

Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Vol 15 • Number 7 • August 2006

Next meeting
Wednesday 30 August

Copyrights and wrongs

Everything you wanted to know about copyright law but were afraid to ask.

Meet at 6.00 for 6.30 pm in the Friends Lounge of the National Library.

Our speaker, Gabrielle Mackey, is a Principal Legal Officer in the Copyright Law Branch of the Attorney-General's Department, focussing on the enormous challenges new technologies pose for copyright law and policy.

Gabrielle has been involved in the review of the Digital Agenda amendments, the implementation of copyright obligations of the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement, the review of unauthorised access to and use of pay TV broadcasts and the Fair Use and other copyright exceptions review. Her section also manages the various copyright agreements the Commonwealth has with copyright collecting societies.

Join us after the meeting to continue the discussion over dinner at some inexpensive local restaurant.

Next month, on **27 September**, Peter Alexander of the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), will speak on Content Management.

From the President

I had intended to make this column an abbreviated version of the report I gave at the annual general meeting in July, but that will be in the minutes of the meeting. In any case many of you were there. Instead, I'd like to focus on what's ahead for the following year, largely because of the highly successful meeting of the IPEd interim council meeting here in Canberra over the weekend of 5 and 6 August.

First, though, I'd like to record my thanks to our immediate past

Why not make this the year that you join in these exciting developments and play a more active role?

vicepresident Ted Briggs for his wonderful efforts on behalf of the society during the year just ended (and indeed for several years before that); he certainly made my job much easier. We've all benefited from the variety and spice that his choice of speakers for our general meetings provided us with, to name just one of his many contributions. We will miss him on the committee, but are fortunate that Ann Parkinson has agreed to be the new vicepresident. Many of you know Ann from her previous work on the committee and I look forward to working with her over the next year.

Thanks also to Louise Oliver, whose resignation as secretary I accepted reluctantly just before the meeting. Louise felt, quite understandably, that she could no longer discharge the full range of responsibilities of the secretary and has stepped aside. She has, however, indicated that she would be willing to help out on the committee in a less

demanding role. Our new secretary is Alan Roberts and I welcome him as an office-holder, as well as all those who have volunteered to be general committee members.



So to the year ahead. After the meeting of the IPEd interim council

I feel a new confidence that we are indeed about to see the formal completion of a process that began several years ago—the formation of a national organisation of editors as a legal entity, with all state and territory societies participating. With all societies represented except Northern Territory (which is affiliated with the South Australia society), agreement was reached at the meeting on a timetable that sets July next year as the target for the launch of IPEd. We expect to put a proposal forward for all societies to consider in February 2007, with voting to be completed by 1 May—the month when the next national conference will take place at Wrest Point in Hobart.

We also agreed to direct the National Organisation Working Group to progress its detailed planning and research on the basis that IPEd would be a company limited by guarantee rather than an incorporated association. (I gladly volunteered to join the group.)

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Canberra Society of Editors Inc.

ABN 77 022 481 553
www.editorscanberra.org
PO Box 3222
Manuka ACT 2603

Committee members 2006–07

President

Virginia Wilton
0417 691 269
virginia@whh.com.au
vwilton@homemail.com.au

Vice President

Ann Parkinson
6282 1993
Ann.Parkinson@atrax.net.au

Immediate past President

Claudia Marchesi
6287 1110 (w)
cmarchesi@netspeed.com.au

Secretary

Alan Roberts
6251 2172
alan.roberts@velocitynet.com.au

Treasurer

Susan Wales
6242 1800 (w); 6259 5342 (h)
swales@earlychildhood.org.au

Newsletter editor

Peter Judge
6296 6211 (w/h/fax)
peter.judge@alianet.alia.org.au

Newsletter assistant

Helen Topor
6207 3414 (w)
helen.topor@cit.act.edu.au

Web minder & membership files

Peter Judge
6296 6211 (w/h/fax)
peter.judge@alianet.alia.org.au

Training coordinator

Kerie Newell
6121 3470 (w) 0412 042974 (m)
kerie.newell@dewr.gov.au

Assistant Training coordinator

Jenny Cook
6295 0035
penultimate@atrax.net.au

Membership Secretary

Ed Highley
6296 1461(h) 0412 358 151(m)
ed@clarusdesign.com

Publicity & hospitality coordinator

vacant

IPeD delegate

Virginia Wilton
6273 3048 (w)
virginia@whh.com.au

IPeD Accreditation Board

Members at large

Shirley Dyson
Louise Oliver
Lindy Shultz

IPeD Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors, August 2006

The Interim Council has reviewed progress on all fronts at its face-to-face meeting in Canberra in the first week of August. A full report will follow next month.

The Accreditation Board has now practically completed its series of workshops for each society, to explain how the accreditation scheme will work and to hear members' concerns. Board delegates have begun holding meetings in each state and territory for the initial pool of assessors (the 'distinguished editors') to discuss definitions of competency, methods of assessment, guidelines and the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, as well as other questions raised by the assessors.

The National Organisation Working Group is settling down to work under its new convenor and beginning to examine possible organisational structures.

The Standards Revision Working Group's work is continuing and members nationally will be invited to contribute to an interactive survey where they can comment on suggested revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Following this, there will be workshops in each state to finalise drafts of the revised *Standards*.

The Communications/Promotions Working Group is seeking testimonials that confirm the value of editing, particularly statements that editing has saved money and time. The sources of the testimonials must be acknowledged (and preferably well-known). If you have a suitable testimonial, please obtain the client's permission and send it to the convenor of the group, Kathie Stove, <kathie@inwriting.com.au>.

Janet Mackenzie
Liaison officer

Literary prize

The annual Bulwer-Lytton literary parody prize for writing the most appalling opening sentence of an imaginary novel has been won by Californian Jim Guigli with this effort:

Detective Bart Lasiter was in his office studying the light from his one small window falling on his super burrito when the door swung open to reveal a woman whose body said you've had your last burrito for a while, whose face said angels did exist, and whose eyes said she could make you dig your own grave and lick the shovel clean.

The Bulwer-Lytton was started in 1982 by the English Department at San Jose State University to honour a Victorian novelist who opened his 1830 novel *Paul Clifford* with what were to become the immortal words, 'It was a dark and stormy night ...'

The competition attracts thousands of entries from across the world and Guigli used a sort of lotto game strategy, submitting 60 entries to win. The runner-up, Stuart Vasepuru, of Scotland, went Dirty Harry with this rancid sentence, which is perhaps peculiarly relevant to this newsletter and its readers:

'I know what you're thinking, punk,' hissed Wordy Harry to his new editor, 'you're thinking, "Did he use six superfluous adjectives or only five?"—and to tell the truth, I forgot myself in all this excitement; but being as this is English, the most powerful language in the world, whose subtle nuances will blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: "Do I feel loquacious?"—well do you, punk?'

Source: www2.sjsu.edu/depts/english/2006.htm

Societies of Editors members' subscription fees — future directions

A discussion paper

We editors have an exciting time ahead as we see accreditation and a new national body coming together. It's time perhaps to look at our general funding—in state as well as national areas.

Is our funding adequate? It seems that some of the societies in Australia are feeling increasingly constrained by their dependence on volunteer labour and the rising work commitments of committee members. At least two of the societies now pay for a part-time administrator. New costs such as these arise and, even if some societies have funds at present, they still need to look at the future. As well, there is a need for us to look at the annual funding of our national body. Both these areas would benefit from more funds.

I believe our members' subscription fees are too low. How many other professional bodies do we know that set their rates at less than \$100pa?

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance recently offered members of Australian Societies of Editors a discount if they joined, the fee amounting to \$439.40pa if you earn \$45,000 a year. They call it \$8.45 a week. The MEAA has a diverse membership. How would the profession of editors advance if we put that sort of money into our own societies so they could promote us in every sense at a state and national level?

Here are some other examples of subscription fees to roughly similar professional bodies (I would be pleased to hear of other fee scales for comparison):

- Librarians, ALIA: full member \$251 (if earning < \$30,000 pa), reduced fees structure \$126–\$64 <www.alia.org.au/membership/benefits/fees.html>
- Graphic Designers, AGDA: full membership \$192.50 pa <www.agda.com.au/>
- Accountants, AFAANZ: \$132pa <www.afaanz.org/afaanz_member.htm>
- Hospital Pharmacists, SHPA: full member \$341pa, reduced fees structure <www.shpa.org.au/>

(From the president, continued from page 1)

I mentioned last month that our society had opened a sub-account for IPEd and deposited our share of the per member seed funding of \$20. I'm happy to report that Victoria followed suit at the meeting with its contribution. In order to remain eligible to participate in IPEd activities, all societies will have either agreed to pay the seed funding by 30 September, or will have committed to a program of time-payment by 30 September.

Also at the meeting Mike Purdy, from our society, gave a fascinating presentation on how to maximise the potential benefits of the website. Mike is now the convenor of a new working group of website

None are less than \$100pa. So what should we be paying? More than \$100pa, I believe.

Generally societies have a diverse range of members, some not working as full-time editors: for instance, graphic designers and others in the publishing industry, semi-retired people, and so on. We have new graduates entering. We welcome our diversity and would never want to deter those members from membership. So we must seriously consider a tiered fee structure (most societies already have one, in any event). A fair system based on total income might look like this:

\$50,000+	\$250pa
\$30,000–\$50,000	\$150pa
\$0–\$30,000	\$100pa

That would mean we would be paying \$5 a week if we earned a decent salary from editing and \$3 a week if we weren't. Would this be onerous? Probably not. But think of what all our societies could do with the extra money to benefit us—to provide more workshops and training courses, run more efficiently, raise our profile, get more work for editors, and much more.

We need to look to our future: to put editors on the map and keep them there, both on a state and national level, we need to consider setting our subscription fees at a realistic level.

Please send any comments to me at the email address below.

Susan Rintoul
susan@seaviewpress.com.au

Please note: The author is a member of both IPEd and the Society of Editors (SA), but the views expressed here are not necessarily shared by either organisation. This paper is intended only to raise a general discussion throughout the societies of editors.

coordinators. There will be a more detailed account of the meeting in the next IPEd notes from Janet Mackenzie, and further updates on the website.

Our first committee meeting for the year will be on 24 August at the Wilton Hanford Hanover offices, 14–16 Brisbane Avenue, Barton. As I write this column on a glorious late winter morning, I am optimistic that the year ahead will be a bright one for our society and for the profession. Why not make this the year that you join in these exciting developments and play a more active role?

Virginia Wilton
President

Track changers—the monthly ‘musings with a member’

Larissa Joseph, one of our newest members, talks to Louise Forster about her recent relocation to Australia from the USA and her education and work as an editor in the US.



Larissa, our members would be very interested to hear about life in the US, most particularly how you came to editing and your editing experience.

It all started at a very early age with my interest in reading and grammar. My father is an English teacher, so from about the age of 10 or 11, I started helping out by grading papers for him. I began by checking vocabulary and spelling tests. By about age 12, I was grading and correcting his high school students' essays.

I grew up in Philadelphia, which is just a few hours south of New York. It was the early '70s and my parents were looking for a different sort of education for my sister and me. They started a small school with a few other parents. It was an alternative kind of learning where we were all grouped together and learnt at our own pace. After this different kind of elementary school I went to a traditional high school, which took a bit of adjustment, though I found I was quite well prepared academically.

You grew up in an amazing part of the world, with access to museums and the arts...

Yes. You know, I think I took it for granted. The museums are fantastic. There was always lots of music and art in the family. My mother's a landscape painter and an art teacher. My father is a poet, a teacher and a jazz drummer.

But you didn't study art or music?

No. My love of grammar led me to study Greek and Latin at the University of Pennsylvania. It was learning Latin that really solidified English grammar for me. I taught Latin and a little bit of Greek for five years in a private Quaker high school.

I believe that Latin and Greek are taught in the States, particularly in private schools?

A lot of private Catholic schools still require all students to take two or three years of Latin. That's being phased out now and the focus is more on modern languages. But private schools are pretty much the only schools that offer Latin. Ancient Greek is almost unheard of.

After teaching for five years, I decided to go to graduate school in Texas to study historical linguistics. After graduate school, I came back to Philadelphia, decided I didn't want to teach, and applied for an editing job. I've never looked back. For the last 10 years, I worked as an editor with a law firm, sometimes also taking on freelance jobs. As a freelancer, I edited two novels and worked on

newsletters for an environmental group. I also did volunteer editing for a non-profit organisation that works with South American grassroots organisations.

Do you like being an editor?

I think it's lucky when you find the thing that fits you; and it's wonderful to be able to make money doing what you're passionate about. I feel fortunate to have found that.

What kind of editing work did you do for your law firm?

Everything from wills and trusts, to newsletters, to the cafeteria menu. We would get work not just from the Philadelphia office but from our other offices in the US and in Europe and Asia. It was a big law firm and we were always very busy.

Was the editing valued in your organisation?

Yes, it was. We were usually given enough time to do things, although there were certainly times when I worked very late nights and on weekends. My law firm was unusual in having a team of editors. Lawyers I met from other firms were amazed that this service was provided to our lawyers.

So you left the firm to come out here?

Yes. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I loved my job in Philadelphia. But we came to Canberra in April this year because of my husband's work.

How did you find out about the Canberra Society of Editors?

We knew for about a year that we were moving to Australia, so I had some time to prepare. Early on, I googled 'Canberra editors' and the first thing that came up was the editors society website. I was just overjoyed to find that website. It made coming here so much easier, knowing that the organisation existed and that I could meet people who do what I do and think the way I think. There's nothing comparable to the editors society in the US, no community to feel you're part of.

Your husband is an expert in Australian birds. Are you interested in birds too?

No, I'm a cat person. My cat's name is Marvin, even though she's a female. Marvin's from Philadelphia too. She had a very long flight to Australia and was quarantined for a month. She has absolutely no idea where she is.

(continued on next page)

My grab bag . . . of even more confusions



In April this year I promised some more words that are commonly confused. Here is part two—some recent examples that I’ve seen and heard being used incorrectly and explanations about their use in writing.

Imply, infer

Wishful thinking, perhaps, but I’d naively thought that at last these two were sorted out, until I heard someone use *imply* incorrectly only days ago. She said: ‘I imply from what you say that these figure are wrong.’ No, she should have *inferred* that. The speaker *implies*; the listener *infers* (or ‘draws an inference’ from what they have heard or seen).

Interstate, intestate, intrastate

If my friend doesn’t make a will, he will die *intestate*—that is, without having made his ‘last will and testament’. If he does so while out of his home state, he will be *intestate* and *interstate* at the same time—that is, between states. *Intrastate* is different—it means within the state; so if I travel between Queanbeyan and Dubbo, I am travelling *intrastate*; between Sydney and Melbourne is *interstate*.

(Track changers, continued from the previous page)

What do you do in your spare time?

I’m not big on hobbies generally because I work so much, but I do like to cook. Unfortunately, almost all my cooking equipment is either somewhere in New Jersey in a warehouse or in a container waiting to be put on the ship. So it’s been months and months since I’ve had all my cooking equipment, including my cookbooks. At the moment, I’m learning how to knit.

Larissa, I know that your law firm honoured you with many awards and that you excelled as a scholar. Can you tell us about your work-related awards and your scholastic achievements?

You asked me whether our firm appreciated the work of their editors. The awards they gave recognised excellence and dedication and were the firm’s way of expressing their appreciation. The certificates of achievement they awarded were also accompanied by monetary awards.

You’ve got an outstanding academic record as well. Because I know that you are a little embarrassed to describe those, I’ll let our readers know that you received the senior classics prize from the University of Pennsylvania, that you were elected to Phi Beta Kappa in your junior year and that you graduated summa cum laude.

Larissa Joseph and Louise Forster

Lend, loan

I think my vote for the second most confused pair of words (after lie/lay) would go to *lend/loan*. How often do you hear ‘Give me a *lend* of your pencil’ or ‘He *loaned* me his car for the evening’. Wrong! *Lend* is a verb, so ‘*Lend* me your pencil’, and *loan* is a noun, so ‘He made me a *loan* of his car.’

Passed, past

Passed is the past tense and past participle of the verb pass—‘I *passed* my exams’; ‘He has *passed* through Canberra many times’. *Past* can be several parts of speech, but only very rarely a verb in modern English grammar: *in the past* (noun), *the past tense* (adjective), *the bird flew past the window* (preposition), *the soldiers marched past as the general took the salute* (adverb).

Scrip, script

Someone offered to take my ‘scrip’ for medication to the pharmacist the other day. No, that would be ‘script’, short for ‘prescription’.

Scrip is the document that shows that you own shares in an organisation. *Script* is used when you mean anything written, such as a play—it is short for ‘manuscript’.

Shall, will

I include these here because I think *shall* is becoming a rarity. For purists, *shall* was the first person and *will* the second and third persons when expressing future tense—*I/we shall go, you/he/they will go*. They were reversed for emphasis: *I will go, whether you like it or not; you shall sweep the floor, Cinderella*. Nowadays, *will* is acceptable in all circumstances. Strangely, *shall* still exists in question forms: *Shall we dance?*

Who, whom

There is so much muddle with these two that I expect *whom* to disappear before long. However, it pays to use them correctly because they make meaning clear. If you mean the subject of a clause, *who* is correct; if you mean the object in a clause or after a preposition, *whom* is correct. For example: ‘This is the boy *who* lives next door’; ‘this is the girl *whom* the boy next door is dating’; ‘From *whom* did the boy borrow that car?’.

I could continue, but this selection may alert you in your writing and editing to some of the more common confusions in English grammar—be on the lookout for many more. In speech, we get away with non-standard usage, but we cannot afford to let these gremlins get into writing, particularly more formal writing, because we risk making meaning unclear. And the aim of every writer, and certainly every editor—should surely be to make meaning completely clear for the reader.

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Thinking about words

Onomatopoeetry: the gentle art of mimicry

I chatter over stony ways, / In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays, / I babble on the pebbles.

From *The Brook*, by Alfred Lord Tennyson



Do you usually say onomatopoeic or onomatopoeitic? Or even onomatopoeitical? You may, of course, reply “Usually”, none of them! And yet you use the products of onomatopoeia constantly, whenever you speak of a car hooting or vrooming, or birds twittering, or water splashing or any of those other myriad words that imitate natural sounds. Tennyson’s poem captures beautifully the busy rhythms and sounds of the brook, without his even needing to squelch in the mud at the water’s edge or dap his trout fly on the surface.

The Greeks generally have a word for it, and *onomatopoeia* is no exception—the OED lists no fewer than 15 words starting *onomato-*, which just means ‘name’. The *-poeia* that follows it in this case means ‘making’ or ‘inventing’—making up names (words) from the sounds that you hear, whether familiar sounds like quacks or yaps or rustles, or for more technical uses, like ‘splatter work’ in the engraving shop or poster studio. You might think that ducks would *Quack* in everybody’s language, but not true: German ducks *Quaken* (pron. *Kvaaken*) and French say *Coin coin* (pronounced *Quan quan*)! The making of such words is sometimes called *echoism*, descriptive perhaps, but not much more intuitive than the *o*-word.

Thinking about *onomato-*, you may sometimes suffer from *onomatophobia* or *onomatomania*, ‘a morbid dread of some word, or intense mental anguish at the inability to recall some word or name’. I know the feeling every time I bump into an old acquaintance whose name momentarily escapes me. But the same complaint may also turn the other way, into ‘a mania for word making’, which my dear mother used to exploit to her great advantage when playing Scrabble.

Onomatopoeetry? Is that a real word? Of course it is—I just made it up! It’s an example of what lexicographers call a ‘nonce word’, a word coined for a particular occasion to make a point. It may not be in the dictionary yet, although *onomatopoesy* is an acknowledged synonym of *onomatopoeia*. And *poesy* is only a slightly more abstract version of *poetry*. So there!

With this introduction you have already guessed that *poet* and *poetry* are close kin to *-poeia*. The Greek *poetes*, for ‘author, maker, poet’, became the Latin *poeta*, from which the Romans later made *poetria* and thence our ‘poetry’. Had you realised that poetry may be far older than prose? Before the language was written, history and

religious practices had to rely on a purely oral tradition, and poetry with its regular rhythms and conventions was easier for the priest or bard to commit to memory.

Bards, skalds, minstrels and troubadours seem to be related, functionally if not etymologically. *Bard* is from an early Celtic word, *bardos*, meaning ‘to raise the voice, praise’. It came into our language twice, once via Scottish, where the bard was a strolling musician, lumped in together with vagabonds and other idle people, and liable (around 1500) to be branded on the cheek as a hint that he was unwelcome in the town. Its second and happier coming was via the medieval Welsh and Irish society, where the bard was a respected poet employed to compose eulogies on his lord—but not above turning those eulogies into satire if he thought he was underpaid. The medieval Irish bardic schools preserved the Gaelic tradition of learning until the 17th century, when universities gradually took over.

Minstrels sang verse to a harp accompaniment; the name is related to *ministry* and was once used to mean any servant or attendant who ministered to you, not just a musician. *Troubadours*, from the Provençal *trobar* ‘to find or invent’ (modern French *trouver*), were poet-musicians

in the south of France (their northern cousins were the *trouvères*) whose songs were generally about courtly love, chivalry and gallantry.

Poetry comes in many forms, their names sometimes implying that they were meant to be sung. The word *ode* is French, reaching us from the Greek *odi*, a song; *lyrics* were meant to be sung to a lyre; an *elegy* or a *threnody* was a song lamenting the dead (Greek *threnos*, a funeral, and *odi*). *Verse*, from the Latin *vertere*, to turn, takes its name from the turn at the end of each line. Verse is often rhymed, *rhyme* being related to the Latin *rhythmus*, ‘rhythm’. But the present meaning of rhyme, similar-sounding endings to lines of verse, has not always been the case. Medieval Saxon poets made their rhymes using alliteration (as in *Piers Plowman*’s 14th century ‘In a summer season, when soft was the sun...’); early French poetry rhymed only the vowel sounds, ignoring the consonants.

Other verse forms have strict rhyming patterns, like the serious *sonnet* (a French word taken from the Italian *sonetto*, from *suono*, a sound—compare *sonata*) and the most *unserious* and often ribald *Limerick*. This latter was



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Hungover from the AGM

Once the business was concluded the evening deteriorated/picked up very rapidly...

A competition was run during the dinner that followed the meeting. Every table took part—indeed, there was sometimes more than one entry per table, usually after acrimonious discussion about which entry should be the one to go forward... The competition:

The manager of a large city zoo was drafting a letter to order a pair of animals. He sat at his computer and typed the following sentence: 'I would like to place an order for two mongooses, to be delivered at your earliest convenience.'

He stared at the screen, focusing on that odd word *mongooses*. Then he deleted the word and added another, so that the sentence now read: 'I would like to place an order for two mongeese, to be delivered at your earliest convenience.'

Again he stared at the screen, this time focusing on the new word, which seemed just as odd as the original one. Then he picked up the phone and called his wife, who was an editor.

What was her response? Prize for best entry...

The judging was in the hands of an impartial panel of two, Ted Briggs and Virginia Wilton. Their impartiality was such that they couldn't decide, so they awarded two prizes, one for the most original and one for the funniest. But which is which? Anyway, here they are:

- There was a young mongoose from Delhi
Who had a strange pain in his belly
He said: 'That there snake
Just makes my tum ache.'
But with two—they could star on the telly!
- Wife says:
Look dear, I don't care, but if they're on offer I'll have one mongoose. No! Make that two.

Answer on website:

Finally, he deleted the whole sentence and started all over. 'Everyone knows no full-stocked zoo should be without a mongoose,' he typed, 'Please send us two of them.'

The organisers hunted for editor jokes on the web, but found none—it seems that editors aren't very funny. They adapted some joke about journalist and linguists:

How many editors does it take to change a light bulb?
Only one, but first he has to rewire the entire building.

The editor's husband walked in and caught his wife sleeping with a handsome young student. He said, 'Why, Susan, I'm surprised.' She bolted upright, pointed her finger and corrected him, 'No. I am surprised. You are astonished.' *

An editor complained to the pet shop owner, 'The parrot I purchased uses improper language.'

'I'm surprised,' said the owner. 'I've never taught that bird to swear.'

'Oh, it isn't that,' explained the editor. 'But yesterday I heard him split an infinitive.'

A linguistics professor was lecturing his class the other day. 'In English,' he said, 'a double negative forms a positive. However, in some languages, such as Russian, a double negative remains a negative. But there isn't a single language, not one, in which a double positive can express a negative.'

A voice from the back of the room retorted, 'Yeah, right.'

Virginia Wilton

*Editor's note: I first heard this venerable joke in France in the 1960s, in scurrilous reference to the great philologist and philosopher Emile Littré (1801–81), author of the celebrated *Dictionnaire de la langue française*:

Chacun a ses faiblesses. Littré en avait pour sa bonne. Un jour qu'il la caressait, Mme Littré poussa la porte de son cabinet et s'écria: 'Ah, monsieur, je suis surprise!' Et le regretté Littré lui répondit: 'Non Madame, vous êtes étonnée. C'est nous qui sommes surpris.'

With shenanigans like this going on, it's not surprising that it took Littré a quarter century to complete his dictionary, compared with Johnson who produced his much larger work in just nine years.

Did she really mean it?

Following the purchase of Captain Shout's Victoria Cross, Diana Streak's article in *The Canberra Times* of 29 July 2006, 'Shout: a leader of men', gave a fine analysis of Australia's most highly decorated soldier in the Gallipoli campaign, including the following remarkable paragraph:

'Shout, it seems, was a man born for the military and who thought primarily of the men he commanded, often putting his own safety before theirs.'

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Do you ever feel that you would like to join a trade union? The MEAA is currently offering discounted fees to members of editors societies. See details on our web notice board:

<www.editorscanberra.org/notices.htm>

(Thinking about words, continued from page4)

popularised by Edward Lear (1812–88), otherwise a fine landscape artist much loved by Queen Victoria, but the name had its origins earlier in an 18th century Irish soldiers' song, 'Will you come up to Limerick?'. The first book of limericks was published in 1820; Lear followed 25 years later, claiming that he had the idea from a nursery rhyme beginning 'There was an old man of Tobago'.

We tend to look down on limericks these days (hardly an art form!) but in the late 19th and early 20th centuries some distinguished writers enjoyed them. Remember W S Gilbert's verse in *The Sorcerer* (1877):

'My name is John Wellington Wells, / I'm a dealer in magic and spells, / In blessings and curses, / And ever-filled purses, / In prophecies, witches, and knells.'

And that word *knell*, mimicking the tolling of the funeral bell to mark the passing of the dead, is a fine example of onomatopoeetry!

Peter Judge

Sources: As usual, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2006 Ultimate Reference Suite on DVD and the *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition on CD-ROM, v. 3.0. The duck cartoon is from the Word Perfect Clip Art collection.

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Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in September 2006 and the copy deadline for this issue is 1 September.

The editor welcomes contributions by email to peter.judge@alianet.alia.org.au, using Word for Windows, for PC or Mac.

New members

The Society welcomes new associate members Natalia Forrest and Carolyn Page, and student member Jane Ahern.

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