

The Canberra



Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Volume 17 | Number 11 | November 2008

End-of-year
dinner, 7pm,
Wednesday
26 November

Please join us for a festive dinner on Wednesday 26 November at 7pm at Zest on Green Square at Kingston. The chef has devised a special menu and has selected special wines for our delectation while we dine alfresco.

Our guest speaker will be Peter Fray, managing editor of The Canberra Times. See the website for details:
<www.editorscanberra.org/notices.htm>.

Cost: CSE members \$48, Guests \$55. Includes wine, beer, juice and soft drinks.

Payment details:
Account name: Canberra Society of Editors
BSB: 805-022
Account number: 0342 3503
Institution: Community CPS Australia

Please include the reference [FIRST FOUR LETTERS OF YOUR SURNAME]-ZEST (e.g. MILL-ZEST) with the transaction so Margaret can identify who the payment is from.

Alternatively, you can pay by cheque made payable to Canberra Society of Editors and sent to PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603 as soon as possible.

Payment required by COB Friday 21 November.

First meeting for 2009 is in February

David Whitbread is launching a new edition of The Design Manual in February 2009 and he will be coming along to our meeting on Wednesday 25 February to talk to us about the changes, some of which are significant. Mark this in your diary now.

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

When: Wednesday 29 October

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

President's report



I hope you'll be able to join us and celebrate a busy 2008 at the end-of-year dinner with special guest speaker Peter Fray. If you haven't responded yet see the reminder on this page for details on how to reserve your place at what will be a special dinner.

Congratulations to those of our members who sat the inaugural accreditation exam in October. And congratulations to IPEd for achieving this historic milestone. I have been following with a slight sense of déjà vu discussions on accreditation in the Australian Society for Technical Communication (ASTC). The ASTC has some similarities to the editing Societies, and they have been deliberating whether to go down the path of accreditation.

The things that have been occupying my time over the last month have been planning for the end-of-year dinner and working with our Training Coordinator Martine Taylor on planning for next year's training program. Martine has thrown herself into this role with gusto and you will soon be receiving a questionnaire seeking your suggestions on our training program. I encourage you to take this opportunity to help us deliver a top-class program in 2009. As I mentioned last time, we're especially keen to hear you if you are interested in presenting a workshop for us—either using material you have already or that you would be prepared to develop.

In the meantime, we have already been discussing with a local training provider the possibility of putting on one or more workshops early in the new year on starting up and running a small business. And of course we have the Grammar Essentials course coming up on 28 November.

As this will be the last newsletter for this year, I'd like to thank you all for your support this year, and I look forward to working with you in 2009. For those who I won't see at the dinner, I wish you a happy and safe holiday season. Relax and enjoy yourselves, and come back refreshed for a great 2009.

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 February 2009.

The deadline for submissions to the next issue is Wednesday 4 February. The editor welcomes 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

IPEd's first accreditation examination, held on 18 October 2008 at seven locations around the country, was not only a milestone in the professional development of editors but also a logistical triumph. Only minor hiccups were reported by invigilators, a tribute to the organisational ability and sheer hard work of the members of the Accreditation Board and its affiliates, all of whom are volunteers.

171 editors took the exam, which is more than IPEd's target of 150. The numbers at the various venues were as follows: 15 in Adelaide (14%), 21 in Brisbane (13%), 21 in Canberra (11%), 7 in Hobart (10%), 50 in Melbourne (10%), 20 in Perth (20%) and 37 in Sydney (10%). The percentages are the approximate proportions of the local society of editors' membership numbers. Eight of the examinees were not members of a society.

It seems that, in general, most examinees were favourably disposed to the process and content of the exam. Here is one unsolicited comment:

"Making the sample exam available was very useful for us. It gave us a chance to (a) assess whether we should take the plunge, and (b) practice! I'm sure I wasn't the only one who hadn't sat an exam for decades (nearly 30 years in my case), so it was great to have the sample exam to bring some of those grey cells back into action.

...The exam itself was well-constructed and I thought it catered well for the wide range of skills and experience that the examinees might have had. I particularly liked the fact that we could choose which questions to answer from a number of options, as this allowed us to play to our strengths."

All examinees gave it their best and came well equipped for the task. A report from Victoria notes:

"We had a great venue and people were pleased with it and commented that the exam was good. We had some arrive with the biggest dictionaries you have ever seen, that they had lugged across town on public transport!"

For a job well done, bouquets go to the Accreditation Board, the Assessors Forum, the exam development team, the exam coordinator, the Communication Committee for promotion and Sapro Conference Management for handling the nuts and bolts of exam registrations. It is planned to hold a second exam sometime during 2009.

The plan was to complete the marking by 30 November. However at their recent moderation workshop the exam assessors decided that they needed more time to ensure consistency so candidates will now receive their results by 15 December at the latest. The Accreditation Board apologises for this delay as it knows people are anxious to hear their results, but is confident that all will understand the need to get things right.

In other news, we have to report the resignation of Michael Lewis as the SocEds (NSW) nominee on the IPEd Council. We thank Michael for his singular contribution and wish him well for the future. The NSW society will confirm a new nominee shortly.

The Council will meet by teleconference on Sunday 30 November. The draft agenda for the meeting is on the website.

Ed Highley
Secretary
www.iped-editors.org



Thinking about words—the end of finance

Wait a minute—we have a global financial crisis, but isn't 'end of finance' going a bit far? Not really. If we are thinking just about the words, *finance* and *finish* have common origins in Old French, when your 'finance' was a payment to settle a debt, to put an end to—*amener à fin*—an obligation. It could even be a ransom, in the days when prisoners were 'put to finance'. The most extreme case of this may be the ransom paid for the release of Richard the Lionheart, who had been captured by the Austrians on his way back from the Third Crusade in 1192. His mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, financed 150,000 marks to free him—almost three times the annual income of the English Crown at the time—by taxing the entire nation a quarter of the value of their property and confiscating the treasures of the churches. Let's hope that we don't face the same kind of taxation to pay for the government's efforts to rescue our economy!

Finance didn't even have to be money. Chaucer has Mary Magdalene lamenting 'There is no more, but dethe is my fynauce'. A grim prospect if you had a *mortgage*, where the *mort* did indeed refer to death and the *gage* to a pledge. But a 17th century definition explains '... if he doth not pay, the land which is put in pledge ... is taken from him for ever, and so dead to him'. So while your own head might be safe, your property could pass for ever into your creditor's hands.

To some extent 'gage' implies an element of risk to both parties. Grimm's law tells us that *g* and *w* are often interchangeable, so that *gage* and *wager* are related. When you lend money for somebody to buy a house or car, you are gambling that the value of that property will at least cover the remaining value of the debt if the debtor defaults. This certainly used to be true of houses, which increased in value year by year, although it could never have been true for cars, which depreciate spectacularly the moment you drive them out of the dealer's yard. The terms of the loan, and particularly the interest rate, are calculated to take these factors into account. A *prime* mortgage is a safe bet. Our current financial predicament began with the failure of *subprime* loans, where for many years the lenders threw caution to the winds and lent to borrowers who were known risks, or whose property was not worth the asking price and so could never recover the loan amount. The domino effect of the failure of these loans was compounded by the consequent slump in house prices,

which meant that more and more of these properties became worth less than the mortgage value.

In order to continue, business needs money. Usually this means borrowing, because the firm's assets are tied up in stock, premises or machinery. If the cost of money goes up, because the interest rate rises, clearly the firm has to work harder to pay for it. Generally this means it has to increase its sales, but if the customers are also short of cash this may be difficult. It's all a tricky balancing act, and if it topples the result may be bankruptcy—a word that reached us in the 16th century from the Italian *bancarotta*, literally a 'broken bank'. Gamblers hope they may break the bank some day, but not in the sense of becoming bankrupt!

Capital was at first a word applied to the head—Latin *caput, capitis*—either your own or anything else predominantly vertical, like the top of a column. Capital letters were so called because they came at the head of the page or paragraph or sentence; Chaucer waxed lyrical about them, especially the decorated capitals so much in vogue in medieval times. A capital offence was one for which you might quite literally lose your head. Only by the early 1600s is the term used to describe a body's wealth, worth or substance.

In difficult times we try to accumulate savings that we can fall back on, but where do we put them? Under the mattress does nothing for us or anybody else. If we put our savings in the bank, we pass the risk to the bankers. If we invest in stocks and shares we take the risk upon ourselves, and whenever we do so we are warned that the value of these investments can as easily fall as rise. It seems certain, though, that our patriotic duty is to spend up big, whether through wild retail therapy or cautious investment, to keep those businesses afloat! And 'investment' is another word that has changed its meaning through the years. Up to the 17th century 'investment' generally referred to the clergy putting on their robes, or to besieging a city. The term was then applied by East India Company to purchasing property in the hope of profit. The Company was busy buying Indian goods, particularly cotton, and transporting them back to England for sale, and saw this activity as a safe 'investment'.

The cost of buying money is referred to as 'interest', but there too lie some oddities. The Latin word *interest* is a verb meaning 'it makes a difference, it matters, it's important'. There seems to be some confusion

(Continued on page 5)



Grammar's in style...avoiding style crampers

Don't let these 'grammar gremlins' cramp your writing style, slow you down as you edit, or drive you to dictionaries or serious grammar textbooks too

often. Some of these gremlins crop up in material submitted for editing by people with English as a second or third language. Some occur in everyone's writing, from time to time. I will go into some detail about each of these points next year, but here's something to think about over the end-of-year break:

Articles

We use a, an or the in noun phrases—a or an as the indefinite article: *a* book, *an* open book (a before a consonant, an before a vowel or vowel sound); the as the definite article: he grabbed *the* last piece of cake. When we generalise, we often don't use an article at all: Books are stored on shelves in libraries.

Plurals

The most common plural endings on nouns are -s, -es, and -en—books, boxes, children. However, there are many unusual plurals like mice, geese, sheep, data, criteria. And there are some downright weird plurals—for example, the plural of 'mouse' (the one you push around your desk to operate your computer) is not 'mice': it's 'mouses'.

Plurals plus numerators

In many languages, a numerator is sufficient to indicate plural as well, but not in English. An Asian person might write 'I bought *two book* at the shop', whereas the correct English way would be 'I bought *two books* at the shop'.

Prepositions

These little words show relationships between words. There are many kinds, such as prepositions of place, time and so on: 'the ball is *under* the table', 'I will complete it *before* dinner'. Prepositional idiom also dictates which preposition should be used to indicate the particular relationship with the same word in various contexts: 'I am responsible *to* my boss', 'I am responsible *for* the annual report'.

Verb tense for meaning

Tense means time, so if you are talking about something that started a while ago but is still going on, you would use a continuous tense: 'I *have been living* in Canberra for twenty years'. Tense is one of the hardest concepts for many people to understand, so I will

discuss this at length next year.

Proximity of adverbs and verbs

It is best to place adverbs as close as you can to the verbs they modify. 'He *worked diligently* at the task' is better than 'He *worked* at the task *diligently*'.

Avoiding embedding material between the subject of a sentence and the verb

Keep subject and verb as close together as possible. 'My brother is over there in the brown suit' is better than 'That man over there in the brown suit *is my brother*'.

Subject-verb agreement

Make sure that you use a singular verb with a singular subject, and plural with plural: 'A *case* of books *has* arrived this morning' ('case' is singular); 'Two *litres* of milk *are* needed for this recipe' ('litres' is plural). But note: 'Bacon and eggs *is* a great breakfast' ('bacon and eggs' is one dish, so is regarded as singular.)

Apostrophes for possession and omission—not plural
Whole books have been written about the use of the apostrophe. This can be confusing. My rule is just a few lines long, and I will tell you about it next year. For now, here are some correct examples: 'This is the *boy's* cap'; 'These are the *boys'* caps'; 'The *men's* shoe department is on this floor'; 'Please arrive at six *o'clock*'; 'In the *1960s*, the Beatles were popular'.

Possessive pronouns

English has the remnants of a case system in the personal pronoun system—I, me, my, mine for example. Because a special form of the pronoun is used to show possession, there is no need for an apostrophe at all: my, mine; your, yours; his, her, hers, its, their, theirs. So what's *it's*? This is a contraction meaning 'it is'.

Just before writing this piece, I bought the ingredients for the Christmas pudding I make every year for my family. There's a little of this, a little of that and a recipe. I thought this last article for 2008 could well be my Christmas grammar pudding for you, my editing 'family'. Have a great holiday—see you in 2009.

Christmas reading (the 'recipe')
Murphy, E M, 1989 (or one of many later reprints)
Effective writing: plain English at work, Pitman, Melbourne
(copies available from Elizabeth Murphy).

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

about quite how or when this verb became a noun; it may be from the French *intérêt*, which in the 13th century meant 'damages or prejudice' and only a couple of hundred years later referred to somebody's share in an undertaking. In England, a 15th century Parliamentary Roll talks of 'interest, right or title of or in any of the premises', and we still use the word with this sense.

Nowadays it's the interest *rate* that we watch anxiously. 'Rate' goes back to the Latin phrase *pro rata parte* (from which we still use 'pro rata') meaning 'according to the proportional share', implying a measure of something judged against some other measure. That 'rata' is the feminine past participle of *reri*, to think or judge—it is significant that words like 'ratio' and 'ratify' come from the same root. The interest rate is usually expressed as 'per cent', your speed rate is 'per hour' and your 'general rates' are calculated as a proportion of the value of your

property. The interest rate was once thought of as the main factor affecting investment—high interest meant less investment. Now we consider that the investment rate is mainly a question of confidence in the future. That confidence has taken a nasty knock from which it may take a while to recover.

A sombre note on which to finish, but this is a sombre topic and these are sombre times. I promise something a bit jollier to start 2009. Meanwhile, happy Christmas!

Peter Judge

Sources: The *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition on CD-ROM v.3.0.
Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite.
Le trésor de la langue française at
<<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>>.

Summary of CSE Committee Meeting, 21 October 2008

Training matters

- Training needs survey: Martine has developed a draft training needs survey and sought feedback from committee members by 31 October.
- Preliminary discussions with a possible presenter for sessions on the 'business side' of being an editor.
- Encouraging members to run training events. It was generally agreed that any members who conduct training events should receive a professional rate of remuneration.
- Grammar Essentials course for 28 November. So far only six people have paid fees to attend, so more marketing may be required.
- Certificates for people who complete training courses: generally thought to be a good idea and we will do this from now on.

Membership

- Nine new applications considered and approved.

IPed

- Feedback on the accreditation exam from Virginia, Dallas and Larissa: exam was highly successful with 21 people sitting it in Canberra. A report should be published on the IPed website in due course.
- The position of IPed Secretary has been advertised and has attracted considerable interest.

End-of-year dinner

- The meeting scheduled for Wednesday 26 November will be the Annual CSE Dinner, which will be held at Zest in Green Square in Kingston
- It has been confirmed that Peter Frey, managing editor of the Canberra Times, will be the guest speaker for the evening.

Website review

- Sharon and Margaret undertook to commence the review (suggested in Joe Massingham's report).

Committee blog

- We have received an offer of professional assistance to assist in developing the committee blog.

So you think you know everything about words?

If you're interested in words then you should look at World Wide Words. Michael Quinion's renowned site explores the English language from a British viewpoint. There are more than 2,000 pages available, with fresh ones added each week. He discusses new terms, displays weird words, gets behind words and phrases in the news and answers questions. A weekly newsletter by e-mail and RSS keeps you in touch. The site is at <www.worldwidewords.org>

Last chance to enrol for Grammar Essentials workshop on Friday 28 November

Editors often feel they need to know more grammar, but how much is enough? The major grammars of contemporary English run to more than 1000 pages, with vast networks of grammatical terms. Editors probably don't need to know all of them—unless they are aiming for a career change. What they do need for the purposes of professional editing is enough grammar to:

- Make the most of dictionaries, style manuals and other language references
- Understand and explain the variable points of current English usage
- Capitalise on language resources for cohesive writing
- Enlarge their repertoire for managing stylistic change.

Presenter:
Pam Peters, Professor of Linguistics, Macquarie University
Friday 28 November
9:15 am to 4:45 pm
National Library, Training Room 3/4
\$195 members, \$240 non-members
Contact Margaret Millard, email
<margaret.millard@ozemail.com.au>
phone: 6288 6754 (h) 0402 029 552 (mob)

ASTC Conference summary

Rhonda Bracy has provided on her blog a summary of the recent conference of the Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW). Most if not all of the sessions are relevant to us as editors. Links are:
<<http://cybertext.wordpress.com/2008/10/31/astc-nsw-conference-2008-day-1>>
<<http://cybertext.wordpress.com/2008/11/01/astc-nsw-conference-2008-day-2>>

Editing opportunities

Institute of Professional Editors Limited

Company Secretary

The Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) Limited was incorporated in January 2008. IPEd's mission is to advance the profession of editing. It is owned by member associations of editors in the six states and the ACT. For more information about IPEd, go to <www.iped-editors.org.au>.

IPEd invites applications for the position of Company Secretary. The Secretary services the IPEd Council in its work, with outsourced accounting and legal support.

The successful applicant will be employed as a freelance contractor, working from their own premises. The estimated requirement is for an average of 15 to 20 hours per month, at \$60 per hour including GST. Applicants will need to have an ABN or ACN.

Applications close on 30 November 2008.

Selection criteria and a duty statement for the position can be obtained by emailing the Chair of the Council, Virginia Wilton. Her email address is <virginia@whh.com.au>. Please use the following message line: IPEd Company Secretary position_yoursurname_yourfirstinitial.

(Editing opportunities...continued)

Part-time teaching roles with the Military Communication Program, UNSW@ADFA

The Military Communication Program is a military subject taught at ADFA which introduces cadets and midshipmen to the service or military writing they will have to produce in their careers (minutes, letters, administrative instructions, post-activity reports, minutes of meetings etc) and oral communication (briefs, introductions, presentations etc). The program runs over the three years that cadets are at the Academy during university semester times.

Although these are teaching roles, the content is very prescriptive and all lesson plans and materials are provided without the need for input from tutors. The skills needed from tutors are in the area of marking, of which there is a high volume. The focus of the marking is on correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate document/presentation structure, and correct formatting in accordance with ADFP102—Defence Writing Standards. Because of this focus, we feel the positions would suit people with qualifications in editing.

The details of the roles are as follows:

Employer: UNSW@ADFA under UNSW Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement 2006

Employment status: Casual Tutor (ongoing)

Employment periods: Late Feb to mid June and mid July to mid Oct (approx 10 teaching weeks in each period)

Usual hours per week: Two initial tutorials plus four to six repeat tutorials; five to 10 hours of marking per week; two hour staff meeting

Pay rates: Initial tutorial per hour—\$107.31; repeat tutorial per hour—\$71.54; marking—\$35.77 per hour; other duties (staff meeting)—\$35.77 per hour.

Induction framework: New tutors will be asked to learn some of the Defence Conventions, will observe an experienced tutor for a few weeks then take a limited number of classes until confident (all paid). Roles will commence in February 2009.

Qualifications and skills required: degree, and teaching or editing qualification, explicit knowledge of English grammar, confidence in presenting coursework to students.

To apply: Send CV with covering letter expressing interest and availability to <m.grose@adfa.edu.au>

Melinda Grose

Manager, Military Communication Program
UNSW@ADFA

Letter to the Editor

Some blessed incite...

Q. I recently wrote an essay and used some information that my adult son gave me, and when I told him I was using it, he said I had to cite him. In my view, if you give birth to a source and he's still living under your roof, you don't have to cite him. What's your view?

A. I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you do owe him something for the material. If you don't want to credit him in a citation, you might try to cast this as a work-for-hire arrangement. Tell him you'll negotiate the payment the next time you're negotiating his rent.

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End note

Hope to see you at a Zestful end-of-year dinner on Wednesday 26 November, 7pm. See page 1 for details, and the CSE website at <www.editorscanberra.org.au>

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SURFACE
MAIL

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