

Mentoring: no barriers

Ted Briggs and Elizabeth Manning Murphy

Editor's note: The following is the transcript of Ted and Elizabeth's introduction to the editors' mentoring scheme they devised and to the pilot that took place over about three months, from December 2012 to February 2013.

Introduction (Ted Briggs)

Why have a mentoring scheme?

Before it was a noun, and certainly long before it became a verb, Mentor was a person. In *The Odyssey*, Mentor was Odysseus's trusted counsellor, left to guard the home when Odysseus went to war. The goddess Athena disguised herself as Mentor and then guided Odysseus's son, Telemachus as he searched for his father.

Since then, it has become a word for someone who provides guidance to another less experienced person.

Mentoring versus training

It is worth clarifying what we mean by mentoring a few thousand years on. Various definitions exist, but we see a mentor as being in a two-way mutually beneficial relationship with a mentee. A mentor aims to help the mentee to develop personally, provides advice, shares experiences and wisdom, guides the mentee to make his or her own decisions, but never does work for the mentee. The responsibility for the development remains with the mentee.

A coach is engaged to provide strategies and to help the 'coachee' to learn and develop skills for a very specific goal.

A teacher imparts knowledge and skills to a student and sees that the student does the practice to develop those skills and assesses the results of the teaching at all stages.



About the presenters

Tedd Briggs AE is a past president of the Canberra Society of Editors, has been an IPEd councillor and is currently a member of the Accreditation Board. He has worked as an editor and technical writer for the last 10 years, and also dabbles in photography, graphic design and video production. He is currently a senior editor, technical writer and multimedia specialist with the Department of defence. Ted hopes the mentoring scheme introduced into the Canberra Society of Editors will inspire the societies in the other states to take it on. Ted can be found at <tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au>.



Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE is the Immediate Past President of the Canberra Society of Editors, and is a Distinguished Editor by IPEd appointment. After more than 30 years in editing, writing and training in Australia and internationally, she now specialises in academic editing. Among her internationally acclaimed books about editing, writing and business are: *Working words* and *Effective writing: plain English at work* and has contributed articles to the Canberra Society of Editors newsletter regularly over 10 years. She is an experienced teacher, mentor and speaker to large and small groups. Elizabeth's contact details are <emmurphy@ozemail.com.au>.



In reality there may be elements of all three in the program we have developed. There may indeed be some specific goals set by the mentee and there may indeed be a need for the mentor to teach the mentee some new skills. Mentoring is often long-term, but can be arranged for short, very specific needs. However, the relationship is more that of a trusted friend and driven by the personal needs of the mentee—not imposed on the mentee.

Early attempts in Canberra Society of Editors

This pilot scheme we have conducted, and the actual scheme that will go live very shortly, goes back, I think, to 2009, when we had a workshop at one of our general meetings about mentoring and how it might operate in our society. Other pressures prevented those of us involved in it—mainly Elizabeth and me—from doing anything with the material we gathered from that workshop, but last year we picked it up again and have managed to get this far with it.

What we were looking for was a way to help members who had experience in some field of editing to pass on some of their wisdom to other editors, whether editors starting out in the profession, or editors who have already carved out a career.

Of course, mentoring has existed in CSE and other societies on an informal basis, particularly through people like Elizabeth, but we thought it needed to be more formally organised to ensure it continued to happen and that the burden didn't fall on the shoulders of just a few people.

In 2012-13 ...

Elizabeth will now describe the research we did into other schemes operating in editing circles around the world, and how we adapted these to come up with a program that would work well for our members.

Body of presentation (Elizabeth Manning Murphy)

Background

As Ted said, informal mentoring has been operating in the Canberra Society of Editors and elsewhere for some time. Recent discussion has centred around a more organised scheme. During 2012, I had several helpful talks with mentoring coordinators Gerard Hill of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP) in UK and Irene Stotko, Inga Norenus and John Linnegar of the Professional Editors Group (PEG) in South Africa, as well as researching what's happening in the Editors' Association of Canada and around Australia.

Research

The research in UK and South Africa showed tightly structured schemes with mentorships being regarded as stepping stones to upgrading membership, and requiring more editing experience and attendance at local workshops than we thought Australians would be happy with. The Canadian scheme, researched online only, showed a similar approach to what we eventually adopted for our pilot program.

We were looking to design a scheme that would suit Canberra (CSE) members as well as possibly being applicable around Australia and perhaps become a model for a national scheme. In addition to trying to meet mentoring goals set by the mentees, we wanted to test the viability of asking mentors to help mentees currently too far from Canberra for personal contact, and to manage with more than one mentee at a time.

We have been delighted with the help from both SfEP and PEG who were generous with their thoughts and samples of documentation, which saved us a lot of effort in designing materials to suit Australian conditions. We don't have time to go through all of it here, but you have our email addresses on the handout, and we welcome enquiries.





MENTORING: NO BARRIERS

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PRESENTERS: TED BRIGGS AE and ELIZABETH MANNING MURPHY DE

Slide			NOTES
2	Introduction	<p>Why have a mentoring scheme? Mentoring versus training: 2-way/trust, friendship/mentee driven; personal development/advice/sharing, guiding—not doing; compared with coaching, training, teaching</p> <p>Early attempts in CSE ... and so to 2012–2013 ...</p>	
3	Background and research	<p>Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP), UK: Gerard Hill Professional Editors' Group (PEG), South Africa: Irene Stotko, Inga Norenus, John Linnegar Online: Editors' Association of Canada</p>	
4	Pre pilot scheme	<p>Eligibility? new to profession; preparing for accreditation; returning after break; brushing up / moving to new area; quick boost for specific job—specific skills; anyone else ...</p>	
5	Pre pilot	<p>Prerequisites for mentees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - member (any level) CSE - done at least one one-day training program copy-editing or proofreading—CSE or any other program - done at least some editing—scheme not for totally inexperienced people—not 'teaching' 	
6	Pre pilot	<p>Prerequisites for mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - member (any level) CSE - experienced editor, willing to mentor in specific areas 	
7	Pre pilot	<p>Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aim: self-sufficiency - fee: incentive to commitment—part honorarium; part admin 	
8	Pre pilot	<p>Modus operandi (depends on mentee needs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supervision of copy-editing and proofreading - ad hoc advisory service - business aspects of freelance editing <p>Length of mentorship (for pilot)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 hours personal consultation - once a week - mid-December 2012—end February 2013 	
9	Pre pilot	<p>Paperwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outline of scheme - guidelines: mentors and mentees + faq * / application forms * - timeline for coordination (fortnightly feedback) - outlines of emails for feedback (3) <p>* next slide</p>	

10	Pre pilot	<p>Paperwork cont.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guidelines: mentors and mentees + faq - application forms <p><i>Thanks to PEG colleagues for outlines that gave us a basis on which to build our own guidelines; and thanks to the Canadian scheme for ideas on which we based our application forms</i></p>
11	Under way at last!	<p>Call for participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - we called for volunteers for the pilot scheme - overwhelming response: 6 mentors + more potential mentees than we could accommodate—selected 8 - Ted + Elizabeth—coordinators (and mentors)
12	Pairing	<p>Matching mentors and mentees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - matrix prepared - 17 broad skills areas noted from mentors' available expertise - cross-matched with mentees' goals - also considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o locations in Canberra for personal contact o distance o preferred communication methods: personal, Skype, email o what we guessed of likely good personality mixes - gap in coverage of freelance business topics led to group workshop
13	Smoothing the way	<p>What mentoring involves: not teaching, coaching, consulting</p> <p>Procedures: mis-matches or other problems</p> <p>Glitches: Skype; vanishing emails</p> <p>Late starts: fees and overruns</p>
14	Outcomes	<p>Was it worthwhile?</p> <p>2-way benefit?</p> <p>Would they do it again?</p> <p>Were mentors' skills levels OK?</p> <p>Were mentees' goals achieved?</p> <p>Do we need 2 coordinators?</p>
15	Outcomes	<p>Experiments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 mentor + 2 mentees: 3-way discussion - distance mentorships: cross-cultural goals <p>Minimal rules but strict confidentiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trust / good personal relationships / ability to confide personal issues impinging on freelancing / free-flowing discussion <p>Bonus workshop: business aspects</p>
16	Where to from here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'go live' in May or June - expressions of interest from other Australian Societies and from IPEd welcome - Ted and Elizabeth prepared to continue in advisory capacity and as contacts <p style="text-align: center;">Thanks</p>
17	Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ted Briggs AE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au - Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o emmurphy@ozemail.com.au <p style="text-align: center;">Watch CSE website: www.editorscanberra.org.au Or email for information – we believe in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MENTORING: NO BARRIERS</p>



Paperwork for committee approval

Having received the go-ahead from the CSE committee, we outlined a pilot mentoring program to run between mid December 2012 and the end of February 2013. The main topics addressed were:

- Who would be eligible to join the scheme:
 - editors new to the profession
 - those preparing for accreditation
 - people returning to editing after a break
 - anyone wanting to brush up their skills or move into a different area of editing
 - those needing a quick boost to help them with a job outside their normal area of expertise
 - in fact ... just about anyone.
- What pre-requisites we should set for mentees on the pilot scheme:
 - that any member of the Canberra Society of Editors, at any level, was welcome to apply
 - that a mentee should have done at least a one-day training program in copy-editing or proofreading—our own or any other
 - and at least some editing—even the church pew sheet—mentoring is not for teaching the basics of editing.
- Who the mentors should be:
 - members (at any level) of the Canberra Society of Editors
 - experienced and willing to mentor in specified areas of expertise
- Costs:

Our preference is for a self-sufficient scheme. We agree with our overseas colleagues that a payment by the mentee is a good incentive to commitment. For the pilot we charged \$100 (with a couple of minor variations for late starters). \$75 goes to the mentor as an honorarium, and the remaining \$25 goes into the kitty for administrative expenses. When the scheme ‘goes live’ after this conference, we intend to charge twice that amount, in the same proportions. Even \$200 is not a great deal to pay for what a mentorship in a good pairing can provide for the mentee’s burgeoning career, or confidence boost after an absence. We see no reason to charge any more than that, given goodwill of both mentors and mentees on things like occasional printing. At that rate, we see the program as being self-funded.
- Modus operandi, which—depending on what mentees want—would vary, ranging among:
 - supervision of copy-editing and proofreading of actual documents
 - informal ad hoc advice on an immediate problem
 - guidance on the business side of freelancing.
- Length of mentorships:

We asked our pilot group to aim for about eight contact hours over the two months (one contact a week), but mentorships can be shorter or longer, depending on whether or not the stated goals have been met, or perhaps if a pairing isn’t quite working out



(something we have yet to experience). Feedback is telling us that when we ‘go live’ we should relax the mentorship period to perhaps four months, with the usual option to continue by private agreement.

Paperwork for pilot

Paperwork we prepared included:

- a general outline of the scheme
- guidelines for both mentors and mentees, with frequently asked questions
- application forms
- a timeline for ourselves as coordinators
- outlines of emails for feedback throughout the pilot scheme.

Call for participants

We then called for volunteers, and were frankly overwhelmed. We finished up with six mentors and eight mentees on the pilot, with a number of potential mentees who couldn’t be fitted in on the pilot, but who will be given priority and a special rate as soon as we go live.

Ted and I agreed to be joint coordinators for the pilot, as well as taking on mentees ourselves.

Pairing and teething problems

We worked hard to try to match mentors and mentees according to the stated, very specific, goals of the mentees and the skills being offered by the mentors.

Specific goals included:

- getting a freelance register entry worded for best effect
- getting a check-up of text editing skills at all levels
- discussing career directions; networking and getting ongoing editing work
- using editing symbols and Track Changes effectively

Fortunately, we didn’t hit any major snags, but it was a bit of a juggling act behind the scenes!

We believe both senior and younger, newer editors have skills they can help mentees with. The scheme needs mentors who are able to help with aspects of traditional English grammar, for instance, and mentors who can guide people needing to use today’s digital technology to do their editing.

Ted prepared a matrix showing areas of need by the mentees, mentors’ areas of expertise, and cross-matched them. We also took into account locations of participants, long distances, and everyone’s preferred means of communication. And we tried to match for personalities, but this was more a lucky guess. One area that most people wanted included was the business side of freelancing, and that is what triggered the idea of a group workshop at the end of the pilot run.

It was important that mentors, in particular, understand exactly what mentoring means, as opposed to teaching, tutoring or counselling, so we ran a small coffee meeting for all mentors and explained this, answered their questions, and discussed procedures to follow, should there be any problems with the mentoring partnerships.

There were minor teething troubles, including communication glitches involving Skype technology and emails disappearing, and a couple of late starts to mentorships, but with goodwill, these were overcome.



Outcomes

Overall, we believe our pilot scheme has been successful—feedback from participants confirms this. It was of mutual benefit to both mentor and mentee in each mentorship, and all mentors agreed they would do it again. Mentors' skill levels seemed to be OK—some finding they learned more from having to brush up or do some research on new ideas. All developed good on-going relationships, and while mentees' goals were largely achieved in the time, some mentorships will be continuing privately. We have learned a lot about administering such a scheme in the future. We think TWO coordinators working together is a good team, when both are busy people—it allows for sharing the load, and gives participants a choice of coordinator to approach should a problem arise within the mentorship.

We learned that not only did mentees reach their stated goals happily, but *all mentors* gained a lot from their pairings, and that having two mentees at a time works and sometimes allows three-way discussions if there's a mutual point of interest.

While our pilot was intended for members of the Canberra Society of Editors only, after some discussion, and given an unusual opportunity that presented itself, Ted and I decided to try our hand at an international mentorship. We had no difficulty at all with this, using Skype and email for our contact time. I don't want to say too much here because of the confidentiality rule, but it was unusual, with the mentee seeking feedback on her editing of material authored by someone in a different culture in her country who was not a native speaker of English. Another pairing with a mentee temporarily overseas but normally living in Canberra also worked well. In both cases, one-on-one Skype calls were invaluable.

We made use of every available form of communication—we recommended at least one face-to-face consultation, in person or by Skype, and for the rest used email and phone. All had their uses. We agree with a couple of the respondents to our request for feedback in that some form of guidance for mentors (either a training workshop or some guidelines in a booklet, or both) would be helpful for future mentorships.

We surprised even ourselves with the diligence with which everyone dealt with this pilot scheme, despite having busy editorial or business or student or family lives at the same time. We had almost no rules or restrictions but top priority was strict confidentiality. To this day, nobody knows even the names of the mentors or mentees on the pilot program except those involved. This ensured that discussion in the mentor/mentee pairings or within the group as a whole or with the coordinators would remain private. All discussion was therefore free-flowing and included a good deal of personal discussion that will never be passed on, but was often essential to building rapport or working around a problem that the mentee was facing in their freelance life. We believe confidentiality is vital, at least within the individual pairings.

Our closing workshop included ten of the group of fourteen participants discussing business aspects of freelancing. The list of requested topics was long, including quoting, invoicing, ethics and coping with problem clients, but we dipped into it and people were provided with useful handouts and book references.

We believe that our style of mentoring knows NO BARRIERS at all—distance, cultural differences, ability to communicate regularly and willingness to undertake practical assignments.

Soon we will have a notice on the CSE website and in our email list inviting members to apply to be either mentors or mentees in a full-blown mentoring scheme. We see no barrier to mentoring across state borders. And our overseas experience opens up possibilities for future liaison with other editing organisations.



Summary

In summary, mentees need to set out very specific goals. Mentors need to tell us what areas of expertise they are prepared to mentor in. All need to understand the difference between mentoring and teaching. The scheme is mentee-driven, not imposed by either the Society or the mentor in the pairing. For us in Australia, it is not a stepping stone to upgraded membership or accreditation, or required for either, though the topics included in the mentee's stated goals could well be part of their personal preparation for either.

Sincere thanks to all who participated in this adventure. The cooperation was fantastic. Ted and I plagued participants several times for feedback as the scheme progressed. They obliged without a murmur, and gave us a young book of useful comments, that we still have to analyse in depth to apply to the running of future mentorships.

I also want to thank everyone, both in the CSE and in other Australian Societies as well as in SfEP in the UK and PEG in South Africa for making this almighty scramble between pre-Christmas and the end of February the success that it was. My special thanks also to my fellow coordinator Ted Briggs for support all the way.

Where to from here? (Ted Briggs)

'Go live!' in May or June

We will be recommending to our committee that we go live with the program in the form we used for the pilot, once we've tweaked the documentation to remove references to the pilot. We hope we'll be in a position to go live in May or June.

This will be followed by another call to our members for mentors and for people interested in having a mentor.

Elizabeth and I are of course prepared to continue our involvement with the program in some capacity—though not necessarily as the permanent coordinators.

But ... we don't see anything in the program that means we have to restrict it to just CSE members. In fact, we see no reason that it couldn't be used by other societies, or that other societies couldn't join with us in running it. Elizabeth and I have actually been harbouring a faint hope that it could end up becoming a national scheme under the auspices of IPEd. So if anyone out there beyond the borders of the Canberra Society of Editors would like to be involved in some way, please come and talk to us, or email us.

Thanks and close

So that's it from us for now. We'd just like to finish by saying a big thank you! Thanks to our mentors and mentees who took part in the pilot scheme, and a big thank you to all of you for being with us today.

