



Bookworm

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF EDITORS (WA) INC.

Say what you mean—hire an editor

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October 2009

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National or global - is there a difference?

I am heading off to the National editors' conference in Adelaide soon and am very excited about meeting members from other societies around Australia. Apart from the interesting dinners and liquid welcomes, there are some fabulous presentations, workshops and panels on offer. Some of the topics cover children's book publishing, editors being edited, Indigenous writing, the digital revolution, editing out of a recession, government editing, mentoring, editing websites, editing poetry, green editing, editing science, online editing and so much more. Check out the details here:

<http://www.editors-sa.org.au/?q=conference/conferenceprogram>

Attending an event like this focuses on the global nature of our world. We all have skills that can be transported across cultural, geographical and cyberspace platforms. Cross to websites and this inter-platform feature becomes even more prominent. We can go to any website to research contacts and knowledge, pursue projects and, if we have enough persistence, develop global networks at the click of a key. However, it's like any research and marketing; it's not going to happen overnight but it will happen. Our society website (<http://editorswa.com/>) now shows up first in a Google search which makes us, as a society, easy to find and hence you, as members, easy to locate via the register. Additional networking avenues (Forum, Twitter, Facebook) all help to interlink us in the online community where we can increase the awareness of the importance of editors – our holy grail!

One last word on the society's website. We are currently updating it with images and more colour so if you see any glitches, or have other ideas for improvement, please let us know. We will no doubt get lots of tips from Gary Barber at our next session (20 October) about the best and worst of websites. There's always room for improvement!

Happy editing...

Robin

Robin Bower - President



This month's Members' Meeting Tuesday 20 October, 2009 at 7.30 pm

'Website creation—building a brand'



Hosted by Marisa Wikramanayake

Guest Speaker:

Gary Barber of Radharc – Web Creatives
(<http://radharc.com.au>)

In his presentation, Gary will focus on whether we, as editors, need websites and what we can do with them. He will outline ways to build a professional-looking website and comment on the networking potential of a good website.

Come along!

Find out how a website may work
for you, your clients and your wider internet audience.

Venue: Subiaco Community Centre (Activity Room), 203 Bagot Road, Subiaco.
Enter by the glass double doors opposite the courtyard (Activity Room is on the left)

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

Parking: street parking and Crossways Shopping Centre car park opposite

RSVP <marisa.wikramanayake@gmail.com>

About Gary Barber

Gary operates his own consultative web design business, Radharc – Web Creatives, from Ballajura and spends much of his time consulting in government, education, energy and private sectors. He also volunteers his services to various professional bodies and is a founding member of the fledgling Perth chapter of the Usability Professionals Association.

His passion lies in designing websites that are creative, accessible and easy to use. 'Websites,' he says, 'are about people, not checklists'. A good website is designed with a clear purpose in mind, is pleasant on the eyes and easy to navigate.

**WELCOME TO THIS MONTH'S
NEW MEMBERS**

* * *

Danielle Costley City Beach
Brett Jenkins East Perth

* * *



Spotlight on Raelene Hall

from Meekatharra

<http://www.outbackwriter.com/publications.htm>

Hello from the Outback

It was a lovely surprise to receive Mabel's request for me to write a brief piece about myself for the October edition of 'Bookworm'.

My first knowledge of the Society came through working with Janet Blagg, who edited my self-published book.



My experience in editing is quite limited. I have been the voluntary editor of 'Pedals', the quarterly national magazine of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Aust. Inc (www.icpa.com.au) for 5 years but I don't have any specific editing qualifications. By joining the society I hope to learn more editing skills, network with other editors/writers and reduce, a little, some of my isolation.

I live on a cattle station of approximately 450 000 hectares (just under one million acres) in the East Gascoyne region of WA. Our nearest town is Meekatharra, 214kms to the south and Perth is 1000kms away.

My husband and I have three children. Our two adult sons work on our property and others in the area, and our daughter is at boarding school in Perth.

My writing career began in 2001 when I completed a writing course which gave me both confidence and direction.

Gradually I began having articles published and felt that at last I was a 'real' writer.

I began writing a light-hearted column for a Geraldton paper on a trial basis in May 2002 and wrote my final column in March 2007. These columns then became my self-published book, *Legitimate Bush Woman*, which I launched in December 2007.

In 2007 the opportunity arose to extend my involvement with 'Pedals' to become its publisher, as well as editor. This meant learning some graphic design skills as well as how to run a small business. I feel great pride and joy now when I see each completed issue, knowing that I have done it all myself.

My other interests include education (I taught my three children on School of the Air for 18 years), computers, my friends and family. Having lost family members to both cancer and suicide I know life has to be lived to the fullest. ■

While poking around on Raelene's website at <http://www.outbackwriter.com/> I came upon a gem of a piece, titled 'Freddo's Days are Numbered'. My first thoughts were of those tasty little chocolate shapes! It couldn't be true! The demise of the Freddo? But no! These were Freddos in quite another league.

Raelene's article began:

'One of my first introductions to station life was sharing a shower with frogs. It seemed like hundreds of them were sitting and staring from every surface. I remember standing in the middle of the shower, trying to keep an eye on them all in case they tried a mass attack ...'

And I was back in North Eastern Arnhem Land living under a closed-in section of the breezeway of a house on stilts and where I, too, shared my shower with a multitude of tiny frogs.

MK

About Pedals

A beautifully laid out, 48-page full colour glossy magazine. The July 2009 Issue offers articles on a variety of topics, from the station girl who spent 28 days at Kapooka to become a member of the army reserves to the story of 14 year old Skye, the youngest finalist in the NT Regional and Rural Initiative Awards.

It includes detailed reports of the various state conferences of ICPA (Isolated Children's Parents' Association) as well as branch reports. In addition, there are stories and poems of living in the bush; school of the air and information on where to send children to school for their secondary education once they have completed their primary schooling through one of the many Schools of the Air across Australia.

I can only begin to imagine how Raelene would have enjoyed our September Meeting on graphic design and how much she could have contributed to the discussion.

Pedals is available by subscription at a cost of \$25 for 4 issues from KMK publishing, Neds Creek Station, Meekatharra WA 6642.

Taking 'the bad stuff out' – Report on the September members' meeting

by Tatum Hands



Have you ever wondered what editors and graphic designers have in common?

The answer, according to Andrew Stumpfel, graphic designer and co-presenter at our September meeting, is that they both 'take the bad stuff out'.

Andrew was joined by Curtin University design lecturer Paul Spicer (standing in for Jacq Shaw, also a design lecturer at Curtin who prepared the presentation but was taken ill on the night) to present on one of this year's most-anticipated topics: 'What do editors find irksome about the graphic design process'?

And, if meeting attendance is any indication, there are clearly many editors in our ranks who find the graphic design process something of a mystery accessible only to the initiated few.

Paul began the night's presentation with a graphic presentation of the design process, unravelling the magic of what a graphic designer does. And it seems they do a lot more than many of us probably realise – far more than just cutting and pasting text from one program to another. He explained the basic principles of design using the amusing acronym PUBES: Proximity, Unity, Balance, Emphasis and Sequence. (The latter is otherwise known as 'hierarchy', but doesn't create such an entertaining acronym.)

For me, one of the highlights of Paul's presentation lay in the way he highlighted the vivid descriptor 'rivers' where poorly justified type opens up large white spaces that seem to connect in rivulets through the text.

He also showed us examples of 'widows' (where a word or part of a word is left alone at the end of a paragraph creating an awkward break) and 'orphans' (where a few words are forced up to the top of the next column breaking up the alignment of text). These are just some of the problems that graphic designers are required to solve when transferring our edited text to the published page.

In Andrew's discussion-based presentation he emphasised the importance of getting the 'drivers' for the publication right. Every project is unique and therefore has a different driver. This may be text, visuals, legibility or simply grabbing attention. He derided the concept of mass communication: every publication, he said, should be understood as a one-to-one personal transaction between the reader and the document. It takes only a microsecond for a reader to judge a publication and they do it largely on the basis of how it is presented graphically. (Who was it that said 'don't judge a book by its cover'?) He urged us as editors not to be afraid of the visual language and to collaborate closely with the graphic designer and client to form a productive project team.

At the end of a very informative evening, Andrew reminded us that the role of editors is now more important than it ever has been. Once upon a time (that is, before the rapid onset of electronic desktop publishing) a veritable cast of thousands worked on a single publication. Each of the roles – writer, editor, proofreader, graphic designer, compositor, typesetter – served as filters, picking up the inevitable mistakes and fine-tuning the published product. Editors now often take on much of this process alone, which, Andrew argued, makes a compelling case for recognising the editor as the 'director' of a project. Now that is a title I can live with! ■

What is an editor meant to believe?

In his latest book *Stylized: A slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White's The Elements of Style*, Mark Garvey offers the following quote from the personal letters of E.B. White:

'It comes down to the meaning of "needless." Often a word can be removed without destroying the structure of a sentence, but that does not necessarily mean that the word is needless or that the sentence has gained by its removal.

If you were to put a narrow construction on the word "needless," you would have to remove tens of thousands of words from Shakespeare, who seldom said anything in six words that could be said in twenty. Writing is not an exercise in excision, it's a journey into sound. How about "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow"? One tomorrow would suffice, but it's the other two that have made the thing immortal.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your letter.

Yrs,

E. B. White'

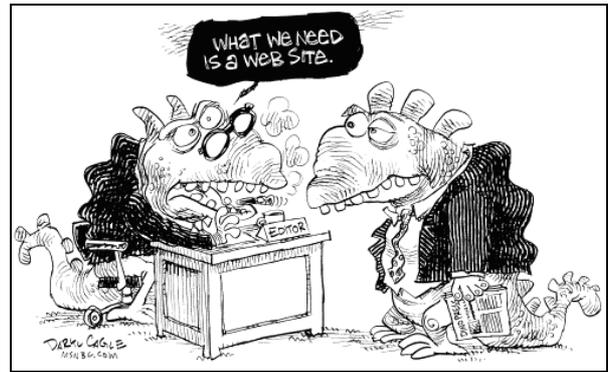
from <http://blog.textarts.com/>

However, the co-author of Strunk and White's book, William Strunk, is quoted as having said:

'Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.'

http://www.famousquotesandauthors.com/authors/william_strunk_quotes.html

from *Catchword*, the newsletter of the Society of Editors (Tasmania) Inc No. 119 Spring 2009, page 7.■



Simon says ...

The September 2009 issue of *Blue Pencil*, the newsletter of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. contains a report by Lachlan Jobbins on their August workshop presented by Simon Hillier: 'Writing and Editing for the Web'.

The subject dovetails with the WA Society's current redevelopment of its website, push to build an internet presence and choice of topic for this month's meeting on 20 October – 'Website Creation'.

Web writing, Simon explained, is like news writing: it's about 'getting to your point fast.' He demonstrated how to use 'the inverted pyramid model' to structure information:

- provide material in easily digestible 'chunks',
- make use of subheadings,
- keep paragraphs short
- use bullet points
- avoid jargon.

To catch readers' attention, online content needs to be fifty percent shorter than offline.

Focus on key words and phrases will make the site not only easier for readers to use, but also easier for search engines to find. He pointed out that the better organised a website (and article) is, the more effective it will be in attracting readers.

An interesting, if sobering, statistic reveals that almost 80% of internet users always scan pages, and many read only the first two words of a paragraph. To get a message across it is essential that a web page 'look good and make a big first impression'.■

'A synonym is a word you use when you can't spell the word you first thought of.'

- Burt Bacharach, pianist and composer

Your Say

First printed in The Big Issue, 'Your Say', Ed#337, 8-21 Sept, 2009.

Dear Mr Witton,

I beg a moment so we might redress a common wrong
(I hope you're not disturbed by critics using poem or song),
And if you curse my pedantry I'll bother you no more,
But I must raise my voice against a practice I abhor.

I've campaigned long and hard against abuse of punctuation
And while I tend to vitriol and wrath in my oration,
I hope my pen is kinder, and that you might learn to see
The 'its' and 'it's' distinction, for that is what bothers me.

In your defense of banjos (quite a worthy cause indeed)
You bestowed upon an 'its' a little mark it did not need.
You weren't combining 'it' with 'is', or 'has', or 'was' (or were you?),
You meant to indicate possession, so I will refer you

To a rule of punctuation formed into a rhyme
That you may remember better at another time:
Prevent your audience from being driven to distraction;
Only use apostrophes when 'it's' is a contraction.

Kim Wenham, Newmarket, Queensland

Patrick Witton replies: Thank you, Kim, for your poetic protestation. Apostrophe misuse: its an affliction that strikes when you least expect it's. ■

Quoted with permission of the Editor of The Big Issue and the author, Kim Wenham.

[Thank you Katie Lennerts for spotting this piece and sending it in.]

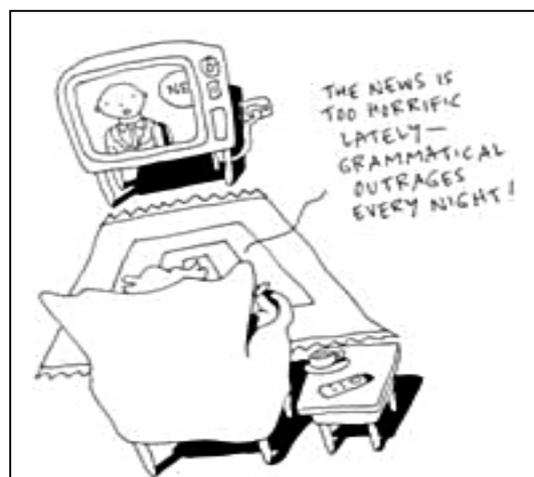
Extract from WritersOnlineWorkshops. com

Every piece of writing, whether it is a cover letter for a job application, a news article, or a fictional short story, has its own structure. Think of structure as the skeleton of a piece of writing. It is the bare bones of the piece, all connected to form a solid, uniform foundation upon which you, the writer and the creator, will build something unique.

Humans, for example, all have nearly identical basic skeletons. However, it's everything that goes on top of those skeletons – the muscles, the facial features, the shape, the curves, the personality, and even the clothes and accessories – that makes each human unique.

Various genres of writing are built in much the same way. All news articles, for example, have the same basic skeleton. It's the facts and details themselves – and the way they are layered upon that structure – that makes each news article different in almost every way from all the others.

This analogy explains why structure is so important. If you don't have a solid, tried-and-true foundation upon which to order and construct your piece, it may be doomed to come out lopsided before you even begin. ■



IPEd.

To advance the
profession of editing

IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors
Limited

www.iped-editors.org

September 2009

It is pleasing to report that the total membership of the seven Australian societies of editors that are the members of IPed increased last year, from 1,489 on 31 May 2008 to 1,645 on that date this year. That's a rise of more than 10 per cent. All the societies apart from Tasmania which, in any case, demonstrated in 2007 that cool-climate editors in a compact society play well above average, showed increased membership, with Queensland recording the biggest rise.

Congratulations are due to the Society of Editors (NSW), which celebrated its 30th anniversary in July. The event was marked with a special dinner at which the guest speaker was Dr Jeremy Fisher, currently the Executive Director of the Australian Society of Authors. Dr Fisher gave a fascinating account of the history of the society, mentioning the many luminaries of editing and publishing – names that will be familiar to many – who have walked its path. It's well worth reading the transcript of his talk, which you can find online at www.editorsnsw.com, in the September issue of its journal, *Blue Pencil*.

The 4th IPed National Editors Conference, in Adelaide on 8-10 October 2009, is now almost upon us but, never fear, you can register right up to the time of the event. The program and an online registration form can be found at www.editors-sa.org.au or via the IPed website.

IPed affairs will be covered in two conference sessions. On Thursday 8 October, in the afternoon, the Accreditation Board will outline its progress and plans, and honour our first accredited editors and distinguished editors. The conference program on Friday 9 October will begin with IPed's annual general meeting, following which Virginia Wilton, the outgoing chair of the council, will outline what IPed has achieved to date and invite discussion on the challenges ahead.

This is your chance to meet the councillors, old and new, hear what councillors and your fellow editors have to say about issues that affect us all and to express your views in a public forum. We look forward to seeing you there.

Ed Highley
Secretary

**Deadline for copy for the next issue of *Bookworm*
is Tuesday 3 November, 2009.**