

## **CEO's Report to the AGM 2018**

The 2017/2018 financial year has been hectic and full of change, as we continue to work to position the ASA strongly for the future and it is satisfying to look back on the progress that has been made.

### **Significant Achievements**

- ❖ Positive financial performance
- ❖ Successful realisation of capital gain on Pitt St investment property
- ❖ More focused board structure in place after constitutional amendments
- ❖ Investment Committee appointed across all three funds
- ❖ Virtual Professional Development fulfilling national remit
- ❖ *New to View* proving to be a popular service
- ❖ Membership starting to increase
- ❖ Popular 6-part podcast series launched
- ❖ New resources including model contract templates for Trade, Education, Ghost Writers and Joint Authors/Illustrators
- ❖ Significant increase in social media interaction and engagement

### **Advocacy and Advice**

Just like rust, advocacy never sleeps.

Striving for equitable, relevant copyright reform that continues to protect the author or illustrator's ability to draw fair income from their work remains a central pillar of the ASA's advocacy efforts. While the implementation of Fair Use in its entirety, now seems less likely, it is essential that we continue to discuss ways in which a more up-to-date and flexible copyright regime can be established, without placing our members' careers at risk.

Digital lending rights also continue to be at the top of our advocacy list, despite the fact that this issue is significantly more complex than we had imagined, because licencing audio books and ebooks into libraries is a very different arrangement to the purchasing of print books. This means that we are making slower progress than we had hoped, but we are persevering and

remain quietly confident that there is sufficient goodwill around this initiative for it to succeed, even if it will take longer than we had hoped.

The industry landscape is not getting any easier and our advocacy under the Fair Contracts banner is more necessary than ever before. Increasingly we are looking at some of the developments in Europe, including bestseller clauses and earlier reversion of rights to Authors, as proven examples of ways in which the imbalance of power between authors/illustrators and publishers can be addressed.

*Parliamentary Friends of Australian Books and Writers*, the group set up to provide a forum for Members and Senators to meet and interact with the book industry on matters relating to the work of writers, illustrators, printers, publishers and booksellers. Co-chaired by Senator Linda Reynolds and Mr Graham Perrett MP, this has been a great step forward in providing us with better political access as a united industry.

The ASA will continue to advocate strongly on behalf of all our members, to do everything we can to ensure that it is possible to build a creative career and receive fair remuneration.

As far as individual advocacy is concerned, we continue to find that our advice is sought ever more frequently as the market continues to become more complex and confusing. Red Dirt Week earlier in the year and our recent Self-Publishing Workshop are platforms for us to help inform our members about the pitfalls of rushing into agreements without thoughtful research. Knowledge truly is power.

### Staffing

Over the course of the year our staff has been very stable:

- Olivia Lanchester, Legal Services Manager and Company Secretary
- Emily Banyard, Marketing Manager
- Laurine Croasdale, Professional Development and Mentorship
- Lauren Anderson, Membership and ASA's Style File Officer.
- Angeles Galvez, Bookkeeper

While there are six of us in the team, only Emily and I work full-time, meaning that the total team is equal to a mere 4.2 FTEs (full-time equivalents). Of course more staff would be an enormous help, but in these largely unfunded times, we simply cannot justify additional overhead at this stage. It does mean, however, that we have to focus on work that either directly benefits our members, or directly helps to grow the membership, which in turn generates more income that can be used for new resources and initiatives.

## Programs, Events, Resources and Services

Our Virtual Professional Development program has grown over the financial year, kick-started by a grant from Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund, which allowed us to develop a 6-part Podcast series, showcasing writers who had extended their writing careers in a number of interesting ways. We now run a number of workshops virtually, rather than face to face, and at our recent Self-Publishing workshop we had 30 participants in the room and 48 more throughout the country, participating via videoconference. It is so exciting that new technology now provides a low-cost way for us to start to build a sense of community among members in the remotest parts of Australia.

Our Mentorship program has also been growing in popularity and we will soon be launching our new, more diverse mentor list, who will cover a broader range of genre including Illustrators across a number of categories for our Style File members, extended Non-fiction including Journalism, Illustrated Lifestyle titles and extended Genre Fiction.

The pilot International Rights Marketplaces have been enthusiastically embraced, which has led to a refinement of the program, making it even easier for International publishers and agents to access the service. We have also worked hard to significantly broaden the number of International participants for the current financial year.

Although running a little later than we had hoped, the new ASA Style File website has proved to be a big hit, with more than 10 jobs being offered within the first few weeks of opening. We hope that this initiative, along with the first Illustrator International Marketplace planned for early next year and the extended mentorship service, will demonstrate to our Illustrator members that we greatly value their participation in the ASA.

With newer and more sophisticated websites and a Marketing Manager skilled in social media, we are also able to not only keep in closer contact with you all, but also portray our advocacy efforts much more broadly and strongly than ever before.

## The Future

The new financial year has got off to an excellent start, with results running ahead of budget in the first quarter. We have many plans and dreams for bringing new benefits to all our members, and although our modest resources mean that we can't implement everything as fast as we would like, we have learned to be creative in our problem-solving, to listen to what you are telling us is most important to you, and to use new technology to drive initiatives that we believe will help you enrich your careers.

As always, these are challenging times, but this simply means that the ASA's Advocacy, Support and Advice are even more relevant and necessary than ever before and I can assure you that the directors and staff are all focused on one thing: delivering the very best service to all our members. We want

you to be fairly paid for your work, to have your IP rights preserved and to be your voice supporting positive change. I would like to thank our Chair, Chris Pash, our wonderful Board of Directors and Laurine, Lauren, Emily, Olivia and Angeles, the small but perfectly formed ASA team, who all work tirelessly to deliver the very best to each and every one of our members. The book industry is built on relationships and individual enthusiasm and passion and I can assure every ASA member that you are in very good hands for the future.

Juliet Rogers  
CEO