

Blue Pencil

Newsletter of
The Society
of Editors
(NSW) Inc.

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August 2001

Whose story is it?

Due to the unexpected postponement of Iain D. Brown's visit to Sydney, Robin Appleton generously stepped forward to read from a paper she presented at a meeting of Oral Historians of the USA in Anchorage, Alaska in October 1999. Many thanks, Robin, for a fascinating exploration of an important subject!

Views expressed in this article are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Society of Editors.

The paper I present now I have reworked to be pertinent more to editors than to oral historians. Much of what I say here is about data-collection processes that precede editing, but that deserve consideration when receiving

typescripts that are based on oral traditions where fact and memory can play tricks. Issues raised in this paper could relate to any one of us in re-telling an event. The words 'interviewee' and 'compiler' are used informally for convenience. Either word could refer to any one of us in a fact-finding situation.

William Deane, in June 2001, in his last official speech as Governor-General of Australia, referred to a 'massacre' of indigenous Australians in northern Australia. Historians quickly contradicted him in this matter, one stating that the conflict did not involve Europeans, none having ever been in the region at that time in the history of European settlement,

but did involve indigenous Australians arguing about an indigenous woman. Deane stands by his statement, commenting about it being 'oral history'.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, many of the typescripts of fiction, faction, biography, and general titles that we edit rely heavily upon oral history, especially of events of past centuries when victors recorded conflicts and where unbiased reporting was a likely casualty. A compiler's perception and interpretation could colour and alter reports, leaving only the essence. The original report tampered with there is a new

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 7 August 2001

We are delighted that Iain D. Brown will now be able to join us at the August meeting to present a paper on 'An editorial community on the Internet: The Electric Editors—Who we are, what we offer, and some of the experiences of running a virtual community'. He will also provide an update on the Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders' experience with the accreditation issue (refer to article on page 6).

Iain D. Brown is Lecturer in Electronic Communication and Publishing at University College London where he runs an MA degree looking at theoretical and practical use, and availability of electronic information.

Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney (between Park & Bathurst Streets, near the Pilgrim Theatre and Pitt St Uniting Church; the closest train station is Town Hall) at 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. Fee \$12 for members; \$15 for non-members and those who don't RSVP; \$6 for holders of a current Centrelink or DVA concession card. Please RSVP to 9294 4999 (voicemail) or <mmripear@ozemail.com.au> (email) by **Monday, 6 August**.

Coming meeting:

Tuesday, 4 September 2001—Special guest Alex McKinnon of Editforce

thumbprint. The naïve form gone, whose story is it now? What might be lost in this new form...integrity, credibility, accuracy and directness? This stage in the work is, however, when general trade publishers, or editors, usually see 'oral histories'—after the untouched interview, or first-hand account, is lost.

The dictionary says 'oral history' is 'an account of past events assembled from the spoken reminiscences of those who lived through them'.¹ Part of the

Interviewing people, formally and informally, compilers perform a community service by compiling resources, and by helping to keep history alive and accessible for coming generations. They provide valuable records, but such compilers might not see themselves as 'oral historians' or their collections as being 'oral histories'. Their methods would not meet the criterion of the definition of 'oral history'. Some compilers might interview

manuscript assessor and editor it is to the oral traditions and to these forms of 'oral history' that I mention above that I might see.

A Haida First Nation storyteller urges us to listen as a story includes 'the telling and the listening. . .to write it down you will miss half of the story.' Half the story, in another way, is often all that we read when only one point of view of a complex story involving many people and events is presented.

The owners of the stories are often not asked if their stories can be transformed from oral history to commercially published works. Writers need to see that the integrity of the story's owner is intact, the writing is uncensored, free of inappropriate political correctness, and that the principal's characteristics, diction, and forms of expression and archaisms or regional dialect come through, even if needing explanation.

'Whose story is it?' is probably one thing that editors need to ask oral historians, novelists, and biographers. Editors look for legal and factual soundness in the typescript, challenging the researcher about inconsistencies, trivial and major. Are sources supplied and has the writer applied for permission to reproduce photographs, letters, quotations from other works, and any interviews? Paraphrasing and plagiarism are questioned. Hearsay is replaced with documented fact.

I read a work presented as *fiction* and the plot seemed unbelievable. After returning the typescript I was to learn that

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How many of us, having repeatedly heard the same account of a past event, take it over as a memory of that event, even if we were absent at that time?

definition of oral history in the Oral History Association of Australia publication is 'a tape-recorded interview in question-and-answer form. . .with a knowledgeable interviewee speaking from personal experience'.² Oral historians ask set questions of interviewees. Interviews are taped and the tapes are often stored without transcripts having been made. How many of us, having repeatedly heard the same account of a past event, take it over as a memory of that event, even if we were absent at that time? This is what also happens when people are being interviewed. Re-telling by others and storing them as ours, tricks our memories. Much more on that later. I just ask in passing if that is so then 'whose story is being told'?

Moving beyond the formal definitions of 'oral history' I need to ask what then is the storytelling of the Australian indigenous people if it is not 'oral history', the lay term so often used when referring to their cultural traditions of historical records? As an editor I also look at oral traditions in cultural 'others' in telling stories.

descendants of the person or family that they are researching, rather than record 'an account of past events assembled from the spoken reminiscences of those *who have lived through them*' (my italics) and they might not be skilful interviewers, not using formal 'question-and-answer format' of interviewing. Compilers might also refer to other primary sources as well as secondary sources to develop 'a good' story in the hope of publication and this is often where an editor comes into the process.

Following the interview the compiler might delete from the transcript hesitations, 'editing' and embroidering the work by adding colour, place, new information, introductions, or commentaries, or through narrative, not replicating the recorded interviews, but building cases or stories around the interviewee's input. It is the narrative that often changes emphasis, time, mood, perception, colour, and form, enlivening the core interviews. As

the story was true, an oral history—an *autobiography*. The narrative was powerful and the story moving. I commended the writer for his skill, the complexity of the plot and subplot, but I thought that publication was unlikely. As well there was no firm market for an unknown writer. Here is a case of oral history where the truth was difficult to believe. I regretted that I had read his story as fiction.

Believing that if they can read and write they can be writers, some people also believe that it is their right to be published. Self-belief and conviction are insufficient grounds for wordsmiths and publishers as manuscript assessors and editors often see first drafts—raw typescripts—in many genres. Few compilers are skilled or lyrical writers, their aim is to share new information. The craft of writing is often a secondary consideration. Some typescripts might be reports or records of research, or interviews—with introductory commentary or narrative and other additions—or they might be fiction. Many writers do not consider market, commercial viability, the work's worth, credibility, plot(s), if any, appeal, subtext, expression, sentence and paragraph structure, and language choice.

Black marks on white paper—the printed word—are believed by many. Compilers, researchers, reporters, communicators, and writers, owe it to the stories' owners and their readers to be authorial, legally accountable and responsible for their works. Errors, allegations and innuendo can be actionable. Narratives should be free of errors, and emotional or intellectual bias. Coherent, informed, truthful, they should tell as much of the story as is

known with a mind to the subject. Deviations from the central theme should be deleted, full sources for material other than their own should be provided after the copyright holders have granted permission.

In the real world, in contrast to the above ideal, people do fail in their ethical responsibilities to sources, interviewees, stories, and readers. Versions of the same story can range from credible to fanciful, from documented checkable sources to Chinese whispers. How the same information is recorded, expressed, processed and is interpreted, is consciously and unconsciously coloured by cultural and traditional differences, perceptions, expectations and attitudes, as well as different belief systems within the same or dissimilar cultures or subcultures. When

purpose is added, the oral history is perverted as the interviewee's voice is overtaken. Are compilers, not necessarily oral historians, storytelling, or re-telling *the* story, or storytelling or telling *a* story where they, or the story's owners, might add to some events or purported conversations to compensate for lack of detail or to enliven the story? Fact is often added to fiction. Is the reverse so in modern histories based on interviews or recollections, and what purpose does fiction serve if this does happen?

In Icelandic sagas, myths, events, past and contemporary, document fact that merges with fable. But what were the purposes of sagas? To educate, to entertain, to instruct, or to amuse people during long, dark winters in Iceland, or were they

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unauthorised biographies are published whose stories are these, or whose stories have they become once secondary sources are used and dialogue becomes text? Do such biographies belong any less to the subjects than those do where the subjects of the biographies have contributed to, and have cooperated with, their biographers? Who is accountable for the claims made?

How far do compilers and re-interpreters go when presenting other people's stories? Is it *the* story as it was told or is it *a* story being told, using the primary interviewee's theme as the outline? Once narrative or commentary, background or

repeated through the generations to ensure that the tradition of the skald lived on and that Icelanders' respect for their oral histories and their heroes and gods be reinforced?

In writing, editing, and interviewing, the participants' cultural differences, perceptions, and attitudes can affect the ways in which they approach a topic or person, questions, or answers. With these changing perceptions, to whom does the story now belong and how many ways can the same story be interpreted?

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Recorded recollections differ and recipients might: assume; remember or forget; share or not share; see as important or as trivial or 'ordinary'; consider events; omit; qualify; present hearsay, rumour, or myth as fact; withdraw something because of the pressure of political correctness or possible censure.

In the tradition of oral history in *Heddy and me* Susan Varga interviewed her mother who recalled their time in Hungary and their settling in Australia. From the outset the writer recognised that she had to make several major decisions: the interviews were to be formal, of a given length, and by appointment. As interviewer Varga was in control with her mother's voice coming through, although the interviewee's memories were reported, rather than the interviewee reporting her memories. The interviews brought out conflict and later resolution between daughter and mother. Vargas has said that sometimes their memories, her mother's and hers, were in competition and that both withheld memories.

of the original? Is there a sense of historical sequence; is there recognition of possible historical, cultural, social, and familial constraints and morés interacting with the text and fact? Is it clear when interviewees resist telling the whole story as they know it, or do they question the purpose of interviewers to delve? Whose stories do interviewees/writers think that they are telling? Whose stories might they become in the re-telling? One thing is sure the stories should not become the editor's.

Oral history and oral traditions run through our human story and since speech there have always been storytellers and before that, pictographs. There are often parallels between oral histories and stories in holy books that tell of myths, legends, law, and religious and cultural traditions. In different countries common themes run through fables and fairytales retold from generation to generation. Where people practise ancestor worship ancient stories survive with past writings

stories' or 'sorry tales' of the indigenous people.

Historically 'storyteller' has various shades of meaning. Soothsayers would make short-term or long-term predictions. Roman priests would foresee victory or defeat from reading the entrails of sacrificed animals and from these would 'interpret' or 'tell stories' in what they believed or in which they wanted other people to believe. There is a tradition of performance in storytelling or telling a story, truth telling, or denial. It is a skill for which adults are applauded, but for which children might be condemned, as their integrity is challenged as 'storytellers'.

Are editors, travellers, readers, cultural 'others' included in the reading of the story, a story, a telling or re-reading of the story or are regional terms and slang used? Will any of these people feel like outsiders as they read the work? How will they respond? Is the re-telling credible? Whose story might they think it is?

Some people believe that once the word is made public, ownership is rescinded. People within the same family might challenge that loss of ownership of the story and any intervention that would change the central theme of the story. Similarly there can be challenges about anecdotal material because we recall the same stories, events, reported sequences of events, the position taken, and the occasion when the happening purportedly took place, differently.

Marianne Fredriksson in her novel, *Hanna's Daughters*, refers to memory at least 14 times.³

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Once narrative or commentary, background or purpose is added, the oral history is perverted as the interviewee's voice is overtaken.

How do we know if what we are told or what we write has come from imperfect memory, a need for closure, or a need to perform, to withdraw, or to deny past events? Do interviewees sometimes give details that are exaggerated, incorrect, misreported, or are details missing and therefore the narrative could be a misrepresentation? Are the interviewees' expressions, language preferences, cultural differences, attitudes, and perceptions colouring the texts or are they representative

and these are reproduced in the original form to honour the ancestors. *The Monkey King* is an example.

Oral traditions survive among many people of different tribes and nations, acknowledging their customs and tellers of their stories of creation, their myths and legends, and the handing down of their tribal law. Traditional stories are part of the fabric of their societies. In Australia there are the 'sorry

These first excerpts are of Anna, Hanna's grand-daughter, thinking about memory:

Memories? Perhaps they were just tall stories that had simply become enlarged over the years. (p.18)

...I don't want to grow old
...How can I ever be truthful? (p.18)

...I must have memories of my own. (p.21)

...I must go back to what I remember. (p.22)

Many of us would recall tellings of behaviour or of events in our lives yet we have no memories of those. These are often other people's (?adults) stories from their perspectives of our alleged behaviour or experiences. In such

was so exciting and he was doing it for fun.

...On the borders of sleep, she thought she had made an important discovery. Perhaps she had so few memories of childhood because she had been living in a story in which she never really recognised herself.

Was that how the sense of alienation was born? (p.17)

In isolation memories can take on special qualities, such as recalling specific places of comfort, of education, and of work. Shared experiences are often recalled in different ways. Isolation can distort events so that one aspect takes precedence and rational

in front of me was transformed, the long curved nose and the heavy lids becoming aristocratic.

How handsome she was! (p.252)

When we editors approach a work based on recollections, verbal and/or written, always be ready to ask 'whose story is it?' and 'whose story was it intended to be?'

References

¹ *Macquarie Dictionary* (3rd edn), Sydney, The Macquarie University Library, 1997.

² Beth M. Robertson, *Oral History Handbook* (3rd edn, 4th print run), Adelaide, Oral History Association of Australia (South Australian Branch) Inc., 1997, p.2.

In this paper I am discussing extensions of the principles of 'oral history' where compilers might use the interviewing process in speaking to descendants and people who know or knew the subject (or know or knew of the subject) of the research, as well as might use other primary sources and memorabilia, to develop typescripts for family, or local histories for private distribution or in the hope of publication.

³ Excerpts from Marianne Fredriksson, original publication, *Anna, Hanna och Johanna*, Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm, 1994; *Hanna's Daughters* (English edition, transl., Joan Tate, 1998), Orion, London, 1998, pp.17, 18, 21, 22, 251, 252.

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Isolation can distort events so that one aspect takes precedence and rational context gives way to reconstructed memory. It is then that false memory can replace reality.

a circumstance whether we were present at the time, or we were told of the events by another, can lead to a different outcome. Anna says:

...Why does it seem a loss not to remember, not to have understood? In me, it's like a hole that has to be filled. As if I hadn't had a childhood, only a story about it, about what happened, or perhaps didn't happen.

They were good story-tellers, Mother most of all with her talent for making pictures of everything.

Gilded pictures?

...She had known since childhood that Pappa embroidered his stories, adding things for effect and avoiding anything complicated. She'd excuse that because the drama

context gives way to reconstructed memory. It is then that false memory can replace reality.

Again from Fredriksson's novel Anna's mother, Johanna, speaks of someone she thought to be of common stock:

Kristina Lundberg came by car with all Anna's clothes, a large rather plain girl with a beaky, peasant nose, heavy eyelids and an ironic mouth. (p.251)

Having found that the young woman came from a landed family Johanna's perception of Kristina Lundberg changes:

I remember that moment so clearly, for it was the first time I understood that we see only according to our prejudices. The peasant girl

Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP)

At the end of last year, the SFEP approved a proposal to restructure as part of a move towards a more professional society. In a ballot of all members, a majority of three to one voted to introduce three classes of membership, representing different levels of expertise and experience: new entrants to the profession, those with proven professional competence, and those whose skills are backed by extensive experience.

The ballot gave the society the go-ahead to establish entry criteria and an appropriate package of benefits for each membership class. The new structure acknowledges members' professional development in their progression from one class to the next, and will be put to the vote at the Annual General Meeting in September.

There will be three membership tiers, namely Associate, Ordinary and Advanced. All existing members will automatically be transferred into one of the new tiers: existing Associates will be transferred to the new Associate category, existing Full members will become Ordinary members, while those who have been awarded Accreditation or Registration will become Advanced members.

In addition, there will be a transition period, commencing after the AGM, during which existing Associates will be able to apply for Ordinary or Advanced membership, and existing Full Members who are

not registered or accredited will be able to apply for Advanced membership. Applications will be processed by an Admissions Panel composed of experienced SFEP members.

For further information, visit their website <www.sfep.org.uk>.

Valuable – and Free - Websites

Australian Style

This is a newsletter published by the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. It incorporates articles on a range of topics of interest to editors but concentrates on Australian usage. To subscribe to this free newsletter, write to Pam Peters, Editor, *Australian Style*, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University NSW 2109; fax (02) 9850 9199; email <subscribe.stylewise@dofa.gov.au>.

Bartleby

The Bartleby website <www.bartleby.com> is another useful reference tool which provides students, researchers and the intellectually curious with unlimited access to books and information, free of charge. Search or choose books from reference, verse, fiction or non-fiction which are simply and clearly presented. Some examples of books that may be downloaded include Fowler's *King's English*, three versions of *Roget's Thesaurus*, the King James *Bible*, and Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*.

The Vocabula Review

You might also check out this website <www.vocabula.com> which is a monthly-generated review covering a broad range of issues relating to lexicography and current word usage. The review is produced by Vocabula Communications Company and while subscription is free, an offer of a little monetary support would be welcome.

Your Committee - volunteers still needed!!!

We urgently need to fill the following positions:

Website Coordinator

To maintain and update the society's website.

Publicity Coordinator

To promote the society, publicise its activities and the editing services of its members, as well as liaise with the media.

Marketing Coordinator

To market the services of our members and determine which issues are best tackled by marketing as a society rather than as individuals, and more!

Also needed:

Catering Officer

An easy but vital role which requires monthly ordering of food/wine, advising the venue coordinator of numbers, and being on hand to ensure all flows smoothly.

Won't you help us out? Our secretary, Merry Pearson, would love to hear from you.

Are you getting all our emails?

If you don't want to miss out on any of the society's important bulletins, ensure that we have your current email address on file by advising **both** the following of any updates:

Robert Pearson <mmripear@ozemail.com.au>
Bruce White <white@msn.com.au>



Postgraduate Certificate in Editing (Macquarie University)

Ever considered the Postgraduate Certificate in Editing being offered by Macquarie University's Centre for Open Education?

The course is conducted over a two-year period via the Internet and materials include a print guide and weekly lectures on audio tape.

Prerequisites for the course are some editing experience and, preferably, a degree.

There are four assessments each semester (two online discussions and two short written assessments). The first semester entitled 'Essentials of Editing' presents a thorough overview of the industry. The second semester on 'Language and Writing Style' focuses on principles of language use. The third semester on 'Structural and Electronic Editing' is useful to expand knowledge and explore electronic text. The fourth semester is on 'Editorial Issues and Responsibilities'.

For further information contact Macquarie University's Postgraduate Certificate in Editing.

EndNote

Need help searching online databases? You may want to visit <www.endnote.com> to see how this website can help you do just that, as well as organise your references and create bibliographies. The EndNote 4 demo is a fully functional trial version that includes documentation to get you started. After the 30-day evaluation period has expired, the program reverts to a feature restricted EndNote Viewer. The trial version is available for Windows 2000/98/95/NT or Macintosh.



NOTICE

Training Workshop on Project Management

Your society is seeking presenters who might be prepared to work on a panel for a training workshop on Project Management. If interested, please contact our secretary, Merry Pearson.

Media Law Conference

THC Conferences and Lawyers Weekly are hosting a Media Law conference on 7 August from 1.30-5.45 p.m. at the Hilton Hotel in Sydney. Members of our society have been offered a special registration fee of \$382 to attend (a saving of 10%). Media Law traverses a broad range of areas and this conference meets the needs of industry professionals by offering a succinct and practical look at crucial areas affecting the industry. A team of leading industry experts and legal professionals dedicated to Media Law will be on hand to share their knowledge and experience. It will be an invaluable networking opportunity for professionals from the legal, media and entertainment industries. For further information contact Naomi McCrae, Conference Producer, at Lawyers Weekly on 9422 2072.

Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders (SFEP) Annual Conference

If you happen to be in the UK in September, you might want to attend the SFEP's 12th annual conference at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh on 24-25 September. Guest speakers will be Andrew Franklin of Profile Books who will discuss publishing today, and Professor Lewis Wolpert of the Department of Anatomy, London University who will talk about science editing. Other lecture topics include computer housekeeping, producing a literary magazine, Braille-net and the life of a commissioning editor. There will also be discussion groups, workshops and post-conference excursions. You may download a booking form from their website <www.sfep.org.uk> or contact Priscilla Sharland Editorial Services on +44 1292 442935.

Copyright Symposium

The Copyright Society of Australia and the Australian Copyright Council are co-hosting the 10th Biennial Copyright Law and Practice Symposium at the Australian Maritime Museum in Sydney on 22-23 November. Among the scheduled speakers is His Honour Justice Laddie of the UK High Court of Justice who will deliver the keynote address. Topics will include the relationship between copyright law and contracts in the context of electronic trade, Australia's exceptions to infringement, moral rights and the operation of the consent defence. For further information visit their website <www.copyright.org.au> or contact Virginia Morrison at the council in Redfern on 9318 1788.

Internet Content Development for Editors

Thinking about breaking into the dot.com world but not sure where you fit in?

Well, your first assignment is to edit your title. If you write, amend your title to 'content producer', and if you copyedit now consider yourself a 'content editor'.

Studies show that high quality content is the greatest factor driving repeat visitors to a website. A successful website needs strong editorial, conveying a clear message to a well-targeted audience; assures readability and usability; creates and maintains credibility; establishes and fulfils branding; ensures smooth navigation; and avoids confusion.

Those elements—clarity, readability and credibility—are all second nature to editors who are accustomed to thinking about the audience and maintaining a consistent tone. An editor's job is to ensure that a message is true and that it remains so throughout a site.

The question is: how do you make the transition from print media?

Play on what you already have: a command of the language and a keen eye for detail. Follow your interests: every imaginable website is available to you. It's also wise to augment your skills by becoming familiar with pertinent graphics software. Keep abreast of trends by using online resources. Better yet, try to get an in-house job (regardless of the salary) to gain valuable experience. You would also need to amend your resume accordingly using the lingo: 'edited manuscript' becomes 'edited content'; 'wrote and edited copy' becomes 'produced content'. You get the idea.

Finally, to really impress potential website clients, do your resume in HTML and link it to your samples.

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

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Membership

Membership of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. is open to anyone working as an editor for publication (print or electronic documents), and anyone who supports the society's aims. Membership runs for a calendar year. Fees for 2001 are \$50 (new members); \$45 renewals. For an application form, ph (02) 9294 4999, write to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007 or visit the website.

Blue Pencil

The society's newsletter, *Blue Pencil*, is published monthly, except for a combined January-February issue. Your comments and contributions are welcome. Please send any copy for September issue to: <teri.brien@au.pwcglobal.com>. The deadline for that issue is 13 August.

Advertising rates

Full page \$90; half page \$50 (horizontal only); one-third page \$35 (vertical or horizontal); quarter page \$25 (horizontal only); sixth page \$20 (half of one column). Inserts: \$50 per hundred for DL-sized or A4 prefolded to DL size. Circulation: approx. 300.

Listing in the Editorial Services Directory

Listing costs \$40 and is available only to members of the society. The fee covers listings in both print and online versions. The online version is updated every three months. Submit new entries in RTF format, using a template available from Cathy Gray at <cgray@mpx.com.au>. For existing entries, updates can be made to contact details only. Deadline for the next update is 30 September 2001.

Committee meetings

All members are welcome to attend the society's committee meetings. Contact a committee member for details if you wish to attend the next meeting.

Networking for Editors

While good networking is vital for all editors, it is a particularly useful tool for those of us who don't have our own website. Apart from an ability to talk to people, there are other useful techniques for making connections that could lead to jobs.

First, develop a strategy. Whether it's making cold calls or sending out letters, devise a plan and stick to it.

Second, be willing to fail. If you are offered a job that seems to be over your head, take it anyway.

If nothing else, you'll learn something new and meet new people thereby expanding your network.

Third, when talking to those in the know, such as people at book festival booths, take notes and exchange business cards.

People with good writing and editing skills are increasingly in demand in the age of the Internet. To attract an audience, copy must be as engaging and as error-free as possible. An introductory and supplementary courses on web content would be advisable.

Brave New Editor

by Carolyn Uyeda

Somehow I didn't see it coming. I knew I would be involved in the company's web development. I had been researching the benefits of ezines (usually emails with links to web pages) and how they can bring high volumes of traffic to a website. But I didn't think I'd be running a daily newsroom (as well as managing web page content). The editors didn't realise they'd be doubling as journalists each morning. We had the vague expectation that the daily news would be outsourced. But that didn't happen. We were it.

After the announcement, while tossing and turning in bed that night, I dreamt up the idea

of using a discussion database to facilitate coordination of the news. The next morning I set up the database, briefed everyone, and we launched into production. The news appears on certain web pages, and an email containing links to the articles goes out each day to news subscribers.

The editors grumbled a bit initially, but have been extremely supportive nevertheless. Producing the news has been the easy part, so far.

The hard parts have been the transition for some individuals and coordinating the production across departments. The company is not a small,

dynamic dot-com, but a traditional publishing house with an imperative to transform itself—the gradually declining numbers are written on the wall.

There are many frustrations. The website has numerous technical problems that must be fixed—I won't go into the specifics here. I'm mainly giving an example of what some editors are being challenged with, ready and willing, or not.

You're most welcome to share your e-experiences in the eSavvy column and *Blue Pencil* would love to hear from you. Send your contributions to newsletter editor Teri Brien at <teri.brien@au.pwcglobal.com>.

Answers to last month's quiz

Please note that a printing error appeared in the quiz (July 2001 issue of *Blue Pencil*). The term 'looney', not 'looepy' should have appeared.

American term	Australian equivalent	American term	Australia equivalent
<i>barrette</i>	hair clip, hair slide	<i>pacifier</i>	dummy
<i>baseboard</i>	skirting board	<i>pound sign</i>	hash sign
<i>bathrobe</i>	dressing-gown (i.e. not limited to terry towelling)	<i>purse</i>	handbag
<i>body shop</i>	panel beaters	<i>rotary</i>	roundabout
<i>chicory</i>	endive	<i>scallion</i>	spring onion
<i>cilantro</i>	coriander	<i>snap</i>	press-stud
<i>comforter</i>	doona, duvet	<i>suspenders</i>	braces ('suspenders' is also used in Australia)
<i>concession stand</i>	snack bar at a venue, kiosk	<i>Swiss chard</i>	silver beet (also called 'spinach' in Australia)
<i>district attorney</i>	public prosecutor	<i>tic tac toe</i>	noughts and crosses
<i>fender</i>	wing	<i>tractor-trailer</i>	semi-trailer
<i>looney</i>	Canadian \$1 coin (the image of a loon appears on the coin)	<i>two bits</i>	US 25¢

SOCIETY OF EDITORS (NSW) INC. 2001 COMMITTEE

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Ergonomics for Editors

Who has never complained of fatigue, achiness when typing on the computer or crouching over copy?



Repetitive strain injuries, or RSI, are definitely a by-product of the editor's workstation. This includes injuries to muscles and nerves of the hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, aching neck and shoulders, and headaches.

Poor posture and mechanical stress concentration are the main culprits, such as repetitive mouse clicking or staring at the computer screen for long periods.

Physiotherapists offer the following tips for good posture: head up with chin tucked in, neck and shoulders relaxed, elbows at the side, wrists on the keyboard, hands relaxed and straight.

An ergonomically sound workstation starts with a good chair, one with good lumbar support. Knees should be slightly lower than hips with feet planted flat on the floor. The keyboard should be directly in front of you, at elbow level. The monitor should be at eye level, at arm's length away.

Relaxation is also essential. The best way to reduce stress is to take several deep breaths every hour or so, letting them out slowly. Move your eyes away from the screen every 30 minutes to prevent eyestrain.

When faced with a rapidly approaching deadline you might say that you don't have time to heed such advice but, as you are your greatest resource, can you really afford not to?

Ten Editor Traits That Guarantee You Success

1. Passion for the work
2. A solid education in the basics
3. Experience
4. Creativity
5. Knowledge of the times
6. Convictions
7. Flexibility and a sense of reality
8. Attention to detail
9. Curiosity
10. Common sense