

Researching, writing and publishing history—the basics

Keith Sutton's home in Petersham was the venue for the society's February meeting. Keith reviewed the discovery and restoration of a large mural in the front room. Now fully uncovered and restored, this mural (comprising twenty-eight images) seems to be a remarkable item of cultural and historical importance.

According to Marrickville Council's Archivist, 36 Terminus St was built in 1885. The 1888 Sands Directory shows the first commercial use of No 36 as 'refreshment rooms'. The large front room had various functions over the years, including as a general store (shop). In 1961 the property was converted to a residence.

In the last twenty years or so the home fell into disrepair. When Keith and his son, Iain, bought the property in early 1997, it was a 'renovator's delight'. Among other things, there was extensive water and termite damage. Sheets of paintwork were peeling off walls, and, ironically enough, it was this extensive damage which led to the mural's discovery.

In 1999 a mate of theirs, Mike Mackay, was helping with renovations. Mike was scraping loose paint off a wall when he discovered the first image (a face). The image turned out to be that of General Charles Gordon (killed in Sudan in 1885). Over time, a few more images or part images were revealed.

Funding the mural's restoration

After confirmation that the mural at least partly related to the Sudan War of 1885, Keith successfully submitted the mural for listing on the Australian Government's Register of the National Estate. He also applied to the Government's Department of the Environment and Heritage for restoration funds. In November 2002 Keith received notification that his

third application had been successful. International Conservation Services (ICS) was chosen as conservator and is Official Conservator to the National Trust (New South Wales Division). Conservation began in May 2003 and was completed in about four weeks.

Conservation techniques

Water was sprayed onto the wall to soften paint and wallpaper. Chemicals were used, when necessary, to remove paint. It is merciful that the first owner to cover the mural (whoever it was) did so with wallpaper first. This was followed, over the years, by more wallpaper and seven layers of paint.

After the basic images were uncovered, the conservators retouched the images as necessary, taking care

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 4 May 2004

The monstrous regiment of convention

Dr Robert Eagleson

How can you help rid the community of obfuscation?

Dr Eagleson's talk draws on his many years of experience as an advocate of plain English. He believes editors and writers need to break free from conventions which can obscure meaning. From 1974 he was heavily involved in the plain English movement, helping organise and convert legal and technical documents into more comprehensible versions.

Dr Eagleson was Associate Professor of Modern English Language, University of Sydney until 1991.

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 9294 4999 (voicemail) or <brhed@pnc.com.au>(email) by Friday 30 April. Next Meeting: Tuesday, 1 June.**



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not to 'assume' the detail. There were a couple of exceptions; for example, an elbow was 'restored'. Otherwise, the conservators simply accentuated, where required, what was already there.

During the years, owners had changed doorways and had removed plaster to make 'features' of underlying brick-work. Many images have been destroyed and there are several incomplete images.

The Sudan War

In 1885 the Australian (that is, Colonial) Government made what is understood to be the first commitment of Australian troops to a foreign conflict that is, before the Boer War. In 1881 the Egyptian Government-controlled Sudan was threatened by an indigenous rebellion.

In 1883, with British acquiescence, the Egyptian Government sent forces to crush the revolt, but the forces were routed.

General Charles Gordon, a British soldier, was sent to Khartoum in February 1884 to rescue trapped Egyptian garrisons, but the Mahdi's forces captured Khartoum in early 1885 and killed Gordon.

On 11 February 1885 news of Gordon's death reached Sydney. The next day a letter was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, suggesting that a New South Wales contingent be sent to Sudan to support proposed British intervention. Australian people had held Gordon in high regard and the Acting Colonial Secretary, William Bede Dalley, promptly offered a New South Wales contingent.

The contingent (750 men) left Sydney on 3 March 1885 amid great enthusiasm—there was a huge crowd at Circular Quay to farewell them.

At Manly, a boy named Ernest Laurence, then 8 years old, watched the troopships sail through Sydney Heads. He wrote a letter to Mr Dalley; and his father and he jointly contributed £25 to a 'Patriotic Fund'—'From a Little Boy at Manly (E Laurence)'.

On 7 March the letter and a reply from Dalley were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and attracted widespread interest and support. 'The Little Boy at Manly' became the subject of numerous cartoons by the *Bulletin's* Livingston Hopkins for years afterwards.

The New South Wales contingent participated in a few military actions in Sudan losing no men in battle, but nine men from illnesses. After completion of its mission, the contingent returned to Sydney in June 1885 and received a welcoming home parade.

During its Sudan skirmishes, the contingent captured a young goat, which became a well-known mascot of the New South Wales Regiment. The regiment bought a white Sudanese donkey, and brought it back to Sydney with the goat. Both became the subject of cartoons, demonstrating the folly of colonial involvement.

In his book *The Rehearsal: Australians at war in the Sudan 1885*, Professor Ken Inglis notes that a cartoon by Hopkins, featuring the goat, (published in the *Bulletin* on 26 September-1885) accuses the government of lying about the cost of the campaign. That Hopkins cartoon is reproduced on Keith's wall.

While most colonists approved of, and were supportive of, the troop commitment, critics believed it was an expensive mission that brought back a goat and a donkey.

Reason for the mural's composition

Initial images uncovered strongly suggested that the mural was principally connected with Sudan, but later images clearly show that the artist was reflecting social or political concerns of the times. Ned Kelly is an obvious example.

A soldier surrounded by a wreath is wearing two crosses, One cross apparently is the Maltese Cross; the other is the German Iron Cross.

An 'Oriental gentleman', complete with 'buck teeth' and pigtail, may represent the prejudices and fears of colonial Australians—the 'yellow hordes'.

Summary

The mural is *largely satirical*—images include a soldier sitting on a branch while sawing it off; a 'businessman' with a 'swelled head'; Loftus and his chook. (Lord Augustus Loftus was New South Wales Governor in 1885, and the story is that Loftus used to sell eggs from his Government House hens to supplement his income.)

Professor Inglis detects a strongly *anti-war sentiment* in some of the images—a type of 'war memorial'.



Mural images of soldier on branch and General Charles Gordon.

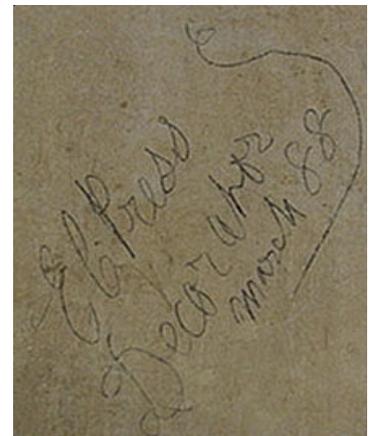
The *variety of images* clearly indicates that the artist was reflecting issues other than Sudan.

Who was the artist?

The artist's name was found in a corner. It reads (in longhand):

E C Press, Decorator, March 88

The identity of 'E C Press' is unknown. In his ongoing research, Keith has checked numerous sources including property ownership records, Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Marrickville Heritage Society.



AHC website entry

The Australian Heritage Council maintains the Register of the National Estate (RNE). The RNE's website entry for 36 Terminus St Petersham is named 'Terrace house with mural'. The current text and photos are out of date—partly because the entry was composed before conservation work began. To access the entry, go to <www.ahc.gov.au> and click on Register of the National Estate. Now click on Search the Register and type 101873 into the field called Place ID number.

Keith Sutton

Researching war memorials and honour boards

Angela Phippen from the Marrickville Heritage Society spoke to members at Keith Sutton's home. She writes about her experiences.

The Marrickville Heritage Society recently published a book on the war memorials and honour boards of St Peters Municipality, Sydney.

This involved locating and photographing them, transcribing the names and researching their construction. They ranged from impressive marble rolls in the former town hall to modest timber boards in churches or lodges. In most cases they recorded the names of those who enlisted, not only those who died. In the case of the World War I boards which constitute the greatest percentage, they were either constructed at the end of the war or during the war to recognise those who had enlisted and to encourage further enlistments.

Firstly I tried to locate 'the list', that is, the record of all boards that had been constructed in World War I and World War II in the local area to use as my checklist to verify I had found all of them. There is no such list. Their

construction was not co-ordinated by a central authority. They were created by the local community from local resources. Because of this one is afraid to commit to publication fearing that another board will be discovered behind a bedroom cupboard or stored beneath a stage in a church hall.

The names themselves, though impressively chiselled into marble and highlighted in gold or carefully copied onto timber boards, were not delivered from a central record authority but gleaned from the community.

The registration cards which were the basis for the municipal WWI roll are extant and provide a fascinating insight into the method of collecting names. Of most interest are the cards labelled 'Rejects'. These are the men whose names were proffered, but were rejected because they either never enlisted or their location in the Municipality at the time of their enlistment could not be verified.

There are errors on and inconsistencies between different boards which can come as a surprise to a researcher. It is best to think of them as historical documents, rather than monuments.

Some people feel uneasy about war memorials and honour boards for they believe they glorify war. I recognise people's unease. However, I am reminded of the origin of the word 'cenotaph', derived from the Greek, meaning 'empty tomb'. In many cases these rolls are a de facto headstone. The mothers and brothers who stood before them or ran their fingers across the names of their loved ones would never have had the expectation of visiting the vast war cemeteries in Europe and the Middle East to mourn at a graveside, if indeed, there were one.

For a local historian the study of local war memorials and honour boards is important because they are first and foremost 'local'.

Is PowerPoint bad for our mental health?

Edward R Tufte, *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*, Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press LLC, 2003, 28 pp., Essay available for download via <www.edwardtufte.com>

Edward Tufte has published three important books: *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, *Envisioning Information* and *Visual Explanation: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. He has been thinking about presenting and explaining statistical and other data for many years, so when he claims that PowerPoint is bad for our mental health, it seems wise to attempt to understand his arguments.

Early data projectors had very low resolutions, so a PowerPoint *modus operandi* developed that restricted each slide to minimal content: typically six lines of text with six words per line, about what first-grade readers have on a page. And of course, the characteristic nested bullet points and obligatory fluff took up space and cut the word count even further. He points out that a standard PowerPoint template 'signals every bullet's status in four or five different ways: by the order in

sequence, extent of indent, size of bullet, style of bullet, and size of type...'

Nowadays, resolutions are rather better, and more information can be presented per slide, but the old design recommendations still seem to prevail, and PowerPoint slides have some of the lowest information densities ever measured. Tufte shows how over-dependence on over-complicated, misleading PowerPoint slides contributed to the space shuttle Columbia disaster (although poor engineering, gung-ho attitudes and management reluctance to hear bad news from below were more important).

To compensate for this grimness, he offers a very entertaining parody showing how Lincoln could have used PowerPoint for the Gettysburg address (the parody can be seen at <www.norvig.com>). The perpetrator, Peter Norvig, created the slides quickly

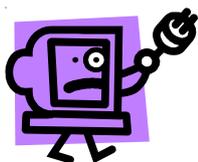
by using the 'AutoContent Wizard', a product named, as an article in the *New Yorker* put it, 'in outright mockery of its target customers'. Tufte claims that when PowerPoint is used as its makers apparently intended, the rate of information transfer from presenter to audience is close to zero.

What is to be done? Tufte considers that PowerPoint's principal useful function is to structure the spoken part of a presentation. If you do have some knowledge to impart, prepare a paper handout with a proper discussion (not simply copies of the slides), and useful tables and graphs, and give participants a copy. 'Thoughtfully planned handouts at your talk tell the audience that you are serious and precise; that you seek to leave traces and have consequences. And that you respect your audience.'



Bruce Howarth

MSWORD TIP OF THE MONTH



Assign shortcut keys to a command or other item

You can assign a shortcut key to a command, macro, font, AutoText entry, style, or a commonly used symbol.

1. On the **Tools** menu, click **Customize**.
2. Click **Keyboard**.
3. In the **Save changes in** box, click the current document name or template in which you want to save the shortcut key changes.
4. In the **Categories** box, click the category that contains the command or other item.
5. In the box to the right, click the name of the command or other item.

Any shortcut keys that are currently assigned appear in the **Current keys** box.

6. In the **Press new shortcut key** box, type the shortcut key combination you want to assign.
7. Click **Assign**.

Note The key combination CTRL+ALT+F8 is reserved for initiating keyboard programming on programmable keyboards, so you cannot assign this combination if you use a programmable keyboard.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members:

Josette Ackad
Deborah Bailey
Judith Baldwin
Anne Coyne
Nick Hand
Liz Hardy
Stephen Harvey
Pamela Jackson
Nina Lim
Justine Northcott
Dean Nottle
Lisa Schnellmann
Merilyn Wallace

What word is that?

A preposition is a difficult proposition

YUKOS is worrisome not so much because of its short-term macroeconomic fallout but because of how it called into question the property rights validity for Russian big business assets

My version:

YUKOS is worrisome not so much because of its short-term macroeconomic fallout but because of how it called into question the validity of property rights for Russian big business assets.

This illustrates how it's not always correct to eliminate the *of*-phrase when translating into English from other languages, by transforming the word following *of* into an adjective and placing it before the word preceding *of*.

In Russia, the expression must have been validity of property rights.

Translator learnt to take expressions like 'prices of oil' and say instead 'oil prices.'

He applied this rule here and it doesn't work.

Why doesn't it work?

This is a good one! Prepositions are really fraught for non-native speakers, and this is one of the murkier corners of a murky area.

Anyway: as I think Simon is aware, I'm not a great fan of Huddleston—I disagree with his position on several issues. (Please don't interpret that as arrogance on my part; linguistics is as faction-ridden as any other discipline!) More to the point, though, I think Jenny's authors need a different perspective. They're economists, not linguists or grammarians, so beating them over the head with an extract from a weighty grammar reference is not likely to help. Instead, I'll try to put something together that would work for specialists in other fields.

'Of' gets six pages in the OED. Given such complexity, how are we to decide on the problem cases in a way that's intelligible to non-grammarians? It all comes down to the fact that these pre-modifiers are being 'used as adjectives', but they aren't exactly comparable.

It seems to me that there are three general constructions where *of* can

be used in a more-or-less genitive sense:

1. Where it's equivalent to conventional genitive and can be represented by apostrophe-s, as in 'the tail of the dog' (= the dog's tail). Other examples: the child's toy, the woman's desk.

2. Where it's attributive and can be represented without the apostrophe-s, as in 'the price of oil' (= the oil price, or—conceivably, but improbably—oil's price). We prefer 'chair leg' to 'chair's leg' (though I'd have no problem with 'the table's legs need a coat of paint'). Other examples: the door handle, the computer screen—but never the child toy, the woman desk.

3. Where it's attributive and can't be represented other than in the 'of' construction, as in 'the validity of rights' (not= rights validity, and not= rights' validity). Other examples: the prevalence of an opinion, the venality of corruption.

What I think we're seeing here is this: The genitive noun 'dog' in case 1 is concrete and animate; 'oil' in case 2 is concrete and inanimate; 'rights' in case 3 is not concrete. The issue is not with the head noun, but with the modifier. We can sometimes use the apostrophe-s form for abstract genitive nouns, but then I think we're getting a little metaphorical, as in 'philosophy's consolations' or 'music's appeal'. I'd also say that constructions such as 'Islam's teachings' and 'Christianity's popularity' are verging on metaphorical; or perhaps codifying a belief system gives it a measure of concreteness.

This might not tell the whole story, but I think it will help.

Michael Lewis

IMPORTANT REMINDER

If you have not renewed your society membership, this is the last issue of *Blue Pencil* you will receive.

Please contact Cathy Gray, Membership Secretary at <cgray@mpx.com.au>



Book Review

Don Watson, *Death Sentence: the decay of public language*,

Sydney: Random House, 2003, 209 pp., ISBN 1740512065 Aus RRP: \$29.95

Death Sentence is a bible that was waiting to be written. In fewer than 200 action-packed pages, Don Watson entertains and educates us about the jargon, clichés, euphemisms, platitudes, tautologies, oxymorons, metaphors, similes, ‘weasel words’ and other mind-numbing verbiage that I like to label the weeds in the garden of good writing. In researching the book’s content, Don must have had a field day fossicking through the green acres of noxious weeds; he certainly had no shortage of material to draw on.

The book contains an introduction; four chapters; a glossary of 20 of the worst serially offending words and expressions, and some suggested alternatives for them; an acknowledgments section; and a bibliography. Don opens the introduction and each chapter with a quote or two that’s highly quotable, for better or worse. For example, for the third chapter, on p.81, he quotes George W. Bush: ‘We need to counter the shock wave of the evil-doer by having individual rate cuts accelerated and by thinking about tax rebates.’ Each chapter’s right-hand pages feature marginal columns of similarly quotable quotes that just keep on coming; on p.107, for example, we find ‘Men hide behind their clichés,’ from Eugene Ionesco’s *Notes and Counter Notes*. Don’s own insights, explanations and interpretations are also highly quotable, such as on p.107: ‘As public language, it [cliché-littered writing] is the equivalent of airbrushing.’

Three metaphors sprang to mind when I was trying to describe the book’s structure: ‘stream of consciousness’, ‘mandala’ and ‘the party that never ends’. Don takes an idea, subjects it to some free association, fleshes it out and more often than not returns to it at some point in the book. Germaine Greer reportedly wrote *The Female Eunuch* in one sitting, under the influence of a bottomless glass of white wine. I found myself wondering whether Don wrote *Death Sentence* in one go too, while downing a magnum of chardonnay as

opposed to Moselle!

The driving idea behind every phrase, clause and sentence he writes is a diamond. However, I feel that the book would have benefited from being organised into shorter, numbered and titled chapters to help the reader navigate the considerable amount of its themes, historical anecdotes, and expansion on ‘dead’ words and expressions. For example, the chapters could have been organised thematically along the lines of ‘Media’, ‘Marketing’, ‘Managerialism’, ‘Education’, ‘Technology’, ‘Politics’ and ‘Academia’.

Readers would also have been thankful for more paragraph breaks and some judiciously placed subheadings when a word or expression is first mentioned, such as ‘Commitment’ (p.38), ‘Enhance’ (p.39), ‘Aspirational’ (p.94), ‘Battlers’ (p.95), ‘Transparency’ (p.96) and ‘Hopefully’ (p.154). I also think the book is begging for an index, or at least a table of contents that included a list of major subheadings, and an extended glossary and list of suggested alternative terms.

On p.15, in his discussion about ‘writing of the kind [that] George Orwell said was tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated henhouse’, he asserts, ‘Grammar is not the problem. To work on the grammar is like treating a man’s dandruff when he has gangrene . . . You try surgery and when you’ve finished there’s more on the floor than on the table.’ I disagree with him on this point: I think that having exemplary grammar and punctuation skills and successfully performing surgery on a body of writing that’s ‘composed entirely of dead matter’ aren’t mutually exclusive.

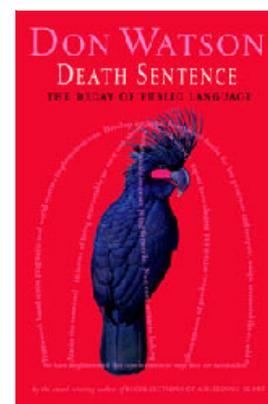
On p.154, Don states, ‘If people need to learn or recall the principles of grammar, they need only go to Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* or Fowler’s *Modern English Usage*.’ On p.163, he goes on to reveal some truths about his own education in rural Australia during what must have been the late 1950s and early 1960s: ‘As for grammar, women of unwavering

forbearance taught it as a component of the subject called English Expression. My memory, and the unsureness of my grammar, both tell me that it did not impress itself upon us greatly. . . That we lacked all motivation [to learn it] had something to do with puberty and sport. . .’

I found it refreshing to encounter this frankness and introspection about his ongoing struggle with his grammar and punctuation. However, I feel that both his writing in general and his improved, reworded versions of some of the worst examples of modern-day Newspeak would have benefited from some competent structural and copy editing. The lack of evidence that a second pair of eyes had been involved in ‘adding value’ to the book’s shaping and the author’s writing was, for an editor, a significant negative. On this point, I reacted similarly when wading through *The Whole Woman* by Germaine Greer (her again!) and Don’s previous, award-winning and much longer book *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating, PM*.

Were I asked to proffer only one piece of constructive criticism of *Death Sentence*, it would be that it could have been even better had a competent editor—one of those ‘women [or men] of unwavering forbearance’—been paid, and paid well, to apply the needle and thread of invisible mending to the rich fabric of Don’s exposé.

Deb Doyle



Insurance and the freelance editor

Do freelance editors need insurance? It seems that government agencies, in particular, are increasingly requiring this. Robyn Colman of the Tasmanian Society of Editors reports.

People are asked to sign contracts that stipulate anything from public liability cover of up to \$10,000,000, to professional indemnity insurance, personal accident and illness insurance, loss of income insurance, and workers compensation.

For the one-person business based in a home office and with annual taxable income that is probably below \$60,000 a year, these are stiff requirements.

Unfortunately, because ours is an uncommon profession, insurance companies put us into a 'miscellaneous' category, often with high-risk occupations. This means that even when a broker acts on an editor's behalf, the cost of basic cover for public liability and professional indemnity is likely to be about \$2,500–\$3,000 a year.

Recently I talked to a lawyer at the Arts Law Centre of Australia about these contractual requirements. He explained that while an organisation's 'standard' contract may stipulate insurance cover of various kinds, we are quite within our rights to negotiate. Indeed, I have found in some cases that if I can talk directly to the Contracts Manager (or whoever is responsible for contracts) it is possible to have contract clauses deleted or reworded once the responsible person understands the nature of the work I am undertaking. It may mean my volunteering to accept whatever risk is involved, but it can be done. Negotiating via a project manager can work well if they are savvy, but sometimes it can just make things more confusing and difficult. It's often hard to know which way to play it.

Of course if the job is going to bring a substantial amount of net income, it may be worthwhile complying, at least for the duration of the contract. The Arts Law Centre's web site has some useful facts sheets about contracts <<http://www.artslaw.com.au/reference/infocontracts/>> and public liability insurance <<http://www.artslaw.com.au/reference/publicliability02/index.html>>. I understand that the Centre is also about to launch a book

about insurance, though details are not yet available on its web site (14 April).

It's worth noting too that under some organisations' guidelines, competitive quotes and contracts are not required for jobs costing under \$10,000.

Another option is to refuse to join in. It is always possible to turn work down if the conditions are unreasonable. It hurts, of course, but there is an argument for jacking up, and if enough of us were to do it, employers might have to reconsider.

A fourth option in a Federal election year, when small businesses are clearly on politicians' minds, is to nag the relevant ministers. When enough of us wrote to Sensis to ask for an 'Editors and editing' category in the Yellow Pages we were successful. It is a fact that 'standard' contracts requiring us to have insurance similar to a building contractor's or a medical practitioner's are simply inappropriate for our kind of work. Perhaps if enough of us can make the point we could get some action.

Relevant Australian government ministers are Joe Hockey, Minister for Small Business and Tourism, PO Box 1107, North Sydney NSW 2059 or <J.Hockey.MP@aph.gov.au>; Senator Nick Minchin, Minister for Finance and Administration, 423 Henley Beach Road, Brooklyn Park SA 5032 or <senator.minchin@aph.gov.au>; Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, GPO Box 3513, Sydney NSW 2001, or <senator.coonan@aph.gov.au>.

The Shadow Minister for Finance and Small Business is Bob McMullan, GPO Box 1947, Canberra ACT 2601 or <Bob.McMullan.MP@aph.gov.au>.

Most States and Territories have a minister responsible for small business who could also be approached.

Meantime, if you care to complete the 'Insurance questionnaire' on the next page and send it back to me, I'll be happy to collate the information and publish it later in the year. If you are prepared to add your name and contact details, I won't pass them on.

Workshop report Advanced MS Word

Creating Word Wizards

How often have you sat at the keyboard, working away in Word, and wound up in a technical dead end, cross, frustrated and about to kick the cat?

Would-be 'Word wizards' recently spent a productive and entertaining Saturday with Bruce Howarth in his *Microsoft Word: Advanced Editing Skills* workshop, arranged by the society.

Bruce's knowledge of Word goes back to the dawn of (Word) time, starting with Version 3.0 on Macintosh in 1984. As he explained, he's been 'learning and grumbling about Word ever since'.

The workshop focused on those areas of Word dear to an editor's heart. We delved into 'find and replace', fields and graphics, the intricacies of tables and the all-important keyboard short cuts. We learnt how to track down repeated errors with formats, wildcards and symbols. No more will we struggle with numbered lists and now we know what the drawing layer does. There were lots of tips along the way, and (for me) the great discovery that if you've forgotten where that handy function is hiding, click open anything that says 'Options', 'Properties', 'Customise' or 'Advanced' and it might be lurking in there.

Bruce's patience, wonderful droll humour and ability to explain the programming logic (or illogic, sometimes) behind what was happening on the screen made taking on new ways of working easy and pleasurable. There were plenty of exercises and time to practise—'Aha, so that's how it works!'

In an occupation where so many of us work alone as freelancers, without much technical backup and unable to ask the person next to us, courses in Word for editors are an important professional support. And a great comfort to our cats!

Wendy Richards

For future workshops, check the society's Professional Development column on p. 10 of this issue.

Insurance questionnaire

1 Have you been required to take out insurance in order to fulfil a contract?

- Yes
 No (go to question 4)

2 _____ If 'Yes', what kind and level of cover was required?

- Public liability _____
 Professional indemnity _____
 Loss of income _____
 Accident _____
 Workers' compensation _____
 Other _____

3 Have you retained, or do you intend to retain, that insurance after completing the work?

- Yes
 No

4 _____ Have you ever refused work because of insurance requirements?

- Yes
 No

If 'Yes', did you tell the employer why you would not take on the work? _____

5 Can you recommend an insurance broker or insurance company?

- Yes
 No

If 'Yes', please give details: _____

6 Do you have suggestions for other editors facing the insurance requirement?

7 Do you have suggestions for action that Societies of Editors could take either individually or collectively?

Thank you for making time to answer these questions.

Please post your reply to:

Robyn Colman

250 Churchill Avenue

SANDY BAY TAS 7005

or email it to <words@word-wise.com.au>

Russell Thomson was so impressed with the scope and standard of the society's professional development program he became an assistant organiser. He writes about the workshops he has attended this year.

The society's first workshop for 2004 was *Indexing*, presented at Sydney University in mid-February by Caroline Colton. Caroline is President of the NSW Branch of the Australian Society of Indexers and, like many people in the publishing industry, she is a person with diverse interests. A qualified librarian, Caroline has specialised in indexing and classification since setting up her own business in 1988. After qualifying as a horticulturalist in 1992 and going on to establish a landscape design business, *Landscape Botanica*, she has kept herself busy by launching an online directory for the Australian wine industry at <www.winediva.com.au>.

So, while Caroline herself may be a multiple entry—and difficult to index—she certainly knows her indexing and effortlessly informed and inspired a group of aspiring indexers.

I've always been fascinated by indexing and indexers, intrigued by the kind of mind that can read a long, complex manuscript and analyse and sort the content into an alphabetical list in which the reader can easily find the information they are looking for. That is the key: the index is concerned only with the content—there is no room for interpretation or bias on the part of the indexer.

Just as the ideal editor is the invisible ink between the writer and the reader, the indexer is a conduit between them. An index frees the reader from the linear structure of the book, and allows accurate access to the information. Without an index, a non-fiction text would be useless. It all sounds obvious and logical to us now, but when did indexing begin?

In the 1550s, as society, and the law, became more complex, indexing became essential. There would be no precedent in law if indexing had not been invented. Similarly, there would be no modern medical research without medical indexing, which began in USA during the Civil War.

Indexing, one of the more arcane and esoteric branches of publishing, also seems to require a quirky sense of

humour. Caroline revealed that there is a history of jokes deliberately placed in indexes. Now there's a challenge—see if you can find the joke in the next index you come across! You probably won't find it under 'J', and you may need to be an indexer yourself to appreciate it!

As for everyone involved in publishing, deadlines rule indexers' lives. Indexing is a last-minute task—it would be a waste of time attempting to create an index until a manuscript is typeset (how else are the page numbers going to be accurate?). So an indexer has to have very good time-management skills, a good memory, and the ability to deduce meaning quickly. They must be well-organised and able to work alone. But above all, they need to be an effective communicator who can work calmly in an often-pressured environment.

Fortunately, it is not necessary for an indexer to be a specialist in the subject of the book being indexed, but they must have an intuitive ability to understand the meaning of what the author is saying.

Caroline's analogy is to think of an index as a map that shows the reader where they want to go, rather than sending them around and around in circles.

This was a particularly useful workshop on a complex topic and one that was well-presented. As for all the society's workshops, the notes provided were comprehensive and will be an ongoing resource for the participants.

If you are going to get serious about indexing, you may decide to outlay a significant amount of money on specialist software. If not, you might be stuck with the ubiquitous Microsoft Word which, despite its claims to the contrary, is not really the most effective indexing tool. But there is no point whinging about its shortcomings or complexities. We all have to deal with it at some time—even Mac users!

That's why the two workshops that followed have focused on how to get

the most out of Microsoft Word. They have been well attended and very useful.

In March, Bruce White presented *Microsoft Word: Basics and Beyond*. In this he shared a lot of important information on how to set up your computer for effective editing by using MS Word's editing features.

Bruce Howarth's April workshop—*Microsoft Word: Advanced Editing Skills*—introduced participants to the more complex tools that are buried in this program. Bruce delved into *The magic of fields* and the intricacies of *Find and replace*, and imparted knowledge that can make an editor's job easier. Participants now know how to use wildcards, or at least know what they are.

Maintaining the contemporary theme of working in the electronic world, the next workshop, to be presented on Saturday 8 May, will be *Wired Words*. Pamela Hewitt will share her considerable knowledge on writing and editing for the web.

The society is always interested in expanding its professional development workshop program, and invites suggestions for future topics. The program is widely advertised to members through the society's website as well as in *Blue Pencil*. Make sure you don't miss out!

International Conference on the Future of the Book

The second conference on the Future of the Book will be hosted in Beijing, China from 29 to 31 August 2004. Topics include: reading and literacy trends, enhancing the viability of the publishing industry, print on demand and e-books.

Find out more on the web at <www.Book-conference.com>.



Accreditation teleconference

The Accreditation Working Group (AWG) held a teleconference on 4 April 2004. Since the launch of the Draft Report on Accreditation in July 2003, all societies have discussed the options canvassed in the report, through workshops, meetings and email feedback.

During the teleconference, we discussed recent working papers we have produced, including a matrix summarising national comment on the draft report, a revised version of option one from the draft report, an indicative budget and some comments on workplace visits.

The AWG will meet from 14 to 16 May in Melbourne and we hope that at this meeting we will be able to work through remaining issues, including a revised educational points scheme and a dispute resolution system. At the Melbourne meeting, the AWG will also work through actual examples of accreditation applications to test the revised proposals.

Style Council 2004

Style Council 2004 will feature the theme 'Public and Professional discourse', and will be held in Sydney from 9 to 11 July 2004 at the State Library of New South Wales. The conference will highlight themes raised by Don Watson's *Death Sentence: the decay of public language* (2003) and will bring together editors, professional communicators, teachers and anyone else interested in the common quest for clarity.

Further details available on the web at <www.shlrc.mq.edu.au/style/styleconf04.htm>.

AUSTRALEX biennial conference 2004

The Biennial Conference of AUSTRALEX (Australasian Association for Lexicography) will be held at the University of Sydney on Monday 12 July 2004 and will be hosted by the Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney and the Department of Linguistics, and the Dictionary Research Centre, Macquarie University.

The conference will take place over one day and will consist of papers, a session on place-names, and the Biennial General Meeting of AUSTRALEX.

Visit the website at <<http://conferences.arts.usyd.edu.au/index.php?cf=5>>

The conference follows a meeting of Australian Style Council and directly precedes the Australian Linguistics Society Annual Conference (July 13 to 15), which is being held in Sancta Sophia College. Contact the AUSTRALEX conference organisers at: <australex@arts.usyd.edu.au> and for information about the call for papers, go to <<http://conferences.arts.usyd.edu.au/callforpapers.php?cf=5>>

Society of Editors (NSW) Inc.

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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 Paula Grunseit <pgg@optusnet.com.au>.

Copy deadline for the June issue is Wednesday, 5 May 2004.

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

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 375.

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. 2004 fees are \$65 for new members (\$40 if joining after 30 June) and \$60 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/>>.

Listing in the Editorial Services Directory

A print edition of the *Editorial Services Directory* is due to be published soon (new listings can no longer be accepted for inclusion in this edition). The online version is updated quarterly, with deadlines of 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December. Listing costs \$40 per year (\$20 for new entries added from 30 June 2004) in addition to the fee for membership of the society. New entries should be submitted using a template file available from Cathy Gray at <cgray@mpx.com.au>.

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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Copy deadline for June issue:

Wednesday, 5 May 2004.

Professional development

Wired Words: writing and editing for the web

Date: 8 May 2004

Presenter: Pamela Hewitt

Venue: City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

Cost: \$145 members, \$175 non-members (lunch included)

Writing for the web has challenges that are different from print-based writing. The workshop covers 'chunking', break-out text, pyramid writing, and linking techniques.

Copyediting: skills and issues

Date: 19 June 2004

Presenter: Shelley Kenigsberg, lecturer,

Macleay College Book Editing and Publishing Diploma

Venue: City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

This workshop will focus on the skills that a copyeditor needs to develop, and it will consider some of the issues modern professional editors face.

Professional Proofreading

Date: 21 August 2004

Presenter: Tim Learner, who has proofread

more than 500 books.

Venue: City Tattersalls Club, 198 Pitt Street, Sydney

Bookings

The society now accepts payment by credit card (MasterCard, Visa and Bankcard, but not American Express or Diners Card), cheque and money order. To book, please send a registration form to the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. PO Box 254, Broadway, with your credit card details or fax or phone your registration and credit card details to the treasurer, Janice Beavan, at the numbers given in the committee list on this page. Bookings will close one week before a workshop takes place.

Cancellation and refunds

The society will refund 100 per cent of the fee if you cancel four or more working days before the workshop, and 50 per cent if you cancel one to three days before. However, please note that there can be no refund if you cancel on the day of the workshop.

Manuals and handouts

The society can only provide manuals and handouts to people who attend the workshop. Please see the information about workshop bookings on this page.

For more information about the society's workshops, please email Pauline Waugh at <paulinewaugh@ozemail.com.au>.