

The Canberra

editor

Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter Volume 18 | Number 1 | February 2009

First meeting for
2009 is at 7pm on
Wednesday
25 February

David Whitbread is officially launching a new edition of *The Design Manual* in March, so he will be coming along to our meeting to talk to us about the changes, some of which are significant.

David is a graphic designer and educator. He was also one of the author team for the *Commonwealth Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, sixth edition (Wiley, Brisbane, 2002).

Where: Friends Lounge,
National Library, Parkes Place,
Canberra

When: Wednesday 25 February

Time: Meeting starts at 6.30 pm, but come at 6.00 pm for networking, wine and nibbles.

President's report

Hello all and welcome back. I hope you all had a relaxing, happy and peaceful holiday break, and are refreshed and ready for 2009.



We had a busy and fulfilling end to 2008, with a challenging and thought-provoking Grammar Essentials workshop. I started the workshop fairly confident in my knowledge of grammar, but quickly found out—as, I believe, did others—that my knowledge is really a long way from being hard and fast.

We also had an end-of-year dinner with a difference. It was originally planned to be al fresco in Green Square, but threatening storms forced us to invoke Plan B, which was to move indoors to Cusacks Arcade, which had been specially decked out in Christmas finery for the occasion. The menu devised for us by the good folks at Zest was absolutely superb, as were the wonderful wines. Guest speaker Peter Fray, managing editor of *The Canberra Times*, gave us some insights into what it was like running a major newspaper and shared his vision for the future of the printed media. We also got to participate in choosing which story would appear on page one of the following day's issue of *The Canberra Times*.

The other significant event at the end of last year was the announcement of the results of the first accreditation exam, and I know you'll join with me in congratulating those Canberra editors who are now Accredited Editors. Come along and congratulate them in person at our February meeting.

It is hard to believe that we are already near the end of February and the first general meeting for the year is almost upon us. But I'm looking forward to hearing about the changes in the revised edition of *The Design Manual*. This will be officially launched in March, so we will be having sneak preview and, I hope, an opportunity to buy a personally autographed copy from the author, David Whitbread.

The committee has yet to meet for the year, but they have not been idle. In particular, Meetings Coordinator Kevin Maguire and Training Coordinator Martine Taylor have been working very hard to put together a fantastic program of workshops and presentations on a wide range of topics related to editing. You'll find out more about this elsewhere in the newsletter and at the February meeting.

The Canberra Editor

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Opinions and statements in signed articles are the responsibility of the author.

Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in late March 2009.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is Wednesday 11 March. The editor welcomes comments, and contributions by email to <virginia.cooke@gmail.com> using a .doc file format.

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IPEd notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors

Happy New Year to all.

This will be a big year for the profession in many ways, not the least because it's the year of our fourth national conference, to be held in Adelaide, 8–10 October.

Planning of the conference, which will take the theme 'Getting the message across' is proceeding apace. A call for papers has been made, with the following strands or topic areas identified: corporate communication; the editor–author relationship; education and mentoring of editors; emerging media; food and wine; 'green' editing; poetry; science communication; writing and editing for younger readers; young and emerging editors. The organisers note, however, that submissions need not be restricted to these.

All national conference details can be accessed via the internet at <www.editors-sa.org.au> or <www.iped-editors.org>.

At its teleconference on 30 November 2008, the IPEd Council agreed to a new 'Policy and procedure on expenditure', noting that it should be read in conjunction with the existing 'Policy and procedures on costs of meetings'. Both policy documents are available on the website, as will be the minutes of the meeting following their confirmation at the next council meeting.

At a meeting in Adelaide on 17–18 January, IPEd's Accreditation Board comprehensively reviewed the planning, procedures and outcomes of the first accreditation examination, held on 18 October 2008. Planning for the second exam has begun. The exam will be held later this year, most likely in September.

The Accreditation Board has a new chair: Larissa Joseph, from the Canberra Society of Editors. The board and the IPEd Council have paid tribute to the retiring chair, Karen Disney, for her commitment and achievements over the past 18 months. One of Karen's last tasks as chair was to write a detailed report on the 2008 exam. This can be read on the IPEd website.

The IPEd Council met in Adelaide on 14 and 15 February. The next IPEd Notes will contain a report on that meeting.

*Ed Highley
Secretary
www.iped-editors.org*

Note from Chair

Following the November council meeting, a small subcommittee considered the gratifyingly large number of applications received for the position of Secretary. The choice of the subcommittee was unanimous: to confirm Ed Highley in the position whose duties he has so ably performed for some time.

Virginia Wilton



Thinking about words—our metamorphic legacy

I wonder how many of you followed up our editor's lead in the November issue, to contact Michael Quinion (at <www.worldwidewords.org>) and subscribe to his weekly World Wide Words newsletter? It's an odd grab-bag of the obvious, the abstruse and the wholly far-fetched, but each week brings something of interest. Just before Christmas his 'Weird Words' section examined 'halcyon' (of 'halcyon days'), looking at its origins in Greek mythology as told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*.

For those who are not familiar with Ovid, I should explain that he lived in the period round the turn of the first millennium, from 43 BC to 17 or 18 AD. He was born Publius Ovidius Naso to a noble family and was destined by his father for public life. But Ovid was determined to be a writer, and eventually became a prolific author, with works like *Loves*, the *Heroines*, the *Art of Love*, volumes of letters and his masterpiece, the *Metamorphoses*. This last work was completed but not yet revised when he was exiled by the Emperor Augustus to the remote town of Tomis, later to become Constanța on the Black Sea coast of Romania. The reasons for the exile are not quite clear, but Augustus was supposedly trying to clean up Roman morals and may have thought the *Art of Love* a bit salacious—besides which there seems to have been some funny business involving Ovid with Augustus's sexy daughter Julia, who was also later banished.

The 15 books of the *Metamorphoses* bring together most of the myths of the ancient world, giving some provocative insights into human passions. As the title suggests, many of the tales involve humans changed by the gods into animals or plants. These have given us any number of familiar words or expressions, whose origins may perhaps be not quite so familiar, such as Narcissus, Achilles heel, the golden touch and the like.

Michael Quinion does a good job of explaining halcyon days, the days when everything seems to be going right for us, the 'best days of our lives'. A young couple, Ceyx and Alcyone, are very much in love. When Ceyx drowns in a great storm at sea, on his way to consult an oracle, Alcyone weeps so inconsolably that the gods take pity. Going to the seashore after she hears the news, she sees the body of Ceyx bobbing in the waves and leaps in to be with him. Magically, they are both transformed into kingfishers and fly off to remain together forever. Their nest is on the waves,

and each year around the winter solstice a calm falls on the sea—the halcyon days—so that Alcyone can brood her young. The initial 'h' in halcyon was introduced in the Latinisation of Alcyone, and there it has stayed in the English. But not in the French—they have stuck with Alcyon, and in the past have used the name for all kinds of bird besides kingfishers, even supposing that their nests were used by the Chinese for soup! (They weren't—that honour belongs to species of cave-dwelling swiftlet, whose nests are made almost entirely of dried saliva and wouldn't last a minute in the sea.)

What is your Achilles heel? Generally speaking, it is some particular weakness—physical, psychological or emotional—in an otherwise strong individual. In Achilles' case, it was all the fault of his mother, Thetis, who had been warned that her baby's life was threatened. To ward off all danger she dipped him in the river Styx, in Hades, holding him by one ankle. Alas, this meant that while most of his body became invulnerable, his heel always remained at risk. And sure enough, he died towards the end of the Trojan war as a result of an arrow shot into his heel (pictured) by Paris, son of King Priam of Troy. The big tendon joining the calf muscles to the heel still has the name 'Achilles'. A Dutch anatomist in the late 17th century first used the name in print, but it had already been in common usage for ages. However, the use of 'Achilles heel' in its metaphorical sense dates only from the early 19th.

Narcissus was a very pretty boy who was out hunting one day when he caught sight of his reflection in a calm pool of clear water. He gazed at it with such delight that he fell in love with it and, because this love could go no further, he pined away and died. But when they came to carry his corpse to the funeral pyre 'they found nothing, only a flower with a yellow centre surrounded by white petals'. Ever since Shakespeare's time, the name has been used for any excessively good-looking young man afflicted with self-love.

While Narcissus was still alive, many had fallen in love with his beauty, including a mountain nymph called Echo. Echo, alas, had a speech defect. She had offended the goddess Juno, who cursed her so that she could no longer talk properly, only repeat the last words of anything she heard. She became passionately attracted to Narcissus, stalking him and watching his every move, but with her handicap she was afraid to come out of hiding to meet him. So she, too, eventually

(Continued on page 5)



Grammar's in style—nuts and bolts...articles

What are the real nuts and bolts of editing? I thought I might explore that question this year by looking at some of the aspects of the editing process that I've

found cause problems. At the end of 2008, I wrote about 'avoiding style crampers'. These were some of the 'gremlins' that haunt all of us, and particularly haunt people who have English as a second language, and people who, through no fault of their own, didn't get a really good grounding in the basics of English grammar.

The items I discussed briefly in the November 2008 issue of *The Canberra Editor* were: articles; plurals; plurals plus numerators; prepositions; verb tense for meaning; proximity of adverbs and verbs, subject-verb agreement; and possessive pronouns.

Let's start this year with articles.

Articles are part of the 'determiner' family in English grammar. They don't occur in some languages, so people learning English as a second language sometimes have to learn to put them into their writing. This is an area of concern for editors too. We need to be aware, when we are editing, that 'first language interference' can occur—this is when the grammatical rules of the native language are imposed on the vocabulary of English. So, we might get from writers of Asian language background something like 'He is member of Department of Defence' (omitting the articles 'a' and 'the'). Another form of interference occurs among native English speakers, where there are dialectal differences in expression. For example, I am increasingly noticing, from some American English speakers 'give me a couple apples' whereas in Australian English we would say 'give me a couple of apples'.

Sometimes, of course, articles are not needed—usually when we generalise:

*There were boys and girls in the bus.
I like cake.*

In English we have basically two articles, the definite article and the indefinite article. The definite article is 'the' and is always spelled 'the' though it can be pronounced 'thee' or 'tuh' depending on whether a vowel or a consonant follows—'/thee/ apples' or '/tuh/ factory'. The indefinite article is spelled 'a' or 'an' depending on whether a consonant or a vowel

follows—'a box of oranges' or 'an open book'.

We use 'the' (the definite article) when we have already referred to the noun or noun phrase, or when we want to specify a particular noun or noun phrase:

*I bought a hat yesterday. Here is **the** hat I bought. Please pass me **the** book with the blue cover.*

All articles are followed by nouns or noun phrases, and generally appear first in the phrase:

*the car
the sports car
the green sports car*

There is one exception—when a pre-determiner of some sort is used, such as 'all', 'some', 'both'. In this case, the article comes second:

***All the** cars in **the** rally are sports cars.
Both the boys went swimming.*

The indefinite article changes form to suit the sound that follows, as noted above. So we write:

*a **book**
a **brown** book
a **very large orange and brown** book*

but, *an **orange and brown** book*

because the **sound** that immediately follows the article is the determining factor.

Some English words look as if they start with vowels (because of their spelling), but they are pronounced as if they start with consonants, so take 'a' before them:

*He belongs to a **union** (where the first sound in 'union' is 'yu'—a consonant sound), while some words look as if they start with a consonant, but are pronounced without sounding the initial letter:*

*She worked for **an hour** (where the 'h' of '[h]our' is not pronounced—thus a vowel sound) pronounce sound)*

Some words are tricky. Do you say 'a historic moment' or 'an historic moment'? In modern English, we pronounce the 'h' as a consonant in 'historic', so it should be 'a historic moment'. If you say 'an hotel' (with or without pronouncing the consonant 'h'), you are partially following the French 'un hôtel' where the

(continued on page 6)

(Thinking about words...continued from page 3)

withered away in sorrow and frustration, until there was nothing at all left of her but a disembodied voice calling from afar.

Myrrha lusted after her father. With her nurse's unwilling connivance, she climbed into his bed in the dark, not once but many times, and there conceived the baby who was to become Adonis. But one day her father glimpsed her in the half light, knew her and realised the horror of what he had unwittingly done. He drew his sword to kill her but she fled, and in her anguish and remorse called on the gods to punish her in such a way that she could sin no more. This they did, changing her into a tree that gives the aromatic resin myrrh (Myrrha's tear drops, for she could still weep), much prized in ancient times as the basis for perfumes and medicines.

In due course the baby Adonis came to full term, and the tree split to yield up its precious burden. The child grew to be a man of such outstanding beauty that Venus herself fell in love with him, and even went hunting with him, something very much out of character for her. She warned him to hunt only small game and to stay away from wild beasts. Of course he didn't listen. One day he botched an attempt to kill a boar, which turned and thrust a fatal tusk into his groin. Venus arrived too late to save him, but so that he should have a lasting monument she decreed that from his blood would spring crimson anemones,

'wind flowers', whose brief existence each year would remind us of a life cut short.

What about greedy old Midas? He prayed to Bacchus that 'everything he touched should turn to gold', only to find that eating and drinking became impossible and he gladly surrendered the gift as soon as he could. Later he supported the wrong team in a song contest between Pan and Orpheus, and finished up with ass's ears. He wouldn't learn!

Those are just a few examples of Ovid's input to our language across two millennia. With them, let me wish you all a great 2009—good health, lasting happiness and may everything you touch professionally turn to gold!

Peter Judge

Sources: Ovid *Metamorphoses* Tr. Rolfe Humphries 1964. *Apollo Handbook of Classical Literature*, Feder, Apollo 1964. *Room's Classical Dictionary*, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1983. *The Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM v.3.0*. Image: <www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/Images/AchillesH.gif>.

CredAbility report

The Accreditation Board is delighted to announce that 112 out of 170 of exam candidates – just over 65 per cent – passed the exam and earned the rank of Accredited Editor, or AE. Successful candidates represented the full spectrum of editing; most pleasingly, a significant number really shone.

The board offers its warmest congratulations to all new AEs who have earned this distinguished achievement. By passing, they have shown that they not only understand but can successfully apply the principles of editing set out in *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*.

Certificates are now being distributed in each state, with some societies planning presentation ceremonies.

The overwhelming response after the exam was that it had been a fair and appropriate one. The Accreditation Board has also received feedback regarding the length of the exam and the time allotted, and will consider this when planning the 2009 exam.

Results are being analysed to identify common areas of weakness, to guide future training and generate useful tips for those who choose to sit the exam this year. A preliminary review indicates that the most common problems were:

- failing to follow instructions in Part 3 (answering

too many questions or ignoring the brief provided in the question)

- producing an inadequate style sheet in Part 2 and applying it inconsistently
- selecting questions in Part 3 that were clearly outside the candidate's area of competence.

If you are one of the 35 per cent who did not get through, please do not be disheartened: sitting the very first Australian editing exam took considerable courage, and there is every chance that the experience you gained will see you sail through the next exam with flying colours.

After a full year of fortnightly teleconferences, the board met face to face for the first time in Adelaide over the weekend of 16–18 January to debrief, discuss the entire exam process and map out plans for improvement on a number of fronts. Future issues of *CredAbility* will keep everyone up to date as planning for the 2009 exam progresses.

Right now, however, it is time to celebrate the achievements of so many successful editors. To all those who have earned the new postnominal, AE, we say CONGRATULATIONS!

IPEd Accreditation Board

(Nuts and bolts...continued from page 4)

'h' is not pronounced. We have acquired a lot of words like hotel, hospital, hostel etc from French, but we have moved away from French grammar and we use English grammar. So we should consistently follow the English grammar pattern. We should say and write 'a hotel', 'a hospital', 'a hostel' and so on.

Some abbreviations cause us to stop and think, too. Again, the choice between 'a' and 'an' depends on whether a vowel sound or a consonant sound follows. For example, we would say and write

She got a High Distinction for her essay (where the H is pronounced as a consonant)

but

She got an HD for her essay (where the H is pronounced

'aitch')

Words change over time in English, and the changes can affect whether 'a' or 'an' is used. Take the Old English word 'napron' (part of the napery family of cloths etc) which used to be referred to as 'a napron'. Gradually people dropped the 'n' at the beginning of the word, so 'an' had to be used—'an apron'. Remember that, when you don an apron or a napron in this barbecue weather!

Reference:

Peters, Pam, 2007, *The Cambridge guide to Australian English usage* (2nd ed), CUP, Melbourne

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Letter to the Editor

The accreditation exam has produced an astounding failure rate of 35%, more than one in three candidates. Considering that IPEd told us that an editor with three to four years experience should pass the exam, one could conclude that more than one third of our editing community is unprofessional, inexperienced or incompetent.

Either that, or the exam missed the mark.

If we apply to the exam the same standards IPEd applies to the candidates—an 80% pass mark—then the exam has failed. It scored only 65%.

It would seem the exam did not reach the desired outcome. It failed professionals who have many years experience and demonstrable professional achievements. Perhaps an exam, while very convenient for IPEd, does not do justice to our editing community.

IPEd seems pleased with its success in finally putting editors through its exam process, but appears to overlook

that IPEd's 'achievement' comes at the cost of 35% of editors being disenfranchised and carrying with them the odium of failure. Their status and possibly their livelihood are severely affected. This is no joke.

The IPEd exam has proved to be an expensive gamble for those who sat for it.

Should we not keep in mind that we are the owners of the process and that IPEd is accountable to us? We are all paying for it and its bureaucracy. Perhaps we should ask IPEd what it plans to do to set up an assessment process that pays attention to actual professional achievements of candidates rather than their ability to cope with the artificial conditions and questions of an exam.

Gil Garcon

Editors note: the views expressed in this letter are not necessarily those of the Canberra Society of Editors or of the editor of its newsletter.

Training Survey results December 2008

A survey of all 180 members of the Canberra Society of Editors was undertaken in November 2008. A total of 24 surveys (13% response rate) were completed and returned. The findings are presented in a report which is available on the CSE website.

The survey sought the views of members about training program topics, venue preferences, locations and training times. Members were also asked about the duration of sessions and how often they would like training sessions to be available.

Also, open-ended questions sought to obtain information about recommended presenters, potential member presenters, further suggestions for the program and general comments.

Thank you to all those members who responded to the survey and provided valuable information that has contributed to what looks to be a very exciting training program for 2009.

First training session on Friday 13 March

Overview of Editing and Publishing

Presented by Sue Wales and Dave Kingwell

9.30am–12.00pm

Introduction to Proofreading

Presented by Cathy Nicoll

Friday 13 March 2009, 1–3.30pm

National Library of Australia, 4th Floor Training Room 3/4

Members: Single session \$95, whole day \$175

Non Members: Single session \$110, whole day \$200

Please book early to avoid disappointment. Contact Martine Taylor, martinetaylor@hotmail.com
Phone: (02) 6260 7104 (voice mail available)

Session 1 – Overview of Editing and Publishing

Are you new to the editing profession or looking to move into a career in editing and publishing?

What is required to complete a successful publishing project?

- what are the stages involved?
- what skills do you need?
- how does electronic publishing fit into the mix?
- how can you develop, acquire or arrange to contract the necessary expertise?

Stages in preparing a printed publication:

- Preparing a publications plan, including defining purpose of publication
- Authorship
- Nuts & bolts' – once first draft of manuscript received

- Graphic design/typesetting
- Printing
- Marketing/promotion

What skills and expertise are needed?

- Electronic publishing
- The range of formats involved
- Advantages/disadvantages of choosing this medium
- Skills required, issues to consider

How are the skills involved in editing and publishing acquired?

Participants are encouraged to bring along examples of publications that work well or don't quite achieve their aims and be prepared to contribute to discussion of the issues.

Presenters:

Sue Wales AE, BSc DipEd GradCertEd&Pub

Sue has been involved in editing and publishing for over 20 years, having built on her teaching and PR careers to work as a publishing and marketing manager and, more recently, a freelance editor. With experience in not-for-profit and government organisations, she has participated in a wide variety of successful publication projects.

Dave Kingwell BA(Hons)

Dave has been publishing electronic and hardcopy publications professionally for more than five years. As manager of a small publications team, he has overseen projects across a wide range of mediums, such as website development, e-newsletter delivery, marketing material and government projects.

Session 2 – Introduction to Proofreading

This two and a half hour session aims to introduce the basic skills you need to proofread your own work or that of your colleagues. At the end of this session you will know what proofreading is, and when proofreading is used in the publication process. You will deal with some common proofreading tasks and learn how to use standard proofreading marks. Some practical exercises will give you some proofreading practice. You are encouraged to bring in some publications as examples to make it more hands-on and fun.

Presenter:

Cathy Nicoll is a freelance writer and editor. With a background in science, environmental management and primary teaching, Cathy has worked on environmental and training publications for print and the Internet. She has spent more than a decade editing or rewriting government publications to make them interesting enough for people to want to read them.

Canberra Society of Editors training program for 2009

Topic	Speaker	Date	Time	Venue	Cost
Morning session: Overview of Editing and Publishing	Sue Wales Dave Kingwell	Friday March 13	9.30 - 12.00	National Library of Australia	Members Single session \$95 Whole day \$175
Afternoon session: Introduction to Proofreading	Kathy Nicoll		13.00 - 15.30		Non-members Single session \$110 Whole day \$200
Project Management - Editing Annual Reports	Helen Lewis	Friday April 17	9.30 - 16.30	TBA	Members \$150 Non-members \$250
Small Business Essentials	TBA	Friday June 19	9.30 - 16.30	National Library of Australia	Members \$150 Non-members \$250
Editing as a Business	Pam Hewitt	Friday July 24	9.30 - 16.30	TBA	Members \$150 Non-members \$250
General Graphic Design	David Whitbread	Friday August 28	9.30 - 16.30	National Library of Australia	Members \$150 Non-members \$250
Developing templates, setting up-macros and using track changes	TBA	Friday September 25	9.30 - 16.30	National Library of Australia	Members \$150 Non-members \$25
Preparing and Editing Indexes	Barry Howarth	Friday October 23	9.30 - 16.30	TBA	Members \$150 Non-members \$25
Grammar Essentials Workshop	TBA	Friday November 20	9.30 - 16.30	TBA	Members \$150 Non-members \$250

Haemorrhoids and Dog Training

Times are tough, especially for contractors and freelancers. When the economy slows, so does the need for polishers and tweakers—as if it weren't tough enough in the past to convince otherwise accomplished, linguistically deprived high-flyers to pay us a few dollars for blood and sweat over their misplaced apostrophes. Now is the time of challenge.

So January was a lean month. The old contract ended just before 2009 firecrackers cracked, and then nothing. I decided to follow the advice of my brother (the e-commerce enthusiast), and sign up with Elance, an online freelance site with 24,437 jobs posted in the last 30 days (not all in writing and editing of course). Some of these jobs I would describe as worth careful contemplation.

For example, one posted a job for re-writing e-books that so blatantly infringed copyright that the site picked up on it and removed it by the next day. Another complained about the previous provider's poor proofreading job on his website (I checked, it had not had a spellchecker run through it, let alone a read-through). He then posted the job to be re-done at a rate of 'less than US\$10 per hour'.

This means that Elance takes 6-8% of your fee, then there's a foreign currency conversion fee with Paypal; and the fees you pay to Elance. You can be a member free of charge, but the number of proposals you are able to bid on is limited; an individual membership costs US\$9.95 a month, with over US\$4.00 for additional 'connects'. Connects are the Elance currency providers use to submit proposals on jobs. Even given the US currency, what would prompt you to spend time bidding for the job? I thought I might be clever about it and put a bid in over the maximum period for realistic job completion, explaining my reasoning and the fantastic editing job I would do. Subsequently another provider used the public messaging system to note to the provider that, in short,

you get what you pay for—and that US\$25 per hour would be a more realistic expectation. I didn't get the job in any event, but here's to lessons learnt. Don't bid on worthless jobs.

The interesting bits include requests such as this one...

Project Name: Article Writing - 10 articles
 Category: Writing & Translation > Web Content
 Bidding Opened: 03 Feb 2009
 Bidding Closes: 10 Feb 2009
 Budget: Less than \$500

Number of Projects Posted by Buyer: 0
 Number of Projects Awarded: 0

Project Description: I am looking for a writer who can undertake a task for me. You must be proficient at writing in English, be able to incorporate keywords into the writing, and produce original articles that aren't just re-wordings - all articles will be checked that they are unique.

This task requires writing 20 articles on a single subject, each article being between 300 and 500 words, providing a small amount of information on the subject. That makes this task 10 articles, 6000-10000 words in total. The subjects for this specific task will be related to haemorrhoids and dog training etc...

So, it is possible to make money on Elance, and it is quite exciting to see what people ask for (which could be articles on anything from real estate to, well, dog training), and bid for it. Just watch out what you bid for... I was up until midnight last night re-writing; and spent all of last weekend working on high-profile resumes that I am not permitted to place on my profile. But it's a start. In less than two weeks, I have become a global freelancer and should have about US\$450 in my pocket next week.

They call it crowdsourcing.

Annie Dean www.ascensionediting.com

End of year dinner



Peter Fray and Ted Briggs raise a glass or two

Suffused with good cheer



"Where's my red pen when I need it..."

Speakers for our monthly meetings

We have organised speakers for the first quarter of this year with more pencilled in for the second quarter.

You will have seen on the front page of this newsletter that we will be hearing from David Whitbread this month. He is the man who 'wrote the book' on graphic design. This area is becoming more integral to the work of editors and, while we may not need to be experts, a working knowledge of the principles can be most helpful.

Whereas our first speaker 'wrote the book', you could say our speaker for March 'wrote the report'. Helen Lewis will address the sometimes-vexed issue of preparing for an annual report. The ideas apply to any formal report but will be especially timely for anyone actually facing this year's annual report.

For April we will be entertained by our own Brian O'Donnell with an audience participation evening around the subject of understanding our fellow human

beings – and possibly gaining some insights into our own selves. Rumour has it that the sessions run by Brian are not only entertaining but can prove very valuable to the active participants. Anything that helps us deal with disorganised authors, distraught printers or demanding publishers should be a must for all of us.

For the plans for speakers for subsequent months 'please watch this space' in the next newsletter.

And don't forget; meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month in the Friends' Lounge at the National Library of Australia. Don't worry about coming straight from work and not being able to grab a bite—from 6pm you can enjoy wine, soft drink and substantial snacks, and chat to fellow members before the meeting commences at 6.30pm.

Ted Briggs

Copies of *Editors in Conversation* still available

Editors in Conversation is the first volume in an occasional series produced by the Society of Editors (Victoria). It is published by Australian Scholarly Publishing and was launched at the Institute of Professional Editors conference in Hobart in May 2007.

The conversations of the title take place between renowned Australian editors: Beryl Hill and Wendy Sutherland; Loma Snooks and Renée Otmar; Robyn Colman and Lee White, and Sheila Allison and Pamela Ball.

Copies are still available for purchase for \$20 from

Marg Millard. You can contact Marg by email margaret.millard@ozemail.com.au or phone 0402 029 552.

Payments can be made by EFT or direct deposit to the Canberra Society of Editors Community CPS Australia credit union account: BSB 805-022, account number 0342 3503. Add your last name to the transaction so the payment can be identified. You can also pay by cash at one of the monthly meetings, or by cheque or money order if you prefer. Make cheques payable to Canberra Society of Editors and send to PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603.

Spaced Oddity

"specialialist" :how easy it is to miss the typo in words like this. It happened to me once in a heading I had set using the old "letterpress" stick on type which we used in our small printing business long before the arrival of computers. The document passed scrutiny from a few people before being printed and sent to a foreign overseas organisation. We received a very snooty complaint from the organisation suggesting that we couldn't speak/write our own language.

Zillah Williams

Rates revisited (part 1)

Seven years ago, I presented a paper to the national conference for indexers and editors held in Canberra. When the Professional Editors' Association decided to hold a meeting on the topic 'What are you worth?' I dug out my old paper to see how much things have changed.

Here, I offer an updated version of what I saw as the situation way back then, with some new ideas for where we might take the debate and the action.

Editors, on the whole, are

- highly skilled, combining generalist and specialist knowledge
- highly qualified, almost always with a first degree, and more often than not with one or more postgraduate qualifications
- highly experienced, often with a track record of many years in the industry
- working in industries at the forefront of technological change, at the very heart of the information revolution.

This is looking promising. Surely here we have the cream of the knowledge society, highly prized specialists for the industries of the future. It should go without saying that, as employees, we should command high salaries, a company car and generous executive packages. As freelancers, the sky should be the limit. What wouldn't a corporate client pay for the services of such people?

But wait. There are some other characteristics of the editing trade that I haven't yet mentioned. Consider these:

- gaps in national education, training and professional development program
 - a predominantly female, underorganised workforce.
- Even more damning
- our work is to do with words.

And, difficult as it is to measure, I would suggest that there is another killer factor at play here. As a rule

- we love our work.

We find it stimulating, fulfilling, varied, creative, engrossing.

When all these factors are combined, it turns out that we have a profession where the work is bound to be grossly underpaid.

This doesn't mean that we should remain underpaid. There are many options that we can explore as individuals and as members of professional associations to improve the standing of the professions in the industry and beyond. These include:

- professional association or trade union membership and activism
- improving our technological skills
- promoting educational pathways for initial training and continuing professional development
- showcasing our skills to business, clients and the public through the activities of professional societies, through partnerships with other professionals...

My focus is a little more inward looking. While the

activities that I have just outlined are vital, there is also a place for taking a step back and looking at how we think about ourselves. At the risk of sounding overly self-analytical, I suppose I am talking about the importance of professional self-esteem.

It's my belief that valuing our services will lead to valuing ourselves and, vitally, in others' valuing our services and us. In order to value ourselves and our services properly, it might be helpful to remind ourselves why our services are valuable.

Why should we value our services?

1. You are good at what you do. You have to be. We all know that in the commercial world, you are only as good as your last job. If you are getting work, especially repeat work or work that comes via personal recommendation, then you must be offering a valuable service.

2. When we offer our services, we bring our knowledge of the trade. In addition, we often bring

- knowledge of specialist fields (languages, academic disciplines and subject areas, technology)
- knowledge of the publication process
- the ability to meet punishing deadlines
- specific negotiation skills for working with authors, designers, illustrators, printers, typesetters, management or editorial boards...

- high levels of speed and accuracy
- many years' experience.

Paragons like us would do well not to undersell such virtues.

By this stage, I hope you are all feeling worthy of respect and recognition. But of what practical use is this knowledge, you might ask yourself, if the marketplace holds your skills in low regard. In what follows, I propose some ways that we might put this 'professional self-esteem' to use.

Next time you provide a quote, or you find yourself negotiating with a client, think of it also as a platform to demonstrate the calibre of your professional skills. The next time you are working with colleagues, think of these activities as a way of increasing your knowledge of the profession. And if you are pressured to undermine your own worth by selling yourself short, think of the effects on your fellow editors.

Pamela Hewitt

To be concluded in the March issue, when we will learn about five ways to consider as avenues to augment the value we can attribute to our own services.

Contents

- 1 Notification of first meeting for the year
- 1 President's report
- 2 IPEd Notes
- 3 Thinking about words—our metamorphic legacy
- 4 Grammar's in style—nuts and bolts
- 5 CredAbility report
- 5 So you think you know everything about words?
- 6 Letter to the Editor
- 6 Speakers for our monthly meetings
- 7 Training Survey results
- 7 First training session on Friday 13 March
- 8 Training program for 2009
- 8 Haemorrhoids and dog training
- 9 End of year dinner photos
- 10 Speakers for our monthly meetings
- 10 Copies of *Editors in Conversation* still available
- 11 Rates revisited (part 1)

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