



SYP chair Doug Wallace and Claire Shanahan are the masterminds behind the SYP's current series of author talks and other events

The Society of Young Publishers provides precious networking opportunities and careers advice for those hoping to make it in publishing. Alexis Hercules writes

Young and upwardly hopeful

Being a member of the SYP is an invaluable stepping-stone to the publishing industry and a glance through the list of past members proves it. Former chairs of the society, which is run voluntarily, include Tom Maschler (former m.d. of Jonathan Cape), Tom Rosenthal (publisher and broadcaster), Judith Longman (publishing director, Hodder & Stoughton), Suzanne Collier (www.bookcareers.com) and, more recently, Jonathan Ruppin (front of house, Foyles).

Network your way up

The current chairman is Doug Wallace, project manager at Taxbriefs Financial Publishing. "Forty percent of members are students, 40% are working and the rest are honorary members, such as experienced people in the industry who come to speak," Wallace says. "A lot of people join because of the jobs bulletin, which is a fortnightly email containing job vacancies and work experience places, usually before they are advertised elsewhere."

The society also organises monthly meetings with special guest speakers covering a wide range of topics. "The monthly meetings are a good introduction to the trade, allowing members to meet important people, ask them questions and go for

a drink afterwards," Wallace says. "We do author events too. This allows prospective publishers to get the author's perspective. Famous authors come and say, 'publishers are really difficult to work with.'" *Labyrinth* author Kate Mosse and Orange Prize winner Lionel Shriver have both spoken to SYP members; *Londonstani* writer Gautam Malkani is scheduled and, although unconfirmed, Marian Keyes has been invited.

CV clinic

SYP also hosts career clinics and an annual careers conference, which give members the chance to network with people at all levels of publishing. Entry to these is free for members, who also gain access to a jobs database and a bi-monthly newsletter entitled *InPrint*, which invites articles covering all areas and aspects of publishing. The society has extensive links with recruitment consultants and such institutions as the London College of Communications, University College London and Oxford Brookes. This allows for communication between the industry and training providers on how people are trained and the skills they will need.

The regular CV clinics with publishers enable members to polish their resumé. "They will go through

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Profile Books m.d.

JOIN THE SYP

SYP membership costs £30 for a full year, or £20 for a student or the unwaged. Join online by visiting www.thesyp.org.uk, where there is also information about postal applications. SYP, which will be at stand X127 at the London Book Fair, is trying to expand and to become a more open organisation. It has registered on the social networking website, www.facebook.com, where people can view details about other members.

it and point out the sort of things they are looking for," Wallace explains. "You talk to people who can help you get into those bigger companies, giving you some direction, which is especially helpful if you don't know exactly where you want to go."

Past participants

The SYP was set up in 1949 by enthusiasts who wanted to broaden their understanding of the complex publishing world by learning from each other, with the ultimate aim of improving the industry as a whole. The principles have not altered much since then, and an official constitution was adopted in 1992.

Andrew Franklin, founder of Profile Books, says he owes his very existence to the SYP, as his parents met through it in 1952. Andrew was a member himself in the 1980s. "I wanted to learn more, make publishing friends and contacts and understand what other people in publishing did. Any networking is constructive for people wanting to get into publishing. The very hardest part of publishing is getting in in the first place," he says.

"The SYP gives you a chance to talk to colleagues and like-minded people who've come through. It's constructive to see what their obstacles were, and discovering what strategies have or haven't worked for them is important and encouraging."

Nicholas Jones, director of Strathmore Publishing, was chair of the SYP in 1979. "When you're at the SYP you're among contemporaries. It sets up a network around the publishing industry that lasts the whole of your publishing career and provides a forum where people are taken seriously. If you are a member of the SYP, chances are you are serious about getting on in publishing."

Victoria Nicholl, chair in 2005, is now at Orion. She says: "The SYP is a fantastic place to learn about the realities of publishing and the people in it. It is a truly flexible and welcoming society that takes pride and pleasure in creating a comfortable environment."