

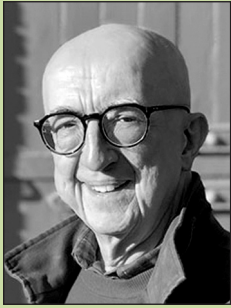


CANDIDATES' ELECTION STATEMENTS

Election to the Management Committee 2022

Please read carefully before casting your vote.

Paul Kenny



I'm a chartered accountant by profession. I'm a great believer in the adage, 'What gets measured gets done', whether that's an income and expenditure statement or a 3,000 words-a-week target.

From 2007 (the same year I joined the SoA) to 2021, I managed a business unit which helped the UK's banks and building societies make more informed decisions. Before that, I ran business software companies in the UK, Spain and Switzerland. I was an active member of management teams for 30 years.

Being a biographer was what I did in the evenings and at weekends. My first book, *The Man Who Supercharged Bond*, told the story of automotive, aeronautic and astronautic engineer and society portrait painter, Amherst Villiers. Haynes published it in 2009. My second subject is racing driver, war hero and industrialist, Whitney Straight. His life was so remarkable, and I have so much source material on him, that a part-time approach to writing his story proved impossible, and I became a full-time writer in September 2021. The History Press will publish the book, and Blackstone Audio the audio book.

The SoA supported me through all three contract processes, and I see that alone as a positive return on 16 annual subscriptions. But in the last year, I've gained so much more from SoA membership, from online and in-person meetings of the London Non-Fiction Group and the friendships I've formed there, to the wealth of helpful material on the website.

Having such a superb source of support has been important to me. I told anyone silly enough to wish me an enjoyable retirement to never say the r-word to me again, explaining that after two years of working from home, I was simply going to put in the same hours, at the same desk in the same study – just at a different computer. But of course it hasn't been the same at all. Writing can be an isolated, insular way of earning a living. Being able to refer to the SoA or my friends in the London Non-Fiction Group makes it less isolated, less insular.

So first and foremost, I want to join the SoA's Management Committee to give something back, and offer my business acumen to the Society. I'm particularly keen to serve on the Finance Sub-Committee.

I'd also like to explore if even more could be done to support the wellbeing of authors. I'm a trained mental health first aider, and I would like to facilitate dialogue between the Society and MHFA to see if, among our 11,800 members, some would like to undertake the training and provide a further network of support for fellow writers.

In summary, I'm standing for election to the SoA Management Committee as a biographer, business person and mental health first aider. Should I be fortunate enough to be elected, I pledge to work diligently to be an effective Committee member.

Nominated by Emma Byrne and Dan Smith

Harriet Evans



I am the author of 13 novels, several top ten bestsellers, two *Richard and Judy* selections, and have sold over a million copies worldwide. Before that I was a publisher, first at Penguin, then Headline where I served on the board. In a varied and rewarding publishing career I edited authors from Sue Townsend to Penny Vincenzi, set up a romance list, overruled Nick Hornby during a literary quiz on a music question and had coffee with Dave

Prowse aka Darth Vader to discuss his memoirs.

In an increasingly febrile atmosphere authors need those who can reach out to all sides without any agenda other than that of ensuring fairness and representation. Twenty-five years in the publishing industry, first as an editor then author, have given me a granular understanding of the literary landscape, the writer's mindset and the mistakes publishers make – often with the best of intentions. I have sympathy for the difficult position many publishers are in today but questions about some of the choices they're taking, and the increasing disconnect between what readers want and publishers need. Having moved out of London several years ago I'm aware of the London-centric nature of many bookselling and publishing conversations, too.

Of especial concern to me is opening up routes to market for those who, unlike me, didn't grow up in a house full of books. The closure of 800 libraries in the last ten years, savage cuts to funding, the fact that 1 in 17 children has no books in their home, and the stagnation in social mobility are issues that should gravely concern us all. I've been a reading volunteer in primary schools, written a Quick Reads title and visited prisons and adult literacy classes to this end. I volunteer with Inspiring the Future to help young people broaden their horizons to pursue the careers they want. There is a fine line to tread between supporting authors who, like me, have been writing for years and have any number of career issues which only the SoA can help with, and ensuring we make the Society a welcoming and inclusive place for anyone starting out as an author.

I've been an SoA member for four years and know from personal experience my membership is worth every penny. Last year I sought advice from the SoA: not only was it immensely helpful, the swift, humane response was incredibly reassuring. I felt for the first time in a long while that someone had my back and how important that is in a strange job like this. And with the wider questions – ebook royalties, threats to IP and copyright, negotiating the post-Brexit, post-pandemic publishing landscape – writers need representation from an organisation that understands both the issues and their unique situation. It's more vital than ever authors are aware of the SoA so it has their back. I'd love to be able to help do that.

Nominated by Clare Mackintosh and Elizabeth Buchan

Photo credit: Philippa Gedge

Abie Longstaff



I am a children's writer and ex-lawyer. I joined the Society of Authors in 2011 and was elected to the Management Committee in 2019.

I have been an active member of the Committee and have represented the Society of Authors on a range of issues with publishers and online retailers. I've helped the Committee argue for greater rights for authors, for better deals and for fairer contracts.

My books range from picture books to middle grade fiction (spanning roughly ages 2 to 11), and I am published by Penguin Random House, Scholastic, Hachette, Templar and others. I also write school readers for a number of educational publishers.

Before writing, I worked as a barrister and, later, legal policy officer in the field of policing and human rights. My quasi-legal work has included responding to government consultations, campaigning on issues and giving evidence at inquiries; and I am published in this field too.

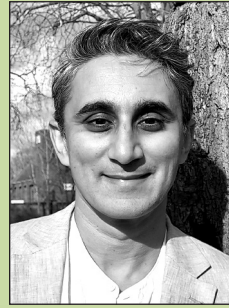
I'd like to continue to use my policy and legal knowledge to help authors and illustrators. Author incomes were already suffering before the pandemic, and the worrying downward trend has not abated. A survey by ALCS found author incomes have fallen in real terms by 49% since 2005, with the median annual income of a professional author at £10,500 – far below minimum wage. Additionally, many of us have suffered recently from the loss of secondary sources of income such as lit fests, school visits and university teaching. Yet, at the same time, the UK creative industry is hugely valuable both culturally and economically (at £115.9 billion).

We are tired of earning such a small share of income from the content we create, of special sales deals that give us marginal rates, and of seeing fellow authors and friends give up because they can't afford to keep writing. And there is so much work to be done – on copyright exhaustion, on libraries, on contracts and on fair remuneration.

I'm keen for authors and illustrators to take a more powerful place in the wider cultural landscape and I want to help us earn at all levels; from debut to career author. I believe that the key to increasing diversity is to pay authors properly and to value the contribution we make to culture and creativity. Authors and illustrators all need a fair, sustainable, more reliable income.

Nominated by Anne Rooney and Nicola Morgan

Vaseem Khan



Who am I? I've been writing for 32 years, 23 of them unpublished. I wrote novels across various genres before finally being published in 2014. I currently have eight published novels, all by Hachette, across two crime series set in India. My debut, *The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra*, was selected by *The Sunday Times* as one of the 40 best crime novels published 2015-2020, now translated into 16 languages. The second won

the Shamus Award in the US. In 2021, *Midnight at Malabar House*, the first in my historical crime series set in 1950s Bombay, won the Crime Writers' Association Historical Dagger, the world's premier award for historical crime fiction.

Empowering other writers: I am the joint-vice-chair of the Crime Writers' Association. I also sit on the board of the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Writing Festival, Europe's largest crime fiction festival. Part of my role has been to help inclusivity agendas in these domains: shaping messaging, events, competitions, and a project I carried out with Arts Council England in 2021 around how writers might tackle difficult topics such as cultural appropriation and stereotyping, whilst maintaining artistic freedom. I co-host the popular crime fiction podcast, *The Red Hot Chilli Writers*, Britain's first literary podcast run by two British Asian writers. The podcast has allowed me to interview some of the most popular writers in the world, promoting literature and issues I believe in.

Relevant skills: I spent a decade as a management consultant, helping organisations achieve strategic goals and manage change. I've since spent 16 years at University College London, managing projects and academics – rather like herding smart cats around – or authors! I'm a qualified Chartered Marketer with extensive branding and marcomms experience.

SoA experience: I've previously judged the Betty Trask Prize – an excellent introduction to the workings of the organisation! I am the current SoA representative to the PLR Advisory Committee. The key challenges facing the SoA are essentially the challenges facing SoA members – low author incomes being further whittled away by piracy, tax legislation, Brexit rules, and a looming recession; as well as broadening representation. In terms of opportunities, the pandemic proved that reading is still a vital part of the lives of millions. More than ever we need stories, stories that cast a wide net, speak to multiple communities, and bring the world to life in imaginative ways.

What difference can I make? The literary world is a network of communities, each looking to organisations such as the SoA for guidance and support, but also as a beacon of what we can achieve when united. I would be delighted to be given the opportunity to contribute to that vision, one that I hope straddles new ideas without abandoning tradition. Widening participation – not just in terms of author inclusivity, but also attempting to engage *reader* communities labelled by the publishing industry as 'non-readers/non-book-buyers' – is an area I feel I can help with. Sorry if some of this sounds cheesy, but that's how I see us!

Nominated by Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin and Dorothy Koomson

Helen Shay



My goal on the Management Committee will be to protect authors' rights and maximise their income.

My background as a solicitor and writer, also with boardroom and management/commercial experience, particularly equips me for this. I can tackle the challenges the SoA faces, such as erosion of authors' entitlements in the wake of the pandemic and pressures from the cost-of-living crisis.

I also have specialist knowledge in promoting diversity and inclusion, having been selected as a social mobility ambassador for the Law Society and living with a disability myself. From this, I know of many initiatives that may help and that I'd like to suggest to the SoA, like specialised targeted mentoring and training in networking skills.

Therefore I am representative of many of the SoA's members today i.e. those who combine writing with complementary careers and other commitments, including family and caring responsibilities; in other words, authors who live full lives that enrich their writing.

My writing includes poetry and drama, with work appearing widely from Glastonbury Poetry Tent to Edinburgh Fringe, and in many publications. My non-fiction covers legal books and articles, with an earlier book on copyright reaching 4th edition. I also give workshops/talks and have taught drama-writing courses at a university. This means I'm fully aware of the issues that can arise for authors from these activities, not least sometimes not being offered appropriate payment and appreciation. (Thank goodness we have had such as Philip Pullman to fight our corner!).

For over a decade, I was In-house Counsel at the University of York, which included working with academics on Intellectual Property issues arising upon publication, in addition to practising Equality Law to eliminate unfairness and discrimination. I am currently a non-executive director of a large company and also a charity trustee.

I have been a member of the SoA for over 20 years and have served upon its Authors North and Poetry and Spoken Word Group committees, so understand very well how the SoA operates. Previously, I was on the board of Script Yorkshire, which promotes northern-based dramatists.

My own involvement with the SoA has increased my confidence and helped me to be properly treated as a professional. I want to ensure other members gain similar benefits.

My specialist background makes me uniquely placed to bring the skills and expertise needed by the Management Committee to serve the SoA's members, through assertively promoting their interests in these challenging times.

Nominated by Clare Dudman and Angela Blacklock-Brown

Photo credit: Simon Meyer of Sira Studio

Christie Newport



My membership of the Society of Authors was awarded to me when I won the inaugural Joffe Books Prize for crime writers of colour. Prior to that I had only a vague impression of what it was.

When I first started believing I could become an author I was at the first Capital Crime festival. It invigorated me and gave me a newfound trust that it was possible to achieve my dream.

As a woman who suffers with a debilitating autoimmune disease, is bi-sexual, mixed race and from a working-class background in the north of England – the publishing world has its barriers. Only recently with the Black Lives Matter movement have I begun to see a real effort for change. Even so, at any writing event I will look around and often be one of very few people of colour in the audience, sometimes the only person of colour. That's aside from the other reasons I am a minority. It can feel isolating and frightening to walk into a room and know I stand out. I understand why others would feel the same way. I can empathise with the sense of not seeing yourself reflected in books, TV, film. I know why there is a reluctance to attend events, to join writing groups or even trade unions such as the SoA, which would be hugely beneficial. I want to help bridge these barriers and aid in developing an understanding both within and outside the SoA. I would like to help encourage people to know their rights and receive the best support. I fear certain minorities run the risk of being taken advantage of with regards to unfair contracts. To get the right advice, they need to know where to seek it and how.

I believe it is vital the publishing industry keeps working on ways to encourage more diversity, more inclusivity and more comprehension of what it truly means for those of us who fall into these categories. I think the SoA could benefit from being more visible within communities, colleges, universities – and places where dreams exist, but the dreamers are fearful of ever being able to realise them. The SoA is taking steps in the right direction but to reach people like me, they need to see faces like mine. I am represented by Northbank Talent Management and published by Joffe Books. I have had opportunities such as a course with Awais Khan sponsored by Red Dog Press, mentorship and guidance with Nadine Matheson and Harriet Tyce. And of course, the Joffe Books Prize. All these were offered as a direct response to the lack of diversity in publishing and I am eternally grateful. I want to be able to pay it forward in any way I can, to be a voice for people like myself and anyone else who feels underrepresented. I am an excellent communicator, a hard worker, an enthusiastic advocate and someone who understands from a professional and personal standpoint why changes and growth are desperately needed.

Nominated by Dorothy Koomson and Awais Khan

Howard Matthews



I am a full-time writer of traditional and self-published work for broadcast and print and have board level experience in the public sector. Writing as Howard of Warwick, I have 30 best-selling titles of historical mystery humour.

I have radio and TV credits and won a BBC/BFI prize for drama series. I created my own publishing imprint and am now author and publisher dealing with production, marketing and sales.

I am also working on a TV rights negotiation for a fellow author, making full use of the SoA's expertise.

The lines between self-publishing and traditional have blurred and authors can have a foot in both camps, or firmly in one.

If I were elected, I would work towards a professional exchange of knowledge and experience between authors, building on existing informal networks. A directory of authors willing to share their expertise in particular areas would be a real benefit to all. Independent authors regularly use such networks and the Crime Writers' Association operates a directory of author experts.

The Authors' Contingency Fund is a great innovation and could be built upon through a network of members willing to talk or simply listen without a formal application process.

The recent SoA report highlighted the risks of contribution or partnership publishing, exploiting authors for little or no benefit. Shared intelligence could identify what and who to avoid.

I have spoken to traditionally published authors who are given no information by their publisher and see little effort being made on their behalf. Self-published authors deal with this directly and know what can be expected.

The recovery of rights from publishers is an issue facing traditional authors, who may see self-publishing as the way to go. The transition could be eased through shared experience.

I am also concerned about copyright and proper reward for creators. Too many of the creative industries expect something for nothing, particularly from young entrants who are required to give their work for free in exchange for the 'experience and exposure', and I would like to see formal standards established. Alongside this, the industry should continue to remove barriers that remain in place for writers who do not have a publishing contract, including prizes for writing that are actually closed to all but publishers.

I am an active member of various SoA regional groups and am a member of Novelists Inc. in the USA and of the Crime Writers' Association. I have board-level experience of public sector organisations, with an MBA and a Diploma in Accounting and Finance. I have prepared and commissioned board papers and reports, set and managed multi-million pound budgets and projects. I have followed the Standards in Public Life criteria and managed formal committee governance, including attending Select Committees and reporting to Parliament.

Nominated by Alwyn Marriage and Henry Bewley

Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin



The past three years have seen some real challenges during my term as a member of the SoA Management Committee, two of which were spent in pandemic mode ensuring direct and rapid support was provided to members who found themselves in need. I have loved every minute of serving my fellow authors and would relish the opportunity to continue.

During my time on the board of the SoA I worked firstly with a sub-committee, and later directly with the SoA staff team to develop a mentoring and professional development programme which, building and developing key areas of the activities already in place, will bring added services to members. We have huge skills within the membership, and also great need, and marrying these in a three-strand initiative across events, support materials and one-to-one consultancy will be a huge benefit. I have spent my career assisting writers – from building *Writing.ie*, Europe's biggest and most popular online writing resources magazine, to creating innovative projects (from the National Emerging Writers Programme in Ireland, to Date with an Agent) that give writers vital access to information and professionals, and I would love to remain on the Management Committee to bring this project to fruition.

I've also worked across the campaigns and communications sub-committees (specifically on *The Author*) to support the incredible SoA staff. Getting to meet new authors at the London Book Fair on the SoA stand was an enormous privilege, and after so many online events and meetings during my term, I would love to meet more in the capacity of board member.

The group and special interest network run by the SoA is one of its huge strengths and I am stepping in to run the Ireland group while its chair is focusing on writing. I am passionate about accessibility for all writers, and creating support and synergy through community, both virtual and in person.

I am English, but living in Ireland, so I have a unique perspective on many issues, as well as a 360-degree understanding of the publishing industry that has come through 20 years spent developing my own writing and assisting many hundreds of writers to achieve their potential. I write bestselling crime as Sam Blake and I'm also on the board of the Crime Writers' Association where I have recently relaunched the CWA's National Crime Reading Month in association with The Reading Agency.

I still have a huge amount to offer the SoA and its members and I seek your support in enabling me to do that.

Nominated by Joanne Harris and Kit de Waal

Photo credit: Alice Rose Jordan

Emma Nagouse



I am a scriptwriter for broadcast (including award-winning BBC radio shows and podcasts *You're Dead to Me* and *Homeschool History*) and have written for a range of online platforms and academic publications. I am in the final stages of a PhD in English Literature at the University of Sheffield and have been a trade union activist for over a decade with experience of national and local roles in both the University College Union and Unite.

In my career outside of writing I have worked in a range of professional roles in campaigns, representation and democracy and have a wide breadth of experience in research, policy, and political governance.

As a mixed-race feminist with a disability from a working-class background in South Tyneside I am deeply committed to equality and inclusion. I want our union to take a proactive approach in tackling racism, classism, transphobia and ableism not only in publishing but in the cultural sector more broadly. Furthermore, in the context of a global health and financial crisis I am dedicated to exploring and championing the needs of members from a range of backgrounds including working class and ill and disabled creators.

If elected, I would work to ensure that the board engages with the broad membership of our union – including but not limited to authors (including self-published and online), comic creators, illustrators, scriptwriters, poets and literary translators to understand what matters most to our members and how we can advance your needs.

As part of the SoA's commitment to fighting for a strong cultural environment, I would like us to be more outspoken on the devastating closure of arts and humanities departments in universities throughout the UK, and the defunding of further education colleges which are integral to an inclusive cultural landscape. I would also love the SoA to consider ways to work more closely with other trade unions which represent creative and freelance workers (such as the Musicians' Union and Bectu) to find ways we can support each other and find collaborative solutions to shared problems we as creators face.

Nominated by Caroline Dodds Pennock and Rebecca Rideal

Rosemary Kind



In an age where authors' livelihoods are being challenged through changing reading habits, increasing cost of production and copyright infringement, we need to stand together to protect the future of our industry. In recognising quality work, we need to embrace commercial fiction and literary fiction, traditionally published and self-published work equally and without prejudice. Failing to do so will leave the industry fragmented and unable to face the challenges which lie ahead.

I believe that I can contribute greatly to the future of our industry. Not only am I published in both fiction and non-fiction but spent a number of years setting up and running the online short story publisher Alfie Dog Fiction which grew to become one of the largest short story download sites.

I would bring to the role a wide range of business experience. I gained a law degree from Birmingham University before going on to qualify as a chartered accountant. My business life included working at director levels in both finance and IT in regional newspapers, commercial radio and as a management consultant specialising in media. I went on to become Finance and IT Director of a national law firm, until leaving to pursue my writing career full-time. I have however continued to serve on the board of the industry body, the Legal IT Innovators Group, for the last 20 years.

I am a successfully self-published author, with a breadth of experience in all aspects of the publishing process and in book marketing. I have also published work for other authors including both novels and short story collections. I write a daily blog which has been listed as one of the UK's top ten pet blogs for the last six successive years.

Writing is my lifelong passion and I have been involved in the industry in many forms since first contributing paid copy to the *Leicester Mercury* at the age of sixteen. In addition to my book publishing, I have written for magazines and run courses and workshops for writing conferences and festivals.

I am energetic, hard-working and would serve our industry to the best of my ability.

I live in Warwickshire with my husband and three dogs and my hobbies are developing the Entlebucher Mountain Dog breed and gardening.

Whilst the focus on diversity and inclusivity as to gender, race and disability is important, our industry body must also represent successful authors without prejudice as to genre of writing or method of publication.

Nominated by Sue Moorcroft and Ellie Stevenson

Julia Wheeler



I am a journalist, writer and event chairperson at a variety of UK and international festivals. These include Cheltenham (Literature and Science), Hay, the Stanfords Travel Writers Festival and the Emirates Literature Festival. I also chair events online, including for the Singapore Book Council and the Global Association of Literary Festivals and I have moderated book events at the British Library, the Royal Geographic Society, for *The Times* and onboard

the QM2. I enjoy larger stages but love working with early career or less extroverted authors who are excited or nervous to share their work, by helping the audience to warm and the author to shine.

I worked for the BBC for 15 years, including 10 years as the BBC's Gulf Correspondent covering the Arabian Peninsula. During this time, I wrote *Telling Tales: An Oral History of Dubai* which captured the disappearing stories of court intrigue, pearl diving and gold smuggling. I joined the SoA to discuss the contract for this book: the staff proved invaluable, helping me to understand the process and what I might reasonably expect from my relationship with the publisher. I have returned to the SoA's solid, reassuring and confidence-boosting advice for help with rights and for festivals sharing content. It has always been wonderful to feel supported and as though I am not the first to face what can feel, especially for the rookie, a somewhat one-sided conversation with the industry.

I have been a governor/trustee of a Kent state secondary school for 10 years and currently serve as the Vice-Chair of the Board. I have held various positions, including Chair of the Curriculum and Staffing Committee and Chair of the Play Your Part Capital Campaign. The latter raised £4.2 million from government and organisational grants and student, parental and community fundraising. This resulted in a new sixth-form block and helped improve sport, music, art and the library.

My trustee role gives me insight into how organisations run, the importance of a board remaining strategic and how to work with a variety of personalities and agendas in order to achieve the best solutions. I have been involved in leadership recruitment, most recently for a new Head Teacher. I am a long-time champion of diversity and inclusion on the board and importantly, ensuring that once around the table all voices are heard, given that the loudest view isn't always the most valid.

I chaired the judging panel of the Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year 2021 and 2022. Last year I was the Stratford Literary Festival's Guest Director and a judge for the British Council's FameLab International science communication competition.

The SoA has achieved so much in recent years in representing authors' interests with festivals. I would hope to provide additional expertise and some lateral thinking in these and other relationships. I cherish being part of a team in which I can collaborate, but am also prepared to ask difficult, searching questions – I believe the sweet spot is somewhere between the two.

Nominated by Mark Billingham and Sarah Salway

Photo credit: Justine Kirby

Kate Brown



I was born and grew up in the UK but I live in Berlin, Germany. I would like to see links between writers in the UK and EU countries strengthened in a time when everything feels so fractured. We need to find ways to share opportunities and information despite the borders that have been erected. We have so much to learn from each other and sharing can only make us stronger in our fight for our rights. Solidarity matters.

Through Covid we've seen some borders become easier to transcend. Digital events and meetings have helped us all to learn and communicate in new ways. Writers who, in the past, were unable to get to live meetings and events for various reasons have had better access. How do we hold onto these possibilities as the appeal of 'being there' is set in motion again?

Good communication gives us agency. It helps us to thrive and to build sustainable careers, something that all authors want. Whatever branch we're working in, we need to feel we have as much control as possible over the way our work is presented to the world, how we get to that point and, most importantly, how we're paid for it. I want to put my energies into engaging actively in being part of a community where we work together and fight for our rights. I would like to use my place in Europe to build a broader network of writers who can ask each other 'How does it work where you live? Have you thought about doing it this way?'. A network where writers can exchange not just ideas regarding their projects, but also ideas about how to live, work and flourish.

I'm a novelist, screenwriter (National Film & Television School directing graduate) short story writer and translator. In 2020, I received a Grant for Non-German Literature from the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe to allow me time to work on my second novel for nine months. I write because I want to communicate with others and because there are stories I care about. I've told the story of one of the daughters of Louis XV, but also that of a teenage boy having to figure out how to tell the girl he's fallen in love with that he's HIV+. People matter. Being a part of the SoA Management Committee would allow me to use my voice to communicate with and on behalf of other writers, putting us in a stronger position to spend as much of our time as possible working on our craft rather than fighting to do so.

Nominated by Karen Lee Street and Susie Maguire

Sunny Singh



My name is Sunny Singh and I am, amongst many other things, a writer, lecturer and authors' advocate.

I have extensive experience in the charity and voluntary sectors, including as trustee of a children's literacy charity, chair of the historic Authors' Club, and the founder of the Jhalak Prize. In my many roles, I am a passionate advocate for accessibility in all parts of the publishing industry although support for

writers and illustrators is the cause closest to my heart.

I have been published since 1984 when the *Pioneer*, one of the oldest English-language newspapers in India, published my responses to the assassination of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the sectarian violence that followed. In the years since, I have worked as a journalist in Mexico and India, in various large multinational firms in southern Africa and South America, acquired a PhD, published three novels and two works of non-fiction, numerous essays, features, articles and short stories in literary journals, anthologies, newspapers and magazines.

I have also built a career as an academic and currently hold the title of Professor of Creative Writing and Inclusion in the Arts at the London Metropolitan University. I write, translate and interpret in three languages although I work in eight and my work has been translated into multiple languages including Spanish, Italian, Dutch, French, Serbian, Japanese and Turkish.

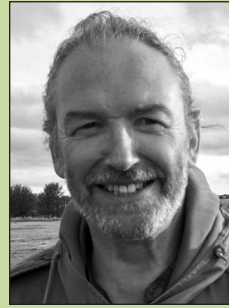
I believe my experience, writing and career to date gives me a unique, global perspective on publishing. My professional and personal experience give me extensive yet nuanced understanding of the many challenges faced by writers from a range of backgrounds. Moreover, in my multiple roles, I work closely with various parts of the industry including authors, agents, publishers, reviewers, teachers and booksellers. These professional links also give me an insight into what a wide range of authors and illustrators want from publishing as a whole as well as their union. I would bring this knowledge, experience and perspective to serving on the Committee.

We are at a critical point for authors and indeed creative industries as a whole. There is also overwhelming evidence that the pandemic, Brexit, government policy and the current economic downturn has disproportionately impacted creative occupations, including authors and illustrators. I understand the pressure this puts on the SoA and want to help work to improve the lives of all of our members.

I am seeking election to the Management Committee with the aim of finding solutions for the challenges faced not only by members of the SoA but also of our wider writing community. Furthermore, I believe advocacy and ambassadorship are necessary within the SoA to encourage all publishing creatives, regardless of their backgrounds and experience, to take more active and vocal roles within and for the SoA. If elected, I would bring my extensive and international knowledge, understanding and experience to the Committee and work towards these goals.

Nominated by Dorothy Koomson and Joanne Harris

Nicholas Rankin



I have been a journalist and professional author for four decades and have written six non-fiction books published by Faber. They include *Telegram from Guernica*, the first biography of George Steer, the anti-fascist reporter and friend of Haile Selassie, *Churchill's Wizards*, a study of British camouflage and deception, and *Ian Fleming's Commandos*, about the writer's role in naval intelligence. I worked for twenty years as a broadcaster on the staff of

the BBC World Service, where I ended up Chief Producer and won two UN awards. I have always enjoyed working in a team – all radio is collaborative – learning from and listening to others while contributing to the shared task. I continue to present BBC radio documentaries freelance, most recently in summer 2022, making my fourth radio feature about the Lakota Sioux people, now struggling to protect their water and their culture in the Great Plains. I have long been interested in diversity and valued different voices. My new book, *Mau Mau & Me*, forthcoming in 2023, is a history and a memoir of racial conflict in colonial Kenya.

These are challenging times for authors, with incomes declining. I have seen the ups and downs of the literary life for both older and younger writers, being married to one novelist, Maggie Gee, and the father of another, Rosa Rankin-Gee. I have also fought for authors' reputations and their estates. Because of my book *Telegram from Guernica*, the great reporter G.L. Steer now has a bust in Gernika and a Bilbao street named after him, and I am invited back to the Basque country every spring. As the author of *Dead Man's Chest: travels after Robert Louis Stevenson* I made sure that the books and papers of E.J. Mehew (the independent scholar who almost single-handedly edited the letters of RLS in eight volumes for Yale University Press, despite never having gone to college himself), went to the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Napier University where they are available to the public. As part of the process of executorship, I also ensured that Ernest's disabled widow Joyce was cared for comfortably for the rest of her life.

I have always believed in 'the republic of letters' and I know how writers' trade unions are vital in sustaining it. I've been in the National Union of Journalists and the Society of Authors for 40 years. Both have helped me professionally. I have sold all my books to Faber myself, without using a literary agent, and the SoA has vetted all my publishing contracts and given me good advice. Having enjoyed the benefits of membership, I think it is time to give something back to the organisation and to you, my fellow writers, illustrators and translators. If elected, I believe I could play a helpful role on the Management Committee, using my voice and commitment to literature to lobby industry and government and further the best aims of our 140-year-old Society.

Nominated by Colin Grant and Salena Godden