

'Trivial' matters of indexing

The skills ascribed to librarians by the [NSW Industrial Relations Commission] ... are usually quite trivial matters of classification and indexing.—Paddy McGuinness

Edited version of an address to the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. on 4 June 2002, by Alan Walker, Vice-President of the Australian Society of Indexers.

My text is taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 April 2002, page 13, by Padraic P. McGuinness. I intend tonight to describe the context in which this remark was made, and I particularly want to mention the implications of this slur for pay rates and employment conditions for editors and indexers. Then I'll canvass a number of topics of mutual concern to editors and indexers.

McGuinness's article

Apart from that slur on librarians' skills, McGuinness's article made a number of

points which evoked immediate responses from librarians and indexers.

His first argument was that the equal pay case in 1966 which decided that Aboriginal stockmen in the Northern Territory should be paid union award rates for the job was the greatest single blow to Aborigines in the last 50 years. His second was that a similar blow is being dealt to libraries by a decision of the NSW Industrial Commission to grant about a 25 per cent salary increase to librarians in the public sector in NSW.

McGuinness claims: 'Rising salaries in librarianship have led to the decline of many libraries as the costs of administration have crowded out the

basic function of a library.' And another quote: 'What the pay increases will achieve is a further decline in the quality of public libraries as people are substituted for books and journals and the few remaining independent libraries are priced out of existence. The net result will be fewer jobs for librarians.'

The third argument, and this is really the guts of the article, is about relativities between different professions, the femininity of certain professions, and work value. He describes the basis of the salary increase as:

... a specious argument about the alleged depression of wages in female

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Next meeting: Tuesday 6 August 2002

Damien Parer and Ginny Lowndes

I just know this book will make a really, really good movie!

Hasn't this thought crossed your mind when you're reading a novel? Well, it crossed ours recently so we, Damien Parer (film and TV producer: *Shame, Rough diamonds, Grim pickings, Tracks of glory*) and Ginny Lowndes (writer, editor: *Neighbours, Australia's most wanted, A country practice*) will take you through every stage we have taken with a novel as we try to wrestle it from the page into an acceptable script that will attract financing—so that it can be eventually shown in a theatre or on a television set near you. In a fun-filled and informative night, we will cover everything from acquisition of the rights to pitching the final product to get money—and that's just the beginning.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney (between Park & Bathurst streets, near the Pilgrim Theatre and Pitt Street Uniting Church; the closest train station is Town Hall); 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. \$13 for members; \$16 for non-members and those who don't RSVP; \$7 for holders of a current Centrelink or DVA concession card. Please RSVP to brhed@pnc.com.au (email) or 9294 4999 (voicemail) by Friday 2 August.

Tuesday 3 September: TBA

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gender-specific occupations. This is based on an unproven historical effect, and on an invalid comparison with a male-dominated occupation — of all things, geologists. The disparity between the two is obvious.

Geologists have to undertake tertiary studies of a much more rigorous kind than the mixture of elementary skills and soft ‘science’ fed to would-be librarians. They have to participate in their training in exhausting field expeditions and most of them to further their careers have to spend long spells in uncomfortable remote areas. It is a tough life. There is no reason why women should not become geologists, but clearly it is not the kind of work that many women have wanted to do. By contrast, librarianship is a genteel occupation with regular hours where work is sedentary and comfortable.

Moreover, libraries were not in past years solely staffed by women. It is only in the past 20 years that women have come to dominate the field. That is, the basic staff relativities by comparison with other jobs were laid down long before the huge influx into the workforce of women.

If it were a generally underpaid job, there would be far fewer people employed in libraries or in training for such employment.

Finally he goes on:

But the real issue is the absurd notion that work in female-dominated industries is historically undervalued. There is simply no economic basis for this assertion. First in the case of libraries it is historically untrue that it was mainly a female profession. Second, there is no evidence that salaries have been driven down by women entering it because there was no alternative employment available. Third, since libraries are chiefly a matter of public sector employment, there is no appropriate basis for market comparisons. Any other form of evaluation of ‘value’ of work must be based on non-economic considerations, and hence must be irrelevant to wage comparisons.

As part of this argument, McGuinness makes his slur on librarians’ skills which

was quoted at the beginning and which I will quote again in its context:

The skills ascribed to librarians by the IRC, drawing on the submission by counsel for the Public Service Association, are those which will be acquired in the course of tertiary education in the humanities by almost anyone fit to get a degree; the skills are usually quite trivial matters of classification and indexing. For the rest, it is simply book handling, book issuing, and searching databases—all all easy to learn.

ALIA’s response

As you will imagine, this article evoked an immediate response. The National Office of ALIA, the Australian Library and Information Association, sent a reply to the *Herald* on the same day that McGuinness’s piece appeared. So far as I’m aware, the reply was not published. ALIA commented:

In any event, Mr McGuinness’s view is of little moment. The case has been ‘run and won’ and librarians have been the big winners. What Mr McGuinness thinks of the outcome of a major consideration by the body charged with determining wage cases in NSW [NSWIRC] is irrelevant. Members should be largely unconcerned by his views.

Demography of the information management professions

McGuinness’s remarks on the demography of librarianship are disputable—indeed, I think they are all wrong, and have been proved wrong for many years. When I was a librarian at the University of NSW in the 1970s, research was done in the School of Sociology by Michael Cass and Sol Encel, among others, which contradicted most of McGuinness’s assertions.

ALIA’s unpublished reply says:

Many of Padraic’s ... assertions are inaccurate. One example: he asserts that ‘it is only in the past 20 years that women have come to dominate [librarian-ship]’ and ‘there is no evidence that salaries have been driven down by women entering it’. Yet evidence put before the Pay Equity Inquiry confirmed that as long ago as 1930 there was 85% female employment in the State Library, but largely-unqualified men held the

senior positions. These men enjoyed salaries on a par with other professionals across the public sector. It was only when more women gained senior positions that relativities declined. Further evidence showed that in 1955, 83% of female librarians held tertiary qualifications compared with only 60% of men. Yet female librarians’ pay was lower than that of male counterparts and was falling relative to other professions with which librarianship had previously had parity ... what actually happened was that, as women came to dominate the librarian workforce, qualification levels increased but relative pay declined.

Now, comparing the demography of librarianship with that of other information management professions such as our own, I can draw on a great deal of personal observation, having been a librarian for 20 years and an indexer for another 20 years. While I can’t produce solid figures on all demographic aspects of demography of indexing and editing, I can tell you what figures I have and make some observations.

The Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI) membership figures show that there are comparable numbers of indexers in NSW and Victoria—nearly 30 per cent of our membership is in each of those states—but there’s a substantial group—20 per cent—in the ACT region. Another 10 per cent is scattered up and down the Queensland coast, and the remaining 12 per cent are in other states and territories and New Zealand. Many of our members live outside capital cities because indexing, like editing, is by and large a freelance occupation and a solitary one which can be done remotely.

Membership is about 75 per cent female, and has been so for at least the last 10 years. If this audience tonight is typical, then much the same holds for editors. Given that sort of split, it’s clear that in AusSI males have usually been over-represented in official positions, in the same way as for many years males were over-represented in the management positions in libraries.

One other demographic factor which McGuinness doesn’t mention, but is one I always find interesting when I go to conferences of indexers around the world, is age distribution. In England, I

would be a young indexer. English indexers are old women, and they are excellent indexers. One gets the impression that the average age of English indexers may be somewhere close to 70. We don't ask our members their age, but I would say that while the average age of Australian indexers is below that, it is not by more than a decade or two. From my observation of conferences in the USA, it appears that their average age is much lower.

There are various reasons for this age profile, the main one being that indexing is usually a second profession. Most indexers have been librarians or editors or academics or authors. Michael Wyatt and I have been running basic training in indexing for the last 15 years at the University of New South Wales as continuing education courses, and the people who turn up show that sort of mixture, and they tend to be of a certain age. I'm not quite sure what the industrial implications of the aging workforce are, but it is certainly a significant factor.

One other thing that I would point to is that not all indexers are book indexers. As our list of Indexers Available (on the AusSI website) and our marketing brochure make clear, indexers work with a wide range of analogue and digital materials, with books and periodicals, loose-leaf services, archives, maps, pictures, databases, websites, intranets, and electronic publications of all sorts.

Gender equity and work value

But getting back to McGuinness's article, in the unpublished reply which ALIA wrote to the *Herald* they quoted from the previous weekend edition of the *Herald*, which had reported on the industrial case in the following terms: 'Employers said the decision was based on work value rather than gender equity because all parties agreed that librarians were underpaid'. And they went on: 'Employers have accepted the evidence put before the NSW Pay Equity enquiry that librarians are underpaid despite their work value having increased substantially over recent years.'

This raises the whole question of work value and relativities. When AusSI sets the recommended rate for indexing, which we do roughly once a year, we look at economic conditions and we look

at established relativities. We have not ever been brave enough to try to upset the relativities, and so we take it for granted that people won't pay an indexer as much as they will pay an editor, but we fully expect that they will pay the indexer more than they will pay a proofreader.

These sorts of relativities have been there for as long as anyone can remember, and I think what this judgement shows is that maybe old relativities and old ideas of work value should be reconsidered from time to time. And perhaps we should get excited when we consider that the richest person in the world is a nerd.

Skills

So let's go on to skills. Michael Wyatt posted a reference to McGuinness's article on two listservs, ALIAIndexers (which is the list supported by AusSI) and INDEX-L (which is the English-language international discussion list for indexers). There was an immediate flurry of outrage to the slur on our skills both from Australia and the USA. One American indexer, Al Austin, wrote:

I'm new to the list and a novice indexer ... but I do have a suggestion ...

Let's sit [Mr McGuinness] down with a book and let him index it. Let's not make it too difficult for the fellow by giving him a medical text or a legal text or even a cookbook. It is, after all, his first time out. How about Jacques Barzun's *From Dawn to Decadence* with the index cut out? A nice trivial romp through 500 years of the humanities. Of course, since it's only a trivial matter of classification and indexing, he should not be allowed any indexing reference books, publisher's style specifications, or advice from anyone. He must do it all by himself, in a small room, eight hours a day, for two weeks.

Maybe we can even arrange for him to be paid at the current salary for librarians.

That's a good point; it's a tough life for indexers as well. It may not be as blokey as geology, but it has its own stress.

The other comment I like was from Judy Hunt, also from the USA, who wrote: 'I'm a woman and an indexer and a geologist. Compared to indexing, geology is a piece of cake.'

The importance of triviality

I'd just like to make one little diversion into triviality, which I'm sure you are aware of, but it's worth a reminder.

Although the most familiar contemporary meanings of 'trivial' are 'trifling, slight, of small importance, or value, commonplace, ordinary, trite', it's worth remembering that its original meaning was 'belonging to the trivium'.

In the Middle Ages, the trivium was the lowest division of a university course of study comprising the three subjects, grammar, rhetoric and logic. Students built on this base when they moved on to the higher division of the course of the seven sciences, the quadrivium. That consisted of the four subjects, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. (Geology of course was not invented until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.)

Therefore, the trivial, far from being useless knowledge, was the basis of all knowledge, and it consisted of the sort of knowledge that pertains particularly to information workers like editors and indexers—to grammar, rhetoric and logic.

How do these issues relate to pay rates and employment conditions for editors and indexers?

I don't know how all of these issues might relate to pay rates and employment conditions for editors and indexers, but I think we should be looking at the work value of our professions. We shouldn't take existing relativities lying down.

I don't know to what extent the societies of editors are involved in negotiating the award which applies to editors. I looked at all of the websites of the editors' societies in Australia and found no reference to that award.

AusSI has been absolutely minimalist in the way that we approach pay rates. We make a statement about once a year, and that statement is a recommendation for a minimum hourly rate of pay for freelance, self-supporting, registered book indexers working on short-term contracts. That statement probably excludes half of our membership, and half of the jobs done by of the others, but the assumption is that it gives some sort of benchmark figure, which at the moment is \$44 an hour.

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Alan Walker

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I personally find it useful. While I do not usually need to quote an hourly rate, I use this figure as a basis for my own calculations of an all-up quote for an index. I do have two clients that I use the AusSI with, two regular clients who I know will accept it, and whom I bill by the hour. In other cases, I know some clients who would hold up their hands in horror and say, 'Oh, we don't even pay our editors that!' So this sort of statement carries very little industrial clout.

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When the subject comes up at meetings of the American Society of Indexers, all hell breaks loose because many of their members do not consider it appropriate for a professional organisation to make any statement at all about pay rates, which is seen as price-fixing. The British and Australian societies have lived with this sort of recommended rate for many years without any problem.

What editors can expect from indexers and what indexers expect of editors

At this point, I'd just quickly like to go through my little list of what indexers expect from editors and what editors expect from indexers.

My view is that generally indexers—and we're talking mainly about book indexing here—should be responsible for the content, quality, and length of the index within whatever constraints the editor imposes. And the editor should be responsible for typographical matters. But that process should be a partnership, which is the main point that I am making. However it's handled, the important thing is that we continue to talk to each other during the whole process

What might an editor expect an indexer to do?

- Provide good estimates of time, cost and length of index.

- Provide the index in the house style (if there is one).
- Provide the index in a specified format (RTF, Word, one of the DTP formats, camera-ready copy, and so on).
- Deliver on time—I probably should have put that on the top of the list.
- Make queries which affect the index and draw attention to literals and inconsistencies in the text.

What might an indexer expect an editor to do?

- Give the indexer advance notice of any requirements for the index, especially content, length, budget and deadline.
- During the indexing process, inform the indexer of any textual changes, especially changes to page breaks, since even the movement of less than a line of text from one page to another may affect the index.
- After delivery of the index, do a spot check of some locators (not all!) and inform the indexer of any problems.
- Take typographical responsibility. Choose appropriate type size and style (not too small, leading, reasonable amount of indentation), adding headers or footers (which may serve the function of a note, for example, *This index refers to paragraph numbers*).
- Proofread the index thoroughly after typesetting or give the indexer an opportunity to proofread it. Check typography after typesetting, with a particular eye to widows, orphans and bad line breaks. Most errors in printed indexes occur at this stage, when new errors in indentation, turnover lines and typography are introduced during the conversion process.
- Insert "continued" headings when index entries extend over page breaks.
- Recognise that indexers are usually the best people to cut or repaginate indexes. Indexers usually have records of cross-references and double entries (which might be affected by cutting the index) and use software which can put indexes into page number order (which greatly speeds the process of repaginating an index after changes to page breaks).
- Treat the indexer as a member of the team, through consultation on the above matters, offering a copy of the book (either gratis or at the house rate), and inviting the indexer to the book launch (if there is one).

Conferences in 2003

Finally, I'd like to mention that AusSI plans to hold an international indexing conference in Sydney on 12 and

13 September 2003, with associated or satellite events or workshops scheduled for immediately before or immediately afterwards. There are plans for a national conference of editors in Queensland at about this time, and I hope that the two conferences will complement and benefit each other.

I'd like to ask where you place the author in all of this? My recent experiences have been that publishers tend to ignore the author completely when it comes to the editorial approach and they ignore the author when it comes to indexing. They make no attempt to broker any discussion between the editor and the indexer, who is brought in after the editorial process is over. At the last minute they say, 'Oh my God, we need an indexer. We've got two weeks left, who can we get? At the cheapest possible price.'

Perhaps I could begin by saying that often an indexer is commissioned by an author, and that there is no editor as far as the indexer is concerned. This is because of a growing practice of the publisher expecting the author to deliver a practically complete package. Or sometimes the author takes too seriously what it says in the contract, that the author shall provide the index. But, for whatever reason, I index mainly scholarly books and about 50 per cent of the time it's the author who makes the initial approach. That leads to the interesting situation where there probably is an editor somewhere, often overseas, who is doing less than the editors with whom I work in Australia. The author and/or the indexer end up doing a great deal of the editorial work.

When you're dealing with an editor, then I don't think it's proper for the indexer to approach the author directly unless some sort of three-way communication is set up by, or through, the editor, which is what usually happens.

Are you, or any of your members, holding workshops for editors?

There was a workshop at the Canberra conference last year. Because that was a combined conference for editors and indexers, there were various workshops—including one called 'Editing for Indexers' and another called 'Indexing for editors'—given on the day after the

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Am I an editor?

Pamela Hewitt talks to Cathy Gray about her working life

*Cathy Gray has been working freelance since early 1994. She spent the mid-1980s as editor of the music technology magazine *Sonics*, and then five years as managing editor of *Choice* magazine at the Australian Consumers' Association. In previous lives she worked as a sound engineer for bands, and on small independent films in various roles from art director to production manager. She was president of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. from 1996 to 1999.*

Not many of us set out to be an editor. In my case, there came a time when that's what I was calling myself. But I'm still not absolutely sure the title fits.

I did architecture at the University of Sydney in the early 1970s, late 1960s. It was a very vibrant place. Not much conventional architecture was being studied. We did very little drafting, we crawled around inflatable tubes on swimming pools and built environmental sculptures and went to Nimbin and made bamboo structures. It was all geodesic domes and anti-architecture: deconstructionist construction.

I think, looking back, that the most important thing I got out of it was an approach to problem-solving—a synthesis approach rather than logical deduction. That's a very interesting ingredient of editing. Editors, because they've come through circuitous and messy routes, often have an appreciation of that skill of synthesis.

I work with people to make communication pieces, whether it's a research report or a website or a set of information sheets. It's usually information-based. What I get the biggest kick out of is coming up with a structure or arrangement that enables the author and the potential reader to see patterns. It's about cutting to the chase, revealing the nub of something. It's helping people take that step between information and understanding.

It's not the search for some pure 'correct' English. I don't actually think that this drives many professional

editors, even though it may be part of the public image of the profession. I see editors valuing things like clarity and precision in language, above 'correctness'. Language is an evolving communication tool, and a lot of its richness has come from people purloining things from different cultures and inventing things and changing them by using them in different ways. Last night on the radio an American psychologist was using the word 'awfulising'. 'Awfulising' (apparently) is when people carry on about how awful a situation is without really having anything to base such a view on. It's an awful word in a way, but it's also a great word. It's very descriptive when you know what he's talking about. If a word is useful, it'll be taken up; if it's not, it'll die.

[Editing] is not the search for some pure 'correct' English ... It's helping people take that step between information and understanding.

In the mid-1970s I took what I thought was going to be a year off from architecture, but ended up doing a BA at Macquarie in the School of English and Linguistics, majoring in Mass Communications. After I graduated, I spent some time working on independent films and then got involved with the music industry. This was the era of punk. Some friends formed a band, and I started doing sound for them (I knew as much about sound engineering as they did about guitar playing: not much!).

I then spent five years as a professional 'sound engineer', a 'roadie', in the late 1970s. It was a fascinating time. There was a lot of energy, a lot of expensive equipment, and a lot of collegiate

learning. I thought the idea was fabulous. Everybody was very open. They weren't precious about their knowledge. There came a time when I found I was a bit old to lug the amps around, and a magazine called *Sonics* had just started. It came out of the do-it-yourself electronics world. Music technology was just taking off, synthesisers had come along and they advertised for a 'literate ex-roadie or similar' to edit their magazine. That sounded like me!

Suddenly I was in magazine publishing, facilitating this sharing of information I'd experienced in the industry. I'd do interviews, follow people around, talk to everybody for a week while they were setting up their gigs, and do an 'in-depth article' on how they operated. It was all about empowering people through providing information. At the same time, I was learning about publishing.

I particularly enjoyed exploring the editor-designer relationship. The text and design tasks are closely integrated in magazines, more so, perhaps, than in a lot of book publishing. The turnaround's quicker, for one thing, and you've got an ongoing, iterative relationship with an art director or designer. When you're getting a story together, you're thinking about what's needed to illustrate it, what photos you can get, how to present it.

Later, when I was managing editor of *Choice* magazine, I honed my ideas about empowering people with information and the role of design in this. I find it miraculous what you can make visible in tables and graphs, for example, if you change the order, what you put next to each other, what you put in columns or rows, what you call things, how the relationships become evident. *Choice* always had a lot of information to pack in and different kinds of readers—some who really wanted to know all the intricacies of how you got to your recommendation, and some who just wanted to trust you.

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Would you travel to Melbourne without knowing where it is?

Why it's so important to have a business plan

Several members of the society and others attended the segment of the Department of State & Regional Development's workshop series for people running home-based businesses that focused on business plans. The session was presented by Patrick Lumbroso from PatCorp Power Business Systems. The following is excerpted from what he had to say. [Editors' note: Although Patrick referred to his audience at 'technicians', we've changed that term to 'editors'.]

A business plan is your blueprint for starting, maintaining and/or expanding your business. You have to have a map that will give you an idea of how to get where you are going. Collecting as much information about your industry as possible, analysing the material you have gathered and formulating a strategy on how your business will operate will allow you to earn a decent living after you've paid your expenses. There is a difference between owning a business and being self-employed. A business run for maximum profit will earn you a fortune—wages will only earn you a living. The ideal is to work on our business not in our business. The truth

is most of us don't have a business—we have self-employment.

When an editor grows a business they need to focus on opportunities and their long-term value and not be seduced into being popular or cheap. That sort of focus tends to leave them needing instant cash, and because they need instant cash, they get it by being popular and cheap. We end up creating a vicious cycle not a profitably run business. An employee only gets paid once. An entrepreneur gets a benefit forever.

Editors need to change their focus from being editors to visionaries. We have to develop a vision that not only excites us but the people we want to do business with. We have to use our creativity, innovation and experimentation to create a great business for ourselves.

Most of us are using our skills to create a great business for other people and not being paid the real value of our expertise and our time. Editors need to develop a business that is a reflection of themselves as people—one that has clear outcomes and focuses on opportunities, on building systems, on performing work that creates long-term residuals rather than instant income.

... we have to know the real value of our time. It isn't trying to do as many \$25-an-hour jobs as we can fit in.

Editors have to ask themselves who their clients are and what they want, then sit down and figure out, via a business plan, how they are unique: how they can present themselves as different from every other techie working in their field. We have to ask ourselves how we can make our businesses better, safer, faster, more profitable and more fun. We need to ask: 'How will my business look when I'm done? Would I like to do business with me?'

We need to discover the truth about our business and ourselves and, in particular, we have to know the real value of our time. It isn't trying to do as many \$25-an-hour jobs as we can fit in.

Being an editor is only 50 per cent of our time. The other half is entrepreneurial, so editors have to force their brains to think and adopt leveraging as a business practice. Leveraging other people's time, other people's money, other people's knowledge and other people's skills and experience can move you from 'I can't afford it' into 'my business can work for me even if I'm not there doing it'.

If your business depends upon your being there, you don't have a business, you have a job. Entrepreneurial work requires creativity, innovation and experimentation. Creativity is really about extending yourself even when you are scared. Taking a good hard long look at what we do and how we do it and creating a business plan to achieve our vision and make money from it can be really scary, so practice a lot by doing one scary thing per day!

Ginny Lowndes

Humour from the Internet— signs of the times

Over a gynaecologist's office: 'Dr. Jones, at your cervix.'

On a plumber's truck: 'We repair what your husband fixed.'

On the trucks of a local plumbing company in NE Pennsylvania: 'Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber.'

Pizza shop slogan: '7 days without pizza makes one weak.'

Outside a muffler shop: 'No appointment necessary. We hear you coming.'

On the door of a plastic surgeon's office: 'We can help you pick your nose!'

In a veterinarian's waiting room: 'Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!'

On an electrician's truck: 'Let us remove your shorts.'

In a non-smoking area: 'If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action.'

On a maternity room door: 'Push. Push. Push.'

At an optometrist's office: 'If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place.'

In the front yard of a funeral home: 'Drive carefully. We'll wait.'

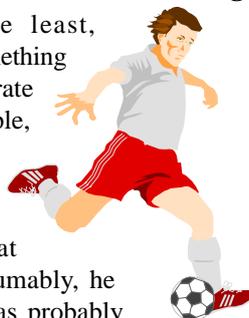
Was this an act of belial?

I am continually bemused by journalists' valiant attempts to dress up mundanity in impressive and portentous language. It wouldn't be so bad if they didn't keep making a hash of it.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of Monday 1 July, on page 19, carried an article about the World Cup. Not being a *Herald* reader myself [editor's note: Michael prefers the *Times*' cryptic crossword in *Another Paper!*], I am indebted to a correspondent for spotting this:

'Germany, a team that has belied the sum of its parts during the past four weeks, had proved ...'

This is, to say the least, unorthodox. To belie something is to suggest or demonstrate that it is false; for example, a politician's actions can belie his words. It's hard to imagine that the *SMH* journalist had quite that meaning in mind. Presumably, he (I'm guessing, but it was probably



written by a male) meant something like this: 'over the past four weeks, the German team's performance as a whole has been greater than the sum of its parts'. This is inelegant, and like so much journalistic writing is too dependent on cliché—which is, perhaps, what the writer was trying to avoid. But by replacing half the cliché with a malapropism, he has merely compounded the inelegance.

Michael Lewis

Call for applications

Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship

Named after the distinguished literary editor and honouring her contribution to Australian letters, the Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship is sponsored by the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the Australian Publishers Association and the Australian publishing industry.

The Fellowship is awarded biennially and allows the recipient a 12-week attachment to the editorial department of a US publishing house or houses. The Fellowship will be awarded in 2002 for travel in 2003.

The Fellowship has among its aims.

- to offer recipients an opportunity to further develop specific editorial skills of benefit to themselves as well as to Australian publishing
- to familiarise Australian editors with US editorial and publishing practices, leading to a greater understanding of US markets for Australian books
- to recognise and reward editors for their contribution to Australian writing and publishing.

The successful applicant will be an Australia-based editor, working either in-house or freelance. They will be expected to have at least five years or equivalent editorial work experience in high-quality Australian fiction and non-fiction, in either adult or children's publishing. Experience should be at a senior level, and should include editorial functions such as

structural and development work on manuscripts with authors, or commission, substantive editing or copyediting of manuscripts.

Selection of the recipient is undertaken by a joint Australian Publishers Association-Literature Board selection panel.

Closing date for applications is Friday, 6 September 2002.

Application forms and guidelines are available from Janet McGaw, Administrator, Australian Publishers Association, 60/89 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW 2007; phone: (02) 9281 9788; email: janet.mcgaw@publishers.asn.au.

Worst analogies by high school students

These are some of the winners from the 'worst analogies ever written in a high school essay' contest in the *Washington Post* Style Invitational:

He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and *Jeopardy* comes on at 7 p.m. instead of 7.30. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

She caught your eye like one of those pointy hook latches that used to dangle from screen doors and would

fly up whenever you banged the door open again. (Rich Murphy, Fairfax Station)

Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Her eyes were like two brown circles with big black dots in the center. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Her date was pleasant enough, but she knew that if her life was a movie this guy would be buried in the credits as something like 'Second Tall Man'. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The thunder was ominous-sounding, much like the sound of a thin sheet of metal being shaken backstage during the storm scene in a play. (Barbara Fetherolf, Alexandria)

They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

Eventually, the Australian Consumers' Association, which publishes *Choice*, changed its structure and eliminated the position of managing editor, so I was made redundant. That launched me on a freelance career, without really choosing it. I waited to see what would happen, and work started to come in.

One of the first things I did was to join the Society of Editors. Two of my main streams of work have come through the society. There are other connections. An environmental consultant I worked with at *Choice* knew what an editor could add, so when I became freelance I worked with her on a couple of projects, including a handbook on packaging and the environment, and a workbook on energy efficiency for local councils. My role was to make the thing work as a publication rather than just a collection of information.

Freelancing has always been an ideal of mine, to work in my own space and at my own pace—although I still have relationships with people and I still feel part of teams. It suits some people and it doesn't suit others. My life is much more integrated now. I get my washing done and I pay the bills, because you fit that into the spaces, the moments when you're thinking about something. But the biggest problem is making blocks of time

for yourself. It's hard to take a holiday. There's never a right time; even taking weekends off is hard.

This talent for empathy—the ability to get inside the author's head, and also to represent the reader to the author—is one of the most important attributes of an editor.

There's always a bit of a dance, initially, with a client, when you don't know what they expect of you and they don't know what's going to come back. You need to develop a psychology of interaction with each writer. In a book I've done every couple of years for the Australian Film Commission, there are four or five essays, analytical pieces from various writers, some of whom are journalists, others analysts or consult-

ants. It's interesting the difference in editing them. Some know what a sub does, so that when you query something, you're not offending them. Others are very suspicious. I've had situations, and I'm sure this is not uncommon, where you have quite a hostile author initially, and in the process of resolving the queries you become dead buddies. There's an intimacy that's created when they see you're not trying to impose your view; you're trying to see what they really mean and make sure it's clear to the reader.

This talent for empathy—the ability to get inside the author's head, and also to represent the reader to the author—is one of the most important attributes of an editor. But interestingly, it may also have something to do with the public 'invisibility' of the profession.

An individual client may—and often does—perceive the value of the work of an individual editor, but there's a dissonance between the individual relationship and the image of the profession as a whole. We're part of the conduit, we're not part of the creation or the output. The act of creation for the editor is integrated completely, especially when it works. When it all sits right, you disappear. Nobody ever sees what you started with.

Many people have no notion of what an editor does, or a very limited notion. It's the term you put on your tax return, it's the accepted name for the kinds of things we do, but maybe it needs reconceptualising. I sometimes call myself an information designer rather than an editor now, because it seems to have more of the flavour of the variation in what I do, what I think I've always done.

I suppose that's where the accreditation issue comes in. Having to prove you have a certain level of skills and knowledge in order to call yourself a member of the editing profession also has the effect of redefining the profession itself. The trickiest problem, I've always felt, with accreditation is that the less easily articulated stuff is more fundamental to the editing process than it is to many other professions. I don't think that this is a reason for not proceeding, but it's not going to be the end of the task of making the profession more valued and 'visible'.

Not so trivial matters for editors

The following items are from the Mantex Newsletter, a monthly online publication about information design and related subjects:

Computer menace

There is a very annoying virus doing the rounds. It creates mayhem with email, and sends out messages with *forged* TO and FROM addresses.

It is called K*1*e*z [without the asterisks] and comes via empty emails or messages which claim to be sending you something.

So don't start getting annoyed with people who you may or may not know who appear to send you messages saying 'I hope you like this program'. Just delete the message, and get yourself the FREE cleaning software at the following address (and keep the URL all on one line):

http://www.norman.com/virus_info/w32_klez_f_mm.shtml

Free Spelling checker

Microsoft Word comes with a spell-checker, and that's handy when you're typing a document. But what if you don't use the world's most annoying software program? Quick Speller v3.0 works all by itself. So, if you're typing a letter to your auntie in Notepad and you can't remember how to spell 'antediluvian', this will help you.

<http://www.pseudoware.com/speller/qspell3.zip>

To subscribe

New subscribers should register at the following address:

<http://www.mantex.co.uk/newslet.htm>

Free back issues are available at:

<http://www.mantex.co.uk/news/archive.htm>

Living language or just a wierd word?

INTERROBANG: A combined exclamation mark and question mark.

This punctuation mark is not yet standard, and probably never will be. It was invented in 1962 through the actions of Martin Speckter, head of a New York advertising agency. He felt that advertising people needed a mark that combined a question with a shout, that mixture any parent produces at stressful moments: 'You did WHAT?!'

His idea was to provide a marker for the rhetorical questions so much favoured by advertising copywriters. He asked readers of his magazine *Type Talks* to suggest a name for the character, and

chose *interrobang* from among the resulting entries. It combined *interrogation*, for the question mark, with *bang*, an old printer's term for the exclamation mark, a usage since taken over into computing (along with *pling* and *shriek* from other sources). Alas, though *interrobang* received some attention at first, it has never caught on, though for a brief period in the 1960s it was added to a few typewriter keyboards. However, it is not dead: its name appears in a couple of American dictionaries, it is in one Windows symbol font I know of, and it is also in the Unicode character set.



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See also <http://www.csfwg.org/archive/news/2002/02/interrobang/>

Alan Walker

continued from page 3

main conference. There have been no regular workshops that I'm aware of, but the Society of Editors (NSW) has sometimes organised training of this sort.

I'd like to get an appreciation of what you consider to be required to become a reasonably competent indexer. I'm asking this in reference to a comment made to me in the USA about adding 'another string to one's bow'. Is this preposterous?

Not at all. An experienced editor has a great deal of the background that is required to be a good indexer. I think it's a matter of learning techniques rather than new skills, and a lot of editors who have come to the courses that Michael Wyatt and I run have ended up doing quite a lot of indexing. They're overlapping occupations, overlapping skills. I'd say an experienced editor would need a short course, some reading and some practice.

When I became an indexer, there weren't any specialised courses. Earlier, when I was taught librarianship, the course included the theory of indexing, which stood me in good stead. I read a couple of good books and by the time I'd done about my fourth or fifth book index, I thought I was doing all right.

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

Carolyne Bruyn transcribed and Merry Pearson edited Alan Walker's talk.

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007; Voicemail: (02) 9294 4999
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/socednsw/>

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. 2002 fees are \$50 for new members (\$30 if joining after 30 June) and \$45 for renewals.

For a membership application form, phone (02) 9294 4999, write to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, or download an application from the society's website at <http://www.users.bigpond.com/socednsw/>

Blue Pencil

The society's newsletter, *Blue Pencil*, is published monthly, except for a combined January/February issue. Your comments and contributions are welcome. Mail them to the Editor, *Blue Pencil*, Society of Editors (NSW) Inc., PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007. Deadline for the September issue is Monday, 12 August.

Advertising rates:

Full page, \$150; half page, \$80 (horizontal only); one-third page, \$50 (vertical or horizontal); quarter page \$40 (horizontal only); sixth page, \$30 (half of one column). Inserts: \$75 per hundred for DL-sized or A4 pre-folded to DL size. Circulation: approximately 350.

Listing in the Editorial Services Directory

Listing costs \$40 and is available only to members of the society. The fee covers listing in both print and online versions. The online version is updated every three months. New entries should be submitted in .rtf format, using a template available from Cathy Gray at cgray@mpx.com.au. Updates can be made to contact details only for existing entries. Deadline for the next update is 30 September 2002. Contact Cathy for more information. A new print edition is due to be published in 2003.

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.

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NOTICE BOARD

Events

Free ticket offer

The Griffin Theatre Company presents the world premiere of *Presence*, by Patrick Van Der Werf, joint winner of the 2002 Griffin Award. Previews 5, 6, 8 and 9 July; Season 11 July–3 August. Tuesday 6.30 p.m.; Wednesday–Saturday 8 p.m.; Matinees, Saturday 2 p.m. and Wednesday 11 a.m.

Call the box office and mention Gleebooks special offer to purchase an in-season discount. For information about Gleebook events, contact Michael Campbell on: 9565 4321 or email mc@myplace.net.au.

NSW Writers' Centre

<http://www.nswwriterscentre.org.au>

Grammar Refresher: improve your writing through simple grammatical techniques with Charlotte Clutterbuck.

Saturday, 24 August, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. NSW Writers' Centre members \$60; members' concession \$50; non members \$90. Bring writing materials and lunch.

Call (02) 9555 9757, or email nswwc@ozemail.com.au for information.

Conferences

Society of Indexers Conference

The Cotswold Wayzgoose, taking the publishing process as its theme, Cheltenham, UK, 16–17 August.

Australian Society of Archivists

Annual Conference 2002, 21 & 22 August.

Useful websites

<http://cpd.sistm.unsw.edu.au/>—continuing professional education at the University of NSW

<http://www.nswwriterscentre.org.au/>—NSW Writers' Centre

<http://www.varuna.com.au/>—Varuna, a writer's centre in the Blue Mountains

<http://www.asauthors.org/>—Australian Society of Authors

<http://aussi.org/>—Australian Society of Indexers

<http://www.gleebooks.com.au/>—Gleebooks, an independent book store

<http://idun.itsc.adfa.edu.au/asec/hoba.html>—Australian Scholarly Editions Centre

<http://www.cmiiw.com/mistakes.htm>—Correct Me If I'm Wrong, editorial suggestions and ideas

http://www.kokedit.com/what_is_a_copyeditor.htm—one outline of what is a copyeditor

<http://www.editorium.com/>—Editorium, useful suggestions and Word fixits for editors

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_proof.html—a site with proofreading strategies

<http://www.cpuidle.de/edition.htm>—the complete edition of Murphy's Laws

<http://www.worldwidewords.org/>—World Wide Words.

A list of new members will be published in the September edition of *Blue Pencil*