AS THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY takes shape, editors face many challenges: technology is transforming publishing, text is losing out to graphics, and writing is distorted by cliché, hype and spin. More than ever, editors are needed to add value to information and to rescue readers from boredom and confusion.

*The Editor’s Companion* explains the traditional skills of editing for publication and how to adapt them for digital production. It describes the editorial tasks for all kinds of print and screen publications—from fantasy novels, academic texts and oral history to web pages, government documents and corporate reports. It provides advice on operating a freelance business and includes the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* as an appendix. It is an essential tool not only for professional editors but also for media and publications officers, self-publishers and writers editing their own work.

With its broad coverage of editorial concerns *The Editor’s Companion* is the 21st-century replacement for the friendly guidance of in-house mentors and colleagues.

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Preface

THE PROFESSION OF EDITING for publication is at a crossroads. Either editors go forward to a bright future, with greater status and remuneration than we have ever had; or we slip into oblivion along with other casualties of a rapidly changing world, like Latin teachers and shorthand typists.

Text is being displaced in the dissemination of information—largely because it is often clumsy and ineffective. Editors add value to raw text; we transform information into knowledge. But editorial skills, properly applied, do not draw attention to themselves, and therefore they are overlooked and undervalued. Editing is crucial to the effective presentation of information and the lucid discussion of ideas. The editor knows how to make a product that is functional and fit for its purpose. We conceptualise the kind of publication that will best do the job for the given resources—whether it is a marketing brochure, a website, a textbook or a novel—and we bring it into being.

The emerging national consciousness of the profession is a sign of hope. In 2001 editors nationwide adopted Australian Standards for Editing Practice, which are reproduced in the appendix to this book. The Standards codify the knowledge that editors bring to the job. Admirably succinct, they are statements of principles with wide ramifications that need to be unpacked. The Standards can be regarded as beacons on a rocky shore; The Editor’s Companion takes them as its reference points for a detailed chart of the coastline.

The role of the editor in the production process is expanding beyond traditional copyediting. Editors now undertake concept development and information design at one end and typesetting and page layout at the other, with a bit of publicity and marketing on the side. Screen publications require editors to adapt their expertise to a new medium and learn new jargon and technical skills. As amateur publishing expands, editors are asked to assemble the publishing team and manage the whole project. The Companion marks out traditional editorial skills amid the fluid job descriptions of the knowledge economy.
Preface

I have taught editing at every level from primary school to postgraduate master classes and in-service training, and I am grateful to the participants for their insights. I know that editors need advice on applying the Standards to their work, on systematic methods of working, on adapting to screen work, and on making a success of freelancing. The Companion answers their questions.

Since 1966 Australian editors have relied on the government Style Manual, now in a splendid sixth edition by Snooks & Co. (John Wiley & Sons Australia, 2002), and I have not attempted to duplicate its thorough coverage of writing, typography and reproduction. The Companion translates the Style Manual’s recommendations into practical editing tasks and provides advice on the puzzles that arise in daily work. As in-house training declines and more editors freelance, editing can be a lonely business. The Companion replaces, to some extent, the friendly guidance and reassurance that were once provided by mentors and colleagues.

I am grateful to my mentors, Camilla Raab, Peter Jones and Peter Ryan at Melbourne University Press, who launched me on my editing career.

Thanks are due to the Council of Australian Societies of Editors for permission to reproduce Australian Standards for Editing Practice; and to the members of CASE and its working groups on standards and accreditation for pleasurable collaboration. For permission to reproduce copyright material I am grateful to John Bangsund, Mike Crooke, Peter Donoughue, Susan Hawthorne, Pamela Hewitt and Janet Salisbury.

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Janet Mackenzie
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