
THE CANBERRA

editor

Newsletter of the Canberra Society of Editors

Volume 20 • Number 6

August 2011

next meeting

31 August
6:00 pm

Drawing Room
University House
ANU

AGM and book launch

The August meeting will be the annual general meeting, combined with a launch of Elizabeth Murphy's book *Working Words*. The book is a series of chats covering basic English grammar, usage and punctuation; legal and administrative aspects of being a freelance editor or writer; hints and guidelines for new and established editors; and fun comments.

For further information, including a menu and details of how to pay for the book and the meal, see Page 2.

July meeting

A general discussion

Cathy Nicoll

The July meeting featured a general discussion about some of the finer points of editing, with the opportunity for everyone to ask about some of those more obscure editing issues. We spent some time on punctuation around website addresses (URLs)—the hard question was whether we should put a full stop after a URL when it is at the end of a sentence. The style manual recommends using angle brackets, and so it is easy to use the full stop if your sentence ends with <this.com>. Some agencies have it in italics *likethis.com*. But did you know that one government department forbids a full stop in that situation? It would mean ending a sentence *likethis.com*

Most editors thought they would recast the sentence, if for no other reason than avoiding the need to start a new paragraph after listing a URL.

One of our members said she became a fan of the 'ugly angle brackets' (her words) after encountering government departments with publications that had URLs that were four or five lines long.

Other topics covered were the accessibility requirements of websites, the use of trademarks (the TM symbol) and registered (the R symbol) against product, and hyphenation in colours. That last point followed on from an online discussion initiated by Janet Salisbury, and could be summarised by 'Would you hyphenate "olive green shell"?' and 'What about "blue green algae"?' Some would, to make it an olive-green shell, whereas others saw it as a common and recognised combination that needed no hyphen to make sense. This led to a discussion about the best way to write terms such as 'centre half forwards', 'halfbacks' and 'left half forwards'.

Finally, we had a discussion about the accreditation exam and how it could be improved. There was general agreement that:

- more than a half-day workshop is needed for preparation
- the exam room should provide a double desk rather than a single student desk, to give enough room for exam papers, a dictionary, a style manual and pens and pencils
- candidates should be allowed to use a pencil in reading time to mark which questions they will do (especially in part 3)
- candidates should be allowed more time as the exam claims to assess competency rather than speed
- some people said they would have liked a break in the middle
- more detailed feedback is essential, especially for candidates who do not pass the exam

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Committee members
Gil Garcon

A general discussion (continued)

- the marked papers should be returned to candidates who are also members of societies, or at the least, candidates should be allowed to view their marked papers
- past papers should be made available to societies to help their members prepare for the exam.

All-in-all, it was a very informative meeting. Many people at the meeting agreed that the society would do well to make this an annual event.

AGM and book launch

An AGM with a difference

At this year's AGM, Elizabeth Murphy will give us a preview launch of her new book *Working Words*. This is your chance to buy a first edition at a discount and have it signed by the author herself.

Attendance at the AGM part of the evening and the book launch is free, but we hope you also stay for a buffet dinner. You can pre-pay for your copy of the book with your payment for dinner (see payment details below), or you can just pay in cash or by cheque on the night.



RSVP by 24 August 2011 to tracyharwood@grapevine.net.au

Cost and payment

For payment by EFT, details are as follows:

Account name: Canberra Society of Editors

Bank: Community CPS Australia

BSB: 805 022

Account no.: 0342 3503

Description: Your last name and 'AGM'

Amount:

- AGM dinner only—\$40 (members) or \$50 (non-members)
- AGM dinner and a copy of *Working Words*—\$75 (special offer—

Buffet menu

Main course

Traditional coq au vin with bacon, button mushrooms and eschallots

Lamb rendang curry with ginger and lychees

Red lentil curry with sweet potato and pumpkin

All with a freshly tossed salad and steamed herb-scented rice

Oven-baked sour dough rolls

Dessert

Chef's selection of fresh cakes and slices

Selection of sliced seasonal fruits

Tea & coffee

Signing off**Cathy Nicoll**

You might be interested to hear that we have come to the end of my two years as president. Our constitution requires me to step down and give someone else a turn.

In the past two years we have had the logo refreshed, a new website launched, the newsletter updated and a group indemnity scheme finally made available. We have also moved our general monthly meetings to Fellows Cottage at the ANU, which has worked very well.

The society is also launching its first publication—*Working Words* by Elizabeth Murphy. We decided many years ago that a collection of Elizabeth's contributions to the newsletter could be published as a book, and I am pleased to announce that we have finally done it. Everyone attending this month's AGM will be able to purchase a copy of the book at a discount. Elizabeth has also kindly offered to sign copies.

We tried to raise our membership fees this year, and the motion gained support of the membership, but unfortunately we didn't have quite the number of full members present required to pass the motion. This motion will be voted on again at the AGM. The delay isn't devastating financially, but if we don't raise our fees soon, then the society will have to make some very hard decisions in the next year.

Our concerns about the accountability of IPEd continue, and it is something I hope the new committee will take up in the next year under the guidance of Gil Garcon and Ted Briggs. We are proud to have helped create IPEd and to continue to support it, but concerns about accountability back to the member societies need to be addressed.

Finally, I would like to mention the contribution the committee has made to your society. The committee has put a lot in, and I, at least, have gained a lot by being part of it all. There is to be a changing of the guard this year, with almost everyone required to step down because of the two-year constitutional limit on positions or plans to travel abroad.

Being on the committee is rewarding. It has been a privilege to serve the society and I encourage everyone to consider taking a greater role in the running of the Canberra Society of Editors. That two-year constitutional limit means you can't possibly be committed longer than you want to. Joining the committee is an ideal way to be more involved with the running of your society. You can take on a job, or just join in as a general committee member.

Positions to be filled

As you can see from *Your committee* (see Page 2), we are facing a substantial changeover this year. The society needs the committee to function, and we are generally a friendly lot. The committee meets at a time that suits its members.

IPEd survey on accreditation

IPEd is very keen to hear the views of editors about the future of the accreditation exam, because running it has a high cost. Thus, the support of the societies that provide IPEd with its base funding is critical to future decisions about the accreditation system. To that end, IPEd has prepared a discussion paper, which you can download from <http://iped-editors.org/View_News/Accreditation_exam_discussion_paper>.

Please do read the paper and complete the survey. The link is <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7RBBCNT>.

New members

We welcome Robyn Schultz as an associate member to the Canberra Society of Editors

Many thanks to Peter Judge

You might have noticed something is missing from this newsletter—it's Peter Judge's regular article on words, their meanings and origins. We don't believe Peter has really run out of words, but he has been contributing to the newsletter for well over a decade, and it is time for a well-earned rest. We all would like to thank Peter for his contribution to the society through these articles and more generally.



PerfectIt gets even better

Hilary Cadman

Regular readers of this column will know that I think PerfectIt is the best thing since sliced bread. The tool—an add-in for MS Word running on a PC—increases the speed and accuracy of editing by highlighting inconsistencies. Now Intelligent Editing, the company that produces PerfectIt, has launched an online consistency checker that gives everyone, including those using Macs and OpenOffice, access to this powerful tool.

The online checker is free and very versatile as it works with Word, PDF and TXT documents. It is also entirely automated, ensuring that all documents analysed are secure. It runs a subset of the tests covered by PerfectIt, highlighting apparent inconsistencies in a document such as:

- words that are hyphenated in one place, but not in others (e.g. 'self interest' and 'self-interest')
- numbers that are spelled out in some locations but appear as numerals elsewhere (e.g. 'there were 5' and 'there were four')
- abbreviations that appear in different forms (e.g. NASA and N.A.S.A.)
- words that are spelled in different ways (e.g. 'colour' and 'color').

To access the online checker, simply go to www.intelligentediting.com and click on 'Products', then follow the prompts. If you try the online checker or the full product, I'd love to hear whether you share my high opinion of it.

In September, I'll be visiting Oxford to attend the annual conference of the UK's Society for Editors and Proofreaders. I'm looking forward to attending a presentation by Daniel Heumann, the man behind PerfectIt. Daniel will be talking about the limitations of software editing.



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To see more of Judy's cartoons, visit her website (<http://horacek.com.au>)

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The Editor's Companion

Megan Cope

I'll admit straight up—I was nervous when I volunteered to review Janet Mackenzie's *The Editor's Companion: 2nd Edition*. As a brand-new editor (so new, in fact, that I'm not even technically an editor), I had next to no knowledge base to review this book from. How was I to tell what was good advice, what was general practice among editors, and what was simply Mackenzie's way of doing things that I could take if it worked or leave if it didn't?

As it turned out, I needn't have feared. This book doesn't spend a whole lot of time on the obvious basics (spelling, grammar, all those things that one really ought to know about before one thinks about becoming an editor). Instead, it spends a lot of time on the industry and some of the more complex aspects of editing text appropriately: things that a complete innocent to the job probably wouldn't know, and ought to know. In addition to that, the book is written simply and plainly, meaning that what might otherwise have been an incomprehensible string of jargon is an engaging and easily accessible guide to the craft of editing.

The other problem with a non-fiction book like this is that it can easily turn into a string of instructions arranged in a logical fashion, which gets incredibly dry to read. Mackenzie, however, inserts dry humour into her book, with such gems as 'Spelling is not important in itself, but it is a social marker enabling those who can spell to look down on those who can't' and 'If I were prepared to commit the error I am warning against, I would call it abstractification'. It's a pleasure in and of itself to read through the book, waiting for the next witty comment to pop up.



I will say that the use of 'pix' surprised me – formerly, I had only associated it with Internet slang (as in, 'Pics or it didn't happen'), but upon encountering an entire chapter on 'pix', I had to get over my exposure to the other usages of the term. Also, I didn't entirely understand whether 'pix' referred to only pictures, or all kinds of graphic inputs in text, including tables and diagrams. It was the only piece of jargon that I didn't immediately understand on first reading of the book.

I think this book will definitely come in handy for me, even when I do gain a little more experience, and it will definitely be useful to keep to look up things I'm not sure about. There are parts of it that are probably Mackenzie's own processes, and these might be interesting for more experienced editors to read, to compare their own habits. I would recommend it to any editor, without question.

Marketing your business

Hilary Cadman

The link between crossing your legs and marketing may not be immediately obvious, but Renée Otmar uses it to good effect in her ebook *Marketing your freelance editing business: a step-by-step guide for Australian editors*. She likens marketing to sitting with legs crossed, noting that some people find it uncomfortable and take time to get used to it, but that 'With patience, time and practice anyone can learn to market their freelance business with ease'.

The ebook and its accompanying online templates are based on a workshop that Renée has delivered over many years. Written in a relaxed and engaging style, it clearly sets out the basics of marketing a freelance editing business. A series of examples featuring Marcy Redact—a fictional freelancer just starting out on her proofreading business—illustrate the main steps in the marketing process.

Renée emphasises the need to see yourself as a professional and run your business accordingly. She also highlights the need to allocate both time and money to working on the business—keeping records, planning and marketing new services, finding new clients and so on.

The book will be invaluable to anyone just starting out in freelance editing, but also contains much for those who are already established. I particularly liked the section on pricing, which Renée notes is 'much more than an exercise; it's a psychological test'. The ideas about growing a business were also helpful.

Marketing your business (continued)

At \$47.95, the book is a worthwhile investment, especially if compared to the cost of a session with a marketing company or a business coach.

The templates can be printed out, but the ebook is available only as a PDF that cannot be printed. I would have liked the option of printing the book—reading onscreen is hard work, and it involved a lot of scrolling up and down because of the two-column layout. A more screen-friendly structure would have been helpful. The ebook would also be improved by the inclusion of hyperlinks and bookmarks; currently, the URLs are not active links and the text cannot be copied, so a reader wishing to access one of the links has to type it into a browser.

Those drawbacks aside, I can recommend this book to anyone who is starting out or already established in the freelance editing business.

To purchase a copy of the book, go to <http://www.otmarmiller.com.au> and follow the prompts.



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Newsletter schedule

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The editor welcomes contributions by email to: [<kerie1@optusnet.com.au>](mailto:kerie1@optusnet.com.au).

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