

The President's column

Next meeting
26 March

The editor as protagonist

This is the title that the award-winning novelist, essayist and short-story writer, Marion Halligan, has chosen for her talk to our next meeting.

Marion's latest novel, *The Point*, was launched on 5 March, but she is already hard at work on her next, in which the narrator and main character is an editor.

Marion says that the preparation for this work has led her to some interesting thoughts, which she will share with us before talking more generally about her experiences with, and thoughts about, editors.

The venue is, as usual, the Friends Lounge at the National Library; the time, 6 for 6.30 p.m. Afterwards all are invited to join our speaker for dinner at *O Stratos*, a Greek taverna in Lonsdale Street, Braddon. There will be a show of hands for that at the start of the meeting.

There's no front-page report on our February meeting because our scheduled speaker, Kerrie Nairn, took ill with flu on the day of the event and so had to withdraw. The many members who arrived for the first meeting of the year were disappointed but sympathetic, and expressed the hope that she might be able to speak to us later in the year.

So what did we do at the February meeting? Well, we had some good food and acceptable wine, and then, following the usual business of a general meeting, we had a productive and quite lengthy discussion on a range of topics of interest to the society and the profession. Indeed, it was so productive that it occurs to me that it might be useful to have such meetings at least once a year.

One of the main topics of discussion was the CASE working group on accreditation and its activities. Janet Salisbury, our delegate to the group, gave us a summary of where things stand. They are well advanced.

Some models for implementing accreditation have been proposed. They range from a deceptively simple points-type model to an evidence-based procedure that would be rigorous but perhaps (though only perhaps) too time- and labour-intensive: we need to be practical. I was gratified to see the high degree of interest in accreditation. I'd thought that, unlike our sister societies, all of which seem to have put substantial effort into the topic, accreditation was dead in the water in Canberra. Not so, and it was agreed that a special meeting to discuss it should be held. We're organising such a meeting, and I hope that many members of the society will participate. As far as I'm concerned, accreditation, certification, or whatever it's eventually called, is the single most important next step in advancing the editing profession in Australia.

Continued overleaf ...

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Catering

Vacant

The President's Column ... continued

The publication of the *Australian standards for editing practice* in 2001 was a first big step forward for us. As I mentioned at the February meeting, Janet Mackenzie, convener of the CASE Accreditation Working Group, recently sent me a copy of an essay by Ms Haya Husseini, a Monash University master's student, that researches our standards and compares them with similar moves in Canada and Britain. It's an interesting story; therefore, with the permission of the author, I've put *Australian standards for editing practice: a comparative critique* on our web site.

Some committee news. Greg Baker has taken on the job of newsletter production editor. We thank him for that, and for the work he is also doing in promoting corporate membership. I regret to report that Claudia Marchesi, who was one of the society's training coordinators, has resigned from the committee, for reasons that she has had insufficient time to devote to the position in recent times and will shortly be going

overseas for a while. We thank her for her substantial contribution to our training program over the past few years. The position of catering officer remains vacant. I'd like to rename it 'Victualler', a supplier of victuals for which see the extract from the *New shorter Oxford English dictionary* below.

Clearly, it's a key position then. There has to be somebody out there with the talent and experience to take it on. If not, I'm afraid it might be chips and nuts only at most future meetings.

The speaker at our March meeting will be Marion Halligan, well-known author and Canberra resident, fresh from the launch of her latest novel, *The Point*. Marion has chosen a title for her talk that should be appealing to all editors (see page 1 for details). I look forward to seeing you at the meeting, and hope that many of you will be able to continue—over dinner after the meeting—what I'm sure will be stimulating discussion.

Ed Highley

victual /'vɪt(ə)l/ n. ME. [OFr. *vitaille*, (later and mod.) *victuaille* f. late L *victualia* neut. pl. of *victualis*, f. L *victus* livelihood, food, f. base of *vivere* live: see -AL¹. Sp. assim. to L original, while pronunc. still represents older forms *vittel*, *vittle*.] 1 Whatever is required or may be used for consumption to maintain life; food, sustenance. Now rare. ME. †b Produce of the land able to be used as food. LME-L18. c Grain, corn. Sc. L15. 2 In pl. Articles of food; supplies, provisions, now esp. as prepared for use. ME. †3 In pl. Animals used as food. rare. M16-M17. 4 An article of food. rare. M16.

1 BYRON Laura . . . almost lost all appetite for victual.
2 J. ROGERS Slaving over a hot stove to provide you with nourishing victuals.
victualage n. (rare) victualing; victuals: E17.
victualless /-l-l-/ a. (rare) M19.

One thing and another

We've all been told it's now OK to end a sentence with a preposition. After all, Sir Winston Churchill himself debunked the notion that you couldn't do so by saying 'This is the sort of English *up with* which I will not put'. Does it work every time, however? Is it OK to write 'This is the book you wrote *in*' rather than 'This is the book *in* which you wrote'? Before I answer that question, let's look at what Churchill might otherwise have said: 'This is the sort of English I will not put *up with*'. Or another example: 'What shall I write *about*?'. Should that be '*About* what shall I write?'.

In my view, where the prepositions are clearly part of a prepositional phrase such as 'in the book', 'at the corner', the whole phrase is best kept together if possible. However, many prepositions are really working as particles after verbs, so I then don't have a problem with putting them at the end of a sentence as in my example 'What shall I write *about*'?

There is also such a thing as 'prepositional idiom'—that is, the currently accepted preposition to go with a noun in order to produce the intended meaning. For example, you can be 'responsible *to* your boss' but 'responsible *for* the petty cash'. There are many words that function as prepositions, nouns, verbs, adjective and adverbs. For example, how many ways can you use 'down'? (Answer below.)

The very word 'preposition' is its own downfall. It means literally something that is positioned in front of something else—pre-positioned. This is what has

governed the thinking of many educators in the past—after all, if it's supposed to be in front of something, it can't be at the end of a sentence, can it? If it's at the end of a sentence, we have to call it something else, don't we? We've moved on from there! I'm happy with the term 'preposition', despite its Latin origins.

And my question in the first paragraph? Yes, I think it's perfectly OK to write 'This is the book you wrote *in*' just as it is OK to write 'This is the book *in* which you wrote'. These are individual stylistic variations of the same thing—they have the same meaning and either version is perfectly clear.

Elizabeth Murphy

The many functions of 'down'

Let's walk down the stairs rather than down the ramp. (preposition)
My doona is filled with goose down. (noun)
'Big Arnie' would down me with one blow. (verb)
The down train is due any minute. (adjective)
I put the heavy parcel down on the floor. (adverb)

References

- Hewings, M., 1999, *Advanced Grammar in Use*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Murphy, E.M., 1989, *Effective Writing: Plain English at Work*, Pitman, Melbourne.
Snodgrass, G. and Murphy, E.M., 1987, *Letter Writing Simplified*, Pitman, Melbourne.
Style manual for authors, editors and printers, 6th edn, 2002, John Wiley & Sons, Australia.

New APA website

The new website for the Australian Publishers Association is <http://www.publishers.asn.au>.

You can now register for APA training online.

New member

Welcome to our new associate member Clair Hurford.

ADVERTISEMENT

Experienced Editors Required

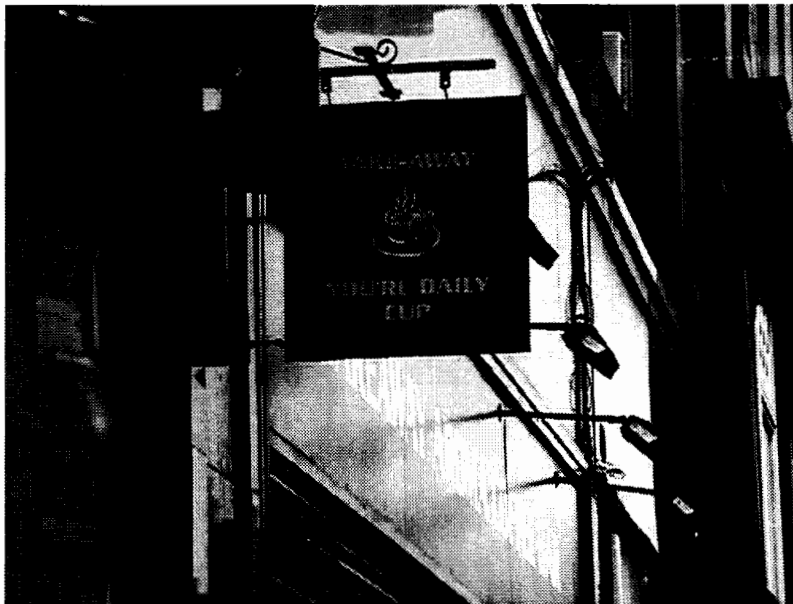
Knowledge of Annual Report processes, Word 2000 and Dreamweaver highly desirable. Good rates apply.

Contact
Louise Forster at
WordsWorth Writing
on 6232 7511.

Time to smile

English grammar: rules for good writings

1. Never verb nouns. Nouning verbs is bad too. Both are a form of jargonising and make for a bad read.
2. Prepositions are perfectly acceptable things to end a sentence with.
3. A lot of alliteration is not always advisable.
4. Clichés are old hat and should be avoided like the plague.
5. Do not use ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Don't use contractions.
9. Foreign words and phrases are rarely apropos.
10. Never generalise.
11. As Emerson once said, 'I hate quotations. Tell me what you know'.
12. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
13. Do not be redundant and repetitive and use more words than necessary because it is highly repetitious to repeat yourself by writing the same thing over and over again.
14. Profanity is bullshit.
15. Be specific-ish.
16. Understatement is not too great.
17. Exaggeration is a million, billion times worse than understatement.
18. One-word sentences? No.
19. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
20. The passive voice is to be avoided.
21. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
22. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
23. Who needs rhetorical questions?
24. Eschew a tendency towards excessive verbosity, as it is a contributory factor to the process of linguistic obfuscation.
25. When writing a sentence with a pronoun make sure you don't confuse your readers by having the antecedent too far away from it.
26. Spilling counts.
27. use capitalisation correctly, particularly when describing proper nouns or readers Will Become confused.
28. Good, punctuation is: very important? Without it! Meanings can... be; unclear"
29. Proofread carefully.
30. Slang ain't good.
31. Double negatives don't have no place neither.



A sign on the Royal Mile, Edinburgh.

Photograph provided by Ed Highley.

News and notes

Indexing the World of Information

An international conference hosted by the Australian Society of Indexers

Friday 12 – Saturday 13 September 2003

Location: Carlton Crest Hotel, Sydney

Cost: Australian Society of Indexers members \$330, non-members \$380.

Contact: Glenda Browne,

e-mail <webindexing@optusnet.com.au>

or phone (02) 4739 8199.

More information: <http://www.aussi.org>

Proposed presentation/panel topics: indexing biographies; difficult names; teaching indexing; website, intranet and database indexing projects; information architecture; thesaurus construction; taxonomies and classification; metadata development. Software demonstrations and workshops will be held during the conference.

Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition

Entries are now being accepted for the 23rd annual Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition, created to recognise and encourage the efforts of writers who have not yet achieved major-market success. Writers will compete for a \$1000 first prize, \$500 second prize and \$500 third prize in this internationally acclaimed competition. Several honourable mentions are also awarded each year.

Stories in all genres of fiction are welcome. Maximum length is 3000 words, and writers retain all rights to their work. The final deadline is 15 May 2003; winners will be announced at the end of July.

For complete guidelines, please visit <www.shortstorycompetition.com>,

e-mail <Calico2419@aol.com>, or

send an SASE to the

Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition,

P.O. Box 993, Key West, FL 33041, USA.

Electronic editors information

Editalk

The Society of Editors in South Australia runs an online discussion forum. Editors from other states are welcome to join the group, which aims to provide a forum for debate and exchange of advice. To find out more, visit

<<http://www.editorssa.org.au/html/editalk.htm>>.

Edline

This is an international discussion list about editorial and business matters for members of the publishing community. The exchanges are often stimulating and amusing, with erudite entries from the likes of Australia's Nick Hudson. You can subscribe to a digest version that organises discussion by topic. Visit <<http://www.electriceditors.net>> and follow the Edline link.

Woody's Office Watch

Woody is a leading expert on Microsoft products. He produces a free, user-friendly (and sometimes Microsoft-hostile) newsletter with hints and tips for using Mr Gates's software.

Visit <<http://woodyswatch.com>> to find out more.

The newsletter about Microsoft Office always has something to teach the eTextpert.

The Technical Editors' Eyrie Newsletter

A useful site by a freelance editor and writer called Jean Weber. She produces a free monthly newsletter with hints and tips, which you can subscribe to, but the site has plenty of other useful links. <<http://www.jeanweber.com>>.

Australian Publishers Association workshops

Managing freelance staff

Presenters: senior publishing staff

Sydney: 15 April, 9.00 – 12.30

Melbourne: Thursday 17 April, 9.00 – 12.30

Cost: \$195

Techniques for working effectively with freelance staff.

Who should attend: editors, publishers, publishing managers, art directors, production managers, HR managers.

Preparing files for the printer

Presenters: senior staff from various printing companies

Sydney: Tuesday 20 May, 4.00 – 7.00 p.m.

Cost: \$150

Preparing files effectively for the printer, troubleshooting.

Who should attend: Editors, designers, and production staff.

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XML document structure

Extensible Markup Language (XML) documents can represent an unlimited number of information sets. However, the way that XML itself describes those information sets still needs to conform to a standard and predictable pattern. All this means is that real-life XML has more structure than the short piece of information in XML format that I presented in my introductory article:

```
<description>
  <title>XML Ethics</title>
  <author>Jim Long</author>
  <format>Book</format>
  <id>ISBN 0233576937</id>
</description>
```

XML structure

Every piece of valid XML consists of two parts: a prolog and a root (or document) element.

The first part—the prolog—contains an XML declaration, then, in no particular order, information about the document type definition (DTD), processing instructions and comments.

Processing instructions are information for the software application that will process the XML after it is checked for validity. They do not form part of the information contained in the XML document.

Similarly, information about the DTD provides information about the XML document; it forms no part of the XML document itself.

Comments are for human readers of the XML code; although well-designed XML should be pretty much self-

explanatory, comments are useful to explain to readers of the code any unusual or obscure features.

The second part—the root element—contains the entire information set being stored or transmitted in XML.

Prolog

The prolog is optional, i.e. it may be empty. However, experienced XML users strongly recommend that the prolog contain at least the following line:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
```

This is the XML declaration. It tells the software checking the XML syntax, i.e. checking that it is well-formed and valid, that the XML conforms to the W3C XML Recommendation 1.0. This version of XML is the current version; W3C is the XML standards body.

The XML declaration may further include two attributes, one indicating the character set used by the XML document, the other indicating whether or not the XML document is self-contained or needs to refer to outside information. The external information could be the DTD but is not restricted to this.

Thus the XML declaration could be:

```
<?xml version="1.0"
encoding="utf-8"
standalone="yes" >
```

UTF-8 encoding is a superset of ASCII. This is the default if you do not explicitly declare it and is most likely the character set you normally use.

The XML processor needs to know which DTD the

document will be validated against. A reference to an external DTD is placed in the prolog. If the XML document is standalone, there will be a *document type declaration* (DOCTYPE) placed here. This declaration stands instead of an external DTD and fulfils in whole or in part the role of the DTD.

Processing instructions are instructions to the software application that will process the XML. They start with a `<?` and end with a `?>`. A processing instruction might for example be used to associate a particular stylesheet with an XML document. Although the XML declaration looks like a processing instruction, purists say that it is not. The reason that it is not is that the XML declaration is information intended for use in checking the syntax of the XML document; the processing instructions are meant to be passed via the software checking the syntax through to the software actually using the XML document.

Comments begin with `<!--` and conclude with `-->`. Thus:

```
<!-- This is a comment -->
```

Comments can also be placed within and after the root element.

Root element

The other part of an XML document is the *root element* or the *document element*. The root element contains the entire XML information. This is a set of nested elements and their attributes, and the information they describe.

Greg Baker

XML Books

Elizabeth Castro, *XML for the World Wide Web: Visual Quickstart Guide*, Peachpit Press, 2001.

Norman Desmarais, *The ABCs of XML: the librarian's guide to the extensible markup language*, New Technology Press, 2000.

Dan Livingston, *Essential XML for Web Professionals*, Prentice Hall, 2002.

William J. Pardi, *XML in Action*, Microsoft Press, 1999.

Andrew H. Watt, *Sams Teach Yourself XML in 10 Minutes*, Sams, 2003.

XML Complete, Sybex, 2001.

These are the books I have to hand; there are many more in the bookshops. Although each of these books has its merits, I do not necessarily recommend any particular book on XML.

Greg Baker

News and notes ... continued

Australian Publishers Association workshops ...

Book design for the non-designer

Presenters: senior designers

Sydney: Friday 6 June, 9.00 – 12.30

Melbourne: Thursday 5 June, 9.00 – 12.30

Cost: \$150

Issues and practice in book design.

Who should attend: editing, publishing, production, sales and marketing staff.

Promotional writing: making words work harder

Presenter: Jo Bramble—Bramble Marketing & Communications

Sydney: Friday 13 June, 9.00 – 4.30

Melbourne: Wednesday 11 June, 9.00 – 4.30

Cost: \$350

Effective writing for promotion.

Who should attend: editing, promotions and publicity publishing staff.

Registration

Registration forms are available from

The Australian Publishers Association.

For more information or to make a booking, contact

Libby O'Donnell at the APA.

Tel. (02) 9281 9788 or email

<Libby.Odonnell@publishers.asn.au>.

Australian Publishers Association training

More workshops for April and May 2003.

Onscreen Editing for Publication

This workshop will be held using IBM/PC. The course is focused on editing for publication using Microsoft Word. Extensive experience in Word is not required. The course is suitable for new or experienced editors and writers, and numbers are limited to allow for individual tuition and questions. Each student works at their own PC and parts of the course are taught using a data projector.

On-screen editing versus hard-copy editing—what the differences are, what you need to be careful about; establishing good editing procedures; working with styles; different word versions and the editing process; using Macintosh files on the PC; identifying font incompatibility between documents; exploiting the Find and Replace function; cleaning up documents efficiently; disabling problematic automated features; optimising screen settings; using Track Changes/Revisions; exploiting custom dictionaries in editing; document navigation techniques; common problems with PCs and how to avoid them.

Further details are at <http://www.wordbytes.com.au>

Presenter: Brett Lockwood

Sydney—Tuesday 1 and Wednesday 2 April

Melbourne—Monday 14 April and Tuesday 15 April

Two-day workshop

Cost: \$460 Members (APA, Society of Editors, Galley Club, AGDA); \$540 Non-members.

20% discount applies when five or more attend from one company.

Flyer and registration form available online at:

http://www.publishers.asn.au/training.cfm?doc_id=130

Rights / Distribution Workshop

Assessment of projects—suitability for overseas markets; establishing what rights you have to sell; where and how a product will sell. Distribution versus rights sales; comparative costs; co-editions; advantages and disadvantages of each. Attending book fairs—logistics, costs, advantages and disadvantages. Using rights and distribution agents—

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Australian Publishers Association training ... continued

advantages and disadvantages, comparative costs and logistics. How to negotiate rights and distribution deals—royalties, advances, freight costs, cost effectiveness.

Presenters:

Sydney: Angela Namoi, Rights and Export Manager, Allen & Unwin; Nerrilee Weir, Rights Manager, Random House Australia.

Melbourne: Sandy Grant, CEO, Hardie Grant Books; Tamara Silver, Thomson Learning.

Dates:

Melbourne—Thursday 8 May 9.00 – 12.30

Sydney—Thursday 8 May 9.00 – 12.30

Cost: \$150 Members (APA, Society of Editors, Galley Club, AGDA): \$190 Non-members.

20% discount applies when five or more attend from one company.

Flyer and registration form available online at:

http://www.publishers.asn.au/training.cfm?doc_id=133.

Enquiries:

Libby.Odonnell@publishers.asn.au

Ph: 02 9281 9788

Dates for your diary

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April meeting

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