

## **Chairperson's report, 2009–2010**

Ladies and gentlemen, it's been an extraordinary year for PEG – its first 18-month year! Plus a period of extraordinary energy, drive and innovation – a year and a half of transformation – and so I present this 'annual' report with great pride: pride in the dedication and perspiration of Exco and committee members who have made extraordinary things possible during the reporting period.

Winds of change have been running through PEG, in accordance with PEG's stated vision and mission, which bears repeating:

*Vision:* To be the recognized centre of excellence in editing in southern Africa.

*Mission:*

To foster high standards of editing and proofreading

To contribute to improved standards of written communication

To promote an ethos of professionalism among editors

To raise awareness of the value added by good editing

To facilitate networking among editors and other language practitioners nationally and internationally.

PEG as a 'centre of excellence' and professionalism: I don't think we've reached our ultimate goal yet, but I do think we're well on our way, through our increasing contacts and interactions with PASA, the CTBF, SATI, SAFREA and now, I hope, UASA. Through our conferences to date, there's no doubt that we're beginning to be known and recognized as such by some of our universities.

### **Membership**

There have been the usual increases and dips, but on the whole it's comfortably up on 2008–2009, and I think we can be well satisfied with the current trend. Broadening our membership remains essential.

### **Finances**

I'm happy to report that these are fairly healthy – despite the contrary impression created in some quarters by the raffle – thanks to Lulu van Molendorff's and now Linda Pretorius's equally conservative guardianship of the PEG Purse. (Linda will report on our finances anon.) The increase in membership fees plus ensuring that projects such as the members' directory and conferences are self-funding are partly responsible for this.

### **Publications (Jill Bishop + Hester van der Walt, Linda Pretorius and Fiona Wallace)**

*PEGboard:* I think you will agree that PEGboard has gone from strength to strength under Hester's editorship, plus she's introduced an important mentoring element by inviting members to participate in its production – with excellent results! The newsletter is now electronic, which increases the team's scope for greater creativity.

*Members' directory:* under Fiona's watchful (and sticklerish) eye, it has become a really professional reflection of and marketing tool for our members; the CD format has worked well towards spreading the word widely, having been handed out at the CTBF and also at the London Book Fair (300 copies were distributed among visitors and exhibitors at the LBF in April 2010); they are also more easily mailed to our client base. The delay in distribution this year is largely of my doing, but as I speak they are being distributed! Please make sure you take your copy of it away with you today.

*PEG Guides:* the first of these has been published (*PEG Guide to Style Guides* – about 100 sold since Nov 2009) and the second (Setting up and running your small business) is due for imminent publication. Others in the pipeline include one on plain language and another on editing works of fiction and narrative non-fiction – ie we hope to publish the wisdom ensuing from each conference we hold, not necessarily as proceedings but certainly as guidelines to our members and others. (There's just nothing like it in print to educate or inform our members, so PEG has, in my opinion, to fill the gaps.) It's also likely that the planned PEG conference on editing theses and dissertations will lead to important guidelines being published by our Group.

*P-zine:* has quickly found its feet since its inaugural issue in Jan 2010, thanks to the enthusiasm and creativity of Lia Marus in collaboration with Juliet Gillies. Its primary aim is to drive members to the website to see – and read about – what's new on the site, and I believe it's working well to that end.

**Marketing (Juliet Gillies + Lia Marus, Joan Fairhurst, Brenda Keen, Heba Sherry)**

*Website:* where previously we had a rather dull, static website that offered very little inducement for visits and no up-to-date information, we now have a much more attractive and active website that I believe our members can be proud of. It's no mean feat to keep it active and up to date, and we have Juliet, Brenda and Lia to thank for the energy they pour into keeping it so.

*CTBF:* apart from sharing a stand with SATI and MLA, we hosted two events on the formal events programme: panel discussions in which the editing of fiction, and then non-fiction, was discussed. They were very well attended by a wide range of people, and helped to raise awareness about the challenges that editors face and whether they're up to those challenges or not. (If truth be told, these events led directly to the Fiction Editing conference in May this year.)

Many editorial queries were raised at the fair stand – from both potential clients and prospective editors/PEG members. We deem the fair to be a worthwhile investment on behalf of our members; and we should continue to participate for the next year or two in view of the fact that in 2012 Cape Town will be hosting the first-ever biennial conference of the International Publishers' Association on the African continent – being held to coincide with the CTBF to be held in June that year. We should be thinking of holding our AGM in Cape Town in 2012 so that as many PEGgers as possible can be at the hub of publishing activity in that year!

*London Book Fair*: we shared a stand with SATI and MLA; our message was “Not quite the Darkest Africa you think it is”. It was a qualified success, for reasons well known to you; but the upshot was that we made some quality contacts on your behalf with UK, African, Middle Eastern and Indian publishers that will probably lead to further contacts, and even work, at some stage down the line. At least 300 Members’ Directories on CD were distributed to both exhibitors who were present and absentees via ‘post boxes’. It was a unique opportunity for PEG to market itself, on the back of the SA Pavilion and the PASA-initiated programme of seminars, to the international publishing community. In addition, it forged our relationship with the PASA team, who coordinated the SA Market Focus pavilion.

*Jozi Book Fair*: in 2009 we had a “visitor” presence – Mary Hazelton and Norman Blight; this year, we’ll be looking to the new Gauteng branch committee’s establishing a presence in order to spread the word about PEG and the need for editing services among a new market sector – nascent publishers, small publishers, self-publishers. It takes place from 4 to 6 August 2010.

#### **Liaison/interaction with other associations: PASA, SAFREA, SATI, SABDC, ASAIB**

To achieve the Group’s vision and mission, I believe it’s essential that we work more closely with other bodies in the language practice, publication and communications space. Not so long ago, PASA wasn’t aware of our existence; now they consult us and invite us warmly to their functions. And though we’ve had a reasonably close relationship historically with SATI, we’ve tended to work in isolation from the likes of SAFREA, and I don’t believe there’s been enough interaction and sharing between representative bodies to promote our common interests and markets. We’ve made good headway during the past 18 months towards closer collaboration/affiliation, to the ultimate benefit of our members. And strength in numbers is going to be our motivation to obtain representation on the SA Book Development Council when, I hope, our proposed Alliance of Language Practitioners of SA joins its board later this year.

And if all of our associations could somehow band together to affiliate to UASA, that will, I believe bring some really tangible benefits to our members. Our thanks are due to Norman Blight for liaising with SAFREA and UASA with vigour on our behalf.

It’s meanwhile also become apparent that we need to form closer ties with ASAIB, for all the reasons given above.

#### **Professional Development (John Linnegar + Ruth Pressler, Norman Blight, Irene Stotko, Vicky Botha, Mary Hazelton, Isabelle Delvare)**

This committee continues to work energetically and earnestly towards the professionalisation of editors through a variety of avenues: mentorship; training; an accreditation test; the points system. We hope that the first evidence of differentiated membership levels will appear in our 2011 Members’ Directory to give potential clients a far better idea of editors’ experience and expertise.

Membership categories and the points system, driven by Mary, Vicky and Isabelle, have been introduced, refined, and now more or less bedded down. (NB: the refined set of categories, and the routes to attaining them, will very soon be circulated among members, who will be given an opportunity to comment upon them and vote on their implementation.)

*Training:* Ruth has focused on assessing trainers on the PEG list with a view to establishing standards; we have also dealt with several complaints about substandard training.

*Accreditation test:* This has been compiled and piloted under Norman's aegis (its rollout has been delayed, unfortunately, but it will be ready and available shortly). We're grateful to Norman and other committee members, plus the members who participated in the pilot, for the enormous energy, wisdom and collaboration that has gone into creating something that is both rigorous and fair in benchmarking our members. When someone passes this test, they can truly label themselves 'professional'.

*Mentoring scheme:* It has made gradual but significant strides under Irene's adept guidance/leadership since its inception early in 2009 – now have almost 8 mentors and about 14 mentees; each mentor has agreed to recruit one more mentor (and mentor them!) in order to increase the pool of mentors so as to fulfil the demand for mentoring, especially among our newer members. At a meeting of mentors held on 29 May it was agreed also to draw up a set of core competencies that should be covered during a mentorship and according to which mentees' capabilities should be assessed before their certificate of successful completion is issued.

*Chat group:* Kathy Gibbs continues to provide an invaluable service to our members, I believe, with members participating wholeheartedly: job opportunities to respond to and editorial/language queries answered. Kathy's firm hand is ever present, keeping order on the group. Thank you, Kathy.

*Conferences:* Thanks to Isabelle Delvare's capable leadership and organizing aptitude, we have hosted two important (and successful) conferences during the reporting period:  
Plain Language, in Gauteng – November 2009  
Editing Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction, in Franschhoek – May 2010.  
(I personally would like this to become an annual event to coincide *with* the FLP in May.)

Later this year, we are due to convene an adaptation of the Plain Language conference in workshop format at the CTBF on 30 July 2010, and a two-day conference on Editing Theses and Dissertations is also planned – two-days at UJ on 29 and 30 October.

We must never underestimate the value these conferences hold for PEG, quite apart from their benefit to members: they bring people and organizations into contact with us who didn't know of our existence, let alone what role editors play in the publishing value chain! And as someone said to me during the Fiction conference: we have made such

wonderful friends through a meeting of minds. Moreover, when I think how difficult it is to make contact with the Right People in publishing and then to try to convince them of the value of PEG using other channels, I realize that conferences are an ideal platform for bringing us (and also the tertiary institutions) together quite naturally. And such people are usually bowled over by what we do and what we are capable of doing for them and their service providers.

### **Branches**

Every family has its 'problem children', and in the past 18 months the PEG community has been no exception. Quite frankly, our newly formed branches have not been fully functional, with only one or two individuals pulling their weight and carrying the branches. Perhaps this has been symptomatic of the restructuring and decentralization of PEG (where formerly a national committee ran all PEG's affairs, including its branch meetings, now local affairs are the province of branch committees trying to find their feet).

But it's a problem easily remedied, in my opinion: by having a few committed individuals with a bit of reserve energy in their tanks come forward to serve, for one or preferably two years, the organization they have benefited from being a member of – possibly for many years.

I'm pleased to report that in Cape Town several fresh new volunteers have come forward to serve on the 2010-2011 branch committee and once they're elected later this month, I'm optimistic that they will deliver on the great expectations we have of them – including putting a programme of bi-monthly meetings in place, organizing our presence at the CTBF and even helping with the annual May conference in Franschoek. Thanks must go to those committee members who helped to keep Cape Town functional.

Gauteng is also rallying to the cause: I am confident that a fresh and reinvigorated new committee will be elected to office today. Two of the existing committee members have been elevated to national positions (Linda Pretorius to membership secretary/treasurer and Isabelle Delvare to national conference convenor). On your behalf I should like to thank the stalwarts who have kept this branch running effectively and dynamically during the past 18 months, under arduous conditions.

### **Paid part-time administrator**

Following your executive's decision to create and finance this position, the present incumbent has been appointed and their decision has, we believe, been vindicated in the first few months. (The motivation document emailed to members refers. I hope that you present today will endorse this decision.)

### **Broader affiliations**

UASA – PEG affiliation on same basis as that negotiated by SAFREA is proposed, subject to the meeting's approval today. (The motivation document emailed to members refers.)

SABDC: we're working towards the representation of language practitioners on its board in the shape of an umbrella body ('alliance') – subject to the meeting's approval today. (The motivation document emailed to members refers.)

### **Resignations**

By unfortunate coincidences, either the terms of office of several PEG stalwarts have come to an end or office-bearers have tendered their resignations. Health problems unrelated to PEG commitments have, sadly, had a part in these decisions too.

From the Exco, then, Mary Hazelton, our devoted National Secretary for the past 2,5 years, Paul Schamberger, our Vice-Chair, Jill Bishop, our Publications Committee coordinator and Lulu van Molendorff, our longstanding Treasurer and Membership Secretary are standing down. I take this opportunity, for my own part and on your behalf, to thank them for their dedication to PEG and us all, and to wish them godspeed in their retirement from their respective positions. (Gifts handed over.)

Then, too, branch chairs sitting ex officio on Exco, Kristina Davidson and Diana Coetzee, will be bowing out, and we thank them, too, for their endeavours in the name of PEG.

We have known for some time that Fiona Wallace, who has served PEG as publisher of the Members' Directory with distinction, would not be taking on this role for more than two issues, and so a new incumbent is sought. Very kindly, Fiona has offered to handhold the new publisher, which, together with the fact that Fiona has put systems in place, will make the new person's job a whole lot easier. But, Fiona, we say an enormous thank you to you for the professional publication you have bequeathed to PEG! (Gift handed over.)

### **Exciting new proposed appointment**

Since the LBF, thanks to the expertise and initiative of PEG member Sukaina Walji (who was supposed to represent PEG at the LBF but had a volcano to contend with instead), PEG has truly entered the Digital Age with its Facebook presence! And another instance of this is the streaming of Arthur Attwell's presentation to Cape Town members on the subject of editors' role e-books and e-publishing on 29 May via Facebook to *all* PEG members.

This is the way we *have* to go if we are all to play meaningful roles in the e-publishing community. So Sukaina has been approached to head up PEG's proposed new Digital Marketing and Communication portfolio, and she has accepted the invitation with great enthusiasm, subject, of course, to Exco's approval. What a strength to be taking on board!

I believe it's been a momentous eighteen months for PEG, but 'Too much too fast'? Yes, and No. If you are feeling bewildered by it all, it's probably because change is unsettling, but possibly also because you've not been kept sufficiently in the loop; I take responsibility and apologise unreservedly for that. But the fact is that 'there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood ...', which we have needed to take full advantage of; moreover, many of the projects we have undertaken as an Executive and as

portfolio committees could not have been tackled in isolation from one another – they're all closely interlinking; and then, of course, opportunities to market our members, such as the LBF, were deemed just too good to miss.

During the past four years, I've become increasingly aware of how 'off the radar screen', and isolated PEG has been until recently; and that unless, through increasing our visibility and rubbing shoulders in the right quarters, we raise our profile and voice, and simultaneously the professionalism of our members, we'll allow external forces and events to overtake us, and we'll be on a road to nowhere.

During my next year as your Chairperson, I intend to dedicate myself to continuing PEG on this path, to ensure that we all have access to work aplenty, that we're able to begin to command fees that reflect our value-add/worth, and that the word 'professional' in our Group's name really *does* make a difference.

**John Linnegar**

Chairperson

5 June 2010