



CANDIDATES' ELECTION STATEMENTS

Election to the Management Committee 2024

Please read carefully before casting your vote.

Ian Giles



In the face of significant challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI) advancements, I will advocate for translators, illustrators and writers, ensuring our work remains indispensable and fairly compensated.

Translators constitute nearly 10% of the SoA's membership and face significant challenges from AI advancements. The members' survey in January revealed a stark reality: more than 40% of

translators reported reduced income due to generative AI, and more than 75% of translators expect generative AI will negatively affect their future income. The urgency cannot be overstated: if we don't confront these challenges head-on, we risk long-term damage to our profession. The results also paint a clear picture of the situation for writers and illustrators: what comes for translators first will impact all SoA members in due course. We are at a crossroads and we must ensure that our next steps secure the continuation of the profession.

What we do is skilled work, and that work should pay. We all should be in a position to negotiate the best possible terms when undertaking work, starting with improving the translator ecosystem, which is already under threat. Translators must not be treated as an afterthought by publishers, nor should translation be seen as an opportunity to economise through replacement of humans with AI. I will push the SoA to deliver a robust outward response to this pervasive threat. We must insist on standard contractual terms that protect translators and our copyright-protected translations from unfair and unremunerated exploitation. We need to raise awareness among publishers and readers alike that they need books translated, illustrated and written by humans. Only that way will we shape the future of the profession for the better.

Most translators don't have an agent or anyone else in their corner representing them. The SoA's services and activities, such as contract vetting and lobbying of government, are essential to us as a group, but there also needs to be an increased focus on skills training in addition to advocacy. We need to futureproof ourselves so that translation – as well as writing and illustration – remains a paying job, ensuring that members are equipped with the tools they need to succeed in the profession.

As a translator of the Scandinavian languages into English with more than 35 published books across a range of genres to my name, I have strong personal experience of how our industry is changing. In my tenure as Co-chair of the Translators Association since 2023, as well as Chair of the Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association (SELTA) since 2018, I've championed translators individually and collectively in the face of the challenges shaping our industry today.

All translators, illustrators and writers need a strong union and now, more than ever, we must improve terms so that we can focus on what we do best: our jobs. With your support, I will advocate vigorously for the rights and interests of professional translators, ensuring their needs are understood and met by the SoA, as well as working to represent the wider membership.

Nominated by Sarah Death and Daniel Hahn

Hetty Saunders



Hello! I'm a freelance non-fiction editor and ghostwriter. I trained as an English literature academic at Cambridge and Edinburgh universities, then as an academic editor at the University of London. Editing and ghostwriting are about putting aside your ego and figuring out how best to represent another's vision. The work involves lifting others up and listening to their needs, skills I will bring to the role of board member.

My whole career has involved writing. I've been a non-fiction judge for the James Tait Black prize, taught poetic form to undergrads, run creative writing workshops, worked in second-hand bookshops and stage-managed a version of King Lear with sheep (Google it). In 2017 I published a biography of the nature writer J.A. Baker and joined the SoA.

My academic research also concerned nature. It looked at the urgent questions that environmental crisis poses to creatives and how writers contribute to articulating these difficult topics and the difficult feelings around them. This work taught me the importance of making space and advocating for those without a human voice or whose voices have been stifled. Last year I co-edited a collection of speculative nature writing with the University of East Anglia. This project involved working to make nature writing a more inclusive space, supporting new writers from underrepresented groups, including neurodivergent, global majority and disabled authors. As a board member, I will work to make the SoA inclusive to all writers, promoting an environmental agenda that helps everyone and defends our future by pushing for more sustainability and environmental responsibility in the industry.

Book publishing is a bewildering world for first-time authors. I felt uncertain of myself among all the "real", grown-up writers, but the SoA provided a likeminded community. I want to help other members navigate the industry with more confidence than I had. The best way to nurture that confidence and creativity is to nurture connection. After all, that's what we're all doing – trying to connect with readers. The idea that writers toil away alone in their garrets is outdated; it takes a village to write and publish a book, and as a ghostwriter I know the power of collaboration. I will work to promote community, connection and collaboration through the face-to-face events that are so crucial to our professional development.

Representing the SoA's members also means championing the UK as a world-leading hub for writing, illustrating, translation and creatives. An editor's job is to uphold the highest standards when it comes to protecting IP and promoting quality. In this world of ultra-processed information, I believe in banging the drum for more nutritious content, especially when creatives are being threatened by substandard AI content. At the same time, I am cautiously optimistic that AI can be a force for good. I want to work with the SoA, other creative bodies and publishers to help writers embrace the parts of AI that can enable and empower them, while defending them from that which disenfranchises them.

Nominated by James Opie and Molly Arbuthnott

Kate Tough



As a member of the Society since 2017, I've gladly volunteered more input since early 2023. Initially, by forming the SoA's local group for Spain, which meets online to support members in their dual-country working lives. Additionally, I sit on the PD James Memorial Fund Committee, which administers lifelong grants to members. Also, this year I was an observer-attendee at the Audit Committee, having acquired skills and knowledge in my working life which are useful in that regard.

Reflected in my working life is a motivation for what's fair for all, and the wellbeing of everyone. After university, I was Personnel Manager (and Management Committee member) in a cooperative wholefood supplier, where all staff could vote and all were paid equally. In 1999, I moved to the Scottish Parliament where I had middle management roles in Clerking and Research; offering impartial procedural assistance to politicians from all parties. Obtaining an MLitt led to a decade teaching creative writing in education and community settings, alongside publication of fiction and poetry, plus literacy volunteering. After a stint as Office Manager in a Glasgow social care charity, I spent eight years as Operational Director of a property business. I shifted its focus from commercial leasing to ethical investing and to affordable rental housing; recently contributing to research for the Nationwide Foundation's 'Decent, Affordable Homes' strategy for the UK.

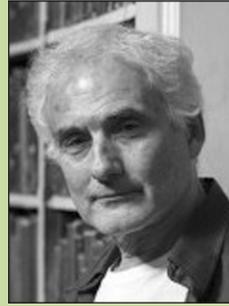
I'm offering to serve on the Management Committee because I'm committed to advocating on behalf of others to reach fair, workable solutions. It's necessary to listen to stakeholders and find the way ahead through research, dialogue and negotiation.

In particular, I have experience in financial management and ethical investing which I could contribute to stewarding the SoA's sizeable resources with care, for the long-term benefit of members who receive grants and assistance, whilst not doing harm to the wider world – helping the existing legacies and funds transition sensibly to ethical investments.

My other motivation is to enhance the experience of writers so that they're supported and remunerated fairly. Many authors express feeling worse as a result of being published, not better. Can we improve that? The goal could be to secure decent remuneration for any contracted work. Many writers need a second job to earn income and thus constantly feel overworked. Perhaps readers are unaware how little some authors earn from the books filling the shops. Is it time for a Fairtrade-style movement in the publishing sector; to design an industry fit for the modern era? Should fewer books be published so that each one can be supported properly, from the contract to the launch and beyond – offering each the best chance to find its audience? Contracted writers shouldn't have to organise their own marketing campaigns, nor require a social media following (being active on social media isn't a healthy, safe or appealing route for everyone). Ideally, simply, we could focus on writing, deliver our best work and be paid accordingly.

Nominated by Hugh Roberts and Helen Sedgwick

Charles Harris



I have been honoured to serve on the Society's Management Committee for the past three years, but there is much, much more to be improved in our industry.

Writers need supporting and defending. We have a crucial role in helping mend the world – or even just to make living more tolerable. The written word has never been more central to our culture, from social media to blogs, magazines

and books. The SoA has a vital role to play in this.

During my time on the Management Committee, I've challenged Amazon on poor and unfair practice when dealing with our members and won concessions and even an apology! I've helped deal with important complaints and worked to improve the way the Society is run. I've been able to set up new connections with librarians, who are easily forgotten as important allies. I've also been working with the Sustainability Group, linking the Society up with the excellent Green Libraries Campaign.

One major issue for me is that average author earnings are still embarrassingly low. Over the past year and a half, I've been working with agents on ways to attack this, and very much want to have the chance to continue this initiative.

I'm also working on new events for members and other planned initiatives to give more in return for membership.

I am a full-time author myself. I have had two novels and three non-fiction books traditionally published, and have self-published a non-fiction book and a collection of short stories. Before that, I worked in cinema and TV as script editor, screenwriter, director and producer, winning awards for my films.

I co-founded the London Screenwriters' Workshop – the first screenwriters' workshop in the world – now called Euroscript, and was co-chair of the New Producers' Alliance.

I'm standing again for the Management Committee because I believe in the SoA and feel there is so much more I can contribute in a new term.

Charles Harris

Nominated by Juliet McKenna and Simon Cann

Juliet McKenna



I joined the Society of Authors in 1997 when I was offered my first publishing contract. I benefited immediately from expert advice, and key clauses of that contract were rewritten to protect my interests. Ever since, I have found my membership invaluable.

I primarily write science fiction and fantasy as Juliet E McKenna, with some historical crime fiction as JM Alvey. I have had 25 novels published by mass-market and independent publishers, plus several novellas and numerous short stories. Forthcoming publications include novels, a story for a shared-world anthology from an American publisher, a contribution to an English university's modern folklore project, and a retrospective short story collection.

As a working writer, I know it is vital for authors to keep up-to-date with ongoing changes in the books industry. Corporate publishers' and retailers' decisions focus on their own commercial interests, and adverse effects on writers can be a secondary consideration. As authors increasingly combine independent projects with traditional book contracts, new technologies and platforms appear, apparently offering new routes to reach readers. As a member of the Management Committee for the past three years, I have seen at firsthand how hard the Society's staff and board members strive to keep writers informed of genuine opportunities and warned of well-disguised pitfalls. If re-elected, I will continue to contribute to this essential work by gathering news from a wide range of professional contacts, drawing on my own experience as an author, and before that, as a bookseller working for Ottakar's.

The Society is a powerful advocate in defence of authors' rights, both in the public sphere, and through direct communication with businesses, government departments and a wide range of industry bodies. The rise of generative so-called 'artificial intelligence' is only one of many current challenges to a writer's ability to make a living, and to retain control over uses made of our work. Sustaining a freelance career is becoming more and more difficult as authors face exploitative contracts, tax and benefit systems unsuited to creative professions, and funding cuts to the arts. If re-elected, I will continue to search for ways to address such problems, bringing ideas to the board's policy discussions. My experience in the successful 2015/2016 campaign to reform VAT regulations on cross-border digital sales showed me a range of effective strategies.

In my time on the Management Committee, I have raised concerns from fellow science fiction and fantasy authors, as well as issues highlighted by the expert small presses who contribute so much to our particular genre. Many of these apply to all writers, others relate to genre fiction, while some are specific to science fiction and fantasy. I have shared news of successful initiatives in science fiction and fantasy which other genres might find useful. I have been involved in organising and participating in events supporting readers and authors for many years.

I hope to be re-elected to the Management Committee in order to continue to promote the interests of all authors.

Nominated by Mary Hoffman and Simon Cann

Anita Lehmann



My name is Anita Lehmann. I'm Swiss by origin and the author of over a dozen books for both children and adults. I have put my name forward to stand for the Society of Authors' Management Committee.

I have been a proud member of the Society of Authors since 2017. The support the SoA's contracts team have given me, an un-agented, internationally published author, has been priceless. They have scrutinised all my contracts, alerting me to potential issues, disentangling the legalese, and encouraging me to keep hold of key rights. As a result, my contracts are more solid than they would otherwise have been, which has boosted both my income and confidence as an author.

I am passionate about libraries, so if elected, one of the areas I would like to be involved in further would be the Society of Authors' work with libraries. In a previous role as an assistant librarian at Cambridgeshire Libraries, I set up 'Meet Your Local Children's Authors' events in order to strengthen the connection between the library and local authors and to foster long-term working relationships. As a member of the Management Committee at the Society of Authors, I will seek to nourish author partnerships with libraries at every level: lobbying for better funding, collaborating with organisations that support libraries, and supporting both grassroots and nationwide initiatives to connect authors and libraries and enrich communities everywhere.

I'd also like to see more funds available to authors, be that for works in progress or for writers experiencing financial difficulties. Having successfully raised funds for several writing and theatre projects over the past few years, I can bring that experience to the table.

Being a member of SoA has made me feel like somebody has got my back. Now is the time for me to pay forward and to support the Society in further strengthening its core mission, which is to support all authors through campaigning, lobbying, negotiation, and representation.

Nominated by Jenny Alexander and Joan Haig

Helen Epega



Dear fellow members,

I'm honoured to nominate myself for the 2024 Society of Authors Management Committee. As a British-Nigerian librettist and composer, I bring over 15 years of board experience and a unique perspective to the table that I believe will greatly benefit our organisation.

The SoA's mission to empower professional authors and their estates with knowledge, support and community resonates deeply with me. In today's rapidly evolving creative landscape, it is more crucial than ever to have a strong advocate for authors' rights and interests. I'm committed to driving this mission forward and addressing the key challenges and opportunities facing our community.

One of the most pressing issues we face is the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and new technologies on the publishing industry. As AI-generated content becomes more prevalent, we must work tirelessly to protect authors' intellectual property rights and ensure fair compensation for their work. If elected, I will prioritise developing strategies to address these emerging challenges, collaborating with industry experts and policymakers to create a framework that safeguards authors' interests in the digital age.

Improving diversity, inclusivity and representation within the literary world is another key focus area for me. As a multicultural artist who has created innovative works such as the world's first Pidgin English Opera, *Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera*, I understand the importance of amplifying underrepresented voices. I will work to expand the SoA's outreach to diverse communities, implement mentorship programs and create more opportunities for authors from all backgrounds to thrive in their careers.

My experience collaborating with major brands like Christian Dior and Disney has taught me the value of building strategic partnerships that benefit creators. I will leverage these skills to forge new alliances for the SoA, expanding resources and opportunities for our members. This includes exploring collaborations with international authors' organisations to strengthen our global presence and influence.

As a Management Committee member, I will strive to:

1. Advocate for stronger protections against AI-generated content that infringes on authors' rights
2. Develop initiatives to support authors in adapting to new publishing models and technologies
3. Expand the SoA's international presence and foster collaboration with authors' organisations worldwide
4. Create more networking and professional development opportunities for members
5. Enhance the SoA's digital presence to better engage with and serve our diverse membership
6. Lobby for improved government support and funding for the arts and literature.

My involvement with the SoA has shown me the power of community in supporting and inspiring authors. I'm deeply committed to nurturing this community and ensuring that

every member feels valued, represented and empowered to succeed in their creative endeavours.

By electing me, you will gain a passionate advocate for authors' rights, a champion for diversity and an innovative thinker ready to tackle the challenges of our evolving industry. I bring energy, creativity, a fresh perspective and a deep respect for the SoA's rich history and traditions.

Together, we'll build a stronger Society that shapes publishing's future. Thank you for your consideration.

Nominated by Gabby Dawnay and Davina Hamilton

Vineet Lal

Sometimes it can feel as though it's never been a more challenging time to be a literary translator. It's a precarious profession at the best of times, which, coupled with the many issues that we have to contend with, means that we need – now, more than ever – a trade union that's committed to battling on our behalf. By putting myself forward to join the Management Committee, I would hope, in my own small way, to make a difference to the literary

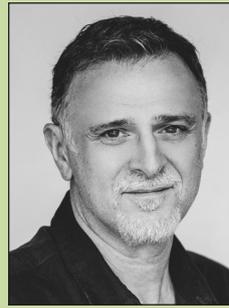
translation community. I have been actively engaged with the Society of Authors, and the Translators Association (TA), for more than decade, ever since I began work as a translator – initially as a member, then as part of the TA Committee, and for the last two years as TA Co-chair. I have taken part in numerous industry panels concerned with literary translation, both online and in-person, including a well-received panel on remuneration at the London Book Fair in 2023. I have also been a Trustee of Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature since 2013.

With my professional experience as a translator, coupled with experience gained via the TA Committee, I would like to continue to tackle some of the many challenges that confront us. Central to those, in my view, is the relationship between the publishing industry and the translation community, because – when all's said and done – that remains the conduit to opportunities and contracts for work. And allied to those key relationships, of course, are many other issues – such as negotiating a fair fee for our work, fostering respect for our role and hard-won expertise as translators, receiving contracts on time (and preferably contracts that, from the outset, lay out fair terms), or negotiating the often sensitive area of cover credits.

And over and above working to improve conditions for translators, I believe that I can lend added value with my insights and perspectives on what we mean by diversity and inclusion. Breaking into literary translation has always been difficult, and can often depend on accessing networks and making connections – something which can be all the more challenging for marginalised groups, and in my experience remains particularly daunting for translators of colour. Representation remains patchy, and notably so when it comes to decision-makers and gatekeepers. Much remains to be done, and this is one area that I'd be especially keen to focus on. In addition, as I'm based in Scotland, I bring a regional perspective: thankfully, we are less London-centric now as meetings have become increasingly hybrid, but it's important to remain aware of geographical spread and regional dynamics.

I believe that I can bring a distinctive, persuasive and informed voice to the work of the SoA Management Committee – a voice which combines professional insights, hands-on experience of what affects our membership, a sensitivity to current issues, and the ability to engage effectively with other SoA Management Committee members for the collective benefit of all.

Nominated by Ian Giles and Kari Dickson

Simon Michael

I am a barrister, called to the Bar in 1978. Until my early retirement in 2016 I practised in crime and common law for c. 20 years and then moved exclusively into professional negligence work. In 2001 I was awarded the Bar Pro Bono prize (a competition open to all barristers, usually large sets of prominent chambers) for my work single-handedly setting up a charity to support bereaved families at the coroners' courts. I was also for

approximately 15 years a board member and trustee of the Road Victims' Trust (RVT), a charity I helped to establish, created to support people suffering bereavement or life-changing injury on the roads. The RVT has now expanded to five counties.

More recently I was a board member of the Crime Writers' Association (CWA) and was the lead member responsible for modernising its policies in respect of self-published authors and the process of nominations for CWA Daggers. I also led the subcommittee responsible for rationalising and modernising the CWA's structure and governance, drafting all of the new provisions. Vaseem Khan (now chair of the CWA) was a member of the same subcommittee.

I founded and for three years co-ordinated the Manchester Local Group of the Society of Authors, stepping back earlier this year to allow newer members to take over. We grew from 8 -10 inaugural members to over 80 by the time I resigned as co-ordinator.

In addition to being a Legal 500 (Tier 1) listed barrister in my field, I have experience setting up service level agreements with outside bodies (e.g. police forces, health trusts) and drafting a wide variety of legal documents. I am very familiar with the obligations and duties of directors/trustees of companies and charities.

I am the author of the Charles Holborne series, a (currently) nine-book series of 1960s London-based legal crime thrillers, published by Sapere Books. I am also published by Bloodhound Books under my pseudonym.

I believe that as authors we face difficult and, in some cases, novel challenges over the next few years, from AI, from the squeeze on our earnings and from the risk of groupthink in the publishing world. Cool heads and powerful advocacy will be required to meet these challenges and protect authors' interests. I am a team player with years of experience of building consensus and believe my skills will be of use to the Society.

Nominated by Vaseem Khan and David Beckler