

**N**ext meeting  
Wednesday 29 August

Our next meeting will be held in the Friends Lounge of the National Library at 6.00 for 6.30 (as usual, drinks, nibbles and networking before the main items!). Sisters Marion Halligan and Rosanne Fitzgibbon will give us an insight into the author–editor relationship in fiction writing.

Marion Halligan has published eight novels, including *Lovers' Knots*, *The Golden Dress*, *The Fog Garden* and *The Point*, as well as collections of short stories, books of autobiography, travel and food, and a children's book. She has been short-listed for most of the prizes on offer, and has won some. Her most recent novel, *The Apricot Colonel* (Allen and Unwin, 2006), is a murder mystery set in Canberra. Her next book is *Murder on the Apricot Coast*, to appear in February 2008.

Rosanne Fitzgibbon established her reputation working as a freelance editor before working for the University of Queensland Press for 16 years as senior editor. She has worked with many award-winning authors. In 1992 she won the inaugural Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship to work in publishing in New York.

Rosanne now lectures in writing and publishing, conducts master-classes for the Queensland Writers Centre, judges literary competitions, assesses funding applications and conducts workshops for the Literature Board. She is also a freelance editor and her most recent project has been editing Marion's latest book.

## Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Vol 16 • Number 7 • August 2007

### AGM—the outgoing president's report

#### General meetings

The committee provided a variety of excellent speakers and events through the year at general meetings:

- Gabrielle Mackey from the A-G's Department on copyright law.
- Peter Alexander and Tim Dale from AGIMO in DoFA on new developments in government policy for online publications.
- Tom Worthington, an independent IT consultant, on using free or low-cost computer tools to publish books online.
- Dinner at Zest, with Canberra poet Geoff Page on what editors and poets have in common.  
A lively discussion about IPed and accreditation.
- Barbara Knackstedt on that time-honoured professional practice, networking.
- We ended on a high note with the perennially popular quiz night and a delightful cameo experience by the Splinter Sisters, aka Pamela Hewitt and Shelley Kenigsberg, in a cabaret-style skit on the relationship between author and agent.

There was no meeting in April as the date clashed with the Anzac Day holiday. Many thanks to Ann Parkinson for her tireless efforts in putting together this varied and enticing program. Jeneen and John Mcleod did a wonderful job with refreshments, with substantial contributions along the way from Ann and from Elizabeth Murphy.

Members present endorsed this thanks by acclamation.

#### IPed and accreditation

We are now a great deal closer to having a national organisation up and running.

All societies have agreed to the proposal nuted out in February. The Hobart national conference saw broad agreement on what should go in the constitution and we have briefed the firm



Williams Love & Nicol in Canberra to undertake its drafting. We all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Ed Highley for his work as secretary to the fledgling Institute and for everything he has done over the last several years to promote its development. And also for carrying out his other role as ACT membership secretary with his habitual flair, thoroughness, courtesy and humour.

We're also a lot closer to introducing a national accreditation scheme. Later this year the society will run a workshop on the first dummy exam, which should be available soon. The idea is that members wanting accreditation will do the dummy exam and then we will workshop it as a group so that we can give feedback to the Assessors Forum. Our gratitude to Loma Snooks, Elizabeth Murphy, Lee Kirwan, Chris Pirie and Larissa Joseph for their contribution to this very important process and making sure that all our interests are represented at the national level.

#### Training

Unfortunately the position of training coordinator has been difficult to fill this year. The only training event was an

(continued on page 2)

## Canberra Society of Editors Inc.

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

### Committee members 2007–08

#### President

Ted Briggs  
6161 4924; 0407 018 433  
tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au

#### Vice-President

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

#### Immediate past President

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

#### Secretary

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

#### Treasurer

Margaret Millard  
6288 6754 (h); 0402 029 552  
margaret.millard@ozemail.com.au

#### Newsletter editor, web minder, membership files

Peter Judge  
6296 6211 (w/h/fax)  
peter.judge@bigpond.com

#### Newsletter assistant

Leora Kirwan  
6296 5210  
leora.kirwan@bigpond.com

#### Membership Secretary

Gil Garcon  
6279 6804; 04 1470 1470  
editors@lizzy.com.au

#### Public Officer

Helen Topor  
6207 3414 (w)  
helen.topor@afp.com.au

#### Training coordinator

Kerie Newell  
6121 3470; 0412 042 974  
kerie.newell@dewr.gov.au

#### General meeting coordinator

Janet Salisbury  
6282 2289; 0416 167 280  
janet@biotext.com.au

#### Catering coordinators

Dallas Stow and Damaris Wilson  
6247 3111 (h)  
wilsondidi@aol.com

#### IPed delegate

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

#### IPed Accreditation Board

Larissa Joseph  
6161 5216  
larissa.joseph@gmail.com  
Chris Pirie  
6282 3730  
cpirie@netspeed.com.au

(From the President—continued from page 1)

onscreen editing workshop run by Clive Huggan, of the society, and Steve Neilsen from the PC Users Group. Many members extended their professional development at the national conference. Many thanks to Peter Fuller for his piece in the newsletter on the conference. One of the challenges for the new committee will be to resuscitate our previously healthy training program. Will we have another *Ed-Ex* in 2008?

### Communications

Peter Judge continues to be a rock as newsletter editor and webmaster, with the newsletter appearing regularly and the website providing up-to-date notices and giving our client base access to the Freelance Register. Thank you Peter.

### Other highlights and events

- A joint letter with the Australian Society of Indexers to the secretary of the Department of PM&C on the problems we face in providing the best possible service to our government clients as they wrestle with the preparation of annual reports. The secretary responded that while it would be inappropriate for PM&C to instruct other departments on their internal processes, he has sent a copy of the letter to each departmental secretary drawing attention to our concerns. It will be an ongoing struggle to make our relationships with departments as good as they can be.
- Publication of *Editors in Conversation*, the first in the national Occasional Series on Australian Editors. It profiles the careers of honorary life members from several states including Beryl Hill, Loma Snooks, Robyn Colman and Sheila Allison.

### Looking ahead

It remains for me to thank all other members of the committee: Helen Topor, Louise Oliver, Claudia Marchesi, Shirley Dyson and Kerie Newell. Alan Roberts stepped into the

breach last year and shouldered the job of secretary, and our wonderful treasurer, Sue Wales, not only handled our financial affairs capably, but looked after those of IPed as well.

What's next for the society? I'm convinced that we need to change the way we do things to survive and the outgoing committee discussed some of these ways at our last meeting, immediately before this one began. We would like to see more members attending general meetings and training courses, writing articles for the newsletter and serving on the committee. But what do YOU want?

One suggestion we could explore is to have a combination of general meetings and workshops (fewer meetings and more workshops). They could be every second month as long as we do six in a year. Committee meetings could be held in the off-months, which would make it easier to be a committee member.

The outgoing committee recommends:

- holding focus groups and surveying members on what they want from the society;
- altering the frequency and style of committee and general meetings;
- facilitating role sharing on the committee;
- contracting out some of the work done by the committee, such as minute keeping, as is now being done with routine financial processes; and
- promoting the society's internet discussion group which currently has 60 members.

But now it's over to a new committee. On a personal note, being president of the Canberra Society of Editors in 2005–2007 has been a terrific experience and I have enjoyed it.

Virginia Wilton  
President, 2005–2007

### Well, it sounds all right, dunnit?

'... predicting a strong increase in sales as customers continue to clammer for games, DVDs and electrical goods.'

Canberra Times, 15/8/07

## From the incoming president



**H**ello all. I'm still recovering a little from the surprise (shock, even) of being elected president—a goal I hadn't taken to the AGM with me. However, I thank the members of the Society for the confidence you've placed in me and I'm certainly looking forward to being able to help out in this role

for at least the next year. After a year's absence from the committee it will be great to be in the thick of things again.

I am particularly looking forward to working with the new committee and I know they will provide heaps of support. I said at the meeting I will only be able to undertake this role with lots of help! This was a bit selfish of me since without exception everyone on the committee has just as busy a lifestyle as I have, and I expect most, if not all, members are also in this situation. Which makes it particularly important that we spread the work around and encourage everybody to contribute just a bit of their time to ensuring the continuing success of the society. The outgoing committee has left us with a number of suggestions for how to spread the work around and make being on the committee less demanding by sharing roles and reviewing the time commitment required to attend meetings.

However I would like to stress that it is important for all members to get involved, not just committee members. So

don't be surprised if every now and then we contact you to see if you can help with something or other.

I'm still forming my ideas about what where I'd like to see the society going over the next year or so. However, I feel that the outgoing committee has left several strategies for us to look into, and at the first committee meeting we will be doing some solid planning to progress these. I'm very interested in developing the idea of running focus groups of members to see what you really want—I believe this will be a more fruitful way of finding out what you really think than the standard member surveys we have run at various intervals over that last few years.

I'd also like to see us getting back to running regular training sessions or workshops on some of the basic editing skills. I've always thought these are a sign of a healthy society and important in developing our skills, especially for newer members.

Despite some concerns expressed at the AGM about decreasing member involvement at meetings, I am convinced that the society is in as strong a position as ever, as shown by the encouraging stream of new members joining and by the impressive attendance by CSE members at the national conference last May.

I look forward to working with you all over the next year.

*Ted Briggs*

### Australian Taxation Office

#### Micro Enterprises and Individuals, Marketing and Education, Publishing Coordination

**Vacancies APS level 6 (currently \$62,372–\$71,649; from 1 January 2008 \$63,619–\$73,082), Canberra, non-ongoing, December 2007 to end June 2008**

**Duties:** The Publishing Coordination team is responsible for tax-time publications, including TaxPack and related publications, tax returns and guides and other publications to assist taxpayers and the community in general. The occupants of these positions will be part of a small group of editors. The occupants will be required to edit tax-time publications and provide editorial sign-off. The occupants will be expected to maintain and promulgate an editorial style that is appropriate to the publications, and to promote good editorial practices throughout Micro Enterprises and Individuals. The occupants will provide specialist editorial skills to authors and other tax and business specialists involved in the production of the publications and other products, negotiate with technical and business experts responsible for certifying the technical accuracy of publications in order to ensure that editorial style is not compromised. The work requires editorial expertise, a commitment to detail, and an ability to sustain performance and liaison skills under pressure of deadlines.

Applicants should submit an application with a detailed résumé and include the names and contact details of two referees. Applications will not be formally acknowledged.

**Contact:** Lee-Ling Sim, Senior Editor, Publishing Coordination, Marketing and Education, Micro Enterprises and Individuals, (02) 6279 6803

Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications electronically in Microsoft Word format to <[Lee-Ling.Sim@ato.gov.au](mailto:Lee-Ling.Sim@ato.gov.au)>.

## Fiddly bits—a place for everything



I was dipping into Janet Mackenzie's book *The Editor's Companion* recently, and was alerted to one of the fiddliest bits of being an efficient editor—the state of one's workspace. Now, my workspace often leaves something to be desired: as jobs pile in on top of each other, and there are jobs

in various states of completion, my workspace starts to look more like the aftermath of a tornado.

We are not all natural-born tidy persons, but we can all do something to keep track of what we are doing, and we can all learn to develop practices that make for less clutter and more efficiency.

I work from home, so my observations here are directed to my colleagues who also work from home. If you work in an office, at least you ought to be able to keep your home relatively un-work-cluttered.

**My workspace** is the smallest of three bedrooms in my house. I picked it because it's on the north side, so that natural light and solar heat pour in during winter and the eaves stop the heat from pouring in during summer. It also has a view of my garden, and I find this restful and inspirational when I am writing and editing. It also means that I can close the door on it when I finish work for the day, and not disturb the living areas of my house.

I had the built-in wardrobe in the room converted to shelves for current work and archives, allowing me to manage hanging files in one two-drawer filing cabinet that doubles as a stand for my printer. Other stationery items, fax machine and reference books are stored on shelving on two sides of the room. There's a lock-up shed in the garden that houses overflow archives until they come up for shredding.

**My computer desk** is in one corner. The main writing surface is big enough to accommodate just the job I am working on at the moment, plus a telephone. This is just as well because I fear I would try to have two or three jobs on that desk at once if there was space.

**My desk and chair** are ergonomically sound. I spend a lot of time using them, so they need to be comfortable. The computer monitor needs to be at the right height and angle, and fitted with an anti-glare screen if glare bothers you. The keyboard is best on a slide-out shelf under the main desk surface. I recommend 'silent' keyboards—clatter drives me nuts. The chair needs to be one that does not 'grab' you under your legs and that has an adjustable back rest.

If you have clients in your office, provide a comfortable chair. For me, that means another chair on wheels as I frequently need to have a client sitting beside me for training purposes.

**Lighting** is placed so that my current work is well lit. Vertical blinds help to adjust the amount of outside daylight coming into the room.

**Sound-proofing** may be an issue. I made sure that my house was built with extensive sound-proofing in all walls, so I can retreat to my office and not be bothered by radios and TVs in other parts of the house. This is not easy to achieve if you have to use a small space in a living room, for example, but carpets or rugs on the floor, solid curtains, and a minimum of hard surfaces all help.

**Security** is very important to me, as I do a lot of work in sensitive areas and must keep all material under lock and key. Current work is locked up whenever I am not at home, and the office is also locked when I go out. Such precautions are usually necessary in order to comply with insurance requirements.

**Working hours** are not easy to stick to when you are working in part of your own home. It isn't always easy to stick to regular office hours, though it is desirable. After all, you may have chosen to work at home because you have a baby to care for or because you want the flexibility of being able to work when the spirit moves you.

For large, long-term editing jobs I do recommend sticking to a routine, but for shorter jobs and jobs that include other elements besides editing (creative writing, preparation of training programs you are going to run yourself, design work and so on), it may be important to you to work in very short bursts and to go out and meet friends for coffee to recharge the batteries.

Whatever your best practice, be sure to let your clients know how they can contact you with least delay. All work and no play ... Do take the weekend off if you possibly can—it's important for our health and energy levels to rest our brains completely for a couple of days in this intensive work that we do.

**Answering the phone** No matter what sort of job I am doing at any given time, however, I do understand that most of my clients are working in full-time jobs. They understand regular working hours. So, from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday, I answer the phone with my business greeting. Outside those hours, I give a much more informal greeting. This applies to both my landline and my mobile phones. What is an ideal business greeting? I find that simply stating my full name is sufficient.

Make sure that the message on your answering machine or on messagebank gives clear instructions about leaving messages or finding you on another number if the matter is urgent; always let the caller know that you will call back promptly. And then do it!

**Health and safety** are just as important in the home office as anywhere else. Make sure that lighting is adequate so that you don't strain your eyes. Make sure that the spaghetti junction of computer leads under the desk is well controlled so that you don't trip on any of it, and that other electrical leads (to printer, fax machine, heaters, fans etc.) are all

*(continued on next page)*

(*Fiddly bits*, continued from previous page)

properly maintained and not in a frayed or otherwise dangerous condition. Make sure that you take proper breaks from work, and particularly from keyboard work; it is not a good idea to work for longer than about 45 minutes without a break.

**Stress** can creep into any home office situation. You are on your own a lot of the time with no colleagues to bounce problems off. Sometimes you are overwhelmed with work and you think you'll never get through it. Sometimes you are worried that you don't have enough work to pay the bills. All these situations can bring on stress.

A good walk every day is a great help for clearing the mind and keeping fit. If you feel really stressed, seek medical advice and take some time off. You won't do yourself or your clients a service by struggling on when you are unwell.

In short, being organised in all aspects of home office editing work is better than just letting it 'happen'. This means being organised in office layout, working space, hours of work, filing and storage of files, and matters of personal health.

They are all little fiddly considerations, but these particular fiddly bits add up to the difference between an efficient and happy freelance editor and one who is constantly on the verge of panic or serious stress-related illness.

© Elizabeth Manning Murphy, 2007  
emmurphy@ozemail.com.au

Reference: Mackenzie, Janet, 2004, *The Editor's Companion*, CUP, Melbourne (Chapter 11, 'Freelance Editing', is particularly relevant)

## More poems by Geoff Page

Geoff was our after-dinner speaker last November. He concluded an entertaining discourse on the relations between poets and editors by reading a few of his poems. He did *not* invite us to edit them, but he did present a handful to your editor for possible publication from time to time. This has duly happened in the February and June issues of your newsletter. We are happy to say that there are a couple still in the drawer, which have obvious relevance to our own concerns. Here they are ...

60.

'y' is 'z' and 'z' is 'y'  
in Europe on the Internet.  
The @ could be most anywhere,  
apostrophes are hard to get;

umlauts sprout by accident;  
you're almost a surrealist poet;  
your story's all in lower case;  
you're writing Finnish and don't know it.

84.

I have a theory, quite convincing,  
although a trifle hard to test,  
that Swedish, Danish and Norwegian,  
collectively are, at the best,

a rather large misapprehension.  
At conferences I have announced  
to somewhat nominal applause  
they're all just English — mispronounced.

from *Europe 101* (Picaro Press 2006)

## Redact 2007

Following the success of last year's inaugural Redact weekend residential course in Mansfield, the Society of Editors (Vic) is holding the second course in its annual program of intensive editorial training from early afternoon on Friday 12 October until lunchtime on Sunday 14 October. The course offers intensive study of editing principles and processes in a collaborative and interactive format.

Participants will choose one of three publishing strands – trade, fiction and biography – and will take an actual publishing project from raw manuscript to finished product under the guidance of a highly skilled editor/trainer. Friday's evening meal will be at a local hotel, at participants' cost.

For details of the course, presenters and accommodation, and to download a registration form for **Redact 2007**, visit the Society of Editors website, <[www.socedvic.org](http://www.socedvic.org)>.

This is wasted space. It could have held your views on some burning professional topic, on the society, on the price of beans, on life after retirement or whatever.

Why not write a letter to the editor, so that next time he can put this space to better use?

## Thinking about words—AUC, AD and CE

We take the calendar date for granted and assume that everybody else around the world will agree on a single value for today's day, month and year, and that they will express it in a similar way. In my last month's article I referred to 'the author(s) of Luke, whose gospel was written around 80–85 CE'. One or two people picked me up on the use of CE (the 'Common Era', or 'Current Era') instead of AD (*Anno Domini*, 'in the year of the Lord')—why did I choose to express it like that?

The dating of events that occurred in the early beginnings of our Western civilisation is often by no means straightforward. The people who took part in them usually referred them to some significant happening in their own environment, 'in the 3rd year of the reign of King Hammurabi' or '27 years since the great floods'. Historians who are trying to make a continuous chronology may have to make educated guesses about when things happened, supported perhaps by evidence from excavations, using carbon dating or other sophisticated technologies to confirm, refine or refute those guesses. A major event that stood for a long time for many people as the baseline for calculating dates was the founding of Rome. So we find dates such as 754 AUC, where the initials AUC stand for *ab urbe condita* (from the foundation of the city) or *anno urbis conditae* (in the year of the foundation of the city).

When the early Christian church fathers set about trying to fix the dates of their great festivals, like Easter, this rather vague calendar made it an almost impossible task. Different groups of Christians were using cycles that varied from 95 to 532 years in length and there was a clear need for some rationalisation. What was the 'right' period? A 6th-century English monk, Dionysius Exiguus, who had been brought to Rome to work on the pontifical archives, was asked by Pope John I to sort out this problem.

Dionysius, who was respected as both a theologian and mathematician, resolved the calculation of the date of Easter in 525 AD (525 CE) by combining the earlier cycles and setting a new starting date for the Christian era, based on Christ's birth. In effect, Dionysius invented AD—but he got it wrong, setting 1 January 754 AUC, which he called *Anno Domini*, as the beginning of our era and the preceding 25 December as the date of 'the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ'. We now know that Christ's birth took place under the rule of Herod the Great, at the latest in 750 AUC, paradoxically four years *before* the date now generally

accepted as the start of the Christian era. Note that the calendar goes straight from 1 BC to 1 AD—there is no year 0.

Dionysius's error was pointed out in the 8th century by the historian the Reverend Bede and others (Bede himself used 'AD', but referred to BC as *ante incarnationis dominicae tempus*, 'in the time before the Lord's incarnation'). However, we have stayed with Dionysius's date ever since. AD was gradually accepted by the Christian churches because of its value in calculating Easter. The church in England formally adopted it in 664 at the Synod of Whitby, but it was another four centuries before it became widely used in Europe, and not until the 1400s in Greece. There is now worldwide acceptance of a single chronology for secular purposes, although different religions (Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc) may keep to their own calendars among themselves.

Thereby stands another issue. Nominally at least, there are said to be two billion Christians in the world, just under one-third of the global population. Why should the other two-thirds reckon their calendars according to the supposed birth date of a being whose importance they don't recognise, and in some cases feel very strongly about? CE and BCE are relatively neutral and in theory should be more acceptable—although they are still counting from the year in which Dionysius supposed Christ's birth to have occurred. In practice, the use of AD and BC is so deeply ingrained that most users would not even stop to think about their religious significance. But the concept of the Common Era is not a new one. Back in Roman times they had their *era vulgaris*, the term *vulgaris* meaning 'popular, of the common people'. A book published by a learned bishop in 1716 talks of 'the vulgar era, by which we now compute the years from His incarnation', and a Jewish historian was using the abbreviation BCE in 1856.

By the way, the *Style Manual* 6th edition refers to the former practice of placing AD before the year and the other 'era indicators' after it, but now recommends that all should be placed after it.

These days academic usage tends to favour CE/BCE over AD/BC and when I am writing something where I have to quote dates I tend to go along with this usage. Needless to say, there is opposition to this secularisation of the calendar from a few Christian religious groups, although some have

(concluded on next page)



*Coming up to 1 AUC! The twins Romulus and Remus were abandoned by their parents, then adopted and suckled by a she-wolf before going on to found Rome.*

## ***Subtleties of Scientific Style* by Matthew Stevens**

**Book review by Janet Salisbury ELS (Director, Biotext Canberra)**

**M**atthew Stevens has a background in agricultural science. He stumbled into editing some 20 years ago while working for the NSW Department of Agriculture and has been working as a freelance science editor for the past 12 years. Matthew is the first scientific editor outside of North America to be awarded the 'ELS(D)', which is the advanced (or 'diplomate') level of accreditation for editors in the life sciences (ELS) offered by the United States-based Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS).

As an ELS myself, I enjoy the BELS email list. Over the years, there have been many interesting threads in which the subtleties of scientific style have been hotly debated by fellow members; for example, who could forget the memorable thread in 2004 about the inclusion of hyphens, an en-dash, or both, in 'yellow corn shucking machine'. While I am usually an observer of these international exchanges, Matthew is a regular contributor. And his contributions can often be relied upon to settle the trickiest grammatical or science style issue. Therefore, when I heard that Matthew was about to publish a book called *Subtleties of Scientific Style*, I felt sure that the science editing world was about to receive some sound advice.

And the book does deliver sound advice. Matthew identifies many common problems of science (and other) writing and gives examples showing how they can be avoided. For example, in the section on 'Common errors', he tells us how to avoid dangles (subject-less verb phrases that attach themselves in the reader's mind to the wrong subject), stacked nouns and adjectives (in expressions such as 'validation of vegetation canopy lidar sub-canopy topography measurements'), filler phrases (such as 'it is known that' or 'it has been reported that') and a number of other problems. In the section on 'Errors of substance or sequence', he deals with topics such as missing information, contradictory data, and unaddressed aims. Under 'Errors of reasoning' he exposes some everyday flaws in scientific reasoning, such as calling on an anonymous authority, and making false or implicit assumptions. In this section, he also tackles some issues that are not for the faint-hearted, such as statistical clumping and 'absolute' versus 'relative' comparisons.

But what surprises me is the book's overall lack of a coherent structure. In the introductory section, Matthew

states: 'The book collects together many subtle recurring errors that I've come to recognise in my more than 20 years of editing. It also incorporates a few essays that I have written or lectures that I have given ...' This may explain why the book has the feel of a text that has been cobbled together from disparate sources rather than being crafted as one whole. How else could you explain the fact that a subsection on 'Plain English in science', which, to my mind, provides overall contextual information for the whole book, appears on page 46 as the 11th subsection of the chapter on 'Improving expression' and is squeezed in between 'Parallel narratives' and 'Position of adverbs'? Another important aspect of 'Improving expression'—breaking up long sentences—appears as a quasi-introduction to Appendix 1 on 'Editing techniques'.

Even the title of the book, *Subtleties of Scientific Style*, does not sit well with the contents, which cover the process of science editing as well as scientific style. For example, the book starts with an interesting, though rambling, 10-page essay about scientific editing, starting with a discussion of what constitutes substantive editing, followed by a detailed description of all the steps involved in a comprehensive edit (which the author suggests requires seven passes through the document).

The writing style of the book is fresh and engaging—in that humorous and ever-so-slightly pompous style well known amongst editors and born-again grammarians! I found myself skipping over some explanations that were rather long and repetitious (for example 'respectively' on pages 71–73), while finding some others annoyingly brief (such as 'compared to' and 'compared with' on page 62).

*Subtleties of Scientific Style* is self-published by the author and I congratulate Matthew on his passion for the subject and for sharing his considerable body of knowledge with the editing community in this way. The book is available from his website at <<http://www.zeta.org.au/~mls/subtleties.html>> as either a PDF download for \$7 (on the shareware principle (payable through PayPal), or as a hard copy for \$15 (+ \$3 postage within Australia). At these prices, it is certainly worth a read, and a hard copy would be a useful addition to the bookshelf of any writer or editor working with technical or scientific information.

*(Thinking about words, continued from previous page)*

sought a compromise by rationalising CE as 'Christian Era' rather than 'Common Era'. But, aiming for consistency, they are now pointing out that the names of the days of the week and some months celebrate heathen gods or festivals (Moon, Tiw, Woden, Thor, Frig, Saturn, Sun, Janus, Mars, Juno ...), and suggesting that perhaps we should re-name them. However, I think they've left their run a few hundred years too late, and those names (or very similar) apply in other languages as well.

**Sources:** *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2006 on DVD, from which the image was also taken. Wikipedia at <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common\\_Era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Era)> and </Anno Domini>. Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance at <[www.religioustolerance.org/ce.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/ce.htm)>. The famous bronze statue of a she-wolf now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome is dated to the early years of the Roman Republic (late 6th to early 5th century BCE), but the suckling twins were a later addition, in the 16th century CE.

*Peter Judge*

## What is your dream topic for an editors society meeting?

**Y**ou may have noticed that I have taken over as the meetings coordinator for the monthly meetings. Actually, I am only the 'front' for what will be a team effort by all the editors at Biotext. And our mission is to deliver some really top-notch events that will have people breaking down the doors to get in! So where to start? We would like to collect two pieces of information from every member of the society:

- (1) What is the best editors meeting that you have ever been to (a monthly society meeting, a conference session, workshop or any other meeting) anywhere in the world?
- (2) If you could have anyone or any resources you liked, what would be the most exciting and useful meeting that you could dream of?

Of course, you can nominate more than one item in each question if you like! Let your imagination run free—think outside the proverbial square—keep paper and a pen by your bed at night—whatever it takes—but please send your answers to <mail@biotext.com.au>.

Janet Salisbury, Biotext

## Contents

Next meeting	1
AGM—the outgoing president's report	1
Committee members 2007–08	2
From the incoming president	3
Situations vacant	3
Fiddly bits—a place for everything	4
More poems by Geoff Page	5
Redact 2007	5
Thinking about words—AUC, AD and CE	6
Book review: <i>Subtleties of Scientific Style</i>	7
What is your dream topic for an editors society meeting?	8

## The Canberra Editor

is published by Canberra Society of Editors,  
PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603.  
© Canberra Society of Editors 2007. ISSN 1039-3358

## Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in September 2007 and the copy deadline for this issue is 12 September.

The editor welcomes contributions by email to <peter.judge@bigpond.com>, using Word for Windows, for PC or Mac.

AUSTRALIA  
PAID  
POSTAGE

MAIL  
SURFACE

If undeliverable, please return to:  
Canberra Society of Editors  
PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603  
Print Post approved P 299436/00098