

Death among the cubicles

Report on November's murder mystery by Kim Manning

In the head office of a small corporate publishing house moves are afoot to establish an Australian first: a standard rate of pay for editors. This would be an historic levelling of the playing field, so to speak. Based on certification levels, it is envisaged that the rates will be the means by which editors will finally be able to come out of the cottage-industry darkness into the professionally standardised light.

It simply had to be solved. The terrible crime that had been interwoven with the November general meeting needed to be resolved to the satisfaction of those present, even those who were under suspicion. For those of you who could not help with this on the night, a recap.

Rosamunda Smith, an accomplished editor of long standing with her publishing employer also maintained a presence in the freelance arena, predominantly in fiction and poetry editing. A standard rate of pay for editors was something that she felt was necessary to quantify the usefulness of the professional skill set. She had been plotting and planning to make this a reality for some time. She was, unfortunately, found dead at work one morning — strangled!

There were several clues and numerous distractors, personal statements from the 'persons of interest' and a floor plan of the crime scene, not to mention allegations of affairs and revelations of embezzlement; the murder investigation squad worked their way through all of these elements with many a thoughtful look and numerous pointed queries.

Who was who? The lead investigator (this report's author) was ably assisted by Piscina ('Red') Herring (Robin Bennett). The persons of particular interest were Skye Spindler, project coordinator (Jennifer Beale), marketing coordinator Rodney Kettle (Karl Craig), senior editor William Wailsworth (David Hill), who unfortunately had to miss our gathering at the last minute but who had earlier given a statement — from his sick bed — to the lead investigator, and Joan Beene, managing editor (Robyn Heales).

And so it transpired that it was a classic case of 'the final straw': despite what appeared to be an excellent professional relationship, Joan and Rosamunda were secretly locked in a nasty game of one-upmanship that Rosamunda was winning ... until Joan snapped and strangled her adversary.

A fictitious Burmese cat 'catnapped' ... what more can be said?

If you would like to read the script go to our SocEdsQ website. Many thanks to those who helped and participated on 5 November; thanks also to Tim Bugler and Josephine and Allen Brown for their initial contributions.



'Red' Herring imparts some information to the squad members and the 'persons of interest'.

inside out

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We missed National Punctuation Day!

The lovely Josephine Brown sent the following in to me — she and I are in agreement in our lamentation that we missed National Punctuation Day somewhere in the world on 24 September and that we should aim to celebrate this next year in our own special — and more local — way. So here's your advance notice people!

Ten Ways to Celebrate National Punctuation Day /

...

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that September 24 is National Punctuation Day. For weeks we've been gathering dashes, calling up old commas, and hiding gaily wrapped colons where (we think) the kids can't find them. So now that we've hung all those apostrophes with care, let's kick out the stops and celebrate!

1. Introduce your friends, relatives, and colleagues to the **Oxford comma**.

Trust me: you don't need a college education for this one.

2. Drop **hyphens** from compound words that follow a noun.

Take every one of your well-written essays; then lose the hyphen if the essay is especially well written.

3. Join the **Campaign to Abolish the Apostrophe**.

Or if that sounds too reckless, enlist in the Apostrophe Protection Society instead.

4. Fire off an **interrobang** — but don't get punked by the pomma point.

At this special time of the year, shouldn't we be thinking about some of the less fortunate marks of punctuation?!

5. Repair a **comma splice**.

You can fix a splice with a conjunction — but first make sure the sentence is really broken.

6. Pause ... for an **ellipsis**.

Just don't exceed your limit of three dots.

7. Recite the **punctuation poem**.

Of course, the "Dictaphone Bard" should be a part of every family's National Punctuation Day festivities.

Life members *

Barbara Ker Wilson (2002)
Jan Whelan (2000)
Mary-Jane Bosch (2000)
John Collins (1993)
Laurie Muller

* year of award in parentheses

8. Explain to your children why **punctuation matters**.

In the end it all comes down to love and money.

9. Remove quotation marks from any **indirect quotations**.

Your friends will say, "Thank you!"

10. But no matter what else you do, **don't quote me!**

Richard Nordquist

Retrieved October 28, 2008, from <http://grammar.about.com/b/2008/09/24/ten-ways-to-celebrate-national-punctuation-day.htm>

Send any thoughts you might have about how we could go about this in 2009 to offpress@editorsqld.com.



2009 IPed conference: Call for papers (abstracts)

You are invited to submit an abstract of a paper for presentation at the 4th IPed National Editors Conference, which will be hosted by the Society of Editors (SA) Inc. at the Adelaide Festival Centre on 8–10 October 2009.

Presentations will be 20 minutes, plus 10 minutes for questions. Strands being developed within the conference theme of 'Getting the message across' include (but are not limited to) corporate communication, editor–author relationship, education and mentoring of editors, emerging media, food and wine, 'green' editing, poetry, science communication, writing and editing for younger readers, young and emerging editors.

Proposals for panels of 3–4 speakers on a particular aspect of editing are also welcome.

The deadline for electronic submission of abstracts is Friday, 27 February 2009.

Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words and must be submitted in Microsoft Word 2003 or compatible electronic format. Please also supply a biographical note of no more than 50 words about each proposed presenter. Abstracts will be reviewed by the conference organising committee and submission of extended abstracts will be invited after this process. Selected presenters may be invited to submit a full paper for publication in conference proceedings.

Please email enquiries about papers and submission of abstracts to eds@editors-sa.org.au. Also refer to the 'What's new' page on our website for the unabridged 'Call for papers'.

CAL mentoring project

To everyone's relief, the first round is now complete. The authors of the selected manuscripts were invariably very happy with the constructive comments provided by the four editing teams and I congratulate everyone for a job well done. Based on the feedback received on the evaluation forms, the mentoring relationships were highly successful – with all participants expressing a number of positive outcomes. There were inevitably some teething problems with some aspects of the project, but hopefully these have been rectified for the future rounds. Certainly, we need to find better ways to integrate the project workload, which can be heavy at times, with the participants' other commitments.

The editing teams have now rotated to work with new mentors. Under the guidance of Craig and Pam, the new fiction teams are under way with their second manuscripts and we hope to have the work completed in early December.

By extending the deadline for submission of non-fiction manuscripts, the Queensland Writers Centre managed to generate six manuscripts for consideration by our non-fiction mentors: Jennifer and Michael. All six manuscripts were in a narrow genre unfamiliar to the mentors – which means that the selected manuscripts will probably be as challenging for the mentors as for the mentees – so this round promises to be more of a learning process for all concerned. Regrettably, the delays in manuscript submission meant that we lost a month, so the deadline for completion of non-fiction has been extended accordingly. However, the third round is not due to begin until February 2009, so the overall project schedule for Stage 1 should not be affected.

Finally, as this is the last *Offpress* of 2008, I wish everyone a very happy and relaxing festive season. I would like to take the opportunity to thank: the mentors for providing such wonderful guidance and encouragement to the editing teams; the mentees for showing such enthusiasm and willingness to learn; and the Management Committee for providing such unerring support throughout this complex and challenging project.

Peter Storer, Moderator

2008 prizes announced

Thanks to everyone who contributed bits and pieces to *Offpress* and *Offshoot* during the year.

All submissions have been much appreciated, but the following two items were duly considered by the Management Committee to be worthy of extra nods, woo hoos, certificates and financial reward:

♦ **Offpress Editor's Prize:** *John Sims*, for his original article 'Never let a chance go by ...', an expose of ongoing gummint waffle.

♦ **John Kerr Memorial Award for book reviews:** *Tim Bugler*, for his review of *Effective onscreen editing* by Geoff Hart.

Both items were published in the April newsletter (a bumper issue, in retrospect!).

If you've been thinking about writing something or reviewing something, make a new year's resolution and *do it in 2009!* Ed.

anzca09

The Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA) is inviting submissions for the ANZCA09 Conference, 'Communication, creativity and global citizenship', to be held at QUT 8–10 July 2009.

ANZCA09 welcomes papers about the contribution of creative and professional practitioners, as well as those involved in leading edge research in advertising; business and marketing communication; communication studies; digital media and Internet studies; cultural studies; film, media, radio, and television studies; journalism; organisational and interpersonal communication; public relations; and the creative, visual, and performing arts.

The conference is particularly seeking papers and panels that:

- engage international and comparative research perspectives
- address questions of intercultural communications media and professional practice, including teaching and pedagogical practice
- challenge and work across disciplinary boundaries and established methodologies
- critically address the role of communication in creative problem-solving
- consider the implications of social networking media and participatory media cultures in challenging the dominance of the 20th century mass communications paradigm.

The deadline for all abstracts and refereed papers is Friday, 5 February 2009.

Contact Professor Terry Flew, QUT, if you have any queries about the conference.

Ph: (07) 3138 8188

E: t.flew@qut.edu.au

www.anzca09.org

Lord Mayor to host conference goers

Adelaide's Lord mayor, Michael Harbison, will host a civic reception in the Queen Adelaide Room of the Adelaide Town Hall on the evening of 9 October 2009 to welcome delegates to the 4th IPEd National Editors Conference. We were very pleased to accept the Lord Mayor's offer and thank him for his generosity.

The Adelaide Town Hall is a prominent landmark in the city, the venue for many civic, artistic and social events. Adelaide established the first local government in Australia, in October of 1840. The Adelaide Town Hall was built during the years 1863 to 1866. The interior of the Town Hall is ornate and features a grand staircase that leads to an elaborately decorated first floor hall. The main chamber of the Town Hall is renowned for its fine acoustics. Touring ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra often broadcast live from Adelaide, rather than elsewhere on their national tour, because of the excellent sound quality.

Additional details about the conference will be published in newsletters and via the websites below as they become available, so please stay tuned.

Conference essentials

Where: Adelaide, South Australia

When: 8-10 October 2009

Venue: Adelaide Festival Centre

Further information:
SAPresident@editors-sa.org.au

Website: <http://www.editors-sa.org.au/?q=node/66>

Plainly signed



Out of office reply appears on street sign

Swansea Council contacted its in-house translation service when designing a bilingual sign barring heavy goods vehicles from a road in the Morriston area of the Welsh city.

But as the translator was not available, they received an automated e-mail response in Welsh saying: 'I am not in the office at the moment. Please send any work to be translated.'

Unaware of the real meaning of the message, officials had it printed on the sign under the English, which correctly reads: 'No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only.'

The council took down the sign, near an Asda supermarket, after Welsh speakers spotted the mistake.

A Swansea Council spokesman said: 'Our attention was drawn to the mistranslation of a sign at the junction of Clase Road and Pant-y-Blawd Road. We took it down as soon as we were made aware of it and a correct sign will be installed as soon as possible.'

Welsh-language magazine Golwg printed photographs of the offending sign after the gaffe was pointed out by readers.

Managing editor Dylan Iorwerth said: 'We have been running pictures of this kind of thing over the past few months. It's good that people want to have bilingual signs, but unfortunately they don't make sure someone with a real knowledge of Welsh checks the work through all the different stages. As in this case, there can be a terrible mistake.'

Retrieved November 12, 2008, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/global/main.jhtml?xml=/global/2008/11/03/noindex/out.xml>

Web wanderings

www.skeptic.com – extraordinary claims, revolutionary ideas, and the promotion of science; might all be a bit much for any one day of the week, but could be worth a look if you're curious.

www.wotartist.com – an online gallery and search engine for artists from every corner of the world; also has resources and an art school.

www.billychasen.com/clock – if you were on the look out for a more interesting desktop clock then look no further!

http://rulesofthumb.org – this site boasts 'every rule of thumb on earth in one place' grouped in 154 categories; under 'Animals' you will find 'zigzag to outrun a crocodile'.

www.sendmeavoicemail.com – somebody's social experiment re getting strangers to leave a voicemail on a mobile phone somewhere in America; not sure why.

http://knotplot.com – knots and links from a mathematical perspective; very intricate!

http://www.xcom2002.com/doh/viewer.php – 'doh the humanity!'; online typos captured and 'red ringed'; you can submit a 'doh' if it meets the criteria.

http://simplynoise.com – white noise available at several auditory levels to aid with sleep, privacy, blocking distractions, masking tinnitus ... brown/red noise (?) is also available (as a downloadable audio file). Enough said.

www.geocities.com/heartland/hills/8929/cures.html – a compilation of forgotten cures and home remedies; if your gout needs attention this could be the site for you.

Management Committee

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Training Officer and Ordinary committee member

Gail Field – meetings@editorsqld.com
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PEEPS!

(Episode no. 11)

In their meeting room above the feng shui parlour, ideas about PE high teas and cocktail parties, conference crawling and web competitions were being firmed up.

'And so our second salvo in this PE war we're waging will have the following elements', announced Rodg.

'An afternoon high tea at the State Library at which Shirley and Ellie will promote our plans and announce the web competition.'

'An early evening cocktail party at that stylish restaurant on the river that Sophie, John and I will coordinate and network at before the guests get too out of it.'

'Papers, posters and stalls at the next three relevant educational/government/publishing conferences — you run with that one Anita.'

'The web comp — Toby, you're in charge of this, but as we haven't worked out exactly what we're doing with it yet it's up to you to start the ball rolling with ideas that we can toss around over a cuppa. Liaise with John if your inspiration juices aren't flowing.'

Rodg ticked things off and then paused for breath.

'So, "no" to eBay and t-shirts then?' asked Toby.

'For now', said John and Rodg at the same time. They shared a strange look that Shirley saw.

'What secret thing are you two up to?'

The air was zinging with feng shui energy ...

Next time: Plotting and planning

2
0
0
8

Slang corner

I hear better cock crow *phr.*
[20C] (W.I.) a *phr.* used to dismiss someone, esp. in authority, whose word has proved hollow or who has gone back on a supposedly firm promise or agreement

his hair grows through his hood *phr.* [mid15C – early 18C] used of someone considered to be ‘on the road to ruin’. [the significance of so unkempt an appearance]

flaxation! *excl.* [late 19C] (US) euph. version of *damnation!* [ety. unknown]

Quotable quotes

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.

(Groucho Marx, US comedian and film star, 1890–1977)

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.

(Samuel Johnson, British lexicographer, 1709–1784)

The most wasted of all days is that on which one has not laughed.

Nicolas Chamfort, French writer, 1741–1794)

Treasurer's report October 2008

(for period 01/10/2008 – 31/10/2008)

Income

Bank interest	1.92
Freelance register	100.00
Members' subscriptions	322.50
Training	200.00
Total income	\$624.42

Expenses

Bank fees and charges	13.75
Postage	56.68
Speaker fees & expenses	418.00
CAL Mentoring Project	1678.12
Total expenditure	\$2166.55

Net Profit/(Loss) **-\$1542.13**

Note: CAL expenditure is offset by the \$20000 grant received earlier in the year.

Any queries? Please contact the Treasurer.

Donna Miller, Treasurer

Business quoting: 10 secret line items revealed

The world of big business is renowned for mysterious fees and charges. But ... amongst small business, the use of hidden line items is running rampant! Here's an exposé of the black art of business quoting.

... When a quote comes in for \$675+GST, it's comforting to think that it's worked out using some neat formula based on standard items such as labour, materials, product costs and a thin margin.

The price may have been arrived at that way, but more often than not quoting also involves more than meets the eye.

Whether consciously or subconsciously, there are intangible factors that go into the black art of business quoting. Below are ten of the common 'adjustments' that are often factored in:

UP: The 'unpleasant person' price hike. Usually expressed in stronger language, this is the 20% tax added to the quotes of people who are an absolute nightmare to deal with.

DOWN: The 'good bloke' bonus. This is the lower price you give to a charming woman or man who is friendly and easy to work with.

UP: The 'I'm too busy' cost creep. If you're in a period where you're swamped with more work than you can handle, you'll see small business quotes getting fatter.

DOWN: The 'I need the work' reduction. Got some spare capacity or saving for a holiday? Watch those quotes trim down a little to make sure you get the work.

UP: The 'corporate' tax. There's something about knowing that a prospect just posted a two billion dollar profit that attracts a slightly higher quote.

DOWN: The 'you'd look fantastic in my portfolio' discount. Also known as the 'Apple' or 'Celebrity' bonus, you do these jobs for less so that you can impress your friends.

UP: The 'some jobs too small' slug. If you've ever had a huge bill for a tiny and seemingly simple job, you'll have paid this tax.

DOWN: The 'can I do all your work' incentive. Applied to a customer that you know could send a lot of work your way if you can just get a foot in the door.

DOWN: The 'this is just the tip of the iceberg' discount. Given to fast-talking customers who convince you that once this small job is done there'll be 'stacks more' work to come.

DOWN: The 'that seems like too much' write off. The extremely common last-minute reduction made to a quote that, despite your best calculations, just still seems higher than you think they'll pay.

...

Peter Crocker

[Source: Originally published 16 September 2008 on www.flyingsolo.com.au; thanks to Josephine Brown for this item, Ed.]

Diploma of Editing (Publishing) ends

Teachers involved with the Diploma of Editing (Publishing) at SBIT have recently been officially advised that the diploma will no longer be offered.

There are to be no new enrolments; however, teaching will continue until June 2009, to allow the students who are currently enrolled to complete their diplomas.

IPEd notes: November 2008

IPEd's first accreditation examination, held on 18 October 2008 at seven locations around the country, was not only a milestone in the professional development of editors but also a logistical triumph. Only minor hiccups were reported by invigilators, a tribute to the organisational ability and sheer hard work of the members of the Accreditation Board and its affiliates, all of whom are volunteers.

Some 171 editors took the exam, more than IPEd's target of 150. The numbers at the various venues were as follows: Adelaide 15 (14%), Brisbane 21 (13%), Canberra 21 (11%), Hobart 7 (10%), Melbourne 50 (10%), Perth 20 (20%) and Sydney 37 (10%). The percentages are the approximate proportions of the local societies of editors membership numbers. Eight of the examinees were not members of a society.

It seems that, in general, most examinees were favourably disposed to the process and content of the exam. Here is one unsolicited comment:

Making the sample exam available was very useful for us. It gave us a chance to (a) assess whether we should take the plunge, and (b) practice! I'm sure I wasn't the only one who hadn't sat an exam for decades (nearly 30 years in my case), so it was great to have the sample exam to bring some of those grey cells back into action.

All examinees gave it their best and came equipped for the task. A report from Victoria notes:

We had a great venue and people were pleased with it and commented that the exam was good. We had some arrive with the biggest dictionaries you have ever seen, that they had lugged across town on public transport!

For a job well done, bouquets go to the Accreditation Board, the Assessors Forum, the exam development team, the exam coordinator, the Communication Committee for promotion and Sapro Conference Management for handling the nuts and bolts of exam registrations. It is planned to hold a second exam sometime during 2009.

Marking of the exam is underway. The initial plan was to have completed it in time to give candidates their results by 30 November. At their recent moderation workshop, however, the exam assessors determined that they needed more time to ensure consistency in the marking of papers. Candidates will thus not now receive their results until, at latest, 15 December. The Accreditation Board apologises for this delay, as it knows people are anxious to hear their results, but is confident that all will understand the need to get things right.

In other news, we have to report the resignation of Michael Lewis as the SocEds (NSW) nominee on the IPEd Council. We thank Michael for his singular contribution and wish him well for the future. The NSW society will be confirming a new nominee shortly.

The Council will be meeting by teleconference on Sunday, 30 November. The draft agenda for the meeting is on the website.

Ed Highley
Secretary

www.iped-editors.org

Workshop postponed until 2009

The 15 November *Scheduling and Budgeting Workshop* was postponed a few days prior to the event as there were not enough registered participants to go ahead with it as planned.

The workshop will be rescheduled in the first half of next year.

The new 2009 date will be advertised as soon as it is finalised.

Frisson of the new *(the final instalment!)*

New words often model themselves on existing formations. For example, 'green-collar' is a new word. We've long had blue-collar and white-collar workers. Now we have the green-collar worker. The strong definition is an employee involved in some way with environmental protection; the looser definition is someone employed by companies with stated green-oriented policies.

There's even a category of metawords, or words about new-word creation. For example, we have 'retronym' – a new term created from an existing word, in order to distinguish the original referent of the existing word from a later one that is the product of progress or technological change. When all watches were pocket watches, they didn't need to be called that. But when wrist watches were created, the old pocket watch had to be called that, in order to distinguish it from the new kind.

One of my favourites among these new metawords is 'disemvowel', which is the verb for removing the vowels in writing, such as in text messaging. Now, disemvowelling has been around at least as long as the *White Pages*. Some languages, like Hebrew for instance, make a religion of it. But it took the SMS revolution for disemvowelling to acquire a wider legitimacy.

Doubtless the thrill of 'disemvowel' derives from its proximity to 'disembowel'. 'Disembowel' has been around for a long time. In fact, it has a certain medieval character, to me at least, unless I've watched too many *Monty Pythons* in my time. Sound the two words and you'll note that the only difference is in one consonant: *v* or *b*. In fact, the voiced fricative *v* and the voiced plosive *b* are phonic cousins, certainly in terms of oral geography, one is labio-dental, the other bilabial. But, hey, that's still pretty close given the confined space of the mouth. I doubt that phoneticians as a group are so thin-skinned as to be put out by the notion of vowels being perceived as entrails. One hopes not!

[Thanks to Wendy Abernethy for alerting me to this gem many moons ago. Ed]

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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.

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.