



# ... the word

Newsletter of the Society of Editors (SA)

ISSN 1833-3796

July–August 2013

## Next meeting

**Monday 26 August, 6.30 pm**

SA Writers' Centre  
2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street, Adelaide  
*Access is via the stairs from Rundle Street or by lift accessible through Café Brunelli.*

## Annual general meeting

You are invited to join us at the SA Writers' Centre at 6.30 pm for a **light meal**. Please bring a plate of sweet or savoury food to share. Drinks will be provided.

A **presentation** by two of our members will begin at 7.30 pm (details below), followed by the **business meeting** at approximately 8.30 pm. The business session will include annual reports and the election of a new committee. All members are warmly encouraged to consider standing for the committee. A nomination form accompanies this newsletter.

## A day at Hansard:

### What does a Hansard reporter do?

**Leanne Barrie** and **Adele Walker** both work as Hansard reporters in the Parliament of South Australia and will provide an insight into the process of producing and editing Hansard, the responsibilities of a reporter, and the skills required.

Please let us know if you can come to the meeting on 26 August by emailing to: <rsvp@editors-sa.org.au>.

*If you would like to write the report of the presentation for the next newsletter (5 to 10 paragraphs, but more if you wish), please contact <newsletter@editors-sa.org.au>.*

*This notice of the AGM in the newsletter is for the purpose of the society's constitution, which requires the notice to be issued at least 21 days before the AGM.*

## Next workshop

**Sunday 11 August, 1.30–4.30 pm**

### Sharpen your skills

SA Writers' Centre – a few places remain (limit is 20)  
Cost: members, \$35; concession and distance members, \$25; non-members, \$50

New editors seeking practical guidance and seasoned professionals looking for an editorial-tune up are invited. The focus will be on exercises (mostly on paper, some online) to enable practical learning.

### Presenter: Susan Rintoul, DE

Susan has taught editing in the Advanced Diploma of the Arts (Professional Writing) at the Adelaide College of the Arts (TAFE) for more than 10 years. The diploma provides tuition in creative and non-fiction writing and editing with a focus on the marketplace. She was an owner of Seaview Press, a self-publishing firm that produced over 750 titles. She has served on the society's committee for many years, including as president. Susan was the convenor of the 4th IPEd National Editors Conference in Adelaide in 2009. Susan is an honorary life member of the society and is an IPEd councillor for SA.

*The workshop notice and registration form have been emailed to all members. If you need another copy or more information, please contact <rsvp@editors-sa.org.au>.*

## Next editors' lunch

**Friday 20 September, 12 noon**

The next editors' lunch will be held in the Adelaide Hills, probably at Stirling. The venue will be advised later by general email. The lunch organiser is Michael Vnuk <michaelv@futureweb.com.au>.

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## The presidential word

### Loene Doube

It's that time of year again, AGM season, with which comes my annual request, an invitation to members to nominate to **join the committee**. It is healthy and invigorating for the committee to have a few new members. You don't need experience; you just need to be enthusiastic about the society, the profession and editing, and have time and mental space to contribute.

The committee manages the affairs and promotes the aims of the society, develops the program of meetings

and professional development opportunities, liaises with and contributes to IPEd on weighty matters that affect all editors (including national accreditation, professional development, and promoting the profession and its standards), reviews and processes applications for membership, manages the freelance register and the website, and much more. This year we have developed a working plan that is making the tasks a lot easier.

Committee members are elected for one year, but can be re-elected for as long as they wish to serve. The committee meets once a month. At these meetings we discuss matters on the agenda and members undertake the consequent actions. We each take on a specialist role (such as membership secretary or treasurer) or a generalist role, and we support each other to learn these roles and carry out the associated duties.

Why on earth would you want to join this small, hard-working group to promote the aims of and manage the society?

First, being on the committee is a great opportunity to be involved in shaping the future of the society and the profession.

Here are a few more reasons. You are likely to (and I'll try not to use jargon):

- learn a lot and develop skills that will benefit you in other aspects of your life and career
- have an opportunity to contribute more and make a difference
- get to know other members and enjoy their respect and friendship
- recognise networking opportunities
- enjoy working towards common goals
- explore different perspectives on our professional issues.

And committee membership looks good on your CV.

If elected to the committee you must be available for (most) monthly meetings, held on weekday evenings at 5.30 pm at the SA Writers' Centre, and have some additional time to carry out actions or follow up projects that the committee determines.

If you have energy and a little time to devote to the society's best interests by becoming a member of the committee, please nominate yourself, or have someone nominate you, before the AGM on Monday 26 August.

**And do come to the AGM.** We have an early start while we share a light meal and a chat, and two excellent speakers, who are also members. The following business part of the meeting takes only a little time.

Before then, though, I'm off to Redact, and I will miss Susan Rintoul's workshop on sharpening our editing skills (Sunday 11 August). Yes, I do need to sharpen my skills; I think we all do. But I am going to be doing a 2-day fiction editing workshop in Hepburn Springs to learn a whole lot of new skills. I am excited!

Never heard of Redact? Well then, see <<http://editorsvictoria.org/professional-development/redact>>.

Please contact me if you have any queries or feedback <SAPresident@editors-sa.org.au>.

The <b>deadline</b> for contributions for the next issue of ... <i>the word</i> is <b>Monday 16 September 2013</b>
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## From the editor

*Michael Vnuk*

As this is my twelfth and final issue of ... *the word*, I wish to thank all those who contributed material, proofread drafts or just provided useful advice.

And a special thank-you to all the readers for reading the newsletter and giving positive feedback.

Please give the next editor similar support.

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## Calendar for the rest of 2013

### General meetings

**Venue:** usually SA Writers' Centre seminar room

**Time:** 7.30 pm to approximately 9.30 pm

**Pre-meeting dinner (optional):** 6 pm (usually)

**Dates:**

Monday 26 August – annual general meeting, with two speakers discussing Hansard (details on page 1)

Thursday 17 October – editors' book club, with special guest reader

Wednesday 4 December – Christmas function; a quiz is being planned; venue to be advised

### Workshops

**Venue:** usually SA Writers' Centre seminar room

**Time:** morning, afternoon or full day

**Day:** usually on a Saturday or Sunday

**Cost:** to be advised (with registration forms) closer to the date

**Dates:**

Sunday 11 August, 1.30–4.30 pm – 'Sharpen your skills', presented by Susan Rintoul (see page 1)

Saturday 9 November, 1.30–4.30 pm – 'Managing a major project', presented by Kathie Stove and Karen Disney

### Lunches

**Venue:** various restaurants or cafes around Adelaide; details to be advised closer to the date

**Time:** 12 noon (nominal starting time, but you can arrive when convenient)

**Dates:** every second month; next: Friday 20 September

*If you have ideas for speakers, workshops or other activities, please contact the society's program coordinator, Pamela Ball <[pam.ball@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pam.ball@bigpond.net.au)>.*

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## Membership and freelance register renewals for 2013–14

Renewal fees for membership and freelance register entry (if you have one) for 2013–14 were due on 1 July. A notice to pay and a reminder have both been sent by general email. If you have not yet paid, please do as soon as possible. You must be a full member of the society to have a freelance register entry. New entries can be accepted at any time. Entries from 2012–13 not renewed by early August will be removed. Queries? Contact:

Membership: <[membership@editors-sa.org.au](mailto:membership@editors-sa.org.au)>.

Freelance register: <[freelances@editors-sa.org.au](mailto:freelances@editors-sa.org.au)>.

## June workshop report

# Editing the web

*John Liddle*

Elizabeth Spiegel, AE, a member of the Society of Editors (Tasmania), has a degree in Internet Studies from Curtin University and a Professional Certificate in Web Accessibility from the University of South Australia. She has worked on the Australian Taxation Office's websites for the past 10 years, as well as editing content for other government and private clients.

In her 5-hour workshop on Saturday 1 June, Elizabeth Spiegel gave a very comprehensive account of effective web writing and editing techniques.

### Could you get work as a webpage editor?

Elizabeth pointed out that there is a large and rapidly increasing number of webpages and hardly any of these have been professionally edited; often it shows. Thus, there ought to be scope for lots of editing employment!

However, most webpage producers do not think about employing an editor. Anyone can use software to produce a page for the web and most people think that they can write well enough to produce the text required. The emphasis tends to be on getting the page operating with the required information, not on how well the text works for users. This applies to both individuals creating their own webpages and work units contributing pages to a corporate website. In a large organisation, approval of individual pages and parts of the website will be left to work units, with minimal quality control. There may be a web management team, which will pay attention to the overall architecture and management of the site and perhaps check that pages are regularly updated, but the team is unlikely to include a professional editor.

Should people pay extra for an editor when they are reasonably proficient writers? As editors, we know from experience that the answer is definitely yes! Writing is one thing, but writing effectively to meet the needs of users may be quite another. This is where editors have expertise and can add significant value to a webpage.

From the experience of Elizabeth and workshop participants, it seems that we will have to actively market our skills and knowledge if we want employment as a webpage editor. We have to convince webpage developers that they need us! One workshop participant said that she works with a website design group and her services are offered to the client as part of the design package. Individual professional people might be particularly interested in having their webpage as useful as possible and looking good, since their website is a crucial part of their image.

### So, what can editors contribute to a webpage?

According to Elizabeth, the answer is much the same as for any text editing. However, there are important differences between how people use webpages and other published texts. Users will scan a webpage and if they cannot quickly locate what they need, they will go elsewhere; an alternative website is only a click or two away. So, it is particularly important for an effective webpage to have meaningful headings, concise text and



Elizabeth Spiegel

*Photo: MV*

display features, such as bulleted items. Writing for the web requires a particular skill set. Many people who produce webpages seem to be unaware of this and think that users are going to read every word they produce. There is an immense amount of material published on the web which has not been written specifically for it.

Useful tips for webpage editors from this workshop included the following:

- As for newspaper articles, place the key and most interesting facts at the start and the less interesting background information towards the end. Assume readers will not get to the end of the webpage.
- Focus on what users are likely to want to know. Avoid including just what you would like users to know.
- Provide a style sheet. Over time, webpages are likely to be updated by many different people and a style sheet is even more important than for other methods of publishing.
- Refer to the web standards provided by the World Wide Web Consortium. These standards help to ensure that sites are accessible, particularly for users with disabilities.
- Think about your main target audiences and be careful about potentially offensive language and content. Every site has a potential international audience.

And she had many more useful ideas and tips.

Among various resources, websites and tools, Elizabeth particularly recommended: Janice Redish, *Letting go of the words: writing web content that works*, 2nd edn, 2012, Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

*Some thoughts from Redish's book are on page 10.*

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'Efficiency' does not mean the paper with the shortest length; rather, [it means] the paper that takes readers the shortest time to understand.

—Michael Alley (1987)

## June meeting report

### Learning the art of creative writing

*Michael Vnuk*

The meeting's four speakers all teach creative writing at the tertiary level in Adelaide, and of course they are all active writers across many styles and genres. While introducing the speakers, the society's program director Pamela Ball reminded us that the speakers' students may become our clients. Each speaker discussed their institution's course, and a general discussion followed.

**Phillip Edmonds** is a lecturer in creative writing and Australian literature at the University of Adelaide, and supervises honours and PhD candidates in creative writing. His main interest is Australian short stories.

He said that the university's creative writing courses began in 1998, chaired by Tom Shapcott. Brian Castro is the current chair. Students can do creative writing as part of an arts degree or as a PhD. Undergraduate students share some subjects with English students.

Phillip is 'not entirely sure you can teach creativity', but he believes that the university's courses can create an environment in which creativity may become apparent or can flourish.

To be a good writer, one needs to write and to read. Phillip said that students were enrolling who hadn't read much and didn't know many authors, so now the university incorporates more reading in the courses.

For a PhD, a student writes a novel – or occasionally a poem or creative nonfiction – accompanied by an exegesis, a critical explanation of the text. Phillip said that they encourage the students to find their own voice and space, so their students may take longer to finish.

Not all students go on to be writers or part-time writers, but some have gone into fields like teaching where they help others to engage with reading.

**Steve Evans** was an early MA student in creative writing at the University of Adelaide. He later did a PhD at Flinders University, where he is now a senior lecturer and head of the Department of English, Creative Writing and Australian Studies. He teaches creative writing. Poetry is his big interest. He is also on the board of the SA Writers' Centre.

At Flinders, creative writing can be done in a BA or a bachelor of creative arts (BCA). Higher degrees are also available. Entry to the BCA course requires submission of a portfolio of written work. Workshopping of material is important, including the giving and receiving of feedback. Editing and publishing is another subject to help students understand the people in the industry.

**Sue Fleming** presented a less academic approach to creative writing. As coordinator of the professional writing program at the Adelaide College of the Arts (part of TAFE SA), Sue teaches writing and journalism subjects to students doing a diploma or advanced diploma.

The TAFE courses are only available part-time and appeal to a wide age range, except that there are almost no school-leavers among the students. All instructors are professional writers, journalists, editors and so on. Some editing is taught by society members Susan Rintoul and Celia Jellett (and Pamela Ball has been on the curriculum advisory panel). Students are encouraged to write in a

range of genres and to learn to self-edit.

**Nigel Starck** began by taking us back 40 years to Canberra, where he was first paid for his writing – \$30 for an article about items held in the Australian Institute of Anatomy, such as Phar Lap's heart and Ned Kelly's death mask. He's since written many features, reviews (don't recite the plot, but do give a critique, he says) and journalistic pieces. Journalism taught him key skills of writing fast and writing right. Although he says that writing does not always pay well, it brings a deep satisfaction and pride in seeing one's name in print.

Nigel is a senior lecturer at the University of South Australia, teaching creative and feature writing for journalism. His special interest is obituaries.

On editing, Nigel said that you must have your work edited. He recommended giving work to someone you respect, and then taking their advice. He also said that students often don't know the difference between concept editing<sup>1</sup> and copyediting, and the difference between editing and proofreading.

Nigel said that biography and memoir are growing areas of writing. Finding one's own voice is important; once found, the writing is usually much better.

During the general discussion, Nigel observed that plagiarising in the courses is harder to do because the workshopping and multiple drafts required tend to reduce opportunities for significant plagiarism.

With course enrolments so high – sometimes hundreds in lectures – tutorial classes and workshops often have 30 students, but Phillip believes that this is too many to be very effective. Steve said that the high numbers require frequent meetings with tutors to discuss and read work. On the other hand, the TAFE classes are often smaller.

Most students are looking to have their creative writing published. Where possible, students also try to publish their exegesis (or part of it) in an article or a conference paper. However, opinions on the value of the exegesis vary. Not all courses discussed include exegesis; some incorporate reflective evaluation of the work.

Not many international students do creative writing, as it is hard to find suitable supervisors to match a particular student's cultural background.

There were general comments about the market for creative writing and literary fiction. Phillip wondered why creative writing has grown. And he is worried about where all of these writers are going to be published. He was particularly concerned about publishing online. Because of copyright issues and because the reading public is now so used to free downloads, any writer who is publishing for free online, in the hopes of getting exposure, is making life difficult for themselves if they want a career as a writer. 'Online is not a business model,' he said. It is also not a good career model.

Several successful writers were briefly mentioned in passing, including Patrick Allington (a society member) whose PhD novel, *Figurehead* (2009), was long-listed for the Miles Franklin Award, and Amy Matthews, whose PhD work became the highly acclaimed *End of the night girl* (2011). Both were at the University of Adelaide.

<sup>1</sup> 'Concept editing' is a new concept to me. From Google, it appears to be somewhat like manuscript appraisal.

## Extras from the conference

### Michael Vnuk

Here are some extra items from my notes of the 6th IPEd National Editors Conference, held in Perth in April.

- The mayor of Fremantle, Brad Pettitt, while opening the conference, said that some of the presentations on the program sounded better than his coming work meetings. Did they really? Or was he just being polite? I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.
- Fashion meets editing? Workshop presenter Abigail Nathan wore a necklace featuring the word 'stet'.
- Nury Vittachi, in his keynote address about global English, showed many signs from Asia. One shop sign was 'CHILD BEAR', which baffled us all until an astute person worked out that it meant 'chilled beer'. Nury noted that there is a copycat chicken store in China called 'KFG' (and I've since Googled and found photos of signs for other stores that copy major Western brands, but you wonder if some photos might be faked). Another sign he showed, from a nature park in Rajasthan, is more interesting for its sentiment:



From <[www.dandavats.com/?p=9776](http://www.dandavats.com/?p=9776)>

- Pam Peters, in her talk about editing across borders, noted that the conference venue, the Esplanade Hotel, is sometimes called the 'Nade' by Fremantle locals, whereas the Esplanade Hotel in St Kilda, Melbourne, is famously known as the 'Espy'.
- The ever-careful Carmen Lawrence did say, in answer to a question, 'data has been collected', but corrected herself (unnecessarily, I feel) to 'data have been ...'
- The mentoring talk by Ted Briggs and Elizabeth Manning Murphy mentioned that they had two co-ordinators. I wonder if they are 'co-co-ordinators'?

- Katy McDevitt referred to her own blog, PublishEd, in her talk about blogging. She pronounced the name in the way *published* is usually said. However, I had thought that the capital E in the name specifically implied a different pronunciation, ie 'publish-ed'.
- Elena Hanet-Hutchins, on digital publishing, said that converting a Word document to an e-book is usually done overseas. Why? I suppose it is a long, tedious process that requires a cheap, educated workforce.
- Roly Sussex referred to historian Niall Ferguson's six 'killer apps' that have led to the global dominance of the West, ie competition, science, property rights, modern medicine, consumerism and the work ethic. Roly thinks that openness to ideas and ideologies, as being developed through new education, library and publishing models, may be the next killer app.
- I'm probably not the first to note that 'IPEd' is very similar to 'iPad'. Can IPEd make anything out of this?
- Robert Nichols covered a variety of errors in books, including 'For *erata*, read *errata*', but I didn't record where that one came from. He reminded us that the year did not always start on 1 January. Sometimes it was 25 March, sometimes other days, depending on local practice. This is a trap for any writer on earlier periods, and he showed examples. Perhaps ironically, one of his own slides had a typo in a date. (No one is faultless.) He noted that some errors used to be found because publishers sent books to reputable readers.
- Stephen White pulled out a *big* red pen in his talk on editing geological maps. The pen was 60 cm long.
- Did Don Watson, author of *Death sentence*, really say 'English is a phenomena'? Knowing how careful he is, I probably just misheard him. More importantly, he observed that modern technology comes as a Faustian bargain, because it is harder to write as you want to.
- In the entertaining and thought-provoking hypothetical chaired by Roly Sussex, Nury Vittachi observed that notoriety and achievement lead to the same destination: fame. And which is easier, he asked.
- The conference organisation was very good. The event ran to schedule. The people chairing each session I attended were mostly good, but a few just read the program's bios, which I had already done for myself. The venue was comfortable and pleasant, except that the main room's air-conditioning was set far too cold. The technology (microphones and screens) worked smoothly. The wide range of food was excellent.
- The next editors' conference is 6–9 May 2015 in Canberra. It will be jointly hosted by the Canberra Society of Editors and the ACT Region Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI) on behalf of IPEd and ANZSI. The conference theme is 'Write, Edit, Index'. (Oddly, a couple of us at my table misread the first word as 'Wine'.)
- In her closing remarks, the conference convenor, Marisa Wickramanayake, hoped that we would take away more than one thing from the conference, because taking just one thing would be inefficient. As you can see, the conference was not inefficient for me.

## July editors' lunch

On 24 July, a lovely sunny day after the rain, seven of us gathered for lunch at Henley Beach while looking out to the sea. It was interesting to hear of the diverse editing that members do, and what they do when not editing.

The organiser for the editors' lunches is Michael Vnuk <michaelv@futureweb.com.au>.

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## Etymology and pronunciation

Michael Vnuk

Because we are editors, people expect us to know a lot about words, such as their spelling, meaning, usage, etymology and pronunciation. The first three attributes are indisputably important.

Etymology is, for some people (including me), a very interesting field in itself, but for editors it has mixed usefulness. Knowledge of etymology often helps in understanding words, but we must beware of the 'etymological fallacy', which is the insistence that a word's original meaning is the one that should be used today. The best comment on the etymological fallacy can be found in *Webster's dictionary of English usage* (1989, published by Merriam-Webster, p413):

One thing to remember when you read or hear someone insisting that an English word must have a certain meaning because of its Latin or Greek roots is that these insisters apply their etymologies very selectively. You will find few of them who object to *December* being used for the twelfth month, when its Latin root means 'ten', or to *manure* being used as a noun meaning 'dung' when it originally was a verb meaning 'to work (land) by hand'. So when you read, for example, that *caption* must refer to matter above a picture because it comes from Latin *caput* 'head', keep *manure* in mind.

One might argue that pronunciation is irrelevant to editors, since we are usually editing written texts and we often correspond about work via email. However, we may need to talk about our work – either the content itself or the words describing an aspect of the work, such as grammatical terms – so we should pronounce these words correctly. Incorrect pronunciation may confuse clients and others, and it could reduce their confidence in our knowledge and abilities.

Here are three words related to writing and language which have come up in my discussions with editors recently. Test yourself with their pronunciation. You might want to try defining them too. (Answers: page 10.)

<b>diphthong</b>	diff-thong, dip-thong, dip-tong
<b>redact</b>	red-act, ree-dact, reh-dact
<b>tilde</b>	tild, til-duh, til-dee

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Conciseness does not consist in using few words, but in covering the subject in the fewest possible words that will express what is in the writer's mind.

—Royal Bank of Canada, 1976

## If the shoe fits

Michael Vnuk

Leafing through a free magazine (*Adelaide Matters*, June 2013), I spotted a fashion column (p27) in which the author wrote about her goddaughter's 13th birthday party. Among the comments about the girls' clothes and fashion sense was the following about their shoes:

It was the shoes, however, that really got my attention – blue suede and six-inch heels. Do you need a licence to wear those things? Is there a P-plate period before you step outside the front gate? I was pleased with the back-up plan of 'havvies' or 'connies' that seemed to appear quite quickly after the first hour of the party.

No more was written about the shoes, so I was left wondering what are havvies and connies. I guessed that they are probably more sensible shoes, or at least ones not so high, but why didn't the author explain the terms? She has put the words in quotes, presumably because the names are colloquial, unfamiliar or both, but then she hasn't been courteous enough to her readers to explain further. Yes, I know that I can always Google the words, but, in fact, Google was not immediately helpful. The items in question are shoes, and havvies could be casual ones, but I couldn't find more information quickly. If the names are uncommon, then that's further reason to explain them. (Alternatively, I'm just a dumb, know-nothing male reader who should not have strayed into a fashion piece.)

However, after showing a draft of this item to other editors who are female and who know teenaged girls, I have been enlightened. Havvies are made by Havaianas, a Brazil-based company, and look like thongs to me, while connies are made by Converse, a US-based company, and look like tennis shoes to me (although both companies make other products). I would have capitalised both terms in the original article, unless the terms are now generic for thongs and tennis shoes.

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## Annual reading

The society's meeting on 17 October will be our annual editors' book club, where we discuss books that we bring along. If you are looking for ideas of what to read, here are some that are a little out of the ordinary:

- Ammon Shea is an American who read the entire *Oxford English dictionary*, and wrote about it in *Reading the OED: one man, one year, 21,730 pages* (2008). (I found the book very interesting in parts, but tedious at times – I didn't really care that his self-imposed reading task gave him eye problems.) He has also written *The phone book: the curious history of the book that everyone uses but no one reads* (2010).
- Ann Morgan is a British writer who decided to read a book from every country in the world during 2012. It wasn't always easy finding English translations, but she did it. You can read about her challenge to herself and what she learned at <bbc.com/culture/story/20130715-reading-the-world-in-365-days>.

## It's not 'rock-ribbed law'

*The Chicago manual of style*, produced by the University of Chicago Press, is one of the most influential style manuals in America. The most recent edition, the 16th (2010), was published simultaneously in print and in a fully functional web format. The Press has an extensive website for the manual; some material and services are free, while a subscription gets you more.

The first edition of the manual was published in 1906, based on earlier pamphlets produced by compositors and other staff members. The book was titled *Manual of style: being a compilation of the typographical rules in force at the University of Chicago Press, to which are appended specimens of type in use*. If you're interested to see what was thought important over a century ago, you can download a PDF facsimile of the first edition from [chicagomanualofstyle.org/about16\\_facsimile.html](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org/about16_facsimile.html).

The hints to proofreaders are particularly illuminating, although the tone is more in the style of rules or commands. In those days, a copyholder read out the marked-up manuscript (including all punctuation and formatting) to the proofreader who checked the proof in front of them. Here is a selection of hints (pp 99–102). (Pronouns are as in the original.)

Read everything as if you yourself were the author, and your reputation and fortune depended upon its accuracy.

Be discreet about your queries. Don't stultify yourself and discredit the office by asking foolish questions on the proof. The author will be thankful for any sensible suggestion you may make, but will resent trivial criticisms. About many matters in this world, grammar and logic included, there is abundant room for differences of opinion. Grant writers the privilege of preferring theirs to yours.

Never hesitate to correct anything that is palpably wrong, however positively the copy may assert the contrary. Remember that the blame for the error will eventually be laid at your door – and justly.

Do not follow copy blindly, unreasoningly. Proofreading machines are yet to be invented. Follow copy only when, and as far as, it is correct. Whether or not it is correct, you are the judge.

And as for authors, typographically they very often do not know what they want until they see it in type – and not always then.

Do not shield yourself behind your copyholder. The copyholder is there to assist you, not to tell you how to do things. If you think you have cause to suspect her version of a matter, investigate for yourself.

Do not read to your copyholder. She is supposed to read to you.

Do not suggest from your proof a word or phrase which the copyholder has difficulty in making out from the manuscript. Let her work out her own salvation. If she cannot, remember that you are the arbiter, and not the compositor.

Let your copyholder do your revising, except in difficult cases. She likes to, and can do it. Your own time is too valuable – or ought to be.

If work, for whatever reason, is accumulating upon your table faster than you can attend to it, or if you find that you cannot single-handed get out a piece of work at the time promised, notify the one in charge – and notify him in time.

Do not permit yourself to be stamped. Cultivate speed, but remember that accuracy is even more important. Do things right.

The first edition was over a hundred pages long (excluding the examples of type). The 16th edition is over a thousand pages long, and with more text on each page. It has more examples, more details and more concepts, and, of course, it has to cover modern technology. However, some things about editing don't change. To emphasise this point, the preface of the 16th edition contains a quote from the first edition:

Rules and regulations such as these, in the nature of the case, cannot be endowed with the fixity of rock-ribbed law. They are meant for the average case, and must be applied with a certain degree of elasticity.

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## Based out of Chicago

*Below are two questions and their answers from a recent monthly update of The Chicago Manual of Style Online <[chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html)>. (Style and spelling are reproduced from the original.)*

**Q.** A colleague said to me, "She is based out of Chennai." I perceived this as "She is not based in Chennai, but somewhere else." When I questioned this, she said she meant that the person is based in Chennai. Is this standard English?

**A.** Oddly, yes. It is a standard idiom, if not formal English. It's often said that navigating prepositions is the trickiest part of learning English; this is a good example. "I work out of my home" does mean "I work at home as a base" (even if that involves traveling). Perversely, it's the opposite of "I work outside the home," which means working somewhere else. Being "based out of" is a similar concept, of someone having a home base that they work "out of" or "out from." Obviously, there is potential for great misunderstanding in the use of this expression. It's one of many reasons why the use of formal English for professional communications is still a good idea.

**Q.** It has baffled me for years why the name of *The New Yorker* is sometimes written the *New Yorker*, and today I learned it is because the *Chicago Manual* advises it. I'm not sure why. The title of the magazine, as William Shawn used to say, is *The New Yorker*. To present it otherwise is to make a factual error, as it would be to print the *New York Times*, or the first letters of someone's name in lowercase.

**A.** The books published by the University of Chicago

Press regularly contain thousands of source citations. Given the impracticality of tracking down the “official” title and casing for each one, writers and editors dodge the issue by following a house style guide. The goal is to treat all titles the same way. This tactic has been so universally accepted that by now readers tend to be more outraged when two sources are treated differently than when a casing diverges from what they know to be “correct.” When you think about it, there would be no need for style manuals to rule on this issue if writers had the time and means to research whether every obscure source includes *The* in its title or not. And besides, not every source is as consistent or well known as the *New Yorker*. It’s not always possible to track down a single correct answer. Publishers can be inconsistent: even their own documents, websites, letterhead, and logos sometimes fail to agree. Long before the days of Internet fact-checking, Chicago settled on lowercasing and printing in roman type *the* in the name of a periodical. If this means our books are filled with factual errors, they are at least serenely consistent, and few readers know exactly where the errors are.

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## ‘I do not think it means what you think it means’

**Michael Vnuk**

*The Princess Bride* is a 1987 film based on William Goldman’s 1973 book of the same name. Moderately popular at the time, the film has become a cult classic due to its mixture of romance and comedy, trickery and treachery, swordplay and wordplay. Lines from the film are often quoted in popular culture – although not everyone gets the reference. For instance, a man was asked to remove a T-shirt on a plane flight because it had some lines from the movie, specifically:

Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

[For example, see <[smh.com.au/travel/travel-incident/prepare-to-die-iconic-film-quip-triggers-flight-tizz-20130124-2d8jv.html](http://smh.com.au/travel/travel-incident/prepare-to-die-iconic-film-quip-triggers-flight-tizz-20130124-2d8jv.html)>.]

A quote more relevant to editors is:

You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.

And that’s my lead-in to some websites on word usage.

### Euro-English

The introduction to a May 2013 report entitled *Brief list of misused English terms in EU publications* (available at <[http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/misused\\_english\\_terminology\\_eu\\_publications\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/misused_english_terminology_eu_publications_en.pdf)>) states:

Over the years, the European institutions have developed a vocabulary that differs from that of any recognised form of English. It includes words that do not exist or are relatively unknown to native English speakers outside the EU institutions and often even to standard spellcheckers/grammar checkers (‘planification’, ‘to precise’ or ‘telematics’

for example) and words that are used with a meaning, often derived from other languages, that is not usually found in English dictionaries (‘coherent’ being a case in point). Some words are used with more or less the correct meaning, but in contexts where they would not be used by native speakers (‘homogenise’, for example).

The report discusses about a hundred terms and suggests replacements that are more suitable and more likely to be understood by the readers.

### Science words

The quirkily named Southern Fried Science is a marine science, environmental science and conservation blog written by a team of scientists who are mostly based in the southern United States. One post discusses:

how the common definition of a word may convey a different meaning than the scientific definition. For science communicators, this may lead to confusion and misunderstanding between you and your audience.

A good example is *abstract*, which the public might interpret as ‘vague’ or ‘intangible’, so a better word to use is *summary*. Similarly, *hypothesis* is often thought of as just a ‘guess’, so a better term might be *educated guess* or *informed prediction*.

The links and comments given at the post (see <[southernfriedscience.com/?p=11584](http://southernfriedscience.com/?p=11584)>) include useful ideas for improving word choice when communicating scientific ideas to non-scientists.

### Weather words

When people greet me and ask how I am, I’ll often reply ‘Fine.’ This is a fairly positive word to me, but in the weather-forecasting business it means:

No rain or other precipitation (hail, snow, etc). The use of ‘fine’ is generally avoided in excessively cloudy, windy, foggy or dusty conditions. In particular, note that ‘fine’ means the absence of rain or other precipitation such as hail or snow – not ‘good’ or ‘pleasant’ weather.

Which would almost be the equivalent for me of saying that I am not crying. However, as the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) says:

Weather forecasts and warnings have to compress a lot of information into standardised, brief messages.

What’s the difference between *drizzle* and *showers* and *rain*? Which presents the greater risk of getting wet, *isolated* or *scattered* showers? How hot is *hot*? Over a hundred words and phrases that you hear in forecasts are defined and explained at the BOM website, <[bom.gov.au/info/wwwords](http://bom.gov.au/info/wwwords)>. In fact, words describing temperature (*hot*, *mild*, *cool*, etc), vary in their meaning depending on the region or the time of the year.

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[On *journalese*.] Similarly, hold back from offering the reassurance ‘There is no need to panic.’ Instead, ask yourself exactly when there is a need to panic.

—Style guide of *The Economist* (2010, 10th edn)

## Signs

Bernie O'Neil spotted the property sign below at Stone Hut, about 30 km inland from Port Pirie. As he notes, it's an interesting variation on the misplaced apostrophe.



Bernie's contribution spurred me to photograph three shop signs I've wanted to include for a while. The signs (below) are at 302 Greenhill Road, Glenside.



The three signs cover all the usual possibilities, except for the novel variant in Bernie's photo. Although the lower sign is the orthodox version, the middle sign may be considered just acceptable in informal situations. The double plural in the upper sign is, however, a no-no.

With camera still in hand, I noticed an intriguing sign nearby at 314 (see below). It's also for a hairdresser, called Unity Hair according to the White Pages (where the business is listed in the adjacent, more upmarket Toorak Gardens, rather than the correct Glenside).



However, although the shop sign looks like 'Unity', it has been made using lowercase Greek letters and thus reads slightly differently – if you know the Greek alphabet, as many of us editors do, having edited mathematical, scientific, linguistic, historical or classical material. Here is the Greek (names and transliterations of letters are the standard ones for Ancient Greek):

- υ = upsilon (equivalent to our U)
- η = eta (long E)
- ι = iota (I)
- τ = tau (T)
- ψ = psi (PS)

## Typos

What do you do if you find a typo in a book, website or other publication? Well, there are too many typos to be correcting every one, but I sometimes inform the author or publisher if a typo is significantly wrong, ambiguous, awkward or confusing. For instance, an ABC webpage on diving said, 'Formally known as depression sickness, the bends occur when ...', so I told them that phrase should be 'decompression sickness'. (And they thanked me.)

Many people encourage you to report errors in their books or websites. And they often make it easy by giving a direct email address to use or by providing a brief online form to fill out.

Other people have a different approach. On the home page of the Word Detective <[word-detective.com](http://word-detective.com)>, Evan Morris says, among other things:

Any typos found are yours to keep.

If you are looking for something to do about typos, you could adopt a typo at Wikipedia. Here's the idea:

The Adopt-a-typo project aims to maintain the quality of Wikipedia by purging it of some of the most common typos. It is a focused effort of the Wikipedia:Typo Team.

Wikipedia is an evolving resource. Even if you completely correct Wikipedia of some typo today, the same typo will creep back in with time. 'Typo adoption' is a defense against that by encouraging users to periodically check Wikipedia for particular typos using special searches on their user page. [Taken from <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Adopt-a-typo>>.]

And while we're on typos, Typo is a shopping chain selling stationery and similar items. Typo has several stores in Adelaide, including one in Rundle Mall. Typo is part of the Cotton On Group, an Australian business that operates internationally.

Typo is a weird name, as it seems to be encouraging errors and faults. But it may work for some people. (Hm, I should open a computer shop called 'Bug', a fruit shop called 'Worm', and a beauty shop called 'Mole' or 'Wart'.)

While looking for more on Typo, I found information in websites of shopping centres, such as this from Harbourside in Sydney (spelling and punctuation as is):

Inspired by the hype of the stationery industry, The Cotton On Group brings you Typo, a one stop concept store with irresistible product to fill your space with confidence. Taking trends from the fashion industry and applying them to notebooks, decal wall art, printed gift wrap and other speciality, items Typo offers product with attitude, and as with all Cotton On Group brands, Typo is fast and affordable. If you love fashion and love stationary, Typo will be your new best friend. [See <[harbourside.com.au/section/store/454](http://harbourside.com.au/section/store/454)>.]

Other shopping centres have the same or similar text, although some at least have a better comma: 'speciality items, Typo offers'. Copyediting (and even copywriting) of the piece is left as an exercise for the reader.

## 'An editor should work *with* you'

Elizabeth Spiegel, in her workshop reported on page 3, recommended *Letting go of the words* by Janice Redish. Although Redish's revisions of example webpages are sometimes longer than the originals, the information is much easier to find or understand.

Here are some quotes from the first edition (2007)

Writing informally is not 'dumbing down'. ... It's communicating clearly. It's writing so that busy people can understand what you are saying the first time that they read it. [pages 171–2]

[When discussing recommendations for an example of a long webpage.] First, we would bring the exception to the top of the article. Never make people read a lot only to discover that the information does not apply to them! [page 201]

You should be your own first editor. (But not your last editor.) [page 300]

An editor should work *with* you. Editing should not be something that is 'thrown over the wall' and then 'thrown back again'. [page 339]

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## Pronunciations (from page 6)

The pronunciations and definitions below are taken from the *Macquarie Dictionary Online*.

**diphthong** /ˈdɪfθɒŋ/ (*say* 'diphthong) *noun* **1.** a speech sound consisting of a glide from the articulatory position of one vowel towards that of another, and having only one syllabic peak, as /eɪ/ in *vein*. **2.** a digraph as *ea* in *each*. **3.** a ligature representing a vowel, as *æ* or *œ*.

Other references say that the common 'dip-thong' pronunciation is incorrect, and that 'diphthong' is a frequent misspelling. Also, the digraph and ligature meanings listed above are considered incorrect by many authorities, especially in formal or academic contexts.

**redact** /riˈdækt/ (*say* ree'dakt) *verb* (*t*) **1.** to bring into presentable literary form; revise; edit. **2.** to draw up or frame (a statement, etc.).

As *redact* can be a synonym for *edit* – although some sources recognise subtle distinctions between the two – it's a word we ought pronounce correctly.

**tilde** /ˈtɪldə/ (*say* 'tilduh) *noun* a diacritical mark (~) placed over a letter, as over the letter 'n' in Spanish to indicate a palatal nasal sound, as in *señor*.

In fact, Macquarie doesn't even list another use for the tilde, the one I was discussing with an editor. A tilde can be used as a character on its own, not just placed over a letter. In this form (which Macquarie has actually shown in brackets), it occasionally appears as a mathematical symbol meaning 'approximately', in website addresses, in dictionary definitions to indicate omission of the entry word, and so on. Other references tell me that this version is also known as the 'swung dash'.

*I had two pronunciations out of the three right.*

## Society of Editors (SA)

**Mail:** PO Box 2328, Kent Town SA 5071

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## Membership

To join the society, go to:

<[www.editors-sa.org.au/Membership.aspx](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/Membership.aspx)>.

**Full** membership of the society is open to anyone who is engaged professionally in any aspect of editing for publication, on a full-time or part-time basis, or who has had such experience in the past. **Associate** membership is open to any interested person.

Subscription fees are due on 1 July each year, and cover the 12 months until 30 June in the next year. The annual fees are below. Rebates are available to those studying full-time in a recognised editing or related course, or living over 50 km from the Adelaide GPO.

\$95, full membership

\$60, associate membership.

If you have an enquiry about your membership status, send an email to: <[membership@editors-sa.org.au](mailto:membership@editors-sa.org.au)>.

## Freelance register

The freelance register is available at:

<[www.editors-sa.org.au/Find\\_an\\_editor.aspx](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/Find_an_editor.aspx)>.

Full membership is required for inclusion. The fee is \$65 per year and the entry is displayed during the society's membership year. More information and a form are at <[www.editors-sa.org.au/Membership/Freelance\\_register.aspx](http://www.editors-sa.org.au/Membership/Freelance_register.aspx)>.

## General meetings

General meetings are open to all members, prospective members and guests and are held (unless otherwise indicated) in the Seminar Room of the SA Writers' Centre, 2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street, Adelaide.

## Newsletter

The society's newsletter, ... *the word*, is issued six times a year. It is emailed to members. After a few months, each issue also becomes publicly available on the website.

Send news, reviews, letters or comments to:

Editor, Michael Vnuk\*

<[newsletter@editors-sa.org.au](mailto:newsletter@editors-sa.org.au)>.

Or send to the society's PO box (listed above).

\* *Please note: Office-holders are likely to change after the AGM on 26 August, but emails sent to the above email addresses will be directed to the new office-holders.*