

Increasing research impact through the use of editorial support

Rob. Sheehan

Abstract

Rendering research findings accessible to broad audiences is in the public interest – a proposition explicitly recognised in the Research Quality Framework. Effectively communicating research outcomes closes the loop with taxpayers – those private citizens and corporate entities who provide public funding for research. Communicating new knowledge to a wide readership enhances accountability and transparency.

Editors are mediators between authors and audiences. This paper argues that universities overlook editors as an important resource in making new knowledge accessible, both within the academy and beyond it. The benefits of accessibility go beyond accountability – they extend to reputation management and improved public support by securing positive visibility and a heightened awareness of research relevance.

In the decade 1990-99 the number of HDR completions in Australia increased from 2,212 to 5,347. The numbers continue to grow. Most HDR completions follow successful examination of a written thesis. Yet the wealth of new knowledge embraced in these theses is barely visible, and rarely consulted, outside the research sector. Taking PhD monographs as an example, this paper suggests that adjustments to models of university organisation, and postgraduate teaching and learning, to involve editors could assist universities to enhance the visibility and take up of research outcomes, and improve public recognition of and support for research activity.

The paper also argues that involving editors in research training programs may have a positive impact on the postgraduate student experience.

Introduction

Sir Isaac Newton was a modest man. In a letter to the scientist Robert Hooke, Newton wrote: 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants'. Newton's famous self-deprecation is, however, incomplete. Only a select group of giants expanded his horizons. A more precise statement might be this: 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants who have written things down'. The edifice of organised knowledge, interpretation and ideas is to a great extent founded on the written word.

As a servant of the written word, my propositions are these:

- First, good writing is fundamental to the communication of new knowledge.
- Second, not all academic researchers are good writers. I have anecdotal evidence only for this statement. You may be able to supply corroborating anecdotes.
- Third, supporting both the communication and the application of new knowledge is a fundamental duty of the university. This entails communication to diverse audiences, and not only those audiences who might have a direct application for that knowledge. Communication to diverse audiences necessarily requires that varied forms of written communication are embraced and valued, not formal academic writing alone.
- Fourth, communication to diverse audiences renders a broad acquittal of accountability by universities to those who have a stake in the social contribution that universities make. That is, accountability to the citizens of Australia, some (but not all) of whom are taxpayers and therefore provide public funds to university operations including research and research training.

- Fifth, communication to diverse audiences can serve to enhance the reputation of universities and may, therefore, engender and sustain broader political support for research funding.

These propositions lead me to suggest that universities could usefully consider a range of options that would serve to enhance the written communication of academic researchers, amongst whom I include postgraduate research students. There is a range of options to consider: some are now being pursued (in a piecemeal fashion) across the university sector. My paper is concerned with the part that editors might play.

Good writing is fundamental to the communication of new knowledge

It is worth reflecting on how much the communication of new knowledge relies on writing. The importance of the obvious is often overlooked. In reflecting on the importance of writing, it is also important to consider how the quality of the writing – whether it is good, indifferent or bad – will determine whether what is written is understood, or even read. Quality will mean different things for different audiences. A journal article, a newspaper feature article, and an article in a teenage magazine will require different registers and conventions, and each is a valid avenue for the dissemination of research findings. Writing for the web requires that still other conventions are accommodated.

To attempt a detailed definition of good writing is a topic for another day. However, its importance is worth underscoring. Peter Doherty's (2005) recent book, *The Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize*, contains 18 tips for would-be laureates. His fourth tip is this:

Learn to write clearly and concisely. Many people who are very good at science are great doers, but uninspired writers ... anyone who wants to be recognised as a top scientist must be able to write clear, concise English ... Science is about telling good, readable and memorable stories (p. 241).

The tip is valid for academics of any persuasion, not scientists alone. He emphasises writing clearly and concisely. What is more, he understands that good academic science writing is tied up with telling good stories: so it is with all good writing.

It is unclear whether there has been a decline or an improvement over time in the writing skills of academic researchers. Hilary McPhee (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2005), a Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at Melbourne University, and one of Australia's great publishers, has said that academics:

... have no time to learn to write, not time to sort of disappear from the campus and spend months on a book. Those days, unfortunately, are really gone, which is the other explanation for why there's so much poor, slipshod writing happening, in journal articles as well as books.

Later, in the same radio broadcast, she observes:

Even those basic skills of writing for mass media, even public speaking, all kinds of fundamental skills have not been developed in the last 20 years in academies, because of the shortage of resources, lack of time, academics doing an awful lot of administration, and so on (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2005).

There is no doubt that everyone can learn to write better. I think it's unlikely that everyone can learn to write well for a variety of audiences in a variety of publication formats. Nonetheless, good writing is fundamental to the communication of new knowledge, and axiomatically it is a fundamental concern of universities that good writing skills are nurtured. That requires a planned and thoughtful approach to supporting the development of those skills.

Why should we provide editorial assistance to academics?

It is a common misconception that all academics are good writers. They are not. This is not a criticism. This statement is a commonplace observation, no more startling than saying 'not all politicians are great orators', or 'not all university planners are well-organised'.

Nonetheless, whenever I make the statement that not all academics are good writers I am confronted with a variety of responses. Some few people agree without a hint of surprise. But most people are surprised; some are perplexed; some are offended. There is a widely held view that academics either *must* be good writers, or *should* be good writers. *Must* because, well, they are academics. *Should* because, well, you shouldn't be an academic if you can't write well. If we can set aside the shoulds and musts and deal with the unremarkable reality, there is a better chance of improving the communication, enjoyment and application of new knowledge.

Blaxter *et al* (1998) identified five primary roles for academics – teaching, research, managing, writing and networking. Of writing she notes:

It seems to be widely assumed that ... the nature and process of academic writing is understood, and that, at the level of guidance, academics already know how to write. Hence, there is little need for research into, or guidance on, for example, the development of writing skills, the processes involved in getting writing published, or individual and joint writing strategies. ... unless they are guided by more experienced colleagues, most academics will only learn their writing trade through trial and error.

The skills required to find things out, to persist over years in chasing down a historical view or an errant microbe, to pin down new applications for existing knowledge, to generate new ideas – these are a researcher's stock in trade and writing is not a foundation stone for any of these qualities or skills. Of course many academics are excellent writers in many text media; amongst the most excellent in both academic and accessible public writing are the economist, J K Galbraith, and, again, Peter Doherty. Galbraith pressed two principles of practice on an academic writer: 'go over the drafts endlessly, and ... have a good editor' (Galbraith, 1986). Peter Doherty (2005) noted in the opening pages of his *Beginner's Guide*:

Though I have written hundreds of thousands of words that have been published in various science formats over the past forty years ... I quickly discovered that I was a total novice when it came to the business of creating an interesting and readable book. Two experienced professionals, editorial consultant Kristine Olsen and Melbourne University Publishing's Sybil Nolan, took the 70,000 words or so of my original draft, re-ordered them, consigned whole chunks to the waste basket, then drew me out on various themes ... (p. ix).

Being able to produce well-written, formal academic papers is not the same as being able to write well for the Internet or a company newsletter. But even being able to produce formal academic papers can be a torrid experience for some academics as the pressure to secure publication points has to be juggled, harking back to Hilary McPhee's comments quoted earlier, with increasing administrative and teaching responsibilities. As Moore (2003) properly notes:

When individuals write out of anxiety rather than desire, the process is driven by a negative and potentially damaging ethic. In the long term, this is unlikely to help academics to initiate or maintain productive, successful writing habits.

It is not a matter of having poor writing skills and habits, or of lacking motivation to learn to write well, even of refereed journal articles alone. It is a matter of having the kinds of support that contribute to the production of well-written, accessible articles or other written texts.

While writing is not a foundation stone for the skills of academic research, writing is a cornerstone for communicating what academics unearth. The task is to support academic researchers so that they can use writing to the benefit of themselves, their peers and disciplines, their universities and communities.

Supporting Higher Degree by Research students

Academics are one large group that deserves increased support in the written communication of their research. There is another large group of researchers I am interested in – Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students. Let me offer some statistics to establish a context for their writing lot.

In 1990, there were 2 212 HDR completions in Australia. By 1999, that number had increased to 5 347 – a 141% increase. In the same period, the number of HDR completions by international students studying in Australia had grown from 345 to 920 – an increase of 166%. The share of total completions for international students grew in that 10 year period from 15% to 17%. (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000, pp. 41 and 45).

The numbers continue to climb. By 2003, there were 5 841 HDR completions. International students continue to make up about 1 in 7 of all completions. (Department of Education, Science and Training, *Students 2003 Tables*, Appendices 2.5 and 2.7). In 2003, enrolment in Doctorates by Research was 25 771, an increase of 6% on 2002.

The distribution of these students across disciplines is worthy of some note. Categorised according to Narrow Discipline Group, the shares are shown in Table 1. These figures simply remind us that these are being written in all disciplines, not in the hard sciences, business and health-related disciplines alone. Despite government and institutional policy settings that explicitly favour these disciplines, higher degrees by research continue to be done across the breadth of disciplines because HDR students persist in believing their passions and preferences are culturally and personally relevant. Those disciplines which are made Cinderellas by policy and funding model incentives have all the more reason to support efforts to improve the accessibility of new knowledge to a wider readership. Every glass slipper will find admirers in the ideas marketplace – the first task is to expand the marketplace by displaying the wares to the passing trade in the best light.

As Table 1 indicates, in 2003 there were more than 25 000 domestic and international students in Australian universities writing, or preparing to write, their theses. Variations on the traditional thesis are gaining acceptance and acknowledgement – thesis by project and publication for example – but writing remains a central part of the HDR experience.

Table 1: Actual Student Load (EFTSU) enrolled in Doctorates by Research, 2003, categorised by Narrow Discipline Group

Narrow Discipline Group	N=	%
Society and Culture	6 678	25.9
Natural and Physical Sciences	6 017	23.3
Health	3 156	12.2
Engineering and Related Technologies	2 773	10.8
Education	1 960	7.6
Management and Commerce	1 761	6.8
Information Technology	1 135	4.4
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	1 076	4.2
Creative Arts	893	3.5
Architecture and Building	322	1.2
<i>Totals</i>	<i>25 771</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training, *Students 2003 Tables*: selected Higher Education statistics, 3.5 All Student Load

(Note: From 2005 the Department of Education, Science and Training retitled Equivalent Full Time Student Unit, or EFTSU, as Equivalent Full-time Student Load, or EFTSL. The meaning of the term is unchanged. It is a value representing the student load of a course as a proportion of the student load of one year's full-time study; that is, 1 EFTSL is equivalent to 1 year full-time study).

Many academics struggle with the writing task – the mechanics of writing, and just fitting writing in to their working lives. It is to be expected that the experience of many HDR students is influenced by their supervisors' approach to the writing task and feedback provided on writing. The influence is not always positive. In his study of PhD students' views of supervision, Heath (2002) discovered that students' assessment of the adequacy of their supervision had much to do with how much assistance they received in developing scholarly writing skills. He writes:

Helping candidates develop skills in scholarly writing is a key role of the supervisor, who must not only encourage writing, but must give effective feedback on it. The emphasis placed by supervisors on these aspects of supervision can be gauged from the relationships between such variables as the feedback provided on the one hand, the frequency of meetings and the encouragement that they [students] received. These relationships may be interpreted to indicate the supervisor's commitment, but may equally reflect the supervisory workload, which in turn may be related to the financial situation. Where finances are tight and PhD students attract money according to funding formulae, there may be an impetus to accept a surfeit of candidates who must then struggle against competing demands for their supervisor's attention.

Storch and Tapper (2000) indicate that in feedback provided in two disciplines on undergraduate written assignments, there was a mismatch between student and teacher expectations about written feedback on their writing. It would be reasonable to assume that same mismatch persists into the postgraduate sphere.

In his national study on the pedagogy of good supervision, published by the Department of Education, Science and Training, Sinclair (2004) notes that where an international student is concerned, 'the editorial burden on both supervisors and candidates is extraordinary'. In effect, supervisors spend much time copyediting and making substantive editing suggestions to their international students. This is a poor use of supervisors' time – the opportunity cost is easy to identify: productive, valuable and short teaching and research time is foregone. Anecdotally, I am comfortable in asserting that supervisors also spend time performing these editorial functions for many domestic students. This work does need to be done; the question is, by whom?

Little attention is paid to how doctoral students become writers (Murray, 2002). What the system asks of PhD candidates is that they produce 100 000 words or so – a book length dissertation – most often without any structured, ongoing support to help them improve their understanding of the writing task and how best to grapple with it. When a publisher accepts a manuscript, editors are part of the publication process. Peter Doherty's experience cited earlier is but one example. Established academics, and academics who are good writers, are provided with editorial support. But for beginning researchers confronting the massive job of compiling a carefully argued thesis and mastering the panoply of conventions that apply to that particular form, limited professional editorial assistance is provided, much less structured support in developing writing skills.

Thesis editing policies, and advice to students – take your pick

Part of the argument against providing such professional assistance is that the thesis is a work for assessment, and that it must, therefore, be the student's own work. This is a weighty ethical issue. It must be approached thoughtfully if we are to maintain the credibility and vitality of postgraduate education. The hurdle is rightly set high. At its simplest, my response is that assisting to express as clearly and succinctly as possible what is already written is a service to knowledge, to the student and to supervisors. It is not a matter of an editor intruding new material into a thesis, of judging its worth or logic or academic rigour. The Deans and Director's of Graduate Studies (DDOGS) and the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) (undated) have concluded a joint policy on the editing of theses which explicitly states the boundaries of the editor's role, referencing it against the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001). The editing profession takes as seriously as the academy the understanding that the thesis is a work to be submitted for assessment.

My view is that, with the ethical issue noted, and with policy and practice always open to review, editorial support to HDR students is a wise investment for many reasons. First, it is likely to improve the HDR student experience. Second, supervisors can place their time more productively. Third, it is likely to mean greater use is made of theses as they are rendered more accessible. Fourth, working with an experienced editor will support the development of improved writing skills, especially if editors are engaged earlier rather than later in the thesis writing task. Fifth, it may have some influence on HDR completions. I can only refer anecdotally to conversations with a number of thesis writers for whom the writing demands were a major contributor to their decisions to discontinue postgraduate studies. Sixth, it is likely that the task of extracting journal articles from a thesis, once examined, would be made much easier.

The joint DDOGS/CASE policy recognises that editing has a place in the preparation of a thesis for submission. However, there are many different policies within and between universities about thesis editing and they are sometimes contradictory. A few examples will suffice. The School of Social Science at the University of Queensland states that: 'No School funds will be granted for thesis editing. At this level students are expected to be competent in written English and theses are to be proofed/edited by the student (and their Advisory Team to a minor extent)' (School of Social Science, University of Queensland, webpage). Around the corner, at QUT, the advice is different: 'Where candidates have access to funding they may wish to seek paid editorial assistance during the final stages of their thesis writing' (Office of Research and Research Training, Queensland University of Technology, webpage). Across country at the University of South Australia, students find this:

Proofreading and editing a lengthy document is a complex and time-consuming process, especially if it is a document you have written yourself. Many people find that they cannot see errors after they have worked on a document for a lengthy period. Your Supervisor can be of some assistance, but if your Supervisor has already read your material in a number of drafts, s/he may not be able to spot your errors either. For this reason it is highly recommended that you employ a professional proofreader/editor to look over your final draft. This process may take time (commonly, 2-4 weeks) but many candidates find that it is worth the wait (University of South Australia, webpage).

Clearly the university sector is at sixes and sevens about thesis editing. The obvious comment to make is that HDR students are not on a level playing field. Beyond that, editors have to be aware of the varying positions taken at different universities, and in different schools within the same universities.

It would be remiss of me not to make some mention of costs. Freelance editors charge varying rates for their services. Many, including me, charge less for thesis editing than for other editing work they undertake, mostly in recognition of the fact that the student pays for editing services from usually limited means. Some have access to writing-up allowances and other forms of financial support provided by their universities. Unfortunately, thesis writers often receive poor advice regarding the cost of editing services. However sensible and supportive the University of South Australia's advice cited earlier, the advice provided in the same document about the costs of editing services is wide of the mark. It states:

The cost of having a thesis edited varies considerably depending on its length and complexity, and the level of care required by the editor. As a very general guideline (set at rates in 2002), you might expect to pay up to AUS\$400 for a thesis up to 30,000 words, \$450 for a thesis up to 80,000 words, and \$500-\$550 or more for a thesis of 100,000 words or more. (If you are asked to pay more than this, consider asking someone else).

Even allowing for the fact that costs inevitably increase over time, it is unlikely that even a very well-written PhD thesis might be edited professionally for as little as \$550. In 2002 the average hourly rate charged by freelance editors was about \$50, so \$550 would allow for eleven hours editing. That must include consultation with the author, leaving perhaps nine or ten hours for the editing task. To copy and format edit a well-written thesis, not including the editing of a reference list and tables, would perhaps take me 15 hours. At \$50 per hour that would amount to \$750. Other editors could no doubt do the same job more quickly and very well. But it would not be unusual for the editing of a thesis to cost in the order of \$900-\$1,100. Where the standard of writing needs detailed attention, costs may be \$1,400 or more. This can be the case often for students whose first language is not English. Reference lists are a special case, often requiring very close reading and careful editing, and will add to the costs.

I began by discussing writing as a performance critical academic role and I would like to return briefly to that perspective. Supporting academics through structured, professional support in their writing role is no less important than it is for a PhD or Masters student. Providing such support to academics is likely to have several benefits. First, productivity, as measured by the acceptance rate of refereed journal articles, is likely to increase. It is possible that fewer re-submits would be required, or at least that the extent of work in re-submits would be minimised. Second, it is likely that the availability of support would signal a more supportive environment for academic writing and therefore encourage it. Third, it is likely that involvement with a professional editor will assist many academics to improve their own writing skills so that they will have less need for editorial support in the future.

My fourth point is that editors can assist academics to broaden their writing repertoires to include non-academic writing for magazines, opinion pieces, and writing for the Internet. I would like to explore this a little further in the context of a discussion about a broader notion of accountability.

Writing for many, not the few

In their article, 'The Waste of a PhD: the experience of disseminating the results of postgraduate research', Dinham and Scott (1999) reported on a survey of 139 people who responded to an international survey about dissemination of the results of their postgraduate research. Of those respondents, 42% had experienced difficulty in disseminating their findings, 23% expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which they had achieved dissemination, while 43% had disseminated their findings in some way. They also report on dissatisfaction about the want of support from their supervisors and universities for disseminating their findings.

As Leonard *et al* (2005) point out,

... it is for those who teach them, and Deans of Graduate Schools, to remind management and policy-makers of the riches research students bring with them. This is not just a question of their fees, but of the knowledge transfer they ... provide in and out of university, and the important contributions to knowledge they make through their theses, publications and teachers in their turn.

One of the reminders might be that most HDR students want to disseminate their findings and need assistance to identify and engage with their potential audiences.

Professor Peter Cuttance of the University Melbourne was quoted in *The Age* newspaper as saying: 'Policy-makers generally take little notice of most of the [educational] research that is produced and teachers take even less notice of it – other than giving researchers a salary, it has little relevance' (Cuttance, quoted in Milburn, 2005). While there will be many reasons for this, and relevance is no doubt a primary consideration, it is also likely that much research is written up in a manner that is not familiar to, or accessible by, those who might make use of it. In his paper, 'Is Australian educational research worthwhile?', Phelan (2000) writes that his data indicate: 'Australian educational research has substantial potential for application to teaching practices'. He goes on to say that many research articles:

First ... deal with sampling and methodological issues that are unlikely to be of much interest to most teachers, but eventually draw conclusions from their research providing practical information that teachers would value if it were made available to them. Although, for example, it might not be immediately evident to a teacher that that direction of causality between performance and attitudes has important implications for teaching practice, research on issues such as this make an important potential contribution, if only teachers could learn of these findings (my emphasis).

It is that concluding phrase that I would like to dwell on for a moment: 'if only teachers could learn of these findings'.

For academics, reading journal articles is essential. The written article is the backbone of the body of knowledge. But for most teachers, reading journal articles is not regarded as essential and very few do so. Teachers read widely and often, both print and online, but rarely do they read journal articles.

One of the propositions I put at the beginning of this paper is that supporting both the communication and the application of new knowledge is a fundamental duty of the university. This entails communication to diverse audiences, and not only those audiences who might have a direct application for that knowledge. Communication with diverse audiences necessarily requires that varied forms of written communication are embraced and valued, not just formal academic writing.

Teachers are not to be criticised for failing to read journal articles. The journal article is a specialised form, evolved to meet demanding academic standards. Its place is not at issue. But the potential users of research findings are not limited to the academy. The successful commercialisation of research is evidence of that, but

no-one pretends it is always easy to bring together venture capitalists and academics, nor to engender mutual understanding between them. It may be that most academic research output doesn't have a commercial value, but most research does have a social value. It is a crying shame that there is educational research relevant to teaching practice that does not reach teachers. A direct and immediate application for the knowledge produced is lost. The challenge is to find ways to package research findings so that they are accessible and can have their rightful influence. It is a communication task.

All editors have a mediating role between authors and readers. Most editors have experience of a variety of written forms. They can be pressed into service to assist academics frame their research findings in ways that will appeal to non-academic audiences. Most editors are skilled at picking the style requirements of particular publications and advising authors on how to dress research findings for a chosen outing. I believe editors can support the wider dissemination of research findings – whether from postgraduate research or from working academics. Editors can assist universities to fulfil the duty that falls upon the university to communicate its work, thereby supporting the recognition and application of new knowledge.

Meeting new accountabilities – how can editors assist?

Fulfilling such a duty is a non-regulated moral responsibility and, to some extent, an act of altruism. Accountability, however, is about acquitting duties in ways that demonstrate the fulfilment of stipulated requirements. Traditionally, the accountability of an academic is to her or his discipline and that accountability is met by making her or his research available to critique by her or his peers; the writing of a journal article, for example, that is peer reviewed.

The preferred model for the proposed Research Quality Framework (RQF) states the focus of the RQF should be on both:

- the quality of research including its intrinsic merit and academic impact – academic impact relates to the recognition of the originality of research by peers and its impact on the development of the same or related discipline areas; and
- its broader impact or use, i.e. the extent to which research is successfully applied – broader impact or usefulness relates to the recognition by qualified end-users that quality research has been successfully applied (Expert Advisory Group for the RQF, 2005).

The preferred model, if it is adopted, would tie research funding explicitly to impact outside the academy, as well as within it. Reaching the broader, outside audience has more going for it than altruism. Indirectly, this is a means of ensuring that stakeholders are getting their money's worth. It requires renewed effort in communicating research outcomes to those who can make use of them. In the earlier example of the inaccessibility of much educational research to teachers themselves, the challenge is with faculties of Education to identify the avenues for getting the research messages into the education marketplace in forms that will be accessed by teachers, and in ways that will be understood and used by teachers. That communication challenge is one editors can assist with.

Before turning finally to some possible ways forward, I want to visit briefly the last of my five propositions, that communication to diverse audiences can serve to enhance the reputation of universities and may, therefore, engender and sustain broader political support for research funding. Objective 6 of the Australian Research Council's *Strategic Plan, 2005-2007*, reads: 'Increase awareness, understanding and support among stakeholders and the community, of the outcomes and benefits of Australian research'. The outcome linked to that objective reads: 'Increased support for investment in research, better informed debate and decision-making, improved understanding of IP issues and enhanced capacity within the community to manage change'.

Increasing awareness, understanding and support implies a concerted effort at communication. Speaking to Rotary Clubs, three or four paragraphs in the *Neighbourhood Watch* newsletter, an article in *OK* magazine, are all on the agenda. Most people will not read a journal article that relates to their working lives. Fewer still will read a journal article for private pleasure. Reaching that broader audience is not hard, but it is a

different communication task to the one universities are broadly familiar with. Whether print or electronic, the avenues are there to be used and editors can assist in crafting material that reaches the many readerships that are available to academics.

What next?

I will not detail the ways in which editing and writing support could be more widely utilised in universities. The following suggestions are meant as discussion points for both universities and editors. Some of them could equally involve other professionals – journalists and public relations practitioners, for example. It is also necessary to say that editors come in many shapes and sizes. There are generalists. Some are technical editors only. Others specialise in book production. Others specialise in academic writing. Knowing what you want an editor to do will guide you to the shape and size that fits best.

1. Implement a structured discussion within and between universities about thesis editing with a view to securing greater consistency in approach and attitude.
2. Establish a register of editors who have experience in academic editing and make this available to HDR students and academics. (The introduction in the near future of professional, national accreditation for editors may assist this approach. Accreditation will be managed through the Institute of Professional Editors, or IPEd, which is now being established).
3. Employ editors within schools or faculties, perhaps on a part-time or casual basis, to provide editing support to academics writing journal articles, research funding applications, and pieces for non-academic readerships.
4. Involve editors earlier in the writing process – whether for thesis editing and other academic writing, or for non-academic writing tasks – so that their skills in document planning and development are utilised.
5. Involve editors in structured, preferably ongoing, writing programs for academics and HDR students (Moore, 2003; Mullen, 2001; Murray, 2002). As much academic writing involves joint authorship, a useful element of such programs could be to consider how best to involve editors in supporting the writing of texts with multiple contributors. One way of doing this for HDR students, would be to offer, as part of research training curriculum, structured learning opportunities (which editors could help to design and deliver) about academic writing (Graduate School, University of Washington, webpage; Singh & Knight, 2002) and working with an editor.
6. Establish links between a number of freelance editors with different skill sets, and faculty or university marketing and communications personnel.
7. Involve editors in induction programs for international and domestic students embarking on higher degrees by research.
8. Provide time-limited, task-focussed one-on-one sessions between editors and academics, or HDR students, as one strategy for assisting them to improve their writing skills.
9. Consider establishing internal university supports like the Writing Centre at the University of Melbourne (The Writing Centre, webpage).
10. Give the time and effort committed to learning, teaching, and managing in higher education, perhaps it is time to support research into, and conference activity around, writing as a performance critical aspect of the academic role.

Implementing strategies like these is not difficult. Any strategy selected must be tied to measurable outcomes and outputs. Universities need to be convinced that editors can add value to the writing undertaken by HDR students and academic staff. Where universities need more information, the Society of Editors in each state or territory is a starting point.

The editing profession has much to offer universities and it is time for conversations between them to begin.

References

Australian Research Council, 2005, *Strategic Plan 2005-2007*. Retrieved 28 August, 2005, from http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/ARC_Strategic_Plan_05-07.pdf

Blaxter L, Hughes C and Tight M, 1998, 'Writing on academic careers', *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(3).

Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2005, 'Transforming scholarly writing', Transcript. Retrieved 14 August, 2005 from <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwwriting/stories/s1327971.htm>

Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001, *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Retrieved 14 August, 2005 from http://www.case-editors.org/files/CASE_editing_standards.pdf

Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies and Council of the Australian Societies of Editors, *The Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors* (undated). Retrieved 28 August, 2005, from http://www.case-editors.org/files/Editing_theses.pdf

Department of Education, Science and Training, *Students 2003 Tables: selected Higher Education statistics, 3.5 All Student Load*. Retrieved 16 August, 2005 from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/selected_higher_education_statistics/students_2003_tables.htm#3.5_All_Student_Load

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Higher Education Students Time Series Tables: selected higher education statistics – 2000*, Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Dinham S and Scott C, 1999, 'The Waste of a PhD: the experience of disseminating the results of postgraduate research', HERDSA Annual International Conference, Melbourne, Conference Proceedings.

Doherty P, 2005, *The Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize*, Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press.

Expert Advisory Group for the RQF, 2005, *Research Quality Framework: assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia – the preferred model*, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

Galbraith J, 1986, *Intellectual Journey: Challenging the conventional wisdom – Conversation with John Kenneth Galbraith*, webpage. Retrieved 28 September, 2005 from <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Galbraith/galbraith2.html>

Gilbert R, Balatti J, Turner P and Whitehouse H, 2004, 'The generic skills debate in research higher degrees,' *Higher Education Research and Development*, 23(3).

Graduate School, University of Washington, *Re-envisioning the PhD: Promising Practices – The Dissertation*, webpage. Retrieved 28 August, 2005, from <http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/practices/topics/t04.html>

Heath T, 2002, 'A quantitative analysis of PhD students' views of supervision', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 21(1).

Leonard D, Becker R and Coate K, 2005, 'To prove myself at the highest level: the benefits of doctoral study', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 24(2).

- Lovat T, Holbrook A and Hazel G, 2004, 'What qualities are rare in examiners reports?', Australian Association for Research in Education, Conference Paper, <http://www.aare.edu.au/01pap/lov01589.htm> [Accessed: 28 August, 2005]
- McCalman I, 2003, 'Popularising the humanities', Australian Academy of the Humanities. Retrieved 24 August, 2005, from <http://www.humanities.org.au/News/Opinion/PopularisingHumanities.pdf>
- Milburn C, 2005, 'Education Research "irrelevant"', *The Age*, 2 July, p5, Melbourne.
- Moore S, 2003, 'Writers' Retreats for academics: exploring and increasing the motivation to write', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(3).
- Mullen C, 2001, 'The need for a curricular writing model for graduate students', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 25(1).
- Murray R, 2002, 'Writing development for lecturers moving from further to higher education: a case study', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(3).
- Nyquist J, 2002, 'The PhD: a tapestry of change for the 21st century', *Change*, 34(9).
- Pearse H, 2002, 'Implementing the Research Training Scheme: the consequences for postgraduate research students', Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, <http://www.capa.edu.au/frameset.html?./papers/index.html> [Accessed: 14 August, 2005]
- Phan L, 2001, 'How do culturally situated notions of 'polite' forms influence how Vietnamese postgraduate students write academic English in Australia?', *Australian Journal of Education*, 45(3).
- Phelan T, 2000, 'Is Australian educational research worthwhile?', *Australian Journal of Education*, 44(2).
- Queensland University of Technology, Office of Research and Research Training, hyperlink to document, *Editing of theses*. Retrieved 28 September, 2005, from <http://www.research.qut.edu.au/restdncen/postgradcrse/formsandguid/thesisexam.jsp#information>
- Robson J, Francis B and Read B, 2002, 'Writes of Passage: stylistic features of male and female undergraduate history essays', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(4).
- Sinclair M, 2004, *The Pedagogy of "good" PhD supervision: a national cross-disciplinary investigation of PhD supervision*, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Singh P and Knight J, 'The knowledge economy and higher degree research training', *QUT e-prints*, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00001772/01/1772.pdf> [Accessed: 28 September, 2005]
- School of Social Science, University of Queensland, *School Policy on Financial Support to Research Higher Degree Students*. Retrieved 28 September, 2005, from <http://www.ansoc.uq.edu.au/index.html?page=15016&pid=0>
- Storch N and Tapper J, 2000, 'The focus of teacher and student concerns in discipline specific writing by university students', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 19(3).
- The Writing Centre, University of Melbourne, homepage. Retrieved 28 September, 2005, from <http://www.sgs.unimelb.edu.au/writingcentre/>
- University of South Australia, no date, *Guidelines and Requirements for Written Thesis Presentation at UniSA*. Retrieved 14 August, 2005, from <http://www.unisa.edu.au/resdegrees/candidates/docs/ThesPres.rtf+%27written+thesis+presentation+at+unisa%27&hl=en>

Usher R, 2002, 'A diversity of doctorates: fitness for the knowledge economy', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 21(2).