The Canberra e|d|i|t|o|r

**Next meeting
AGM,
Saturday
29 August**

Note: there will be no Wednesday meeting this month. The AGM takes precedence.

The venue is Members Dining Room 3 at Old Parliament House. The best way to enter is from the top level car park at the back of the building. A walkway leads directly to the meeting area.

Tea and coffee will be available from 11am and the meeting will start at 11:30am. A light lunch will be provided free (to all members who RSVPed), and the Members Bar (cash bar) will be open at lunchtime.

After lunch we are very fortunate to have Cath Lawrence, a restaurant reviewer for the *Canberra Times*, speak to us on a most appropriate topic—wine and food. We hope that she will also tell us what her job involves; the process, deadlines, and relationships with sub-editors. This is our chance to get an insider's view.

We will resume the general meetings on Wednesday 30 September when we hope to have a former speechwriter as guest speaker. It should be interesting to get another insider's view, so put the date in your diary.

President's report

You don't need me to remind you that the AGM is coming up on Saturday 29 August. The format will be pretty relaxed so please come along and have your say.

And please volunteer for the committee. All positions including the executive positions are open. Under our constitution, executive positions can only be held for two consecutive years. This means that the president, vice-president and treasurer positions will become vacant. We need people with a range of experience on the committee—both newer and longer-term members. So if you think "I'm too new to go on the committee" then put your mind at rest—you are the very person we need. The current committee has achieved a lot, but there are still plenty of challenges, so life won't be dull for the next committee.

It was interesting to see an article in the *Public Sector Informant* recently about the problems with vague and impenetrable language used in government. It was also interesting to note that the proposed solutions did not appear to involve the employment of professional editors. This gives us a golden opportunity to respond and put the case for using editors to help clear up the mess.

It has been a busy month for training in the Society. Pamela Hewitt presented a workshop in July on editing as a business, and we had the preparation workshop for the next round of the accreditation exam in September. I hope you are enjoying our training program this year—I think our Training Coordinator Martine Taylor had put together a very comprehensive program covering many aspects of editing. And there's more to come. Also, while thinking of what I am going to put in my annual report to the AGM, I have been looking back over the speakers and topics we have had over the last year, and I think we have been lucky to have such a set of varied and interesting speakers, thanks to Kevin Maguire, our meeting coordinator.

As this will be my last president's column, I'd like to thank you all for your support over the past two years, with particular thanks to all the hardworking committee members.

I look forward to seeing you on the 29th.

Ted Briggs

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IPEd notes
News from the Institute of Professional Editors

The big news at the beginning of this month was that the 2009 accreditation examination will go ahead on Saturday 12 September. There are some 90 registrants for the exam, 13 of them not being members of a society of editors. Clearly, the value of having 'AE' after one's name is being recognised.

The IPEd Council met by teleconference on Sunday 2 August. The budget for 2009–10 was a major topic of discussion. The Institute is in a financial position that will allow it to fund routine activities and current projects. However, to implement major future projects such as, for example, the research and development of on-screen and online exams and training materials, we will almost certainly need to find support from outside funding bodies.

Another topic discussed was the report of the survey of members conducted earlier this year by Rosemary Noble, the Society of Editors (Victoria) councillor, on behalf of the IPEd Council. This is an interesting and illuminating document that identifies, among other things, the wide range of activities that the members of the societies would like to see IPEd engage in. A copy of the report is on the IPEd website.

The council endorsed a letter to be sent to Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, expressing IPEd's concern about the possible implementation of the recommendations of the recent Productivity Commission (PC) research report 'Restrictions on the parallel importation of books'. A copy of the letter is on the website.

The main recommendation is that:

The Government should repeal Australia's Parallel Import Restriction (PIRs) for books. The repeal should take effect three years after the date that it is announced.

The council believes that such a move would have a severe negative impact on many people in all areas of Australian publishing, starting with local authors and flowing through to editors, book designers and typesetters, publishers, paper suppliers, printers and booksellers. The sole benefit promoted by the PC is a reduction in book prices, which we are not convinced will occur.

Our South Australian colleagues are working hard, refining the program and logistics for the 4th IPEd National Editors Conference to be held in Adelaide on 8–10 October 2009. Registrations are already well above 100. The latest program can be found at <www.editors-sa.org.au> or via the IPEd website. There are some wonderful speakers, and just about every presentation has an intriguing title. You'll want to be there.

Ed Highley
Secretary
www.iped-editors.org

Thinking about words – dropping your aitches

You are editing a novel and find the sentence, 'At dusk we came to an hotel'. Do you reach angrily for your red pen and change it to 'a hotel'? Yes? But perhaps you shouldn't be quite so hasty—it all depends on when the novel is set and who is talking. In the period before World War II it was common for the educated classes to say 'an hotel', or even to join the lesser orders in 'an 'otel'. Earlier, back to the 18th century, 'an hotel' was the norm; nowadays, to say 'an hotel' might be seen as an affectation.

The issues surrounding 'h' go back to its origins. It was the eighth letter in the Roman alphabet—as it is in ours—coming from the classical Greek. There it had come in from older languages as a 'rough aspirate', like the 'ch' in a Scottish loch, but in time that sound was merged with theta, and the symbol 'H' became used for a capital *eta*, the long 'e' sound, as it does in modern Greek. The Romans called the letter *ha*, the name given to it in modern German. Later Latin changed the name to *accha*, and in Italian this became *acca*, in French *ache* (pronounced 'ash').

Classical Latin pronounced the 'h', as in *Horatio*, but lost it later and it has since remained generally mute in Italian and French. Indeed, my Italian dictionary defines 'h' as *acca-muta* and has a bare half page of words beginning 'h', all of them imported words like *habitat* and *hors d'oeuvre*. Looking further in Italian, we launch into 'h'-less words like *abituale*, 'habitual', *orribile*, 'horrible', *orizzontale*, 'horizontal', and the like, although these would have had an 'h' in their Latin ancestry and they've kept it in the English and French words. The Russians also have no 'h', and I can recall an official visit to Moscow, back in the 1960s, when the leader of the delegation, Sir Harry Hookway, appeared under the Cyrillic equivalent of *Garriy Khukveiy*—we never discovered why his two aitches were transliterated differently.

Incidentally, the French remain in a tangle over which of their aitches are really mute and which aren't. None of them is ever actually pronounced, but the problem when writing is always to know whether the definite article *le* or *la* is elided before the 'h'. Words like *l'homme* or *l'hôtel* behave as expected, but 'the hero' is *le héros* (even more confusingly, it is *l'héroïne*), the herring is le *hareng* and the owl is *le hibou*. French-English dictionaries often put an asterisk to distinguish the 'aspirate h' from the mute h, but some native French dictionaries seem to expect you to know which is which from your mother's knee. French websites still carry impassioned debates on this topic, and the suggestion that it's an 'aspirate' if the stress is on the first syllable doesn't help with monosyllables like *haut*.

Early English followed the trend and dropped the silent 'h', but educated scribes then thought it smarter to reintroduce the 'h' by analogy with the Latin spelling, and once restored it tended to be pronounced. Former Latin interrogatives like *quid, quis, quo* (what, who, where) duly received their initial 'h' in the English translation: *what* began life as *hwaet*, and if you say a breathy 'what' you may be surprised to find that the 'h' still comes out before the 'wot'. 'Only in a very few cases—such as heir, honest, honour, hour—has the 'h' stayed silent, and before these we use an 'an'. If it's not at the start of a word the 'h' is silent, as in shepherd, Graham. The OED points out that in practice it is also often silent 'in the pronouns he, his, him, her, when unemphatic and as it were enclitically combined with the preceding word, as in "I met-him on-his horse"'.

'H' collaborates with c, p, s and t to form the digraphs ch, ph, sh and th, which in Greek were single letters. Old English had individual letters, *eth* ð and *thorn* þ, for the hard and soft 'th' sounds. Only after the Norman conquest did these digraphs become spelt as we now see them, with gh and yh added for good measure. It was at this time, too, that the spelling of words that had initial 'hw' changed to initial 'wh'.

Returning to words like 'hotel', the question of whether to say 'a' or 'an' in such cases is usually settled by whether the following word starts with

Nuts and bolts—dash it!

If there's one punctuation mark that I get asked about more than most others, it's the dash—what it is, when to use it, what kind of dash to use, how to produce it on the computer. When all we had was a typewriter, we used the hyphen to serve as the dash as well. As a hyphen it looked like this: The Well-Tempered Klavier (no space on either side of a single hyphen). As a dash it could be shown as space/hyphen/space or hyphen/ hyphen with no space on either side:

• There was nothing else for it - we had to run for cover.
• There was nothing else for it--we had to run for cover.

But now we have computers with em rules and en rules.

If we use the hyphen as a dash, the auto-correction facility in the computer will often convert these to em rules and en rules anyway:

• There was nothing else for it – we had to run for cover. (spaced hyphen becomes en rule)
• There was nothing else for it—we had to run for cover. (unspaced double hyphen becomes em rule)

The em rule (—) is often called 'the dash'. It is called 'em' because it is the width of the capital letter 'M'. The en rule (–) is just called 'the en rule'. It is half the width of the em rule and the width of the lower case letter 'n' in whichever typeface is being used. For example, an em rule in *Brush Script* 16 point looks like this: —, and an en rule looks like this: –; while in Arial 16 point they look like this: — and –.

The em rule is formed on a PC by holding down the Ctrl and Alt keys plus the minus key on the numeric keypad. The en rule is formed by holding down the Ctrl key with the same minus key.

The whole family of rules is:
hyphen   -
en rule   –
em rule   —
double em rule——

The hyphen has been discussed in these pages several times, so let's concentrate on the em and en rules (and note: no hyphen in 'em rule' or 'en rule' because em and en are whole words). There are other dashes or dash-like characters: the underscore, the tilde, the swung dash, the wave dash, and so on, which have their uses in certain contexts and in certain languages.

When to use the em rule (usually unspaced):
• *(to express abrupt parentheses)* We went far away—far away from the cares and demands of city life—to write up our research.
• *(to amplify or explain)* What could the message mean—that the bus had broken down?
• *(to show abrupt change)* I talked to them for an hour about the psychological effects of classical music versus pop music on behaviour in institutions—but I see I'm boring you.

When to use the en rule:
(ranges of figures and other spans)
• pages 345–7
• 2001–02 financial year
• 27–29 June
• 69–71 Mort Street
• June–July planting guide
• Canberra–Goulburn–Sydney bus timetable
(association between separate entities)
• Commonwealth–State arrangements
• hand–eye coordination
(linking parallels in series)
• Australia–Scotland test match
• Australian–American research

All of these are unspaced. A spaced en rule is used when there is at least one compound term in the expression, for example:
• the New South Wales – Victoria border
• the financial year 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011

Some publishers, government agencies and business houses allow a spaced en rule for a dash. An example is the sentence at the beginning of this article:
• There was nothing else for it – we had to run for cover.

When to use the double em rule:
This is used in bibliographies and references when two or more publications are by the same author—the author's name can be replaced by the

a consonant or a vowel. In the former case it's 'a', in the latter 'an'. This opens up a host of exceptions, usually resolved by speaking the words out loud—regardless of how it's spelt, if the spoken word sounds as though there is a consonant beginning it, then we use 'a', and vice versa. For example, 'a union', 'a European', but 'an $80 lunch', 'an S-bend'. Initial 'Y' mostly behaves like a consonant, so we say 'a yacht' or 'a yabby', but very occasionally as a vowel: 'an yttrium atom', 'an Ypres defence salient'.

And if you are still worried by 'an hotel', you just have to appeal to accepted practice. Many people refer to 'an historic event' (but 'a history') or 'an heroic act', although 'a' in these cases would not be wrong. Indeed, the upshot of all this seems to be that in many cases, including 'a/an hotel', we cannot be prescriptive—to a large extent it is a matter of personal taste. Burchfield says 'the thoroughly modern thing to do before *h*-words in which the first syllable is unstressed is to use *a* together with an aspirated *h*, but not to demur if others use *an … An hotel* is old-fashioned but by no means extinct.'

And when you have to refer to the 'h', do you say *aitch* or *haitch*? Let Nicholas Hudson have the last word: 'Australians believe (with some statistical justification) that we can tell people who were educated by the Christian Brothers or the Sisters of Mercy because they call this letter *haitch* rather than *aitch*, after the Irish fashion. Why this should be a matter of reproach in Australia is less certain. ... However, the upwardly mobile must learn, *in this one instance*, to drop their aitches.'

So now you know!

Peter Judge

Sources:
Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM (v. 4.0), 2009.
   The Cambridge Guide to English Usage, Pam Peters, 2004.
   New Fowler's Modern English Usage, 3rd edition 1996, ed. R W Burchfield.
   Modern Australian Usage, Nicholas Hudson, 1993.
   The whimsically illuminated initial 'h', painted by an Irish scribe around 800 CE, is taken from *The Book of Kells*, Sir E Sullivan, The Studio, 1955 (1914).

July meeting report - structure mapping for longer documents

At the July general meeting, Dr Neil James, Executive Director of the Plain English Foundation, gave us a very instructive and entertaining presentation on structure mapping.

The Foundation has developed its structure mapping tool over the last decade as a repair kit for faulty reports.

Workplace editing of reports tends to focus on the smaller picture, when the problem is often its structure. Managers know something is wrong with their report, but don't know how to diagnose and fix it. So draft reports go back and forth, as managers and authors tinker with wording without solving the underlying structural problem.

Structural mapping sets out the governing framework for a report and lists the headings, sub-headings and sub-sub-headings. This overall pattern allows the report to be assessed in a structured way.

The structure mapping checklist then assesses five elements: structural design, complexity, balance, headings, and numbering and navigation. Each of these splits into four criteria, to provide a 20-step system for reviewing the structure of a report. Simple, systematic, powerful.

Neil illustrated the process with a before-and-after map of a single report chapter: the 'before' was a ribbon of 11 landscape pages; 'after' was two and a half pages. We got the point.

After giving the demonstration, Neil discussed some of the trial results in using structure mapping. Apart from improving documents, it saves time and effort as teams have an objective way of working through structure and managers can engage with the content before the significant investment in drafting.

While the tool has evolved on the job, the Foundation has also researched the evidence for the principles it is based on. Existing research in areas like cognitive psychology appears to support the tool, although further research is needed.

Of course, structure mapping alone won't guarantee that a report will work. Getting the structure right also calls for strong content and clear thinking. A structure mapping exercise is not going to compensate for their absence. Neither will it make up for poor and unclear expression. So structure mapping is but one tool in the plain English toolbox.

Neil covers structure mapping in chapter 3 of his book *Writing at work* (ISBN 978-1-74175-218-2) which sold out quickly on the night. I think it's my best how-to book. The chapters on editing and proofing alone would justify its purchase.

So if you missed out on the night, get the book and get mapping!

Gil Garcon

double em rule after the first entry. For example:
• Murphy, Elizabeth M (1988) *The Job-Hunter's Guide*, Pitman, Melbourne
• —— (1989) Effective Writing: Plain English at Work, Pitman, Melbourne

It can also show sudden breaks or that something is deliberately being omitted:

• I'm sure he said 'Let go, or I'll ——'.
• It is alleged that the boy, J——, who cannot be named, was injured in the schoolyard fight.

There are many more variations on the use of hyphens, em rules and en rules in writing. As editors, we need to watch for consistency of usage and meaningfulness. Fashions change in the use of these punctuation marks, as they do in all aspects of writing. As more people get used to using computers, and as computers become more and more sophisticated, new practices will become the 'in' thing. I recommend browsing the material listed below for more information.

Having dashed that off, I'd better dash to ——. well, perhaps to start next month's article!

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emmurphy@ozemail.com.au

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Mackenzie, Janet (2004) *The Editor's Companion*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne
Murphy, Elizabeth M (1989) *Effective writing: plain English at work*, Pitman, Melbourne (reprints available from the author)
Style Manual for authors, editors and printers, 6th edition (2002) Commonwealth of Australia, John Wiley & Sons, Australia

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Committee notes

Key items from recent committee discussions

• End-of-year dinner speakers had been arranged: Professor Iain MacCalman (author of *Darwin's Armada* and General Editor of *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776–1832*) and Assistant Editor Kate Fullagar.

• Arrangements for the AGM including a guest speaker, Cath Lawrence

• Membership renewals coming in. Membership cards are printed and will be mailed out over the coming weeks.

• Financial paperwork has been sent to the auditor.

• IPEd for member contributions due.

• Three applications for full membership, three for associate membership and one application of an 'upgrade' of membership were accepted.

• Newsletter distribution: printer to print the addresses on the newsletter to reduce the workload for the editor.

• Information provided by new members on application forms about what areas they would like to contribute in: need to follow up especially with AGM coming up.

• The Small Business Essentials Workshop, Turn Skills into Profit..! was held in June and the double act of presenters David Grantham and Jean McIntyre had worked well for the small group.

• Arrangements for accreditation exam. The pre-exam workshop was conducted with 21 participants: 15 prospective candidates and six presenters. It was hoped that the venue for the exam would be be the same as last year (Canberra Grammar School): to be confirmed.

• Cathy Nichol had volunteered to put together a concept for a revision for the website.

• Discussion of, and keen support for, the possibility of co-publishing Elizabeth Murphy's grammar articles from the CSE newsletter.

Training News

Professional development reminder
Design for non-Designers presented by
David Whitbread

Friday 28 August 2009, National Library of Australia
9.15am – 4.30pm

$150 (members), $250 (non-members)

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

This workshop will be especially relevant to participants who deal with designers and need to know more about the design process to enhance their editing work.

Session 1
Introduction to design and layout, typography, working with colour, photographs and illustrations.

Session 2
Readability, type selection, displaying creativity and working within a tight budget.

Session 3
Picture selection, sourcing of commissioning images, print effects and designing-on-a-shoestring.

Session 4
Web design conventions and the requirements for smooth navigation and retaining readability.

David Whitbread is the author of *The Design Manual* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2001) which won an Australian Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing in 2002. The second revised and expanded edition was released in 2009. He also co-wrote and art directed the sixth edition of the Commonwealth *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (Wiley, Brisbane, 2002). Formerly Design Director of the Australian Government Publishing Service and Head of Graphic Design at the University of Canberra, he has run his own graphic design consultancy, David Whitbread Design. He is currently the Director of Design at an Australian Government department in Canberra.

With a BA in Graphic Design from Swinburne Institute of Technology in 1982, David has mostly worked in publishing and corporate identity design. He started teaching part-time: layout and design at the Canberra Institute of Technology and, later, print production and professional practice at the University of Canberra. He moved from studio management and design direction to higher education. After speaking at a conference, he was invited by a national magazine to write a monthly column on graphic design that continued for 11 years. This prompted a publisher to request a reference book on graphic design which became *The Design Manual*. David has moved into corporate communications, design and web management since.

Summary of Editing as a Business July workshop

The Editing as a Business Workshop presented by Pamela Hewitt was held at the end of July. With her engaging manner and drawing on her significant national and international editing and business experience, Pamela gave attendees valuable insights into what it is like to be a sole trader in this field. From the practicalities of setting up a business in one's own home, quoting, insurance, to looking after one's health—Pamela covered it all and more.

Pamela traced her editing business 'journey' from her early days as a freelance editor when her short term goal was to establish a viable business, so she took on whatever editing work she could. Once she was earning almost as much as in her previous in-house position, Pamela incorporated training work, an on-line presence with her editing courses and expanded to interstate: she relocated interstate without any hitches or drop in business. Today, Pamela's focus is to expand her on-line presence to capture an international market, editing literature and doing more writing. Throughout her career Pamela has done pro-bono work which she finds valuable, and she always provides a quote for this work just to show its value in the current market.

Although most freelance editors are sole traders sometimes Pamela works with other editors. Partnerships are another matter, and are fine as long as things are going smoothly but it is important to plan in case the business has to be wound up.

Pamela covered the importance of freelance editors not 'underselling' their skills, the minimum hourly rate, the role and importance of accreditation and the impact of the global financial crisis.

It was heartening to hear that editors are very generous with their knowledge and that's why it is important to join a Society of Editors!

Workshop evaluations were very positive and a number of participants mentioned how confidence enhancing they found the workshop, and how generous with her time and approachable Pamela was. Some more comments from the evaluations were:

'Really enjoyed Pamela's informal approach. Lots of valuable information. Enjoyable presentation'

'Pamela had a great ability to convey important and useful information in a friendly informal way'

A big thank you to Pamela for travelling from Sydney to do our workshop and to the participants for their attendance and contributions.

Martine Taylor
CSE Training Coordinator

Contents

End note

Would you like to be the new Newsletter Editor? All you need is access to InDesign or Publisher software, and a few hours a month to layout the newsletter. No labelling or delivery to post office involved. Contact Virginia Cooke for more information, virginia.cooke@gmail.com