



# BOOKWORM

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

November 2007

## From the Chair

Hello folks,

Your friendly neighbourhood committee has been very busy lately. No, not making a list and checking it twice; it's FAR too early for that sort of carry on if you ask me (just look for me at the shopping centre – I'll be the one swearing at the lack of parking spaces on Christmas Eve). Rather, as I've mentioned earlier, we've been designing and writing up a new website for the Society, to reflect our professionalism and all-round fanciness. We're almost done with it, and hope to have it up and running by the end of the year – go us!

To coincide with this new look, we've been hard at work designing a new logo too. Okay, to be fair, Carla was the one who did most of the work, but the rest of us did have some vital input, such as 'Er, we like green,' and 'Yes, we like that one thank you'. If I were clever, I would be able to put it in here – and send a trumpeter to each of your houses to do a little 'parp da da parp' as you opened *Bookworm* and saw it – but alas, you'll just have to wait. I promise I'll send it out on the mailing list soon (I'm still working on the trumpeters).

These changes are of course not random. Nor are they the only things in place. They are simply phase one. In 2008, we're hoping to get shiny badges made up, and some specially designed holsters to hold indelible red pens. Then we can go out and change all the bad spelling and poor writing we're confronted with, and even arrest repeat offenders (like sign writers who abuse the poor apostrophe). I'm thinking we could be the Apostrophe-les, but that may mean there can only be 12 of us.

Phase three may take a little longer, but I see lots of secret handshakes and inveigling proofreading symbols onto the national currency. Perhaps even a movie starring Tom Hanks – who knows? A girl's gotta have dreams.

*Emma Pearmain*

PS: Don't forget to get your booking in for the Society's end-of-year dinner. If you book and pay by November's meeting, you'll receive your tickets for \$30! (Contact me or bring your money to the meeting.)

## Editor's note

From this issue onwards, *Bookworm* will be arriving in your inbox as a PDF only – we will no longer attach a Word version. The Word version is still available from James Hansen, if required: <[jehansen@westnet.com.au](mailto:jehansen@westnet.com.au)>.

*Rebecca Newman*

## Forthcoming meeting

### *November: 'But it's fiction!': Getting it right when you're editing fiction*

What's the correct term for a nineteenth-century potty? Which Apollo space mission took place in 1972? When do gardenias flower? Do children in 2007 still say 'golly'? Editors of fiction are no strangers to checking facts and trying to get it right. But occasionally these efforts are perceived as 'nitpicking' and we're met with the incredulous response 'But it's fiction!'

At the November meeting, Amanda Curtin will present a paper given at the national conference in Hobart earlier this year, which draws on her own experiences, and those of editing colleagues, to consider issues of implausibility, inaccuracy and inconsistency in fiction, why they matter, when they don't, and where our responsibilities as editors lie.

This session is likely to stimulate discussion on a range of editing issues, so come along, whether you edit fiction or not.

**Date:** Tuesday 6 November 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:** Emma Pearmain, 9243 5045, <[emma007@amnet.net.au](mailto:emma007@amnet.net.au)>

## Report on October meeting

### *Words, words, words*

James ran a lively discussion covering grammar, spelling, usage and punctuation, based on examples that he had collected as well as selections supplied by other SOEWA members.

How would you use a possessive apostrophe for 'the hats of the fathers-in-law'? (And spare a thought for the poor writer finding it necessary to refer to such objects.) 'The fathers-in-law's hats' was eventually scrawled on the whiteboard, but most members in attendance agreed that this sounds dreadful, albeit correct, and would rewrite the material instead. Indeed, this became something of a refrain for the evening – if grammar requires a form that sounds awkward, you can always rewrite. Use the full power of the language!

We covered a wide range of subjects, from the incorrect use of 'cohort' to the frequent misuse of fictitious singular forms of words such as 'goods' and 'premises'. The disappearance of prepositions in idiomatic speech rankled with members and was whole-heartedly denigrated!

Other useful topics which James clarified included subject-verb agreement; verbs and their subjects, objects and complements; and subjects subverted by other words. There was prolonged discussion about whether one should write 'focussing' or 'focusing' – this last topic continued to occupy some thoughts even after the meeting. (You can read Katie's response in this issue of *Bookworm*.)

James also drew our attention to a number of interesting references, including:

- *Australian Style*: a national bulletin on issues in Australian style and English in Australia. This is published by the Australian Government Department of Finance and Administration, Australian Government Information Management Office.
- '50 Writing Tools', which is part of the Poynteronline website: [http://web.archive.org/web/20060523223009/www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=62027](http://web.archive.org/web/20060523223009/www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=62027).

James will be organising a workshop dedicated to punctuation, for our first meeting in 2008 (in February). He will be approaching various punctuation gurus in the society for assistance with this project. In the meantime, members are invited to contribute examples for discussion by emailing them to James at <[jehansen@westnet.com.au](mailto:jehansen@westnet.com.au)>, putting TOPIC 08 in the subject line. And there was considerable interest when James announced his forthcoming book *Take Charge! Using Apostrophes and Plurals Correctly* which will be launched at the 2008 SOEWA AGM.

Thanks James for an informative and interesting evening. Put me down for a copy of your book!

**Rebecca Newman**

PS: James brought to the attention of Mac users that NisusWriter was an inexpensive alternative to Word – older Macs would use 'NisusWriter Express' (for OS9), and newer Macs 'NisusWriter Pro' (for OSX). It has an excellent dictionary! The developer's website is <<http://www.nisus.com>>.

### **Pedant's corner**

I enjoyed James's presentation on Tuesday night but I feel the pedantic need to continue the argument about focused vs focussed. I hope that this will not be considered brawling ...

Pam Peters, in 'The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide', writes an entry on 'doubling of final consonant' –

*In a two-part nutshell, the general rule is that you double the final consonant if:*

- *the vowel before the consonant is a single one (as in wetted or regretted), not a diagraph (compare seated and repeated); and*
- *the syllable before the suffix is stressed (as in wetted and regretted), not unstressed (compare budgeted and marketed).*

And hence, focused!

Pam's exceptions are words ending in x; words ending in c; words in which the last syllable is identical with a one-syllable word, such as backlog; and words ending in l. There is no mention of the letter s.

And I think that Tom would be pleased to know that the American novel I am reading contains many correctly spelled references to phosphorus.

*Katie Lennerts*

## **IPed Notes**

### *News from the Institute of Professional Editors October 2007*

This has been a month of consolidating the initiatives that are under way. The new website is up and running at <<http://www.iped-editors.org>>, and we welcome your ideas on how to improve it further – contact your society's IPed delegate. [Anne Surma is SOEWA's delegate.]

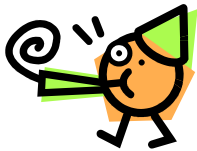
The constitution was the main topic of a lengthy teleconference held by the Interim Council at the beginning of September. The council is very aware that it is laying the foundations for an enduring organisation and it is striving to provide a fair and flexible basis to enable IPed to meet the unknowable challenges that lie ahead. During the phone hook-up the delegates went through the draft prepared by the lawyers, together with email comments circulated beforehand, and considered the implications of every clause in detail. The process was so intense that the meeting had to be adjourned, both to give the delegates a rest and to get more legal advice; it reconvened the following week to complete the discussion. The resulting document is again in the hands of the lawyers to resolve final difficulties and questions. It will be available for comment on the website by the time you read this.

With so much effort going into the constitution, other council matters have taken a back seat for the time being. IPed's present financial position is reasonably sound. An indicative start-up budget is in preparation, and the member societies will be kept up to date as financial projections are refined.

The accreditation scheme is making steady progress. The Accreditation Board's current activities include gathering numbers, estimating costs and preparing

guidelines for the first examination. The sample exam paper is now available on the website together with its answer sheet and marking guide. Even if you don't intend to sit the exam, you will find it a useful refresher. The editors societies around Australia are conducting workshops to gauge members' reactions to the exam questions and answers, and Western Australia has already reported on its workshop with some constructive and helpful ideas. While the Accreditation Board takes responsibility for the administration and conduct of the scheme, the Assessors Forum concentrates on the content. As the feedback from the workshops comes in, the Assessors Forum will collate it and modify the exam paper accordingly. There was a good response to the issues paper on how to make the examination available on screen, and these comments are also being considered.

*Janet Mackenzie*  
IPEd Liaison Officer



## SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) CHRISTMAS BASH

**When:** Tuesday 27 November 2007 at 7 pm  
**Where:** **Villa Roma**, 9-13 High Street Fremantle (Roundhouse end)  
**Cost:** \$35/head (or \$30/head if you book and pay on or before 6 November)  
**BYO wine or beer (but no BYO soft drinks)**  
**RSVP:** Emma Pearmain, 9243 5045, <president@editorswa.com.au>.

3 courses with choice of 4 mains:

- mushroom risotto
- chardonnay barramundi (superb, says JB)
- scallopini
- char-grilled chicken breast

Entrée will also include a vegetarian option

Be entertained by musical duo **DORIS** (Jane Cornes and Margie Hanly—funny, intelligent, wicked, delicious harmonies. Sample their music on <[www.doris.com.au](http://www.doris.com.au)>.

*To make things as easy as possible, please forward your payment before the party. All RSVPs will be taken as bookings, and payment will be expected accordingly. See you there!*

**Deadline for December 2007 *Bookworm*:**

**Tuesday 20 November 2007**

*All submissions gratefully accepted.*

**Contacting SOEWA**

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