The Canberra



Canberra Society of Editors Newsletter

Vol 15 • Number 6 • July 2006

Next meeting Wednesday 26 July

The AGM and dinner at the Brassey Hotel

The 2006 AGM will be held at The Brassey of Canberra, Belmore Gardens and Macquarie Street, Barton. The meeting will start at 6.30 pm but please join us for a pre-meeting drink at 6.00 pm.

After the AGM we have arranged a magnificently subsidised dinner for members and their guests: only \$20 each for members and a very reasonable \$45 for their guests. This is our way of saying thank you for your support over the last year.

Seating at the dinner is limited, so first in best dressed! RSVP *now* and send your payment by cheque or money order to: The Treasurer, Canberra Society of Editors, PO Box 322 Manuka ACT 2603.

If you prefer, you can transfer money directly into our account—contact the Treasurer for details at

<swales@earlychildhood.org.au>.
If you choose this option send the Treasurer an email to confirm, and also mention whether you have any special dietary needs.

We must have payment and final numbers by Thursday 20 July.

Any queries to Ted Briggs at <tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au>.

From the President

Over the next couple of weeks I'll be putting together a report for our annual general meeting that will, I hope, give us all some perspective on what the society has achieved this year. Like many of you at the moment, I'm working on annual reports for government agencies and departments—for the first time, I feel an unwonted sympathy for all those reluctant, anonymous contributors.

The committee agreed some time ago that our society would open a sub-account for IPEd funds as an interim measure until IPEd becomes a formal body. (The proposition is that all societies will contribute, on the basis of \$20 per member, towards seed funding to get IPEd launched as a properly constituted organisation.) I'm happy to say that this has now occurred (on 3 July); my thanks go to Sue Wales, our treasurer, for her persistence and patience on the day we appointed to meet for the purpose. Canberra has now shown that it is prepared to back the new national organisation with more than just words. We are also hosting the meeting of delegates to the interim council in August (see Janet Mackenzie's IPEd notes).

This is not the place to comment in detail on Ed•Ex, but I hope that those of you who came found the day's activities useful and enjoyable. Many people took the trouble to fill in the feedback forms and these will be a sound basis for planning future training activities and the next Ed•Ex in 2008. At first glance there appears, at the very least, to be unanimity that Old Parliament House was an excellent venue—and that Kate Burridge was an outstanding keynote speaker. Please continue to send any comments you may have to Kerie Newell.

In conclusion, the eve of our annual general meeting is perhaps the right time to remind you of the objectives of this society, as set out in our constitution:

- promote contacts between members;
- promote the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of information on matters of professional interest;
- assist in promoting and maintaining high standards of editing and publishing;
- establish and maintain liaison with other organisations with related interests;
- promote the use of editorial services.

How well are we doing? The AGM is your chance to state your views and provide guidance to the incoming committee for 2006–07 on the direction you want the society to take. Nomination forms for the new committee are available on the website. Please do consider taking the plunge and joining the committee if you haven't done so in the past, particularly if you're new to the society.

Virginia Wilton President

At the AGM, why not put your name forward for service on the committee? There's a nomination form on our website, with a link from the Notice Board at <www.editorscanberra.org/notices.htm>. Or you can sort it out on the day. If you want to know more about the responsibilities of committee members, that's up on our Notice Board, too.

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IPEd Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors, May-June 2006

t the Interim Council's teleconference on 30 April we heard of steady progress on all fronts.

The Education, Training and Mentoring Working Group is making progress with its survey of editing courses available in Australia at all levels—postgraduate, undergraduate, TAFE, private, and those offered by the Societies of Editors. The next step is to map the courses against Australian Standards for Editing Practice. The group is also looking at methods of mentoring for junior editors.

The Promotions Working Group is refining a draft brief for a PR campaign and obtaining rough estimates of costs.

The Accreditation Board is continuing its program of workshops and is also considering the methodology for assessing portfolios submitted for accreditation. The choice is between peer review and some form of competency-based assessment, which would include performance criteria. Since the yardstick for accreditation is Australian Standards for Editing Practice, the revision of that document is central to this decision. The Accreditation Board is working closely with the Standards Revision

Working Group to determine the best way to proceed.

The National Organisation Working Group has suffered a setback with the resignation of its dynamic convener, Trischa Mann, because of family illness, but Deborah Edward, one of the NSW representatives on the National Organisation Working Group, has now volunteered to be convener. Thanks to Deborah for undertaking this vital role. It is most important that this group should proceed with its work of identifying the best structure for a national organisation and drawing up a proposal to put to members.

The Interim Council was disappointed to hear that its application for funds from the Copyright Agency Limited has been refused. We will be revising our application and resubmitting it with higher hopes for success. The Council has also agreed a code of practice for its internal communications, which has been published as part of the statement on structure and operations on the website, <www.iped-editors.org>. The website is also making progress and we look forward to being able to use the forums.

Janet Mackenzie Liaison Officer



The Writers Bookcase did a roaring trade at Ed•Ex. Keith Binnington is busy serving Geraldine Triffitt, while Pete Martensz beavers away in the background.

Ed • Ex — 2006

Forging relationships

he theme of Ed•Ex 2006 was 'relationships', and the lasting impression of the day was that relationships were being forged—among editors, writers, designers and indexers; between all of them, individually and as groups, with publishers; and importantly, among ourselves as we interacted over

coffee and excellent meals and nibbles on the day. The venue helped: the Members' Dining Room and Bar of Old Parliament House—still elegant, suitably 'bookish', and conducive of animated discussion among the 80 or so delegates.

The keynote address by Kate Burridge focused on the relationships between present vocabulary and grammar usage and those of older versions of English—particularly the minimalising effect of frequency of use of small vocabulary items such as the negative *not*, once a much longer expression and today reduced in speech to 'a mere grunt ...' In the olden days 'don't be silly' would come out as 'naya-wiht silly be' (perhaps 'nary-a-whit

silly be'?), whereas now we probably mumble something like 'dohmbi silly'.

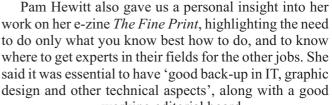
Janet Mackenzie brought us up to date on progress towards a national body for editors and accreditation—it's a slow process but proceeding well, with the Standards currently being revised as a prerequisite to assessment for accreditation.

During the day there were several instructive sessions. These included a caution from Francis Walsh on the

tendency for writing to be reduced to dot points; a useful guide to manuscript assessment by Hilary Cadman (we could all use her chart to help us in our dealings with clients); and some very sound advice on project management and what makes a good project manager from Michael Young. Peter Alexander gave an update on the requirements for government publishing, emphasising the move to federal branding, and Joe Massingham discussed in broad terms the relationship between lifestyle and work.

Ian Templeman's personal reminiscence about publishing reminded us that this industry depends on relationships. 'The network of relationships from author through to reader is vital to the success of a book – a collaborative and creative process.'

The panel: Rosanna Horn, Sherrey Quinn, Roger Swift and Louise Forster.



working editorial board.

Virginia Wilton's workshop on quoting for editing jobs put a practical training stamp on this comprehensive training and discussion day.

The day ended with a lively plenary panel discussion with Roger Swift (Australian Society for Technical Communication), Louise Forster (representing the editors), Rosanna Horn (design) and Sherrey Quinn (indexer). This really brought together the four disciplines and illustrated their interdependency. The plea from all participants was clearly: 'Please involve us from the beginning of the project'.

The day ran smoothly, and on time, thanks to organisers Kerie Newell, Claudia Marchesi and their team.

Ed•Ex is now an established part of the conference/ training scenario for editors and their colleagues in the publishing industry in Canberra, and Ed•Ex 2006 has set a high standard for future gatherings to follow.

Professor Kate Burridge,

our keynote speaker

Elizabeth Manning Murphy—with help from Ted Briggs, Ara Nalbandian and Roger Swift.

Photos: Ted Briggs, Melbourne Uni and Elizabeth Manning Murphy.

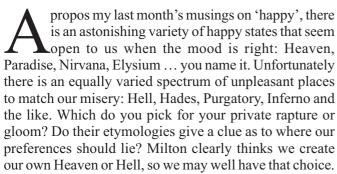


Thinking about words

Good Heavens! And merry hell?

The mind is its own place, and in itself Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

Milton, Paradise lost



Surprisingly perhaps for a word in such common use, 'Heaven' has a very uncertain pedigree. The Old English heofon or hefen seems to have no sure antecedents, and is apparently not related to the German Himmel, nor to Latin caelum (French ciel) from which we get 'celestial'. The word for Heaven in the Jewish bible is samayim, a plural—we might talk of the heavens as the firmament in which the stars are set, or 'the heavens opened' to describe a heavy shower. Its meaning as the space in which the stars appear to float was current in the 11th century, as was its meaning as the abode of God, his angels and the beatified spirits.

The Jews recognised seven heavens (as subsequently did the followers of Muhammed), the highest being the 'Heaven of heavens'—we still use this concept in describing the summit of happiness as the 'seventh heaven'—the sevens seeming to reflect the known planets and Babylonian astronomical theories. But in the chapter on *Paradiso* in his *Divine Comedy*, Dante visits no fewer than *ten* heavens, respectively the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, an unspecified ninth and then the 'Empyrean'. Blundevil (1594) has eleven!

The *Empyrean* was once the abode of pure fire (cf. our familiar word *pyre*), but in Christian belief is again the abode of God and his angels, the highest heaven. The Hindus thought the Heaven of Siva was situated among the highest peaks of the Himalaya, a lofty if uncomfortable place to aspire to, one would have thought, although probably not more so than the sun!

Paradise comes in two kinds, earthly and heavenly. The word derives from an old Persian name for an walled garden or park, pairidaeza, borrowed by the Hebrews and applied to the Garden of Eden. That was Paradise on earth, but the nature of Paradise used as a synonym for Heaven depends very much on your beliefs. In earlier literature Muslims seem to look forward to a continuation of all earthly delights, 'to be by houris loved immortally'. Who are these houris? The answer, says the Wikipedia, is 'beautiful maidens who await the devout Muslim in



Paradise'. The Koran describes them as 'purified wives' and 'spotless virgins', but tradition says that the believer is presented with a large number of houris on entering Paradise, with each of whom he (why is it always 'he'?) may cohabit once for each day he has fasted in Ramadan and once for each good work he has performed. He'd need to be fit!

Buddhists consider *Nirvana*, from a Sanskrit word meaning 'extinction', to be the state where you have overcome all desires and passions and have attained perfect beatitude. *Elysium*, in Greek mythology, was the abode of the blessed after death. But anybody who has ever driven up the *Champs Elysées* (the 'Elysian Fields') in Paris and joined the traffic racing round the Arc de Triomphe will probably feel that any allusion to the heavens is a gross misrepresentation.

So what about 'Hell'? There we are on firmer ground, figuratively speaking. The word comes from old Teutonic or Gothic words meaning 'the coverer-up, or hider'. It is used in the Bible to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol* (found 65 times in the OT) and the Greek *Hades* (found 10 times in the NT). Both *Sheol* and *Hades* refer to the abode of the dead, without distinction of good and evil.

In newer translations 'Hell' is reserved for *Gehenna*. 'Where's that?' you may ask (you see, you don't need to ask where Hell is!). Well, it was once the Hebrew name for the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem. Enoch had a vision in which the faithful Jews gathered to look down on the damned burning in eternal fire, a rather horrid picture of a devout family outing. The Koran also applies the name *Gehenna* to the place of ultimate punishment.

Dante descended into his *Inferno* with its seven circles, the lowest reserved for the greatest sinners, but all apparently able to chat with him at great length about what had brought them there. The word, from the Latin infernus, has links to inferior, appropriately enough for the lower regions. The *inferni* were the shades of the dead. Infernal has a little-used antonym supernal, meaning dwelling in the heavens. On the frontier of Hell was *limbo* (limbus is Latin for 'edge', or 'border'), not just a West Indian dance under a pole but supposedly the home of unbaptised infants and the just people who died before Christ's coming. And there is also *purgatory*, where you might go for a spiritual purging before being admitted to Heaven. The rules and procedures are becoming rather complicated. Dante assures us that no greater pain exists than the memory of happy times when you are feeling wretched. There's not much merriment in merry Hell.

Track changers—the monthly 'musings with a member' Lindy Shultz talks to Louise Forster about her career, her work as an editor and her many interests

Lindy, tell us a little about your background.

I've been editing for about 10 years now. Before that I was a library technician and librarian. As an only child, I retreated into the world of books early on—I am told that even before I could read I refused to go out without a book. I remember going on a school excursion to The Newcastle Herald and being fascinated watching the paper come off the presses (nothing digital then, of course). I knew then I would work somehow with the printed word. I grew up in the Hunter Valley and moved to Canberra in 1988. I spent many years in the public service and over the years I have worked in a lot of

libraries, including the Parliamentary Library, the National Library, the Tax Office, public and university libraries.

I've noticed that quite a number of editors and indexers start with librarianship qualifications.

I think it's because many librarians have analytical minds. Certainly, if you work in the technical services area of the library profession you have to have an analytical mind for cataloguing. That's the part that I liked when I was a librarian—cataloguing. I've found the discipline of it—following procedures and formats and guidelines—a big help

in my editing work. Also, library work attracts introverts and so does editing, I guess.

How did you made the transition from librarianship to

It wasn't a simple matter of a straight changeover. I was working in the Tax Office Library and a colleague, whom I regarded very highly, left the library to work on a law project within the Tax Office. One day she called me up and said, 'I need someone, and I'd like to poach you'. Eventually I moved into her communications area. Part of the job was proofreading and laying out documents supporting draft legislation. I guess she asked me to join her because she knew my work, and I was studying for a print journalism major as part of my information management degree at the time. So it was a combination of things that meant that I moved into editing quite easily, I think.

You work from home? How do you find that? I absolutely love it. I'm really relishing it.

So you're not tempted to hang out the washing or vacuum *the floor?*

When I first started, yes. It was a case of 'I'll just read another chapter of this great novel', 'I'll just have another cup of tea' or 'Is that what they show on daytime

television?' Now, I'm much more disciplined and, in fact, sometimes I find it hard to move away from the computer.

But I do like the flexibility that working from home gives you. Recently, I acquired a little dog and he's a great companion but also provides a reason to take a break now and then for a walk when the sun is shining.

You've done quite a variety of work actually, haven't you? Tell us about some of those things.

Apart from the usual lot of editors in Canberra—annual reports and government documents, I've worked as

publications manager and a research assistant at the Humanities Research Centre at ANU. As well as producing a journal, I looked after three websites and was a research assistant for a muchpublished professor. He wrote *The Seven* Ordeals of Count Cagliostro, about a notorious character who lived during the time of Marie Antoinette and Casanova. It was interesting to work with someone who wrote so beautifully and brought history to life so well, and it was tremendous experience, responsible for many aspects of a publication.

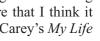
I have also worked as a librarian and publications officer with the Australian peak body for dance and I do occasional work for Roslyn Russell Museum Services, such as research and copyright and drafting entries for the Australian Women's Archive project. I like doing that work, which is not so much editing but writing; writing to a very specific style.

I also prepare books for self-publishers—memoirs and that sort of thing.

What do you do when you're not editing or doing things for the society?

I don't really have any specific hobbies, but I do love reading and I guess I like walking in some of the lovely spots around Canberra. The new dog is an excuse to walk. I also like to try new recipes from the mountains of gourmet magazines that I've bought at the Lifeline Book Fair over the years. I like buying books; hanging out in second-hand bookstores.

What have you been reading lately, can you remember? What I usually do is read something literary and then something light. So, at the moment it's light. I'm reading P D James's, *The Murder Room*. Before that I think it was The God of Small Things and Peter Carey's My Life



My grab bag . . . how not to write



Collect grammar books. The oldest I have is *English Grammar* by Lindley Murray (generally known as *Murray's Grammar*) first published in 1795—my edition is dated 1804. More of this later.

My most recent acquisition is *How* not to write: simple guidelines for the grammatically perplexed by Terence

Simple Guidelines for the Grammatically Perplexed

Denman, published by Piatkus Books, London, 2005. (154 pages, rrp \$29.95). Terence Denman is an instructor with the UK Plain English Campaign, and

I would guess that his classes are very lively his book certainly is. It doesn't cover every aspect of English grammar, but it does give grammar tips in ten of the most commonly areas for perplexing workplace writers: sentence length, passive and active voice, imperative mood for instructions, verbs rather than abstractions, verbs from adjectives, simple tenses with fewer auxiliary verbs, case and personal pronouns, possessive, the apostrophe for other uses, and the comma.

In each chapter, the author includes practical exercises and demolishes one writing myth, including the one that says you can't have a comma before 'and'—as I have written at the end of the last paragraph. And there are others: that you can't start a sentence with 'but', 'and' or 'because' (I just did); that 'get' isn't a proper word (I argued with my mother about this); that 'that' and 'which' are interchangeable (when they certainly are not); and more.

The author believes that 'good business writing should aim for the four Cs': it should be correct, clear, concise and conversational. By 'conversational' he does not mean exactly 'write as you speak', but he says 'too much office writing gets into a tangle by moving too far away from the everyday words that we use when we're talking to someone. It's a good idea to listen to anything you have written. Then ask yourself whether you would have used the same words if you had been explaining it face to face or on the phone'. Sound advice, as is almost all of the advice in this book. I found myself nodding in agreement

with his dislike of the abbreviations e.g. and i.e. and the Latinate 'prior to', and with his championing of the singular use of 'they'.

This is a useful grammar aid for people at work. It's written in an informal style, with short, clear examples, and has some useful information on basic grammar terminology, lists of everyday words you can use to replace their pompous alternatives, and ten tips on writing in plain English.

Scattered through the book are examples of

gobbledegook gathered from the author's work with the Plain English Campaign. Although these are amusing, I found them annoying because they bore no relation to the subjects of the chapters they were attached to.

And what about *Murray's Grammar*? Well, there's nothing new under the sun—Murray was advocating 'clearness' and 'unity' two hundred years ago: 'Whatever leaves the mind in any sort of suspense as to the meaning, ought to be avoided' and 'long, involved and intricate sentences are great blemishes'.

It's always good to welcome a new grammar book, and Terence Denman's *How not to write* continues the tradition of sensible guides to good, clear, cohesive workplace writing without getting into too much technical detail. It's a good read, and worthy of a place on the reference shelf.

© Elizabeth Manning Murphy, 2006



The society welcomes new full members Kristina Cunningham, Michelle Lovi, Dr Vicki Luker, Joan Morris and Tamsin Sowden, and associate members Larissa Joseph, Michelle Regan and Christina Vett-Joice.

(continued from page 5)

as a Fake. I don't read much non-fiction these days after editing it all day, but I'd like to read more history.

You frequent the Lifeline Book Fair?

Yes, I can't resist searching through dusty old books. I like the serendipity of the book fair; you never know what you will find.

But it is a kind of addiction, isn't it?

Yes, most definitely, as is my addiction to buying shoes, and admiring fonts.

So have you got an Imelda Marcos size shoe collection? No, I cull the shoes the way I cull my books.

What about your fascination with fonts?

I adore fonts. I collect books about fonts. I even have, which I treasure, a little set of font cards that look like playing cards. On one side of the card the font is displayed in different sizes and forms; and on the other side there

is a potted history and explanation of why that font is beautiful.

I haven't really asked you about the society and ...

I'd like to see some sort of mentor system in operation. There is a wealth of knowledge amongst the membership, and I'd like to see that imparted more effectively than it currently is. I would also like to see its activities focus more on core skills, rather than areas which are peripheral to editing. Seeing how helpful some informal discussions at Ed Ex were, maybe we could have regular networking sessions where informal discussions can develop around technical or professional topics. Sometimes it's those informal environments in which people can ask questions and learn so much from others' experiences. It is a problem that public schools in much of Australia stopped teaching grammar in the 1970s, so perhaps the society could help the victims of that bad decision.

Lindy Shultz/Louise Forster

Our last month's meeting

Why didn't more members come along to our great trivia evening? Ted Briggs ran it as a splendid solo performance, and it all worked beautifully. The 19 contestants in four teams had done their homework, and knew all about chuggers, Edmund Blackadder's criticism of Johnson's *Dictionary* and 'the beast with two backs' (Shakespeare used the expression but may not have coined it).

In spite of massive score rigging, the President's team won the prizes, beautiful boxes of chocolates to shorten their lives and the intervals between visits to the dentist.

From *The Canberra Times*, 11 July 2006, page 2

Clarification

A page 2 report yesterday described Professor Colin Groves as a "reader" in biological anthropology at the Australian National University. It should have appeared as reader. This was a sub-editor's error.

Now you know.

(Thinking about words, concluded from page 3)

So, at the *acme*, the highest point of your happiness, which Heaven do you feel that you are in? Before you answer, you should know that a scientific paper published in a serious refereed scientific journal has proved that Heaven is uncomfortably hotter than Hell. The detailed calculations are in the reference below, but broadly speaking, if *Isaiah* 30:26 is right and 'the light of the Moon shall be as the light of the Sun and the light of the Sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days', you can show by fairly basic physics that the surface temperature of Heaven is 798K (525C).

And the temperature of Hell? *Revelations* 21:8 says that 'the fearful, and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone', i.e. the temperature of molten sulphur, 445C. Other scientists have questioned this latter figure, but only to suggest that it be revised upwards—no risk yet of Hell freezing over. However, nobody seems to have queried the temperature of Heaven, which therefore stands until further notice.

Peter Judge

Sources: As almost always, the Oxford English Dictionary on CD-ROM and Encyclopaedia Britannica on DVD. The Oxford Companion to the Bible, OUP 1993. The Vision of Dante Alighieri, trans. HF Carey, Everyman's Library 1931 (1908). The item on 'Hotter than Hell' first appeared anonymously in Applied Optics (1972, 11 A14) and the refutation in the Journal of Irreproducible Results in 1979; both are at < www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/hell.htm>.

P.S: Anent my unhappy comment last month that 'gay has now been definitively hijacked by the homosexual community', our colleague Pauline McGuire writes:

I thought you might like to know that 'gay' has moved on again. It is now used by teenagers to describe something unfashionable or uncool: 'The party was so gay' now means it was anything but. Similarly, 'random' for teenagers has become linked to unpredictability/eccentricity: 'He says such random things.' I suppose one of the compensations for growing older is witnessing these fascinating shifts in the lexicon.

Who are we?

The start of the new financial year seems a good moment to look at our members and see the profile of who edits in the Canberra region.

Our total membership at 11 July 2006 is 218, made up of Hon. Life 2, Full 149, Associate 62 and Student 5.

The society is strongly weighted in favour of women: 154 women to 64 men. Our academic qualifications are generally modest, but we have one professor and 24 other PhDs among us, totalling 16 women and 9 men.

Mostly we live in the Canberra area: 183 in the ACT and 24 in Queanbeyan and other neighbouring bits of NSW. Eleven of us live in more distant parts of NSW or other states.

Apart from our members, the newsletter goes to the National Library's legal deposit, the Literary Editor of *The Canberra Times*, the seven other editors societies, the ACT

Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (with whom we trade training courses), the ACT Writers Centre, and Janet McKenzie who writes the IPEd Notes column.

How does this compare with previous years? My mailing records date back only to 1998, but in that July we posted 180 copies, in subsequent years respectively 197, 211, 197, 200, 179, 198, 215, and for this issue 232.

Not quite a steady growth (what happened in 2003?) but the trend is generally upward. So when you see your renewal letter, make sure you return it (with payment!) and keep that trend moving ever up. As professional societies go, ours is still one of the least expensive. Developments on the IPEd front mean that it is now becoming better value than ever.

Peter Judge

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The Canberra Editor

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Newsletter schedule

The next newsletter will appear in August 2006 and the copy deadline for this issue is 4 August.

The editor welcomes contributions by email to peter.judge@alianet.alia.org.au, using Word for Windows, for PC or Mac.

Coming shortly

- for the 30 August meeting: Everything you wanted to know about copyright law but were afraid to ask, Gabrielle Mackey, Attorney General's Department
- for the 27 September meeting: Content Management, Peter Alexander, Australian Government Information Management Office

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