

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

April 2003

From the Chair

'Literacy: had it a future?' was the theme explored by our panellists in a small but lively forum, following the society's AGM this month. Clearly the term literacy itself embraces a broad and diverse range of meanings and applications. In the twenty-first century being literate may well still mean being able to read and write, but it also means having an informed knowledge and understanding of texts (print, electronic, visual, filmic, for example), reflecting critically on how and to what effects they 'work' and, perhaps most importantly, producing texts for different purposes to suit individual contexts and diverse audiences. Our panellists, Rob Finlayson, Janet Blagg, James Hansen and Mar Bucknell, demonstrated, through their highly individual presentations, the reach of literacy as an idea and as practice.

The AGM saw the re-election of some committee members and the welcome addition of two new members. For my sins, I'm retaining the position of President. I'm joined by James Hansen as Vice President, Linda Browning as Treasurer and Ffion Murphy as Secretary. Amanda Curtin and Betty Durston continue as general committee members (with particular responsibilities for meetings, and for CASE and education and training, respectively). Michele Crawford and John Hall are the new general committee members.

Book Worm's new editor is Chris Nagel. We're delighted to have Chris take on this role; please show your appreciation by inundating her with material for our newsletter over the coming months. Wendy Bulgin is our new selector of material from other state societies' newsletters for inclusion in *Book Worm*—thank you, Wendy.

Here's to a great year for SOEWA. We look forward to your involvement in the society's activities over coming months.

Anne Surma

Editorial

Well, there, I've done it. Succumbed to Anne's impassioned pleas for an editor for *Book Worm*. What moment of unmitigated madness possessed me? Why would anyone want to take on the role of editor to the Society of Editors'

newsletter, for pity's sake?

Of course, now I've opened my big mouth, I'll have to follow through. So, in the tradition of new editors everywhere, I'll call on all our members to HELP ME and supply articles of interest for publication.

Apart from the excellent contributions of Wendy Bulgin, who replaces Lorna de Courtney as researcher and newshound, and Michèle Drouart, continuing in her role of proofreader, we will still need offerings from you.

Please send me your anecdotes, reports on editorship, gripes, or any other writings that you'd like to get off your chest. How about a contribution from each member titled 'A Day in My Editing Life'? Daggy, right? Share your experiences with your colleagues to broaden our individual understanding of the various jobs we all do.

I would also like to develop a whinge list: email me the thing that irritates you most and I'll list them each month so we can all groan together.

Profound thanks to James for his article, *However, however ...* originally published in a much earlier edition of *Book Worm*, but which remains pertinent, and to Gila for her amusing piece on the German language.

That aside, I'd like to welcome you to *Book Worm* if you are a new member and thank our continuing members for their interest and readership.

I will be attempting to bring something of my own taste to the newsletter, so you may notice some small changes. I will use the *Style manual* as a guide for our house style, but I do lament the demise of title case as recommended in that publication, and I will cling to it stubbornly.

Chris Nagel

**Society of Editors Western Australia
Annual General Meeting 18 March 2003**

Chair's report

Our tenth anniversary year has allowed us to celebrate SOEWA (which we did, in style, at Christmas) as a solid and robust professional body.

The national scene

CASE continues its important work in co-ordinating national initiatives on behalf of the state societies. Betty Durston has ably represented SOEWA at the national level. A large and ongoing initiative, in which Betty has been and continues to be involved, is the refinement of a model for accreditation.

Plans to implement a national promotional campaign were launched last year. While they have been put aside for a few months—as societies have been too busy to take them up—it is planned to revive them this year.

The National Editor's Conference, 'After Gutenberg and Gates: Gazing into the E-future', has been in the planning these last few months, and will be held in Brisbane in July 2003.

Meetings

Through the year, SOEWA meetings, always successfully organised by Amanda Curtin, have reflected the society's engagement with a range and diversity of issues and interests: accreditation, copyright, grammar, fiction editing, self-publishing, and even ergonomics. SOEWA members and invited guests have offered informative and absorbing presentations.

Marketing

The marketing group has been at work all through the year. As a result, the society now boasts leaflets aimed at prospective clients and bookmarks carrying SOEWA's logo. Chris Nagel was the unflappable co-ordinator of that project. Marketing of the work of editors and of the society was also carried out, albeit indirectly, by Janet Blagg and Michèle Drouart through their participation in an author and editor panel at this year's Perth Writers Festival. SOEWA also had a presence at the festival, with a small stand in the information tent. Member volunteers sweated it out (literally), distributing wares on the society's behalf.

Individuals responsible for looking after key areas of SOEWA over the last year merit special mention:

Web site

Colin Muller took over as administrator of our site this year. He has maintained and extended our public profile through the site.

Education and training

The running of practical editing courses through the past year has again thrived under Betty Durston's direction and hard work.

Book Worm

Allan Watson, astute editor of the newsletter for the last two years, has stood down; Chris Nagel is to take over that role. Lorna de Courtenay, careful selector of other societies' newsletters, has also stood down; Wendy Bulgin takes over that role. Michèle, *Book Worm's* eagle-eyed proofreader, is going to maintain the continuity by staying on in her role.

Email group

James Hansen, ever-patient *Book Worm* distributor and email group co-ordinator, will retain his role for the next year.

Committee

This wonderful group also deserves enormous thanks: Janet Blagg, Linda Browning, Amanda Curtin, Betty Durston, James Hansen, Ffion Murphy, Wendy Bulgin and Susan Green. Their involvement, support and enthusiasm are hugely appreciated.

Anne Surma

However, however ...

by James Hansen

We editors need to work harder to save *however*, one of our most useful words, from death through overwork and a pattern of serious misuse which appeared in the late twentieth century and continues in the twenty-first.

Traditionally, *however* has operated in two ways: firstly, as an adverb—the equivalent of *nevertheless*, *yet*, *on the other hand*, *all the same*, *by whatever means*, *no matter how*—which modifies the whole sentence or clause in which it stands, and is separated by a comma or commas from the rest of the sentence or clause.

However, we will look into the matter.

The weather, however, was too bad to allow play to resume.

Secondly, *however* has functioned as an emphatic form of *how*, in which role it is not separated from the word it modifies.

However strong you are, you still need rest.

He is always willing to help, however tired he is.

Note that the powerful suffix *-ever* becomes a separate emphasising adverb in questions:

How did they ever find out?

Who ever was that?

The archaic form of this suffix, *-soever*, was added to the words *who*, *which*, *what*, *when* and *how* to give *who(so)ever*, *which(so)ever*, *what(so)ever*, etc. In this form they are sometimes used as simple pronouns (= who, which, what), as in 'Who(so)ever will, may come' and 'Whatever is, is right.' But all the compounds of *-ever* are most commonly used in a concessive sense: that is, they equate to *though* or *although*.

Whatever you do, don't take risks. (= Though you do everything else ...)

Whoever goes, I shall not be affected. (= Though everybody or anybody go ...)

However strong you are, you should be careful. (= Although you are remarkably strong ...)

It is this sense of concession that leads many of today's writers to misuse *however* as a fully-fledged conjunction. They use it (monotonously) to add

afterthoughts to a main clause or a complete preceding sentence. The result is frequently a run-on sentence.

Nicholas Hudson, writing in 1992 in *Modern Australian Usage*, describes a run-on sentence as a sentence with two main verbs and no conjunction to link them. Consider:

The marathon runner struggled on, but he was unable to reach the tape.

This is correct because we have two simple sentences joined by a conjunction; nevertheless, if we replace *but* with *however* the result will be a run-on sentence:

The marathon runner struggled on, however he was unable to reach the tape.

This does not sound right because *however* is not a true conjunction at all, but an adverb, possibly a shortened form of the adverbial clause of concession 'however hard he tried' (= although he tried hard). This confusion in the writer's mind may produce (yet another) run-on sentence:

The marathon runner struggled on, however hard he tried, he was unable to reach the tape.

The best solution is to recast the sentence, and comma off the *however*:

The marathon runner struggled on. However, although he tried hard, he was unable to reach the tape.

Here is a recent, local example:

This Union does not donate to any political party, however, it does campaign to express a point of view on the policies of all parties at the time of an election.

Here the use of *however* as a half-hearted conjunction waters down both the strong opening sentence and the important qualification that follows.

Recommended solutions are:

1. Substitute a full stop for the comma after *party*, and begin *however* with a capital letter, or perhaps replace *However* with *Nevertheless* (for variety's sake).
2. Replace *however* (and the following comma) with *although* or *but*.
3. At the very least, substitute a semi-colon for the comma after *party*.

Run-on sentences with *however* are not acceptable usage, and have been criticised as inelegant and illiterate. Yet they are very common, often a sign of hurried, pressured writing. Their concessional aspects make them, along with the passive voice, a favourite of bureaucrats and others who work in rigid hierarchies. The passive, where the subject is not the 'doer' of the action, means that blame for a failure is more difficult to target, while a plethora of *howevers* means there can be many qualifications to statements. Nevertheless, bureaucracies have been around for a long time, and the big problem of *however* and the run-on sentence is recent. Could a possible reason be that we now have several generations of writers who (through no fault of their own) missed being taught a formal grammar which imbued its students with a sense of structure?

While run-on sentences are a recent problem with *however*, there are two others of long-standing. H.W. Fowler writing in 1926 and Stephen Murray-Smith in 1988 remind readers that *but* should not be used with *however*, as in:

But the snow, however, continued to fall.

Here either *but* or *however* is unnecessary.

Note also that while *but* has to be at the beginning of the words it introduces *however* (being an adverb), can appear almost anywhere. *However* attaches

itself to the word immediately before it, and puts stress on it. For example:

The winning team ran a lap of honour. The losing team, however, straggled to the dressing room.

I wanted the article delivered on Monday, by messenger. It arrived on Tuesday, however, by post.

When *however* has no word before it, as at the beginning of a sentence, it applies to the whole sentence and indicates no particular stress pattern. Nicholas Hudson in *Modern Australian Usage* is particularly helpful on the position of *however*. Along with H.W. Fowler, he warns that carelessness with this word can lead to quite contrary effects. William Strunk Jnr in *The Elements of Style* makes the excellent suggestion that we avoid starting a sentence with *however* when it means *nevertheless*. For example:

The train was much delayed. However, we at last arrived.

The train was much delayed. At last, however, we arrived.

In preparing this article, I have referred to and drawn examples from works by H.W. Fowler, Nicholas Hudson, Stephen Murray-Smith, H.A. Treble & G.H. Vallins, William Strunk Jnr & E.B. White, and Dudley Burton. I greatly admire their scholarship and common sense. However, (!) I am aware that this article may, in other respects, be judged by some readers to display neither of these two virtues. Should that be so, the fault is entirely mine.

Why German is a relatively easy language

Following James Hansen's last email Why is English so hard to learn? I would like to add an amusing translation ...

by Gila Scheffler

German is a relatively easy language. If you know Latin you're used to declensions and can learn German without great difficulty. That's what German teachers tell you at the first lesson. Then you start studying the *der, die, das, den* ... and they tell you that everything follows a logical order. So it's easy. And to prove it, let's look at an example more closely: you sign up for first-year

German and go out and buy the textbook. It's a beautiful, expensive, hardbound book, published in Dortmund, which talks about the customs of the Hottentots (*Hottentotten* in German).

The book tells us that when opossums (*Beutelratten*) are captured, they are placed in cages (*Kasten*) with bars made of wood slats (*Lattengitter*) to keep them from escaping. These cages are called *Lattengitterkasten* in German, and when there are opossums inside them they are known as *Beutelrattenlattengitterkasten*.

One day, the Hottentot police arrested a would-be murderer (*Attentäter*), who allegedly tried to kill a Hottentot mother (*mutter*). Her son is a good-for-nothing stutterer (*Stottertrottel*), so his mother is, therefore, a *Hottentottenstottertrottelmutter* and her would-be murderer is a *Hottentottenstottertrottelmutterattentäter*. Easy, right? So the police captured the suspect and put him, temporarily, in an opossum cage (*Beutelrattenlattengitterkasten*) for safekeeping until they could take him to jail. But the prisoner escaped!

A search ensued and a Hottentot warrior cried out, 'I have captured the murder suspect (*den Attentäter*)!'

'Yes? Which one?' asked the chieftain.

'The *Beutelrattenlattengitterkastenattentäter*!' replied the warrior.

'What? The murder suspect who was in the opossum cage?' asked the Hottentot chieftain.

'That's right,' said the warrior, 'the *Hottentottenstottertrottelmutterattentäter*.'

By now you know enough German to understand that he's talking about the would-be murderer of the mother of the good-for-nothing Hottentot stutterer, right?

'Oh, I see,' says the Hottentot chieftain, 'why didn't you say so right away? You could have begun by saying that you had captured the *Hottentottenstottertrottelmutterbeutelrattenlattengitterkastenattentäter!*'

As you can see, German is a very easy language. All you have to do is pay a little attention.

Events, workshops and conferences

Australian Publishers Association training workshops April, May 2003

The Australian Publishers Association has a new web site at <http://www.publishers.asn.au/>

You can now register for APA training online: go to the APA website to see how or for more information contact Libby O'Donnell on (02) 9281 9788 or Libby.Odonnell@publishers.asn.au

Some workshop dates and venues have changed. Please check the notices below.

Managing people and performance two-day workshop

What makes an effective manager? Critical communication skills for managers; giving and getting feedback; personal styles; managing/working with different styles; discussing performance and performance reviews; counselling and coaching skills; training and mentoring; listening; resolving conflict; grievances; problem solving; dealing with under performance; discipline; action plans.

Melbourne: Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 April, 9.00 am – 4.30 pm.

Cost:(for two days) \$470 members (APA; Society of Editors; Galley Club; AGDA): \$550 non-members. Twenty per cent discount applies when five or more attend from one company.

Onscreen editing for publication two-day workshop

This workshop will be held using IBM/PC

The course is focused on editing for publication using Microsoft Word. Extensive experience in Word is not required. The course is suitable for new or experienced editors and writers, and numbers are limited to allow for individual tuition and questions. Each student works at his or her own PC and parts of the course are taught using a data projector.

On-screen editing versus hard copy editing – what the differences are, what you need to be careful about; establishing good editing procedures; working with styles; different Word versions and the editing process; using Macintosh files on the PC; identifying font incompatibility between documents; exploiting the Find and Replace function; cleaning up documents efficiently; disabling problematic automated features; optimising screen settings; using Track Changes/Revisions; exploiting custom dictionaries in editing; document navigation techniques; common problems with PCs and how to avoid them.

Further details are at <http://www.wordbytes.com.au>

Presenter: Brett Lockwood

Melbourne: Monday 14 April, and Tuesday 15 April

Cost: \$460 members (APA; Society of Editors; Galley Club; AGDA): \$540 non-members. Twenty per cent discount applies when five or more attend from one company.

Rights and distribution workshop

The dates for this workshop have changed. This workshop was originally to be held in March but is now scheduled for 8 May 2003 in both Sydney and Melbourne.

Assessment of projects: suitability for overseas markets; establishing what rights you have to sell; where and how a product will sell.

Distribution versus rights sales; comparative costs; co-editions; advantages

and disadvantages of each.

Attendingbook fairs: logistics; costs; advantages and disadvantages.

Using rights and distribution agents: advantages and disadvantages; comparative costs and logistics.

How to negotiate rights and distribution deals: royalties; advances; freight costs; cost effectiveness.

Presenters in Sydney: Angela Namoi, Rights and Export Manager, Allen and Unwin; Nerrilee Weir, Rights Manager, Random House Australia.

Presenters in Melbourne: Sandy Grant, CEO, Hardie Grant Books; Tamara Silver, Thomson Learning.

Dates in Sydney: Thursday 8 May, 9.00 am – 12.30 pm. New date!

Dates in Melbourne: Thursday 8 May, 9.00 am – 12.30 pm. New date!

Please note that the Sydney and Melbourne dates have both changed.

Cost: \$150 members (APA; Society of Editors; Galley Club; AGDA); \$190 non-members. Twenty per cent discount applies when five or more attend from one company.

Flyers and registration forms will be forwarded to you approximately six weeks prior to the workshop date. If you would like to register in advance, book online at <http://www.publishers.asn.au/> ***Please check the flyers and above information for the correct dates.***

Indexfest

In case you missed it in the March edition of *Book Worm*: 'Indexing the World of Information', an international conference hosted by the Australian Society of Indexers, is to be held at the Carlton Crest Hotel, Sydney, from Friday 12 to Saturday 13 September 2003.

Proposed presentation/panel topics are: indexing biographies; difficult names; teaching indexing; website, intranet and database indexing projects; information architecture; thesaurus construction; taxonomies and classification; metadata development. There will be software demonstrations and workshops.

Cost: Australian Society of Indexers members \$330, non-members \$380.

Contact: Glenda Browne:

email: webindexing@optusnet.com.au or

phone: 02 4739 8199.

More information: www.aussi.org

General meetings

Because of the timing of the AGM, there will be no general meeting in April but join us at Tresillian Community Centre on 6 May (7.30 pm) for the first meeting in our 2003 program.

Deadline for next issue of *Book Worm*: Tuesday 22 April 2003

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