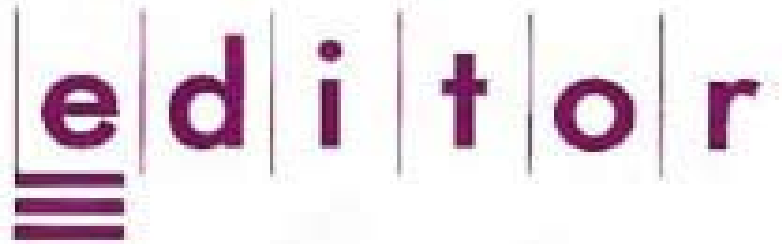


The Canberra



## Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Volume 17 | Number 9 | October 2008

Next meeting  
Wednesday  
29 October  
6 pm

### The politics of words

*Presented by Susan Aitkin*

Some of us work in an environment where being politically correct seems important. But that is a far cry from a regime where being politically incorrect can cost not only your job but also your life.

Sue began her career as a journalist and has spent the last 15 years in a number of countries before returning to work on policy issues with a federal government department. She set up a journalism school in Cambodia after the Pol Pot years and worked on UNICEF's communications programs in Lao PDR, Nepal and Myanmar. Susan has a wealth of stories and examples highlighting the power of words in their use and misuse – intentional or otherwise.

This promises to be an entertaining and informative evening for anyone interested in words. That probably includes you.

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

**When:** Wednesday 29 October

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

### President's report



My big news this month is that our Society now has a Training Coordinator! Martine Taylor has kindly volunteered for this important role and on your behalf I'd like to extend a big welcome to her. You'll learn more about Martine in the next newsletter, but she already has lots of good ideas about the role and will be seeking your input very soon about what we need to include in our training program.

Of course, one of the challenges of putting a training program together is to find people who are prepared to present the sessions. However it is likely that many of our members are already experienced trainers and presenters, so I hope we'll be able to tap into this expertise. We'd love to hear from you if you're interested in presenting a workshop on an editing-related topic over the next year or so. Please contact me or Martine (see contact details on page two).

I was very pleased with the turnout at the last general meeting to hear Kristina Cunningham talk about her favourite tricks with Word, and this leads me to believe that we need to include more topics like this in our meetings and training program.

Some of you may be wondering what has happened to the information you provided two meetings ago on mentoring. Well, I have been slowly absorbing it and am in the early stages of drafting a proposal for a scheme that I think might suit our Society. I hope to be able to present this to you before the end of the year.

That's it from me—I don't want to take up too much space since we have a fairly packed newsletter this month, with a bit of a focus on the business side of editing which I hope you will find interesting.

See you in the Friends Lounge on the 29th.

*Ted Briggs*

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**Newsletter schedule**

The next newsletter will appear in late November 2008.

The deadline for submissions to the next issue is Wednesday 5 November. 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

By the time you read this, IPed's first accreditation examination, held on Saturday 18 October, will be almost done and dusted—an outcome of enormous significance for the future of our profession. I write 'almost' because the exam markers, before they finalise their task, will be participating in a moderation workshop in Sydney during the first weekend in November to ensure a consistent approach to assessment across jurisdictions. More on the exam next month.

New on the IPed website is a report by Pamela Hewitt of her fourth national survey of editors, conducted in conjunction with the 2007 national conference in Hobart. There were 132 responses to the survey and just under half of the respondents described themselves as freelance. The full report is recommended reading for all editors, but to whet your appetite I'll list a few of the main findings.

- The profession had not been taken over by men since the previous survey in 2005: 87% of the respondents were female.
- We're a highly educated lot: fewer than 10% of respondents did not have at least a first degree, and more than 60% had qualifications higher than an undergraduate degree.
- The proportion of editors who reported that they participated in professional development programs remained high at 97%.
- The proportion of full-time editors fell to 54%, compared with

60% in the previous survey, with 28% working part time and 14% working at other jobs as well as editing. About half the respondents worked as employees.

- There was little change since 2005 in the rates that editors reported charging, the average hourly rate remaining at just above \$60. There were significant interstate variations in the average. As before, the standard deviation about the mean was large, with reported hourly rates ranging from \$34 to \$160.

- Among the main challenges identified by respondents were extending skills and keeping abreast of technology.

- High priorities for respondents included that the professional associations take on a greater public promotion role, that professional development activities increase, and that more effort be put into mentoring and career advice and development.

Here's a little gem from the comments field of a survey form:

I am sick of hearing about women supplementing their income when they are stuck at home with kids by doing 'a bit of editing'. I wouldn't dream of doing 'a little doctoring' or 'a little engineering'. Editors need to be acknowledged as professionals, and important ones at that.

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



## Thinking about words—the spring invasion

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.  
Gen. 2, 19

Spring seems to be the time when animals that normally live happily in our garden decide to go walkabout, either indoors, or where they can be most tiresome outdoors. The first blowfly of summer we greet with equanimity and a quick squirt of Mortein, but we have now had our first huntsman spider of the year on the dining room wall and a very large black cockroach on the bathroom door, great fat aphids on the roses and a twiggy green caterpillar on the lime tree. Everything seems to be on the move.

When we spot one or other of these invaders we can at least talk about them with confidence, knowing that the name will be understood. Adam had the misfortune of having no one of his own kind to share his newly-minted names with. Until Eve was around, it was no use saying, as he might have done, 'By Jove, there's a serpent in the apple tree!' *Serpent* and *apple* might have been quite unambiguous, but would be pointless if there was no one to receive the message.

Until I came to Australia, a *huntsman* was just a man in a red coat. A *daddy-longlegs* is a crane fly in Britain, not the *harvestman* spider that now seems to find its way into every room in our house. English *magpies* are a totally different breed from the ones we have here, and won't swoop at you. Those apparently familiar names don't always do their communication job.

Different language backgrounds can give rise to even greater confusion. When we first lived in France we had an apartment overlooking the River Seine, next door to a French rheumatologist whose Dutch wife occasionally baby-sat for us. The first time she did so she asked us if the *spinsters* in little Richard's room worried us, and whether he liked beer in his bed. It took a moment or two to sort out that there were some tiny spiders that concerned her, and that *beer* was her pronunciation of *bear*, his teddy. Well, we say 'hear', don't we? And those *spinsters*? The Dutch for a spider is *een spin*, and the German *eine Spinne*.

Scientists need a better way of referring to plants and animals than local nicknames. This was solved in the 18th century by Carl Linnaeus. In his binomial system every living thing has a two-part Latin name; the first part (the *genus*) grouping very closely related animals or plants, and the second (the *species*) identified the particular kind. Two of the same species can normally interbreed, but different species generally give rise to infertile offspring—'mules'. Thus, cats have the generic name *Felis*, but within the genus *Felis* we have our domesticated *Felis catus* and five

other small cat species. Linnaeus also grouped lions and tigers under *Felis* (*F. leo* and *F. tigris*), but now they are classified under the genus *Panthera*—still in the family Felidae, which currently has 37 species in 18 genera.

So, where do our common names come from? We can't blame Adam, who probably spoke Proto-Indo-European, ancestral to Old Hebrew. Our English spider was also a *spinner*, from the Saxon *spinthra*, which became *spithre* or *spither*, and thence to spider by the mid-1400s. However, in the Romance languages the spider goes back to classical mythology, to the Greek Arachne, who had the temerity to challenge the goddess Athena to a weaving contest. In this she so outshone the goddess that the latter tore Arachne's perfect tapestry to shreds in a fit of pique. The distraught Arachne hanged herself, but the rope became a cobweb and she changed into a spider. So spiders now belong to the Class Arachnida (with over 90,000 known species) and the French and Italian words reflect their origin: *une araignée* and *un ragno*.

Spiders aren't really pests, even if you feel uneasy sharing your house with them. The word pest has an ugly history. It originally meant the bubonic plague, and still does in French: *la peste*, from the Latin *pestis*. If your children are plaguing you, you probably think of them as little pests, but you don't really mean it literally. Not so for the cockroach, who really is rather unpleasant: apart from having similar gourmet tastes to ourselves and so spoiling any of our food that they can lay their hands and feet on, they have a characteristic unpleasant smell. Their name was an attempt by Captain John Smith, one of the early settlers in Virginia (he whose life was saved by Pocahontas), to spell the Indian name of this insect, *cacarootch*. He succeeded in introducing this term to Europe, whence the Spaniards derived *cucuracha*, corrupted by the English into cockroach and by the French into *cancrelat*. The French have two more names for it: *blatte* (after *Blatta*, the Latin name of many species) or *cafard*. *Cafard* is also a slang term in French for a black humour, profound melancholy, presumably because the dark insects shun the light.

Caterpillar is an even stranger name, supposedly from the Old French *chatepelose*, meaning 'hairy cat', although modern French has *chenille*, thought to come from the Latin *canicula*, 'little dog'. Shakespeare spelt it *caterpillar*, but Samuel Johnson preferred the *-ar* ending and his spelling has since prevailed. Johnson, whose views on etymology are often less than reliable, thought it got its name from

(Continued on page 6)



## Grammar's in style...what's your style as an editor?

I'm taking a little detour from this year's basic grammar theme to look at what we are as editors. My motivation for doing so is the evening we spent in the stimulating and hard-hitting company of Joe Massingham at the CSE general

meeting on Wednesday 25 June 2008.

By the time you read this, you will probably have read the results of Joe's focus-group survey on the CSE. I am not going to comment on that document. I want to say what I think about the editing profession, professionalism in editing, the responsibilities of an editor and the skills an editor ought to possess—in my opinion, that is.

This article also comes on top of an initial discussion about mentoring at the CSE meeting on Wednesday 27 August 2008, so it seemed relevant to include something about mentoring.

### **What do we mean by the term 'editor'?**

In the context of the CSE, we do not usually mean a newspaper or magazine editor. This person's job is to select material for publication, to cull stories that can't be included and to decide just how much of any particular story will make it to the publication and on which page. Such an editor doesn't always have a great deal to do with checking spelling, grammar, punctuation, style etc, but is more likely to have more to do with restructuring and even re-focusing stories to bring the meat of a story to the most prominent position so that it will 'sell' the publication. There are often sub-editors to do the detailed checking.

Thinking of the editors who are seeking accreditation as professional editors, what we generally mean is a text editor. As text editors we work at various levels of edit. If we're wise, we don't quote for editing anything until we've looked at what level of edit is required for the job. The client frequently has no idea. Only recently I was asked "What do you charge for editing?" Well, you can imagine my response. It went something like this: "That depends on what I'm to edit, the complexity of the document, the level of edit required, and perhaps whether I've done editing for you in the past, among many considerations".

Mind you, I do know magazine editors who also text edit (I am such a person myself in one of my roles)—they have to because their organisations are small and can't afford two separate people for the two aspects of the editorial function. However, a lot of our training and interest is in text editing. Perhaps we should broaden our horizons and include magazine and newspaper editors

and provide more talk topics at meetings that would interest such people too.

### **Professionalism**

I have written about this in recent articles, so I will say no more than this: professionalism and accreditation go hand in hand but are not joined at the hip. An editor can be totally professional and not bother about accreditation because he or she already has a good reputation around town as a meticulous editor with professional standards. Accreditation alone can't make you a better person. It can't make you more professional in outlook. Your personal standing among your peers is still a good gauge of a professional approach to the job.

Having said that, I fully support accreditation of editors as a necessary step towards full professionalism in editing. It will be the norm in years to come—it will become increasingly difficult to get editing work without accreditation at some level or other. My earnest hope is that accreditation will be a rite of passage from 'learning to be a professional editor' to 'being a professional editor'. But remember that accreditation can't teach you professionalism—it's something, like adulthood, that you grow into.

### **Responsibilities**

Much has also been said and written about the responsibilities of an editor. To me, one responsibility is paramount: to make the author's work look as good as possible. Now, that assumes that you know something about the author, the audience, the subject, and have at least a nodding acquaintance with the author's reasons for writing the document in the first place. Squiggles in margins or Track Changes can be assumed—as text editors we ought to be able to use any form of editing that the author can relate to—after all, the author needs to understand the changes you are recommending. There are many styles for many purposes. They range from very sophisticated house styles through various professional styles to simple everyday words that clearly tell the author (or printer or publisher) what you recommend. If you work where a particular style of editing is required, it is your responsibility to learn that style and use it.

One responsibility doesn't get much of a mention—being a teacher. What is the use of all the squiggles etc if the author has no idea what they mean and therefore ignores them and sends your version off to the printer without question? That author will go away and make all the same mistakes again. If I am doing something to someone else's written work, I would expect that they would expect me to tell them why I'm doing it. It's no good if I waffle on in esoteric terminology that they don't follow. They need to know, at their own level of

squiggle means and what was wrong with their original and why my version is likely to be better for their document.

And you can't teach unless you are also teachable. The seminars and other teaching aids available to editors ought to be snapped up and devoured by all of us. As we learn new wrinkles on how to perform our craft, as we absorb the basics of editing skills and the grammar etc that support them, as we grow in confidence in our own understanding of what we're doing, so we become better and better equipped to pass on tips to authors and to explain to authors why we are recommending certain changes in their manuscript.

Maybe I'm biased, but if I were to have a catchcry for editors it would be "Be teachable in order to be able to teach. Learn and then go out and teach what you have been taught and are practising".

And this leads to another, related, responsibility—being a mentor. What's the difference between a teacher and a mentor? Plenty, but we all have our own ideas about where teaching ends and mentoring begins. To me, a mentor guides and encourages a person and allows them to develop along their own lines. A mentor needs to be able to see beyond the present situation to where the mentee is heading in their career, and help the mentee to see stumbling blocks and get over them, help them develop skills by seeking training, help them evaluate their own level of expertise by posing insightful questions, and so on—but never by actually doing stuff for them that they ought to be able to do for themselves. Mentoring in the editing business is a challenge, an extension of teaching, and not for everyone perhaps. Indeed, a mentor may not even be a highly skilled practitioner—but a mentor will certainly have 'people skills'. A good mentor knows when to let go and allow the mentee to take off on their own. Teaching, on the other hand, means passing on specific skills, actively helping the learner to acquire a set of skills, testing them on their understanding, and making sure that they are competent to use those skills. Of course, teaching can include the philosophy and theory behind whatever practical activity we can think of, but I've kept my comments here to what's mostly required to get a new editor up to speed.

### Skills

As in many walks of life, there are some standards in editing practice. We need to adhere to them, but we also need to be flexible. Just exactly what is copy-editing, for instance? To me, the term relates to a blurry area on a continuum—I don't think we can divide up the editing role into three, or four, or five,

or fifteen levels of edit clearly, though we have tried to specify three—there are huge areas of overlap. It takes time and the development of skills all along the continuum to be able to say that a document requires a copy-edit or a substantive edit or a proofread. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to learn all the skills necessary to edit anything, and to find out who or what to refer to when we don't know something ourselves. Very basic skills should be a given—such skills as understanding the requirements of the Australian standards for editing practice, being very familiar with the conventions of English grammar, knowing at least the most common proofreading symbols, and knowing how to use something like Track Changes so that the author understands our comments. We build on those skills over time.

So—who are we? How do we want to appear to the general public? How do we get there? Are we thinking sufficiently far ahead to take into account changes in what others think of as 'an editor'? I recently heard a talk and read a book about the Y Generation. For a pre-Baby Boomer, this was quite an experience—we all need to learn respect for each others' views on work and life. To many of us in the editing profession, 'editor' means one thing—to GenY it may mean something quite different—we need to ask them and take their views on board—they live in the world of mobile phones and text messaging, and have a totally different view of how to achieve their needs from that of their elders. It can only be good for a profession if it grows as the generations grow and as technology extends into every aspect of life. And it can only be good for a profession if older and younger, more experienced and less experienced editors learn from each other and learn respect for the fundamental values of their profession.

I'll get down from my soapbox now and get back to basic grammar next month! By the way, thanks to the people who took the trouble to tell me they missed my article in September—I was away from base, burning up the k's between Canberra and Melbourne, having a bit of a holiday.

Reference: Australian standards for editing practice Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) [now Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd)], 2001

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emmurphy@ozemail.com.au

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

*cates*, an old word for food, and *piller*, French for 'pillage, rob'. A caterpillar is, of course, a *larva*, which sounds Latin and is: it means a 'ghost' or a 'mask', and was used by Linnaeus in the sense of a disguise, because the mature insect is unrecognisable. The caterpillar stage is followed by the *pupa*, also a Linnaeus coinage from the Latin for a doll; the pupa may also be called a *chrysalis*, from the Greek for gold, the 'golden sheath' in which the insect builds its adult form. The *catkins* on your birch tree were so called because they look like caterpillars.

A pest likely to make its presence increasingly felt is the European wasp. Its Latin name was *Vespa* (the same as its current scientific name) and most European languages have something very similar: Italian *vespa*, German *Wespe*, Spanish *avispa* and French *guêpe*. *Guêpe*? Yes, that fits too: it traces back to 12th century Old French *wespe*, those *w* to *gu* changes being quite common—compare English *ward/guard, warranty/*

*guarantee*—and the circumflex very often indicating an *s* in a French word's ancestry.

As for the *mosquito*, its name is simply a diminutive of the Latin *musca*, a fly. It reached English unchanged from the Spanish, but the French managed to get it all upside down, ending up with *moustique*. So if ever you need a mosquito net in France, be sure to ask for a *moustiquaire* and not a *mousquetaire*, or you'll wind up with a musketeer in your bed!

Which seems a good point for me to wind up. I have to go and spray things.

Peter Judge

Sources: The Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM v.3.0. Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, ed Jack Lynch, Levenson Press 2002. Le trésor de la langue française at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>>.

## Minutes of CSE Committee Meeting, 16 September 2008

### Present when meeting commenced at 5:35 PM

were: Ted Briggs, Brian O'Donnell, Margaret Millard, Helen Topor, Kevin Maguire and Tina Toth.

**Apologies:** Sharon Eacott, Virginia Wilton, Peter Judge, Rebecca Booth, Larissa Joseph, Dallas Stow and Damaris Wilson

### Minutes of previous meeting

The following comments were made:

- Margaret will develop a 'Green Paper' to examine issues related to future membership possibilities. It will consider issues such as: possible tiers of membership and the reasons for them and fee structures.
- Gil had confirmed that he was happy for Dallas to take over as Membership Secretary.
- There was no volunteer for the role of Training Co-ordinator at the most recent general meeting. Therefore a volunteer would be sought via the newsletter.

**Treasurer's report:** Margaret circulated copies of July and August Statements of Income and Expenses and indicated that as at 16 September the balance for the Small Business account was approximately \$7,400.

Margaret undertook to check with Peter Judge about the recent account for web hosting services as the cost seem to have risen significantly.

**Membership Secretary's report:** In the absence of the Membership Secretary no report was presented. However, on the day following the meeting, Margaret provided the following information about recent new memberships.

Full members, endorsed out of session by the committee on recommendation from Gil are:

Liz Drysdale, Angela Cole, and Martin Blaszczyk.

Associate members are:

Anne Glavimans, Wendy Pang, Martin Taylor, Karen Watts, Eileen Willingham, and Patricia Munro (Patricia applied for full membership but the committee agreed that her level of experience was more appropriate to associate membership. Gil has advised that he sent Patricia an email to this effect).

Student member is Anna Walczuk.

**Newsletter Editor's report:** In the absence of the Newsletter Editor, Ted mention that the despatch of the latest edition was imminent.

**Training Coordinator's report:** There being no Training Coordinator, Ted advised that the Grammar Essential Workshop provided by Pam Peter will go ahead as scheduled on 28 November.  
(A Training Coordinator, Martine Taylor, has now been appointed. Ed)

**IPEd report:** In Virginia's absence, none presented.

**Catering Coordinator's report:** Tina advised that she had contacted Bookplate and other caterers to assess an indicative cost for general meeting catering and found that the cost was prohibitive. Therefore for the last meeting she had purchased suitable refreshments from a supermarket and it was agreed that this had been very satisfactory.

## 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](http://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](mailto:virginia@whh.com.au)>. Please use the following message line: IPEd Company Secretary position\_yoursurname\_yourfirstinitial.

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*(Minutes of CSE Committee Meeting...continued from page 6)*

**Blog trial:** Brian advised that an initial trial version of the Committee Blog had been setup and email invitations sent to all committee members to commence using the blog. Once those invitations were accepted Brian would be able to change the status for each person to author, which should allow them to start posting items to various parts of the blog.

As part of the testing process Brian had password protected some blog pages and circulated the password by email so that members could trial that feature. For some time yet using the blog would necessarily be something of a 'journey of discovery' but with experience we should be able to use it effectively.

**General Meeting Co-ordinator's report:** Kevin sought suggestions from the rest of the committee about other possibilities for presentations and events

for future general meetings.

There will be a presentation from Kristina Cunningham entitled 'Cool things with Microsoft Word'.

Ted will follow up with Virginia about the arrangements for a speaker for the end of year function.

Margaret will send Kevin details of a possible presentation from Vision Australia – perhaps for the October meeting. If that doesn't prove possible Ted's suggestion of a 'Speed dating' activity will be organised instead. In the new year Brian will give a presentation for the February meeting and Ted will provide one in March.

Meeting closed at 7:00 pm.

**Next meeting:**  
5:30 pm Tuesday 16 October

## Workshops and training

### Grammar Essentials workshop in 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 2008

9:15 am to 4:45 pm

National Library, Training Room 3/4

\$195 members, \$240 non-members

Contact Brian O'Donnell on 0419 625 714

### ASTC Conference in Sydney

The Australian Society for Technical Communication (ASTC) is holding its annual conference at Citigate Central, Haymarket, Friday 31 October to Saturday 1 November 2008.

This year's conference features presentations of new technologies and methodologies in the pipeline. IPED's Queensland delegate Robin Bennett will speak about the national accreditation program for Australian editors.

More information on the Conference can be found in the article on page 11.

Go to: <<http://www.astcnsw.org.au/conference/conference.asp?item=Calendar>> for online registration.

## Spaced Oddity

We all love words; that's why we do what we do. And if you enjoy visual wordplay, you'll love British cartoonist Graham Rawle's Lost Consonant series, which were published in *The Guardian* for many years. He made part of his living because he was inspired by some sub-editor's inability to proofread! Check out <<http://www.grahamrawle.com/lostconsonants>> If you come across some verbiage that tickles your fancy and would like to share it with us, send a short email to the editor at <[virginia.cooke@gmail.com](mailto:virginia.cooke@gmail.com)>.



## Fourth national survey of editors

Pamela Hewitt

*Pamela Hewitt has over 17 years of experience as a professional editor, both in-house and freelance. She is also a qualified teacher and has lectured in editing programs in universities and TAFE. Pamela has run professional workshops for writers' centres, literary festivals, editing conferences and most Australian societies of editors.*

The fourth national survey of editors was conducted at the conference, 'From Inspiration to Publication', held in Hobart in May 2007. There were 132 responses to the survey, an increase on the responses to the third national survey of editors, carried out in October 2005 at the Melbourne conference.

These surveys are the only comprehensive, national collection of information about editors. Although participation at national conferences is not necessarily representative of all editors, they are excellent opportunities to gather national data and views, and they provide a snapshot of the profession. To allow comparison over the four surveys, the same questions were asked, where possible.

As the conference was held in Hobart, there is a disproportionate representation of Tasmanian editors. Some 16% of respondents were from Tasmania. Even so, there is an encouraging continuity of response, which suggests that we can have confidence in the findings. The most variable responses are in the area of rates and charges so I conducted a state-by-state analysis to allow comparison.

### Who is an Australian editor?

- It comes as no surprise that women continue to outnumber men in the profession, with 87% female respondents and 13% male.
- As all the previous surveys have shown, editors are highly educated. The percentage of editors who hold at least a degree remains steady at 92%. In 2005, just over a quarter of respondents held a Masters or Doctoral degree; in 2007, the number of higher degrees had increased to 36%. The combined percentage of people holding qualifications higher than an undergraduate degree is an impressive 63%. Many respondents reported multiple higher degrees, for example two Masters degrees or a Masters and a Doctorate.
- The proportion of editors who reported participating in professional development programs also increased slightly, to 97%, continuing the increasing trend for professional skills upgrading noted in previous surveys.

- The proportion of respondents who had more than 6 years' experience as an editor increased slightly, to 71%.
- The proportion of full-time editors was 54% compared with 60% two years earlier, with 28% working part time and 14% working in the field in addition to other employment.
- The changing role of editors in the publishing industry continues to be reflected in the terms we use to describe our work. In 2007, 31% of respondents described their role as copyediting or proofreading, 22% saw themselves primarily as substantive editors (twice the 11% who identified their work as substantive editing two years earlier), 10% described themselves as project managers while 36% agreed that it was impossible to distinguish between combinations of these activities. Many used job titles: commissioning editor, acquisition editor, publisher, communications manager, development editor, writing services manager, web writer/editor, corporate communications, team manager, partner in a writing and editing business, managing editor and more.
- In this survey, a slightly higher proportion (48% compared with 46%) of respondents worked as employees. Just under half of respondents were freelance, with the rest describing their employment status in various ways, including contractor, company director and, in one case, 'dormant'!

### Rates

The 2005 survey reported a significant increase in the reported rates editors charge. The national average hourly rate of \$61, a marked increase on the \$50 average reported in the previous two surveys, had barely increased in 2007 and is now \$62.55, to be precise.

A breakdown by state and territory follows: average hourly rates for editing were \$66 in Victoria, \$65 in NSW, \$64 in the ACT, \$63 in South Australia, \$62 in Tasmania, \$56 in Queensland and \$51 in Western Australia. There were some overseas respondents and some which were unidentified by state. The average figure for this 'other' category was \$62 but it is based on a small sample.

The huge variations reported in previous surveys are still a feature of the profession. The highest reported hourly rate for editing was \$160 and the lowest was \$34. All these findings relate to freelance editing rates. Higher rates are charged for services such as project management and document development.

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Fourth national survey of editors...continued from page 9)*

Comments about rates included 'Some publications have low fixed rates', 'corporate and educational editing seems to pay better than trade and commercial book editing', 'I should be charging more' and 'other editors tend to be cagey about what they charge'. One respondent observed that editors should charge as much as graphic designers. 'Rates for most editors depend on what the client is willing to pay', said another. 'Charging low rates results in the industry being seen as a cottage industry'. Pleas for IPEd and professional associations to provide advice on rates repeated comments in earlier years. Geography was a reason cited by several respondents for low rates—the comment was that in smaller states and country towns, higher rates are harder to achieve. A common strategy is to charge different rates for different clients, according to capacity to pay and the perceived going rate in that area of the industry. Another comment that was echoed by many was that it is better to charge by the job than by the hour and several respondents remarked that they charge the same rate regardless of the type of work performed (proofreading, copyediting, structural editing).

I'll leave you with this realistic but hopeful comment on rates: 'People work for very low rates for editing, therefore undercutting each other. However, sometimes you get what you pay for. Hopefully, accreditation will even this out a bit more.'

### Challenges

Extending skills was the challenge most frequently cited as the most important and it was the most commonly listed item overall, followed by keeping abreast of technology and maintaining and extending networks. Managing workload emerged as a common challenge for many, who commented that the workflow is often out of their direct control when clients and publishers are late with manuscripts or don't allow sufficient time for the work to be done. Several respondents identified their efforts to have clients value editorial work as a challenge.

### Priorities

A greater public promotion role by professional associations was the clear favourite development requested by respondents, with the highest number of people listing this as their number one priority, followed by the need for the provision of more professional development for editors, followed closely by a desire for a greater employment brokerage role on the part of societies.

As in earlier years, many stressed the need for a mentoring scheme, career advice and career development. Many commented favourably on the establishment of the accreditation scheme. Other suggestions were more liaison with industries

beyond publishing, and a plea for a greater sense of professionalism among editors.

### Subject areas

Once again, the most common description for most editors was 'generalists'. Education was by far the most common subject area with 48 responses. Next was science (34), trade fiction and non-fiction (14), history (13), government, the environment (each with 10), academic, business and finance (each with 9), health (8), theology and religion, corporate, medicine and the arts (all with 7), and biography or memoir, law and maths (all with 5)

The many single-item responses included intelligence, current affairs, music, accounting and biology.

Here are some more parting quotes from respondents:

"I think editors need to be micro-specialists and macro-generalists."

"We're not paid enough for what we do, and we need greater awareness and visibility and value of our profession... We will be paid more when people appreciate what we do — or when men enter the profession."

"Despite my science background, I'm finding that editing other areas (e.g. management and business) is surprisingly straightforward. I'm coming to think that editing in an area different from my background may well be an advantage — I can better stand back and take an objective view of how understandable the text really is."

"I enjoy and pursue a lot of variety and eclecticism in my work and so have successfully resisted specialisation."

"I'd like to see more professional support for freelancers starting off. A mentoring scheme would be valuable and could even be 'fee for service'. Work experience schemes with publishers would also be useful."

"I am sick of hearing about women supplementing their income when they are stuck at home with kids by doing 'a bit of editing'. I wouldn't dream of doing 'a little doctoring' or 'a little engineering'. Editors need to be acknowledged as professionals, and important ones at that."

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*In next month's issue of The Canberra Editor Pamela looks at rates and how much editors are worth and should charge for their services.*

## Register now for the Australian Society for Technical Communication (NSW) annual conference

The ASTC conference will be held on Friday 31 October and Saturday 1 November at the Citigate Central in Haymarket, Sydney.

This year's conference focuses on the analytical and problem-solving aspects of technical communication, and there will also be sessions on professional development, accreditation, certification and professionalism in general.

What is the future of technical communication as a profession? What does it mean to be a professional? Presenters from comparable professions will shed some light on these questions, including John Maizels from the media industry, who was instrumental in setting up a system to induct industry entrants, certify their competency and provide mentors.

Robin Bennett from the Society of Editors (Queensland), will talk on why and how it decided to accredit its members.

Increasingly, technical communicators have to be marketers of both product and services. Irene Wong, in the innocently titled 'What's in it for me?', gives us some ideas on how to sell the message. On another tack, John Catlin explores methods for articulating the value of the services we provide. (Your boss will love you for that.)

Brian O'Donnell provides another missing piece of the puzzle that is technical communication: he explores the technical writing project from a personality-type perspective using the Myers-Briggs system.

Whether or not forms design is part of your work, Liz Griffiths and Lorraine Hall have insights into designing 'information that works'.

Helen Lewis presents the 'Don't panic' guide to producing an annual report: useful information for any information development project.

Meanwhile, Ana Young opens the door to her world: what it means to be a technical communicator in the mining industry.

In a case study, Bob Trussler describes how a non-traditional layout solved some usability problems. Roger Swift provides some tools and techniques for evaluating communications, while Rhonda Bracey does the same for user interfaces.

Need to re-organise some long documents? Neil James (Plain English Foundation) demonstrates the PEF's structure-mapping tool. But thinking again, is animation the way to get the message across? Then don't miss Rodney D'Silva.

Full program details and online registration and payment are available at <[www.astcnsw.org.au](http://www.astcnsw.org.au)>

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## **End notes**

*The CSE Christmas dinner will be held on Wednesday 26 November, 6.30 for 7.30pm.  
Check the CSE website at [www.editorscanberra.org.au](http://www.editorscanberra.org.au) for important updates.*

### **Did you know...**

*...that there is a Canberra Society of Editors yahoo group? You can connect with other CSE members and get pedantic about semantics. To join, send a blank email (no need to include a subject line) to **canberraeditors-subscribe@yahoogroups.com** (But if your email address doesn't make it clear who you are, add your name so that you can be recognised as a member.)*

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If undeliverable, please return to  
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