

**Next meeting  
6 pm Wednesday  
25 March**

## **Don't Panic – take the heart burn, hysteria and headaches out of publishing an annual report**

*Presented by Helen Lewis*

Helen describes herself as a wordsmith and has worked in the communications industry for over twenty-five years. Her work includes media liaison materials, articles, brochures, booklets, newsletters, short stories, radio and film scripts and even annual reports.

She is an experienced project manager and has researched, developed and implemented information campaigns for a variety of audiences.

Her talk will be based on her book *The Don't Panic Guide to Annual Report Writing*.

The focus will be on taking the pain and panic out of the production process and managing the project. Essential if you have not yet enjoyed the excitement of producing any major report to a deadline. If you are experienced, come and gain a new perspective. It may make the next one easier.

**Where:** Friends Lounge,  
National Library of Australia

**When:** Wednesday 25 March

**Time:** Meeting starts at 6.30 pm;  
networking over nibbles from 6 pm

## **Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter**

Vol 18 • Number 2 • March 2009

### **February meeting report**

It came as quite a shock when David Whitbread announced that *The Design Manual* as we know and love it is now eight years old.

David was giving us a sneak preview of the updated version which will be launched on 17 March. Not so much a revision as a complete re-write.

As an example of the extent to which he has revisited the material in *The Design Manual*, David showed as 'Exhibit A' the version which he annotated when deciding what needed to be revised. There was scarcely a paragraph which did not have a marginal note or a yellow post-it note attached.

Why the need to make such major changes? One of the main reasons is the increasing importance of web content and the design issues associated with that. As an example, when David wrote the first version, people teaching design were teaching with a print focus first, and the web as a secondary focus. Now this has turned around—design is being taught primarily with the web in mind and a secondary focus on printed media.

And more and more organisations are following this trend—content is being written and put straight up on the website with little or no time to produce separate print versions.

This has implications for the way we write since more and more of what we write will be accessed on-line. It also requires a re-think, according to David, on some of the conventions we hold dear. For example, the traditional unspaced em dash causes ugly line breaks in on-line material. This is because if it occurs at the end of a line, the text can not be made to break immediately before or after it. Hence the line break occurs before the word preceding the em dash. So most publishers have already changed their house style to replace unspaced ems with spaced en dashes.

Not surprisingly, this sort of thing was controversial for us editors. However David promised that the book goes into comprehensive explanations about the changes.

David's presentation was entertaining and audience participation was high. Copies of the book were available, hot off the press (they had only arrived in Australia three days before the meeting), and were quickly snapped up by members at the meeting.

A great start to the Society's meeting programme for the year.

*Ted Briggs*

## The Canberra Editor

© Canberra Society of Editors Inc. 2009

ISSN 1039-3358

Published by  
Canberra Society of Editors  
ABN 77 022 481 553  
PO Box 3222  
Manuka ACT 2603  
www.editorscanberra.org

Opinions in signed articles are the responsibility of the authors.

### Committee members 2008–09

#### President

Ted Briggs  
6161 4924; 0407 018 433  
tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au

#### Vice-President

Sharon Eacott  
sharon@capital-letters.com.au

#### Immediate past President

Virginia Wilton  
0417 691 269  
vwilton@homeemail.com.au

#### Secretary

Brian O'Donnell  
0419 620 714  
odonnell1@netspace.net.au

#### Treasurer

Margaret Millard  
6288 6754 (h); 0402 029 552  
margaret.millard@ozemail.com.au

#### Web minder, membership files

Peter Judge  
6296 6211 (w/h/fax)  
peter.judge@bigpond.com

#### Membership Secretary

Dallas Stow  
6247 3111 (h)  
dallas.stow@dsto.defence.gov.au

#### Training Coordinator

Martine Taylor  
6260 7104 (ah)  
martinetaylor@hotmail.com

#### Newsletter editor

Virginia Cooke  
virginia.cooke@gmail.com

#### Catering coordinator

Tina Toth  
tinamariatoth@yahoo.com.au

#### General Meeting Coordinator

Kevin Maguire  
0417 244 675  
kevinmag@bigpond.com

#### Committee members

Gil Garcon  
gil.garcon@ato.gov.au  
Kerie Newell  
0412 042 974  
kerie.newell@deewr.gov.au

Damaris Wilson  
6247 3111 (h)  
damaris.wilson@afp.gov.au

Elena Guarracino  
wildcroft.1@bigpond.com

#### Public Officer

Helen Topor  
6207 3414 (w)  
helen.topor@afp.com.au

#### IPEd delegate

Virginia Wilton  
0417 691 269  
vwilton@homeemail.com.au

#### IPEd Accreditation Board delegate

Larissa Joseph  
6161 5216  
larissa.joseph@gmail.com

## IPEd Notes

### News from the Institute of Professional Editors

www.iped-editors.org

March 2009

The IPEd Council met in Adelaide on 14–15 February. Also participating were the new (Larissa Joseph) and outgoing (Karen Disney) chair of the Accreditation Board (AB), and the new convenor of the Communication Committee (CommComm), Rowena Austin. Discussions were wide ranging, as will be evident from the agenda, which is on the website. The minutes of the meeting will also be there in due course.

Some highlights:

A discussion paper from CommComm raised, among other things, the matter of IPEd 'branding'. Each of the societies (the Members of IPEd) has its own brand but, at present, nowhere is it mentioned that they are members of a national body. In short, IPEd currently presents no brand to the wider world. As a first step towards establishing IPEd as the nationally recognised representative of the editing profession, it was agreed that the societies should be asked to take simple steps to identify themselves as Members of IPEd on their websites, publications and documents. For its part, CommComm is preparing materials focusing primarily on promoting accreditation to employers and editors who may

not be members of their local society. These will include a media release, an advertisement, a poster and a compact brochure.

*CredAbility* 9, published in society newsletters and available on the IPEd website, provides a wrap-up on the first accreditation examination. Council agreed that the second exam should be held later this year, with an announcement of the date to be made four months before the event. The exam this year will again be 'on paper', but there are plans for electronic delivery in 2010 if possible. The AB is initially focusing on on-screen rather than online delivery and on offering an on-screen exam as an alternative to a handwritten exam in the first year at least. All facets of electronic delivery are being investigated by a subcommittee headed by Pam Peters (NSW).

Increasing the professional development opportunities available to working editors is a high-priority objective of the Council, and it proposes to harness the resources of the member societies as a big first step towards its achievement. All of the societies have training programs for their members,

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Welcome to new members

### Belated welcome to new members who have joined us over the last few months:

Claudine Jamieson, Amy Panter, Elizabeth Prentice, James Goodrum, Adrienne Gross, Elizabeth Phillips, Christine Alesich, Anna Walczuk, Cecilia Burke, Patricia Munro, Anne Glavimans, Liz Drysdale, Wendy Pang, Angela Cole, Martin Blaszczyk, Martine Taylor, Karen Watts, Eileen Willingham, Trudi Ryan, Robert Nichols, Sheridan Roberts, Clare Hoey, Eris Jane Harrison, Ian Dewar, Annie Dean, Susan Cutsforth, Megan McKeough, Rosemary James, Jeff Fitzgibbon, Helen Lewis, Tristan Viscarra Rossel, Leanne Pattison, Elizabeth Trump, Darlene Silic, Annie Dean, Merran Laver

## From the President

This will be a very short report from me this month as we have a very full newsletter and I don't want to take up space at the expense of more interesting topics.

We have had a great start to the year with a well-attended general meeting and the first of our series of workshops for the year, which I understand went very well. A big thanks to the presenters Susan Wales, Cathy Nicoll and Dave Kingwell, and to Martine Taylor for organising the workshop and for coming up with a terrific training program for the rest of the year.

In the committee we have been busy providing CSE's response to a survey being conducted by IPEd to get member societies' input into strategic directions. This gave us a good chance to think about what we would like IPEd to do and our relationship with it.

Our response centred around having a greater role in tertiary institutions, perhaps through contributing to curriculum development and providing guest lecturers.

We also thought that IPEd could foster special interest groups for editors across all the societies. And could also involve members of the societies in the running of IPEd perhaps participation in working groups.

If you would like to see our full response send me an email.

See you all at the March meeting.

*Ted Briggs*



## Letters to the Editor

*We welcome and encourage debate on topical issues through letters to the Editor. However all letters are the views of the writers only, and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor of the newsletter nor of the Canberra Society of Editors.*

Dear Editor

I'm at one with Gil Garcon (Newsletter, Feb 2009). With Australian educational institutions at all levels having finally embraced recognition of prior learning and experience, what on earth was IPEd thinking of? Given the organization was starting *ab initio* the only sensible way of getting started without losing a generation of editors was to recognize those who have achieved meritorious status the long, hard way.

Now it risks the alienation of the very people whose lot it was trying to improve by providing standard accreditation and has guaranteed that accreditation will be perceived as the achievement of only a minority of the editing community for years to come.

*Dr. K.R. (Joe) Massingham*

Dear Editor

I would like to support the sentiments expressed by Gil Garcon in the February CSE newsletter. I agree that a failure rate of 35% is unacceptable, and I suspect this may reflect as much on the nature of the exam as on a lack of editing skills on the part of at least some of the candidates who did not pass.

My first concern with the exam is the time factor. I understand from a group of people who sat the exam in Canberra that, although they managed to complete their answers, they had no time to go over them – something that would be unthinkable in a real-life editing situation. My second concern is that the exam is paper based. These days, most of us edit onscreen, and there was a strong desire from participants at the national conference in Hobart in 2007 for the exam to be electronic rather than hand written. The comments on the IPEd website echo these sentiments.

I have 10 years experience in editing, and have passed the onerous exam set by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences, USA (a multiple-choice exam), but I am reluctant to take the IPEd exam until these issues are dealt with.

The information in the CSE newsletter suggests that the Accreditation Board will be considering the time factor when preparing the 2009 exam, but not the issue of the exam being paper based. Before the next exam is prepared, I would like to see a systematic attempt to gather comments from all candidates for the 2008 exam (e.g. through a simple questionnaire), so that the next exam can be modified accordingly.

*Dr Hilary Cadman, ELS*

## Nuts and bolts ... plurals



In English, as in most modern languages, we have a singular form of a noun to express one, such as *cow*, and a plural form to express more than one, such as *cows*. Some languages have singular (one), dual (two) and plural (more than two). Some old languages used to have even more ways of expressing number: singular, dual, paucal (a few) and plural (more than a few).

**Number**—of nouns—is usually expressed in English by the addition of a plural suffix *-s* or *-es*, as *cow/cows*, *box/boxes*. There are exceptions:

Nouns ending in *consonant+y* change the *y* to *ie* and then add *s*, as *country/countries* (but not proper nouns such as *Mary* where a simple *-s* is added—see more below).

Nouns ending in *vowel+y* are pluralised by adding the simple *-s*, as *monkey/monkeys*, *key/keys*. You may see *money* pluralised as *monies*, but most dictionaries and other authorities prefer *moneys*.

Many nouns ending in *-f* change to *-ves* for the plural, as *loaf/loaves*, *leaf/leaves*, *thief/thieves*. Again, there are exceptions: *oaf/oafs*, *roof/roofs*, *chief/chiefs*.

This isn't the end of it, however. There are many noun plurals that follow different rules. These are mostly either very old English words or have been borrowed from other languages, whose plurals are so different that they just have to be learned. They are often confusing for people with English as a second language, so we editors need to watch for errors. Here are some examples:

- Changed vowels: *foot/feet*, *mouse/mice* (but note that more than one computer mouse becomes *mouses*)
- No change at all: *deer/deer*, *sheep/sheep*, *fish/fish* (though *fishes* is also an acceptable plural when referring to fish of two or more species)
- Suffix *-(r)en*: *child/children*, *brother/brethren*, *ox/oxen*; and we can include here, or in the 'changed vowel' examples above, *man/men*, *woman/women*
- Nouns from Latin like *memorandum* and from Greek like *criterion* have Latin/Greek or anglicised plurals: *memoranda* (L)/*memorandums* (Eng), *criteria* (Gr)/*criteria* (Eng), though *criteria* seems still to be much preferred (as in 'selection criteria' for a job).

Plurals of nouns of other origins, including French, Italian and Hebrew, often stick to their foreign language plurals in English: *plateau/plateaux* (Fr), *libretto/libretti* (It), *seraph/seraphim* (Heb). However, English plurals, using *-s* or *-es* are also used.

There do seem to be rather a lot of rules and variations. My advice would be to go for consistency throughout a document, bearing in mind the tone and the target audience.

There is one rule on which I am adamant, however. Do not normally use an apostrophe to indicate plural. Do not write *Onion's are cheap today* or *The Beatles were popular in the 1960's*. Instead, write *Onions are cheap today* and *The Beatles were popular in the 1960s*. There is one exception—when a final *s* without an apostrophe would make a word difficult to read, as in: *Dot your i's and cross your t's . . .* or *There are four s's in Mississippi*.

Proper nouns: People's names cannot be changed. If there is more than one person named *Mary* in your group, you write *There are three Marys in our group*—not *three Maries* which means something entirely different. We also address a letter to the sisters *Jane* and *Bev Jones* as *Misses Jones*, and to the several doctors who looked after us in hospital as *Drs Benson, Cook and Garside*.

What should we do about pluralising compounds? Times they are a-changing, as the song says. We used to be told that we always pluralised the more important noun in the combination: *secretaries-general*, *brothers-in-law*, *baby sitters*. However, the trend seems to be towards pluralising at the end of the combination with a simple *s*, no matter which is the more important word. This particularly applies to combinations where one of the words is an adjective—*courts martial* and *court martials* seem to be equally acceptable; in compounds that are very familiar, such as *attorney-generals* instead of *attorneys-general*; and in compounds borrowed from French such as *cul-de-sacs*—we wouldn't dream of pluralising *cul*, though it is the key word in the compound.

When we add numerators to nouns in English we also pluralise the noun, as: *I bought two books yesterday*. A writer from an Asian language background is more likely to write *I bought two book yesterday* because the rule in the Asian language is that the numerator itself is sufficient indication of plural in such a phrase.

Number in verbs can be difficult, particularly for the writer who has English as a second language. The plural verb is unmarked while the singular verb takes *s*—quite the reverse of the rule for nouns: *They run every morning* is plural to match the plural subject. *He runs every morning* is singular. The number of the verb must match the number of the subject in the sentence—this is called 'subject-verb agreement'.

(Continued on page 5)

(*Nuts and bolts... plurals*, continued from page 4)

I have only touched on some aspects of pluralisation. For more, I recommend Pam Peters's *The Cambridge guide to Australian English usage*.

### References

Murphy, Elizabeth M (1989) *Effective writing: plain English at work*, Pitman, Melbourne

Peters, Pam (2007) *The Cambridge guide to Australian English usage*, CUP, Melbourne

© Elizabeth Manning Murphy, 2008  
<emmurphy@ozemail.com.au>

## Committee doings

*This is a list of the key points discussed at recent committee meetings. If you'd like more information on any of the items discussed, contact any of the friendly committee members.*

- IPed survey response
- Accreditation exam feedback and plans for 2009 exam and pre-exam training
- Training survey and proposed workshop schedule
- Speaker program for 2009
- Website review
- Committee manuals
- AGM arrangements

## General meeting program

**A**s promised in our last newsletter, here are the plans for speakers and activities to take us up to our Annual General Meeting in August.

First, a recap on the announcements already made for the first quarter, February to April. Of course we have already enjoyed the February talk by David Whitbread with pre-release coverage of the second edition of *The Design Manual*. Copies of the manual were available for sale on the night. All sold. A fair indication of how well the talk was received.

**March:** you will have seen on the front cover of this newsletter that our speaker is Helen Lewis. She will be speaking, from her extensive experience, on ways to prepare for the production of an annual report – or any significant report with a deadline.

**April:** Brian O'Donnell will run an audience participation session in an attempt to give us some insights into our fellow human beings. The aim is to help us in dealing with people in our chosen pursuit.

**May:** We have booked Damien McCormack from Vision Australia. That is the organization formed by the amalgamation of the three main support groups for blind and vision-impaired people in Australia. Damien will update us on many things we should be aware of whenever we are involved with information that may be needed by vision-impaired people using the Web. We live in a society that is trying to be more inclusive and this is a session designed to help us in that regard.

**June:** We can look forward to the latest word, so to speak, from Dr. Bruce Moore, who is head of The Australian National Dictionary Centre. Could be very interesting but only if you care about words.

**July:** We have Dr. Neil James to speak on how to handle the structuring of large documents. Neil is the Executive Director of The Plain English Foundation in Sydney but, from people who have heard him speak about large documents, he is an expert and very entertaining on that topic as well as plain English.

**August:** That leads us to our Annual General Meeting. It is planned for Saturday, August 22 and we have again booked a Members Dining Room at Old Parliament House. We will publish details as the date gets closer but, for now, please put a note in your diary. That is one meeting you should attend, to help our Society remain vibrant and meaningful.

Speaking of diaries, now that you know the plan for most of the year, why not also write in CSE for the last Wednesday of every month. Make sure you note it for 6pm to allow time for a chat to fellow members and to welcome new members and visitors over drinks and substantial snacks before the meeting starts at 6:30pm.

Kevin Maguire  
Meetings Coordinator

## Thinking about words: Turning off the tap

This is not going to be an exhortation to save water, important though that might be. Let me explain. In my retirement I spend some of my time teaching beginners' French and German to my fellow seniors in the University of the Third Age. We generally start the class with some music, analysing the words and (hopefully) enjoying the melody. On one occasion towards the end of last year, as a change from lieder and operetta, I introduced my German class to a few songs sung by Marlene Dietrich. Among these, inevitably, was *Lili Marleen*, an anti-war song that became popular with both sides in World War II.

The song opens with the line, *Bei der Kaserne, vor dem großen Tor* ('At the barracks, in front of the big gate'), with the young lovers embracing underneath a lantern. But by verse three we hear *Schon rief der Posten, sie blasen Zapfenstreich*, ('The guard post was already calling, they're sounding the last post') so that he has to tear himself away from his Lili and hurry back to barracks or face three days in the cells. But *Zapfenstreich* (literally, the 'tap stroke')? 'Der Zapfen' is the tap or bung on a barrel. What has the last post to do with taps?

Distant memories of Hollywood war films prompted the thought that the American troops give the name 'Taps' to the bugle call for lights out (they also use it, as we use the last post, at the graveside of a fallen comrade), and they've done so for a couple of centuries. In Australia, as in the British army, we refer to 'beating the retreat' (as at Duntroon) or sounding 'the tattoo'. Are these words related in any way? And to the marks so eagerly and so permanently implanted in tender young skin and regretted ever after?

It all goes back to the 17th century and a Dutch expression *tap toe* ('tap to')—if the tap is 'to', it's turned off. At nightfall you had to turn off the tap, stop drinking, retire to barracks ('the retreat') and go to bed. But it may also have referred to turning off the flow of words—it seems that the earliest use of *doe den tap toe* ('turn the tap off') was a slangy term meaning 'Shut up!' and silence in a barrack room is a precious commodity when you are trying to sleep in the company of twenty or more of your comrades in arms. So from this came the German and the American variants, and indeed our word tattoo, which entered the language in

an old book of military orders, spelt at first 'tap-too'. A Colonel Hutchinson laid down in 1644 that 'If anyone shall be found tiplinge or drinkinge in any Taverne, Inne or Alehouse after the houre of nyne of the clock at night, when the Tap-too beats, hee shall pay 2s 6d'. By the end of that century it had become 'tattoo' and there it has remained. Webster's dictionary also confidently quotes *taptoe* as the origin of the American use of 'Taps'.

Why 'last post'? At the close of the day the duty officer would go round to inspect the various guard posts, and when he had seen the last of these the 'last post' was blown on a bugle or beaten on the drum to signify 'lights out' in the camp or barracks. Sometimes there would have been a different call from the bugler to mark the first post, then the second and so on. At the start of the next day the *reveille* roused the sleeping soldiers. That is simply the French for 'wake up', pronounced as 're-valley' by the British and 'revverly' by the Americans. In WWII there was a popular early morning radio program from the USA with the title 'Reveille with Beverly', which only makes alliterative sense with the American pronunciation.

The *tattoo* on your skin has absolutely no relation to the military term. It was a Polynesian word, spelt *tataou* in the French navigator Bougainville's account of his voyage round the world in the late 1760s and as *tattow* by Captain Cook in the record of his first voyage in 1769. From which came the modern French *tatouage* and English *tattoo*. A propos of which, the OED makes a howler when it refers to French *tatou* in its article on 'tattoo'—'*tatou*' is French for armadillo, coming from a South American Indian tupi word!

My class were intrigued by an apparent contradiction in Lili Marlene. Although the song came into prominence in WWII, the words are more redolent of WWI. They are in fact the words of a poem written by a young German conscript in 1915, combining the names of his



A US Navy trumpeter blows taps

(Continued on page 7)

*(Thinking about words, continued from page 6)*

girl friend, Lili, and a young nurse called Marleen, who used to wave to him when he was on duty at the barracks. It was set to music more than twenty years later, and first recorded by the German singer Lale Andersen in 1939, well before Marlene Dietrich got her hands on it. After the German invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941 it became the sign-off tune of their forces' radio station there, *Soldatensender Belgrad*, which was powerful enough to be heard all over Europe and North Africa. So the song had wide coverage and rapidly acquired its enormous popularity with both sides, soon appearing with French and then English words.

'At the barracks ...' and that word *barrack* has quite a history itself. When the word first turned up, in the early 17th century, it referred to very temporary accommodation for the troops, 'a souldier's tent, or a booth, or such like thing made of the sayle of a shippe, or such like stuffe', and was derived from the French *baraque*, 'hut, shanty, booth at a fair', coming in turn from the Italian *baracca*. Unless used attributively, these days it generally appears in the plural, sometimes wrongly associated with a singular verb. Barracks are not usually either elegant or comfortable, and so the term is frequently used as a derogatory term for any large ugly building.

'Barrack' can also be a verb, generally applied to a crowd shouting abuse at a football team or a politician—but, confusingly, you can also barrack

for your team. As you might guess, it bears no relation to the building. One theory is that it started life in colonial Australia, from the Wathawurung Aboriginal word *burag*, 'no, not'. You were 'poking the borak' at someone if you were poking fun at them. An alternative suggestion, preferred by Nick Hudson, is that it is a northern Irish dialect word, 'to brag or boast of one's fighting powers'. Whichever, barracking began and has remained primarily in Australian and New Zealand usage, although Webster says '(Br.) to hoot, jeer' but how would he know?

And it's time to turn off the tap and stop the flow.

*Peter Judge*

Sources: The *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition on CD-ROM v.3.0. Webster's *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1988 encyclopedic edition, Lexicon Publications, New York. *The Macquarie Dictionary* 3rd edition. *Modern Australian Usage*, Nicholas Hudson, Oxford 1993. *Le trésor de la langue française* at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>>. <<http://ingeb.org/garb/lmarleen.html>>. Trumpeter photo from <[www.blackfive.net/main/images/taps.jpg](http://www.blackfive.net/main/images/taps.jpg)>.

*(IPEd notes, continued from page 2)*

and many of the workshops and other events that constitute these programs are transportable. IPEd aims to provide the logistical and other support to 'roadshow' training events between the societies and other interested groups. To catalogue all that is available, Anne Surma, convenor of the professional development committee, will be contacting society training officers.

Susan Rintoul, chair of the organising committee for the national conference to be held in Adelaide on 7–9 October this year, joined the meeting to outline an informative and stimulating program in progress, and some exciting ancillary events. The committee's call for papers closes on 27 March. Of the high-profile keynote speakers invited, prominent refugee advocate and human rights lawyer Julian Burnside has already accepted. Mr Burnside has a strong interest in 'the word' and 'truth' and their corruption in the doublespeak of the usual suspects.

The conference organisers realise that the costs of travel and accommodation make it hard for many editors to consider attending. To help defray such costs, members of the SA society will be able to offer billets to some out-of-state registrants. Discounted, early-bird registration will be available from April. Visit the conference website at <<http://www.editors-sa.org.au/?q=node/66>>.

The minutes of the Council teleconference held on 30 November 2008 are now available on the IPEd website.

*Ed Highley*  
Secretary

## Report from the first of our 2009 workshops

The first sessions of the CSE Training Program 2009 took place on 13 March 2009.

The morning session 'Overview of editing and publishing' presented by Sue Wales with the electronic component covered by Sue's colleague, Dave Kingwell, attracted 17 participants.

Some of the very positive responses from the session evaluation were:

*'...very relevant and practical'*

*'raised a whole series of interesting questions'*

*'the most helpful parts were actually interactive – a question from the floor being discussed and /or people's practical examples being discussed...'*

*'...both presenters were engaging and clear'*

This session was designed to be introductory in nature, however, many participants wanted more time to explore the topics at a deeper level and to go through their own examples:

*'The subject for this session was too broad even for an 'overview''*

*'Each session could have stood on its own'*

*'Could well have been a full day'*

The afternoon session 'Introduction to Proofreading' presented by Cathy Nicoll attracted

16 participants.

Some of the most positive responses from the session evaluation were:

*'Presentation very interesting and exercises were fun'*

*'Fantastic, helpful, informative, interactive'*

*'...useful anecdotes from industry'*

*'Working examples was a great way to learn – difficult and fun'*

Although lack of time was not such a big problem for participants of this session some did identify it as an issue:

*'Would have loved longer'*

*'There was a lot to cover – perhaps longer duration would be appropriate'*

*'...supply notes/handouts of powerpoint slides'*

In conclusion, Canberra Society of Editors would like to thank the presenters, Sue Wales, Cathy Nicoll, Dave Kingwell and all the participants who made the day such a success and we look forward to seeing you again at forthcoming training sessions.

*Martine Taylor*



*Some of Canberra's new Accredited Editors being presented with their certificates by President Ted Briggs at the February meeting*



## April workshop with Helen Lewis

### **The Don't Panic Workshop – learn to publish annual reports and other publications without headaches, heartburn and hysteria.**

After having your interest piqued at Helen's talk at our March meeting, you will want to come along and learn more at this all-day workshop.

Presented by:	Helen Lewis (presenter) & Elizabeth Henderson (facilitator)
When:	17 April 2009
Where:	To be advised
Duration:	1 day 9:30 – 16: 30 (full day attendance required)
Format:	4 workshop sessions
Non-members:	To be advised
Members:	To be advised
Contact:	Martine Taylor: 6260 7104 (ah) or martinetaylor@hotmail.com

**Overview:** Four workshops sessions: covering scoping and planning large publications; developing a workable project plan; establishing a sound report structure and managing the publishing process. Participants will undertake workshop exercises to illustrate the principles and have the opportunity to work on their own project.

#### **Session 1. Scoping and planning large publications**

- introduction
- task and process analysis
- putting yourself in the picture
- compiling a 'to do' list

#### **Session 2. Developing a workable project plan**

- the role of the project manager
- the need for a project plan
- developing a project plan
- assembling the publishing team

#### **Session 3. Establishing a sound structure**

- content and compliance requirements
- identifying illustrative materials
- developing and testing the structure
- briefing the writing team

#### **Session 4. Managing the publishing process**

- preparing an order of book
- collating and tracking incoming material
- version control
- clearance procedures

#### **Helen Lewis BA (presenter)**

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, newsletter, 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.

## Rates revisited (Part 2) – How much are you worth?

Here are five avenues to consider to augment the value you attribute to your own services. My first proposal for considering the merit of your own work can be summarised by the word **solidarity**.

This is a quaint old-fashioned word that I think retains contemporary meaning. If I undercut my colleagues, in the long run I undercut myself. If I sell myself short, I sell my colleagues short. If I don't value my own services, I undervalue the services of my colleagues. I prefer not to do any of these things. I would rather that my colleagues didn't behave this way towards me. Solidarity forever.

A second way of improving your position in the industry at the same time as providing benefits to others is a simple one—**networking**.

Networking through professional associations, at conferences and through more informal groups increases your professional awareness and the value of your work. How? You might find out about new technological developments. You could hear about professional opportunities. A well connected editor can direct a client to an appropriate colleague who has specific expertise for a particular job. This might be experience with a certain kind of software, the ability to understand Russian, a background in astrophysics or expertise in literary editing. That colleague could be you, this time or next time.

Most of us have had the experience of people asking us to help find work or to help find someone with the right skills for a particular job. It helps everyone to put the right team together. As well as letting you know about opportunities, networking can also alert you to problems in your local industry. Networking might let you know about a client who pays late or not at all or about the disadvantages of a new contract under offer. Information like this can stop you from wasting your time and help you to target your services, which is another way of valuing your time and effort.

Our professional associations are networks, as are our personal links with other professionals. In addition, there is room for formal and informal groups of editors to join together to put forward tenders requiring specific combinations of skills and also to balance better the times of flood and famine that we often experience. No one wants to recommend a client whose work is not up to scratch and the best way to find out the calibre of your colleagues is to work with them.

Third, knowing your own worth is crucial when you are **negotiating**.

Your services will be valued and you will be taken more seriously if you start any negotiation from a position of strength. By this I mean working

out your bottom line and deciding your position in advance. In the negotiating room, don't be tempted to shift from this position unless you are offered some additional element that might make a new deal worthwhile. Put simply, this is another way of valuing your services. It means that in any negotiation you are clear about how far you are prepared to go, and it means that you will never walk out of the negotiating room empty handed. Even if you don't get the contract, you walk out with your professional standards undiminished. You know that you have not undersold yourself (or your colleagues).

This leads me to my fourth area, and it is a vexed issue. People don't talk about it much, but it doesn't mean that it doesn't happen. Can I be the only person who has been asked to lower my rates for some special reason? I'm talking about the dreaded D word, **discounting**.

I don't think that bakers or mechanics are routinely asked if they will bake bread or fix cars for less than their advertised prices, but I know that editors are. Clients sometimes ask for discounts, we sometimes give them. In fact I am not opposed to discounting under any circumstances (although I know that some editors are). What I am opposed to is random discounting. An explicit discount for work you consider to be in a good cause or because the job is intrinsically interesting is very different from a discount because the client is trying it on, or because you feel sorry for the person asking for a discount or because you find it hard to say no. If you let clients know that you are providing your services at a discount rate for particular purposes by writing it into your quote, they shouldn't expect it from you or any other colleague as a matter of course in the future.

If a client genuinely has only so much in the budget for editing, instead of working for less money, it's often possible to negotiate performing a different service that does not involve underselling your skills. It might be possible to offer a manuscript assessment or a chapter edit, instead of the full edit originally discussed, for example.

Finally, **quoting**. Quoting is a very public way in which we tell the world what we think we are worth, by offering to do a particular set of tasks for a specific sum.

Many of you will be familiar with the following scenario: your quote for a job is accepted. When you begin, or part of the way through, you find that the specifications have changed. The job is bigger than the one you quoted on or there are endless meetings that you were not told about or you are asked to incorporate author changes that were not part of the original quotation. Bakers are not expected to throw in extra cream buns, much less

to double the amount of bread they agreed to bake for a certain price. Mechanics will charge you more if you bring the car back with a new problem. I have known them to charge twice for the same problem! This is not the place for a detailed discussion of quoting protocols. But I would say two things about quotes or tenders if you want others to value your services.

- The first is to make sure your original paperwork is very clear about precisely what your quote covers. This can save a lot of heartache. It clarifies your position in the event of any later differences in interpretation of words and phrases in the written quotation such as 'proofreading', 'editing' or 'project management'.
- The second is to suggest that you resist client requests to perform extra tasks for no extra payment. It sounds so simple, and yet if all the editors in Australia did this, we would find we were not taken so much for granted and our services were valued a great deal more. Overnight, perhaps.

When clients place us under pressure to lower our rates, or to do extra work for no extra payment (which comes to the same thing) remember that behind an hourly rate lurk many hidden costs. In particular, remember that a freelance editor is paid by the hour, by the job, by the page, or, the ultimate in piecemeal, by the word. Time is certainly money, but time is not our only cost. Freelancers are not paid when they are sick, they do not receive superannuation benefits, recreation leave, long service leave, professional development, they are not paid for the time spent in administration, coping with IT problems, preparing quotations, or for the costs of running a car and upgrading equipment or administering the GST on behalf of the government. So when you fail to incorporate those costs in your services, you are giving them away, as well as your time and your skills.

I resist clients' requests to divulge my hourly rate, preferring to quote on the job. I find this to be an entirely successful work practice. It makes it unlikely that the client will go for the lowest hourly rate on the often mistaken assumption that it is cheaper. An experienced and skilful editor can often quote competitively at a higher hourly rate than a less experienced or skilful one. The quality of the work is a factor that clients would do well to take into account when assessing quotes.

Much of this paper has concentrated on outlining the problems we face in ensuring that our services are adequately valued.

You might ask 'If it's all so hard and so poorly recognised, why do it? Why not be a baker or a mechanic?'

It has been said that doing the work you want to do is worth \$100,000 a year (a comment attributed to Isaiah Berlin). Add that to whatever you earn,

and editing starts to look pretty attractive.

It's heartening to know that what you do is creative, worthwhile, skilled and absorbing. It's wonderful indeed to find your work satisfying. It's great to be happy with your work.

But you might as well be happy **and** valued.

In preparing my original paper, I tried to get useful data on editors. As I expected, meaningful information was hard to come by. So I conducted a survey, asked editors about their professional priorities, their educational and employment background, their special skills and their current rates.<sup>1</sup> I continued to run the survey at national editing conferences every two years. The captive audience seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

My aim was to provide some useful data for editors to publicise their levels of skill and expertise, and to gather information as a basis for further advocacy work.

The section that most people were interested in was the one on rates. Here is the average taken from the responses to the question about hourly rates, gathered in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007:

2001	2003	2005	2007
\$49	\$50	\$60	\$62

We know that many editors charge well below that rate. We also know that it is less than a third of the MEAA rate. I therefore proposed that PEA develop a recommended minimum rate, publish it on our website and promulgate it through the industry.<sup>2</sup>

Given that \$62 was the average reported rate from the last national conference, I suggested \$55 as our starting point. I thought it was an achievable figure for competent editors to charge. Having a minimum recommended rate advertised on the website will help us educate clients about industry standards and as a guideline, individual editors naturally retain the freedom to charge above or below the recommended rate. It also dovetails nicely with the professionalism that will be generated by the national accreditation scheme which will hold its first exam on 18 October 2008.

The meeting that I presented the proposal to went one better and upped the recommended minimum rate to \$60 per hour with built in CPI increases. Who am I to argue with my colleagues?

© Pamela Hewitt 2008  
www.emendediting.com

#### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> The surveys were conducted at national editors' conferences held in Brisbane (2003), Melbourne (2005) and Hobart (2007). It will be run again at the survey in Adelaide in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> 'What are you worth?', meeting of Professional Editors' Association (NSW) (Inc.), 22 September 2008.

---

## Contents

- 1 Next meeting: Don't panic—take the heart burn, hysteria and headaches out of publishing an anual report
  - 1 February meeting report
  - 2 IPEd Notes
  - 2 New members
  - 3 From the President
  - 3 Letters to the Editor
  - 4 Nuts and bolts... plurals
  - 5 Committee doings
  - 5 General meeting program
  - 6 Thinking about words: Turning off the tap
  - 8 Report from the first of our 2009 workshops
  - 9 April workshop with Helen Lewis
  - 10 Rates revisited (Part 2)—How much are you worth?
- 

---

POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA

SURFACE  
MAIL

If undeliverable, please return to  
Canberra Society of Editors  
PO Box 3222, Manuka ACT 2603