The Canberra editor

Renee Bennett, of Design One, will talk about 'The relationship between designers and editors'. She will focus on how that relationship can be made productive, so that design of a document complements the text and highlights key points, making the finished product visually appealing and easy to read.

Renee qualified in Canberra before starting work for Design One. She joined the studio when it was under the direction of the former managing director and well-known Canberra graphic designer, Bill Pearson. Renee's long-term ambition to become a turkey farmer helped her to stand out from other potential employees!

Currently ACT President of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), Renee was an ACT finalist in the Young Business Woman category of the Telstra Business Women's Awards in 2006.

Renee has been at the forefront of Design One's strong focus on environmental issues, and the studio has received several awards in this area, including the *2007 NOWaste Business Award* and the *2006 Print and Graphic Excellence (PAGE) Award for Environmental Excellence.*

Come along to hear what you can do to work more effectively with designers while reducing the environmental footprint of your publications: 6.00 for 6.30 pm in the Friends Meeting Room of the National Library.

The end-of-year dinner (with a difference)

So what was different about the society's end-of-year dinner for 2007? Well, it was held in a restaurant; the speaker was not a literary person; the theme was flowers; and the presence of a weather man ensured good weather.

The restaurant was d'browes, in Narrabundah; the speaker was ABC TV's weather man, Mark Carmody; and the floral theme alluded to our speaker's continuing profession and previous life as ABC radio's gardening guru.

Mark's after-dinner speech was wide-ranging, informative and very, very funny. A natural raconteur, he told us what it was like to become the ABC's weather man and the ways in which the community had responded. His style, accent, pronunciation, enunciation and dress have been the source of much discussion in the ACT, and Mark gave us his take on all of these, often in entertaining detail.

His career as a horticulturist provided many anecdotes and made him an expert judge of our competitive floral efforts. He duly declared Shirley Dyson the prize winner for her sprig of St John's wort, *Hypericum perforatum*, worn for its connection with her workplace, St John Ambulance.

This end-of-year dinner was an upbeat finale to the society's year.

Ann Parkinson

President Ted with our speaker

Congratulating winner Shirley Dyson

Mark and an apprehensive Elizabeth Murphy … who also took the other photos

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IPEd notes
News from the Institute of Professional Editors, February 2008
Obesa cantavit*

On 2 August 1998 the presidents of six Australian societies of editors met in Melbourne to discuss how they might bring their state-based societies together in some way. During the decade since then the societies have chalked up many collaborative efforts, but perhaps the most important is drawing up and agreeing on a constitution that enables them to federate as a national body.

On 22 January 2008 the Australian Securities and Investments Commission issued a certificate of registration for the Institute of Professional Editors as a public company limited by guarantee. Special thanks to Virginia Wilton of the Canberra society for her tireless work on the detail of the constitution and to Ed Highley, secretary of the Interim Council, for seeing it through.

*The fat lady has sung.

Accreditation
Karen Disney of the South Australian society has been participating in national action ever since she attended that initial meeting in Melbourne ten years ago. As the current chair of the Accreditation Board, Karen prodded the board into action after the holidays with a teleconference at the end of January. The major item on the agenda was the arrangements for the first editing examination, including consideration of the feedback from the issues paper circulated in the second half of last year as well as the costs and logistics of running the exam. The board is working closely with the Assessors Forum, which is responsible for the content and marking of the examination paper. The plan is to hold the first exam in mid-2008; more details next month.

Website
The IPEd website <www.iped-editors.org> is looking better all the time. It now contains an RSS feed for continuous updates and a calendar to keep track of professional events. Training officers in particular are urged to post details of their society's programs so that members can plan their professional development. And members are urged to fill in the web user survey – the information you supply will form the basis of a submission to obtain funding that will enable IPEd to sponsor tailored computer training for member societies.

2009 conference
The South Australian society will host our next national conference in Adelaide in October 2009. It seems a long way off, but now is the time to start making plans – saving your pennies or dropping hints to your employer – for this fully tax-deductible expenditure on your professional development.

Janet Mackenzie, Liaison Officer

Bank charges impact on CSE

The society's financial institution, Community CPS Australia, has introduced a 60 cent fee for cheques deposited to our account.

The committee has decided that this fee will be added to membership subscriptions paid by cheque from June this year. Memberships paid by direct deposit will remain unchanged.

So, if your personal bank account is set up for online banking, please pay renewals (and, meanwhile, any other payments to the society) by direct deposit whenever you can. Our details are BSB 805022, a/c no. 0342 3503.
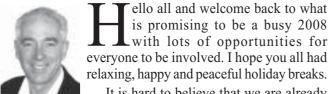
You will need to include your name or other identifier with the deposit, or send an email to the treasurer advising the date and amount of your deposit.

Direct deposit does not currently attract any charges and is the most practical option at this time. BPay would not be economic for the society. Credit card payment might be a possibility in the future, but we have to look at it further.

If you have any questions, please contact me (details at left).

Margaret Millard
Hon Treasurer

From the president

Hello all and welcome back to what is promising to be a busy 2008 with lots of opportunities for everyone to be involved. I hope you all had relaxing, happy and peaceful holiday breaks.

It is hard to believe that we are already near the end of February and our first general meeting for the year is almost upon us. My spies in the graphic design industry tell me that it is a considerable coup to have Renee Bennett speak at one of our meetings, so I hope you'll all take the opportunity to come along and hear what she has to say. Not to mention catching up with fellow members and doing some serious networking. I'm very pleased that we again have an opportunity to interact with someone from the graphic design area, as graphic design is so important to the success of any document. I am in awe of people who can do it well, and I only wish I had more skills in this area.

Speaking of meetings, the program for the year is shaping up and Janet Salisbury, our speaker coordinator, is working hard to bring you an interesting and varied program. More about this at the general meeting and in the next newsletter.

However we have to be a little cautious this year about planning too far ahead as the format and style of meetings could very well change as the result of the feedback we get from our focus groups. On this subject, we have engaged Joe Massingham of WRITEpeople to conduct focus groups on our behalf to get feedback from members (as well as ex and potential members) about how our society can best provide a service to people involved in the editing industry.

EdEx, the Society's day of workshops and presentations, comes around every two years. EdEx 2008 is scheduled for 2 August and will again be in Old Parliament House. EdEx 2006 was a huge success and we hope that this year's event will be even bigger and better. Please take the opportunity to get involved—there will be lots to do and your contribution can help to ensure its success. Kerie Newell is the person to contact, on 0412 042 974.

See you on the 27th at the National Library.

Ted Briggs

Book review

Neil James, *Writing at work: how to write clearly, effectively and professionally*, Allen and Unwin, 2007, RRP $35.00

It seems rare nowadays for a publication's title to faithfully reflect not only its aims but also its achievement—and Neil James has done just that with his immensely readable, well-organised and practical *Writing at work*.

He wrote the book because many workplace writers 'were failing to meet their employer's standards'. Neil James, Executive Director of the Plain English Foundation in Australia, is eminently qualified. He seeks to address the problem of school education often not preparing writers—or their managers—well enough for workplace writing. However, the focus is not on literacy but on *effectiveness*—a watchword.

Writing at work provides an 'objective and systematic method' to help solve workplace communication problems. James argues that effectiveness goes beyond grammatical correctness—more sophisticated criteria are needed. He offers the following: precision, clarity readability, efficiency, usability, persuasiveness.

Seventeen well-balanced chapters are spread over four parts: Planning (Readers, Content, Structure); Structure (Focus, Persuasion, Coherence, Design); Expression (Tone, Grammar, Words, Clutter, Verbs, Sentences); and Review (Punctuation, Style, Editing, Proofreading). The part on Structure is particularly valuable.

Each chapter has three recurring sections: the toolbox, the living language and power tools. The toolbox gives a practical overview of the quick and easy 'road-tested' skills that can be used immediately. The living language section reinforces the concepts in the toolbox by providing detail for those wishing to explore the historical and intellectual contexts of the toolbox—how the tools developed and why they remain useful. The power tools are intended for more advanced writers, and are useful as one's career develops and writing roles become more complex and challenging.

To use the tools effectively it is helpful to think of writing as more than a one-dimensional act—in fact, as having several stages. The structure of *Writing at Work* adopts the writing process itself: research, planning, drafting, structure review, expression review, proofing. Ideally, James urges, writers should spread their time equally on each stage, so that no stage is ignored or rushed.

James argues that much of ineffective writing results from an attitude of viewing writing as 'a one-sided transaction, with the writers dictating content and style, and the readers having to accept', rather than the more professional and productive view of writing as essentially 'a collaborative process, with writers and readers achieving outcomes of common interest'.

There is nothing gimmicky about James' approach to writing. He draws on several of the concepts of classical rhetoric for handy principles for structuring documents, expressing ideas clearly, concisely and coherently, and for restoring the reader as the major focus for effective communication. He advocates making the most of technology so that the design can support the message. Drawing on more recent research about writing in a

Grammar's in style ... why grammar?

Without grammar, there's no style.

Is that too sweeping a statement? I don't think so. Style only happens if the underlying grammar is so consistently acceptable that it almost disappears and leaves the style to shine through. If the message sent by the author doesn't reach the reader with its original meaning, with the author's 'voice' and enthusiasm, and in an easy-to-read flow of text, something has gone wrong with the way the words have been put together – not necessarily with the author's intention.

This year, I've decided to go back to some of the basics of English grammar—the morphology involved (the parts of words that form the whole words) and syntax (the ways words are assembled in sentences to make grammatical sense). It was suggested to me that I should call this series 'Morphing with Murph'—I was sorely tempted. But as syntax will be part of the year's offering, I didn't see 'Synning with ?' as an option. So you're stuck with 'Grammar in Style'. 'Style' can refer to an author's individual style, a house style, a specific way of writing such as Plain English style, and so on.

As editors, it's our job to see that the author's intention is carried out. So it's our job to see that the words the author has used are put together in a way which is meaningful to the intended audience and will get the intended meaning across with the least possible effort on the part of the reader.

You may be an experienced editor. If so, perhaps this year's pages will serve as a refresher or as material you can use when mentoring less experienced editors. Perhaps you are a new editor—if so, I hope these reminders of basic rules and conventions of English grammar will be a reminder of what to watch for in your own writing and in the writing of others. If you have been editing for many years, how long is it since you attended a grammar workshop? The English language changes all the time, and these days it is changing very rapidly—and that includes what is or isn't acceptable in some areas of grammar. Perhaps these articles will serve as food for thought, as something to take on board as a new wrinkle on an old grammar problem, or even just as confirmation that you were right all along!

So, what is grammar?

Grammar means 'the features of a language (sounds, words, formation and arrangement of words etc) considered systematically as a whole ...' (Macquarie Dictionary). Every language has a grammar—patterns made by putting words and parts of words and other structures together to make meaning; and the rules that govern how we do it. We learn the grammar of our own language gradually as we listen to it being used around us and, later, by being taught in school. If we threw words together in any order we liked, and if we put endings on words at whim, what we say and write would look very peculiar and would not make much sense to the listener or reader. If we are speaking or writing in English, we need to understand and use the rules governing the formation of English used by most people, so that we can understand and respond to people in the same code.

What destroys grammar?

- Lack of follow-up to the basic grammar that may have been taught in primary school;
- lack of any teaching of grammar in primary school (it still happens);
- the notion that grammar doesn't apply to emails;
- the notion that text messaging is correct grammar (it may be, but because of space constrictions, it has to be very much abbreviated).

How can we as editors help in these circumstances?

- We can be meticulous in our checking of grammar in everything we edit;
- we can use 'comment note' facilities in on-line editing to explain why we are recommending certain changes—give sound grammatical reasons;
- we can read and learn more and more ourselves about grammar and pass our knowledge on to new and younger editors who don't have the breadth of experience that we might have;
- we can move with the times ourselves—English is a living language, and so constructions which may have been frowned upon a generation ago are now considered grammatically acceptable ... etc.

An important area is the editing of material written by people who have English as a second, third or fourth language. More and more, I find myself editing such material, written by people of Chinese, Japanese, African, Polish and US origin. US origin! What's the problem there? Plenty. A lot of American expressions, and even some grammatical constructions, are quite different from Australian English. Chinese native speakers have problems with articles, verb tenses, use of prepositions etc. Polish people have trouble with English spelling because their own spelling is phonetic. And so it goes on.

There are also many times when I wonder whether the author (even with English as a native language) just tossed a bucketful of words and word endings in the air and let them land on the page in any order. The author clearly hasn't thought about the difficulty the reader was going to have with this mish-mash of syllables. For communication to take place, there has to be a way of getting the words and meaning that are inside the author's head to the inside of the reader's head without losing anything. The 'com-' of 'communication' implies a 'togetherness'—information flowing back and forth between people. Grammar is the tool we use to achieve this—its rules form the code we share. And the code we share is English grammar.
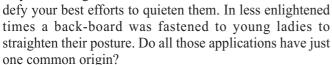
Thinking about words—all aboard!

30ac Wild pig in its own fat calls for old port (8)
(*Canberra Times* Gemini crossword, 24/11/07)

Crosswords are all about 'thinking about words', and the different kinds of teasing wordplay used by their compilers often lead one's thoughts into interesting byways. Those of you who are committed crossword puzzlers will have solved 30ac on sight. However, in case you are not so addicted, dear reader, let me tell you that the solution requires you to insert 'boar' into 'lard', making 'larboard', a nautical term from ancient times that until relatively recently was an alternative to 'port', as the opposite of starboard. But why was that so?

The 'board' syllable turns up in many different contexts—'all aboard' is just one obvious example. You board a ship when you go on board, and you can also board an aircraft or a bus or tram. You may have boarded as a boarder at your boarding school or have enjoyed half board in a Bed & Breakfast. If your investments misbehave, you blame the boards of the companies concerned. Creaking boards in your dining room floor defy your best efforts to quieten them. In less enlightened times a back-board was fastened to young ladies to straighten their posture. Do all those applications have just one common origin?

The answer is 'no'—there appear to be two quite separate roots. One of these, going back to Old English and with links to old Dutch *boord* or German *Bord*, gives us board as in plank or table. The company board is so-called because its members sit around a table (the 'board') as you would have done as a boarder. The other, from the French *bord*, is related to border or edge—*le bord de la route* is the roadside. If you are a pirate boarding your victim's ship, the origin is French *aborder*, to range up alongside. The two come together in a word like 'shipboard', meaning the ship's side. 'Man overboard' was formerly 'over the board', over the side.

For *starboard* we have to go back to the early days of shipping, when ships were steered with an oar over the side. This continued until quite late—there is no evidence of a stern rudder in northern Europe until about 1240. The snippet from the Bayeux tapestry shows how Duke William's ships looked when he crossed the English Channel from St Valéry to Pevensey during the night of 27/28 September 1066, taking about 14 hours for the 127 km crossing. You can see that the steering oar is over the right-hand side of the ships, which was therefore called the *steorbord* side. Steering in this way may seem a bit primitive, but it served to maintain the integrity of the Norman invasion fleet of about 600 Viking long ships and many hundreds of smaller vessels, during a night voyage carrying up to 8000 men, several thousand horses, materials for three pre-fabricated fortresses, and food and wine for all.

When a ship came into port for cargo, it obviously had to fetch up against the wharf with the side away from the steering mechanism. So this became the *port* side of the ship. It was the side on which the loading ('lading') took place, giving the alternative name *ladebord* (pronounced lah-de-bord), which in due course became *larbord*. But larboard and starboard were a bit too similar when shouting instructions to the steersman at the height of a gale, so *port* eventually gained official acceptance in place of larboard.

These terms followed similar paths in other European languages. For example, the German for starboard is *Steuerbord*, recognisably from the same 'steering' root, but its word for port is *Backbord*. If the steersman was facing the right-hand side, then logically his back was turned the other way! The French also used *bakbord* for port in early times, from the old Dutch *bakboord* (French relations with the Netherlands were then closer than with the North Germans) but it has now become *bâbord*. The circumflex over a French vowel is very often an indication of a lost 's' during development, and sure enough at one stage *bakbord* became *basbord*, with the sense of 'back' replaced by 'low'. This seems to have been appropriate at the time, because the lower ranks' quarters were located to *basbord* and the officers to starboard. Starboard in French is *tribord*, which they derive from the early Dutch *stierboord*—the shuffling around of the consonants in language development is nothing unusual, as seen in Anglo-Saxon *hwilc* becoming 'which' or Chaucerian *thurgh* becoming 'through'. Italians have a word *tribordo* for starboard, but prefer to use *dritta* and *sinistra* for the right and left sides of their ships. Russians likewise, with *praviy* and *leviy bort*.

Definitions of port and starboard always assume that you are standing at the poop, looking forward. Poop? *Poop*'s pedigree goes back to the Romans, with Latin *puppis* meaning the stern of the ship. (The children's word 'poop' has no pedigree, other than a real or imagined noise!) And why 'stern'? That also has to do with steering, whether with an oar over the side or a rudder hinged to the back—'rudder' was formerly the catch-all name given to 'a paddle or oar used for steering or propelling a vessel'. Indeed, modern German *Ruder* means both oar and rudder.

CredAbility 7: Follow-up to Accreditation Workshops

Consultation with members of the Australian societies has played an important role in the development of the accreditation scheme ever since IPEd (then CASE) first began working towards that goal. Between September and December last year, workshops were held around the country to consider and discuss the sample accreditation examination. Editors gave a great deal of thought to the assessment content, the weighting of components, how candidates would approach the exam, and the way the exam would be conducted. Many editors tested themselves by attempting the sample exam and were able to offer especially valuable feedback. The Accreditation Board is grateful to all those who contributed to the review process.

In considering all the feedback, and formulating our brief to the exam development team, we have not been able to act on every suggestion made—sometimes for practical reasons, and sometimes because suggestions have been contradictory. But we are confident that the accreditation examination will be a far more effective and equitable instrument of assessment because of the wealth of constructive criticism and comment received.

One of the most debated issues concerning the exam has been the mode of delivery: whether it should, as originally envisaged, be a hard-copy exam, or whether online and/or computer-based delivery should be offered as well as or instead of the hard-copy exam. On this matter, too, we have listened to the views of society members, through the Hobart conference and through written responses to an issues paper put forward by IPEd (July 2007). A subcommittee is currently studying the feasibility and costs of a range of exam delivery options, and the results of that study will guide the board's decision.

In the meantime, the Accreditation Board has reached agreement on the following points, based on feedback from the accreditation workshops in 2007.

Eligibility

Candidates will not be required to have a nominated number of years' industry experience in order to sit the exam, but the exam will be designed for editors with at least two to three years' experience.

Standards and authority for exam

The exam will be based on *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (Council of Australian Societies of Editors, 2001).

The *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edn (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), will be the assumed style guide for the exam; however, candidates may nominate, and use, another authority if they feel it is necessary (stating their reasons). The assessors' primary concern will be consistency.

If a question posed in the exam clearly requires an answer involving 'acceptable' usage that candidates disagree with, candidates should demonstrate in their answer that they understand what they are being asked to do and justify their preferred usage.

Exam development

The exam development team will consist of one writer, three reviewers who will have considerable input to refining the final exam, and one person to proofread and conduct a timing trial.

All assessors will be asked to contribute suggestions for Parts 1 and 3 (see below), to increase the variety of assessment options.

Exam marking

Assessors will either meet or participate in a teleconference to discuss a range of acceptable answers to exam questions, to ensure that the approach to marking is fair and consistent.

The exam will be scored either Pass or Fail. The pass mark will be 80% of the total number of marks available in the exam. Since the exam is a test of competence (not excellence) in applying *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, the Accreditation Board expects that a competent editor with two to three years' experience, or equivalent, will score well above the pass mark.

Exam structure, weighting of marks

Part 1 will be worth 25% and will include some multiple-choice questions.

Part 2 will be worth 35% and will consist of one passage for editing.

Part 3 will be worth 40% and will require candidates to answer four questions from a choice of twelve.

Exam content

Part 1

Multiple-choice questions will be included (up to 15% of the total mark). The focus of questions will be on correcting errors rather than on rewriting/improving the sentences.

Part 2

The passage for editing will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam. It will be general, requiring no specialist knowledge of the subject or genre. Minimal structural editing will be required, and candidates will be given explicit instructions on what they are expected to do.

The passage will be presented double-spaced and in a reasonably large font. Scribble paper will be provided, and candidates may use pencils and erasers when editing.

Part 3

Eight of the questions offered in Part 3 will be general, testing skills and areas of knowledge that would be expected of editors working in any genre. The remaining four questions will be specialised, but the specialties offered will vary from exam to exam.

All questions in Part 3 will be of roughly equal difficulty.

Questions will be open-ended; instead of instructing a candidate to 'Write a letter', they will say, for example, 'Explain what you would do. Write down your conversation, email or other communication strategy'.

(Grammar's in style, continued from page 4)

Next month, I will look at 'case'.

Yes, we do have a case system of sorts in English. It's important for editors to understand it so that they can, if asked, explain to authors why a certain correction is necessary. For example, we all know we need to change the following sentences: 'Jane is coming to the party with you and I', 'My sisters coat is blue', 'Peter is a student at Fort Street Boys' High School' and 'Although Jim denied responsibility, hisself is the only person who could have done it'. But why? Answers next month. If you would like to suggest topics for this year, please email me.

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(Thinking about words, continued from page 5)

The keel (from Old Norse *kjolr*) is the foundation of heavy wood, metal or other material on which the rest of the ship is constructed. Formerly it referred to the whole ship, as did the German *Kiel*. The French have *quille*, which makes the same sound and has the same Old Norse origin. That word *quille* also means 'skittle', but then the German word *Steuer* also means 'tax' and *port* tastes jolly good with your Stilton cheese. There aren't enough different words to go round all the meanings in anybody's language.

There's a thought! And with that I'll shut up, and wish you all a belated happy and successful 2008.

Peter Judge

Sources: The *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition on CD-ROM v.3.0. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite. The picture of the Norman ships from *La Tapisserie de Bayeux* by Lucien Musset, Zodiaque 2002.

(CredAbility, continued)

Duration of exam

The exam will last three hours. There will be fifteen minutes' reading time provided before the exam begins, during which no writing will be allowed.

Given that the passage for editing in Part 2 will be considerably shorter than the one provided in the sample exam, it is expected that candidates will have ample time for checking their work within the three hours.

Candidates with a disability

The Accreditation Board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, how best to accommodate candidates with a disability. Candidates with special needs should, in the first instance, talk to their Accreditation Board delegate.

Meanwhile …

In the coming critical months, we will keep members up to date on accreditation news through the CredAbility column in society newsletters, but in the interim you are welcome to contact your Accreditation Board delegate (*see page 2*) if you have queries or require further information.

IPEd Accreditation Board

Retiring at your peak?

Moral: always read the big letters three times.

Canberra Times, 9/2/08

professional context, he converts plain language theory into workplace reality by using real-world examples that enliven the text and give it relevance.

Writing at Work succeeds because it practises what it preaches—not that the tone ever becomes didactic. James maintains a formal yet friendly and chatty tone; however, the occasional lapses into a casual tone in the second half jar somewhat.

It is a well-designed publication with a pleasing proportion of text and figures. Novice and experienced writers will appreciate the persuasive examples, practical strategies and checklists (particularly the tone scale), and have a better understanding of how to write more effectively.

At the very least, this authoritative book will help to resolve workplace disputes about why 'it should be so'.

This persuasive book fills a gap in Australian publishing of works that deal with the nuts and bolts of workplace writing. James acknowledges his debt to the feedback given by plain language practitioners at home and abroad and the 4000 workplace writers who tested the tools.

Writing at work is an excellent resource for busy professionals who write at work, for serious writers of non-fiction, and for editors.

Helen Topor

Contents

The Canberra Editor

Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in March 2008 and for that issue the **copy deadline is 7 March**.

The editor welcomes contributions by email to <peter.judge@bigpond.com>, using Word for Windows, for PC or Mac.