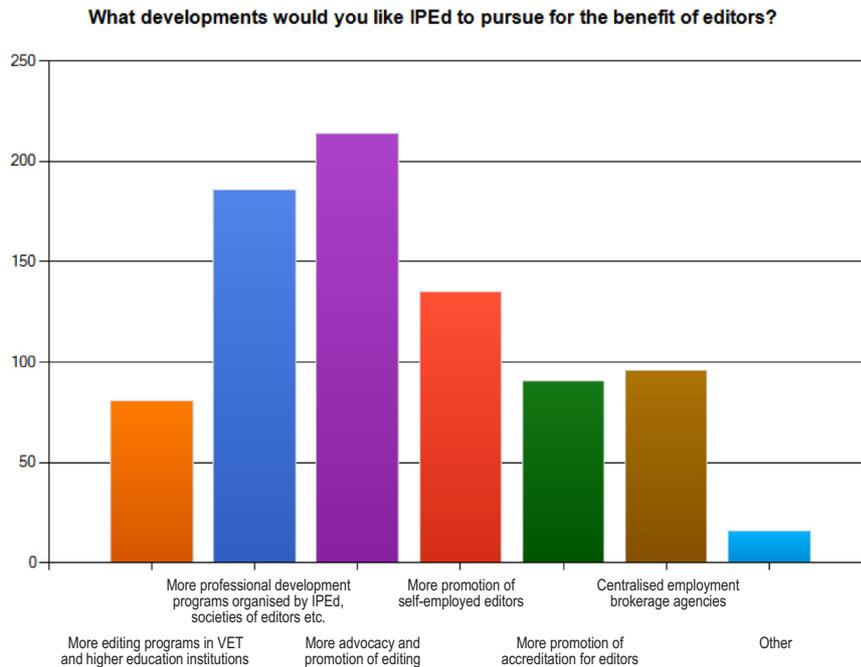


Diagram 2: Perceived challenges for IPEd



While there is much for IPEd to take on board in these responses, it is also clear that many respondents are not aware of the amount of PD already offered by the societies of editors, and even as workshops at the 2011 national conference.

Responses to suggestions about what IPEd might do 'to advance the profession of editing' were as shown in Diagram 2, above.

In addition, respondents suggested:

- More promotion of accreditation and its benefits, especially in-house
- An online accreditation exam
- Explaining to employers the difference between editors and 'communications' graduates
- Mentoring programs
- Greater sense of a community of practice
- More collaboration with writers' centres
- Lobbying for better VET and higher education programs in editing; accrediting editing courses/programs
- Taking on some activities nationally (journal, PD etc.) to ease the toll on societies' volunteers

- Brokering reduced course fees
- Advocacy for the profession, especially for freelancers, in both corporate and publishing sectors
- A national professional journal
- Lobbying for revision to the *Style manual*
- Lobbying for better salaries for in-house editors.

Conclusion

IPEd Council believes that the results of the survey show that IPEd's current activities align well with what editors want of their national organisation, as demonstrated in Diagram 2.

More detail about the survey results will be provided on the IPEd website and in societies of editors' newsletters.

[This report was prepared by IPEd's Communication Committee.]

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