

ACTive Voice

Newsletter of the Canberra Society of Editors

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From the President



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From the 'Impossibly Messy Desk' of the President

Welcome to the first edition of CSE's newsletter bearing its new name, *ACTive Voice*. We want the name to reflect our communication with you – active and engaged – and the journal to be the voice of the society. All contributions for future editions welcome! Thanks to Alan Cummine, our guest editor.

We are watching the world – and our own lives – being edited. Some edits are serious and structural; some are milder; but all are unwelcome and induce feelings of helplessness. When I wrote my first President's Column in December, we all expected life to continue as normal: booking venues for meetings and training; organising interesting speakers; rethinking our website and systems; reviewing the constitution; and getting together regularly to chat, put speakers on the spot, drink wine and scoff ginger cake.

Not for a while, it seems! But CSE remains strong, and our excellent committee is mastering Zoom and working hard to find ways to bring good experiences to members. They didn't have Zoom or email during the Spanish Flu epidemic, so those are resources we'll make the most of. Our April and May general meetings will be delivered as webinars. On the positive side, I'm booking in for webinars run in other states.

As a freelancer with work still coming in, I feel very lucky. Not everyone is so fortunate. The JobKeeper payment is available to sole traders who have lost income, and the ATO site gives clear instructions about eligibility and making an application: <https://www.ato.gov.au/general/jobkeeper-payment/In-detail/JobKeeper-guide---sole-traders/>. A sole trader is both the business entity and an eligible business participant and so receives the JobKeeper payment themselves.

We include some photos and reports from happier times. In February, we had our first (and only) in-person meeting this year, where Brian O'Doherty introduced us to some new and useful software – VisibleThread. We'll be calling for a handful of volunteers to try it out and report back. The offer is for our members to sign up for free, so we're negotiating carefully what CSE might be able to offer in exchange.

The committee has undertaken a review of our systems and website. We want everything to be better integrated – membership, information, payments and links – and more accessible to members. We're investigating software and providers, and we are prepared to invest some of our (your) carefully managed capital on getting this right.

I want to recognise and congratulate Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE as the inaugural recipient of IPed's Janet Mackenzie Medal. This is a welcome recognition of Elizabeth's past, present and future contributions to the editing profession.

We've approached IPed to re-open discussions about how to work more effectively together. When both organisations are less distracted, and we can meet face to face, we'll seek to build active relationships that support the profession in Australia. Meanwhile, CSE will do its best to ensure our members aren't disadvantaged by the lack of a discount for us on IPed webinars and, eventually, the accreditation exam. The exam has, of course, been postponed, so we've postponed our exam training as well. (cont.)

If you need a subsidy for a training place or an online meeting run by IPed, let us know. Members of IPed are receiving invitations to virtual branch meetings around Australia and across the ditch, so the horizon is actually widening there!

Thank you for continuing to support your organisation. Stay strong and safe. Please tell us if you need any information or support from the committee.

Eris Jane Harrison AE
President

Membership

Technology is a beast at the best of times and more so when someone like me really does require a little hand-holding and basic, plain English instructions to wrap my brain around it.

I have taken on the Membership Secretary role from the long-serving Dr Linda Weber, at a time when CSE is still bedding down a new system for membership and financial records where they can 'talk to each other' more easily.

That being said – if your membership renewal fees were due any time in the last four months, since the beginning of the year, you should have received an email reminding you in the last week or so.

A huge thank you to people who have responded, either by telling me they'd already paid, and when, or apologised profusely (totally not necessary) and paid promptly, and to those who let me know they'd retired/moved/resigned.

If you know your membership was due and you didn't receive an email, or if you're not sure if you've paid and are still a financial member, please get in touch and I'll try to sort it out for you. Similarly, if you received an email but know you've paid, please let me know so I can update your details.

Welcome to new members

A huge and warm welcome to all new (and renewing) members over the last half a year. If you're new to CSE, I'd love for you to shoot me a quick email to say 'Hi' and let me know what you do and maybe one amazing/intriguing thing about you. It would be great to have a members' corner section in our newsletter so we can connect with each other through this medium.

I'm looking forward to getting to know more of you this year.

Kellie Nissen
Membership Secretary
kellie@justrightwords.com.au



Professional Development

I have been a CSE member for several years, but only joined the Committee for the first time this year by taking on the role of Professional Development Coordinator.

My first major task was to carry out an updated survey of Canberra's many meeting and training venues with a view to finding a centrally located and reasonably priced venue from which we could conduct training and workshops throughout the year. The Committee was close to selecting a venue from a strong shortlist when the coronavirus struck and many venues put their operations on hold indefinitely.

We had been working on plans to start the year with a couple of pre-exam workshops ahead of this year's IPed accreditation exam, before that too was suspended. It is IPed's intention to reschedule the exam for a date within three months of COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, and we will be ready to hold the workshops, *Grammar in a Nutshell* and *Copy-editing*, once an exam date is confirmed.
(cont.)

While the accreditation exam remains the focus of this year's professional development calendar, I am working with the Committee to explore other general training topics, including marketing yourself as an editor, using Word macros, and much more. While the COVID-19 restrictions remain in place, we are hoping to bring you some of these as webinars.

If you would like to suggest a training topic, you can contact me via the CSE website by going to 'About' > 'Contact us' and selecting 'Workshops and courses', or you can simply reply to any of the general Society emails and your suggestion will find its way to me. In the meantime, don't forget to keep an eye on the IPed website for other training opportunities.

Nigel Brew
Professional Development Coordinator

General Meetings

CSE's monthly convivial gatherings went into hibernation after our February meeting at the popular St Mark's venue in Barton. Adapting to the new COVID-19 'social distancing' restrictions has created challenges, which your Committee is now meeting.

March was cancelled while we explored new arrangements.

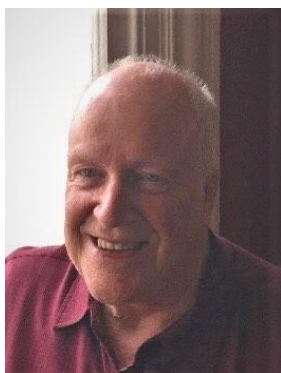
In April (29th), 25 members and guests took part in our first Zoom webinar, presented by our own Dr Malini Devadas, on marketing your editing services in uncertain times. It was a good start to our conduct of virtual meetings.

For May and June, we have two guests from the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) – Meaghan Newson (May, see page 6) and Julian Fleetwood (June) – and will probably build on the Zoom success in April.

National Library has cancelled all bookings until the end of August. So if we're likely to convene in person before then, we will continue our assessment of alternative venues.

Kate Potter
Meetings Coordinator

Website Update



The current website remains unchanged since I took up the reins, though unfortunately there have been some hitches in the handover process. One of these has meant that emails sent from the **Contact us** page haven't been reaching the intended recipients. This has now been fixed – so you can again send enquiries about the various activities of the society from that page. I apologise if you have submitted an enquiry that wasn't responded to; if you resubmit it now, it should go to someone who can deal with it.

CSE is in the process of investigating options for a new website that will offer many new capabilities. This will also incorporate financial management features and allow us to streamline our administrative processes.

Howard Silcock
Website Manager

On being a mentee

Mentoring

In the December 2019 edition of *The Canberra Editor*, we focused on what it means to be a mentor – that is, the person providing the mentoring, the guidance.

A mentorship can't work without mentees, that is, people who are seeking guidance in a wide range of skills and knowledge associated with the editing profession. We often have a lot more potential mentees seeking a match with a suitable mentor than we have had mentors.

Right now, with much more work, schooling, study and business being conducted from home, there can be a feeling of 'loneliness', even for normally stay-at-home editors, because of the lack of face-to-face contact with friends and family. Now might be a good opportunity to (cont.)

strike up a new relationship – to get that guidance you’ve been looking for, and do it all from your own home. If you are thinking that it might be a good idea, here are some points you need to be aware of that make mentoring quite different from classroom study, tutoring, coaching, counselling or any other form of professional development:

- You need to be a member, at any level, of the CSE or IPEd.
- You need to understand the basics of copy-editing (mentoring is not basic teaching but can help you ‘top up’ existing editing skills).
- You must have at least a little experience in editing, whether paid or voluntary.

That’s all. Then you need to ask yourself what your goals for a mentorship might be. Perhaps you need one or more of these:

- to upskill in copy-editing, using time-saving editing tools that are available these days
- to understand the documentation that goes with running an editing business from home
- to expand your knowledge in an area of editing you may not have tackled before – eg fiction, academic material, poetry.

Our program is not limited to any particular area of editing, so long as it is clearly related to editing. See the list of topics that have been the goals of some mentees (back page of our Guidance Notes on the IPEd website).

How can you ‘be a good mentee’? Most importantly, it’s a partnership, and a good mentorship is as valuable to the mentor as it is to you, because the mentor often needs to research material to discuss with you, so learns a lot in the process. In addition:

- Be considerate of your mentor – get assignments back in good time.
- Stick to your stated goals – if your goals change or you have problems, talk to your local Mentoring Coordinator.
- Be clear about what you can manage to achieve – you are the ‘driver’ of the mentorship.

If you have questions, or would like a Mentee Application Form, email one of the joint Program Coordinators, Ted or Elizabeth, or your local Mentoring Coordinator.

Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE – emmurphy.words@gmail.com

Ted Briggs AE – tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au

Mentoring in the ACT

Mentoring continues to offer a valuable and personalised avenue for professional development for members of the CSE. Four established mentorships continue, and we’ve recently established a new mentorship in fiction editing. We’ve also welcomed back a former successful mentor who specialises in academic editing, including law and medicine, and can provide advice on building an editing career. For further information, please email me: kate.horgan@alumni.anu.edu.au.

Kate Horgan
ACT Mentoring Coordinator

MENTOR RECRUITMENT DRIVE – ACT AND NEARBY

Dear CSE members

We want to boost our pool of mentors for the IPEd Mentoring Program. The program is still running during this time of social distancing, with mentees and mentors using videoconferencing, email and telephone to connect with each other.

You might:

- have years of experience in different aspects of editing
- be relatively new to the profession
- have knowledge about setting up a freelance business
- be an AE or have other relevant qualifications (eg scientific or business).

How might you contribute?

Mentoring offers opportunities to consolidate your existing knowledge, and to learn something new! You get to connect with like-minded people, add to your professional development, and give something back to your professional community.

For more information on applying, please contact ACT Mentoring Coordinator, Kate Horgan: kate.horgan@alumni.anu.edu.au

Mentees

gain skills and confidence

Mentee takes responsibility for setting and achieving goals | builds on skills | expands knowledge | gets personal guidance tailored to needs
Content of mentorship confidential between mentor and mentee



Mentors

get just as much out of it

Mentor learns through guiding others, researching new areas of expertise
Highly rewarding experience | opportunity to give back to the profession

IPed News

News from the Institute of Professional Editors (IPed)

IPed has launched its first IPed-wide newsletter. Read it at http://iped-editors.org/News_and_events/Newsletter.aspx

Branches now include New Zealand, so IPed is an international organisation.

The COVID-19 lockdown is making IPed branches creative, with meetings everywhere now available to us all via Zoom. For example, **Editors SA** is running a Zoom workshop at 7.30pm Adelaide time on Tuesday 19 May, called 'Improve your financial finesse'. Once, we would have had to travel to Adelaide for it; now, we simply book and pay online. Members \$10, non-members \$20. **Editors NSW** is offering 'News – good, bad, fake? What corpora can tell us about language usage' online via Zoom on Tuesday, 5 May at 7pm Sydney time; same prices. Check out all the offerings on the IPed website.

IPed is conducting an initial survey to identify how editors are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the survey will be used to assist in IPed's advocacy for IPed members and the editing profession. They say that the survey will only be open until 28 April, but check it out in case that has been extended: [The impacts of COVID-19 on editors and their employment, editing work and activities](#). Because the situation is evolving, IPed members will be offered more opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences and how their health, employment and work practices have been affected.

IPed has announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IPed and Biotext Pty Ltd–Macquarie University, as joint publishers of the *Australian manual of style* and the website StyleHub. It is not yet clear exactly what this partnership will deliver, but it promises 'access to quality resources across Australia and New Zealand', which sounds very promising. Here is a link to the Media Release:

<http://iped-editors.org/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/IPed%20signs%20MoU.pdf>

7th Style Manual ... project update

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) will publish the new Australian Government style manual later this year.

It has been nearly 20 years since the 6th and current edition of *Style Manual for authors, editors and printers* (Style Manual) was published. Editors and writers now face challenges that weren't even on the horizon in 2002. Punctuate a tweet, cite a Facebook post? Add to this, evolving language and style conventions, and changes to the way people access and consume information.

When DTA embarked on this project, we knew it would be big job. We knew it would be conceived in a very different environment to previous editions. And we knew there would be enormous expectations.

We are using the DTA's user-focused [service design and delivery process](#) to develop the new Style Manual. This process has four phases: Discovery, Alpha, Beta and Live.

From Discovery we learned what users like and dislike about the current edition, and what they need from the next one.

We found four distinct user groups. This, in turn, helped us to identify what is required of the new content – rules, examples, evidence and authority.

We learned that many of our users are time-poor and need answers quickly. That most government content is published digitally, which requires a different approach to hard-copy publishing. We learned that government produces a vast range of content – ranging through online services, social media posts, white papers and legislation, to name a few examples.
(cont.)

We learned that approval processes are convoluted and often derailed by personal preferences. I refer to the great 'program vs programme' debate of 2013–15, not to mention double spaces and capital letters.

During Alpha, we thought about how we might meet the needs identified in Discovery. We then tested those hypotheses with users. Some fared well, others went back to the drawing board.

Beta, which is where we are now, is where we take those learnings from Discovery and Alpha and then build the thing.



In conjunction with Ethos CRS, our content partner, we have been working flat out on the new Style Manual since September last year.

We have been testing with users as we go. We know that exposing the Style Manual in rough draft may result in some users never coming back – so we are approaching this with caution. Content is first reviewed by our cross-agency working group and then by users of our private Beta site.

We have just (late April) finished drafting content. However, much of this content is still to be reviewed. Once we have finished our internal review processes, the content will be subject to an expert external review. So, we still have some way to go before the Style Manual will go Live.

I look forward to sharing more of our learnings and progress so far at the next meeting of the Canberra Society of Editors.

Come along to the next CSE meeting on 27 May 2020 if you would like to find out the who, what and when of the new Style Manual.

Meaghan Newson
Style Manual Product Manager

* * * * *

How to write good

More of the thoughtful spam (an oxymoron if ever I saw one) from my literate truckie mate in Harden Murrumburrah.

1. Avoid alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. They're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
5. Be more or less specific.
6. Writers should never generalise.
- Seven: Be consistent!
8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

So ... now you know!

(from Your Guest Editor)

Features

Janet Mackenzie Medal



‘Our Elizabeth’ awarded the first Janet Mackenzie Medal

The Janet Mackenzie Medal was officially launched at the 9th IPEd national editors conference in May 2019. The award is to recognise professional editors who have made significant contributions in lifting the standard of the editing profession and/or given exemplary service to IPEd. Kerry Davies AE, IPEd Director and Chair, gave a moving speech honouring Janet Mackenzie DE who had died the previous September after a lifetime of making visionary contributions to IPEd and to the editing profession in Australia.

Kerry Davies noted that, while it was imperative to establish this award honouring Janet Mackenzie’s service, IPEd had landed themselves a tough gig: it wasn’t going to be easy to find people to measure up to Mackenzie’s achievements. Perhaps she meant that it would become more difficult after the inaugural winner had been chosen.

At the same plenary session announcing the award, Ted Briggs AE awarded his colleague and friend, Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE, the informal title of ‘living national treasure’, gently presaging the inaugural awarding of the Medal.

In April 2020, IPEd announced Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE (*pictured*) as the inaugural winner of the Janet Mackenzie Medal.

Elizabeth worked closely with Janet Mackenzie in the IPEd group that developed the national accreditation scheme, and knew her well. Elizabeth and Janet also served on various working groups that wrote or revised *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* over a number of years.

Elizabeth will be known to a great many of you as a tireless and clear-eyed mentor and friend to her fellow editors. She has been extraordinarily generous to me – I learned more about editing in one chat with her at my first general meeting than I had been able to in months beforehand – and I am not alone in my experience of her generosity.

Elizabeth is herself a prolific mentor who has personally mentored, formally and informally, many editors in and around Canberra. But since 2011 her mentoring has extended around the country and now also to New Zealand. She was instrumental in establishing the IPEd Mentoring Program, and remains at its head together with her fellow Program Coordinator, Ted Briggs AE. The Program is unique in the world in its design, which bears the hallmark of Elizabeth’s generous style.

Her past and present contributions to CSE are immeasurable, recognised by her being awarded Honorary Life Membership at CSE’s 21st Anniversary in 2013. She has been a member since CSE’s inception, and is a long-serving member of the committee, including as President. She has forged links with sister organisations within Australia and overseas; she and Ted Briggs developed the mentoring program within CSE as a pilot and then made it national; and she does more than her due as an (extra)ordinary committee member. She is also generous in permitting a regular invasion of her home for the committee’s monthly meeting (when pandemics aren’t making such gatherings a Very Bad Idea) – and she even feeds us!

Among all that, Elizabeth runs her own consultancy providing tuition, mentoring, coaching, editing and other services useful to writers and editors. She has run her online mentoring, training and editing services world wide by digital means for many years, and has been editorial adviser to the *Style Manual* (7th edition) project. Two of her many contributions have been her recent website Study Skills help for editors preparing for the accreditation exam and her ongoing *Grammar in a nutshell* workshops, which she has delivered all around Australia and overseas in various formats.

Elizabeth’s two best-known books, *Effective writing* and *Working words* are as staple in Australian editors’ offices as Janet Mackenzie’s own *The editor’s companion*. Take this as a reminder to read them both again, or to (cont.)

Editor’s shameless plug:
Check out www.emwords.info.

get a copy of the fully revised second edition (2019) of *Working words*, if you haven't already.

Elizabeth Manning Murphy is a kind of institution in her own right. Congratulations, Elizabeth. Thank you for all you do – nobody but you is surprised that you've been awarded the inaugural Janet Mackenzie Medal.

Ngairé Kinnear (one of your many grateful mentees)

Reflections after a year with CSE

I have just paid my membership renewal. Essentially, it's my 'one year anniversary' with CSE. It's also a little over a year since I registered my business name, sent my website live and reduced my teaching hours from 'nearly fulltime' to 'hardly at all'.

The latter step is not to be taken lightly – my first pay notification from the Department of Education after I did this made my heart leap out of my chest in fear. What was I thinking? Bills to pay. Two teenagers with large appetites and expensive leisure activities. Freelancing?

A year down the track, however, and I'm starting to make inroads. No, I'm not earning as much as I would be if I were still teaching fulltime – but I'm happier. And I'm also more confident in my ability and less likely to be hesitant to throw my hat into the ring to bid for a job.

There are multiple factors that have contributed and one of them is my decision to join the Canberra Society of Editors.

What benefits did membership give me?

A CSE membership provides you with multiple opportunities and resources – from little nuggets of wisdom found in newsletters, to knowledgeable speakers at the monthly meetings and fabulous professional learning opportunities, including one-on-one mentoring. In reality though, it's what you make of it that determines how much you get out of your membership.

In my case, there are two things that really stood out for me in my first eight months of membership.

The first was the wonderful training session on Indexing, presented by the inimitable Max McMaster. I'll put it out there now – before I signed up for this day, I didn't even know 'indexing' was a thing. (I don't know who I thought put together the index at the back of the book. Magic, perhaps?) I loved it. It was a wonderful day of learning and 'a-ha' moments. More than that, though, I met some lovely people – which leads me to my next point.

The second, and perhaps most valuable, thing I've gained from my membership has been the opportunity to meet lots of people I wouldn't have otherwise met. Getting to know people on a social level is one thing – editing is often a very lonely job. However, I'm not talking about social get-togethers – it's the networking that's important.

What value is there in networking?

For me, networking is everything. Whether it's via editors' groups on Facebook, or in person at the monthly meeting, or a small group of editors getting together for lunch and a chat every month or so. You don't necessarily always talk business, but it's great to know that if you're having a problem, or have come across something you're not sure about, there's a group of people who won't judge you and will happily help you out.

CSE is a wonderful network. In my year, even though most monthly meetings have been out of my reach owing to a clash with my daughter's band commitments, I've managed to make it to a couple and have made the most of social media connections through the CSE. I've found jobs this way, discovered tools and resources I didn't realise I couldn't live without, and have enrolled in courses to improve my skills.

(cont.)

I love belonging to a group of like-minded people and am one of those creatures who feels the need to give something back – even when I shouldn't because, seriously, who has the time?

And suddenly, I find myself on the CSE committee!

How did that happen? One person, she knows who she is, so she'll remain nameless here, is responsible for me finding myself on the committee – as membership secretary, no less.

I'd just like to put it out there now – as an ordinary member, I had **no idea** what went on behind the scenes. It's easy to think that everything – all the training, the speakers, the newsletter, renewal reminders – just happens.

Not so.

It happens because of a small group of dedicated, single-minded volunteers – I'll say that again – volunteers.

There is a huge amount of work and effort that goes into everything the committee does. That's been my learning curve since February!

None of them want accolades, or medals or special certificates. All of them want to make the CSE the best possible society for its members.

In my short time on the committee, I've gathered lots of extra nuggets of info to add to my growing knowledge and practice pile. The wealth of experience and expertise in that room when we meet has it bursting at the seams.

The hidden message

It's not so hidden, really.

Embrace your membership with the CSE. Explore what it has to offer and make the most of it when you can.

Be patient with the committee – but do give us a nudge every so often if we don't respond to an email. It's probably slipped off our radar.

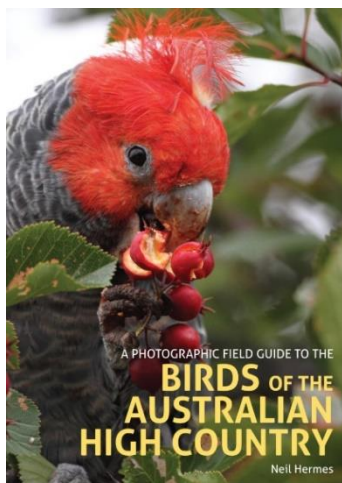
Think about putting your hand up every now and then. You have no idea how appreciated that gesture will be – plus, you'll learn a lot.

Network. Network. Network.

And socialise a little too.

Kellie Nissen

What do birds and editors share?



Neil Hermes is an accomplished ornithologist and the author of many books on Australia's natural history, landscape and wildlife. As a local Canberra author, CSE invited him to speak to our August general meeting about the publication of his latest book – *A Photographic Field Guide to the Birds of the Australian High Country*. 2017, John Beaufoy Publishing Ltd: Oxford, UK.

The meeting was held at a venue new to CSE, the Durie Room at St Mark's in Barton, so we were almost as curious about the new 'digs' as we were about Neil. That is, until he started speaking.

Neil had not published in some years, and found that a lot had changed in publishing while he'd been busy with the actual birds. The process of publishing had gone global – publisher in Oxford, UK, editors in distant regions of the UK and in Ireland, design in New Delhi, printing in Kuala Lumpur. He spoke about the business of adjusting his own work to accommodate time zones and no chats-over-a-cuppa with those involved behind the scenes.

Neil had been invited to speak about the process of writing, compiling and publishing, and to his credit he stuck to this topic quite well for a bit. The beautiful photographs were supplied by accomplished amateurs and professional ornithologists from within the community of birdwatchers, including from Neil's own collection. Some were collected for-purpose, including one for which Neil drove to the other end of the country on a sighting tip-off for a photograph of a desert eagle that is only a rare visitor to the high country region.

(cont.)

I say 'to his credit', because before long it was quite clear that the editors present were pretty keen to hear about the birds, rather than about the publishers. We learned a great deal about the shifts and changes in the bird populations of the ACT and region since Canberra was built, some fascinating history of Norfolk Island's birds from his time working there, and details about individual species. He must have thought our questions would never end, and they might not have done if some brave soul hadn't gently wrapped the meeting up.

The presentation was placed handily before Father's Day, so Neil's book sales after the formal meeting went very well indeed. We were glad of St Mark's open-ended finish time which allowed him to process the long queue – I have a feeling some more questions about birds were smuggled in under cover of the purchase transactions.

The question, 'What do birds and editors share?' had an answer after all: a fascination with birds.

Ngairé Kinnear

<https://johnbeaufoy.com/photographic-field-guide-birds-australian-high-country/>

Discovering Vermeer: A writer-editor's challenge and achievement



Presenter Helen Topor receives her floral gift from CSE V-P Gil Garcon

Helen Topor faced some interesting, unusual and very personal challenges in writing her first book – a 360-page, colour-illustrated, non-fiction work on the life and paintings of the Dutch Golden Age painter, Johannes Vermeer, known to many for his famous *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

A committed, longstanding CSE member, Helen shared her stories about these challenges with an appreciative audience at our monthly meeting last October.

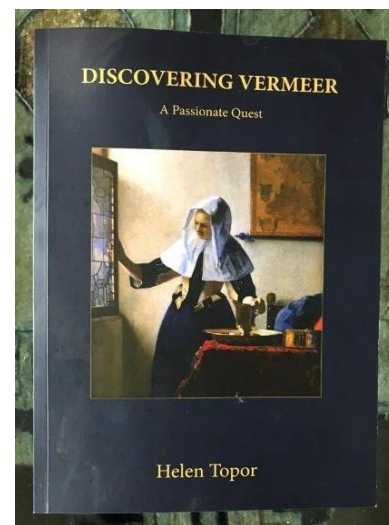
One of her biggest challenges was being able to view all the works in person so she could write about them from experience informed by research. Others included structuring her writing, finding the appropriate tone and title, and integrating the personal, travel and research elements into a coherent whole. To do this she had to muster a range of writing, editing and indexing skills to shape the book into an informative and attractive read.

Helen told us of her fascination with Vermeer and her quest to see all his works, a quest that took her to galleries in Europe and the USA. She spoke particularly about his depiction of light and the reasons for his choice of subjects and interior settings. Images of some of his beautiful paintings illustrated her analysis and evoked sighs of recognition.

It was a passionate and very personal quest, and Helen told her story with warmth and sincerity. Those present felt privileged to have shared it.

The National Gallery of Australia Book Shop holds copies of Helen's book, as does the NGA Research Library.

Leanne Pattison



EDITING/LANGUAGE BLOOPERS — (EXAM PRACTICE !)

Shortly after 3am on November 29, 2014 police who had been monitoring the shipment since its arrival in Australia from Germany a week earlier arrested six men in Smithfield, not including Mr Bishop.

Why so many police to make an arrest?
([The Sydney Morning Herald](#), 7 June 2019, since corrected)

[Thanks to Nigel Brew for these.]

Pilcher's lawyer Harvey Walters also disputed Ms Henderson had been stabbed more than 20 times during the trial, and claimed there were only two stab wounds with the rest being "mere cuts".
(ABC News, 10 August 2017)

"... Now our Labor team are currently pouring over the detail and you'll be hearing more from us in the coming days."
(ALP Budget Statement, 2 April 2019)

Quoting Russell Zimmerman (Australian Retailers Association) about changes in buying habits.

"What we are seeing at the moment is that consumers want to buy things that are ethically sourced, and local makers – artiesians – fill a very niche market ...

"I understand that people can't always afford small, artesian work, but ..."

(ABC News online, 30 January 2019, since corrected)

Editors adapt to disruption and dislocation

As with all other organisations in January–February this year, the Society of English-Language Professionals in the Netherlands (SENSE), the Barcelona-based Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET) in Europe, and the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG) in South Africa seemed to have all their ducks in a row, planning as they were their programs of CPD activities for their members for the year ahead. And then COVID-19 swept across the planet, deciding otherwise.

SENSE activities hard hit

SENSE has been particularly hard hit. It has a number of active SIGs that arrange regular meetings for their members on a variety of subject areas (translation, copywriting, editing academic texts, education, law and finance) and these were the first victims of the lockdown in the Netherlands.

Not only that. SENSE's AGM, set for Saturday 28 March, had to be canned as a face-to-face meeting at extremely short notice. (The Dutch government has banned meetings of more than 10 and the quorum at an AGM must be about three times that.) This was doubly sad, because, this being the 30th anniversary year of the society, there was to be a full commemorative program, including a guest speaker, as part of the afternoon's proceedings.

Despite this setback, our tech-savvy webmaster made it possible to stage a 'Sure Slim' event online, thanks to the Zoom meeting platform. What a success the AGM turned out to be, and our resourceful SIG coordinators have all become adept 'zoomers'! One is even running weekly virtual workshops to help teachers develop online teaching techniques; that group alone has grown to about 30, including members spread across Europe.

But there was more disruption and conversion in store. Since March 2019, a team of nine members had been organising what was billed as the SENSE Jubilee Conference 2020 – only the third conference to be staged by the society. It was slated for 5–7 June – only days, as it soon became apparent, after the Dutch authorities' envisaged ending the lockdown. 'Cancelling' the Maastricht conference in its face-to-face form, we were also faced with this hard choice: abandon it altogether and simply refund everyone their conference fees, or postpone it for a year (sadly, no longer a 'jubilee' year), or go online.

Our first step was to survey all the session presenters and the workshop facilitators, 80 per cent of whom voted to support an online venture. And that is what we're currently engaged with – no easy task! (The pre-conference workshops have successfully been converted into a webinar series spanning seven weeks, again thanks to Zoom. Ironically, they are expected to attract an even wider audience than the original workshops. Zoom has meanwhile spawned a new skill – SENSE is about to train up a team of webinar/meeting hosts.)

In the process, we're learning some interesting aspects of human behaviour. Some members have confessed to 'attending conferences mainly for the socialising, the change of scenery and the networking opportunities'. Well, yes, to each his own, mate. Others have voiced concerns that online meetings are stressful, a strain on the eyes and the grey matter, and that they are insufficiently punctuated by breaks. Presenters have voiced their discomfort at being restricted to sitting behind a computer screen (with a suitable backdrop behind them, or not!) and being unable to move and gesticulate as they would naturally do before a live audience. (Others have demonstrated just how inept they are at presenting in the new medium.) And so on. These are all factors that must be taken into account in the 'New Normal' of training and conferencing.

(cont.)

Meanwhile, SENSE's Executive Committee now 'meet' for monthly updates on portfolio activities via online 'scrums' – meetings that last no more than an hour and during which each member gets only 5–10 minutes to report back or raise issues. The New Normal for this society, it would seem.

MET's mayhem

In the same way, MET's June–July summer workshops, planned to take place in virus hotspot Spain, have had to go online – but at least they will go on. And just when we all thought their mid-October annual conference, also in Spain, was safely out of virus's way, voilà, this past week it was cancelled. Period. For the first time in more than a decade, a MET conference in an exotic setting on the Mediterranean littoral will not be a given. Such is the turbulent, topsy-turvy world post-Covid!

Fortunately, other conference organisers here in Europe have been forced to forge ahead with conversions to online, including the so-called 'BP' conference for the translator community. Quaintly, the locality of the conference is still billed as 'Budapest' (hence 'BP'), but now it's all taking place in the ether, with presenters and hosts situated across Europe.

But being able to attend some of the sessions has given me, and some of my fellow SENSE conference planners, invaluable insights into the opportunities and drawbacks such online events present – from networking rooms during breaks between and after sessions to 'raising your hand' or continuing to 'chat' with fellow participants during sessions, to learning to 'host' (as opposed to presenting) a session – a whole new skill. On the final night, a number of us attended a delightfully informal evening, designed not so much to display our brilliance but to promote much-needed socialising in these times. And what fun the convivial event was! We hope this experience will help us to run an equally efficient virtual conference that approximates what would have been the Maastricht experience.

Social distancing, lockdown: where freelancers stand

One of the speakers at BP, Anne-Marie Colliander Lind, from Sweden, spoke on the topic 'Effects of social distancing on translators'. She could have been speaking to freelance editors and linguists generally. Quoting the findings of two surveys among European language practitioners in March–April this year, she pointed out that of the 1000 respondents, 60% expected less work as a result of COVID-19, 30% no change and 10% more work. Among the top issues for freelancers were: uncertainty of business (91%) and a slowdown in demand for services (89%); but 75% said that they were likely to continue to operate in the aftermath of the pandemic and 95% indicated that they would continue to work once things return to normal. These results reflect some overwhelmingly positive sentiments despite the severity of the dislocation to working life.

It's a freelancers' world. And their strength lies in their networks and business forums, and the fact they've experienced the least social disruption from social distancing. – Anne-Marie Lind

Lind stressed how important it is in such hard times for language practitioners to be more collaborative, caring and generous of spirit than before: "We need to do more for less by supporting and carrying one another in order to ensure that the talent is available when things return to normal." And 'more for less' does not necessarily mean being squeezed on price: it does mean going the extra mile in these extraordinary circumstances, among ourselves and between ourselves and our clients. And if exceptional rates are to pertain for as long as the virus continues to take its toll, then we should protect ourselves by getting such agreements in writing, so that lower rates or other modifications do not become the new norm in future.

PEG's virtual workshops an antidote

In contrast to the northern societies, PEG in South Africa seems – unwittingly – to have been better prepared for the pandemic, the lockdown in response to which began in earnest at midnight on 26 March, (cont.)

and is due to be relaxed from 1 May (just in time for Labour Day, the cynics would say!). As you no doubt know, editors there have similar challenges to Australians, arising from our both being expansive countries with concentrations of members in major centres. However, the Guild has only three branches, which effectively excludes a whole bunch of members from any face-to-face activities.

In September 2019, PEG first began to experiment with half-day webinars. Such was their success (the feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly in favour) that it launched a program of what are billed as 'nitty-gritty editing webinars' for 2020. These have continued to serve our grateful members during the lockdown period and will no doubt do so beyond May. And the AGM in May will undoubtedly go online too, since it looks as if the country will still be in some form of partial lockdown then, with large-group activities discouraged. The temptation to stage most, if not all, events virtually is now really great.

Freelancing and social networking our strengths

What has emerged as a really fascinating phenomenon during this whole period when the world seems to have gone haywire is this: those of us who have been operating as freelancers have probably been subjected to the least disruption and dislocation of all, as Lind acknowledges, simply because we're used to a home office routine.

Yes, sure, this prolonged artificial isolation is taking its toll. And having the 'ankle biters' around you 24/7 and their having to be home schooled when they should have been at 'proper' school does create enormous challenges to those of us fortunate enough to be wanting to get serious paid work done and deadlines met. But, on the whole, my colleagues in the North and the South seem to be taking the isolation and concomitant virtual solutions to group get-togethers in their stride.

This contrasts strongly with the experience of our colleagues who are used to working in the social setting of an office environment: the lack of socialisation with co-workers, the difficulty of maintaining a routine and productivity in a home environment, and loneliness, are just some of the problems they are experiencing.

All of which speaks volumes about us language practitioners: routine-friendly, resourceful and resilient, we will not only survive but thrive! And it also speaks volumes about the value of societies such as CSE in the current chaos, which should not be underestimated either.

John Linnegar

Can readability tools improve writing and make an editor's job easier?

It was our first general meeting for the year, and our last public, in-person event before COVID-19. The venue was lovely, the food and wine excellent, and the editors (and others) in attendance were socialising at the now-illegal distance of less than 1.5 metres apart.

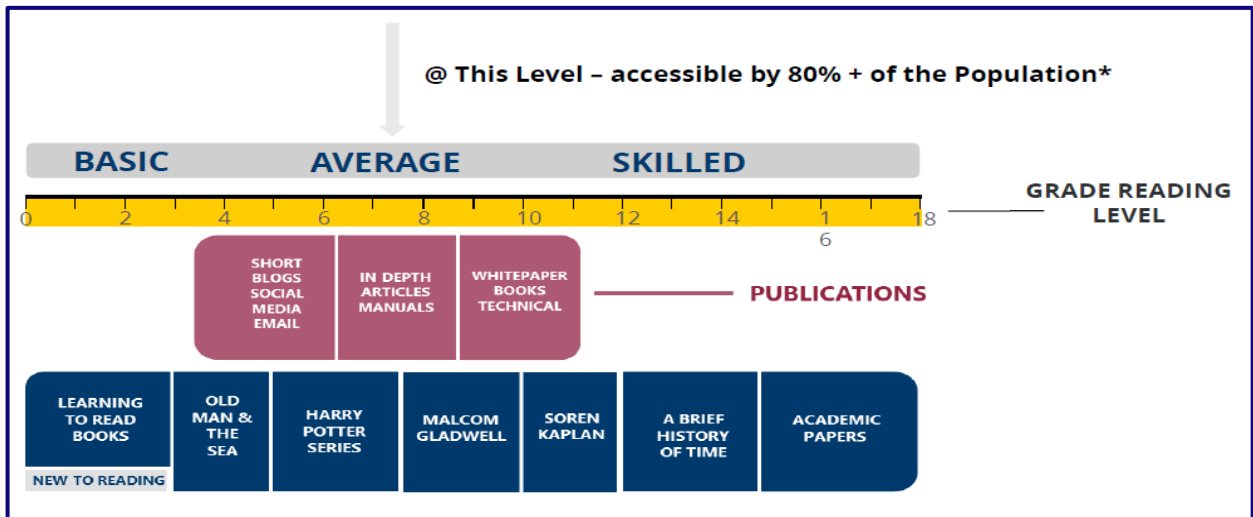
The guest speaker for the evening – Brian O'Doherty, from NovaTech Ventures – took us through the ins and outs of readability, readability tools, and how one tool, VisibleThread, has helped people improve their writing from the point of view of users and writers. Brian also wanted to make a special offer to CSE members.

Readability

Readability measures how difficult it is to understand text. It gives a readability score as a reading-ease measure or reading age. It is calculated from metrics such as number of syllables, and word and sentence lengths. The difference between the tools, Brian explained, is what they measure and how the results are weighted, thereby giving slightly different scores.

The reading level you need depends on who will read or use the content: an instruction on an Australian Government website needs to be written at a level that most people can understand. In Australia, that means writing for upper primary to lower high school, which is the reading level of more than 80% of the population. (cont.)

Academic articles are written and read by a more educated audience, so the language is more complex, often with specialist nomenclature.



Readability tools

Readability tools have come out of the shift towards plain English, with its focus on shorter sentences, shorter words that people use everyday, and a reduction in unnecessary words.

VisibleThread Readability is one such tool. It was initially created to make tender documents easier to read and respond to. The company then expanded to helping governments improve the readability of their communications – e.g. websites, emails, letter or other content – largely in Ireland, Australia, Canada and the U.S.

The tool evaluates text in terms of sentence length, the amount of passive voice, readability (based on the Flesch Reading Ease Test), and it gives a grade level equivalent. These metrics can be compared with a standard that you set. This is where the real value of VisibleThread comes in: if your audience will value an unlimited amount of passive voice, multisyllabic words and 50-word sentences, you can set the standard accordingly.

In many departments, web publishing or communications areas set the standard for an entire department. According to Brian, they use the apparent impartiality of VisibleThread to explain why those 50-word sentences they get asked to publish aren't appropriate for a website: 'it's not me rejecting your writing – it's the machine'.

The Whitelist function lets you exclude unavoidable terms, such as the name of your department, from the readability score. It also lets you create a list of Watch Words that should be avoided, and can offer preferred alternatives.

Brian finished his talk with an example of how a NSW primary school principal used VisibleThread to reduce her own workload in editing 150 school reports (that's one for each child). Teachers would draft the reports, send them to the principal for review, then make corrections as required. All this on the evenings and weekends, of course.

With the help of VisibleThread, the principal found that she could save 105 hours a year just by highlighting complex language and jargon as teachers write. She created a 'watchwords' list so VisibleThread could flag jargon and offer an alternative (entered by the principal). It became an essential part of the school's style guide. It made the process more objective and reduced the 'red-pen arguments'. The resulting reports were more consistent, easier to review, and for parents, easier to read.

How can it help editors?

For editors, VisibleThread is another tool we can use to deliver better edited text. It's more gentle in offering advice about the readability metrics (such as sentence length and passive voice) than some other readability tools. Its Whitelist function and the ability to adjust the standards lets you customise the readability analysis for the client. (cont.)

Note to CSE members

CSE Committee is negotiating whether and how CSE might support members' use of VisibleThread.

As a preliminary step, we're seeking volunteers to test the software in their businesses. Some members who saw the presentation are very keen to use the software.

If you can see an opportunity for this in your work, and could trial it within the next few weeks and report to Committee, please contact Eris Harrison via the President email in 'Contact us' on CSE's website.

We're limited to five participants, so don't mull over it for too long.

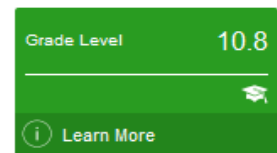
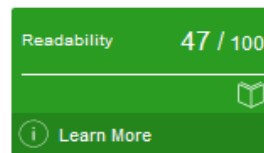
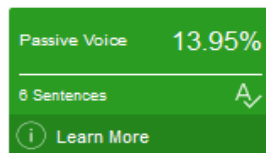
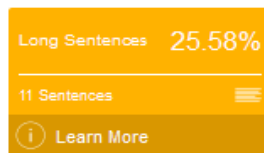
Eris Harrison

For our own work, it catches us out if we let the reading level slip a bit too high in our excitement over adding in missing commas. It is also a good management tool for a managing editor who wants the writers and editors working for her to meet a client's demands for a certain reading level without close supervision and review.

The committee is currently considering a special offer from VisibleThread for members of the Canberra Society of Editors. More details will come once the committee has made a decision.

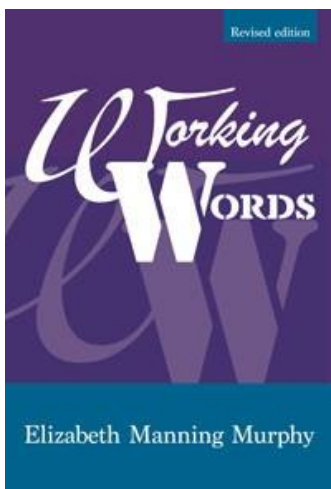
Cathy Nicoll AE

In case you're wondering, here are the VisibleThread 'traffic lights' for this article, with the standards for the thresholds set for the highly literate audience I know editors to be.



Had I used the default standard for most Australians with a reading age of upper primary, the traffic lights would show the same scores, but flash a lot more red and orange.

Book Review: Working Words



Reproduced with permission from *Editing Matters*, February 2020, the magazine for members of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders, UK (about to transition to the Chartered Institute of Editors and Proofreaders on 1 March 2020).

Working Words

E Manning Murphy, Lacuna Publishing, 2019 (revised edition), 268pp, £17.99 (pbk), ISBN 978 19 22198 36 3

REVIEWED BY Lindsey Thornitt

I wish I had found this book earlier!

Working Words by Elizabeth Manning Murphy is a highly engaging text that provides a comprehensive yet light-hearted view of what it means to be an editor, the steps it takes to become one and how to set up your business for success.

She also discusses ethics and legal considerations for editors, project management, preparing quotes and responding to clients, how to incorporate an indemnity clause into a contract, and home office setup.

These are all things that are invaluable for people just starting out; I've never found so much useful information on starting an editing business in any other book, and that's only the first 80 pages. The following chapters provide reviews of basic grammar, punctuation, style, plain English, editing for second-language English writers and more. Each instruction is easily accessible and accompanied by readily transferable examples.

Working Words is a fantastic book, and I highly recommend it for any new or intermediate editor venturing out on their own. The text is playful and engaging, and written in a conversational style that is never dry. The Itchypencil moments are humorous and educational, offering a candid glimpse into the professional editor's world, both behind the desk and out and about in everyday life. I plan on keeping this one within easy reach on my reference shelf.

Nigel Brew's ODD SPOT #1

Consider the different ways in which '–ough' is pronounced in this sentence:
A rough-coated, dough-faced ploughman strode through the streets of Scarborough, coughing and hiccoughing thoughtfully.

Singing our song

Reproduced from *The Canberra editor* June–July 2014. It had been submitted by CSE Honorary Life Member, Ed Highley. It deserves to be learnt and sung by all editors – new and ‘old’.

* * * *

I was having a bit of a clean-up the other day – not me personally, my old office – and was elated to rediscover the glorious work reproduced [here].

Its strains have, to the best of my knowledge, and great disappointment, been heard once only. This was at the dinner for the Second National Editors Conference, held in Melbourne in 2005, from a choir composed almost entirely of sopranos and contraltos. I was in there, a pathetic drowned tenor, and I remember the hairs on the back of my neck rising up, though I’m not really certain of the reasons for that.

The anthem was written specially for the event which, I recall, endorsed the plan for a national association for editors, and saw the start of work that led to the incorporation of the institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) in January 2008.

I’m not certain of the true identity of the songstress Anne Neditur, though I have my suspicions. Can a reader help?

I respectfully suggest that, with some minor editing, the anthem be sung, as appropriate, on ceremonial occasions.

Ed Highley

The Editors’ Anthem

Sung to the tune of
‘Advance Australia Fair’

Lyrics by Anne Neditur

We’re editors and that’s becoz
We know our ABC.
With words to spare and tender care
We’ll cross your i’s and t.
Your p’s and q’s we’ll daily mind
With grammar rich and rare.
On every page we’ll rant and rage
If there’s an error there.
With joyful stains of ink that’s blue
We’ll make your copy fair.

* * * *



REPEAT AFTER ME

‘I will not use an apostrophe + s to form a plural.’
Write it out 100 times. TODAY.

**(Ask an editor for the two exceptions.
One is in the lyrics above.)**

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