

Blue Pencil

Newsletter of
The Society
of Editors
(NSW) Inc.

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Dictionaries and language communities

In October Sue Butler, publisher of the Macquarie Dictionary and former society president, described how dictionaries record the differences between English-language communities. As this edited report shows, Sue included lively examples of writing from England in the 1700s, as well as modern Australia and Singapore. Those who attended the meeting were delighted by the opportunity to touch an eighteenth-century dictionary and to receive a year's subscription to the Macquarie Dictionary Online.

We are all familiar with the role of the dictionary as a reference on language. The dictionary has a larger role as a document of the language of a particular language community existing in a particular place at a particular time.

In 1985 the Macquarie Dictionary conducted a survey of its users through the newsletter of the *Macquarie Dictionary Society*. Of course the people surveyed were hardcore users of the dictionary, but even so the results were interesting and indicative of the general attitude.

The most common reason for looking up a dictionary is to find out the meaning of a word. The next-most common reason is to establish the spelling. After that come etymology, pronunciation and grammar in declining order of importance.

The fact that some of these reasons have low scores is not indicative of their importance or unimportance. You

might consult the dictionary but once a year on an etymology, but you are grateful for that information when you need it.

At this basic level of providing information about language the aim of a dictionary is to meet the needs of the

'It paints a picture of who we are, what our values are, what our history has been.'

user, which is why there are so many different kinds of dictionaries—specialist dictionaries, learners' dictionaries, children's dictionaries, and so on.

It is interesting that despite the many shapes and forms of the realised dictionary we still look things up in 'the dictionary' as if intuitively we feel that each one of these dictionaries is

an access to the complete document of our language. At this level of use the dictionary is consulted as a book that tells the reader what to do, although these days all dictionaries aim to tell their users 'what is' rather than overtly to instruct them on 'what is best'.

However, if the information in the dictionary is detailed and accurate, if the dictionary gets it right, then it is a small but significant step to that function of an authority. Unless you are a rugged individualist you are likely to fall in line with what your language community deems to be acceptable.

The dictionary's primary aim, however, is to be the record of the language of a particular community. It paints a picture of who we are, what our values are, what our history has been. If the dictionary is authentic in all its detail, then the picture is true.

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 6 February 2007

Children's books and the Australian market

The dynamic and highly experienced speaker Mark Macleod will discuss working with writers and illustrators on children's books in Australia.

Mark McLeod is well known as a lecturer and as a radio and television presenter on *the Midday Show* and other programs. He was Children's Publishing Director at Random House Australia and a publisher with his own name imprint at Hodder Headline. A former president of the Children's Book Council of Australia, he now works as a freelance editor and speaker.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, 6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. Drinks and light refreshments provided. \$15 for members; \$20 for non-members and those who do not RSVP; \$7 for holders of a current concession card.

Please RSVP to (02) 9294 4999 (voicemail) or the email address <editorbruce@optusnet.com.au> by Friday, 2 February 2007.

March meeting: The AGM – Tuesday, 6 March 2007

Sometimes this picture is easier to see with other dictionaries from other times and places than it is to see with a contemporary dictionary.

Take any page of Nathan Bailey's dictionary, *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1727), and you learn fascinating snippets of information about the world of the early 1700s in England.

By chance, I stumbled on the entry for bordello—an entry remarkable for its length. Nathan begins by giving the old address—'on the South Bank of the River of Thames, Westwards of the Bridge and next to the Bear-garden'—and then gives the rules laid down by an Act of Parliament in the reign of Henry II for the owner of the bordello. They seem designed to protect the women—'That no single Woman should be kept against her Will. That no single Woman take money to lie with any, but she may lie with him till the morrow'—and to protect decency—'That they should not receive any Woman of Religion or any Man's Wife'—and health.

Take Bailey's view of politics. The words 'democracy' and 'republic' are lacking; 'king' is minimally defined; and 'parliament' a little more warmly described; but the astonishing entries are those for a 'knight' and 'a gentleman', which are lengthy and list the rights of those who had achieved such status.

Dictionaries reveal the enthusiasms of their authors, in this case towards classical learning. Nathan justifies this in his preface by pointing out that 'it is so common among our modern Poets to intersperse the Grecian and Roman Theology, Mythology, etc. in their Works, an Unacquaintance with which renders their Writings either obscure or at least less intelligible to the Readers', that he has felt compelled to bung them all in.

An example of this sort of thing is the long entry at 'sacrifice' which reads like a cross between a recipe book and a book of etiquette.

'First take your sacrificial beast. Then mix a small quantity of salt and meal. Then taste the wine. Pour the rest between the horns of the beast and pulling a few hairs from the place, throw them into the fire. Then slay the beast by knocking him down or cutting his throat. Then with a long knife, turn the bowels up and down. Under no circumstances touch with the

hands.' I won't go on but Nathan did. 'Burning the dead' is a good entry too. The language captured in the dictionary reflects the culture.

In the same way the various dictionaries today paint pictures of different communities within the umbrella of a shared English. And so the Oxford English Dictionary tells us about British English. Random House and Webster tell us about American English. Macquarie tells us about Australian English.

Compare the treatment of 'bush', a significant word in Australian English, given in an Australian, an English and an American dictionary.

We have yet to see dictionaries of other varieties of English, such as Singaporean and Malaysian English, or Philippine English, or Indian English, but they will come, and they will reflect different cultural concerns.

Their dictionaries will have productive items (like the word 'bush' in Australian English), which will produce sets of words not found in dictionaries of other varieties of English.

'Tay reacts badly to being told that he can't write the way he speaks as a Singaporean.'

Authenticity in a variety of English is assessed on accent, lexicon and usage. We are finely attuned in both listening and reading to all the minutiae of these features and we know, even without being able to analyse in detail why we know, when our own variety is captured accurately and when it is not. In this process the dictionary that records a particular variety acts as the writer's friend. It gives writers the freedom to choose the words that are right for them and true to their place and time. The writer can set high store on authenticity without being afraid of losing intelligibility.

To show you how this works I thought I would look at a few examples—one from a writer in Singaporean English who is not supported by a dictionary, and one from a writer in American English who is.

Simon Tay, author of *Stand Alone* (1991) is a Singaporean poet and writer who has struggled with the need to break from the British English tradition in

which he was taught in order to express himself authentically as a Singaporean. He finds that he is up against anxious editors who argue that in doing so he loses international intelligibility, (*Words in a Cultural Context*, 1992).

For example, he fought with the editor of his short story over the use of the word 'horn'. In Singapore this is a verb as well as a noun, as in 'I horned them loud and long' (rather than 'I blared my horn loud and long'). Tay reacts badly to being told that he can't write the way he speaks as a Singaporean. This is but one item in a wide range that gives Singaporean English its distinctive flavour. Some of these items are now listed in the *Macquarie Dictionary*, indicating that dictionary's interest in the Englishes of our near neighbours.

Compare Simon Tay with all his difficulties with author Annie Proulx writing *The Shipping News* (1993). This book is full of dialect of Nova Scotia—words like crenshaw, watch cap, reel footing, sunkeners and tickle.

Does Annie Proulx have any problem with international intelligibility? Not in the least, because the dialect she writes in is well covered in American dictionaries. Most of the time readers wouldn't bother to look things up—the flow of the writing carries them along, but if they did want to stop and take the trouble to find out exactly what a crenshaw is, they could.

The American regionalisms are just as obscure to the international market as the Singaporeanisms, but the existence of the dictionary on the one hand resolves the problem whereas the absence of the dictionary on the other gives rise to it.

The author of a Singaporean, Malaysian or Philippine novel has a much tougher battle. The fault lies not in the regional variety but in the dictionaries whose function in life is to record varieties of English—so that we can understand the subtleties of each other's language, the inevitable subtleties that arise from a particular community living in a particular place and having a shared culture and history as a common reference. For functional communication we can retreat to common ground but for an expression of what is most dynamic, most central and most local in a particular culture we must use the full resources of each variety.

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Membership renewal

Your membership renewal is now due. You should have received a renewal notice; if not please email Bruce Howarth at <editorbruce@optusnet.com.au>.

Please return your subscription promptly so that you can continue to receive the benefits of membership.

As a special bonus, this year all members who renew by 28 February 2007 and new members will receive a voucher to attend one regular monthly meeting for free. Vouchers and more details will be sent out with your receipt. Vouchers do not apply to dinner meetings (or to the free AGM).

We will continue to offer our traditional services to members:

- **a program of lively monthly meetings with good food and wine, interesting speakers and opportunities for networking**
- **quality, affordable professional development**
- **your monthly *Blue Pencil* newsletter**
- **the editor's job market—notification by email of editing jobs**
- **the opportunity to contribute to our national task of improving the professionalism and status of editors in Australia.**

You can transfer to associate membership for a saving of \$20, or you can remain an ordinary member and continue to advertise in our *Editorial Services Directory*. Transfers to professional grade will be offered separately, opening in January 2007 (see page 4 for details).

We look forward to seeing you in 2007.

Tiered membership system

The newly introduced tiered membership system will work as follows.

Categories

This membership year (2007) the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. will offer current and new members the option of three categories:

1. Remaining an ordinary member at the current fee (\$70/75) with the current entitlements;
2. Becoming a professional editor member at the current ordinary fee with the current ordinary entitlements, provided you have two years experience as a professional editor and can supply two letters confirming your experience; or
3. Becoming an associate member at a reduced fee (\$50) with reduced entitlements (an associate member cannot vote at an election, cannot become an office bearer and cannot be listed in the *Editorial Services Directory*).

Phasing in a new system

Within four years (before January 2011) all ordinary members will be asked to choose either:

1. Professional editor member status; or
2. Associate member status.

Four years should be sufficient time for those seeking professional status to gain professional experience if they do not already have it.

Experience

Professional editor members must have at least two years in-house experience as an editor or the equivalent freelance or part-time experience. For example, if you worked half-time as an editor for four years (part-time or freelance) then that would be an acceptable equivalent to two years full-time work as an in-house editor. Professional experience must be in a paid editing role.

As professional members may have had career breaks, there is no limit on how long ago the professional editing experience was obtained. Professional editor members will be asked to provide two letters that can be checked by a subcommittee appointed for this purpose. The subcommittee will simply confirm the statements supplied by the third parties. The letters can just be a statement of the years of experience in an editorial role. See the Professional Experience flyer (which will be made available on the website) for more information about requirements.

Corporate Associates

A new category of Corporate Associates is also available. Publishing companies and other businesses and organisations that support the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.'s aims can become Corporate Associates. For an annual fee of \$300, Corporate Associates of the society will receive five copies of *Blue Pencil* each month and one copy of the *Editorial Services Directory*, five free admissions to each monthly meeting and two free admissions to special events, such as the Christmas dinner. The usual member rates on professional development courses and workshops will apply to Corporate Associates for up to five attendees.

The Committee

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

IPed notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors (formerly known as CASE),

December 2006

The IPed website <iped-editors.org> is gradually adding more items and developing more functions, thanks to the hard work of our expert web manager Mike Purdy. Take a tour to catch up with IPed's achievements and recent initiatives.

An important document on the website describes IPed's current structure and functions and lists the members of the Interim Council and the various working groups: in time, of course, this outline will be replaced by a formal constitution agreed on by members nationwide. Under the heading Accreditation there are nearly a dozen items; the Accreditation Board is working on several more, which will be posted as soon as the drafts are agreed. The site also provides *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* and the policy on editing theses developed jointly by IPed and the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the site is its interactive capability, which enables editors across the country to join in discussions on matters affecting our profession. EditorsForum is a public space in which anyone may post a question or a comment. At present it contains a brief discussion on methods of strengthening our societies; more contributions on this and other topics would be welcome. (The list comma, anyone?)

Another forum is Edwiki, which enables registered users to edit and comment on the documents it contains. At present these include a paper on setting up the national organisation of editors, and a questionnaire on the revisions to *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. It's easy to register, and we urge you to take part in these exciting developments that can defeat the tyranny of distance and bring editors together in a national conversation.

The website also hosts also several forums with restricted access, which enable the Interim Council and the various working groups to perform their functions and to collaborate in drafting documents. This frees them from administrivia such as organising email, filing agendas and minutes, and keeping track of successive drafts. As IPed volunteers develop expertise with these interactive methods, their workload will be reduced and their productivity will improve.

The website will keep you in touch with national activities until the next issue of IPed Notes appears in your society's newsletter (March *Blue Pencil*) in 2007.

Janet Mackenzie
Liaison Officer

The Editor's Job Market

The Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. offers publishers and other individuals or companies the opportunity to advertise Positions Vacant, by email, free of charge. You can reach the editors of New South Wales by using this free service to our members.

● **Publishers: please send us your ad as a PDF or Word document and we will distribute it by email to our members. You are assured of wide distribution among your target audience.**

● **Members: please supply or update your email address so that the society can email you notices of jobs for editors.**

We welcome advertisements for all editorial roles from trainee to publisher, for permanent, temporary or freelance jobs.

**Email Bruce Howarth:
<editorbruce@optusnet.com.au>**

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The author of the *Shipping News* probably had little to fear from an editor or publisher in that there is a general tendency to accept American English and all its regionalisms.

Some writers use localism very sparingly—perhaps confining it to dialogue. Others wallow in it.

A writer like Les Murray need never fear that *Fredy Neptune* (1998), will not be understood while the *Macquarie* has entries for items such as 'shirty', meaning cross; and the plural form of you. Sometimes the dictionary has to scramble to keep up. I was astonished to find we didn't have 'to look sideways at someone'—a very difficult phrase to define—which appeared in *Fredy Neptune*.

But a writer using Malaysian English, such as Malike Shahnnon Ahmad in *No Harvest But A Thorn* (1991), has obviously gone beyond the bonds that a nervous editor will tolerate. The

publisher's solution here is the footnote at the bottom of the page. 'Menerong' (menderong) is footnoted, unlike 'parang', 'rice barn' and 'areca nut', because it is not in any dictionary. In the case of 'fish trap', more commonly called a 'kedai' in Malaysian English, the solution is translation.

Jessica Hagedorn, Philippine writer, and author of *Dog eaters* (1990), has written confidently in Philippine English and seems to have got away with it. Although again there is no dictionary yet that will back her up.

This is the kind of lexicon we need to expect from writers in Malaysia, Philippines and Hong Kong.

The problem for all these writers is the one described by Chris Wallace-Crabbe (*Melbourne or the Bush*, 1974) in relation to Australian English—that authority does not come easily when we are escaping a colonial past.

The accuracy with which our language reflects our culture is the achievement of the writers within the language community. In creating texts they are, as Simon Tay said, bending and reshaping the language so that it is capable of authentic expression of our culture. This is not the work of just one writer, although individuals can have more or less influence on the process, but it is the collective triumph of those who give voice to the perceptions and imaginings within which we all share and shape our lives.

Sue Butler is a former president of our society and was publisher of the second, third, and fourth editions of The Macquarie Dictionary.

For more details about the revised Macquarie Dictionary Online visit <www.macquariedictionary.com.au>.

The APA Book Design Awards, closing date 17 January

The Australian Publishers Association's Book Design Awards, held in May, recognise excellence and innovation in contemporary Australian book design. Entries for the 55th Book Design Awards close on 17 January 2007. Visit the website <www.publishers.asn.au> for entry details and registration forms or email <dee.read@publishers.asn.au>.

Unwin Trust UK – Australian Fellowship, closing date 31 January

Applications are now invited for the 2007 Unwin Trust Fellowship, which enables a member of the Australian book trade to visit the UK for up to three months. All working in Australian bookselling and publishing are eligible. Applicants are asked to put together a proposal to carry out a project which will both enhance their own understanding of the UK book trade and will provide a means to increase understanding of each market by the other.

It is envisaged that the successful candidate will have at least three years' experience in the book industry, and a clear view as to how the experience gained from the Fellowship will be of benefit to their career. They should also expect both to participate in a number of workshops/seminars on their return, and to take part in briefings in Australia if appropriate.

The judges, all actively involved in the Australian book trade, will be looking for original and constructive proposals, and applicants should also provide a timetable and approximate budget. It is expected that time spent in the UK will be between two and three months and the Trust will provide funding for travel, accommodation etc up to £10,000.

NEW MEMBERS

Helen Kinny-Lewis

Lesley MacCulloch

Sean Mooney

The inaugural Fellowship was awarded in Australia to Lorien Kaye who visited the UK in 2003; the following year the Fellowship was offered to applicants from the UK wishing to travel to Australia and was awarded to Rebeka Cohen. Australian children's publisher Annabel Fleay was the recipient of the 2005 fellowship and visited the UK. Hannah Westland is the first literary agent to win the award and she visited Australia in late 2006 to research the Australian market.

A detailed career CV should be provided, along with at least two written references. Appropriate confirmation from employers that sufficient leave of absence will be granted should be provided. Please apply in writing to Maree McCaskill, Australian Publishers Association, 60/89 Jones Street Ultimo NSW 2007. Completed applications must be received by 31 January 2007.

The Unwin Charitable Trust actively supports book-related projects in the UK. It owns Book House in London which is home to the Publishers Training Centre and Book Trust.

Freelancers do lunch, 12 February 2007

The next freelancers' lunch will be held at noon on Monday, 12 February 2007. The venue is the Glenmore Hotel (upstairs on the rooftop if the weather is good), at 96 Cumberland Street, The Rocks. Mains cost about \$13 to \$18. The invitation to lunch is cordially extended to other freelancers, such as indexers, who work in the publishing industry. There is no need to RSVP. See you there!

National Editors Conference, 9 to 12 May

The third National Editors Conference will be held in Hobart from 9 to 12 May 2007 at the Wrest Point Convention Centre. The conference's three strands are: 'From inspiration to publication'; 'Science and education editing'; and 'Corporate and public sector editing'. For further information, contact <conference@tas-editors.org.au>.

The Australian Picture and Copyright Association launched

The Australian Picture and Copyright Association (APACA) for picture research and copyright clearance professionals has been launched in Victoria. APACA has been formed by experienced publishing industry professionals who recognise the need to provide support, training and advice to people responsible for picture research and copyright clearance in publishing and related industries.

Increased litigation and growing legal emphasis on the need to protect copyright, and the need for practising professionals to keep up to date with current copyright law, have been key drivers for the establishment of APACA.

'Blink and you'll miss it' amendments to the Copyright Act, recently put before the Senate, and scheduled to be made law in early 2007, are a pertinent reminder of how necessary it is to keep abreast of copyright changes. The structure of the industry is changing too, as almost weekly one photo library or another is bought out by a competitor. APACA is positioning itself as a conduit for the communication and discussion of such changes.

APACA aims to bring together professionals to build a network of best practice, enhance the industry standing and value of its practitioners, and create scope for career development.

APACA encourages interested professionals to join and take up membership. For further information visit <www.apaca.org.au> or email <info@apaca.org.au>.

Walkley Award for best non-fiction book shortlist announced

The winner of the Walkley Award for best non-fiction book is *Packer's Lunch* by Neil Chenoweth (Allen & Unwin). Chenoweth details the network wars played out between a group of Sydney power players, and the rise and fall of the restaurants that marked the changing borders of their turf war.



Christmas party notes

Once again society members celebrated the festive season and the end of the calendar year with a wonderful dinner.

Perama restaurant provided an ample and very tasty Greek banquet and the society supplied an excellent array of wines to help the conversation flow.

The service at the restaurant was friendly and of a standard to match the high-quality food.

Big thanks go to Terry Johnston for choosing the venue and organising the drinks for the evening.

The much treasured Julie Stanton put in a great deal of work to arrange the decorations and prizes for the evening and her efforts were, once again, greatly appreciated.

It was a fabulous evening and no doubt those who were at the party will be eager to make their earlybird booking for next Christmas.

See you there!

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

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<www.editorsnsw.com>.

Blue Pencil

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Your comments and contributions are welcome. Mail them to the Editor, *Blue Pencil*, Society of Editors (NSW) Inc., PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007, or email Catherine Etteridge at <cje_editing@hotmail.com>.

Copy deadline for the March issue is Tuesday, 23 January 2007

The views expressed in the articles and letters, or the material contained in any advertisement or insert, are those of individual authors, not of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

Advertising rates

Full page, \$375; half page, \$200 (horizontal only); one-third page, \$125 (vertical or horizontal); quarter page \$100 (horizontal only); one-sixth page, \$75 (half of one column). Inserts: \$200 per hundred for DL-sized or A4 pre-folded to DL size. Circulation: approximately 375. Please note that the committee reserves the right to decide whether advertisements are appropriate for this newsletter.

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. 2006 fees are \$75 for new members (\$45 if joining after 31 May) and \$70 for renewals.

To obtain a membership application form, phone (02) 9294 4999 or write to PO Box 254, Broadway NSW 2007. You can also download an application form from the society's website at <www.editorsnsw.com>.

Listing in the *Editorial Services Directory*

The society's *Editorial Services Directory* is available online at <www.editorsnsw.com/esd/>. New listings and updates can be added quarterly as follows:

- online only: July (deadline 30 June); October (deadline 30 September)
 - print and online: January (deadline 31 December); April (deadline 31 March).
- The cost is \$40 per year (\$20 for new listings received from April to September) in addition to the fee for membership of the society. New listings should be submitted using a template available from Cathy Gray at <cgray@mpx.com.au>.

Committee meetings

All members are welcome to attend the society's committee meetings, generally held each month. Please contact a committee member for details if you wish to attend the next meeting.

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Catering officer: position vacant

Copy deadline for the March issue of
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Tuesday, 23 January 2007

Professional development

'Getting' the Book: an insight into creative writing

Writer Inez Baranay says: 'A good editor is someone who GETS the whole of the book. A good editor is a writer's angel.' In this workshop you will discuss elements of writing; build a character; give it dialogue; and look at various narrative viewpoints. By being a writer for a day, the editor will gain an understanding of how these elements work together for strong, effective writing. It will help you 'GET' the book.

Date: Saturday, 24 February 2007

Presenter: Glenda Guest

Venue: City Tattersalls Club

Cost: \$195 for society members, \$245 for non-members

Grammar for Editors

Presenter: Pam Peters

Date: Saturday, 14 July 2007

Indexing for Editors

Presenter: Glenda Browne

Date: TBA

Effective Writing: structure, style, and plain English

Date: TBA

Presenter: Pauline Waugh

Regional members living more than 200 km from Sydney may receive a 40 per cent discount on the cost of the society's workshops (excluding computer-based workshops).

For more information about the society's workshops, please email Pauline Waugh at

<pauline.waugh@corporatecommunication.com.au>.

Call for contributions

Have you been to an interesting conference or event? We welcome your contributions to

Blue Pencil.

We would like to publish your articles, book reviews or letters.

Please email the editor at
<cje_editing@hotmail.com>.

2011 conference

The New South Wales society will host the 2011 national editors' conference. A special conference committee, with Pam Peters as convenor, has been set up to focus on this major event. If you would like to be a volunteer or have any suggestions for the Sydney conference please send comments to: '2011 conference in Sydney', care of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.