

BOOK WORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

July 2004

From the Chair

Technical Editors—Literature’s Noble Misfits?

As we know, copy editors are the last line of defence against bad writing, and writing certainly can be bad, even when it is otherwise ‘clean’. Tightening up wordy prose and smoothing awkward transitions are generally considered part of the copy editor’s job, but more extensive rewriting usually has to be cleared by the author or assigning editor.

So checks and balances, or parameters, have evolved to provide copy editors with a freedom that enables them to pay attention to editorial detail secure in the knowledge that, so long as they do not impose unwelcome authority on the author’s text or the author/editor relationship, their work will be acknowledged and respected.

But what of the role of technical editor? Is technical editing different? How much attention should technical communicators and editors pay to the formal rules of grammar, and are there essential and non-essential rules of grammar? I hear the cries of dissent from my esteemed colleagues.

The premise of essential and non-essential grammar was thrust upon me when, as I trawled the Internet in the hours before dawn this morning, searching for views on editing and its importance to literature, an article, *Escape from the grammar trap* (Jean Hollis Weber), imposed itself on my screen and my consciousness.

Weber is convinced that all technical communicators aim to produce perfect copy, but they rarely have the leisure to do so. Business realities often require compromises from technical writers and editors, so accuracy and usability are placed ahead of issues of grammar and punctuation, and getting proofs to the printer to meet unrealistic deadlines that cannot be ignored, are sometimes placed ahead of issues of (essential) grammar and punctuation.

As editors struggle to become recognised, even lauded, in the literary world, is this view of the technical editor, however inaccurate, detrimental to editing as a profession? Editors recognise that there are writers who still do not accept that editors of any persuasion play a significant part in the creative art of authoring a published work; fortunately, these dissenters are few.

Thankfully, the panel of authors at our May meeting presented, with their editors, a positive view of the author/editor relationship, and offered encouraging suggestions

of how the editor might provide support of even greater value to bring the author's work to a satisfactory conclusion. We are grateful to Janet Blagg and Tim Chappell (*The Persian Blanket*), Tanya Marwood and Carla Van Raay (*God's Callgirl*), and to Liz Byrski (*Remember ME and Gang of Four*) for giving us the benefit of their varied experience.

Obviously, there is still much work to be done. As editors we must come out from behind our mantle of obscurity and state our case, and our worth, with sincerity and vigour.

Betty Durston

SOEWA President

Comment: *James Hansen*

Perhaps we all face the same problem of editing prose that we don't like, and would never have written ourselves, but which we have neither the time nor the brief to rewrite, and so we concentrate on accuracy and usability. This certainly applies to technical non-fiction; but, for fiction, the case for paying more attention to the niceties of language is surely much stronger. Fiction readers read primarily for pleasure and fulfilment, not for information, and feel no compunction to endure turgid prose.

Editorial

Wow! Another bumper edition! Is it the colder weather, driving us all to huddle in front of our keyboards, rather than get out on our bicycles or down to the beach? I suspect it is so!

As some of you may know, our proofreader Michèle Drouart has suffered the sudden death of her beloved sister, who also lived in Perth. For obvious reasons Michèle did not proofread this edition of *Book Worm* and—just as our thoughts go to Michèle and her family at this very difficult time—so my thanks go to those on the committee who stepped into the breach to check over the content of this newsletter.

Tanya Marwood

Forthcoming Meetings

July: Please note there will be NO MEETING in July. A note from the Meetings Coordinator follows...

Dear Colleagues

Your committee has decided to bring forward the 'winter break' that was scheduled for the month of August to July. Sadly, there will be no SOEWA meeting on the first Tuesday of July.

However, the committee will still be beavering away during the month of July. Events planned for later in the year include some computer training in August (focussing on PDF documents) and a great combined SOEWA-Women in Publishing event in September. 'Stay tuned' for further details.

Kind Regards

Chris Walker

SOEWA Meetings Coordinator

AUGUST MEETING

This will comprise a computer training evening, with an emphasis on the use of PDF documents. Details of time and venue to be advised in the next edition of *Book Worm*.

Report on June Meeting

Susan Hall

The June meeting comprised a panel discussion exploring the author-editor working relationship.

The panel consisted of the following author-editor pairs:

1. Carla van Raay (author of the recent autobiographical book, *God's Call Girl*) and Tanya Marwood.

2. Tim Chapple (first-time author of *The Persian Blanket*, to be released by Fremantle Arts Centre Press this year) and Janet Blagg.

Liz Byrski (lecturer and widely published author, whose books include *Remember ME* and the recent *Gang of Four*) was also part of the panel.

The discussion raised some interesting general points about the process of writing a novel. Firstly, it is often a very long-term project—Tim Chapple's book took seven years to write while he was still working full-time as a GP.

Secondly, editors are involved at different stages and in different capacities. Carla van Raay, because English was not her native language, had help at an early stage with grammar, spelling and English usage. Later in the process, Tanya Marwood gave her advice about the overall structure of the book including the need to introduce a lot more dialogue. Carla found this very helpful in her reworking of the manuscript and subsequently worked with an editor from Harper Collins to prepare the reworked manuscript for publication.

Tim Chapple had often shown his work to friends and family. However, Liz Byrski, an experienced writer, worked only with a professional editor. At Fremantle Arts

Centre Press, Tim first had a wide-ranging discussion about the suitability of his novel for publication. He was asked to cut out or reduce the part of some characters. After rewriting, he worked with editor Janet Bragg to prepare the book for publication. Janet was full of praise for Tim's book and they seemed to have had a good working relationship.

One shouldn't make stereotypical judgements, but it did seem to me that the three writers were outgoing and voluble. In contrast, the two editors seemed quieter, self-effacing and uncomfortable in accepting praise. On the other hand, the writers seemed to feel vulnerable when their work was first being assessed. However once there was an agreement to publish, they settled into a very skilful relationship with their editors.

A large audience, including guests, enjoyed this look at author-editor relationships. 'Many thanks' to all the panel members.

Coddled Language

Amanda Curtin

I only saw the last two episodes of the ABC television program *Posh Nosh*, a highly entertaining spoof on the pretentious presenters of cooking programs—and their even more pretentious language. In case you missed it, too, here are a few gems I collected from those episodes (not, I might add, from the same recipe!):

- alienate [i.e. slice] your chorizo
- exonerate your fat
- excite the chorizo in the fat
- hand-splash some milk
- gradually waltz in the rest of the milk
- savage some lettuce
- embarrass a clove of garlic
- put some organic salt in your organic basin
- splash some air-dried organic water
- use only wine aged in Spanish oak for eight Spanish years (slightly longer because of the siesta).

I'd say 'Bon appétit' but it sounds so dull!

The Cambridge Guide to English Usage: Special Offer on New Edition

Written by Australian Pam Peters, this latest edition is being marketed as ‘THE English language reference for the 21st Century’. Having examined a copy, looking up the likes of those modern bugbears ‘website/web site’, ‘e-mail/email’, ‘Euro/euro’, and even ‘co-ordinate/coordinate’, I can affirm that The Cambridge gives you all the information you need to make the choice most appropriate for your situation—whether you’re writing for Australian, British or even Canadian readers. It covers not only word usage, but also punctuation. The use of commas, colons and dashes of various species is discussed. Ultimately, it is a descriptive—rather than prescriptive—reference, with the emphasis being on the word ‘Guide’.

With a RRP of \$75 (it’s a hardback) the 20% discount special offer (available for a limited time) brings the price down to a more affordable \$60. Orders to Cambridge University Press, Private Bag 31, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, or e-mail info@cambridge.edu.au (mentioning that you saw it reviewed in *Book Worm*).

Tanya Marwood

Insurance and the freelance editor

Robyn Colman

Society of Editors (Tasmania) Inc.

Do freelance editors need insurance? It seems that government agencies, in particular, are increasingly requiring it of us. People are asked to sign contracts that stipulate anything from public liability cover of up to \$10,000,000, to professional indemnity insurance, personal accident and illness insurance, loss of income insurance, and workers’ compensation. For the one-person business based in a home office and with annual taxable income that is probably under \$60,000 a year, these are stiff requirements.

Unfortunately, because ours is an uncommon profession, insurance companies put us into a ‘miscellaneous’ category, often with high-risk occupations. This means that even when a broker acts on an editor’s behalf, the cost of basic cover for public liability and professional indemnity is likely to be about \$2,500–\$3,000 a year.

Recently I talked to a lawyer at the Arts Law Centre of Australia about these contractual requirements. He explained that while an organisation’s ‘standard’ contract may stipulate insurance cover of various kinds, we are quite within our rights to negotiate. Indeed, I have found in some cases that if I can talk directly to the Contracts Manager (or whoever is responsible for contracts) it is possible to have contract clauses deleted or reworded once the responsible person understands the nature of the work I am undertaking. It may mean my volunteering to accept whatever risk is involved, but it can be done. Negotiating via a project manager can

work well if they are savvy, but sometimes it can just make things more confusing and difficult. It's often hard to know which way to play it.

Of course if the job is going to bring a substantial amount of net income, it may be worthwhile complying, at least for the duration of the contract. The Arts Law Centre's website has some useful fact sheets about contracts www.artslaw.com.au/reference/infocontracts/ and public liability insurance www.artslaw.com.au/reference/publicliability02/index.html. I understand that the Centre is also about to launch a book about insurance, though details are not yet (as at 14 April) available on its website.

It's worth noting too that under some organisations' guidelines, competitive quotes and contracts are not required for jobs costing under \$10,000.

Another option is to refuse to join in. It is always possible to turn work down if the conditions are unreasonable. It hurts, of course, but there is an argument for jacking up, and if enough of us were to do it, employers might have to reconsider.

A fourth option in a federal election year, when small businesses are clearly on politicians' minds, is to nag the relevant ministers. When enough of us wrote to Sensis to ask for an 'Editors and editing' category in the *Yellow Pages* we were successful. It is a fact that 'standard' contracts requiring us to have insurance similar to a building contractor's or a medical practitioner's are simply inappropriate for our kind of work. Perhaps if enough of us can make the point we could get some action? Relevant Australian government ministers are: Joe Hockey, Minister for Small Business and Tourism, PO Box 1107, North Sydney NSW 2059 or J.Hockey.MP@aph.gov.au; Senator Nick Minchin, Minister for Finance and Administration, 423 Henley Beach Road, Brooklyn Park SA 5032 or senator.minchin@aph.gov.au; Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, GPO Box 3513, Sydney NSW 2001, or senator.coonan@aph.gov.au. The Shadow Minister for Finance and Small Business is Bob McMullan, GPO Box 1947, Canberra ACT 2601 or Bob.McMullan.MP@aph.gov.au. Most states and territories have a minister responsible for small business who could also be approached.

Meantime, if you care to complete the 'Insurance' questionnaire (see end of this newsletter) and send it back to me, I'll be happy to collate the information and publish it later in the year. If you are prepared to add your name and contact details I won't pass them on.

My contact details:

Robyn Colman

250 Churchill Avenue, Sandy Bay, TAS 7005

(03) 6225 1941

0422 221 885

words@word-wise.com.au

National Policy on Editing Theses

Janet Mackenzie

Editors have long been concerned about the ethics of editing student work that is to be submitted for academic assessment. Editorial intervention may misrepresent the student's academic ability or proficiency in English, and it may unfairly advantage students who have the means to pay for editorial services. In the absence of guidelines, the committees of the state and territory editors' societies have often found themselves in a difficult position when asked to adjudicate in particular instances.

I am delighted to announce that we now have an official national policy on the editing of theses, reproduced below. The Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) developed it in collaboration with the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS), representing Australian universities.

As the CASE representative I have been negotiating with Professor Elaine Martin, head of the Postgraduate Research Unit of Victoria University, representing DDOGS, to draw up a policy acceptable to all interests. We had two meetings in Melbourne and a considerable e-mail correspondence. Professor Martin reported that the academics were impressed with *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* and felt that it provided a sound basis for the policy.

Having gone through various drafts, the final policy was ratified by both DDOGS and CASE in May 2004. This is the culmination of three years of effort by CASE, which first approached the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee about this matter in April 2001.

Having been agreed at a national level by representative bodies, the policy has considerable standing. Although it is written specifically for higher degree theses, it can be taken as guidance for the editing of student work at any level. The policy sets out the roles of academic supervisors and editors and stipulates requirements for acknowledging editorial services. It provides editors with a clear statement of their responsibilities in undertaking this type of work, and it should enable them to resist any pressure for inappropriate intervention.

The Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors

Policy developed by the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies collaboratively with the Council of Australian Societies of Editors

Background

Professional editors need to be clear about the extent and nature of help they offer in the editing of research students' theses and dissertations. Academic supervisors of

research students also need to be clear about the role of the professional editor as well as their own editorial role. This policy has been developed primarily to give guidance to professional editors. It also provides a guide for academic supervisors. This document has been developed with close attention to the current *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Academic supervisors are encouraged to become familiar with this very useful publication.

Proofreading and Editing of Research Theses and Dissertations

It is expected that the academic supervisors of research higher degree students will provide editorial advice to their students. This type of advice is covered in Standards C, D and E of *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*:

- Standard C, Substance and Structure;
- Standard D, Language and Illustrations;
- Standard E, Completeness and Consistency.

Students may use a professional editor in preparing their thesis for submission, but they should discuss this with their principal supervisor and provide the editor with a copy of this policy before they commence work.

Professional editorial intervention should be restricted to:

- Standard D
- Standard E

Where a professional editor provides advice on matters of structure (Standard C), exemplars only should be given.

Material for editing or proofreading should be submitted in hard copy. In electronic copy it is too easy for the student to accept editorial suggestions without thinking about their implications.

When a thesis has had the benefit of professional editorial advice, of any form, the name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered, in terms of *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, should be printed as part of the list of acknowledgments or other prefatory matter. If the professional editor's current or former area of academic specialisation is similar to that of the candidate, this too should be stated in the prefatory matter of the thesis.

The Australian Standards for Editing Practice is available on the following website:
www.case-editors.org

CASE Promotions Working Group

Terms of Reference

Goals

To raise the profile of the profession of editing, CASE and the state and territory societies of editors.

To raise awareness across the educational, business, government, corporate and other related sectors of the value a professional editor can add to communications projects, and other benefits of using a professional editor.

To increase the use of professional editors across industry sectors.

Objectives

To establish a working group to research, develop and oversee the implementation of proposals and projects that promote the profession, CASE and/or the societies.

To develop and implement key strategic internal and external communications, for and on behalf of CASE.

Scope

The Promotions Working Group (PWG) is charged with the tasks of conducting promotions and public relations for and on behalf of the profession, CASE and the societies of editors. The scope of the PWG is limited only by its imagination. The process for undertaking activities and projects is set out as:

1. Initiate discussions, identify issues and develop ideas for resolution of these issues.
2. Where necessary, conduct research, develop proposals, including budgets, for approval by CASE.
3. Upon approval of a proposal, oversee its implementation.
4. Report to CASE on the success (or otherwise) of a project/activity/campaign.

The work of the PWG, for the most part, will be done via e-mail. If a teleconference or in-person meeting is required to progress the work of the PWG, a proposal (including costs) shall be made to CASE for approval.

Membership

- Ideally, one representative of each state or territory society of editors. The current membership is five: Renée Otmar (Convenor, Victoria), Aimee Pope (South Australia), Hilary McLaren (Queensland), Kerie Newell (Canberra) Suzanne Cooper (Tasmania).
- A convenor of the PWG shall be appointed or approved by CASE.

- The convenor of the PWG shall initiate and moderate discussions of the group; present proposals from the PWG to CASE; and provide regular reports on the work of the PWG to CASE.

Terms of Reference

The PWG shall undertake tasks and duties to further its goals and objectives. Typically, members would be asked to:

- Provide ideas and contribute towards discussions of the group;
- Identify issues and offer solutions;
- Participate in the development of a strategic plan for marketing and promotions (for approval by CASE);
- Participate in the development of proposals for activities, projects and campaigns;
- Oversee the implementation of proposals approved by CASE; for example, commission design, printing and/or distribution of promotional materials such as brochures or bookmarks;
- Undertake research as required; for example, test content or find out how other professional associations have undertaken successful campaigns;
- Create text content and generate ideas for their implementation in promotional materials;
- Edit content of promotional materials;
- Set up radio/TV interviews; arrange for newspaper articles/letters to the editor to be written etc.

Process

The PWG members will convene on an *ad hoc* basis via e-mail or as instigated by the PWG Convenor, who is responsible for development and rollout of CASE initiatives.

CASE initiatives are likely to be suggested by the PWG members and endorsed by the Society of Editors' committees for program leadership and implementation.

The engagement process would involve:

- Engagement will be via e-mail.
- A Convenor will run the session.
- The input of the members will be aggregated and used to develop the program and the communication strategy.

- Once the 'product' and the communication strategy are finalised, the groups will be sent a copy of the product and strategy and / or reconvened to discuss the outcomes of their input.
- A feedback loop at each step in the process will be used to determine the reaction and need for process modification.

Time Commitments

Members of the PWG will be expected to keep up to date with e-mail and respond to requests in a timely manner.

National Organisation Working Group AGENDA

Phase 1 of investigations (deadline October 1st 2004)

The group, comprising Mary Blake, Anne Surma and Haya Husseini (convenor), have agreed upon the following terms of reference for investigation into the possibility of creating a national organisation of editors:

1. To set out why a national organisation of editors is being investigated and the principles which should underlie any national organisation.
2. To research how other associations and professions organise on a national basis.
3. To develop possible models (probably two plus the option of continuing with the present arrangements) to be put to members.

The October 1st deadline is for Points 1 and 2 only in the terms of reference.

The group has agreed to look into:

- How overseas professional, non-profit, national bodies (or executive councils) organise, especially their charters or constitutions, membership rules, by-laws, roles and responsibilities. If applicable, their relationship to their state societies.
- How professional, non-profit, national societies/organisations/associations in Australia organise, with emphasis on:
 - i) charters/constitutions, membership rules, responsibilities, roles and accountabilities;
 - ii) legal status (what the organisation/association is registered as);
 - iii) the relationship between the national organisation and its state societies.

The group will also:

- Review CASE's structure and operational protocols (based on the document posted on its website).
- Review the charters/constitutions of Australian state societies of editors to determine exact role of each society, and if there are any necessary amendments to be made to enable/empower national body.

Based on the group's assessments of all the above, they will then determine:

- Why a national organisation of editors is being investigated and the benefits (if any) to its members and to the state societies;
- What principles underlie national organisations (Australian and international).

Preliminary discussion of Point 3 of the terms of reference (phase 2 of investigations) will commence in November with research to start by February 2005 and to be completed by June 2005.

The National Organisation WG communication dates are as follows:

Friday 16th April

Friday 30th April

Friday 14th May

Friday 28th May

and then,

Friday 3rd September

Friday 17th September

Friday 1st October—Research of points 1 and 2 completed.

Deadline for August 2004 *Book Worm* issue: Tuesday 20 July 2004.

All submissions gratefully accepted.

Further 2004 *Book Worm* deadlines

Issue	Deadline
September 2004	Tue 24 August
October 2004	Tue 21 September
November 2004	Tue 19 October

Contacting SOEWA

President: Betty Durston, bdurston@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

Vice President: Ceri Clocherty, ceri@cambridgemediacom.au

Secretary: Ffion Murphy, 9450 1546, Fmurphy@ecu.edu.au

Treasurer: Linda Browning, 9266 2253, L.Browning@curtin.edu.au

General committee members

Anne Surma, 9287 1494, asurma@murdoch.edu.au

Michele Crawford, 9246 4116, michele.crawford@westnet.com.au

Chris Walker, 9228 0793, cdwalker@ca.com.au

Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Newsletter

Editor: Tanya Marwood, 9291 3723, tanya.m@globaldial.com

Proofreader: Michèle Drouart, 9382 2930, drouart@netfactory.com.au

SOEWA Web Site: <http://www.editorswa.iinet.net.au>

Web editor: Ceri Clocherty, ceri@cambridgemia.com.au

Insurance questionnaire

- 1 Have you been required to take out insurance in order to fulfil a contract?
 Yes
 No (go to question 4)

- 2 If 'Yes', what kind and level of cover was required?
 Public liability _____
 Professional indemnity _____
 Loss of income _____
 Accident _____
 Workers' compensation _____
 Other _____

- 3 Have you retained, or do you intend to retain, that insurance after completing the work?
 Yes
 No

- 4 Have you ever refused work because of insurance requirements?
 Yes
 No
If 'Yes', did you tell the employer why you would not take on the work? _____

- 5 Can you recommend an insurance broker or insurance company?
 Yes
 No
If 'Yes', please give details: _____

- 6 Do you have suggestions for other editors facing the insurance requirement?

- 7 Do you have suggestions for action that Societies of Editors could take either individually or collectively?

Thank you for making time to answer these questions. Please post your reply to Robyn Colman, 250 Churchill Avenue, SANDY BAY, TAS 7005 or e-mail it to words@word-wise.com.au