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ADVANCING OUR PROFESSION

**8th IPEd National Editors Conference
13–15 September 2017, Brisbane**

IPEd National Conference Papers

Lee, K, Rogers, J, Quinn, S, Wikramanayake, M, Woods, K & Arciuli, R 2017, 'Building Alliances panel', notes by D Page, *Proceedings of the 8th IPEd National Editors Conference: Advancing Our Profession*. 13–15 September, Brisbane. Institute of Professional Editors, pp. 125–31, http://iped-editors.org/Professional_development/IPEdConferences.aspx.

Building Alliances panel

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With IPEd entering its second year as a truly national organisation, it's a perfect time to take a national approach to our role in the publishing industry. Representatives from a range of related organisations and interest groups formed a panel to discuss the question: How can we work together to advance our profession? We're pleased here to reproduce Desolie Page's notes of the discussion.

Introduction

Karen Lee introduced the panel and described the process: she would ask each panellist the same question in turn, followed by a short Q&A opportunity.

Karen Lee (IPEd): As many of you know, Council and I have been in the process of developing IPEd's strategic plan, to get a roadmap of what IPEd should be focusing on over the next three years. As part of this plan, we see the opportunity to build relationships with our key stakeholders to work together. It is my pleasure to introduce you to our panel this morning.

Q1 What are the most important issues facing the sector and your particular membership?

Juliet Rogers (ASA): I represent authors, and there are a number of issues making their lives more difficult than they've been in the past. They come in no particular order, but of course the assault on copyright is one of the first things, with the Productivity Commission report and the support for parallel importation and lifting the ban on it, and fair use; those are critical issues for our membership because copyright is the way creators monetise their work. Alongside that there have been all the funding issues – which is code for no funding, and that has been difficult for organisations that support authors, but also for the writers themselves; and the market has changed so much where, because producing a book is a great deal easier than it's ever been before, but the path to market and looking after that book and doing a really good job of publishing it are more difficult than ever. So we've got a double pincer movement; there are fewer opportunities with traditional publishers as the big guys are getting more risk-averse. And then there are the fraudsters in the market who see a lot of people with stars in their eyes about getting published and they have stepped

into that gap. They make their money on producing the book; they don't care if it sells or not. There are challenges abroad, but also some opportunities; content, as we are told, is king, and my guys produce it.

Sherrey Quinn (ANZSI): Indexers work on information sources. In some cases, the issues that face ANZSI members are similar to the ones Juliet has mentioned, for example, diversification of publishing models has made it harder for indexers to market themselves; government publishing in particular is very disparate and seems to be left to individual agencies to manage. We also have the issue of larger publishers outsourcing indexing overseas, where their focus may well be on cost rather than on quality. Another issue is the need to advocate for quality indexing in quality publications; we come up against the argument that 'we're publishing electronically and everybody's got a search button – we don't need an index'. One of my colleagues will address that in a panel session later today. We also need to promote understanding that indexers have the skills to work on many types of publications: print and digital, single items like an information book or directory or large collections of information such as websites or databases or archives. Internally, our issues are that we have an ageing membership; lots of our members have retired in recent years, we have difficulty attracting younger members. I think this is common to most membership organisations. There's a lot of competition from social media. We are looking at sharing with our sister organisations information about how we can address these issues.

Marisa Wikramanayake (MEAA): The things I'm concerned about are, to start with, working rights, rates and conditions for freelancers – that includes some in-house people as well – in both media and publishing. And the issue of how we try to safeguard that because freelancers are doing lots of different bits of work and the things they do vary, and their clients vary as well, so how do you set up a bargaining with those clients to say you must treat all freelancers you hire in a certain way, and you must pay them a certain rate. I see there is potential to cover editors as well. We do have editor members in MEAA; if we negotiate something, it will cover editors as well. The other issue is the copyright issue; we are suffering from huge issues of plagiarism. It's been about 100 years since someone had the money to sue someone for plagiarising; freelancers don't have the money. In-house employees will have a team of lawyers at their disposal, but even then they're very reluctant to go after another publication that has lifted stuff, because they don't want to get into a protracted legal battle. This is for journalists, but editors could be involved if work was stolen. Also, diversity, which is an issue across the board in publishing. I'm a bit tired of diverse authors only being allowed to be published in cookbooks and memoirs. We write so much more than that. I'd like to see more diversity in editors and authors.

Katie Woods (QWC): You might be starting to feel like an echo chamber is happening here; a lot of our issues are similar. Like Juliet's ASA, the QWC works with writers so that's the focus of our activity. We have the same concerns about copyright, parallel importation, funding. But at the bottom of all that is a bigger issue that impacts across all our sectors, which is how do we really communicate the value of writing, editing and publishing? In order to change government funding policy, to change the way the market works, to provide our members with access to funding to write or opportunities for education, we have to communicate our value.

The changing publishing models and pathways to publishing bring huge challenges for writers and editors. How do we keep up with what's happening and give the best advice to

our members? We need to think as a sector about how we communicate the value of what we do.

Rosanna Arciuli (CA): Copyright Agency has over 30,000 members, from a vast range of creators, journalists, writers, illustrators, cartoonists and publishers. A lot of them are small publishers that have left the teaching industry, so they produce a lot of educational content. The biggest pressure on them at the moment is fighting the impacts of globalisation in educational publishing and lots of open educational resources. For the entire group, it's definitely copyright, and we've been fighting hard to educate politicians and the community about the threat of fair use and how it would undermine the whole ecology of the publishing system. The global forces that are trying to water down copyright are the biggest threat to all of us in the room, I think.

Q2 What are the key issues your organisation can work with IPEd on?

Juliet Rogers (ASA): Following on from what Katie said, one of the things we could all work together on is communicating the value of what we do. A lot of my authors battle with the fact that their work is seen as a hobby and something that you love doing; no one would turn to the guy fixing the fridge and say, 'You obviously really enjoy doing this, so I won't bother to pay you.' But with a writer, they feel that that's a perfectly legitimate thing to do. I'm sure many people approach you and ask you to use your skills for free. We all have this issue and it leads into, as Marisa was saying, rates of pay and respect for the profession. This leads into how we could be working together on developing the sorts of standards that I know you've done some great work on at IPEd, so there are trusted professionals – in the midst of all this mess of everybody purporting to be a writer or a publisher – so there are some codes of conduct or some other guiding path for people. At the ASA we spend a lot of time trying to stop people making really poor decisions and getting themselves entangled in terrible situations. We tell them what not to sign, but they always ask, 'What should we be doing? Who is trustworthy? How do we know who to rely on?' Working in partnerships, we could make a huge amount of progress in that area.

Sherrey Quinn (ANZSI): I endorse all those comments. My organisation is extremely small and it has a range of people from those who work full time as indexers to those who do valuable volunteer work for various community organisations. I think working with our IPEd colleagues would help us each understand the value that the other partner adds; editors and indexers can both do more to understand what the other is on about. I think we have opportunities for standards development and maintenance. Certainly we have opportunity to work together for fair and equitable pay as professionals and to be seen as professionals who add value to publication, in whatever way they are published. We can also come together to address shared issues. For example, our members who work for government agencies have an interest in the government *Style manual*. I think that the Digital Transformation Agency is currently trying to revise the *Style manual*, and editors and indexers should have a voice in that process. We should also take the opportunity to come together on issues such as copyright and education and so on, when we can do so.

Marisa Wikramanayake (MEAA): I think we've mentioned the possibility of working together with IPEd on looking at the pay rates again; I'd like MEAA and IPEd to work on that, and we've already started talking about how we can do that. I'd also like to look at the Book Industry Award again, revisiting it to check if it's relevant and up to date. Beyond that I have a long list of ways that MEAA and IPEd can collaborate. I think we should share resources; I

have a lot of freelancers who get workshops about how to freelance, and a lot of these things are relevant to editors too, so why start from scratch? We could just share the information. I would like MEAA to be able to do all the bargaining on conditions and rates; at the moment it is illegal to collectively bargain on behalf of a group of freelancers, but we have made submissions into the Inquiry into the Future of Public Interest Journalism and so we are hoping in the next few years to have legal advice about whether we can overturn that. We will be talking to a lot of organisations that employ editors in-house, so we can negotiate on your behalf.

Katie Woods (QWC): At QWC we are delighted to point to IPed as a resource for members. I agree that where we can work together in terms of that standards space is very important. When our members are looking for editors, it's great that we can say, 'Go here – here's a list of editors who have their qualifications on their listing, so you can make a good choice from there'. I agree that there are lots of ways we could work together to share resources so that we're not starting from scratch. Also, things like this: I think it's amazing when the sector can get together and share information and meet one another. We spend a huge amount of time and energy working with writers from very grassroots through to emerging and then published authors, but particularly at the early stage there's a lot of mystery for people around editing, so we spend quite a lot of time talking to people about why it's important to work with a professional editor, why it's not a good idea to send the first draft of your manuscript straight to a publisher or an agent. So it's working together to broaden people's understanding of what editing is, what the process is and why it's so important – I think that would be wonderful.

Rosanna Arciuli (CA): It would be great if you could join Copyright Agency and ASA and the broader coalition of creative industries to educate politicians about the value of copyright and the importance of having a sustainable publishing industry. It would be great if you could do it at a local level. Just have meetings, contact your local MPs, because they really don't understand publishing. So if they could understand your part and how important it is for you to make a living, it would help us a lot when we're lobbying at a high level to make sure that copyright is respected.

Q3 How can we work together as a bloc to advance the sector as a whole?

Juliet Rogers (ASA): Last year, when we were fighting the Productivity Commission findings, we set up a Books Create Australia group, which was publishers, authors, booksellers, printers and literary agents and we went as a bloc down to Canberra to lobby, and it was incredible effective. In the past we've been incredibly sectionalised. We had a broad understanding that we were all lobbying about copyright, but everyone would ask for a slightly different thing. Politicians hate that – they just want it to be simple. Our opposition in the broader arena of what's happening in publishing is formidable; the [Australian] Digital Alliance have all the resources of the Googles and things and they are spending money to position themselves very cleverly. If we're not careful our arguments will sound very fuddy-duddy and as if we are a pack of Luddites when in fact it isn't about thwarting progress, it's just saying that the creators and the people who look after the creators are important in the process. So I think if we were drawing more people into that Books Create Australia alliance, including IPed, it would be a very strong group to work on things that are of common interest. Much of that is advocacy work but it is also about valuing creative talent. I would

also love the writers centres to come in, because the more that we act together, the stronger we'll be.

Sherrey Quinn (ANZSI): Again, I agree with all of that – we are a small organisation with a small pool of volunteers doing most of the work. Advocacy and promotion of our members and of the value of the work we do is probably the hardest task we have. I can see a great value for our membership in joining forces with IPEd and similar organisations to promote publishing as a whole and being able to articulate where our small niche is within that much larger enterprise. One issue we are facing is: how big do you need to be to be viable as an association? Can you effectively represent your members and provide services for them when you are a small volunteer group? I think we need to talk seriously about opportunities to promote our profession and promote the value we provide by joining with larger groups. If not actually becoming a part of them, with strategic alliances we could offer different or complementary points of view to the kinds of issues the publishing profession is facing. I think the solution to this is continued dialogue at forums like this and at the grassroots level to see where we can help with the bigger issues and perhaps get help with some of our own.

Marisa Wikramanayake (MEAA): I think it is important to band together and form a bloc on things like copyright and parallel importation restrictions [PIR], and I think on PIR at least MEAA has joined the fight. I sit on Federal Council and I have to come to the meetings with issues and concerns and we have to come up with ideas on how we can help our freelancers, but I struggle with being one of only a few editor members of MEAA. I can't speak for all the IPEd members and all the non-IPEd-member editors and all their issues and concerns. If we band together we have more of an idea of those concerns. If we get to the point where we can advance something to make freelancers' lives a lot better, I would like it to be not just for journalists, photographers and general editors, but also for book editors, freelance indexers, proofreaders. Why not? If we get one shot at this I'd like to make it as efficient as possible, make it work for as many people as possible. That might mean saying, 'if you hire a journo, this is what you do; if you hire a book editor, this is what you do'. I don't want to make decisions for large numbers of people and possibly get it wrong. That's why I think organisations need to band together.

Katie Woods (QWC): I think there's enormous value in working together as a bloc and as a sector; there's a power in working as a group. We tend to get siloed; it's not deliberate – most of us work in organisations that are very lean, that rely heavily on volunteer help, so most of the time we're too busy to look up and see what's going on. It's only when we get these crisis issues that we work together as a group. Over the last few years, the writers centres have worked as an informal network. I don't think it needs to be full of rules and regulations, but even this informal organisation means that a) you've got colleagues so you can ask for help if something happens where you need advice, and b) you can share information, which I think is really valuable. I'd also like to see us working as a group though, rather than just dealing with crises, looking at opportunities. Juliet said something earlier that really resonated: content is king. And while we hear on the radio about the economic crisis being nigh because robots are going to take over 60% of jobs, the creative industries are, I think, likely to grow. Being able to work together to identify those opportunities for our members collectively would be a really positive thing.

Rosanna Arciuli (CA): I think it's so important to have a united position, and I want to give an example of how it recently worked. The industry got together to fight this possible introduction of Fair Use into Australia, and everyone got behind our campaign as well, which

was the 'Free is not fair' campaign, and we had musicians, poets, journalists, writers, small and large publishers writing to their members. We got three and half thousand people writing in and, in conjunction with all our colleagues, we did actually influence the government and they did not support the recommendation by the Productivity Commission to introduce fair use. So it's a small victory, but it's an example of how working together is so important – educating those politicians and letting your voice be heard. If you're not a member of Copyright Agency, it's free to join and you get lots of interesting information about copyright and industry news once a month, through our newsletters. The more members we have the better as well.

Audience questions and conclusion

Delegate: Maybe this is a question for you, Karen: it was wonderful to hear you all, but I have to say I've heard this kind of thing before, that we must get together; we must prioritise advocacy and promotion. When are we doing to start doing something practical? Can we set up a committee within IPEd that will keep in touch with all these other people and really set something going?

Karen Lee (IPEd): The whole reason we undertook strategic planning and the reason we have such a detailed implementation plan was because we could add things like this to my workplan. So it's a top priority for me, and then I have to report to the Board. I have monthly and quarterly reporting milestones. We've done our strategic plan and now we've invited our key stakeholders to begin this discussion, so I'm very heartened by some of the things that we can work on together, and I'm very excited. It will happen, and I will be letting people know that through our comms, whether it's the *CEO Bulletin* or *IPEd Notes*.

Juliet Rogers (ASA): Yes, I do understand that it's very easy to join hands and love one another at a conference, but I think that there are some differences. The Books Create Australia group and the 'Free isn't fair' campaign are the first; publishers, booksellers and authors have never lobbied together ever because they've never agreed, and it took a lot of work, on behalf of particularly booksellers, to stand with us on that issue [of parallel imports]. So I think that's a change. And the other night Rosanna and I were both in Canberra launching a 'Friends of ...' group at Parliament and they do it for certain industries, where you are Parliamentary friends and you have two co-chairs, from Labor and Liberals, and we had the launch on Tuesday, and everybody came – it really was quite extraordinary, particularly as we were up against Olivia Newton-John, who was also at Parliament House! But Shorten and Albanese and Tony Burke and Sam Dastyari, of course, and our friend Mr Abbott and all sorts of people from both sides of politics saying – sure, motherhood statements – but still, very positive about the whole publishing industry and the importance of copyright. It is a start, and the point of that group is to have positive relationships in Canberra as well as always going down and whingeing about something. So there are a couple of things at least that are the start of good steps.

Karen Lee (IPEd): I might just add that we have been in conversations with APA about the Parliamentary group, so IPEd is in those discussions, just to let you know, but we just couldn't make it because we had the conference. But there are certainly talks about how we can be part of that voice and all of their activities as we go down the track.

Katie Woods (QWC): I also think we can work together as individuals at a grassroots level as well as at an organisational level. Some of the projects that QWC has worked on with Editors Queensland are because there are members who know one another and they see opportunities that will be of interest to both groups.

Delegate: This is a question for Sherrey – you say the Society of Indexers is small; do you know the proportion of indexers who are working as such but are not members of the society?

Sherrey Quinn (ANZSI): I wish I knew! I don't, and I think it would be impossible to guess. We're almost all freelancers. We're very collegiate, those of us who know about each other. I think our membership would be a lot larger if we could locate people who work as indexers who are not members of our society. But we have enormous difficulty identifying them. How do you identify someone who works freelance if they are not engaged in social media or if they're not engaged in your professional association? If we could identify them, we would be seeking actively to engage them in our society. I do know that a number of our members who also work as editors are members of both ANZSI and IPEd or Canberra Society of Editors. I'm sure there are a lot of [non-society member] indexers, so if there are any here, I'd love to meet you.

Karen Lee concluded the session with her thanks to the panel members.