



BOOKMARKS Stephen May promises to give independent Australian publishers a voice; Scribe's Henry Rosenbloom backs a biography with bite; China changes its visa policy; and Anthony Lawrence plans a trip to the dentist. **Jason Steger** reports.

May the force be with him

THE election last week of Stephen May as the new president of the Australian Publishers Association was notable for a couple of reasons. First, that there was an election at all; second, that smaller publishers seem to have dominated proceedings. May, who runs Australian Academic Press, which describes itself as a niche academic publisher for the behavioural sciences, won the election for presidency in a two-horse race with Penguin boss Gabrielle Coyne. New vice-presidents are Andrew Kelly, who runs Melbourne-based children's book publisher Black Dog, and Random House boss Margie Seale. Two new directors are Greg Bain, from University of Queensland Press, and Melbourne University Press boss Louise Adler. There has been something of a reinvention of the APA over the past few years under the stewardship of chief executive Maree McCaskill. One insider said her appointment had been a breath of fresh air before which roles in the organisation had been done on a "finger tap" basis and most of the members had been disengaged. Arguably the APA is now seen as more relevant because of its role in recent issues such as the parallel importation debate and its planned introduction of Title-Page, the industry's online price and availability service. Membership is up. But as one publisher says, "It is an organisation dominated by small independent publishers — something like 75 per cent of members — and this year they exercised their rights and not only stood for elected positions, but voted as well."

A voice for independents

STEPHEN May prefers the term independent to small for the majority of his members. Over the years, he said, the bigger publishers had worked for all members of the association but hadn't always heard the voices of the independents. There were also elections for the board and it now reflected the broader membership. The main issue over the next couple of years would be ebooks. "How that plays out for all the members is the important thing," he told Bookmarks. There

were several aspects to be addressed, including the nature of distribution, types of format, and how they were accessed by readers. Then there was the question of copyright and technical matters such as "the number of Isbns" required for slightly different versions. Another matter that concerned May was the question of "open access" to scientific journals, research and book chapters, which was particularly relevant to academic publishers. "It is important that there is dialogue before decisions are made." He said the issue of open access was also encouraging some people to look at the whole question of copyright again. But he stressed that copyright was a driver of creative industries.

The bite has truly healed

WELL done to Scribe publisher Henry Rosenbloom, who last week received a George Robertson Award at the Australian Publishers Association annual meeting. The awards are given to people who have been involved in the book trade for more than 30 years. Somewhat more than 30 years ago, Rosenbloom was leading a very different life — as adviser to Moss Cass, sometime media minister in the Whitlam government. In 1975 Rosenbloom produced a "background paper" about the establishment of a press council in Australia that floated the idea of licences for newspapers. The then editor of *The Age*, Graham Perkin, responded pithily. "Any man who puts out as a ministerial working paper a document as ignorant and ill-based as Henry Rosenbloom's paper doesn't really deserve anything but a bite on the leg." The quote is in Ben Hills' life of Perkin, *Breaking News*. And who published the book? Henry Rosenbloom.

China relaxes visa policy

YOU may recall that Robert Dessaix was banned from entering China for a writers' festival because he is HIV positive. About 100 writers signed a letter attacking the ban. The issue, which got a fair amount of media coverage, has resulted in a change to China's visa policies, apparently, with the state council removing the



Henry Rosenbloom (above) and Robert Dessaix.



Australian Book Review

ban on people with HIV, among other conditions. Reuters quoted an official spokesman in *The Legal Daily*: "Restricting foreigners with these diseases from entering the country has played an extremely limited role in our country's disease prevention and control work, and instead has repeatedly become an impediment to our hosting a variety of international events."

Poetic teeth and smiles

WHAT'S the connection between British novelist Martin Amis (aka in the pages of *Private Eye* as "smarty anus") and Anthony Lawrence, the much-admired Australian poet? The answer is teeth. When Amis got a £500,000 advance for a couple of novels, he copped a barrage of criticism for saying he would spend a chunk of the money on getting his teeth fixed. So what's Lawrence (most recent book — *Bark*) going to do with the \$4000 he gets by winning *Australian Book Review's* poetry prize? Go to the dentist, apparently. "When poets do go to the dentist they tend to quake whenever there's work to be done," he said, "and I have some serious dental work to be done." Winning the annual *ABR* prize — for his poem *Domestic Emergencies* — was wonderful, he said, given that competition for any poetry prize in Australia was so tough. Lawrence is living in Newcastle these days, teaching at the university, finishing a PhD and writing a book of erotic poetry. "It engages with all the things I love to write about, with sex and the sensual as the central motif."

Ave atque Vale

When the rabbiting generations of *homo sapiens* finally exhaust just those resources that their life depended upon, the planet will survive.

No doubt it will foster still multifarious other lives none of which, alas, will master English verses, let alone, like me, the Sanskrit.

Evan Jones

DYSON



EVENTS

TODAY

WRITER/illustrator Anna Walker celebrates mothers. 11am. Eltham Bookshop, 970 Main Road.

MONDAY

Poets Peter Rose, Susan Hawthorne and Michael Farrell read their work. 6.30pm. Readings Carlton, 309 Lygon Street.

TUESDAY

EVELYN Krape, Robert Richter, Jacek Koman, Andrea Goldsmith and Marta Kaczmarek read the poetry of Wislawa Szymborska. 6.30pm. The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street. Bookings: wheelercentre.com
BILL Muehlenberg and Rodney Croome debate the question of gay marriage. 6.30pm. Readings Hawthorn, 701 Glenferrie Road. Bookings: 9819 1917.

WEDNESDAY

GLYN Davis, Marcia Langton, Dennis Altman and Julianne Schultz wonder whether Australia is still the lucky country. 6pm. Wheeler Centre.
JOHN Harding and Ross Mueller discuss writing for the theatre. 6.30pm. Victorian Writers Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street. \$15.
GLENYS Osborne discusses *Come Inside*. 7pm. Carlton Library, 667 Rathdowne Street. Bookings: 1300 695 427

LOANI Prior, author of *Wild Tea Cosies*, checks out your favourites. 6.30pm. Sun Theatre, 8 Ballarat Street, Yarraville. Info: 9689 0661

THURSDAY

GRETEL Killeen gets on her soapbox against conformity. 12.45pm. Wheeler Centre.
MILES Franklin shortlisted authors Deborah Foster, Sonya Hartnett, Alex Miller and Peter Temple discuss their work. 4.30pm. Experimedia, State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street. \$20. Bookings: trustawards@trust.com.au