

## Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Volume 18 | Number 8 | September 2009

Next meeting  
Wednesday  
30 September  
6pm

The Quiggle is back by popular demand. What's a Quiggle, you ask? Will it be a quiz, or will it be a discussion of editing niggles? No, a bit of both—it's a 'quiggle'! This members' night will combine fun and games with some serious discussion of editing issues.

For example:

- Does your blood boil at the sight of a misplaced apostrophe?
- At the end of the day, does it matter if people use clichés?
- Do you apoplex at the sight of an invented verb?
- Are you sure where the commas go with 'not only ... but also'?

So, please email your pet editing niggles to <tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au>, or just bring them along to the meeting and we will endeavour to supply the soap box.

Where: Friends Lounge,  
National Library of Australia

When: Wednesday 30 Sept

Time: Join us for nibbles and drinks at 6pm, followed by the Quiggle at 6.30pm

### President's report

Canberra editors are an interesting bunch. We're a mostly reasonable, if somewhat fussy, group of people, so it is quite an honour to have been chosen to fill the role of president for the next two years.

Ted and the outgoing committee have left the society in good shape, and I would like to thank them for their hard work over the past one or two years. In particular, Virginia (both of them), Martine, Dallas, Margaret, Kevin, and Ted, of course, all deserve our thanks.

Some committee members have stayed on, and I am grateful for their continued contribution to the society. To those who are new—welcome. I am looking forwards to working with you all to continue to develop our profession in Canberra.

It is really too early for me to say where I see the society going in the next two years. The only real agenda I have is to further build the society. Mentoring of our newer members is something that I would like to explore, and I hope some of our more experienced members will have some suggestions on how we can make this happen.

I would also like to hear from you—where would you like us to go? How do you see the role of the society now that IPEd and the accreditation system are taking shape? What would you like to see changed? What else would you like your professional association—the Canberra Society of Editors—to do for you? Or would you like to be more actively involved?

As I said, it's an honour to fill this role. I look forward to working with you all over the next two years.

And if you haven't met me, or any of the other committee members, try to get to a Wednesday general meeting. This month is a 'quiggle'—a quiz and a discussion of editing niggles—and it is a good opportunity to meet a few of your Canberra colleagues.

*Cathy Nicoll*

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**Newsletter schedule**

The next newsletter will appear in late October 2009. The deadline for submissions to the next issue is Wednesday 14 October. 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

It is pleasing to report that the total membership of the seven societies of editors that are the members of IPEd increased last year, from 1,489 on 31 May 2008 to 1,645 on that date this year. That's a rise of more than

10 per cent. All the societies apart from Tasmania which, in any case, demonstrated in 2007 that cool-climate editors in a compact society play well above average, showed increased membership, with Queensland recording the biggest rise.

Congratulations are due to the Society of Editors (NSW), which celebrated its 30th anniversary in July. The event was marked with a special dinner at which the guest speaker was Dr Jeremy Fisher, currently the Executive Director of the Australian Society of Authors. Dr Fisher gave a fascinating account of the history of the society, mentioning the many luminaries of editing and publishing—names that will be familiar to many—who have walked its path. It's well worth reading the transcript of his talk, which you can find online at <www.editorsnsw.com>, in the September issue of its journal, *Blue Pencil*.

The 4th IPEd National Editors Conference, to be held in Adelaide on 8–10 October 2009, is now almost upon us but, never fear, you can register right up to the time of the event. The program and an online registration form can be found at <www.editors-sa.org.au> or via the IPEd website.

IPEd affairs will be covered in two conference sessions. On Thursday 8 October, in the afternoon, the Accreditation Board will outline its progress and plans, and honour our first accredited editors and distinguished

editors. The conference program on Friday 9 October will begin with IPEd's annual general meeting, following which Virginia Wilton, the outgoing chair of the council, will outline what IPEd has achieved to date and invite discussion on the challenges ahead. This is your chance to meet the councillors, old and new, hear what councillors and your fellow editors have to say about issues that affect us all and to express your views in a public forum. We look forward to seeing you there.

*Ed Highley*  
*Secretary*  
[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)

### Would you like to receive your newsletter by email?

A number of members have asked if it is possible to receive the newsletter by email. If you would prefer to receive your copy of the newsletter this way, please contact Peter Judge at <peter.judge@bigpond.com> and he will adjust the mailing list.

### Two committee positions still to be filled

Have you always wanted to volunteer your help to your society but haven't known where to start? Two very important roles are up for grabs. The catering coordinator provides the all-important plentiful and delicious snacks and beverages (yes, alcoholic too!) that you enjoy at meetings, and the general meeting coordinator... well, makes the general meetings happen! For more information contact the president Cathy Nicoll on 6259 2984 or email <cathy.nicoll@atrax.net.au>



## Thinking about words—the birth of the press

Stephen Fry's recent TV program on the origins of printing prompted me to look again at what I had written about this back in May 2007, in my thinking about the 'ough' words. It was not really very much, considering the importance of the 'Gutenberg revolution' to us as editors, and it was mostly about Caxton, who brought printing to England and began the process of standardising our spelling. But what did Gutenberg actually do, and did he really do it all by himself? We have all heard that the Chinese invented printing with movable type, so where does Gutenberg come in?

The Chinese certainly had the three basic elements of printing by the end of the second century CE:

paper made from rags (replacing silk for writing on), ink, and surfaces with raised relief from which impressions could be taken. Initially this involved little more than the equivalent of brass-rubbing, but later they were producing prints by writing on fine paper that was then pressed onto a wooden block covered with sticky rice paste that took up the ink. Craftsmen then cut round the ink-marks, leaving a relief image on which to print a page at a time. The first known book, the *Diamond Sutra*, was made in this way in China in 868; it was followed by a collection of the Chinese classics in 130 volumes.

It wasn't until the 11th century that the Chinese invented the first movable type, made of a mixture of clay and glue. The type was stuck into wax on a tray to hold the characters in place. After the job was finished, the wax was melted and the type recovered for further use. The Chinese system of writing requires many thousand separate ideographs – in 1313 an author commissioned 60,000 characters carved on movable wooden blocks. The Koreans took this even further, with ten fonts each of 100,000 pieces of type cast in bronze.

Little of these eastern printing developments seems to have been known in Europe except for paper, which arrived there dramatically. The Arabs and Chinese were warring in the 8th century for the control of Central Asia, and in 751 a decisive victory by the Arabs resulted

in the capture of many Chinese prisoners, including artisans skilled in paper-making. The opportunity was too good to miss, and soon paper factories were operating in Samarkand, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo and Delhi. By 1120 there was a factory in Valencia, Spain (then under Arab rule), and before long paper spread right across Europe. Paper was not necessary for the invention of printing, but printing would not have been a commercial success without paper. If a book took a year to make by hand, vellum was a good option that would last indefinitely. And anyway, for the next three centuries paper was seen as a Muslim invention, unfit for the use of Christians!

Gutenberg was born in 1400 to an aristocratic family in Mainz. As a result of some vicious politics, a number of the wealthy families went into exile, so that in his thirties Gutenberg found himself in Strasbourg. There he saw a market opening. The Renaissance was under way, the clergy was losing its monopoly of literacy, there was a shortage of books at an affordable price and an increasing demand for them. For example, Cambridge University was founded in 1209, but by 1424 its library still owned only 122 books, each worth as much as a farm or vineyard. Gutenberg had trained as a jeweller and gold- and silver-smith, but now he borrowed money to develop his ideas for printing.

He had the idea of printing from type made by pouring molten metal into moulds, one for each letter. The shape of the letter was carved on a punch, each of which took a skilled craftsman a day to cut, and then stamped into copper to make a mould. By trial and error Gutenberg came up with a formula for type metal which was still used more than five centuries later – an alloy of lead, tin, and antimony. Pure lead is soft and cannot make castings with sharp details because molten lead shrinks and sags when it cools to a solid. Adding pewterer's tin made the lead tougher; antimony reduced the shrinkage of the alloy when it cooled. The letters were stored in cases (at back in the illustration), with divisions for each letter. To print, the type for each line was set out along a groove in a 'composing stick', with slips of lead inserted as required



(Continued on page 5)



## Nuts and bolts—sentence structure traps

As editors, we often have to explain grammatical structures to our clients, particularly to first-time authors. Having a 'gut feeling' that something is right or wrong isn't enough—we need to be able to see the trap

that the author has fallen into and then rescue the situation and do our best to see that the author learns not to repeat the mistake. Here are some of the traps that even experienced authors fall into. You may well argue that some of them are not 'traps' at all, but deliberate ploys for making a point in the text. That makes them all the more difficult to alter, and makes it all the more urgent that we editors know what underpins the usage, so that we can 'correct' or 'leave well alone', depending on the context.

### Fragments

A fragment is a part of a sentence, or a deliberately unfinished sentence. Grammatically, anything that is not a complete sentence (with a subject and predicate, containing a finite verb) is a fragment. They're fine in speech. We use them all the time in conversation:

- 'Hullo, John, how are you today?'
- 'Fine, thanks.' (fragment)
- 'I've catered for eleven for lunch. I hope that's all right.'
- 'Ten. (fragment) No Jim. (fragment) Meeting in Sydney. (fragment)'

The fragments here are perfectly understandable because they are either answers to questions or they are comments triggered by someone's earlier comment. There is no need to write full sentences when direct speech is being recorded, provided the context makes the words clear.

However, how about this very common letter-starter?

- Referring to your letter of 10 September. Please send ....'

The first part is a fragment because it does not have either a subject or a finite (complete) verb. *Referring* is the present participle of a verb. And who or what is doing the referring? Here's a solution:

- I refer to your letter of 10 September. Please send ....'

Here the subject is *I* and the finite verb is *refer*—we have a complete sentence.

The editor needs to establish whether fragments are OK in the context—perhaps as part of a conversation in a novel or in punchy advertising writing—or should

not be allowed because of the more formal nature of correspondence, reports, academic theses, or other

documents where the target audience would expect the conventions of English grammar to be observed.

### Comma fault

This is the practice of inexperienced writers who realise that some sort of punctuation is needed and use the comma as the default punctuation mark, whether it is appropriate or not. For example:

- Thank you for your order, the goods will be despatched tomorrow.

Here we have two complete sentences, and the comma is not a powerful enough mark to separate them—we need a full stop:

- Thank you for your order. The goods will be despatched tomorrow.

There is a hierarchy of punctuation, and I would like to share with you something that has helped many of my students to understand the comma, the semi-colon and the full stop in relation to each other:

- Think of the full stop as exactly that—a FULL stop—full strength
- Think of the semi-colon as a HALF stop (semi means half)—half way between comma and full stop in strength
- Think of the comma as a QUARTER stop—a much milder break

The full stop and the semi-colon both contain a full stop (• ;). They are sometimes interchangeable:

- There will be a holiday on Monday for all staff. It is our company's Founders Day.
- There will be a holiday on Monday for all staff; it is our company's Founders Day.

The semi-colon and the comma both contain a

comma (• ,). They are sometimes interchangeable, as in these series:

- The President, Secretary and Treasurer all live in Canberra.
- The President, Jim; Secretary, Ted; and Treasurer, Sue, all live in Canberra.

The full stop and the comma have nothing in common. They are not interchangeable. The hierarchy set out above may help you to understand the relative values of each of these punctuation marks, and explain them to your clients.

(Continued on page 6)

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

for justifying. The lines were then transferred to a tray (the 'forme') to build up the page. After printing, the letters were replaced in their cases.

Back in Mainz in 1448 Gutenberg had a wooden press built, worked with a screw, similar to those already used in wine- and paper-making. He developed oil-based inks, using soot and linseed oil. His early printing projects were probably Latin grammars, but a lucrative sideline in 1454–55 was 'indulgences', by which reformed sinners paid for remission of their punishment.

His greatest work was his 1272-page 'Gutenberg bible', completed in 1455. A few copies were printed on vellum, but most were on the finest quality paper, which he imported from Northern Italy. The print run was 180. Six pages of the work were composed at a time, printed, then the type broken down for re-use. The first few pages originally had 'spot colour' in red, by giving them a second pass through the press, but this was soon found to be too slow and expensive. In the end the bible was not sold as a finished book: the pages were delivered loose, and any coloured decorations added by hand before binding, according to the purchaser's wishes (and pocket) – a set of instructions for doing this has survived. The price was 30 florins, three years' wages for a clerk.

Gutenberg was slow to repay his loans and after several law suits (including one for breach of promise!) he lost his business and everything in it to his principal creditor. But what he had started grew with astonishing speed. Within fifty years about eight million books had been printed. Gutenberg's bible had no title page or page numbers, but printed books had consistent pagination from copy to copy so that tables of contents, indexes and citations became possible. The gothic font used for the bible was seen as inappropriate for many applications, and typography rapidly became an art, with new Roman and italic shapes based on classical models – the Frenchman Claude Garamond (1499–1561) was one of the earliest specialised typographers ('punch-cutters'). Authorship became more profitable, and copyright laws were passed to protect authors' rights.

Literacy took a great leap forward, and Latin a step backward – more books appeared in the vernacular, and spelling and syntax became more standard. And suddenly we needed editors!

*Peter Judge*

Sources: *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2009 Ultimate Reference Suite. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing\\_press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press)> <[www.mainz.de/gutenberg/zeitgutb.htm](http://www.mainz.de/gutenberg/zeitgutb.htm)> <[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Gutenberg](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Gutenberg)>

Image from <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Printer\\_in\\_1568-ce.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Printer_in_1568-ce.png)>

## August committee meeting

### Moneys

The treasurer reported our working account balance that day was \$8,367.38. The Editing as a business workshop in July had realised a small profit of \$78 and we had made a \$4,020 contribution to IPEd that month. We have renewed our term deposit.

And as you learned at the AGM, our audited statements have been signed off by Houston and Hanna without issue.

### Membership

The committee welcomed new full members Kaaren Sutcliffe and Mary Walta, as well as Merran Laver who is moving up from associate membership.

The membership secretary asked the committee to define membership qualifications. The committee suggested 'editors paid by an employer or by clients'. The committee also referred to the definitions of professional editor for the NSW society and for accredited editors on the IPEd website.

### IPEd

Virginia Wilton tabled two IPEd papers A national identity and IPEd survey findings and led the discussion that followed.

The committee agreed on a formal motion about IPEd to be proposed at the AGM 'the CSE supports the IPEd aims and philosophy, and the process towards accreditation of editors, and the process of accreditation of editors.'

Another point of debate was IPEd's recent decision that only accredited editors be on the IPEd accreditation board, and the implications of that decision. The committee passed two more motions which nominated Ted Briggs to be the next delegate to the IPEd council and Gil Garcon to be the accreditation delegate if Larissa Joseph were not continuing.

### Potential new committee members

The committee decided to contact those who had at some stage expressed willingness to help out and to get them to come to the AGM. A number of those present also indicated they would be happy to continue on the committee. And outgoing president Ted Briggs placed on the record his thanks and appreciation of the committee.

*Gil Garcon*

(Sentence structure traps...continued from page 4)

## Ambiguity

The ambi- part of ambiguity literally means two, in the same way that ambidextrous means able to use both hands equally well. In recent times, ambiguity has come to mean 'having more than one meaning' rather than just 'having two meanings'. There are three main types of ambiguity to watch for when editing or writing:

*Lexical*—where a word can have more than one meaning in the context:

- Ann drove the office car as well as Peter.

That is:

- Ann drove the office car as efficiently as Peter drove it. OR:
- Ann and Peter both drove the office car.

*Surface structure*—where emphasis changes the meaning of a sentence (obvious enough in speech, but not obvious in writing):

- We inspected the *new managers'* offices.
- We inspected the *new managers'* offices.

This means, depending on the emphasis:

- We inspected the *new offices* that have been prepared for the managers. OR:
- We inspected the offices that have been prepared for the *new managers*.

*Deep structure*—where you really have to get inside the head of the author to be able to interpret the sentence correctly. Think about these three sentences and look for two interpretations for each—solutions at the end:

- Visiting relatives can be a nuisance.
- The duck is ready to eat.
- When fire broke out at the hostel, the residents sought safety in their pyjamas.

### Poor reference, ambiguity and misuse of words

Ambiguity can also occur when pronouns like *which* and *it* are incorrectly used:

- The groundsman asked the players to help him patrol the oval and surrounds during the planned demonstration *which* would show that they cared about their sports ground.

What does the *which* clause refer to—the patrolling or the demonstration?

- When the result was announced so promptly, *it* surprised us all.

What does *it* refer to—the result or the promptness of the announcement?

And loosely related, misuse of certain words can cause confusion for readers:

- I heard *where* you are thinking of entering the Masters Games as a swimmer.

*Where* implies place, and place is not intended here. The writer should use *that* instead, making a noun clause *that you are thinking of ...*, and this is the object of the verb heard.

Now, to put you out of your ambiguity stress (see *deep structure* ambiguity above):

- It can be a nuisance to have to visit relatives.

OR

- Relatives who visit you may not be welcome at the time.

- The duck is cooked and we can sit down to a meal of roast duck. OR:

- The duck is hungry and will eat the food we offer it.

- The residents were already in their pyjamas and rushed outdoors to safety. OR:

- The residents put their pyjamas on in the belief that wearing pyjamas would make them safer.

All of these 'traps' are set out in detail in my book *Effective writing: plain English at work*. Copies are available from me—please email for enquiries. I will discuss a few more of them next month.

Here are a few examples from real forms. Think about what's wrong with them and how they could be better expressed. Suggested solutions next month:

1. (from a primary school enrolment form) Hand? .....
2. (from a survey conducted by a firm which installs gas heating) Is your home unheated? Yes ..... No .....
3. (from a questionnaire handed out to patrons leaving a local cinema) How many times do you go to the movies in a year? Often ..... Sometimes ..... Rarely ..... Never .....
4. (from a government form) Are you unmarried and in receipt of a pension? Answer YES or NO .....

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emmurphy@ozemail.com.au

### Reference

Murphy, Elizabeth M (1989) *Effective writing: plain English at work*, Pitman, Melbourne (copies available from the author)

## Training News

### Professional Development Workshop Preparing and Editing Indexes

Presented by: Barry Howarth  
 When: Friday 23 October 2009  
 Where: National Library of Australia  
 Time: 09:15 – 16:30  
 Members: \$150  
 Non-members: \$250  
 Bookings: Martine Taylor 6260 7104 (ah) or  
 martinetaylor@hotmail.com

#### Morning

##### 1. Introduction

What is an index? What does the indexer do? The process of indexing, including indexing software. The elements of an index entry.

2. The criteria for Registration -- discussion illustrated by examples from published indexes.

##### 3. Editing the index

#### Afternoon

4. Exercise 1: Read and make notes for indexing "Proust and French History". [text of about four and a bit A4 pages taken from a book on Proust].

5. Exercise 2: Assess the extract from the index of Joanna Richardson, Baudelaire: A Biography, using the "Criteria for Registration".

##### 6. Conclusion

Barry Howarth has been President of the ACT Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI) for the past three years. He was also a member of the ANZSI Registration Panel for a number of years. He began indexing in 1993 while working as a research assistant in the Economic History Department in the Research School of Social Sciences at the ANU. In 1994 he won the Society's Medal for indexing for his index of Graeme Snooks' *Portrait of the Family within the Total Economy. A study in longrun dynamics, Australia 1788–1990*. Since retiring from the ANU in 2003, he has worked as a freelance indexer. Among the many books and reports he has indexed are:

Roger Butler, *Printed images by Australian artists 1885–1955*  
 Patricia Clarke and Meredith McKinney (eds), *With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright*  
 Robin Haines, *Charles Trevelyan and the Great Irish Famine*  
 John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an*  
 Rick Kuhn, *Henryk Grossman and the Recovery of Marxism*

### Summary of Design for non-Designers, presented by David Whitbread

There was strong interest in this workshop held on Friday 28 August with demand outnumbering the available places. Whilst most registrants were CSE members there was a small number of non-member, non-editor registrants.

Participants expressed their expectations for the day and the workshop was customised to capture areas of interest, which meant that the workshop met the needs of most participants.

The workshop components were: an introduction to design and layout; typography; working with colour; photographs and illustrations; and the web and print. Using the second edition of *The Design Manual* along with additional handouts, this workshop had much to offer editors.

The issue of how editors brief designers about the design specifications of their publishing projects was discussed. It was interesting to hear that achieving appropriate design is about knowing and understanding the real audience. Editors need to communicate to designers as much information as possible about their audience and provide a design brief and style sheet. Appropriate design is about what will work best for the audience: editors/authors do not necessarily need to like it.

Other concepts explored included readability versus legibility; natural eye flow; pull quotes; entry and fallow points; headings, and type selection. Participants were alerted to the fact that care is required when choosing fonts as some fonts can send out confusing messages to the editor/audience that the designer may not be aware of (for example, nostalgia triggers).

The session on web and print design covered a number of production issues in related to the web. The workshop concluded with questions from the floor.

Participants found David to be an 'excellent and engaging presenter' with a 'flexible and audience-responsive approach'. Many participants appreciated the manner in which David conveyed his extensive knowledge in an 'enjoyable' and 'entertaining' way. The evaluations have also identified the need to present the topic with a practical 'hands on' approach to meet the learning needs of members who are inexperienced editors and non-members who are not editors. There is scope to create a two day workshop – a design basics day and then a design detailing day. It is also worth mentioning that the evaluation forms are a valuable source of information about the broader professional development needs of CSE members.

A big thank you to David for participating in our professional development program; to Meredith Wright from Dalton's Books and, as ever, to the participants for their attendance and contributions.

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## Contents

- 1 Next general meeting—The return of the Quiggle, Wednesday 30 September
- 1 President's report
- 2 IPEd Notes
- 3,5 Thinking about words—the birth of the press
- 4,6 Nuts and bolts—sentence structure traps
- 5 August committee meeting report
- 7 Training news—October workshop, Preparing and Editing Indexes; summary of August workshop Design for non-Designers, presented by David Whitbread

## Are you financial?

Have you renewed your membership for 2009–10? If not, this will be your last newsletter.

If you have lost your renewal form, you can find one on our website at <[www.editorscanberra.org/renewal\\_form.pdf](http://www.editorscanberra.org/renewal_form.pdf)>.

This includes details of the 2009 fees and methods of payment.

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