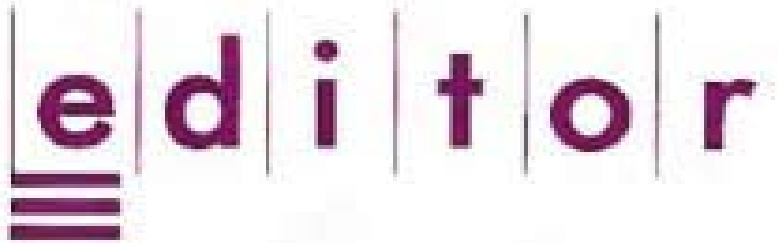


The Canberra



Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Volume 18 | Number 3 | April 2009

Next meeting,
6pm,
Wednesday
29 April

How to influence people
and not lose friends

presented by
Brian O'Donnell

This participative presentation will consider how differences (and similarities) in Psychological Type can have an impact on our relationships with those with whom we live and work.

It will outline the essentials of the theory of Psychological Type, as developed by Carl Jung and expanded by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers, and then look at how to apply those ideas to everyday life and in particular to the work of editors.

The presenter, Brian O'Donnell is a CSE member, Editor and Technical Writer, Director of First Rate Solutions Pty Ltd and an accredited Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) practitioner. Brian regularly presents on Type related issues at events run by the Australian Association for Psychological Type (AusAPT) and seeks to apply his special interest in Type to his life and work.

Even experienced editors need all the help they can find in working with the wide range of people involved directly and indirectly with our profession. Considering the title of this presentation, it should prove very valuable in this regard.

Come prepared to participate actively and enjoy the results.

Where: Friends Lounge,
National Library of Australia

When: Wednesday 29 April

Time: Meeting starts at 6:30pm; networking and nibbles from 6pm

President's report



Hello all and welcome to the April newsletter. As usual it has been a busy month since my last report, although it hasn't always been me who has been busy.

Our indefatigable training coordinator Martine Taylor has been working hard to firm up the workshop program for the rest of the year, following a highly successful workshop in March. I'd like to thank our members Sue Wales, Dave Kingwell and Cathy Nicoll for getting us off to such a great start.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see that the April workshop—The Don't Panic Workshop on managing annual reports without headaches, heartburn and hysteria—has been deferred for a couple of weeks to allow us more time to promote it. Can I ask for your help in promoting this very worthwhile workshop? If you know anyone who is responsible for publishing annual reports, can you let them know about it? Or if you work in a government agency, could you pass the information on to the area responsible?

Other things the committee has been looking at include the website review which we promised to undertake this year. A small subcommittee has met to work out how to approach this and we will let you know soon what our thoughts are.

We are also finalising plans for the Annual General Meeting, which is scheduled for 22 August—not that far away. We hope to use a similar format to last year, which I think worked really well. More information in the next newsletter.

I will be overseas for the next couple of weeks, so unfortunately I'll miss Brian O'Donnell's session on how to influence people and not lose friends. But I hope you'll all be there—you'll be amazed at what you'll learn about yourself and your fellow editors.

See you all in June.

The Canberra Editor

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Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in late May 2009.

The deadline for submissions to the next issue is Wednesday 13 May. 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

The action reported this month is mostly covert: about groups working quietly behind the scenes to advance Institute activities.

The Communication Committee, convened by Rowena Austin (SA), has prepared and distributed a media release, 'Editors adopt national quality standards', reporting on the first accreditation exam and its outcome, and announcing the next exam, which is scheduled for September this year. The distribution list includes national and state newspapers, and specialist journals and newsletters. As well as the main release, which can be read on the IPed website, each society has been provided with a customised version (noting its AE complement) for its own promotional activities.

The Accreditation Board meantime has been busily building the team to realise and run the next exam. Meryl Potter (NSW) will

again be the Lead Writer/Developer for the exam, and Anna Kassulke (Old) and Janet Mackenzie (Vic) have been appointed as Co-Writers/Developers. The Board is also pleased to announce that Alan Ernst will again be Exam Coordinator.

Keep an eye on the 'Upcoming events' list on the IPed website for notices about training courses and workshops in the wider world that may benefit your career in the editing and communication business. Indeed, 'Getting the message across' is the theme of the 2009 national conference to be held in Adelaide on 8–10 October. Through a link at the IPed website you can keep abreast of an increasingly exciting conference program. This is an event you should try hard to get to.

Ed Highley
Secretary

www.iped-editors.org

Call for contributions



Calling all members! This is your newsletter, and emailing in your contributions can make the difference

between whether you receive an eight page, or a 12 page newsletter. Four pages is a lot of text to fill in the publishing world but often there isn't quite the mix of longer and shorter stories to reach the 12 page target.

So, do consider putting fingers to keyboard. Do you have a funny play on words to share? A discourse on a lengthy debate with a colleague on the appropriate use of the en

versus the em dash? Your fellow members would love to hear about it because, chances are, we've all been there. So tell us something about yourself and your adventures in the world of the written word. Any member organisation is only as dynamic as the shared experience of its members, so now is your time to share.

Please send any contributions to the Newsletter Editor, Virginia Cooke, at virginia.cooke@gmail.com Long or short, I will endeavour to publish your contribution in an upcoming edition of *The Canberra Editor*.



Thinking about words – grams, grammar and other measures

Us chaps (alright—‘we fellows’) are well-accustomed to the heart-cry from the kitchen, ‘At 20 minutes to the pound, how long do I roast 1.7 kg, and what does 360 degrees mean on my oven?’ The arithmetic is quickly resolved (an hour and fifteen minutes at 180, assuming your oven speaks Celsius and the recipe was in Fahrenheit), but how often do we think about the language of these terms: time, weight and temperature, all in the same question.

Something akin to our *hour* began with the ancient Egyptians, who for no very obvious reason thought a day should be divided into 24 parts. This was difficult, because you then probably divided the daylight and the night into 12 parts each, differing from one day to the next. It wasn’t until clocks appeared in church towers to call worshippers to prayer (around the 13th century) that hours automatically became the same length—even if the accuracy may have been only to about half an hour a day. The word *hour* comes to us from the Greek *ora* (‘season, time of day’), through Latin *hora* and French *heure*. Its length, the 24th part of ‘a mean solar day’, can now be defined with prodigious exactness in terms of radiation emitted from atoms of the element Caesium.

The first division of the hour is the *minute* (from late Latin *prima pars minuta*, ‘the first small part’), and the second division is, well, the *second*. The ancient Babylonians liked counting in 60s, and it is probably due to their influence that our clock counts that way too. Scientists prefer to measure time in seconds, whose length is calculated from the Caesium clock. However, there is a complication: the Earth doesn’t rotate at a constant speed and every few years a second has to be added to the clocks to keep them in time with the seasons.

Since it was adopted internationally in 1960, Australia has standardised on the SI system (*Système International d’unités*), which is regulated by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (*Bureau international des poids et mesures, BIPM*, housed in the Pavillon de Breteuil, near Sèvres on the outskirts of Paris). However, many cookbooks seem to be either from an earlier era or ignore this standard. Or are terribly precise in translation: ‘take 113 grams of sugar, 454 grams of flour’ . . . As a schoolboy, long before the SI system came into vogue, I was drilled in miles, furlongs, rods, poles, perches, yards, feet and inches,

and had to learn my 16-times table to convert pounds to ounces. Then there were 112 lbs to the cwt, and 20 cwt to the ton. The metric system has destroyed the need for such mental exercises for the young, and the ubiquitous hand calculator has also long since done away with the need to memorise tables.

Why *gram*? And is it really related to ‘grammar’? Yes it is, but it was some early copyist’s a mistake. In Latin, a *scripulum* (a ‘scruple’, long used as an apothecaries’ weight) was the 24th part of an *uncia*, an ounce, used more generally for any small weight. But in error, the word *scripulum* was thought related to *scribere* (*scripsi, scriptum*), ‘to write’, therefore they thought *gramma* (actually Greek for ‘letter’) must also be a small weight, hence the entirely spurious connection with *grammar*. Late Latin *gramma* gave the term *gramme*, used by the French in the 18th century as the basis for their newly devised metric system. It was borrowed by the English, but there the *Metric Weights and Measures Act* (1864) gave the official spelling *gram*. A hundred and fifty years later the new spelling is still not universally adopted, although it has long been used in most scientific applications. You may come across both spellings when editing, but the shorter is preferred (just as in program/me). You may also meet Gram-positive bacteria, but these are named for a method of staining developed by the Danish physician Hans Christian Gram in 1884.

A ‘universal measure of length’ to replace the highly variable ‘foot’ was first proposed in 1668 by an English clergyman, John Wilkins, the founder and first secretary of the Royal Society. It was an Italian, Burattini, who a few years later called it *il metro cattolico* (‘universal measure’), from the Greek *metron*, measure. Wilkins, curiously, wanted to base a decimal system of units on 38 Prussian inches (making 99.37 cm), but Burattini suggested the length of a pendulum whose half-swing was one second (99.39 cm). The word *mètre* came very quickly into French from Burattini’s *metro*, but it was another 120 years before *mètre* was first recorded in English. There were two approaches to defining this unit more precisely. The pendulum couldn’t work, because it varied from place to place depending on the local force of gravity. The other definition, accepted by the French Academy of Sciences in 1791, was to be the ‘ten-millionth part of a quarter of the earth’s meridian, from pole to equator, passing through Paris’.

But how to measure that? It took seven years,

(Continued on page 5)



Nuts and bolts – prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationship between things. They are always followed by a noun or pronoun, and sometimes by two nouns or pronouns (or a

mixture) joined by a conjunction. The pronouns that follow prepositions are always in the objective case (that is: me, you, him, her, us, them):

The books are *on* the table.
 There are books *on* the table *and* the chair.
 Come *with me* to the party.
 Come *with David and me* to the party.

The group of words headed by the preposition is called a **prepositional phrase**—*on the table, with me*. In ‘The books are on the table’ the preposition *on* shows the relationship between *books* and *table*. If you are not sure whether to write ‘... with David and I’ or ‘with David and me’, try leaving David out of it—would you write ‘with ... I’ or ‘with ... me’?

There are many prepositions—usually small words, but not always: on, in, under, through, up, with etc. Some words are always followed by specific prepositions and prepositional phrases:

adjacent *to* (not with)
My house is adjacent to the woods.

responsible *to* or *for*
 I am responsible *to* my boss.
 I am responsible *for* the conference arrangements.

This is called **prepositional idiom**, meaning that it is the accepted usage at the moment, depending on meaning. Idiom changes with time—what was unacceptable fifty years ago might be perfectly acceptable today. Fifty years ago, the acceptable use of *different + preposition* was *different from*. Usage has made *different to* acceptable in both speech and writing, even formal writing. *Different than* seems to be acceptable in speech now but not yet in formal writing:

| | Speech | Writing |
|--|--------|---------|
|--|--------|---------|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| This photo is different <i>from</i> that one. | √ | √ |
| This photo is different <i>to</i> that one. | √ | √ |
| This photo is different <i>than</i> that one. | √ | X |

The purists have no doubt got hairs positively

bristling on their necks by now! Why am I not insisting on *different from*? I am not a prescriptive grammarian—I am a descriptive linguist. English is a living language and usage changes all the time. I go with the flow, so long as meaning and structural integrity are maintained. Personally, I usually opt for *different from*, but that is because it was the only acceptable form when I was at school and growing up. However, I acknowledge that there are plenty of ways to express meaning, and I have no objection to reading newer, more fashionable ways of saying the same thing.

Some other prepositional idioms that were the only correct forms fifty years ago, but which could now be debated, are:

opposite to *afflicted with* *similar to*

and some which seem to be solidly stuck in their old form:

emigrate from *accede to* *aptitude for*

Having said all that, there are always situations when you need to show different meanings by altering the preposition you use. For example, you:

agree *with* a person
 agree *to* sell your house, but agree *on* selling ...
 agree *on* a price
 agree *between* the two of you.

agree *in* part (if you don't like the whole deal)

Likewise:

I am a teacher *of, at, in* or *for*, depending on what follows.

Variation of prepositions for meaning is very common. So also is **variation of word order**—note the difference in meaning when the preposition

(Continued on page 6)

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

from 1792 to 1799. Two expeditions measured the distance between Dunkirk and Barcelona (just over ten degrees of latitude apart and both almost exactly on the meridian of Paris), starting at each end, meeting in the middle and then extrapolating for the 90 degrees. If you actually wanted to measure a metre of something, this was all a bit beyond most people's grasp, so based on the expeditions' early results a brass bar inscribed with two marks became the standard metre. Unfortunately the expeditions' surveying instruments weren't accurate enough, and one of the leaders fudged his figures to agree with his position according to the stars. In consequence, the first prototype metre was short by a fifth of a millimetre, due partly to this scientific fraud and partly to a miscalculation of the flattening of the Earth. These errors were discovered and corrected in 1806, and the measurement was improved over time until 1885, when the BIPM was set up and established the 'International Prototype Metre': the distance between two lines on a standard alloy bar measured at the melting point of ice.

Since then the metre has been further refined, based on wavelengths of light and most recently on the length of the path travelled by light in a vacuum in a tiny fraction of a second. And is it metre or meter? The Americans write 'meter', but all other English-speaking nations use 'metre' for the length, and save 'meter' for a measuring device, such as your electricity meter or a parking meter.

The history of the *litre* isn't nearly as dramatic. Once again it began in France. In the beginning was the *litron*, a rather vague measure serving for both liquid and dry goods, and liable to vary depending on where you were, what you were measuring and the honesty of the merchant. It was sorted out in 1795, just after the French Revolution, by introducing the *litre* as one of the new 'Republican Measures', defined as one cubic decimetre. And essentially there it has stayed, ever since the standard metre became an accomplished fact.

And finally: temperature. That *Fahrenheit* temperature scale in the old cookbook was invented by an eponymous German physicist in the middle of the 18th century, round about the same time as the Swede *Anders Celsius* thought up his competing scale. Degrees C have won out for general use in most of the world and for most scientific purposes, although the Americans cling to degrees F for general use. *Celsius* (often referred to as *Centigrade*) seems the more logical: water freezes at 0 and boils at 100. The F scale began with 0 at the freezing point of an equal ice-salt mixture to 90 (why 90?) for the human body temperature, so that water froze at 30, but these figures have since been corrected to 96 and 32 degrees respectively. If that's not enough, back in 1730 a French naturalist called *Réaumur* devised yet

another temperature scale going from 0 to 80, but that fizzled out in the 19th century after a very brief period of use. And if you're into big numbers you follow *Lord Kelvin*, whose degrees K are the same size as degrees C but whose scale starts at absolute zero (where even Hell freezes) and has already climbed to 273.15 by the time ice melts.

On which chilly note, my warmest wishes to you all!

Peter Judge

Sources: *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition on CD-ROM v.3.0. , *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite, *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>> ,<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre>> ,<<http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanomètre>> , <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liter>>

English as She is Taught

Here is a list of kids' genuine answers to school exam questions. The list comes from a much larger collection by Caroline B Le Row in the book *English as She is Taught* (1887).

"Every sentence ... must begin with a caterpillar."

"A verb is something to eat."

"Adverbs should always be used as adjectives and adjectives as adverbs."

"The horses run fastly. This is an adverb."

"All sentences are either simple or confound."

"Germany has very little clubbable land."

"When we read we come across words that when we hear them spoken of we are entirely ignorant of them."

"Your the same as dead when your asleep and things that are making you pleasant now will one day make you sorry."

"The only form of government in Greece was a limited monkey."

"Vowel sounds are made by keeping the mouth wide open and consonant sounds by keeping it shut."

"Emphasis is putting more distress on one word than another."

(Prepositions...continued from page 4)

through is placed differently in these sentences:

I can see *through* your plan.
I can see your plan *through*.

When is a preposition not a preposition? When it is an adverb.

Just to confuse things, prepositions can also be used as adverbs—an adverb always tells you more about the verb in the sentence:

My friend came *in*. (adverb)
The cat climbed *up*. (adverb)
but
The cat climbed *up* the tree. (preposition)

The easiest way to identify prepositions is to remember that they are always followed by a noun or pronoun. This is not so for adverbs. The pre- of preposition is a Latin prefix meaning *before*.

And are their post-positions? Yes, there are, but happily for us, not in English!

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Hewings, Martin (1999) *Advanced grammar in use*, CUP, Cambridge

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Successful Science Writing and Editing

Tuesday 12 May
9.30am–4.30pm
Bruce

Would you like to be able to communicate complex information clearly and accurately?

Would you like to be able to use editing skills to improve your own and other's work?

Biotext, a leader in the field of science writing and editing, runs a highly acclaimed training course for anyone who writes or edits material dealing with science and technology, for any audience.

Places are limited, so register now at <http://biotext.eventbrite.com/>

See 'Services offered' at www.biotext.com.au for a course outline, or email hilary.cadman@biotext.com.au if you have any questions.

What participants say:

- **Best writing course I have ever attended.** Scott, Brisbane.
- **Has helped immensely by providing a clear outline of what to be aware of when writing and editing.** Katherine, Brisbane



Training News

The Don't Panic Workshop

Tuesday 5 May 9:00am–4:30pm
University House
ANU



Is your annual report causing headaches, heartburn and hysteria?

Do you want to improve your production process and your product, but are not sure how?

Through a series of workshop sessions you will cover:

- scoping and planning large publications
- developing a workable project plan
- establishing a sound report structure
- managing the publishing process

The skills gained from this workshop will be useful for any publishing project and participants will have the opportunity to plan their own project during some of the workshop sessions.

Presenter: Helen Lewis, BA

Coming up in June – Small Business Essentials workshop with David Grantham and Jean McIntyre

We have been busy planning the June training session, *Small Business Essentials* with David Grantham and Jean McIntyre. This workshop will be an important opportunity for participants to network and to share their experiences. The major topic segments to be covered during this 19 June workshop include:

- getting started
- business planning
- finances
- marketing
- resources
- rewards
- pitfalls.

Stay tuned for more information in the next edition of our newsletter.

Martine Taylor
Training Coordinator

Helen describes herself as a wordsmith and has worked in the communication industry for over 25 years. Her work includes media liaison materials, articles, brochures, booklets, newsletters, annual reports, short stories and radio/film scripts. She also has considerable experience in project management and has researched, developed and implemented information campaigns for a wide variety of target audiences. She is co-author of the *Don't Panic Guide to annual report production* first published by AGPS Press in 1992; fully revised, updated and republished by IF Imprint, 2008.

Bookings: Martine Taylor (02) 6260 7104
martinetaylor@hotmail.com

Members \$150, Non-members \$250

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