



## Language matters : October speaker report by Karl Craig

Members who missed October's meeting also missed a delightful presentation by Roly Sussex, the Professor of Applied Language Studies at UQ and well-known host of ABC Radio's *Language Talkback* program. Roly is passionate about language and his friendly, chatty delivery was packed with interesting facts, anecdotes and considerable insight.

Roly's subject was 'Standardising and regulating language', a topic that should appeal to all editors, who he describes as the 'bastions of the English language'. We were entertained as Roly took us on a journey through the development of English and explored why it of all languages is least regulated. He talked at length about the various academies that govern and regulate languages like French, Polish, Chinese and Japanese, and showed how English has developed several traditions across the globe.

Roly spoke of the English language's 'mongrel' growth as it developed from its Anglo-Saxon origins by absorbing, in turn, ecclesiastical Latin, Norse and French. He showed how all these influences have left us with a language that is 80% imported and completely adept at assimilating words from almost any other language source. He also touched on the early development of dictionaries and the influence of people like Johnson, Swift and Addison.

Prof. Sussex discussed how the French developed an ideology of language that was used to unify the nation and provide it with an ethnic identity and a model of 'cultural purity'. He talked of how there is a central 'Parisian' version of French, regulated by L'Académie française, which links the language to the state, church and education: an impossible concept for the English-speaking world.

So, where are the norms of English set? Where is the model? Roly contends that English is plural-centric and the development of the language is in many hands – it is flexible, unstable and dynamic. He points out that we are in an age where Indian writers can win the Booker Prize; where Singaporeans are proud of their English and where 300 million Chinese are learning to speak it. International navigation and two-thirds of all science literature uses English, and Hong Kong University has adopted it as the language of instruction. Roly is certain that Asians will have a big influence on the language in the years to come.

A common thread in Prof. Sussex's talk was the Americanisation of English. He demonstrated how in spoken English the American habit of moving the stress to the first or second syllable is gaining ground, along with American spelling. Roly recalled that at one public speaking competition in Asia, 24 of the 26 contestants used American English.

Australians have absorbed at least 10,000 examples of America usage, yet Roly remains confident that our English is strong and vibrant. Australian English, he feels, remains flexible and Australians readily capable of adapting to different language situations. Good news for editors, I'm sure.

It's been over 4 years since Prof. Sussex last addressed the Society of Editors, but the wait was well worth it. Thank you, Roly, for a most entertaining evening.

[Thanks for the report KC! Ed.]

### Web wandering

Something somewhat musical? **Woody Phillips has set out to explore the musical capabilities of the tools (both hand and power tools) on his workbench and has several classical variations (such as 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' and 'The Ride of the Valkyries') on offer. Go to <http://www.gourd.com/127A.HTML>**

### Contact points: SocEdsQ

Please visit our website at [www.editorsqld.com](http://www.editorsqld.com) for all contact details.

### November meeting

Saturday, 10 November will be the last Society meeting for the year. Rather than sit around in our normal venue, we thought it would be *fab* to do something different ...

If you would like to come along for \$25 worth of barefoot bowls and barbecue at the New Farm Bowls Club (6 pm start) please RSVP to Wendy Abernethy, Speaker Secretary, at [wendy\\_ab@tpg.com.au](mailto:wendy_ab@tpg.com.au) and bring \$25 along on the night. Please advise Wendy if you need vegetarian or gluten-free consideration. If you would like to come for a drink (no bowls and barbecue) that's fine too (happy to have a big cheer squad!).

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### 'Editing for the web' workshop: done!

Sixteen participants attended the 'Editing for the web' workshop conducted by David Hill for the Society of Editors (Qld) Inc. on Saturday, 13 October 2007. The workshop was designed to introduce editors to the topics, jargon and extras they need to consider when producing or re-working content to be published online.

The participants were mostly experienced editors looking to develop or enhance web editing skills. The day went extremely well; participants were pleased with the workshop and felt the content was relevant to their needs.

[Thanks to Kerri Ullrich for this beautifully snappy report. Ed.]

# IPEd notes: October 2007

This has been a month of consolidating the initiatives that are under way. The new website is up and running at <[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>, and we welcome your ideas on how to improve it further: contact your society's IPEd delegate.

The constitution was the main topic of a lengthy teleconference held by the Interim Council at the beginning of September. The council is very aware that it is laying the foundations for an enduring organisation and it is striving to provide a fair and flexible basis to enable IPEd to meet the unknowable challenges that lie ahead. During the phone hook-up the delegates went through the draft prepared by the lawyers, together with email comments circulated beforehand, and considered the implications of every clause in detail. The process was so intense that the meeting had to be adjourned, both to give the delegates a rest and to get more legal advice; it reconvened the following week to complete the discussion. The resulting

document is again in the hands of the lawyers to resolve final difficulties and questions. It will be available for comment on the website by the time you read this.

With so much effort going into the constitution, other council matters have taken a back seat for the time being. IPEd's present financial position is reasonably sound. An indicative start-up budget is in preparation, and the member societies will be kept up to date as financial projections are refined.

The accreditation scheme is making steady progress. The Accreditation Board's current activities include gathering numbers, estimating costs and preparing guidelines for the first examination. The sample exam paper is now available on the website together with its answer sheet and marking guide. Even if you don't intend to sit the exam, you will find it a useful refresher. The societies around Australia are conducting workshops to gauge members' reactions



to the exam questions and answers, and Western Australia has already reported on its workshop with some constructive and helpful ideas. While the Accreditation Board takes responsibility for the administration and conduct of the scheme, the Assessors Forum concentrates on the content. As the feedback from the workshops comes in, the Assessors Forum will collate it and modify the exam paper accordingly. There was a good response to the issues paper on how to make the examination available on screen, and these comments are also being considered.

Janet Mackenzie  
Liaison Officer  
<[www.iped-editors.org](http://www.iped-editors.org)>

## Strutting our stuff in Maleny: our intrepid reporter

Where does a story start?

For me, this one with a phone call.

'Aah, Helena,' Robin asked tentatively, 'Has anyone spoken to you about the Maleny Writers' Festival?'

'No,' I replied, all innocent.

'Oh, um, well, would you like to speak at it?'

It turned out that I could make the date, was comfortable with the topics and delighted to appear on a mixed bill with stars like Jill Morris and Robyn Sheahan-Bright. A gift horse really! The aim was mainly to promote editors and the Society of Editors, with a bonus for me, of course, of promoting me (a hint to anyone who may be thinking of volunteering – it's not all committee meetings, you know).

Sunday 30 October dawned bright, clear and hot, even in the mountains. Maleny hadn't acquired quite the festival buzz I thought it might have; with six concurrent sessions spread throughout the town, it maintained its usual relaxed feel. There was a great buzz in the Green Room, though. Writers, editors and people I know from completely different areas like cycling and singing were gathered together, laughing, chatting, signing books and generally having a grand time renewing and extending their professional friendships.

Jill, Robyn and I kicked off the afternoon with a panel on the topic 'Write from the heart, edit from the head', into which we managed to weave information such as what it takes to make a good editor, some idea of the range of input editors can have, news about IPEd and accreditation (as one of our initial assessors, Jill was well placed to comment). Despite our widely different roles and experience, we all agreed and plugged the necessity of combining analysis and skill with creative input, no matter who plays what role, and there were lively questions. In fact, the questions got so lively I was unable to carry out my threat of singing them a song if we ran out of time, and had to hot-foot it to the next session. →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→

## ... Helena Bond!

I was to give a presentation on 'Finding the right editor' and people had had to pay to attend, so I'd armed myself not only with ideas about what to say, but also a handout and copies of the Society of Editors' brochures. I talked about where to look for an editor, what to ask, what to expect, and how to get the most out of being edited. Questions came thick and fast, and an hour and a half flew by.

In fact, the people who attended were clearly in such need of the information I had to share, that I plan to follow it up with an article in the QWC's Writing Queensland.

Where this story ends is clearer. This article; I'll call the article for WQ, assuming it comes off, a new project. But the bigger story, the one that began with someone in the Society seeing an opportunity to promote editors and 'make the pie bigger' for us all — that one, we should all be grateful to know, is still going.

Maybe you can play a part in it too. It's just a matter of being willing, putting your hand up, and learning as you go.