

# CANDIDATES' ELECTION STATEMENTS

## **Election to the Management Committee 2019**

Please read carefully before casting your vote.  
Candidates are listed in random order.

## JOANNE HARRIS



I am the author of 18 novels, including *Chocolat*, as well as scripts, libretti, short story collections and cookbooks. My work has been published in over 50 countries and has collected a number of British and international honours and awards. I am an honorary Fellow of St Catharine's College, Cambridge, and in 2013 was granted an MBE by the Queen. I have been a judge of numerous prizes, including the Orange, the Whitbread, the Desmond Elliot, the Betty Trask and the

Royal Society Winton Prize for Science.

An ex-teacher turned professional author, I have been on the Management Committee of the SoA for the past three years, and I am also on the Board of ALCS. I would very much welcome the opportunity to continue to serve on the Management Committee, and to continue to use my influence (including my well-supported social media platforms) to raise awareness of the SoA and its role, as well as to campaign on behalf of all authors on issues such as copyright, piracy, diversity and authors' earnings.

**Nominated by Philip Womack and Nicola Morgan**

## VANESSA FOX O'LOUGHLIN



The UK is a vital market for Irish writers, and their voices enrich the narrative. As a British woman living in Dublin, I have a foot in both camps, I am regularly in London, and would love to bring a new perspective to the already superb work the Society of Authors is doing.

I am a bestselling crime writer - agented by Simon Trewin, I write crime as Sam Blake; my fourth book *Keep Your Eyes on Me* is out with Corvus in Jan

2020 - but in my 'day job' I work with writers at all stages of their careers. Through Writing.ie, one-to-one at Inkwell, and through the events I programme at festivals, my focus is on attempting to demystify publishing and explaining how writers can approach the industry in the best possible way. I meet many unagented authors who have been put under pressure to sign contracts that see them give up vital rights, but also who sign with publishers who put zero effort into promoting a book, expecting the author to do this but giving them no guidance. Writers are wordsmiths, they are not always business people or marketing executives, and I believe the work the Society of Authors do in this area is vital. I would love to bring my varied experience across business and marketing to add to the already strong offering.

In addition to running a multi-award winning writing resources website, I work with a wide range of agents and publishers in Ireland and the UK to assist writers to achieve the best outcome for their work. I have a 360° experience, having self-published and worked closely with the Alliance of Independent Authors and Amazon (!), to working as a scout and being a traditionally published author myself. I continually aim to develop free initiatives to provide information to writers, both published and unpublished in order that they can get the maximum benefit from their writing - I feel passionately that income should not be a barrier to improvement and reaching your goal.

I would love to see more events programmed with libraries in the UK, particularly given the dire situation they are in. This will help build community and with it, build support for vital services. It's also essential that authors are paid for their time and I believe there can be synergy between business and art to achieve this. I think outside the box and am passionate about writers achieving their dreams, whatever form that may take.

**Nominated by Kit de Waal and Angela Clarke**

## AMY BEESON



Since joining the Society of Authors in 2013 after signing my first book deal with HarperCollins the SoA has become a growing presence in my professional life - somewhere I'd increasingly look to for advice and opportunities via email, the website, social media, in *The Author* or through events and training. I've come to realise the more I engage with what the SoA offers the more I benefit and the less isolated and ill-prepared for the highs and lows of a writer's life I am.

As a communications and branding professional who runs my own business, Wordsby Communications, I understand the pressures we face in this fast-paced digital world. Writers, illustrators and translators today are expected to do so much more than produce work. You have to be your own marketing, press and finance departments, and let's not forget HR department, because when you're your own boss sometimes you aren't kind enough to your employee - you! Authors' quality of life, health and wellbeing as well as our understanding of our professional rights all come into the scope of being an engaged and valued member.

As a working mum of mixed race, under 40, balancing family life, writing, running a business and striving for self-care I hope I'd increase the diversity and breadth of experience on the Management Committee. I believe the values we hold as an organisation should shape decision-making at every level and that all members, at all stages of their careers should be represented and considered.

Over the last two decades I've worked with business, government, charities and arts organisations as well as authors and creatives to campaign and market their message, products and services. Before getting that life-changing book deal I worked in the civil service and was responsible for strategy, communications and archives policy. I was frequently the bridge between readers, creators and government funders and policy makers.

I'd previously worked in election strategy and advocated that grassroots engagement had an important role to play in shaping strategy. It's something I continue to do in my work with international conservation and human rights campaigns today, working co-creatively to amplify the voices of ordinary and extraordinary people to be seen and heard to bring about change.

I'd like to use my blend of creative communications and strategic engagement know-how to benefit my fellow authors in the SoA by serving on the Management Committee. To contribute to shaping policies and opportunities that help all authors grow their careers. To play a small part in improving the lives of our members through the services and tools on offer and in how we develop our influence in the media, broadcasting and publishing industries and with other partner organisations and government.

**Nominated by Ellie Franklin and Margaret Gullan-Whur**

## JULIET MILLER



I have been a member of the Society of Authors for seven years. I joined having published a couple of books in the field of psychotherapy: *Inconceivable Conceptions*, (Routledge, 2003) and *The Creative Feminine and her Discontents* (Karnac 2008). I wanted to broaden my readership and to have more support for my writing from writers in other fields. I also wanted to try and understand a publishing world that seemed to be changing fast. In the SoA I have

found a true writing home where I have felt supported by other writers and by the expertise available. I have been an extensive reader all my life and could not live without books. I believe passionately in the importance of the written word and the continuing capacity of writers to be able to voice their diverse and independent voices in a confusing and constricting world.

I am applying for a place on the Management Committee because I would like to be a part of the union, which holds a beacon up for writers. Since I first got into print the publishing industry has changed dramatically and writers now struggle more than ever to get their individual voices heard. The work of the SoA is crucial in helping to highlight the new and diverse difficulties that authors face. Reduced incomes, changes in copyright, book pirating online and fast-moving new technologies are all making me and all the writers I know more anxious and more in need of support.

As well as these concerns and my love of writing, the main experiences I would bring to the Management Committee would be the skills and knowledge I have acquired throughout two careers. I was a film director and producer for 20 years and made documentary films for the BBC and Channel 4. I am used to writing for factual films, thinking in images and understanding how the televised media works, although I am much happier behind a camera rather than in front of one.

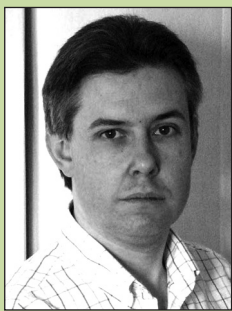
In mid-life I trained to be a Jungian Analyst and worked as a psychotherapist for 20 years with a wide variety of clients including writers, singers and performers. As a result, I am sympathetic to the difficulties writers and creative people face from both internal and external factors. I am also aware of group dynamics and very conscious of how societal influences impact on individuals. Although I earn a small amount of money from my writing, my income mostly comes from supervising and teaching other psychotherapists.

I have experience of committee work, as I have been on the Council of two Analytic training organisations, The Association of Jungian Analysts and The Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists, and also on their training and ethics sub-committees. For three years I was on the Editorial Board of *The Harvest*, the international journal for Jungian Studies.

I would bring this mixture of skills to working on the Management Committee, as well as enthusiasm and energy for the work of the SoA.

**Nominated by Lucinda Hawksley and Ann Shearer**

## SIMON CANN



I am unapologetic in my ambition for authors to earn more money. I am standing for the Management Committee of the Society of Authors to further that ambition and to support the work that has already been done in this area.

It seems to me that over time the people who write books are getting paid less while the people who don't write, but who are involved with and around

books however peripherally, are earning more. This needs to change - writing needs to pay.

I want to focus on two areas:

First, I want authors to get a greater share of the pie. The only people who are fundamental to books are authors - everyone else is an intermediary. I want to see the author's role as the essential component without which books cannot exist more fully acknowledged in the financial settlement.

Second, I want to increase the size of the pie. I want to work to find and develop ways for books and the writing ecosystem to generate more money. The writing ecosystem supports us all - we need to expand and diversify that ecosystem, both in terms of voices and in the ways to convert writing into income.

In short, we need a bigger pie with authors taking a bigger share of that bigger pie.

If we fail and authors cannot put food on the table, then we will lose books. If we lose books, the consequences at an individual author level and at a societal level are significant.

I also want to work to help new authors into the industry, but in tandem we need to ensure that every new author and every existing author can then sustain a financially viable career. Every time an author ceases to be the hot new thing and can't find a fresh contract that offers a living income, we lose diversity and we lose the opportunity to hear the maturing voice.

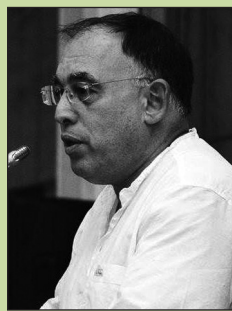
It distresses me that authors need to undertake work that is adjacent to, rather than integral to their writing in order to survive. We need to be clear in our focus: in a changing world, we need to find ways to make writing pay - and keep paying. Beyond that, we need to be realistic in our approach and embrace both traditional routes to publishing as well as independent/self-publishing so that we can take advantage of the particular strengths of each option.

I have been paid to write over the last 30 years and have been full-time for the last 15 years. I am the author of thirty-something fiction and non-fiction books, most in my own name, but with some ghostwriting thrown in. I have worked with traditional publishers and I have also self/independently published a significant number of books since 2007.

In a past life, I worked as a management consultant for one of the large global consulting firms where my clients included aeronautical, pharmaceutical, defence, financial services, chemical, entertainment, broadcasting, and publishing companies.

**Nominated by Charles Palliser and Charles Harris**

## ERIC LEE



I joined the Society of Authors a few years ago for the same reason that many writers do: to get someone to look over my contract with a publisher. And since I joined, the SoA has done this for me three times, and three times I have gotten better contract terms from publishers than what they initially offered. I've written five commercially published works of non-fiction, mostly history, as well as hundreds of articles in newspapers and magazines.

I love being a member of this union, and when I meet other writers, I always advise them to join the SoA. When copies of *The Author* come through my letterbox I read them from cover to cover. I've attended interesting SoA events, enjoyed the discounts at London's great bookshops, and appreciate how much the SoA does to represent authors to government, to publishers and booksellers, and to the public. I am even a recipient of a generous Authors' Foundation grant that allowed me to finish one of my books.

Now I want to give something back. My first book published in the UK was called *The Labour Movement and the Internet* (Pluto Press, 1996). Back then, I was convinced that new communications technologies were emerging that could make trade unions stronger. I went on to found the LabourStart website in 1998, and it is today the news and campaigning platform of the international trade union movement. LabourStart's volunteer translators ensure that our news and campaigns appear in more than 30 languages. Over 900 people post links to labour news stories to our site every day. Over 130,000 trade union members around the world have supported our campaigns, which are always launched at the request of unions and usually focus on the denial of workers' rights. We have a very large mailing list, and a strong presence on social media. And every couple of years, we organise a global solidarity conference, most recently in Toronto, Berlin, Sydney and Istanbul.

I've had more than two decades of experience with online campaigning for trade unions, often exploring the very latest tools, learning what works and what doesn't.

The Society of Authors is a campaigning trade union and it does great work. Much of what we campaign for benefits not only our members, but our society as a whole. For that reason, we need to reach out to a wider public, including our fellow trade unionists, but more broadly speaking to all those who care about reading and writing. And some of what we campaign for has a global dimension too, meaning that we should be working even more closely with our sister writers' unions in other countries.

We will be facing new challenges as authors and as a union in the years to come and I want us to be ready with the best strategies and tools that there are. That's where I think I can help, and that's why I want to be part of the Management Committee.

**Nominated by Andrew Laurence and Jocelyn Robson**



## ABIE LONGSTAFF



I am a children's writer and ex-lawyer. I joined the Society of Authors in 2011 and am an active member of the Scattered Authors' Society (a group of published children's writers) for whom I organise the Winter Retreat. 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 range 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 have volunteered at Liberty and recently was on the Amnesty Carnegie Medal panel.

I'd like to use my policy and legal knowledge to help in campaigning and calling for greater rights and better deals for authors. There is an increasing conglomeration of power at the top, whether that is in the merging of book chains, or in the limited amount of shelf space devoted to an ever-smaller range of authors. As a result, the career of an author is becoming less and less sustainable (the All-Party Parliamentary Writers Group identified that writers' earnings have fallen by a devastating 42% in real terms since 2005). We are all tired of earning so little 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.

I am lucky to earn a living as a writer but I need to supplement my income with school visits, literary festivals and teacher training conferences. Whilst I am grateful for this additional revenue, I sometimes feel that the balance of my work time errs too much on the side of events and promotion and not enough on the writing itself. I am the main breadwinner and am very aware that my overall income is insecure and unreliable.

I'm keen for authors and authorship to take a more powerful place in the wider culture and I want to help writers earn at all levels; from debut to career author. We all need a fair, sustainable, more reliable income.

**Nominated by Anne Rooney and Nicola Morgan**

## TERRY FREEDMAN



Of all the associations I belong to, the Society of Authors is by far the most effective. Since joining in the early 1990s it has proved invaluable for contract-vetting, guides on various aspects of publishing, and events such as tax talks. The other member benefits, including book discounts, have also proved most useful. For all these reasons, I often recommend joining when I talk to writers, and on my blog.

Furthermore, the advice provided on contracts has been extremely helpful not only as far as books are concerned, but also those I've been asked to sign by magazine publishers.

Beyond the personal, however, I find myself fully in agreement with the SoA's stance on a number of issues, especially the promoting of a reading culture, support for the EU Copyright Directive and its C.R.E.A.T.O.R. campaign.

To take two examples which illustrate why I believe these issues are critically important, first consider libraries. According to Giles Watkins at the Educational Writers Awards earlier this year, around 500 libraries have been closed in this country since 2010. Research shows that this is likely to adversely affect social mobility, because one of the benefits of visiting libraries is that doing so encourages reading, which has been shown to improve life chances.

Secondly, the statistics recently unveiled by the ALCS (and included in the All Party Writers Group report) show that authors' earnings have declined in real terms by 42% since 2005. Therefore, the SoA's work in representing authors' interests at the highest levels is crucial.

I do feel, however, that there is more that the SoA could do in certain areas. In particular, those members who self-publish are under-represented in any formal sense. The Alliance of Independent Authors clearly is very prominent in this area, but perhaps one way of addressing the SoA's membership growth target (agreed in 2018) would be to explore what we could offer to would-be members who self-publish.

Also, although the SoA is very active on Twitter, and its blog posts are very interesting, the two do not seem to be linked. Furthermore, a blog post every two weeks is not usually frequent enough to keep people coming back. I think that looking into these points might be useful.

Thirdly, as education writers constitute around 8% of the membership, I think there should be an education writer - someone with direct and current experience of writing in this field, especially at school level - on the Management Committee, and one who is permitted to speak at the meetings. At the moment this is not the case.

My credentials:

- Long-standing membership of the SoA.
- Support of its aims.
- Membership of Educational Writers Group (EWG).
- 39 years writing.
- Blogging and other social media experience since 1995, such as Twitter, moderator of online debates, forum moderator.
- 44 years in education.
- Several senior management roles.
- Committee memberships of educational associations, including position of Chair.
- Fellow of RSA.
- Public speaking.

**Nominated by Hilary Macaskill and Ignaty Dyakov**

