

Offpress

June 2008

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (Queensland) Inc. www.editorsqld.com

Editing legislation: an exercise in precision

In 1992 the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel (OQPC) became the new face of legislative drafting and editing. Created under the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*, the office ensures that all Queensland legislation is 'drafted' (the art of turning policy objectives into legislation), quality assurance checked (or as referred to in the office, 'QACed') and published in hard copy (authorised) or electronic (unauthorised) versions for ready access by the public. Basically, it ensures that the Queensland statute book is of the highest possible standard.

Our June speaker, Andrew Curran, has been a legislation officer (among other roles) at OQPC for thirteen years. He enlightened us on the various functions of the office and the procedures necessary during the QACing process. Legislation officers are limited in their editorial powers by the *Reprints Act 1992*, an Act that is relevant only to this office. Basic spelling and some punctuation errors can be changed, but to correct most other mistakes requires approval by a senior drafter. Serious errors need amendments to be drafted, assented to or notified and then incorporated; a long, slow process indeed.

Other functions of the office include removing obsolete provisions in Acts, updating the language by removing

gender specific and 'politically incorrect' references, and using plain English. It is only recently that some rather obsolete sections of the Criminal Code were removed. Up until 2000 it was illegal to 'pretend to exercise witchcraft or tell fortunes'; actually being a witch, however, was well within the law. Also, until 1997 it was illegal to send a false telegram. Not sure how many people nowadays even send a true one!

Since the office deals with many sensitive topics it has put into place a number of checking procedures. Amendments to each piece of legislation are checked by two pairs of eyes; very sensitive (or high risk) legislation is checked by a third, more senior officer. Checklists abound ... even the checklist to check that other checklists have been completed.

Andrew very bravely told us of some bloopers in the office. As editors we know that the spell checker should never be relied on. Andrew mentioned an amendment to the Cremations Act that required permission to *create* a body, not *cremate* it. Luckily the legislation officers found the mistake before it had slipped through the system. Not so fortunate, however, was the occasion when an amendment to the Bail Act was not incorporated correctly into a reprint of the Act and it prevented a prisoner from obtaining parole.

Unfortunately, the *Courier Mail* picked up on that one.

It was an interesting, well-attended evening. Andrew's insightful presentation succeeded in making legislative editing a very entertaining topic.

The OQPC's website, which includes current, superseded and repealed legislation, can be found at www.legislation.qld.gov.au for all your legislation needs.

[Thanks to Fallon Smith for this meeting report. Ed.]

inside out

Paul Bennett reminds us ...	2
IPEd notes: June 2008	3
July meeting details	4
Committee details	4
Special speaker news ...	4
Exam date	5
President's report	5
Mentoring: exciting news	6
Frisson of the new (Pt 2)	7
PEEPS! (or is it ...?)	7
Web wanderings	7
Meeting bingo	8
Membership information	8

The future of quality control

Paul Bennett writes: *This article, written in 1994, says: 'If this article has any value, it will be in highlighting danger signs that editors and others can use to guide them in avoiding future misery.' You can decide whether any of the advice set out here were worthwhile.*

The sudden arrival of desktop publishing (DTP) brought with it a collection of new opportunities, challenges, improvements, and regressions. The name itself is inexact; it really should be *desktop typesetting* or *desktop pre-press*. But enough of that. This article has been written to discuss the aspects of quality control in publishing that are becoming a problem.

Before DTP, typesetting was a trade with an apprenticeship of between four and five years. The tradesperson was called a compositor, a hand-compositor or a machine-compositor. The hand-compositor was responsible for doing layouts, operating the camera to make half-tones and so on, and cutting and pasting type, illustrations and rules for the final artwork for the printer. The machine-compositor did the typesetting. Proofreaders ideally came from the ranks of the compositors.

Compositors who had extra talent, or who made fewer mistakes, became supervisors and shop managers. Some became production managers of publishing companies. Those who were able to combine their technical superiority with good grammar and a good ear could move into editing or even to the ultimate position of publisher. Publishers, compositors, designers, editors, production managers and authors managed to combine their talents in various ways to produce the product they were all working for, a high-quality document.

As far as a quality control goes, we will now look at what has happened since DTP and try to determine possible trends. If this article has any value, it will be in highlighting danger signs that editors and others can use to guide them in avoiding future misery.

Put simply, the problem is: who is going to make the decisions on quality? Let us assume that the trade training we talked about before will not exist in future. This means that no new trades-trained typesetters will enter the field and the ones we have will eventually die out. The people that set type and our traditional quality-checking agents, the proofreaders, will have to come from somewhere else.

Where do editors come from? What do they know about production? What training did they have?

Ask ten editors and you'll get at least five different answers. Editors just happen. Not all of them know an en from an em or that a bleed doesn't always come from a scalpel.

Designers know how the weight, size, alignment and layout of type will affect the mood of the finished piece of work but they may not have a firm grasp on all aspects of grammar even though their typographical knowledge is usually high. So where does that leave us?

We need:

- a training program to ensure that we have a supply of desktop machine operators who understand typographical conventions
- a course for new proofreaders
- training for editors so that they have a thorough knowledge of production, and preferably a reasonable ability to do practical tasks
- a way of bringing designers deeper into the final checking process.

It is clear that accreditation for editors is on the way. Perhaps it would not have been necessary if DTP had not made it so. But, as it will be here, it is clear that a big part of editors' training must be concerned with the technical side of production, with typesetting knowledge at the forefront.

Without this training we may have to do without the finesse and style that sets an elegant document apart from an ordinary one.

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FYI: This month it's mostly **Palatino Linotype** regular 12pt on 12.5pt leading, with smatterings of Verdana, 10pt on 11pt.

Note: Copy deadline for the July 2008 issue of *Offshoot* is Wednesday, 9 July 2008.

EDITING IN THE MAGAZINE WORLD

July meeting details

As most, if not all, of us are editors of the book, journal or even website ilk, wouldn't you love to hear about how our tasks differ from those of an editor in the exciting, heady world of magazine publishing?

Our speaker for July is Margaret McGuire. She is a Deputy Editor at Graphic Publishing, a Brisbane-based publishing company that produces the following high-end, glossy magazines:

- *Holiday for Couples*
- *Queensland Brides*
- *Queensland Homes*
- *Queensland Homes Gold Annual*
- *Queensland Homes Outdoor Living*
- *Spa Destinations*.

Margaret is responsible for the overall look and content of some of these magazines. Her wealth of experience will help answer some of those issues you always wondered about:

What does the sub-editor do? How do they deal with the graphics/images? How do they brief designers? What computer skills do they need? How do they meet their deadlines? How do they deal with recalcitrant clients? ...

Please come along on Wednesday, 2 July to the German Club in Vulture St, Woolloongabba for our 7 pm meeting. Feel free to come a little earlier to meet the speaker and your committee, and enjoy dinner and drinks.

FRANCES WHITING: COMING TO A MEETING NEAR YOU SOON!

Date claimer: not to be missed, this very special Society of Editors meeting with Frances Whiting will have you laughing out loud and leave you with a smile on your face.

Frances Whiting is one of Australia's most loved columnists. Her quirky, humorous and intimate observations in her weekly column in *The Sunday Mail* have been a favourite for ten years. Now syndicated in New South Wales and South Australia, Frances's column is a Sunday 'must-read'.

So mark this special event in your diaries now. *This promises to be one unforgettable meeting. Don't miss out!*

When: 6.30 for a 7 pm start, Wednesday, 3 September 2008

Where: German Club, Vulture St, Woolloongabba

Announcement of exam date

The first accreditation exam will be held on Saturday, 18 October 2008.

The cost of the exam will be \$490 (with no GST applicable) for financial members of the societies of editors and \$650 for non-members or those who are not financial at the close of registrations. Registrations for the exam will open in the first week of July and close on 18 September. All registrations must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of \$100, with the balance due by 3 October.

The fee, although slightly higher than the Accreditation Board had hoped, is the minimum required to cover exam costs. It is based on a target number of 150 applicants, and in the unlikely event that this target is not reached the Board will have to postpone the exam until early next year. As some 200 editors have previously indicated their intention to sit the first exam, the Board is reasonably confident that the target will be met. There will be no limit placed on the number of candidates who may sit the exam: all candidates who register and pay the fee will be accommodated.

As soon as registrations reach 150, the Board will place an announcement on the IPEd website confirming the 18 October date; if the target is not reached by 18 September, a new exam date for 2009 will be announced on the website and all candidates advised by email or telephone within a couple of days of the decision being made.

A revised sample exam will be available on the IPEd website by 1 July: www.iped-editors.org. It will be a very good indicator of what you can expect in October, and trialling it will help you decide whether you are ready for the real thing. As has been stated throughout, an editor with two to three years' full-time editing experience should be able to pass the exam. All societies will be organising pre-exam activities to help prepare candidates.

As a successful candidate, you will have the honour of joining the first cohort of Accredited Editors, to be formally acknowledged at the 2009 IPEd national conference in Adelaide. The 'AE' will be recognition by your peers of your editing competence, and a valuable asset in the marketplace.

To obtain further information, contact your Accreditation Board delegate, Robin Bennett, or check the IPEd website (from the first week of July) for exam guidelines, an application form and Q&A.

President's report: Robin Bennett

Institute of Professional Editors Limited

The Council of the Institute of Professional Editors Limited met in Adelaide on 31 May and 1 June. The meeting began with a strategic planning session, and Councillors reported on their areas of responsibility. Possibilities for fundraising were discussed. The company also discussed accreditation, the Accreditation Board's business plans and underlying assumptions, and roles and responsibilities in relation to accreditation.

Susan Rintoul, the SA President and conference convenor, reported on progress to date in planning the IPEd national editors conference to be held in Adelaide in October 2009. It sounds exciting; the venues are excellent.

The Communications Working Group has been replaced by a new group, called the Communications Committee or CommComm; it is based in Adelaide, since all members live in or that city. This group is now focusing its energies on promoting the accreditation program.

The Council has sought payment of a levy amounting to \$20 per member from all societies for 2008–2009 by 30 June, based on financial membership on 31 May 2008. The committee has therefore approved a payment of \$3200 to IPEd.

Accreditation Board

The Accreditation Board has completed a round of business planning in relation to setting the cost, target and date of the first accreditation exam. [See above for more.]

Remember that the exam fee is an investment in your career. It will also be tax-deductible.

Society AGM

The Society's AGM will be held on 3 September. If you are interested in joining the Management Committee, we would be delighted to hear from you. Having committee responsibilities certainly involves some work, but it is a very rewarding experience and a great way of developing your own career as an editor, to say nothing of the networking opportunities. We can only deliver services to our members if we have the active support of committed members!

So if you've been thinking along these lines, please contact a current committee member for a chat.

CAL CULTURAL FUND EDITORS AND WRITERS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

As most of you would already be aware, the committee sought funding from the Copyright Agency Limited Cultural Fund for a mentoring program to benefit beginning editors and society members seeking experience in different areas. I am delighted to inform you that the CAL Board has approved funding of \$39,510 for a two-stage program to be run in association with the Queensland Writers Centre.

Members of the QWC will be invited to submit completed but unpublished manuscripts for a total of 12 hours' copy or structural editing by a team of editors, each consisting of one experienced editor (the mentor) and two inexperienced editors (the mentees).

Each team will work on five manuscripts over a period of 13 months.

Stage 1 of the project is scheduled to begin early in August 2008 with an introductory workshop for all participants; this workshop will be conducted by an external facilitator skilled in providing training in mentoring. It will end with an evaluation workshop (mid-August to early September 2009).

Work on each manuscript will include 12 hours of editing by each team member, a team meeting/s, discussion with the writer, resolution of queries, and presentation of a report to the writer.

The form of editing to be provided and the timeline will be negotiated with each writer; writers will pay \$240 per manuscript.

All mentees will gain experience in editing a variety of genres and in doing both copyediting and structural editing; they will move from one mentor to another to complete their five manuscripts.

Four very experienced SocEdsQ members, with an aptitude for and a commitment to mentoring, will be acting as mentors: Craig Munro, Michael Kuter, Jennifer Beale and Pam Collins. Their experience ranges from 16 to 37 years. All mentors will be paid \$75 per hour for their services.

Craig Munro was University of Queensland Press fiction editor from 1973 to 1980 and then UQP Publishing Manager from 1983 to 2000. In 1985 Craig won the Barbara Ramsden Award for editing; his current areas of expertise include memoir and biography.

Michael Kuter has 27 years' experience in newspaper, magazine and book publishing as editor, proofreader and indexer. His special interests include complementary medicine, educational books, history, public health, life sciences and medicine.

Jennifer Beale is a very experienced editor and teacher, whose special skills include local and family history.

Pam Collins was the Publishing Editor of Community Resource Unit Publications for ten years, producing a series of books widely used as university textbooks; she has 17 years' experience and now edits fiction.

This project will be coordinated by a paid moderator, an experienced editor who will report regularly to the Management Committee and the members of this society. The moderator will be assisted by a paid administrative officer.

A call for expressions of interest in the eight unpaid mentee positions will be issued shortly, as will position descriptions and a call for expressions of interest in the positions of project moderator and administrative officer.

To obtain further information on this project, contact *Robin Bennett* at president@editorsqld.com.



Frisson of the new: a multi-part exploration of new words (Part 2)

From ABC Radio's *Lingua Franca*, an abridged version of the transcript of an interview with Ruth Wajnryb, applied linguist, newspaper columnist and writer (early February 2008); reproduced in *Offpress* across several issue during 2008 (because it's quite long. *Ed*).

[There are] plenty of terms like this in the various new word lists that are published around this time of year. This is not surprising in the light of the fact that technology advances at such a speed that the lexicon has to race to catch up. Often there's a lag between the phenomenon and the label, and that's why the new term can get a warm reception. I felt the way Sue Butler did about 'man flu' when I first encountered 'linkrot', which is the term for a website that's been neglected, to the point that its hyperlinks no longer work.

So too with 'floordrobe', which is a floor littered with discarded clothes and viewed ironically as a clothing storage system. Any parent of an adolescent will understand. And having a term for those tattoos you see about, placed just above the buttocks, with a central section and curved extensions on each side, well ... we can simply and conveniently call them by their name: 'arse antlers'.

I started off saying that people love new words, but I have to qualify that. Certainly, there are some patterns that evoke anger. One is the -isation suffix like democratisation, for the process by which democracy may come to be newly established in a place not previously known for its liberalism. We're okay with 'democracy', and even at a pinch 'democratise', but the '-isation'

somehow becomes the line in the sand of change that just won't be crossed. A case of 'thus-far-but-no-further'.

You'd think, though, that if one could accept the apparently oxymoronic notion of democracy being imposed from without (as in 'democratise'), there'd be no argument against 'democratisation'. Not so long ago, 'fertilisation', 'rationalisation', 'liberalisation' may have been that line in the sand — remember? — but these are now accepted as bona-fide English words. It's the newness factor, more than anything else, that earns these words their bad reception. Give them time and they generally settle in.

[to be continued ...]

PEEPS!

(Episode on hold)

Due to extreme tiredness on the part of the serialist there will be no further advancement in the goings-on of the PEEPS! crew. Do stay tuned though for the next riveting instalment.

Next time: Episode 9 ...

Quotable quotes

If you had to identify, in one word, the reason the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be: meetings.

Dave Barry (1947–)
American philosopher

If sunbeams were weapons of war, we would have had solar energy long ago.

George Porter (1920–2002)
British chemist

Web wanderings

Health and wellbeing spot: *ergocise.com* is a free, web-based ergonomic exercise program especially designed for computer users. *Ergocise.com* combines a simple reminder program with over one hundred short animations of simple, ergonomically correct stretches and strengthening exercises. Combining gentle warm-ups, stretches, strengthening ergocises and self-massage, *ergocise.com*'s reminder program can help reduce computer-related stress and tension as well as help prevent RSIs (Repetitive Stress Injuries) from developing:

<http://www.ergocise.com>

Need to know what a boring measurement unit really equates to, in practical terms? 'Six hectares' is much more tangible as '12 hockey fields':

<http://www.sensibleunits.com>

Would you rent a villa or an island from just any old dude?!!

<http://www.unusualvillarentals.com>

Slang corner

cornichon *n.* [late 19C] (society) a poor shot [Fr. *cornichon*, lit. a gherkin, and used in French argot to mean a novice or greenhorn]

dead cargo *n.* [late 17C–19C] (Und.) the proceeds of a robbery that have turned out to be less valuable than hoped

Source: Green, J. (1999). *Cassell dictionary of Australian slang*. London: Cassell.

meeting BINGO

I heard this game explained while listening to an audio-book, *Lost for words: The mangling and manipulating of the English language*, by John Humphrys.

This game was invented to increase your attention-span during boring, interminable meetings, seminars or phone calls.

The object of the game is to listen for clichés and jargon, and tick them off as they occur. When you have ticked a complete row or column, you stand up and shout 'Bullshit'!

For added spice, make a note of any outrageous phrases, for example, 'retro-aspirationalist'.

This source also suggests that, to ensure you are without sin yourself before casting your stones, you may invest in a software program called *Bullfighter*.

As a copywriter, editor and professional organiser who declutters and streamlines homes and offices, this game appealed to me. These earnest, mind-numbing words are the verbal equivalent of décor items such as too many cushions, teaspoon collections, shaggy mats, and 'statement' objects that infest horizontal surfaces.

Strategic fit	Gap analysis	Bottom line	Best practice
Bandwidth	Hardball	Out of the loop	Benchmark
Proactive	Win/win	Fast track	Mindset
Empower	Knowledge base	Total quality	Result-driven
Ball park	Game plan	Client-focused	Leverage

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Your news and views

We welcome any contributions to our monthly newsletter. Copy deadline is one week after the general meeting. Please send articles, letters, book reviews, details of interesting web sites, anecdotes, snippets and quotes to the editor at offpress@editorsqld.com.

With compliments from Josephine Brown, Hire Order, www.hireorder.com.au, 3392 0669.



[... with a reminder that Josephine is looking for organisational tips and tricks, particularly relating to finding lost objects. Ed.]

Membership information

The Society of Editors (Queensland) Inc. came into being in 1990 with the object of promoting the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of information on matters of professional interest in the publishing industry, and to help in establishing and maintaining high standards of editing and publishing. Since that time, the Society has grown from a gleam in the collective eye of a few editors to a professional association of some standing. It has been involved in the development of the Diploma of Editing (Publishing) at TAFE, and the former Graduate Diploma of Publishing and Editing at Griffith University.

The Society holds training workshops and seminars for its members, and is responsible for producing the Register of Freelance Publishing Services (updated every few years, and containing entries for editors, designers, illustrators, layout experts and so on).

There are three levels of membership:

- Full membership: open only to people professionally engaged in editing and publishing; the membership

application must contain details of the applicant's experience and the names of publishing companies and organisations worked for. Annual fee: \$45

- Associate membership: open to anyone interested in the activities of the Society; there are no voting rights, and associate members are not eligible for election to Management Committee positions. Annual fee: \$35
- Student membership: open only to full-time students who cite their student ID number; there are no voting rights, and student members are not eligible for election to Management Committee positions. Annual fee: \$20

People who live more than 50 km from the Brisbane GPO pay half-fees. Application for membership is assessed by the Management Committee.

Visit the website or contact the Membership Secretary for an application form.

website: www.editorsqld.com; email: membership@editorsqld.com (please also include your postal address).