Central Queensland University (CQ University)

Donna Lee Brien

Writing to understand ourselves: an organisational history of the Australian Association of Writing Programs 1996-2010

Abstract

In 2008, the Australian Association of Writing Programs Committee of Management endorsed a proposal that a published history should mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Association. This article outlines the theoretical and methodological framing decided upon, the process to be employed, and the information gathering still to be completed, in order to produce a useful and appealing history of the AAWP. Such planning is essential because writing authorised organisational histories can be an unadventurous and reactionary activity, resulting in dull hagiographies of little interest or enduring value. Recent thinking on organisational history writing has, however, suggested that such histories can be an important and proactive moment in ongoing processes of institution building for the organisation so chronicled. This is at least in part because the processes involved in organisational history research and writing can prompt an action learning cycle of discovery, reflection, learning and future improvement for those involved.

Background

In July 2007, I attended the annual conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) in Tempe, Arizona, in my role as Chair of the Committee of Management of the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP). Among the many interesting papers presented at this conference were a number whose contents contained important ramifications in relation to writing programs and their administration in Australia. What struck me most forcefully, however, was a session dedicated to a series of papers on various aspects of the WPA's history, work and achievements. Formed in 1977 (McLeod 2007: 71), the WPA was then 30 years old and its history was well in the process of elucidation, in book chapters (see, for instance, L'Eplattenier & Mastrangelo 2004, McLeod 2007) and papers discussing in a historical context the work of the Council and that of writing program administrators (see, for instance, Hesse 2002; Mirtz 1999; Phelps 1999). This, in association in my decision to not seek re-election for the role of AAWP Chair for 2009, prompted me propose that a history should mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Australian Association of Writing Programs. This proposal was endorsed by the Committee of Management at the 2008 annual conference. Progress was reported at the association's annual conference in 2009 (see Brien 2009).

This article outlines the theoretical and methodological framing decided upon, the process to be employed, and the information gathering still to be completed, in order to produce a useful and appealing history of the AAWP. Such planning has been especially important as the result of authorised organisational history writing can be dull seamless hagiographies of little interest or enduring value. Recent thinking on organisational history writing has, however, recognised that

such histories are crafted pieces of *writing* (Durepos, Mills & Helms Mills 2008), with all that such a process involves. They can also be an important and proactive moment in the ongoing process of institution building for the organisation so chronicled. This is, at least in part, because the processes involved in organisational history research and writing can prompt an action learning cycle of discovery, reflection, learning and future improvement for those involved. Klæbe (2006) has discussed this in her work on oral history as a tool for community building, especially where oral history is used in making a creative artefact that has knowledge sharing as a primary purpose.

Context

As student demand for training in the creative arts has grown in Australia, and various quality assurance regimes have brought increasing levels of regulation to the higher education sector in Australia as well as internationally, the professionalism of tertiary level creative arts disciplines has also increased. The formation of the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) in 1996 marked the recognition of the professional requirements of writing as a tertiary-level discipline by a number of those involved in teaching in the discipline in Australian universities. Over the intervening years, the engagement of the organisation's membership with pedagogical and other key issues for the discipline has continued and developed, a situation that has ensured that the AAWP has become not only the most important national forum for the discussion of the teaching of writing in higher education in Australia, but also a significant player in the international scene. This is because the association's initial interest in teaching writing has been informed by and, in turn, has informed research into, and theorisation of, research in writing, and more widely in the creative arts, in Australia and beyond.

Although beginning with a focus on creative writing - and especially fiction writing - in Australian universities, the interests of the organisation have grown as its members' interests and their locations have expanded, to include nonfiction (with a focus on creative nonfiction and all forms of life writing), professional and technologically-influenced forms of writing; as well, its membership has expanded from the university sector to the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) sector in Australia. The AAWP also has a significant membership from New Zealand, a situation that was recognised by the holding of the 2009 annual conference in that country and, at that conference, the raising of a successful motion at the Executive Committee of Management meeting to change the association's name to the Australasian Association of Writing Programs. Since 1996 the AAWP has, principally through its membership, also formed various linkages with other cognate bodies and organisations nationally and internationally, including the Tertiary Writing Network in New Zealand, the National Association of Writers in Education in the UK and the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP), and the WPA in the USA. Since its inception, the organisation's twin foci of engaged dialogue and dissemination of best practice have been encapsulated in two regular forums. These are the association's annual conference, the first of which was held at the University of Technology in Sydney in 1996, and its international peer-refereed journal, *TEXT*, which has published two annual issues and six special issues since 1997.

Conceptualising professional associations and the AAWP

Professional associations are most commonly constituted as non-profit entities with multiple, although related, aims. These aims are commonly to further the interests of both a profession and the individuals engaged in that profession, as well as to establish, develop, maintain and, in many cases, guarantee the standards of that profession. Some professional organisations supply professionally-focused education programs, and others accredit educational programs and/or certify that graduates of those programs possess a necessary level of skills and knowledge in the professional area. This fits into conceptualisations of what professions are, such as Haskell's (2000) definition of a profession as a group of people whose practice is shaped by training and credentialing against a proven and rigorous body of knowledge and Ohmann, who agrees but goes further to note that the body of knowledge is 'develop[ed] and guard[ed] ... within a universally recognized institution such as a university' (1999: 227).

While one of the AAWP's overriding concerns is with writing discipline-related standards in higher education, it - like many other education-related professional associations - also acts as a learned society for the academic discipline of writing and for the academics who comprise that profession in the higher education sector. Other professional associations differ, in focusing on providing service to the general public. While this latter aspect is not the AAWP's framing focus, its members do supply a great deal of community-related service as part of their organisational activity. Many associations combine aspects of these various elements. Professional nursing organisations, for example, 'represent the voice of their membership in influencing development of public policy, setting professional standards and in promoting the profession and raising awareness of its vital role and contribution to the health care sector' (Daly & Bryant 2007: 27) and provide the key focus for peer recognition and credentialing in Australia (Middleton, Walker & Leigh 2009). The property and construction industries in Australia have relied 'heavily' on professional bodies to 'maintain educational and professional standards ... and to regulate the profession' (Warren & Wilkinson 2008: 354). Despite this, however, students surveyed in these building-related industries, although valuing professional qualifications, had a lack of understanding about the role of the relevant professional bodies in their careers, and their expectations of the value of membership were not the same as those expected by employer groups (Warren & Wilkinson 2008). Picking up on this question of the relationship between professional bodies and the constituents they claim to serve, this history of the AAWP will seek to describe how the AAWP fits into the universe of professional bodies and their networks of professional relationships. In doing this, it will attempt to explicate how the AAWP connects (or fails to connect) with its community. It is hoped that this process will help to expand not only knowledge about the association itself but also about this sense of community and what it means for these academics and writers.

The study of professional associations is a subset of the discipline of organisational studies, which is also known as organisational behaviour and organisational theory. This is an established academic discipline, with the highly regarded *Journal of organisational behaviour* having published some 1100 research papers in its 30-year history. This area of study focuses on how people, both as individuals and as groups, function within organisations, as well as how organisations operate as entities, and how they develop and change. Within this discipline, the history of organisations, and how these can be researched and written, is a further specialised area of inquiry. While studies of businesses and government units are prominent, the definition of organisations in this context also includes those that are not-for-profit in orientation, such as non-government and professional organisations.

As Katzenbach and Smith define a team as not just any group of people who work together on a specific task or project, but rather a 'number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable' (1994: 45), this approach is particularly applicable for the study of professional associations whose work is primarily mobilised by groups of motivated members. Katzenbach and Smith's findings that high performance teams are 'deeply committed to one another's personal growth and success' (1994: 92) and become 'vehicles for personal learning and development' (1994: 48) is also an interesting frame for investigating the impact of the AAWP on its members, as well as why this may have occurred - particularly since the AAWP is an association which, as the programs of its annual conferences show, focuses on the wellbeing of its individual members as well as the profession of tertiary level writing teachers more holistically.

That said, having defined organisational culture as 'a patterned system of perceptions, meanings and beliefs about the organization which facilitates sense-making amongst a group of people sharing common experiences and guides individual behaviour', Bloor and Dawson (1994: 276) underscore shared perceptions and shared practices as 'group sense-making' (280) rather than the sum of its by individual members' values. Further research on teamwork is applicable to this context. Beyerlein, Freedman, McGee and Moran, for instance, look beyond the functioning of individual teams to those that are networked into what they call 'collaborative organisations' (2002) - a model into which the work of the AAWP fits. The AAWP networks not only academics and students as individuals, but also the university programs they represent, with other national and international organisations. A key writer in this area, Senge, actually applied his own understanding of teamwork to the context of education in 1998, articulating his vision for the future of the sector in terms of 'collective agendas', 'shared vision' (Senge 1998: 60), 'partnerships' and 'collective responsibility' (1998: 64). While this has certainly not become the norm in our increasingly competitive educational institutions in the intervening decade, such aspirational thinking provides an appropriate way to conceptualise the work of professional organisations such as the AAWP that do indeed display high levels of collaborative, community-focused, teamwork. This teamwork has been manifest outside the association itself in cross-organisational collaboration between members of the AAWP and with other organisations. While this will be investigated in detail in the history, some instances of this collaborative work include joint discipline-related grant proposals, grant-funded projects, conference presentations and publication projects.

In beginning work on this history of the AAWP, I have also searched for a way to describe the particular way in which the membership relates to the association's professional field (university writing programs) and the broader culture in which this professional field, and this relationship, is located (that of the industry of writing and publishing, and the culture of work more generally). While it is accepted that all professionals bring a range of values, attitudes and expectations to any organisation they join (see, for instance, Louis 1980), this on its own does not provide a very fruitful area of investigation when thinking of an association such as the AAWP as a totality. I have found, instead, a useful framing for such a study in various authors' musings on contemporary working life and its effects on workers, both in professional and personal terms.

In *The corrosion of character: the personal consequences of work in the New Capitalism* (1998), Sennett describes how, despite rhetoric to the contrary, contemporary corporations (and corporately-run organisations such as universities) regard their employees as disposable. In response, Sennett reports,

many employees feel little real loyalty to the bodies they work for and, as much personal self-image is embedded in the idea of one's career, this detachment has significant negative consequences for employees' emotional and psychological wellbeing. Alongside this, Sennett argues that, although many of us seem to have a great deal of freedom of our choice of career, the actual jobs we perform offer little autonomy or agency. In these terms, the commitment that members make to a professionally-focused organisation such as the AAWP - a commitment that is manifest in energy, time and money spent on that organisation's business - could be explained by investigating how such an association allows its members to shape a coherent narrative around their working lives. That this is created in an atmosphere of collegiality and mutual helpfulness may well induce an allegiance that has been transferred from the workplace itself.

Moreover, Sennett's finding in a later volume on this theme, *The craftsman*, that craftsmanship - which he defines as an 'enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett 2008: 9) - is fundamental for individual as well as collective wellbeing, also has relevance for understanding an organisation such as the AAWP which has a creative artform (in this case, writing) as its underpinning focus. Such a framework can assist in answering questions such as, why people join, maintain membership of, and complete considerable voluntary labour for, such organizations - especially when a common theme running through member conversations is how busy people are. If, again according to Sennett, craftsmanship is not valued in the contemporary workplace and this is contributing to employees feeling demoralised, then it is possible that being able to invest craftsmanship's 'engaged material consciousness' (its skill, commitment and judgment) (Sennett 2008: 180) in the association's activities encourages and validates membership and the time this consumes.

Reveley and McLean's (2008) evaluation of two divergent views of employee occupational identification provides a cognisant model for thinking about personal motivations for organisational membership. In line with Sennett, they work from the position that occupational identity is waning under modern managerial processes. They also, however, define a second view that posits that some employees are not just giving up their occupational identities, but are, in resistance, developing new ways to sustain these. While, moreover, trade unions are traditionally seen as the sites for such identity formation and resistance, Reveley and McLean suggest that contemporary instances of occupational identification and resistance are much more complex, even in traditional blue collar industries. Such analyses as these are useful in terms of asking whether the AAWP promotes and fosters occupational identity for its members, and if so, whether this identity is shared or individual.

Providing another relevant approach for investigating organisational membership, Moynihan and Pandey (2007) assist with the community service aspect by expanding on Perry's foundational work on why people engage in community/public service (1996 and 2000). In this work, Moynihan and Pandey show that membership of professional organisations, and the organisational environment of that association, strongly affects members' motivations towards public service (2007). In underlining the 'importance of encouraging public employees to feel that they are personally contributing to an organization that performs a valuable service, without unnecessary restrictions or controls on their efforts' (2007: 48), Moynihan and Pandey suggest an applicable line of inquiry for considering what motivates some members to dedicate considerable time and efforts to the AAWP, wherein most project work is largely self generated and self directed.

Organisational history: motivations and uses

While the writing of history has been attended by centuries of debate around objectivity and subjectivity, fact and fiction, and analysis and interpretation, and organisational histories themselves have a long history, the specialist area of organisational history is a new area of scholarly inquiry (see Üsdken & Kieser 2004; and Booth & Rowlinson's editorial introduction to the new journal *Management & organizational history*, 2006). To use a basic definition, organisational history mobilises the historical method to document the activities of businesses or associations. At its best, an organisational history also attempts to unpack and understand the workings of an organisation, including the personal motivations and sectoral influences at work in its formation, development, current operation and potential future, and the forces at work in the creation of any documented history (Durepos, Mills & Helms Mills 2008).

The achievement of a significant anniversary or other milestone is a common prompt for the formal recording of an organisational, institutional or business history. In such instances, the resultant history is often understood as a way of reporting and celebrating past achievements. The introductions of such histories reveal, moreover, that many are also attempts at legacy building. A survey of such histories held by the National Library of Australia reveals that watershed anniversaries such as centenaries, 75, 50, 25, 20, 15 and even 10 years of operation are recorded in the titles of many Australian organisational histories, including *The Greater Union story 1910-1985: 75 years of cinema in Australia* (O'Brien 1985), *Jubilee pictorial history of Churches of Christ in Australasia* (Maston 1903), *Onward bound: The first 50 years of Outward Bound Australia* (Klaebe 2005), *Silver memories: The history of the first 25 years of the Australia-Japan Association of South Australia* (Wood 1995), *The National Servicemen's Association of Australia: A history 1987-2007* (Callaghan & Wallis 2007), *The first fifteen years: Australia's Natural Disasters Organization* (Britton & Wettenhall 1991), and *The Australian-Asian Association of Victoria: A history 1956-1966* (Gourlay 1997). These neat time gradations are not, however, always the case with, for instance, a 60-year history of community organisation Toc H (Altschwager 1985) and that of the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Maribyrnong (DSTO) in Victoria marking 82 years of operation from 1922 to 2004 (Smith 2005).

This survey reveals that histories of certain kinds of organisations are more common than others, with those that could be classified as business organisations, government and military departments/bodies and educational bodies the most numerous, and named national, ethnic and religious groupings next. This probably reflects the ability of the first group to pay someone outside the organisation to write the history or to allocate time/workload to someone within that organisation to do so. Organisational histories that could be classed into the categories of non-government/non-profit, charity and artistic are available, but rare, and I could find little evidence in this survey of Australian titles of any histories of groups such as AAWP, which, although broadly fitting into either the educational or non-government descriptors, are extremely uncommon. This, again, possibly reflects the lack of ability of those organisations to dedicate resources to such an endeavour. There are, of course, alternatives to paying writers. Klaebe's history of the organisation Outward Bound, published in 2005 was, for example, produced as the creative work for a research Masters in Creative Writing. [1]

Despite the above, organisational histories are written for a number of reasons beyond such attempts of self-memorialisation and legacy building and, even if prompted by such motivations, can have various effects on the organisation involved (Cheria 2004). A number of the effects of writing such histories may, moreover, only become apparent when the process is underway or completed, and none of the texts surveyed above propose the complete list of possible reasons below as their reasons for setting out to compile a formal history. One possible reason is that externally-focused documentation such as annual reports, submissions to government, and applications for grants and other funding often require historical information about the organisation, and available historical information can be compiled into a single history that can then be drawn from as appropriate in each context instead of writing this afresh on each occasion. A formal history makes an organisation's expertise visible, and can be used in support of an advocacy role, in the attempt to make more widely known that organisation's prominence as an information or services provider, or even as part of a conscious public relations campaign to raise the organisation's profile. As publication (especially in book form) has a certain prestige, the very existence of a published volume can raise the credibility of the organisation with a range of external stakeholders and other observers. A formal history can also be a means of attempted relationship building. In this, a history can provide insights for other similar organisations, which can learn from the example provided and, in doing so, open up a space for enriched dialogue between the organisation and those with which it has obvious links and synergies. Published organisational histories can also generate much needed income for not-for-profit associations. While almost never published by mainstream publishers - significant recent exceptions include histories of the Australian national broadcaster, the ABC (Inglis 2006a, 2006b) and New South Wales surf lifesaving clubs (Johnson 2008) - histories of large national or international organisations can generate significant sales, especially within those institutions' own memberships and supporters, and many such volumes have been produced, at least in part, for fundraising purposes. In this, self-publication can enhance profitability as the distribution function of mainstream publishers is not required (Clark & Phillips 2008).

As the principal audience for such a chronicle is, however, often the members of the organisation under study, such a history can also be undertaken in an attempt to share information, experiences, knowledge and innovation within, as much as beyond, the organisation. The process can be motivated by a desire to support the organisation's current work by documenting and analysing internal policy development processes and the procedures which fall out of these, and can thus form part of the cycle of internal policy review and development. It can also be spurred on by a desire to improve both recordkeeping and how these records, once made, are archived and preserved. This is one of my driving motivations for compiling this history, as the information-gathering process is bringing together previously dispersed, and (as the producers and keepers of these records approach retirement from academia) potentially endangered, organisational records. The process of gathering evidence can also encourage existing members to increase their level of engagement with the organisation as well as prompt lapsed members to re-engage with its work as they are contacted in the research process and encouraged to celebrate their achievements as part of the association. For such purposes, many organisations find a printed volume is useful. While an online version can also be mounted, most web-based organisational histories are brief timeline-based outlines focusing on key events and/or highlights, rather than fully-fledged histories published online. Printed histories are sometimes published and marketed to readers conjointly with an exhibition of retrieved memorabilia. In this way, the project of writing a researched history can lead to diverse museological activities including physical and/or online displays of related artefacts. The

AAWP has, for instance, generated an annual series of conference booklets and other publications, a complete set of which I am in the process of compiling. These could be displayed as a memory-prompting, as well as memorialising, activity and lead to further historical activity.

As well as this variety of motivations and uses, the process of the production of an organisational history can have many positive effects upon the organisation itself. The creation of a history can mark an important moment in how an organisation understands itself and its identity, as most organisations that embark upon the activity of writing their own histories do so after the initial work that prompted its setting up is completed or is, at least, well advanced (Cheria 2004). Although the idea of providing information to readers outside the organisation is commonly cited as a motivation for producing a history, one application that is rarely discussed is the potential for such texts to also provide significant insights for the entity that is under such scrutiny. This is because the process of producing such a history, and deciding upon its themes and focus as well as what is to be given less attention in the resulting narrative, can assist in the process of defining the identity of the organisation as well as encouraging a shared sense of its position in the culture in which it operates. At least two decades of studies have suggested that organisational learning is 'history-dependent', whereby members learn 'by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behaviour' (Levitt & March 1988: 319), involvement in the process of history writing has the potential to act as an instance of action learning, as a catalyst for self-reflection and, therefore, an opportunity to trigger future change and, even, transformation for those who engage with it. This is mobilising Mezirow's understanding of transformational learning as learning where one becomes 'critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation' (2000: 4).

An organisational history of the AAWP: forms and processes

I have written elsewhere about the rationale for choosing the framing forms for this organisational history of the AAWP (Brien 2009), inspired firstly by calls for a historically-informed study of organisations and their management (see Clark & Rowlinson 2004, Üsdken & Kieser 2004, Booth & Rowlinson 2006). Working from my own experience in writing, and otherwise having contributed to a number of organisational histories, I believe that one of the major challenges in such projects is how to fashion an engaging narrative from such ostensibly unprepossessing and uncontroversial documents as annual reports, meeting documentation, membership lists and financial statements. This interest can be embodied in the type of history chosen and, thus this challenge met by composing this history of the AAWP as a narrative social history. This will not only provide a space for interesting storytelling but, as a sub-category of creative nonfiction, also a way of including the unashamed subjectivity of the historian as insider to the subject being written about - an author who, like myself, is a member of the organisation concerned. Creative nonfiction provides a way of satisfying the conventions of ethical history writing from the insider's point of view. As Freire has written, 'I am not impartial, or objective ... [but this] does not prevent me from holding always a rigorously ethical position' (1998: 22). Utilising key input from oral history sources, the result will blend documented detail and personal memory and anecdote. I believe it is essential when dealing with such a recent time period to encourage the participants in, and eyewitnesses to, that history to become actively engaged in the history writing process. Klæbe has described this as 'participatory public

history', public history that is not made only *for* the public as consumers, but actively *with* that public as co-producers (2006: 10).

In 2009, therefore, at the 14th annual AAWP conference in Hamilton, New Zealand, a survey was distributed among attendees. This collected basic information regarding length of membership and conferences attended, as well as reasons for joining and for staying a member of the AAWP. It also asked for volunteers for interviews. This questionnaire has been placed on the AAWP website and will be supplemented by further calls for information during the first half of 2010. Processes planned for 2010 will also include a series of interviews including with the organisation's founders and more questionnaires, as well as calls for past and present members to contribute written submissions on a series of topics. These questionnaires and topics will be, in part, generated by issues raised in information already gathered. As various researchers have discussed, such an iterative process not only collects information that is impossible to source in any other way, but is a process that also has the potential to empower individuals or social groups through the process of remembering, articulating and interpreting the past (Perks & Thomson 2006). This is because such iterative oral history processes are, according to Frisch, 'a powerful tool for discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory' (cited Bornat 1999). Such a process, indeed, reflects the very personal way that 'people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and ... its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them' (Frisch cited Bornat 1999). Information sourced in this manner will be used in association with such traditional historical resources as the association's meeting documentation, published messages from the Chair, keynote conference addresses and conference publications, and any personal documents such as letters, photographs, diary entries and emails located.

Once this material is gathered, the challenge is - as in any history writing - to incorporate the various pieces of documentation, numerous points of view and possibly conflicting memories into an intelligible whole. This consideration also raises the question of whether the information so gained will be incorporated into a seamless narrative, or whether the individuality of each participant's testimony should be kept, such as in Allan's suggestion of including parts of oral history transcripts as discrete anecdotes (2004). The historian's key task is always that of sculpting a final narrative from a range of information: however, decades of investigation into innovative historical forms have made a range of possibilities available. Gattégno's innovative biography *Lewis Carroll: Une vie* (1977 [1974]), for instance, provides a striking alternative to the (still) usual chronological, life event focused studies. Gattégno presents 37 essays arranged alphabetically by title with the aim that readers will, as they progress through the text, 'gradually ... discover [Carroll] ... and so re-create him' (Gattégno 1977: 5). This 'reliance on [a] mosaic' (Backscheider cited Nadel 2000: 764) of themes is an approach that is particularly attractive when thinking about writing a narrative social history of the AAWP. While the final approach will, however, only be confirmed when the research data has been collected and the writing begins, it is already nevertheless being shaped, at least in part, at this data-gathering stage - when questionnaires and sets of interview questions are created, participants and interviewees are selected, and interviewees' testimonies are shaped by the manner in which questions are asked (Portelli 2000).

Concluding remarks

My aim in the first stages of this project has been towards defining what kind of history I could write about the AAWP (see Brien 2009). This will, as discussed above, be based on the latest conceptualisations of organisational history writing and will aim to be reflective, ethical and critical, as well as informative, imaginative and entertaining. It has also been necessary to identify how to go about that task in order to ensure a process that involves searching analysis, criticism and evaluation, as well as celebration. Alongside the necessary location of meeting documentation, annual reports, brochures and other publications, the next stage in the research involves seeking input from past and current members, as well as those outside the organisation. This will necessarily involve introspection, evaluation and the revisiting of past discussions on the part of these individuals, whom I will be approaching throughout 2010 with requests for interviews and other information. Key questions to be answered include the following:

- Why was the AAWP founded?
- What was the association's original mission and goals, and how have these changed since 1996?
- What was the academic environment like when the AAWP was founded, and how has this changed since 1996?
- What was the professional environment (writing and publishing) like when the AAWP was founded, and how has this changed since 1996?
- Why was *TEXT* initially published, and how has this changed since 1997?
- Who has played a role in the AAWP and/or *TEXT*, and what contribution have these roles made?
- What other organisations has the AAWP linkages with?
- What organisations serve a similar purpose and how is the AAWP similar?
- What, if anything, makes the AAWP unique?
- What have been the AAWP's most significant challenges and opportunities, and how has it met these?
- What have been the AAWP's most significant accomplishments? How have these changed since 1996?
- What have been its most significant problems and failures, and why? Have these also changed over time?
- What is the organisational membership's occupational identity, how has this been developed, and how is it promulgated and shared?
- Any other important questions raised by research process

In undertaking this task, I am encouraged by the positive response to my requests for information in 2009. This is not only because of how this has been offered in an atmosphere of mutual helpfulness that is a hallmark of the Association, but also the knowledge that the collective effort necessary for such an activity can only occur when there is a common recognition that an association has a value and meaning. I take, therefore, the progress thus far towards writing this history as a mark of our coming of age as a national peak body, and a fitting way to mark the next stage of our consolidation and development.

Notes

[1] It is valid to consider here that some organisational histories may be self-published, or have publication funded by a closely related foundation or umbrella organisation, and might then be published without an ISBN number; missing, therefore, the attendant necessity of lodging a copy of the text in the national collection. However, an online search found no published organisational histories in this category. return to text

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Donna Lee Brien, BEd (Deakin), MA (UTS), PhD (QUT), GradCert Higher Ed (UNE), is Associate Professor of Creative Industries and Head of the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Central Queensland University. Widely published in the areas of writing pedagogy and praxis, creative nonfiction and collaborative practice in the arts, Donna has an MA and PhD in Creative Writing. Her biography John Power 1881-1943 (Sydney: MCA, 1991) is the standard work on this expatriate artist and benefactor, and Donna is also the co-author of The Girl's Guide to Real Estate: How to Enjoy Investing in Property, 2002; and The Girl's Guide to Work and Life: How to Create the Life

you Want, 2004 (both with Dr Tess Brady, Sydney: Allen & Unwin). Founding Editor of dotlit: The Online Journal of Creative Writing (2000-04) and Assistant Editor of Imago: New Writing (1999-2003), Donna is an Associate Editor of New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing (UK) and on the board of readers for Writing Macao. She is the Immediate Past President of the Australian Association of Writing Programs and Editor, Special Issues, for TEXT.

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