

# **BOOK WORM**

**NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.**

**October 2004**

## **From the Chair**

### **Zero tolerance**

It may be that Lynne Truss's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* has indeed touched a nerve of latent pedantry in a world in which, as she writes, increasing numbers of people 'don't know their apostrophe from their elbow'.

Truss seems to have been set ablaze by superfluous apostrophes and commercial signage such as *no dog's* and *potatoe's*, as well as by the media's uncritical acceptance (and, indeed, promotion) of such doubtful forms as *Hear'Say* (a band) and *Two Weeks Notice* (a film). Most of us would agree wholeheartedly with her on this count. Certainly, since the emergence of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, many editors have taken the vow of zero tolerance.

However, at closer range we can see flaws in Lynne Truss's work, or is it that our rules of punctuation are different?

For example, is it acceptable to parenthesise an independent clause at the end of a sentence? Consider, 'I bought a copy of Eric Partridge's *Usage and Abusage* and covered it in sticky-backed plastic so that it would last a lifetime (it has).'

Consistency is the ultimate aim for editors and yet the citation form varies: one passage from the Bible is identified as 'Luke, xxiii, 43' and another, a page later, as 'Isaiah xl, 3'.

So, what constitutes zero tolerance? We would need to have complete confidence in the perfection of our own editing before we confront our clients with our newly acquired attitude of zero tolerance, and can we afford this luxury? We are, after all, editors at the mercy of our clients and the work they generate for us.

Ian Nowak summed it up very nicely (Book Worm, August 2004) in his response to my musing from the chair (July 2004), '...I would sum up my attitude as one of flexibility—whether to a fault (do I hear the word 'prostitution' murmured?), is for others to decide'.

Does Truss want people to care about correctness or does she want them to care about writing and about using the full resources of the language? Is *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* really another 'decline of print culture' book, thinly disguised as a style manual?

*Betty Durston*

## Editorial

Hello again, fellow editors. It's almost the end of the year already, which seems hard to believe! It has been a year of increased popular awareness of editorial issues, with the amazing sales of *Eats, Shoot & Leaves* and the discussion it created. Perhaps we can raise that as a possible marketing ploy with our speaker at the October meeting (see below)?

The final meeting for the year will be in **November** and **no topic or theme has yet been decided**. So, if you have something you would like to do (it might be a fun idea like some word games, or something more serious), contact Chris Walker or one of the other Committee members—ideally before the next meeting. See you there.

*Tanya Marwood*

## Forthcoming Meetings

### OCTOBER MEETING

#### Marketing for Freelance Editors

For those of us running our own businesses, marketing is one thing we know we should do more of.

So, what is it that prevents us marketing ourselves well?

How can we convince current and potential clients of the value of our services?

How can we establish and maintain effective marketing activities?

**David Reid** is a leading sales and marketing strategist. He has a diverse client base, ranging from large financial services organisations to smaller, owner-managed operations.

At our next SOEWA members' meeting David will discuss with us how editors can better market their services.

**When:** Tuesday 5 October, 7:30pm until 9pm

**Where:** Tresillian Community Centre, 21 Tyrell St, Nedlands

**Cost:** \$2

**RSVP** to Chris Walker, [cdwalker@ca.com.au](mailto:cdwalker@ca.com.au), by **3 October**.

## November's meeting

A topic for this meeting has yet to be finalised—the Committee would gladly receive suggestions for it between now and the October meeting date (please contact Chris Walker).

## **Report on the September meeting**

*Ceri Clocherty*

### **WIPWA/SOEWA Joint Seminar on Mentoring**

(Held at the offices of the Small Business Development Corporation)

It was good to see so many of you turn up for our annual joint meeting with Women in Publishing in September. The theme for this event was ‘Mentoring—is it the way forward?’ While anyone who has been involved in a mentoring (or coaching) scheme will probably have no doubts about its effectiveness, the aim of the evening was to determine whether it is something we should look to formally establish within our own organisations.

We had three guest speakers. Ann Kennish from the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) mentoring scheme started the ball rolling with an informative and lively look at exactly what mentoring is. She said that the aim of the mentor was to ‘guide’ the client and their business in particular directions, rather than give immediate remedies. Often she receives calls at the SBDC from small businesses that find that they are struggling with their books and ask for a ‘mentor’. In these cases, what is usually required is a bookkeeper—at least, to fix that particular problem.

Kim Lisson from Coach School continued on from Anne’s discussion, broadening the scope to include ‘life mentoring’ rather than a purely business-based scheme. Again, the theory of guidance rather than instruction came across strongly.

In conclusion, Anne Surma from Murdoch University and SOEWA talked about her personal experiences of being mentored. She has had the opportunity to do this twice and says the positive outcomes from these schemes have been enormous, citing increased confidence in her professional capabilities as one of the major benefits.

We then enjoyed a half-hour break for drinks and some excellent finger-food, during which we discussed mentoring and other topics of interest. We reconvened full of enthusiasm. Anne Surma facilitated a discussion centring on whether we thought mentoring could be useful to our professions and, if so, whether we should look at establishing such a scheme. It was concluded that there is a lot of interest in taking this further and formalising any coaching systems already in place within our societies.

While time to discuss this further eluded us on the night, it is something we must continue to pursue; the best way to do this would be to set up a small committee to

help formalise this process. If any readers are interested in being part of this committee, please contact Ceridwen Clocherty via e-mail at:

[ceri@cambridgemediacom.au](mailto:ceri@cambridgemediacom.au)

Please get involved and help our association develop.

## The Who/Whom Bugbear

Excerpted and slightly modified from an article by Elizabeth Murphy in *The Canberra Editor* (Vol 13, No.6, July 2004)

These relative pronouns cause a lot of confusion.

There is a rumour about that *whom* is disappearing from English. I hope that's not true—it's very useful.

*Who* is always the subject of a clause. *Whom* is always in the predicate of a sentence, either as the object of a verb or the object of a preposition. *This is the person **who** can help you.* *This is the person **whom** we rewarded for bravery.* *This is the person to **whom** we gave a medal for bravery.* It may help to break the sentence down to see which should be used:

- This is the person + *She* (the same person) can help you = This is the person *who* can help you.
- This is the person + We rewarded *him* for bravery = This is the person *whom* we rewarded for bravery.
- This is the person + We gave (to) *him* a medal for bravery = This is the person to *whom* we gave a medal for bravery.

Maybe that distinction will disappear eventually, and we'll all happily accept *This is the person who we rewarded for bravery*. I will continue to observe the distinction in my speech and writing, but I'll probably be in the minority.

Already perfectly acceptable in speech is *This is the person we gave a medal for bravery to*. I doubt whether it's yet completely acceptable in formal writing.

This example was derived from a list of confusing pairs of words collected in *Letter Writing Simplified* (revised) by G Snodgrass and E. M. Murphy, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986.

## Deadline for November 2004 Book Worm issue:

Tuesday 19 Oct 2004.

All submissions gratefully accepted.

## **Further 2004 *Book Worm* deadlines**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
December 2004–January 2005	Tue 23 November

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