

From the President



Canberra Society's 2015 calendar was always going to be dominated by two really big activities: our co-hosting of the national *write|edit|index* conference, and the consultations and eventual vote on the proposed transmogrification of our national institute, IPEd.

Our outstanding and memorable conference is now behind us. The IPEd transition is ramping up over the coming months to the final showdown.

The conference

CSE members (about 100) were very prominent among more than the 270 delegates at the conference—a wonderful turnout. And wasn't the conference a beauty! A truly enjoyable and valuable few days, I thought.

Tracy Harwood and her team put together a first-class program of topics, speakers and social events at very agreeable venues and then ensured the whole four days ran smoothly.

Patricia Hewitson has written her own impressions of the conference (pages 3–4) and we will be asking others to do the same for our next edition.

I had many rewarding experiences between Wednesday 6 and Saturday 9 May. Here are some of my highlights. We were blessed with three outstanding keynote speakers, all showing how much they valued both the editing and indexing professions. David Astle presented his messages very effectively in his customary entertaining wordplay style, and also mingled with delegates for the dinner and the next day. Roly Sussex demonstrated for the second successive IPEd conference what a warm, insightful and hands-on IPEd Patron he is. We are very fortunate to have him. And Jackie French, unaided by any written notes, spoke with such warmth and emotion that she had herself and a lot of us in tears, and received the first standing ovation I've seen at such a conference. A most memorable occasion.

Socially, I was revved up at the end of the welcome drinks night when CSE Honorary Life Member, Virginia Wilton, said to me: 'Alan, this thing already has an unstoppable momentum'. Then at the conference dinner, I was surprised and entertained when our host, the Master of University House, Professor Peter Kanowski, told us stories about University House and the Great Hall, convincing me that these are much more significant and iconic national venues than I had previously imagined. And then, on Friday night, I had the opportunity to host a small dinner and enjoy the company of IPEd councillors and staff and other society presidents.

But what really impressed me above all was the utterly seamless way the conference brought editing and indexing together as one big 'extended family'—the professions and the people—and attracted such enthusiastic

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Shirley Campbell (left) and Elizabeth Manning Murphy—the two head schemers (back in 2012) of

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participation by the delegates. The plot hatched over lunch by Elizabeth Murphy and Shirley Campbell back in 2012 had proven to be a 'serious success'. Very well done to everyone concerned.

Transmogrifying IPEd

I'm most grateful to our members who have represented CSE on IPEd Working Party 4 and its five project teams, through all or part of this extended journey. When we get an opportunity, we should each make a point of thanking Elizabeth Manning Murphy (WP4 and Professional Development team), Col Roberts (Governance), Maree Peterson (Finance and Operations), Anna Boots and Geoff Hunt (Membership), James Dixon and Malini Devadas (Professional Development), and Sue Pavasaris (Communications).

The volume and quality of work done by WP4 and its teams over the past year has given us all a corpus of very valuable information about societies' and members' views on many issues that can guide the advancement of our profession into the future, regardless of the outcome of the final vote on the proposed transition later this year.

The latest phase in the process comprises the 'final' green papers, which I circulated to CSE members in a broadcast email on 30 April. If you haven't looked at them yet, I hope that you can do so soon and send your responses to me. You'll be pleased to know that the date for you to do that has now been extended from 31 May to 21 June, to which my intervention in the IPEd plenary session at the conference may have contributed.

The outcome of members' responses to the green papers will be the 'white papers' on all the main issues (governance, finance, membership, professional development, and communications) that will come to you at the end of August, together with instructions for the voting protocol in—probably—October. When you've had a chance to consider these 'no further tweaking' documents, CSE will devote its whole September general meeting to this matter—the pros and cons of the proposal—as we did before the first vote back in 2013. I sincerely hope that as many of you as possible will invest time and energy to consider this matter and attend the September meeting to debate the transformative issues we will be considering about our future professional representation.

Membership renewals and Society elections

I know you are all fully cognisant of these next two matters. But I can't help mentioning them ... just in case. The first is that membership renewal time is now upon us, and Linda Weber has provided the details on page 3. I know you'll be rushing to be first!

The second is an advance notice that our Annual General Meeting and dinner are scheduled for Wednesday 26 August. The AGM is when we elect the committee for the next year. Being on the committee and holding office is demanding but rewarding, and I invite you all to think seriously about nominating. Some positions can't be held for more than two years in succession, guaranteeing an opportunity for fresh ideas at the helm of your Society. We'll have a lot more detail of the 'duty statements' in the next newsletter, and will be hoping to welcome some enthusiastic new committee members in August.

Alan Cummine
President

The following committee positions will definitely be vacated at the AGM in August. The current incumbents either cannot (per the CSE constitution) or will not accept renomination:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- General Meetings Coordinator

Please think seriously about this in the next two months.

Membership reminder

Yearly membership runs from 1 July to 30 June. The Committee has resolved not to increase the fees for the 2015–2016 membership year. Thus, annual fees remain at \$135 for full members, \$105 for associates, \$45 for students, and \$270 for corporate members. Renewal reminders and the hyperlink to the TryBooking site for payments will be emailed to members in June.

The committee encourages all members to participate in Society activities, including committee business, the newsletter and the 'canberraeditors' Yahoo group. Please send me an email at lsweber@optusnet.com.au if you are interested in contributing.

Linda Weber

Membership Secretary

write|edit|index: CSE delivers

The much-anticipated *write|edit|index* conference took place in Canberra on 7–9 May, causing more than 250 participants from as far afield as New Zealand, South Africa, and Fiji to brave the late Canberra autumn chill.

I heard nothing but praise from conference participants for the mix of topics on offer, the quality of the presentations, and logistical aspects. All up, a stimulating, rewarding and pleasant experience.

The conference was jointly hosted by CSE (on behalf of IPEd) and the ACT Region Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (on behalf of ANZSI).

Keynote speakers Jackie French, David Astle and Roly Sussex were impressive, each in their own thought-provoking style. David Astle called for a collective noun for editors and later chose 'cardigan' from the entertaining responses. Noting the financial lot of editors, Belinda Pollard wryly suggested 'penury' instead. On Saturday morning, the audience seemed to like Virginia Wilton's suggestion of 'a crown of editors'.

Plenary sessions usefully addressed the eternally relevant issues of ethics and 'valuing our profession'.

The rich array of topics on offer appeared to satisfy everyone. Editor or indexer, newcomer or old hand—everyone learned something valuable.

Presentation and discussion topics ranged widely, but some themes included:

- working with writers
- style and style guides
- editing or indexing specific types of content (e.g. fiction, science, numerical content, 'foreign English' academic writing, newspaper clippings, biography, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content)
- professional skills (e.g. briefs and mentoring)
- index evaluation methods and user expectations of indexes
- design
- electronic publishing and ebook applications
- workflow and consistency for material produced over time or by multiple authors.

Also nestled in the conference program were an IPEd plenary and an ANZSI special general meeting.

A striking feature of the conference was the interaction between editors and indexers. The joint hosting and the conference program worked well in this regard. Thoughtful contributions from keynote speakers about both editing and indexing also helped the mood. Most sessions attracted both editors and indexers (including of course those talented dual practitioners).

Considerate program design tempered the pressure on participants to clone themselves so as to attend clashing presentations. Instead of being

New CSE members

A warm welcome to these new members!

Full

Christine Watson (May)
Dinah Hansman (May)
Helene Attrill (March)
Justin Harding (March)
Maryann Martin (March)
Skye Owen (March)

Associate

Allison Ley (March)
David Blair (May)
Emma Frater (March)
Peter Barrett (March)

Student

Alison Darby (March)
Allison Peters (March)
John Linnegar (May)



Lunch was wonderfully 'edible' at the conference. Photography by Farid Rahimi.

lumped together into panels with shared Q&A time, each presentation was a self-standing segment—so participants were free to move between streams mid-session without disturbing speakers.

The conference proper was preceded on 6 May by half-day and full-day workshops. I attended two, on systematic text editing and basic design. They were excellent, and the back-to-back timing with the conference worked well.

Evenings were awash with social functions of varying degrees of formality. The welcome reception on 6 May set the tone, involving a good time and the launch of the new edition of Nick Hudson's *Modern Australian Usage*, which sold out (50 autographed copies) in an hour. The conference dinner at University House was convivial and fun, with the bonus of educating even locals about that loved venue. And on Friday, in a bar, a sinister clique slyly celebrated the Australian launch of the League of Vile Editors and Evil Indexers.

As with any gathering of people with common interests, much of the attraction of the conference lay in simply spending time with other participants. This went far beyond the obvious value of professional networking among other editors and indexers. It is intrinsically satisfying to meet others who share your own passion for language but hail from extremely diverse backgrounds. This diversity was equally apparent from reading biographical information about the speakers and from casual chats with a cross-section of participants. Few walks of life can boast such breadth and depth of interdisciplinary expertise among practitioners. It certainly makes for fascinating conversation.

Congratulations to Tracy Harwood and all others involved for making a huge success of this challenging conference project. And thank you. You've done CSE proud.

Patricia Hewitson AE

Mentoring in the ACT



We have a new coordinator in the ACT: **Ara Nalbandian** is an experienced editor with a wealth of know-how and organisational ability, and, as you see, is fond of his cat. He was the editor of the CSE's publication *Working words*, and edited *The Canberra editor* for a number of years. He is also a mentor in our mentoring program. We look forward to hearing from him in these Mentoring pages in coming issues. Meantime, if you are in the ACT or nearby, please write to Ara to find out more about the program, to have the guidance notes sent to you or to apply to be a mentor or a mentee, or both. He can be found at yerevanarax7@hotmail.com.

Mentoring Program

New status

At the IPEd plenary session of the *write|edit|index* conference, our mentoring program became part of IPEd's responsibility. We are now known officially as the **IPEd National Mentoring Program for Editors**, as a result of an agreement signed by the CSE President, Alan Cummine, and the IPEd Chair, Kerry Davies. The systems we've put in place all remain the same; Canberra continues to administer the program nationally with the team of state/territory coordinators working with the national coordinators. We are delighted to have IPEd's formal recognition and support.

Before the formal announcement, all but one of the current coordinators, plus the two national coordinators, were able to gather for lunch at the



... here they are!

conference, and here is a photo of us all: standing—Ted Briggs; sitting, clockwise—Ara Nalbandian (ACT), Elizabeth Manning Murphy, Kerry Coyle (WA), Sheelagh Wegman (Tas.), Davina Dadley-Moore (Vic.), Zoe Hale (NSW), Roberta Blake (Qld). Absent: Adele Walker (SA).

At the Mentoring plenary session of the conference, coordinators sat on the podium and were introduced to the delegates. Your local coordinator is your first port of call for information about the mentoring program and for advice during a mentorship, should you need it. We are dedicated to helping mentorships be successful, personally rewarding pairings. If you don't have your local coordinator's details, contact either Elizabeth or Ted (see below) and we'll pass your request on.

We're pretty chuffed with this outcome—we've been working towards it, but it's happened in two short years, and we're still somewhat bemused by the speed at which it has happened. Heartfelt thanks to all the coordinators for help, swapping ideas and generally promoting mentoring to the whole membership of all current societies.

Who is eligible to be part of it?

This brings me to a topic we get asked about sometimes—just who can be mentored? Is it only for new editors? Or can senior, experienced editors be mentored? The answer is—ANYONE can be mentored and ANYONE can be a mentor. It all depends on what you want to be guided in, and what skills you can share. We have on our program young, inexperienced editors, struggling to get a foothold in the competitive editing profession; and we have editors near to traditional retirement age, with lots of experience behind them, but wanting to understand perhaps more about new technologies and spread their wings into newer areas of editing—such editors are often mentored by much younger colleagues who have grown up with technology or work in legal, medical or scientific editing. You don't have to be old and white-haired to be a mentor, and you don't have to be straight out of editing school to be a mentee. If you meet the basic requirements—membership of an editing society at any level, have attended a course or workshop about copy-editing and proofreading, and have at least a little experience in copy-editing—you qualify. Just ask for the mentor or mentee application form and we'll help you with the rest.

For IPEd National Mentoring Program for Editors:

Ted Briggs AE

tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au
Joint National Coordinators

Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE

emmurphy@ozemail.com.au

Professional development

Cost: \$250 for members; \$400 for non-members; \$150 (for members of interstate editors societies).

Cost includes morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and a copy of Susan's book, *Clear&Concise: Become a better business writer*.

Principles of plain English for editors

Susan McKerihan

Saturday 13 June 9:00 am–4.30 pm, University House, ANU

Susan McKerihan has spent more than 20 years as the plain English editor for one of Australia's largest professional services firms, PwC. She has worked with consultants in all disciplines and industries, both within the firm and in the broader business and government community, helping them write clear and succinct reports on a range of subjects. She now has her own business, coaching and advising business writers on how to clarify and improve the style and impact of their documents. Susan has a Masters in Applied Linguistics and a graduate diploma in teaching English as a foreign language, both from the University of Sydney, and is the author of the recently published *Clear&Concise: Become a better business writer*. Her book was reviewed in the February–March issue of *The Canberra editor*.

NOTE: Your CSE President drove to Sydney for this same workshop last year. He thought Susan McKerihan was a most engaging presenter and the course was a valuable and worthwhile investment.

Appreciation of clear written communication in business is growing not only among the general public and specialised audiences, but also within different organisations. Many companies and government bodies are keen to respond to readers demanding plain English. Editors who understand the principles of plain English can offer extra value when advising their clients on a document's overall readability, structure and clarity.

This workshop will take you through the three main components of plain English:

- Structure: Plain English ensures that a document's intended reader understands its messages quickly and accurately. What is a 'reader-focused document', and how is it achieved? What specific tools and devices can help make a document easily readable?
- Language: business-ese is often pilloried as 'gobbledygook'. What are the most common sentence-level problems in business writing, and how can they be converted into a straightforward, succinct expression?
- The professional edge: some documents look instantly appealing—interesting, easy to read and digest—while others seem as a chore to get through. What can help a document make a good first impression on a reader?

This course will be particularly suitable for editors working with business, government, academic and educational material.

Please book your place before Wednesday 3 June. To register for this course, go to <http://www.trybooking.com/137286>.

Electronic accreditation exam unveiled



The electronic IPEd exam trial was a huge success at [write|edit|index](#).

The Accreditation Board, led by the Chair, Ted Briggs, gave an informative presentation to the [write|edit|index](#) conference held in Canberra on 6–9 May 2015.

One of the most exciting developments during the conference was the unveiling of a prototype of the accreditation exam as an electronic document. The wait is over for all those editors who wished to sit the accreditation exam on a computer, as they felt a computer exam truly reflects the way they work.

The Accreditation Board had a testing area at the conference where delegates could use a computer to see what the exam might look like in its electronic form and how it would feel to work with that exam paper. Feedback from those who reviewed the files was positive.

If you couldn't make the conference, the electronic exam prototype will be up on the IPEd website as soon as possible, and you can access it and try it in your own time. There will also be a feedback option so you can let us know your thoughts. We will collate the information from the feedback forms.

The Accreditation Board anticipates conducting the next exam on 30 April 2016. We have planned to hold the exam in an invigilated setting in a computer lab. Watch this space for more information.

Ted Briggs AE

Chair of Accreditation Board, IPEd

March general meeting



Alexi Paschalidis is a co-founder of MasterDocs, an online document collaboration tool. He has helped government, cultural and research organisations improve online collaboration, content management and digital publishing workflows. He runs a digital consultancy and has worked with Australian and international government organisations such as the National Library of Australia, University of Canberra, National Museum of Australia, Department of Defence and the US Department of State.

Agile authoring and collaboration in the cloud

The guest speaker at the CSE General Meeting on 25 March 2015 was Alexi Paschalidis. He spoke to CSE members about the heightened expectations technology continues to create and about the importance of using technology, which can overwhelm communication, as a tool to improve collaboration and the quality of publications in all formats.

Alexi noted that e-books currently mimic books, as the original cars were designed to look like carriages. We need to make the leap from current concepts of publishing to take full advantage of future technologies and opportunities. 'The idea that we need to recreate print media will die away ...' he said. In future, people will carry in their pockets a single device which will do anything we can do on a desktop or a phone now. Any surface will be able to serve as a screen. Flexibility will be critical for users.

Multimedia publishing relies on a central repository for living documents which act as a source. That single source becomes the authority for a variety of publication outputs which draw on that information for updates. Template publications with structured content can be updated from the central repository. Quality can be improved and time saved by the use of cloud-based solutions. Collaboration with a team, wherever its members operate, is effective, and output is controlled centrally.

For consumers, this is 'less about a type of technology, and more about a model of procurement'; the consumer is always working on the latest version.

Alexi referred to the concept of 'agile authoring': authoring and review can occur concurrently. Parts of content, once finalised, can be locked against editing. He gave some concrete examples of the ways these tools have been used successfully on recent projects.

The benefits of structural authoring include:

- tools are usually based on XML, though XML itself should be invisible
- there is the ability to publish to multiple outposts
- it is possible to reuse content across various platforms
- the content is very easily updated across documents.

Members were dazzled by the possibilities. A lively discussion followed.

Eris Jane Harrison

CSE Secretary

April general meeting

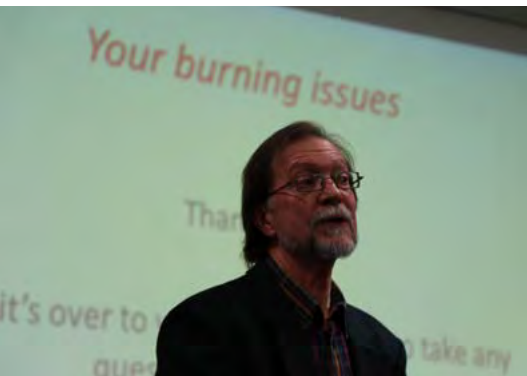
The business of editing: How to survive—and thrive—as a freelance

In a packed Ferguson Room at the National Library of Australia, John Linnegar shared his experiences and advice on 'how to survive—and thrive—as a freelance'.

Before starting his talk, John provided all 46 attendees with a copy of *The business of editing* by Professional Editors' Group, South Africa, and a handout with supplementary information they could use during his talk. The handout contained a questionnaire to determine if one was up to establishing a small business. It also contained a SWOT analysis, a four-by-four matrix, to assess 'talents and weaknesses', and 'opportunities and threats' when considering setting up an editing business.

John used the questionnaire and the SWOT matrix in the first part of his talk, 'Am I up to freelancing?' He highlighted fiction editing as a very demanding area, and editing poetry as an even more demanding subject to tackle when assessing strengths. It is important to realise one's strengths and to research the marketing scope of a special field of editing before embarking on the business venture. Members listened closely, took part in the questionnaire, and asked questions as he progressed through his PowerPoint slides.

John Linnegar has been active in the publishing industry for more than 30 years. He is an author, accredited text editor, proofreader and indexer. He has been training text editors, proofreaders, subeditors, indexers and project managers since 1999. In 2013, his index for *Text editing: a handbook for students and practitioners* was a runner-up in the Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers awards. In his current PhD project at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, he focuses on developing an effective, blended learning model for mentoring language practitioners online.



The very experienced John Linnegar sharing his editorial wisdom with the CSE. Photography by Farid Rahimi.

The rest of his talk covered the following:

- considering factors related to setting up an editing business
- identifying specific clients and building a clientele
- quoting and invoicing
- establishing terms as an independent contractor as opposed to an in-house employee
- building and preserving reputation.

In setting up the business, John emphasised the importance of finding a business niche, time management, home office setup, office equipment, emerging technologies, file management, paperwork and templates, and professionalism (e.g. logo, business card, website and promotion). When considering an editing niche, it is important to be a generalist rather than a specialist.

John spoke of his own experience, having started as a maths teacher. The first books he edited were poorly written maths books. Once he edited a book on policing in South Africa and another book on gynaecology and obstetrics. In the latter case, his lack of experience was to the author's advantage because John made them realise how the two subjects could be better communicated to the target audience of the book. For example, the authors had assumed everyone knew what the two words meant and how they differed in meaning and scope when they drafted the book.

When quoting, John mentioned the importance of thoroughly assessing a manuscript sample so the correct level of edit could be determined and a quote prepared accordingly; he mentioned he could easily spend half a day on this task. As a general rule, it is important that one does not over-quote and under-deliver or under-quote and over-deliver. Also, it is important that terms of payment should be laid out well at the outset (for example, with or without GST).

For preserving your reputation, it is important to meet certain standards and deadlines, try to under-promise and over-deliver, embrace technology and use it effectively, be an effective communicator, declare conflict(s) of interest, embrace lifelong training, and expand your clientele.

John's final advice was, 'You're as good as your last job'. He then answered questions and introduced the following useful references that editors can benefit from using:

- *New Hart's Rules*
- *Style Manual: For Authors, Editors and Printers, 6th Edition*
- *Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation*
- *Working Words*
- *The business of editing by Professional Editors' Group*
- *The Editor's Companion*
- *Text Editing: A Handbook for Students and Practitioners.*

Farid Rahimi

Newsletter Editor

Join the CSE catering corps!

We're always looking for people to help out with drinks and nibbles for the upcoming CSE meetings. Maybe you're a foodie, or a home baker, or a vegan. Maybe you hail from somewhere exotic and would like to share your native cuisine with members in a convivial atmosphere.

Catering for CSE meetings offers the opportunity to be as creative as you like. We're happy to provide suggestions, but you're welcome to put a personal touch on what you decide to bring. It's not an onerous task and CSE reimburses all costs.

Please contact the catering coordinator for more info.

Many thanks.

Mary Webb

IPEd WP4 response to Ed Highley's letter

We published Ed Highley's open letter titled, 'Still time for a rethink on IPEd', in our February–March issue of The Canberra editor. Because the content of Ed's letter related to the IPEd's transition process and its future, the Transition Working Party (WP4), headed by the Project Manager Rosemary Noble AE, deemed it necessary to respond. As part of this ongoing debate, here we publish Rosemary Noble's letter.

IPEd's Transition Working Party (WP4) is a group formed under the auspices of IPEd Council but its members are long-serving and loyal members of their own societies. Our aim throughout this process has always been, and will continue to be, to consult as widely as possible and make fair and objective recommendations based on feedback from society committees and members. On this basis, we welcome rigorous debate and hope that each society will publish this letter in response to Ed Highley's recent letter, entitled 'Still time for a rethink on IPEd'.

Societies whose members vote to accept transition plans for a direct-membership IPEd will not be committing group suicide.

IPEd's Transition Working Party (WP4) is well aware that for many members of Australian societies of editors the prospect of losing their identity is a major concern. However, this will not happen. These societies will certainly cease to exist as incorporated bodies; however, they will retain their distinctive identities and personalities as branches. They will also retain most of their established methods of operation.

For example, they will determine the training needs of their members and plan their own training programs; they will continue to organise speaker meetings, AGMs and other gatherings for their members; they will be able to continue paying honoraria or other forms of incentives to committee members; and they will have their own sections in the IPEd website and newsletter.

In other words, the decisions about everyday branch activities will continue to be made by branch committees. The primary relationships members have with other members will still be based on branch membership, though a direct-membership model will also offer the possibility of individual networks developing across branches, outside of national editors conferences. Ensuring the greatest possible flexibility in branch operations is one of the major aims in transition planning.

What a direct-membership IPEd will do is to provide support for branches that have struggled in the past to find committee members willing to take on such time-consuming responsibilities as membership administration, society finances, training, and website content and administration.

Branch committees will be required to take on some new tasks, such as preparing and submitting budgets to obtain IPEd funding for their activities and providing tentative training schedules and details of individual professional development programs for funding, administrative and promotion purposes. However, IPEd contractors will relieve them of the burden of maintaining and updating membership databases, doing all the administration and promotion of professional development activities and registration of workshop participants, and handling every aspect of financial administration. In fact, branch committee members will shed a significant amount of their workloads.

Transition to a direct-membership IPEd will certainly enable IPEd to provide all the aspects of the accreditation program that have not been possible to date, such as effective promotion, and provide similar promotional and financial support to the now completely national mentoring program. It will also bring other benefits to members, such as increased promotion of the profession and advocacy for its members, and increased access to professional development activities for distance members and members of smaller branches.

Rosemary Noble AE, on behalf of WP4
25 March 2015

What should editors check?



Professor Peter Stanley, of UNSW, Canberra, has published 26 books. His last book was the historical novel *The Cunning Man* and his next will be *Die in Battle, Do not Despair*, the first book published on *Indians on Gallipoli in a century*. He can be contacted at p.stanley@adfa.edu.au and tweets @Stanleyhistory.

Spilling the Beans on a cautionary tale

Saturday mornings in north Canberra in late summer are made for a quick tour of the local garage sales and then a coffee under the shade at Dickson. For a dollar or less you can pick up books that you'd heard of but not bought, but hey, you might as well.

So I found myself buying *Spilling the Beans*, the autobiography of the late Clarissa Dickson Wright, the British lawyer-turned-foodie better known as half of the motor-cycle-borne *Two Fat Ladies*, whose early life—well, perhaps all her life—seemed so touched by tragedy. That her mother had been an 'Australian heiress', so the blurb read, clinched it for me—this could be interesting.

And so it has proved. Though told in a style I can only describe as 'breathless'—its paragraphing seems to be at best random—the book's first chapter, describing her complicated family history was alone worth the dollar.

The lack of concern with the 'pace' of the narrative is, of course, not just the author's fault. Presumably an editor at some point had a hand in either retrieving or allowing her random paragraph breaks. But several oddities in the first chapter made me wonder whether the manuscript had received more than a hasty copyedit. (Ms Dickson Wright thanks a Morag Lyall as her 'copyeditor', and she certainly seems to have done a pretty casual job, judging by Chapter One. Ms Lyall's expertise was and remains in victuals—she is today editor of *Hotel Food and Beverage* magazine.)

My brow first wrinkled on page 9. Ms Dickson Wright describes how her grandfather, Tom Bath, went off to the Boer (aka South African) War as a member of the 'Queensland Mounted Light Infantry'. Of course he didn't—there was a Queensland Mounted Infantry but there was nothing 'Light' about it. A minor slip, and it would be pedantic to mention it. But the author goes on:

I always thought the family had got the name wrong until having a drink at the Artists Rifles' Mess in Chelsea Barracks one day I saw their badge on the wall.

Presumably she remembered seeing a plaque presented to the Artists' Rifles from one of the several possible regiments of Australian Light Horse known as the Queensland Mounted Infantry, and this unimportant family conundrum seemed solved.

But of course the problem is that there actually isn't and never has been a 'Queensland Mounted Light Infantry'—the family had actually got the regiment's name wrong, but Ms Dickson Wright had too when she misremembered the plaque she had seen at Chelsea Barracks. (Note to fellow pedants: the regiment was the Artists' Rifles until 1937, when the apostrophe was dropped because it was so misused.)

A few pages later, she describes how her mother was as a child sent from the family home in Singapore to Ballarat 'South Australia' as a four-and-a-half-year-old. Of course, as Australians know—and as even British editors with access to Google maps could find out in about .034 seconds—Ballarat is in Victoria. Is this important? Not by itself, it isn't, but read on.

A page or so on, Ms Dickson Wright describes how her mother, Molly, presented a bouquet to General Foch when he visited Loreto Convent in 1918 (or at least before Molly left Loreto in 1919). Foch in Ballarat? She must mean General Paul Pau: Foch never visited Ballarat—in 1918 he was far too busy winning the Great War. Sure enough, another .034 seconds in the National Library of Australia's Trove newspaper database established that Foch indeed never visited Ballarat—though a horse named after



him ran on that city's race course—and that the general to whom little Molly presented the bouquet was indeed Pau, whose visit to the Loreto Convent was reported extensively. (Pau was a one-armed veteran of 1870 and the Marne, well able to be spared to make a morale-raising visit to a distant ally.)

Spilling the Beans was first published in Britain in 2007. A quick but definitely unrewarding Google search on 'Queensland Mounted Light Infantry' then would have suggested that something was wrong with one memory. This was before Trove existed certainly, but the life of Ferdinand Foch was surely documented well enough then to allow a check to disclose the accuracy of Ms Dickson Wright's recollection. Perhaps the publishing deal precluded any detailed editorial checks (though the principle that it would be preferable for errors to have been detected and corrected before publication seems a sound one). Perhaps, like many publishers, Hodder & Stoughton wanted a cheap 'light' edit.

Spilling the Beans is a powerful book. The author recounts her father's coldness and cruelty, the devastating effects on her of a miserable childhood and her decade lost to alcoholism; a life that only looked up when in late middle age she took to cooking on television and enjoyed a few years of fulfilment, dying in 2014 at only 66.

All this might seem mere pedantry: my minor corrections don't alter her story of the dysfunctional family in which she happened to be born. They certainly don't affect my sympathy for the lousy hand Clarissa Dickson Wright was dealt, despite the wealth and seeming privilege in which she grew up.

But my finding these three errors in the first nineteen pages does raise the questions of why editors exist and what they are for. I only happen to know that the QMI were not 'Light' and that Pau and not Foch visited Australia because I happen to be a military historian in Australia. I don't know what else the author misremembered or otherwise got wrong and which Ms Lyall did not find, check or fix. (I suspected that her mentions of IRA bombs were misplaced in her narrative, and sure enough they occurred in the early 1970s, though located in the chapters set in the 1960s.) Failures of memory and failures in editing certainly don't discredit or diminish the value of *Spilling the Beans*, but they ought to make for more careful reading and editing.

This is no theoretical question. Last year I edited a manuscript, a memoir of a Welsh–Australian who had served in the West Indies in the 1950s, published as *A Welch Calypso*. I faced the same dilemmas as did Morag Lyall, and I'm sure that I failed to check some points, either because I didn't realise I ought to check, or because I assumed that I knew the answer—correctly or not. And I suffer from exactly the same nit-picking as I'm engaging in as an author. Last year Bobby Graham Publishing of Canberra published my novel *The Cunning Man*. My editors (both of them) omitted to check whether 'wranglers'—mathematical scholars—existed in Cambridge and Oxford. (I had referred to 'an Oxford common-room of wranglers', for reasons that don't matter.) It turned out that wranglers only existed at Cambridge, a point of academic esoterica that neither I nor my editors grasped but which a British reviewer even pickier than me pointed out. I had inadvertent revenge on one of the editors by getting his name wrong in my acknowledgments on the verso page, which I had of course not bothered to send to either editor, saying airily that of course I could get that right myself—ha!

These cautionary tales remind us why we need editors, and what good they can do us.

Peter Stanley
February 2015



BELS certification

The US-based Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) will be running its certification exam on Sunday 30 August 2015 in Brisbane. Science editors interested in sitting the BELS exam should check their website (www.bels.org/) for additional information, such as application processes and sample questions. You'll need to register by 9 August for the upcoming exam.

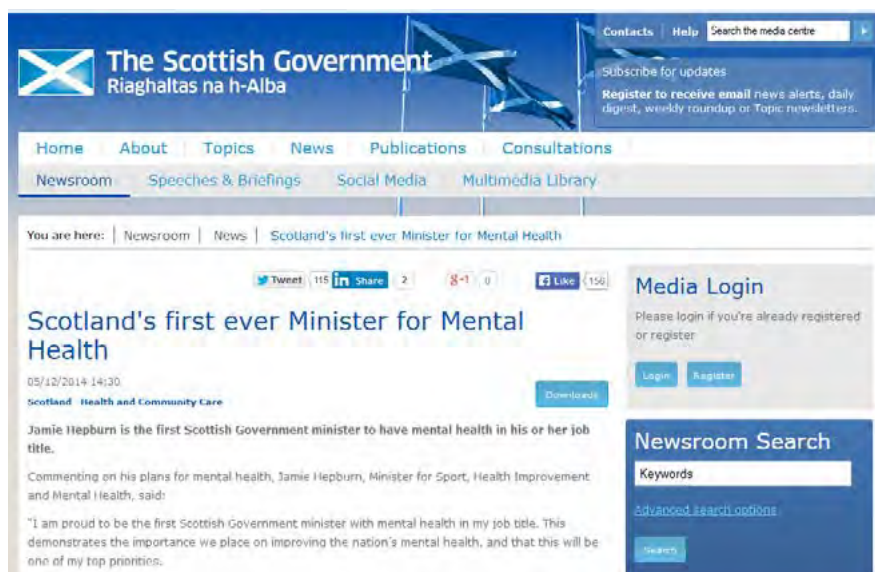
Karin Hosking AE
chezkaz@gmail.com

Screen captures

Gender question

Jamie Hepburn is the first Scottish Government minister to have mental health in his or her job title.

<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Scotland-s-first-ever-Minister-for-Mental-Health-1300.aspx>



COMICAL COLLECTIONS

The church ladies do the email rounds from time to time, bringing with them much hilarity. As editors we enjoy their misspellings—and the resulting double entendres—immensely, because that's our nature! We'll be cackling along as we read their unfortunate mistakes and conjure up the embarrassing situations that might result from them. Here's the second set of not-so-improbable mistakes.

Ara Nalbandian

ACT Mentoring Coordinator

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the Church hall. Music will follow.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

The Church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5 pm; prayer and medication to follow.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

This evening at 7 pm, there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the Congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.

'Low Self-esteem Support Group' will meet Thursday at 7 pm. Please use the back door.

The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday: 'I Upped My Pledge—Up Yours!'

**Proofread headlines
... huh!**

Man kills self before shooting wife and daughter

**Something went wrong
in jet crash, expert says**

War dims hope for peace

**COLD WAVE LINKED
TO TEMPERATURES**

**Man struck by lightning:
faces battery charge**

**RED TAPE HOLDS
UP NEW BRIDGES**

**Police begin
campaign to
run down
jaywalkers**

**ASTRONAUT TAKES BLAME
FOR GAS IN SPACECRAFT**

**Typhoon rips through
cemetery; hundreds dead**

**LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL
DROPOUTS CUT IN HALF**

**PANDA MATING FAILS;
VETERINARIAN
TAKES OVER**

KIDS MAKE NUTRITIOUS SNACKS

**JUVENILE COURT TO TRY
SHOOTING DEFENDANT**

MINERS REFUSE TO WORK AFTER DEATH

**New study
of obesity
looks for
larger test
group**

**If strike isn't
settled quickly, it
may last awhile.**

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SUED BY
7 FOOT
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The editor welcomes contributions by email: newsletter@editorscanberra.org.
All articles must be in .doc format.

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