



The Society of Editors (WA) Inc.

BOOKWORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

September 2007

From the Chair

Dear Members,

I hope you've all had a productive winter break, and not spent most of it surrounded by a sea of tissues and cough syrup like me. It feels as if we've been wrestling colds and flu forever (and when I signed up for motherhood I should have read the small print more closely – we're not allowed to take sick days), and my soggy washing on the line makes a mockery of the newspaper's claims of the driest winter ever.

Finally, the skies (and noses) around here are beginning to clear, and so it's onwards and upwards towards Christmas. Already I'm hearing stories of people getting started on their Christmas shopping, and at first I thought they meant for a Christmas in July type of affair, but no, they mean the real one. Mind you, these are also the Carpark Mafia (you know, the ones whose children never forget their library bags or go to school with a tin-foiled cold sausage and the last browning banana rolling sadly around in their lunch box on the day you're going to do the shopping), so I don't feel too bad about not even having a Father's Day present in sight.

But in some respects, I am a little bit organised. Okay, that's bending the truth slightly; your committee is organised, and I'm part of that, so I think it counts. We're planning the Society's Christmas party, and so far we have some great ideas stuffed into the proverbial stocking. Keep an eye on the mailing list and *Bookworm* for details as they emerge, or I will be forced to eat all the catered food myself.

And if I get my way, and we get brandy snaps, as your President, it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make.

Emma Pearmain

PS: The website is coming together slowly but surely. Hopefully, it'll be up and running soon, with a new and improved freelance register and minty fresh fragrance. We have a small collection of articles to post for your reading pleasure,

and are on the look out for more, so if you have any articles, journals or pieces on writing or editing that you think the rest of the Society would enjoy, please send them in to me at <president@editorswa.com> or to <webadmin@editorswa.com>.

Forthcoming meeting

September: Accreditation workshop

Date: Tuesday 4 September 2007

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: CWA House, Board Room (3rd Floor)

1174 Hay Street, West Perth

Parking at rear of building; enter via door from car park

Cost: \$2 members, \$5 non-members

RSVP: By Monday 3 September to Emma Pearmain, 9243 5045,
<emma007@amnet.net.au>

September's meeting will be an Accreditation Workshop to help you prepare for the examination in 2008. There's not a lot of time before the meeting (apologies – there have been some delays beyond our control), but you'll get more out of the workshop if you try your hand at the **sample accreditation exam** sent via the email group on 23 August (if you have not received it, please contact Amanda Curtin, 9277 2091, acurtin@highway1.com.au). We suggest you do this under examination conditions:

- Allow reading time of 15 minutes, exam time of 3 hours.
- Use the reference books you are planning to take in with you (and take note of any others you think you will need as a result of doing the sample exam). A calculator is also allowed.
- Assume the exam will require hard-copy editing and handwritten answers (the possibility of doing the exam on-screen is still under investigation*).

At the workshop, we will discuss the sample exam and the marking guide provided by the Assessors Forum (also emailed on 23 August). WA's assessors will be available to offer advice. The workshop will give you the opportunity to:

- share with peers your experiences of sitting the sample exam
- express concerns or make suggestions to the Accreditation Board delegate
- talk to the SOEWA committee about professional development/education opportunities on specific areas that would further help you prepare.

* See 'Editing Examination: Issues Paper' on the IPEd web site (under 'Accreditation').

Report on July meeting

Microsoft Word tips, tricks and frustrations

At the July meeting, members met for an informal session to ask questions about using MS Word. Members found this informative and expressed interest in further sessions of this nature. A detailed record of the tips discussed at the meeting will be sent as a separate document when *Bookworm* is emailed.

Editors and fact-checking

Mar Bucknell's small item in the August newsletter scored some sympathy points from me. I too have had concerns over the problems of editors and fact-checking. Like Mar, I have defended my viewpoint at a Queensland SOE meeting and, again like Mar, have found myself on the receiving end of some sharply negative comments over my stance on the issue.

To use a phrase I am sure Mark McLeod (same issue) would hate: 'Reality check here, people'. We produce some 80 titles a year and we now have about a thousand titles in print, worldwide. Despite writers' claims to the contrary, there is one group and one group alone that checks each and every word or numeral – our editing group. If a writer tells me it's raining, I put my hand out the window! If a writer tells me there are six stars on the Australian flag, I'll find a photo and count them.

Without that anally retentive, OCD approach to checking, we would have missed the 'fact' that some of our authors had 'lifted' entire slabs of their text off the Internet. We might not have noticed (but probably would have) that the 'reason' for the decline of steam trains in Australia was that it was 'too hot for the fireman in summer'. We certainly could have skipped over the statement that Walt Disney World is in Miami, Florida (it's not; it's in Orlando, Florida, more than 300 km north of Miami). And, regrettably, we did miss the fact that Wellington, not Auckland, is the capital of New Zealand!

At the last IPEd conference in Tasmania, one of the keynote speakers headed an entire team of editors to do just that very task – fact checking (and associated research). I didn't hear any tirades from the assemblage about that situation.

Sorry, but my job statement says I and my team have as a principal task the responsibility for the accuracy of what goes out under this company's imprimatur.

If that upsets the sensibilities of some editors, so be it.

Bruce Tuffin

R.I.C. Publications

New members

Welcome to:

Vicki Portors (Our apologies for misspelling Vicki's surname in August's *Bookworm*.)

IPed Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors August 2007

The Interim Council is making progress with establishing IPed as a legal entity. The proposal that the societies have accepted, which is on the website <iped-editors.org>, forms the basis of the constitution. The Interim Council has discussed the details of what needs to be included and identified where extra advice is needed. Following extensive consultation, we have signed an agreement with a solicitor specialising in business law who is preparing a draft constitution based on the documents we have supplied. Our thanks to Virginia Wilton of the Canberra society for handling these negotiations. The draft constitution will be circulated among the societies of editors for discussion, and then returned to the solicitor who will prepare a final document based on responses to the draft. The societies will then be asked to accept this constitution.

The Accreditation Board, led by Shelley Kenigsberg of the New South Wales society, has drawn up an issues paper that canvasses responses to the sample editing examination and the implications of sitting the exam on screen. Members are invited to comment on the issues paper, which is on the website under Accreditation. The complete sample editing examination and answers will be posted on the website so that members can trial it. Each society of editors will hold a workshop towards the end of the year to gather opinions and feedback on the trial; this consultation will enable the assessors to refine the actual examination paper to meet members' needs.

The Accreditation Board has collected information from members about their intentions to sit the exam, and found that many are keen to do so as soon as possible. We expect that the first editing examination will be held in March 2008; members will receive at least four months' notice of the date and venues.

The revision of the website has encountered some delays. The convener of the Website Working Group, Mike Purdy of the Canberra society, is training extra administrators to add and edit content. By spreading this expertise among several people, we ensure that the website will continue to operate despite the manifold demands on volunteers' time. The expectation is that the new website will go live before the end of August.

Janet Mackenzie

IPed Liaison Officer

Word thieves

[Thanks to Paul Bennett, a freelance editor from Queensland, for permission to reprint this article.]

As soon as somebody mentions that an Australian text will be edited, writers rise up and say two things: 'the readers will understand what I have written' and 'language is constantly evolving – you have no right to stand in its way'. Both these statements are wrong. *Honest* writers would rise up and say: 'I am not interested in the readers' not understanding, because I am writing this to impress my peers' and 'language is always evolving and you should be blessed for keeping the changes under control'.

We can do nothing to rein in the hubris of writers, especially if they are academic – all we can do is to make a comment, wait to be ignored, and take the money. But we *can* do something about the warning that we shouldn't stand in the way of the evolution of language – we should ignore it, and take big steps to keep the evolution under control.

Copyediting is a bit like herding cattle. Cattle have to go from here to there, and you wouldn't want to change the general direction of travel, but you do have to bring back the ones that bolt, and keep an eye on those in danger of being rustled. Just as people steal cattle from herds, people steal words from English, and if I am told that I have no right to stand in the way of a changing language, I reply that you have no right to steal words of which I am a part-owner.

The problem is that people can't stop themselves from splurting out new words, or replacing time-honoured, accurate words by others that are not quite right. There are three groups of 'new' words, and while this article admires the first group, it criticises people who use the second and third groups.

Group 1: *New* new words. We must welcome these when they supply a need. Let's look at one new word from each decade of the twentieth century¹: *hangover*, *autism*, *penicillin*, *supermarket*, *bikini*, *modem*, *velcro*, *spin* (slant), *himbo*, and *spam*. These words define something we did not have, or could not express well before.

Group 2: Show-off new words or terms. These show off the user's new-found perspicacity, or demonstrate cool familiarity with a celebrity or current event. They include *buy-in*, *going forward*, *transitioning*, *governance*, *yadda-yadda*, and *cost-driver*.

Group 3: Stolen words. These are existing words that have been damagingly twisted to mean something different from what they meant yesterday. They include *altercation*, *protocol*, *issue*, *disinterested*, *crescendo*, *reticent*, *cohort*, and *edgy*.

Some of the not-new-but-replacing-old words slide in under your guard, and all of a sudden they are entrenched and you'd be wasting your time trying to put things back they way there were. Do you remember how, in the late 1980s, we

¹ Taken from John Ayto's *Twentieth Century Words*, OUP 1999.

used to stamp and shout when people started *addressing issues* instead of dealing with problems? These days, even eminent editors address issues. The other day, a senior editor told me she wasn't ready for a relationship, and I had to tell her she was having them all over the place in full view of everyone. The best-educated reporters on Radio National often report on a crisis coming to a crescendo, and shady politicians sometimes blame their shady cohorts when things go wrong.

I can help you keep the language under control by providing a list of words that point to danger. When you are editing, and you find these words, be bold and strike out dodgy uses! Stand up for your rights, protect your property, and upset a writer at the same time. The list is made up of just a few words either in flux or already completely fluxed, with the old use first and the new use second:

anticipate = be ready for something. *anticipate* = expect

articulate = (phonetics) move the speech organs. *articulate* = say

allude = casual or sly reference. *allude* = reference

altercation = verbal stoush. *altercation* = fight

begging the question = the fallacy of founding a conclusion on a basis that as much needs to be proved as the conclusion itself. *begging the question* = to give rise to the need for a question

corporate = connected with corporations, like the local council. *corporate* = business

criteria = more than one criterion. *criteria* = one criterion

crescendo = build-up to a climax. *crescendo* = climax

cohort = large group of people. *cohort* = crony

crisis = the point when an illness or event will go one way or the other. *crisis* = a serious event

culminate = to reach the highest point. *culminate* = to end

de facto = (adj) in fact, though not in law. *de facto* = (noun) someone you live with as a spouse

directly = very soon. *directly* = direct, with no intermediary

disinterested = having no vested interest. *disinterested* = uninterested

edgy = nervous. *edgy* = on the cutting edge

enormity = grossness, badness or wickedness. *enormity* = large size

fortuitous = accidental, without planning. *fortuitous* = probably unplanned but fortunate at the same time. (Leave this one alone! This is a fortuitous change of meaning. The new meaning is more descriptive and more useful than the old one.)

fulsome = overdone in a sickly way. *fulsome* = thorough

issue = something of interest to people. *issue* = problem

momentarily = in a flash of time. *momentarily* = soon

offshore = just off the shore, like a drilling rig or an island. *offshore* = overseas

oversight = a mistake resulting from poor supervision. *oversight* = good supervision

presently = soon . *presently* = right now

protocol = diplomatic procedure. *protocol* = any procedure

relationship = how you relate to someone. *relationship* = how you sexually relate to someone

refute = deny, with proof. *refute* = deny

reticent = reluctant to discuss something. *reticent* = reluctant.

The reason for standing up to word thieves is to preserve precision. A well-read person should not be reluctant to differentiate between “having a vested interest” in something and simply “wanting to know something” about something. I want to talk about my relationship with my daughter without half the population raising their eyebrows. When I play my cello, I obey musical markings that ask me to gradually increase my volume until I reach the climax; I don’t suddenly *fff* at the first sight of a hairpin. When my 92-year-old mother tells me she’s feeling edgy, I should immediately get her a scotch and keep her calm, not be prepared to see her appear in skin-tight hip-huggers.

If we are not ‘allowed’ to stand in the way of the evolution of our language, why should wordmanglers be ‘allowed’ to rob our language of its one good feature? Why should *they* go unchallenged when their grossness plonks itself down in the way of precise, poetic phrasing? How do we explain our acquiescence when they drive their dirty-great wordHummers through our narrow and precise sentences, knocking our meanings for six, and scaring the homophones?

I’ll not be reticent to beg this question: Please, writer or editor – whether you are uninterested or involved, at home or offshore, edgy or old-fashioned – will you, in your work, promise to fulsomely utilise the *one* important criteria of oversighting a culmination of this crisis so that it will not reach a crescendo?

Paul Bennett

**Deadline for October 2007 *Bookworm* issue:
Tuesday 18 September 2007**

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