
THE CANBERRA editor

Newsletter of the Canberra Society of Editors

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March 2011

Next meeting

30 March
6 for 6:30 pm

Fellows Lane
Cottage
ANU

Neil James on plain English

Plain English expert Neil James will be speaking to us about the finer points of plain English.

Join us in the Emeritus Faculty—Building 3T, Fellows Lane Cottage (off Fellows Road)—for networking and nibbles from 6.00 pm. See the map on the back page.

February's meeting

Running your own editing company

Leanne Pattison

Running your own editing company is exhausting but exhilarating, frustrating but stimulating. It's complex, but simpler if you are disciplined. It's a balancing act, juggling tenders, deadlines, employees, clients and finances. Above all, it's a challenge that the three very informative speakers at our February meeting—Janet Salisbury of Biotext, Virginia Wilton of Wilton Hanford Hanover and Louise Forster of WordsWorth Writing—all relish.

All three started as sole traders in the 90s, gradually building business and networks until deciding to employ other editors and to incorporate.

As much work is for the Public Service, Janet outlined the evolution of the Australian Government's procurement procedures. She took us from the days of self-promotion and minimal contracts, through the early 2000s when she had to address selection criteria to become a preferred supplier, and to the 2005 Department of Health's centralised portal for writing, editing and design services, run by a 'communications' section that allowed no contact with project areas for job details, and for which cost seemed to be the only criterion.

In 2009, new procurement guidelines led to whole-of-government arrangements (e.g. Centrelink manages jobs for departments and agencies such as PM&C and ACCC.) Clients can get editors' names from Centrelink, but there are still disadvantages: often patchy job descriptions that make it hard to quote adequately, short turnaround times, low rates and layers of impersonal management. (The National Audit Office has just done a report on these procedures.)

Continued on page 2

Our three presenters—Virginia Wilton, Janet Salisbury and Louise Forster—at the February meeting



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Damaris Wilson

February's meeting

Running your own editing company (continued)

What's an editor to do? Watch *The Weekend Australian*, *Canberra Times* and www.oztender.au, which tells you what public tenders are available now. You can put your name down for them, you can get tender results and there's a forward planning spot for upcoming work. However, it doesn't help the process of tendering.

Virginia, who 'loves' annual reports (somebody has to!) agreed that the procurement process can be difficult, but saw a plus in the Australian Government's reliable payments.

She focused on caveats for new players, warning of the difficulties inherent in joint business venture partners and managing a number of employees. Her maxims include: be hard-headed; know about every aspect of publishing, as you are one in a chain; limit your liability by using a commissioning checklist; pay for good legal, accounting and financial advice; 'know thy enemy', using their jargon and resisting their false equation of low rates equals value. Finally, clarify expectations so that you and the client are 'on the same page'.

Louise finds running a small business 'involving and addictive'. She likes the unpredictability of job types and the adrenaline of deadlines. From the fires of experience, she has refined the following set of qualities necessary for small business.

- *Self-knowledge*: be aware of when you need other experts with skills you lack.
- *Flexibility and adaptability*: you might have to lose battles with time, money and client expectations to win the war. Adapt to technology and a realistic workload.
- *Resilience*: have coping strategies, including pride, courage and a desire to improve.
- *Sense of humour*: this is vital for your health, especially at 1am with pages of trying text!

Audience questions generated further excellent advice. Keep up with legislation governing Australian Government contracts and sub-contracts. Be specific about terms of engagement and scrupulous about every aspect in this very personal business. Have financial assets and a work forecast, as work depends on seasonal and political cycles. If a client is vague about details, ask what procurement process they are following, as the job could be going to tender. Believe in your value, as your work is a business. Charge for a sample edit or do it to know what to quote. Have a risk management strategy and professional indemnity insurance. Get yourselves on OzTender. And give your company a name to remember.

Training news

Courses planned for 2011*Martin Holmes*

The first course of 2011 is a twofold event—'Software aids to editing' and 'Word 2007/10 clinic'—presented by Dr Hilary Cadman on Saturday 19 March from 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm. For members \$65 and non-members \$113, the course will be held in the Meeting Room, University House ANU. Bookings can be made by contacting the training coordinator, Martin Holmes, at martin.holmes-forte@bigpond.com.

Other courses planned for 2011 are shown below.

Editing Essentials II	Cathy Nicoll	Deferred until later in the year
Editing fiction	Pamela Hewitt	May 9.30–4.30 Date, venue & cost TBA
Annual reports: Don't panic	Helen Lewis	June 9.30–4.30 Date, venue & cost TBA

The origins of the Australian style guide

Adrian Young

I met John Pitson when I began work as a graphic designer in Canberra in 1973, and again last year when an English friend and I visited him at his retirement home on the South Coast. As we walked out the door he said, 'Nice to know you're not forgotten'.

English-born typographer and director of typography of the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), John Pitson is best known for the production of the first edition of the government's *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (style manual).

The creation of the style manual moved Commonwealth Government publications from the cramped and disordered into the modern era, left strong foundations for the process to continue and encouraged the use of plain English language, even in the patchy forms of media.

Pitson's ideas for government publications were learnt during his 13 years in the layout section of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) in London. There he developed a strong reforming passion and an understanding of the need for clear, purposeful decision making.

Born in Buckinghamshire in 1918, Pitson was educated at Slough Secondary and Harrow County, where he matriculated with honours, and then became an apprentice compositor at HMSO's Harrow Press. In 1939 he joined the RAF as a fitter/armourer and served in England and Western Europe during WWII. In 1943 he married Freda Instone.

After the war he joined the HMSO design team and soon their work was recognised. The HMSO restyled a whole range of publications and sought to make government printing worthy of the nation that produced it.

In 1964 he arrived in Australia to become director of typography in the Government Printing Office in Canberra. Here, he was 'ringmaster in my own (antipodean) circus' and in November that year was awarded an MBE for his work in the UK.

Pitson's task was to implement the design and production recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary and Government Publications. This committee's recommendations covered a wide range of design, printing and distribution features.

With the full support of the Government Printer Albert Arthur, Pitson updated the range of typefaces held by the printing office, produced a handsome type book and modernised the layout of parliamentary papers. After that he began the introduction of International paper sizes—an important first step as the Government Printer (and all other Australian printers) had to hold at least 15 different sizes of paper in several grades and weights ready for any printing request.

By 1966 he and fellow committee members had produced the first edition of the style manual for Australian Government publications. It standardised Commonwealth publications and was on almost every desk and office of anyone who had to produce information (and not only for Government publications). It was reprinted in 1968, a second edition in 1972, and reprinted twice in 1974.

David Whitbread, one of the authors of the sixth and latest edition, said '...when I was invited to be an author of the sixth edition (released in 2002), we went back to John's original edition to review its content and noted that, in subsequent editions, content had been lost that was now required again—so we reintroduced some of his topics and advice in the sixth edition'.



John Pitson MBE c1972

Pitson's appointment as typographer to the AGPS and the subsequent growth of the AGPS design section prompted development of the graphic design industry in Canberra. Departments soon saw the benefits of well-designed publications and freelance studios developed to supplement AGPS's work and service the growing sophistication of clients.

During this period the ACT branch of the NSW Chapter of the Industrial Design Institute of Australia (IDIA) was formed and John Pitson was among its early members.

After Pitson retired in 1978 he became a volunteer with the Australian Executive Service Overseas Program (AESOP) and worked in Samoa and Fiji. Freda died in 1984 and in 1985 he married Nancye Blakely who predeceased him.

John Pitson died on 25 November 2010 and is survived by daughter Liz and son Bob, two grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

A significant figure in the publishing and design field, John Pitson's legacy remains alive and strong today and certainly will not be forgotten.

The Canberra editor would like to thank Adrian Young and Liz Bree for permission to use this article and the photographs.

Thinking about our membership fees

Cathy Nicoll

Our committee is currently discussing the state of the society's finances—how much money we have in the bank, our income, and what it costs to run the society.

The concern is not how much money we have in the bank today, or even next year, but how little we will have in only a few years if we don't do something now.

When I first joined the society, we did not have much of a bank balance. We had to be conservative in our management. Training courses were cancelled if attendance wasn't high enough to cover costs; we had to fold the newsletters ourselves (it took four of us a couple of hours to fold about 200 copies); freelancers were charged to have their entry in the register.

The reason we are comfortable now is that, with the Indexers, we took the significant risk of holding the first national conference, and made more money than planned.

Our membership fees—\$60 for full membership—have not changed since 1997, when I joined the society. In that time, almost every cost has increased due to inflation—catering costs for general meetings, room hire for training courses, newsletter printing costs, website hosting costs and so on. Changes in government hiring contracts mean we might also need to take out public liability insurance just to be able to use key venues. We are also facing ongoing IPEd fees of about \$4000 per year.

I believe that now is an appropriate time to consider our membership fees and whether, after at least 14 years, an increase might be in order to cover the cost of running the society.

We discussed this at the March committee meeting and it will be raised at the general meeting on 30 March. So please contact me with your views.



**Our membership fees—\$60 for full
membership—have not changed since 1997**

Welcome to new members

The Canberra Society of Editors would like to welcome new members who joined recently and in the last months of 2010:

Suzanne Eggins (full); Jose Robertson (full); Alison Cernovs (assoc); Megan Cope (student); Helen Portillo-Castro (assoc); Rachel Muntz (assoc); Jennifer Nicholls (student); Karin Hosking (full); Jennifer Brookes (student); Katie Poidomani (full); Keren Lavelle (full); Deborah Johns (student); Alison Cernovs (assoc); Ben Wilson (full); Megan Cope (student) and Elizabeth Howie (student).

Accreditation exam to be in May 2011

Just a reminder for all members. The third IPEd accreditation exam will be held on Saturday 21 May 2011. Like the 2008 and 2009 exams, this will be a pen (or pencil) and paper exam. Registrations for the exam opened on Tuesday 1 February and close on 21 April. More details at: <http://www.editorscanberra.org/accreditation-in-may/>.

New Accreditation delegate for Canberra

Kirsten McNeill has agreed to be the new CSE Accreditation Board delegate. An IPEd-accredited editor, Kirsten is a director of Canberra-based editing and transcription company, Apricot Zebra Pty Ltd. Before co-founding Apricot Zebra in 2010, she was senior legal editor with the Australian Government Solicitor for three years, an editor with federal Hansard at Parliament House for six years, and general editor and New Product Development Editor at the Law Book Company in Sydney for six years.

Revised thesis editing guidelines and FAQs

Tertiary institutions have been notified officially of the revised editing guidelines and there has been some positive feedback. The new guidelines are available at http://iped-editors.org/Resources_for_editors/Editing_theses.

A useful resource for copyeditors

Hilary Cadman

As one would expect from the name, the website *copyediting.com* is a great resource for copyeditors. Here, I describe how *copyediting.com* started, and my experience of accessing and using the different materials available from the site.



Background

Copyediting.com is the website of *Copyediting* newsletter, which is based in the United States. Originally called *Copy Editor*, the newsletter was started in 1990 by Mary Beth Protomastro, who was then working as copyeditor of *McCall's* (a monthly women's magazine). The aim was to keep copyeditors up to date on language, and provide a way for them to communicate with one another on copyediting matters. Subscribers were mostly copyeditors and other editors at magazines, newspapers, book publishers and corporations. The website was added in the late 1990s; initially it provided information about the newsletter and links to useful sites for copyeditors, but gradually expanded to include information about workshops and jobs. McMurry, the current owner, bought *Copy Editor* from Protomastro some 10 years ago, and subsequently changed the name to *Copyediting*.

Free content

Tip of the week

'Tip of the week' is a weekly email from *copyediting.com* (scroll to the bottom of the homepage to see the link for signing up to this service). I find the tips interesting and informative. For example, for the week of 15 February, the tip described a 'typographic oath': *no matter which field you edit in, do no harm*. This was accompanied by a list of commandments for copyeditors, including 'respect the writer', 'respect the reader' and 'he who pays makes the rules'. The latter commandment is one that I'm sure will stimulate discussion on the *copyediting.com* blog.

Podcast

The homepage contains a link to the '12 fiddly rules of style and grammar' podcast; however, to listen to this, users have to complete and submit a form with their name and email address. Also, that podcast is rather long and ponderous, because it combines all 12 rules in a single audio file. Scrolling to the bottom of the homepage reveals a link to the podcast archives, where there are snappy 2-minute files on 'confusables', such as *use* versus *utilise*, and *recur* versus *reoccur*, these resources can be accessed without submitting a form.

Articles

Articles taken from the newsletter can be accessed via the homepage. Current topics include difficulties in spelling words from languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, why the term 'midget' could cause offence and the benefits of using the quick access toolbar in Word 2007.

Resources

The website's 'Virtual library of resources' includes lots of useful material, including links to various editors' organisations, online manuals and guides to style and grammar, blogs and training courses.

Content available by subscription

Newsletter

I signed up for the newsletter last year; it is published every two months and arrives as an email with a link to a PDF. I print it out (it's usually about 12 pages long) and read it cover to cover. Recent issues have focused on style guides, with the publication of the *Yahoo style guide* and the 16th edition of *The Chicago manual of style*. The articles are well written and I find that the content is relevant to my work. I also like the 'Ask the editor' page, and have cited an example from that page when resolving a thorny issue with a client. The 'Technically speaking' column gives useful information on computer programs; for example, in the final edition of 2010, it focused on the ribbon in Word 2010 (which apparently can be customised more easily than the ribbon in Word 2007).

Training

Copyediting.com provides two sorts of training: 'online training modules' and 'on-demand training'. I found this terminology confusing, because all the training is modular, and accessible online and on demand! In spite of this confusion, I have tried both types of training, and found them to be worthwhile.

The online training consists of a series of copyediting modules covering topics that range from sentence structure and the copyeditor's role in the editorial process to fact checking. Each module costs US\$50 and is self-paced.

A useful resource for copyeditors (continued)

The user takes a test at the start, works through a set of examples, then takes another test at the end to judge progress and receive a completion certificate. I signed up for the 'English sentence structure' module, and learnt a lot about objects, subjects and verb types, although I have yet to complete the module.

I found the on-demand training—audio conferences and webinars—more useful. The live sessions are expensive, but there is an excellent deal whereby users can sign up to access a selection of audio and video learning sessions for the price of a single live session. I signed up for an individual account, and received a discount because I subscribe to the newsletter. Large organisations can get an even better deal, with access for up to 30 users for an additional US\$100. I have listened to the audio files for 'common problems in medical editing' and 'common problems in science editing' (both about one hour long). These fell under the category of 'editing specific types of content'. Other areas covered include editorial methods, electronic resources and editing, freelancing, grammar, punctuation and style. I enjoyed the sessions that I listened to; they were well presented and pitched at an appropriate level.

Conclusion

Copyediting.com provides a wealth of material and links. There is plenty to be had for free, and the materials are professional, up to date and of interest to editors in Australia, despite the bias towards *The Chicago manual of style*. It is worth getting past the somewhat muddled design of the homepage to locate the useful content.

The e-experience

Peter Judge

My Christmas present to myself was an iPad. I didn't actually *need* it—as my wife pointed out—in the beginning it was just another of my 'boys' toys'. What's more, to make use of its full capabilities, I needed another small piece of hardware to add wireless broadcasting capability (WiFi) to my modem. But, like everybody else, I had read a lot about this new gizmo, the 'tablet computer', and wondered what it could do for me. Three months down the track, what do I think about it?

Like any other computer, it depends on the software applications (here called 'apps') that you get for it. There is an amazing variety of apps out there, many of them originally written for the iPhone and the iPod touch, often free and almost all costing only a few dollars. My initial experiments were with ebooks, of which the number available is almost limitless. Apple has its own ebook reader, the 'iBooks' app, and is steadily building up its e-stocks. However, the strength at the moment is with Amazon, who has an enormous e-range and to promote its sales give away its Kindle app free of charge.

The Canberra Times published its review of Mark Logue's book *The King's speech* a few days after I had seen the film, and I was interested to read the book. Thanks to Amazon, five minutes later and a modest \$10 poorer it was on my iPad. I visited the Portrait Gallery recently, and was intrigued in its shop by a new collection of essays, *Scribble, scribble, scribble*, by Simon Schama, whom I had previously known only as a historian. No sooner returned home than I owned a Kindle version, at a fifth the price of the printed volume. It becomes very difficult to justify paying for a printed book.

I am one of the masses in this respect. It seems that almost everybody had some kind of e-reader for Christmas. The big US book chain Barnes and Noble claims to have sold a million ebooks on Christmas Day. Amazon reports that its customers are buying Kindle digital versions of the top 10 best-selling books more than twice as often as print copies, and ebooks are also outselling print books for the top 25, 100, and 1000 bestsellers.

'It's across the board,' said Steve Kessel, senior vice president of Amazon Kindle. 'This is remarkable when you consider that we've been selling hardcover and paperback books for 15 years, and Kindle books for just 36 months.' It is a fast growing trend—Amazon said it sold more than three times as many Kindle books in the first nine months of 2010 as in the same period of 2009. Overall, the revenue from digital book sales increased by almost 200 per cent in the first 10 months of 2010.

Do ebooks mean the end of print? As Ed Highley commented in a recent letter to *The Canberra Times*, pre-press costs for comparable quality are likely to be the same—the savings are in printing and distribution. Once the market settles down and an equitable pricing strategy is established, the book as means of entertainment or information is likely to be secure. But in the long term, the traditional bookseller will suffer. And no sooner had I written this (on 17 February) than the news came that Angus and Robertson and Borders in Australia are to go into receivership, and Borders in the USA has applied for bankruptcy.



The e-experience (continued)

In a related field, Abels is closing its Manuka shop. Sales of CDs have plummeted in favour of e-versions. I'm guilty here too—if I want a piece of music, I can generally download exactly the version I want from iTunes, at a very advantageous price, and have it on my iPod within minutes.

There is now a wide choice of e-readers—how do I rate the iPad as a tool for reading? With a light cover, it weighs in at a little over 800 grams, about the same as a largish hardback book. That's a bit on the heavy side for sustained reading unless you can rest it on your knees or some other support, and here Amazon's dedicated Kindle Reader has the advantage of being only half the weight. But the iPad's screen is brilliantly clear, and being back-lit (with automatic brightness adjustment responding to the ambient lighting) it is great for reading in bed.

However, I am also finding it very convenient for storing reference works. Many of these are apps rather than books, coming with a built-in search program. I had long hankered after a really good Latin dictionary, but was put off by the cost. I've just downloaded one for \$2.49! My excellent Italian-English dictionary was a pricey \$12.99, but the verb tables were free. When I go to my language classes I can carry large dictionaries and grammars without worrying about the weight or the bulk.

The iPad also stores, reads and annotates PDF documents, which means that I can take all the papers I need to committee meetings without having to print them out on paper and lug them around. Talking of meetings, one of the apps I've found is *Notesound*. This enables you to record continuously what people are saying, while tapping brief notes on the iPad's onscreen keyboard. I am the world's worst note-taker, because if I get involved in what is happening I forget to write it down. So, half the time, when I come to look at my notes later I have no idea about the most vital bits. But one click on the confusing note and the sound track plays at that exact point to remind me of what I may have missed.

Another free app is *Dictation* (the computer version costs \$220!), a very efficient voice-to-text transcription program. This piece is being typed the old-fashioned way, but only because I check sources and try to get it right as I go, rather than stream-of-consciousness stuff for editing later.

Moreover, the iPad can do two things at once. When I'm checking out a piece of text for my class, it will let me listen to the recording and follow the printed word at the same time. All this, even though mine is the simplest iPad. It has a mere 14 gigabytes of usable memory, but 15 books, a score of hefty documents and more than 30 apps take up less than two of those gigabytes.

One drawback, commented on by other reviewers, is that the screen can't cope in bright sunlight, so using it outdoors needs the deepest shade available. It has the power and versatility of a laptop, but the onscreen virtual keyboard doesn't readily lend itself to rapid touch typing. People who need to do this generally invest in a separate WiFi keyboard. These two minor niggles apart, I'm completely sold on it.

I'll come back in a year's time and tell you whether my enthusiasm is still running hot!



Sources

The figures on relative ebook sales came from <http://tinyurl.com/4zgzv6n>.
A comparative review of the main e-readers is at <http://tinyurl.com/2wvvtpl>.

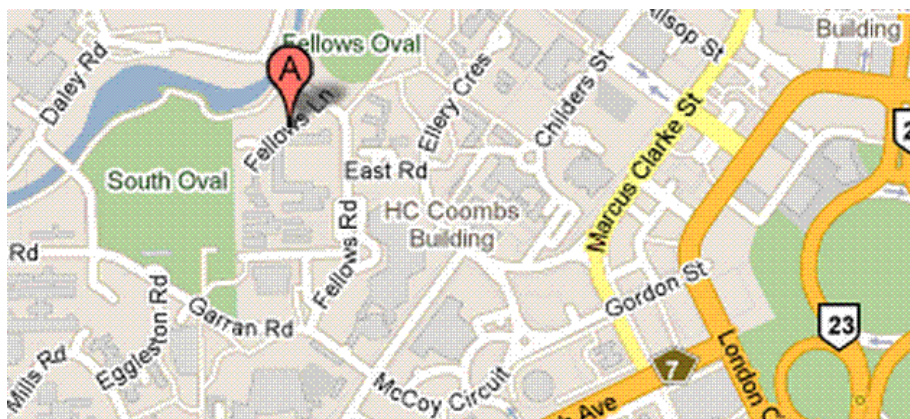
Anagrams

The strangest words may give deep and meaningful anagrams:

- PRESBYTERIAN gives BEST IN PRAYER
- ASTRONOMER gives MOON STARER
- DESPERATION gives A ROPE ENDS IT
- THE EYES gives THEY SEE
- GEORGE BUSH gives HE BUGS GORE
- THE MORSE CODE gives HERE COME DOTS
- DORMITORY gives DIRTY ROOM
- SLOT MACHINES gives CASH LOST IN ME
- SNOOZE ALARMS gives ALAS! NO MORE Z'S
- A DECIMAL POINT gives I'M A DOT IN PLACE
- ANIMOSITY gives IS NO AMITY
- ELECTION RESULTS gives LIES – LET'S RECOUNT
- THE EARTHQUAKES gives THAT QUEER SHAKE
- ELEVEN PLUS TWO gives TWELVE PLUS ONE
- MOTHER-IN-LAW gives WOMAN HITLER

Directions

Meetings are held in the Emeritus Faculty—Building 3T, Fellows Lane Cottage (off Fellows Road).



You have probably noticed that this newsletter looks different—we have changed the layout and the font. Please let us know what you think of the design. Send your comments to the editor, Kerie Newell.

Contents

February's meeting	1
Training news	2
John Pitson	3
From the President	4
Out and about	4
Copyediting.com	5
Thinking about words	6
Anagrams	7
Directions	8

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Newsletter schedule

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All articles must be in .doc format.

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