
THE CANBERRA

editor

Newsletter of the Canberra Society of Editors

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July 2011

next meeting

27 July
6.00 for 6:30 pm

Emeritus Faculty
Building 3T
Fellows Lane
Cottage
ANU

Q&A

The July meeting will be a questions and answers session about editing. Bring along all those tricky questions about editing, the style manual and the editing standards for discussion.

If you already are part of the yahoo canberraeditors group, you will have experienced the benefits of asking a group of editors for advice on things editorial. This is an opportunity for those not yet part of the group to discuss some of the big and small issues in editing.

The meeting will start at 6.30 pm; join us for nibbles at 6.00 pm.

June meeting

Indexers and editors get-together

Karin Hosking

'Twas a dark and chilly night and a few hardy souls ventured forth to attend the Canberra Society of Editors June 2011 meeting. The gathering brought together editors, indexers and technical writers, and offered an insight to the indexing and editing role in the publishing process. Tracy Harwood, an active member of both the Canberra Society of Editors and ACT branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI), introduced the evening's two speakers.

Liz Phillips spoke first as representative of the editing profession. Liz worked as a technical writer until about three years ago and then 'fell' into editing. She is currently studying a Master of Arts (Writing) degree through Swinburne University of Technology. Liz gave a brief overview of the tasks an editor might undertake— assembling, preparing and modifying writing for publication—and noted that editors might work at different levels and in many different fields.

The second speaker, Shirley Campbell, is president of the ACT branch of ANZSI. Previously, Shirley worked in microbiology and then retrained in library studies, spending over ten years as a librarian at Radford College. She is now semi-retired and works as a freelance indexer.

Shirley explained that ANZSI is a very small organisation, with five branches and 223 members. It is affiliated with international indexing bodies and international conferences are held in alternate years. Shirley talked about why indexing is necessary—to provide clear, consistent access to subject matter—and discussed what to apply in deciding the depth and length of an index. Anyone can join ANZSI, but there is currently no formal training available in Australia for indexers, so the society has devised a registration system. Candidates for registration need to submit a published index, which is assessed by a panel to see if it meets recognised criteria and shows an accepted level of competence. Members of ANZSI are eligible to be listed as available on the society's website.

A lively and interesting Q&A session followed. The audience asked about assessment criteria for registration as an indexer; whether complaints are made about bad indexing, the mechanics of preparing an index; how to select items; whether indexes are edited after they are constructed; levels of indexing; available training; fees for indexing; and whether indexers (and editors) tend to purchase insurance.

Thanks to the speakers and audience, the night provided a stimulating discussion.

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Working words

First publication from Canberra Society of Editors

Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE has been writing articles for *The Canberra editor* for more than 10 years. The Canberra Society of Editors agreed some time ago that it would be good to compile many of these articles in a book, and *Working words* is the result.

Elizabeth has rewritten and combined a number of the original articles, and they have been assembled as 'chats' in several themes covering basic English grammar, usage and punctuation; some legal and administrative aspects of being a freelance editor or writer; some hints and guidelines for new and established editors; and some fun comments—the sort of thing you might see when you're out driving and wish you had a pencil handy!

This is the first book published by the Society and will be launched at the IPEd conference in Sydney in September. More information will be provided in next month's *Canberra editor*.

Thinking about words

Apropos—or is it?**Peter Judge**

From time to time I have a little spell of wakefulness in the middle of the night, a period when thoughts and imagination drift gently around—usually at random, occasionally more focused, but seldom coming to anything constructive. On one occasion recently, apropos of nothing in particular, I began to wonder about that familiar adverbial expression *apropos*. We come across it regularly as editors, sometimes spelt as one word, sometimes as two ('a propos'), sometimes embellished with an accent—à propos. Which is right? Or, in a non-prescriptive environment, are any of them actually wrong?



Later that day, I searched the OED with 'a propos' and was offered 'apropos', with 'à propos' as an alternative. The earliest citation was to John Dryden in 1668: 'The French use them with better judgment, and more àpropos.' So, in one word *with* accent! In other citations through to the mid-19th century there are examples of the three variants we started with. Pam Peters (*The Cambridge Guide to English Usage*) tells us that in English dictionaries it is usually written as one word, 'apropos'.

We use 'apropos' to refer to a topic that has just been raised or one that is being newly introduced, or simply to mark a change of topic or change of pace in a discussion. Used adjectivally ('her remarks are apropos'), it could mean relevant or timely. The French, who see *propos* as a noun in its own right, trace its origins to *proposer*, and hence with the meaning of a proposal or proposition. Quite often they might say, *à ce propos* ('in regard to *this* matter'), so defining its relation more precisely. In its article on 'apropos' the OED also mentions the delightful French phrase *à propos de bottes* ('with regard to boots'), meaning without any serious motive, without rhyme or reason, which was being used in an English context as far back as the 18th century.

If something is apropos is it also *appropriate*? Or *apt*? It may well be both, but the words have different origins. 'Appropriate' is close to 'proper', which in its early days meant one's own, akin to the French *propre* (*Ma propre maison* is 'my own house'). You have probably bought and paid for your *property*, but in more lawless times you might have *appropriated* it by force—which would not be seen as appropriate behaviour these days.

'Apt' comes from a Latin word, *aptus*, the past participle of *apere*, meaning to fasten or attach. It also has the sense of 'appropriate, fitting, suited', and in its earliest application might literally mean 'fitting', say of a suit of clothes. As editors we are more likely to come up against questions related to its antonyms 'inept' or 'inapt'. Which one of these is correct, in which situations? If we simply mean 'not apt'—unsuitable or inappropriate—then in most cases the correct word (in formal communications) is 'inapt'. However, writers much more commonly use the older word 'inept' in these contexts, even though it has undertones of foolishness, ineffectualness or clumsiness that may not be required or intended. Peters, as usual, has sensible comments: 'inept' has a negative value judgement built in, whereas 'inapt' is more dispassionate. Management may be inept, and so may remarks, but inept remarks will be regarded as fatuous.

The opposite of 'apropos' is *malapropos*, which you may not often see except in relation to 'malapropism'—the use of a wrong word, sounding vaguely like the right word but actually meaning something totally different. The youthful Sheridan in his play *The Rivals* (1775) gave the character Mrs Malaprop her name because of her ludicrous affliction with this wrong use. An example: 'Why, murder's the matter!...killing's the matter! – but he can tell you the perpendiculars.' US President George Bush was so prone to them that they became known as Bushisms in his honour. The *Canberra Times* has printed some classic examples in the past (Patrick's CEO, during the wharfies' strike, 'taking a peak out of a meeting room window ... ') and no doubt will again. Watch that spot!

**... consider: 'weapons of mass
production' or 'It will take
time to restore chaos
and order.'**

The *pun* may rely on malapropisms, or be a more complex play on like-sounding words: 'Atheism is a non-prophet institution.' Our childhood memory is of: 'Why can't you starve in the desert? Because of the sand which is there. Who brought the sandwiches? Noah—he sent Ham, and his descendants mustered and bred.' Samuel Johnson thought the pun was the lowest form of humour. In his dictionary (1755) *pun* is defined as 'An equivocation, a quibble, an expression where a word has at once different meanings'. The OED traces it back to the mid-1600s, 'of unascertained origin', but possibly a shortened form of *puntiglio* (Italian for 'a fine point, a quibble'), which also gave rise to our word *punctilious*.

A spoonerism is a related verbal mishap, transposing the initial letters or syllables of words within a phrase. It is named for the Reverend Canon W A Spooner (1844–1930), who held various academic posts in New College, Oxford, over a period of some 60 years. Spoonerisms seemed to have been launched when he announced a hymn as 'Kinkering Kongs their titles take...'; this slip of the tongue spread far and wide, leading to many imitations. Did he really dismiss one idle student with, 'You have tasted a whole worm and will return to London by the town drain'? Probably not—trains to London were the *up* trains, and Spooner would not have made this mistake. But, whether or not that particular saying was genuine, his absent-mindedness was also legendary. On one occasion, meeting by chance a young man in the quad, he invited him to tea, 'to welcome Stanley Casson, our new archaeology Fellow'. 'But, sir,' the man replied, 'I *am* Stanley Casson'. 'Never mind,' said Spooner, 'come all the same.'

So, apropos (or malapropos) of nothing in particular, the words circle around. Time to go back to sleep.

Sources:

Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM (v. 4.0). *The Cambridge guide to English usage*, Pam Peters, CUP 2004. *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>>.

Training resources

Hilary Cadman

Recent discussions on LinkedIn led me to some useful sites for training resources:

- UC Berkeley Extension (extension.berkeley.edu)
- IconLogic (www.iconlogic.com)
- ed2go (www.ed2go.com).

UC Berkeley Extension

I wanted to take a refresher course in grammar, and after reading some positive comments on LinkedIn about UC Berkeley's extension program, I signed up for the online, instructor-led course *Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage for Editors X445*. Apparently, the university developed the course as a prerequisite for its *Professional Sequence in Editing* program, because students in the editorial workshops were struggling with grammar issues. The course covers the eight parts of speech, phrases and clauses, sentence functions and types, punctuation, style manuals, sexist language, spelling errors and liaison with clients.

The eight-week course is quite expensive (about USD600). It has eight modules, each of which involves reading online course notes and material from the course textbook, contributing to an online discussion board and completing an assignment in MS Word. Initially, I found the mechanics of the online course difficult, although I had worked my way through the online student orientation module (a prerequisite for taking the actual course). However, after completing five modules, the system seems quite straightforward.

The course textbook is *A Writer's Reference* by Hacker and Sommers. This publication was new to me, but apparently it is used in many US colleges and universities. The book is divided into four parts: composing and revising text, creating grammatical sentences, basic grammar, and information on APA and CMS style. It is available in hard copy or online, and the accompanying website (bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/writersref7e) has useful exercises for each chapter.

I think it has been worth doing the course. I now feel more confident in my knowledge of grammar, and have enjoyed the experience of online learning.

IconLogic

IconLogic is a US-based training provider. Its website has online courses (some led by an instructor, others self-paced) for programs such as MS Word, Adobe InDesign and QuarkXPress. It also has a series of 'skills and drills' workbooks for these programs, created by professional trainers and instructional designers. The blurb on the site says that the workbooks are designed to 'bring users to proficiency through practical hands-on exercises and independent challenge activities to reinforce learning'.

I bought the *Editing with Microsoft Word 2007* workbook for USD55 (including shipping costs). The main areas covered are track changes and comments, spelling and grammar, find and replace, formatting with styles, and macros.

I am about one-third of the way through the exercises and have already learnt a few tips that have made the purchase worthwhile. I was delighted to learn that, after comparing two documents with the 'Compare' function (under the 'Review' tab), it is possible to show the source documents on a single screen (using 'Show source documents'). This view shows the compared document on the left-hand side of the screen, and the original document plus the revised document, stacked above one another, on the right-hand side. The three documents are synchronised—as the user scrolls through one, the others automatically scroll to the same point. This function led me to other options in the 'View' tab of MS Word 2007. I found the 'View side by side' function, which is useful for comparing an edited document with the original. Again, this function can be set so that the two documents scroll simultaneously.

Another useful thing from the workbook was the additional options under 'Track changes'. For example, the 'Change tracking options' function allows the user to set the different colours assigned to changes from different people. It also has the helpful option of tracking changes to text in one way (e.g. in red) and movement of whole chunks of text in a different way (e.g. in green, with double underline). When the changes are viewed, the moved text automatically appears with a comment balloon indicating that the text has been moved and noting where it was placed originally.





Membership Renewal Form
Membership year 1 July–30 June

Membership expires on 30 June each year. Please renew before 31 July to remain financial.

Note: Only full members are eligible to vote at general meetings or be listed in the freelance register. Associate members who are currently employed in editing or publishing, or who have had appropriate experience in the past, may apply for full membership.

How to pay

EFT or direct deposit (preferred)		Amount payable	
Financial institution	Community CPS Australia	Full member	\$60
Account name	Canberra Society of Editors	Associate member	\$45
BSB	805 022	Student member	\$30
Account number	0342 3503	Corporate member	\$225
Please include your last name with your deposit			

Cheques/money orders payable to Canberra Society of Editors

The form is also available on the website www.editorscanberra.org/renewal_form.pdf

Send completed form to: Canberra Society of Editors
PO Box 3222
Manuka ACT 2603

Note: Renew existing membership only on this form

If you are not currently a member, please do not use this form. You can find application forms for full or associate membership on our website at www.editorscanberra.org/members.htm

Your contact details

Renewing for membership year	
Renewing membership type	Full <input type="checkbox"/> Associate <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate <input type="checkbox"/>
Address – postal	
Phone – home	
Phone – work	
Fax – home	
Fax – work	
Mobile	
Email	

Your payment details

Amount paid \$	Cheque/money order <input type="checkbox"/>	EFT/direct deposit <input type="checkbox"/> Date
		Financial institution

Training resources (continued)

Overall, I have found the workbook to be a useful resource, and I like being able to work through at my own pace. It is also a much cheaper option than attending a training course.

Ed2go

Ed2go is another US-based training provider, providing online courses on everything from accounting to web design. The website lists courses under four main areas—career and professional, computers and technology, writing and publishing, and personal development.

The courses are instructor led and run for six weeks. They comprise 12 lessons, each lasting for two hours, and are reasonably priced, at USD139. In relation to editing, Ed2go offers The Keys to Effective Editing and Grammar Refresher. I have not tried any of these courses, but comments about them on LinkedIn are positive. I plan to take the Ed2go course in Adobe InDesign because it is much cheaper than other options I have investigated for InDesign training.

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The editor welcomes contributions by email to:
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