

# Blue Pencil

Newsletter of  
the Society  
of Editors  
(NSW)

Patron: Hazel Hawke

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## TO TALK OF...

Over the holiday break I have been working with teachers' typescripts. I don't know when the apostrophe left town, when spelling of one word could take three different forms in as many sentences, when the letter O replaced zero or when 'data' merited a singular verb, but I do know that the editor is having to work harder and longer on line work, thereby deflecting attention from logic, flow, clarity, or appropriate choice of vocabulary on scripts which are typographically attractive, but ill-prepared. If this is the standard for contracted texts, I wonder what the quality of face-to-face teaching is like.

It is also disturbing to reflect that students of postcolonial writing in Australian universities, involved in text and subtext analysis, often have not received tertiary teaching in eighteenth or nineteenth century literature. In fact, I have spoken to a PhD candidate who has not read a novel written before 1950.

You might ask why is this relevant to editing? Some editors receive postcolonial literary commentaries and texts to edit. Seldom are any of the terms in the texts defined, the editor needs yet another 'dictionary of key terms' as he or she wades through dense writing. Alluding to past examples of traditional 'classic' literature does not happen. The writing refers to the present or near-present, that is, the recent past. The richness of English-language texts, once studied in schools is not acknowledged, and

often not known to the immediate writer.

In schools, the choice of texts for English study sometimes defies description either as literature or 'good' prose. Many lack valid themes to sustain 100 pages and yet up-and-coming editors of the year 2000 are 'studying' these as examples of literature. It is difficult to maintain a 'standard' in editing when the raw material is poor and yet is used as an example of worthy 'literature'.

In history as well, many of the texts have a sense of now, not of history by example, of the past and how it and human experience affects present events. Many writers lack a knowledge of sequences in history and literature over centuries. To relate to these disciplines only with the eyes of now misses the point or leads to shallow representations of literature and history, with little or no reference to their development over time, which are often the keys to the course and effect of present actions.

Editors will always have a need for a wide, general knowledge because of the variety of subjects they work on. My point is that one requirement for those who eventually choose to be editors is a sense of historiography and the pertinence of the past to the present

might well be lacking if education providers do not address present curriculum limitations.

On another matter, I have been inundated by callers, seeking to be proofreaders; some were from interstate, some were redirected from writers' groups. The stimulus was a book on proofreading, released in late 1994. It has led to many untried people wishing to earn extra money with this craft, for craft it is. It is unfortunate that few callers had any understanding about what the work can entail; some believe that because they can read, they can proofread. Proof-reading is not seen for what it is -- an exacting and thorough process, one not to be done while the baby sleeps, or while travelling to work by train. In spite of the accurate information I have given the callers they still want to try and ask for details of proofreading courses. Do any of you know of such a course? The Australian Society of Authors, the Fellowship of Australian Writers, the NSW Writers' Centre, and the Writers' Guild do not. My solution to this lack of training in proofreading is to offer my own course (see Bulletin Board on P. 3). Some of your authors may benefit from the course.

*Robin Appleton*

## *Next Meeting?*

*Details on page 8*

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# EDITOR-IN-RESIDENCE, 1994

*An edited summary of Beverley Barnes's address to the meeting of the society on Tuesday 1 November 1994.*

I was editor-in-residence at the University of South Australia from March to September 1994, the third person in the program. Robin Appleton was the first editor-in-residence, in Western Australia in 1992, and Lesley Dow was the second, in Queensland in 1993. The duties of an editor-in-residence include providing editorial advice to staff in all disciplines; conducting workshops and seminars aimed at improving the participants' writing style and presentation of manuscripts; liaising with editors of in-house journals, and editors in other institutions and local publishing houses; and providing general advice to students and the wider community on publishing and editing.

Mine was a new university, one formed from the Dawkins amalgamations -- the transformation of colleges of advanced education into universities -- and includes the former South Australian Institute of Technology. It is a large institution with six campuses, 23000 students, 1140 academics and 1200 general staff. They produce thousands of documents using desktop publishing programs and printed by photocopying machine. Many of these people have little experience in editing, design and production and really appreciated the advice I could give.

During my six months in Adelaide

there was constant discussion about the Department of Education Employment and Training (DEET) quality assessment. The DEET teams went to all universities around Australia, and although in the resulting hierarchies published in newspapers such as *Campus Review* and *The Weekend Australian* higher education supplement, the new University of South Australia did not rank highly, it was praised for several research centres, its association with the Aboriginal community (there is a very lively Aboriginal Studies faculty) and its distance education programs. I was based at the Distance Education Centre at the Underdale campus, where staff produce materials for external students, with something like 17000 enrolments in 600 courses.

The Distance Education Centre (DEC), has four sections: management, print and editorial services, student services, and audio-visual. Offices in the management section are provided for academic staff on secondment to develop materials and work closely with distance education students. While I was there they were starting a multi-media package for nurses, the team consisting of an information technology expert, the nursing expert, and an academic who had extensive experience in instructional design. All along the corridor I could hear people teleconferencing with students Australia-wide, participating in tutorials on subjects as diverse as environmental law and physiotherapy.

The print and editorial services section includes eight talented editors as well as about twelve desktop publishing people who key in or scan manuscripts that are not going to be professionally edited; while the latter don't have authority

to make editorial changes they do need knowledge of the editorial process. The DEC audio-visual staff were generous in advising me before a couple of my seminars were to be videoed, and I was able to enrol in a one-day seminar on making videos.

As well as its own courses, the university also produces materials for the Open Learning Agency of Australia (OLAA), an institution that has federal government funding for its first three years. In 1992 OLAA offered five subjects on an open television network and by 1994, was offering 150 subjects. The University of South Australia produces packages for fifteen of these, one of them a joint venture by the three Adelaide universities (Flinders, Adelaide, and South Australia); they won the tender to handle this subject for three years, after which the tendering process will be repeated. About 700 students take University of South Australia courses through the Open Learning Agency, paying \$305 per subject. If an Open Learning Agency student successfully completes at least a third of a BA through the University of South Australia courses and two-thirds of courses prepared by other universities, he or she can apply to be awarded a degree from the university. The impression I formed is that the non-campus university will be the future of much tertiary-level education in Australia.

The University of South Australia invited me to participate in a 'think tank' with Fuji Xerox investigating the consequences of installing the Documents on Demand system. The university already has Xerox Docutech photocopying equipment for printing books, study guides, brochures and course notes for on-campus classes, and after the think tank it was announced that the

university will be the first in Australia to use the education-specific document management system called Xerox Documents on Demand, scanning paper masters into digital image files. Documents on Demand was developed with Cornell, Yale, Harvard and other American universities, where out-of-print and/or fragile books in university libraries are scanned and stored digitally for transmission over local area networks and the Internet. Students and staff may thereby gain on-screen access to many books and other documents.

This leads us to the topic of copyright. Academics have considerable leeway in photocopying material for educational purposes and are allowed to tape television programs for showing to students. (Incidentally, when students have a copy of those videotapes, they may not show them to spouses or flatmates who are not also full-time bona fide students of the university.) Gaps in Australia's copyright law were discussed at a meeting of the Copyright Convergence Group in August, attended by representatives of the ABPA, the ABC, a number of radio stations, universities and the Departments of School Education and of Technical and Further Education. A couple of months later, the newspapers reported that twelve publishing companies and the Copyright Agency Limited were appealing against a decision of the Federal Court which found for the Victorian University of Technology in a test case that challenged VUT's right to *sell* photocopied anthologies of texts to students.

My role as editor-in-residence was to help people not only with printed documents but also with documents produced for computer networks (for example, journals that

are never actually printed). As discussion aids for seminars I handed out four to six pages of notes on writing and publishing and showed examples on overhead transparencies initially typed in 14 point Palatino, but subsequently reformatted to 18 point Helvetica (a typeface designed for signage and therefore perfect for enlarging on an overhead screen). Two pages of my notes would take an hour to discuss and explain (four pages would take two hours), and the best seminar length was generally two or three hours. On display were copies of the *AGPS Style Manual*, the Chicago style manual, the *ABPA Directory of Members*, the recently published ABPA book *Introduction to Book Publishing*, and the new *Australian Editing Handbook*. For discussions with people who produce journals and newsletters, I used Colin Weildon's book *Communicating or Just Making Pretty Shapes* (\$10 from the Newspaper Advertising Bureau of Australia, North Sydney), the findings of a research program that examined the elements of typographic design.

My main impression from this six-month period in residence was that academic writers really do appreciate the type of briefing that publishers can give them, especially to help identify their audience and write appropriately for it. They also appreciate being advised about ways of organising the material, planning the subheadings, and working out the appropriate flow of information. I enjoyed working with research teams to find appropriate ways of writing, editing and publishing their journals and newsletters. Most of all, it was a wonderful experience to meet people who are so dedicated to education. They no longer talk solely about teaching -- it's always

teaching and learning -- and their concern is always for the student and the future of knowledge.

[The 1995 editor-in-residence will be Melbourne editor Janet Bragg who will work at the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs from April to September.]

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide*, Pam Peters. Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1994. 864 pp. Hardback, RRP \$75.00. ISBN 0 521 43401 7.

In the words of its author, Pam Peters, *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* 'aims to provide a balanced and thoroughly informed account of Australian style and usage on the threshold of the twenty-first century'. It steers a course between the extremes of prescription and description, invoking both linguistic principle and the usage evidence available when making recommendations'.

The publication of this book is a significant event. Arthur Delbridge sets out its distinctive qualities in his foreword:

'Its author is not just ... expressing views that are the fruit of personal experience and judgement; she is a scholar well trained in the discipline of linguistics, who has done extensive research into the history of written English ... : she has excellent grounding and achievement in the languages that have contributed most to the history of English ... So she writes with an authority that comes from a pro-

fessional knowledge of language and languages.

'Her principles of style guidance are founded on descriptive accounts of actual language ... in newspapers, magazines, books of fiction and non-fiction, all ass-embled in computerised databases ... The reader is first given the facts about a particular variant usage, then taken through the events that produced the variant; and in the end the reader may decide which of the possible variants is best for the work in hand.

'Australian English is not presented in a vacuum, but is compared with and related to ... other varieties of English.

'The range of topics is exceptionally comprehensive ...'

The result is a work of interest and authority, one that will be of continuing usefulness to writers, editors, teachers, computer programmers -- indeed to anyone who deals with written language in Australia. Many will see it as indispensable. The path Peters chooses to explore, a middle way between prescription and description, is particularly welcome. On my work shelf, her book sits comfortably between the Australian government *Style Manual* -- dense with rules as neat and constricting as its stiff binding -- and *The Macquarie Dictionary*, whose slumping covers hint at the laid-back descriptiveness of its approach.

The range of topics covered is indeed wide, even though in one or two important respects it is ultimately disappointing; I'll return to this negative aspect later. The arrangement of contents is alphabetical, with ample cross-referencing, and readers are helped to form a preliminary idea of the book's usefulness for their own purposes by an 'Overview of

Contents' that lists the general topics treated in language, editing, and writing. Taking a sampling of topics from the Overview, I found excellent entries on *capital letters, coherence and cohesion, grammar, passive verbs, plurals, English and foreign, rhythm in prose* (illustrated with some evocative passages from Marcus Clarke), *split infinitives*, and *standard English*. Here is how Peters begins her entry on *grammar*: 'The deeper secrets of any language lie in its grammar, in the underlying rules and conventions by which words combine with each other. This is especially true of English, where word relationships are only occasionally marked in the forms of the words themselves ...'. O brave new world, that has such a champion of English in't!

This is the sort of book that tempts you to sit up late burning the midnight oil, tracking down familiar old touchstones and shibboleths. (No entry for *touchstone*, by the way, but there is one for *shibboleth*. It is short but barbed.) The more one reads, the more one appreciates the strength of the author's broad-based historical approach; as Peters tells their story, words become robust life-forms surviving across continents and centuries, undergoing as many changes of fortune as any picaresque hero.

However, burning the midnight oil nourishes criticism as well as praise.

Let's look first at a minor oddity, a source of confusion. Apparently writing out of fellow-feeling, Peters states that 'editors do have to implement a single option in a given context, and editorial choices have been made for this book which are indicated between ruled lines at the end of certain entries' (Preface, p. xi). Now, I took this to mean 'Since editors have to come

up with instant answers, correct and immutable, on every problem of text, I've placed particularly helpful editorial tips at the end of some entries, between ruled lines for easier finding'. Not a bit of it. We meet the ruled lines in her very first entry, where she is discussing the choice of 'a' or 'an' before a noun (e.g. *a hotel* or *an hotel*). What do we find between the ruled lines? We find 'I CAN FEEL A XXXX COMING ON ... AUSTRALIANS WOULDN'T GIVE A XXXX FOR ANYTHING ELSE'. To which Peters's response is 'These advertisements force us to think twice about how to say the unpronounceable XXXX. The use of "a" (rather than "an") shows it should be read as "four ex" not as "exexexex"'. Sure thing Ms Peters, notta problem, on this one I reckon I was there before you. Then, turning to p. 53 to check on how she likes her name treated when used in the possessive case (*Apostrophes with names ending in -s*), we find another pair of ruled lines. The helpful tip here is 'CUSTOMER'S HEALTH REGULATION'S DO NOT ALLOW CARTON'S OF EGG'S TO BE CUT IN HALF', to which Peters responds 'Apostrophes like these are not grammatical devices but decorative flourishes -- baroque accessories to the letters'. Quite so. To be fair, it is not long before we meet an editorial preference that is given the ruled-lines treatment; but most of the book's rich store of editorial preferences are presented unadorned, while ruled lines are meted out to a variety of features.

But the major criticism isn't a matter of baroque accessories, but of an important element left out.

The omission is most noticeable in that area where language shades into ethics and aesthetics, an area that can't be ignored by editors,

writers, etc., and that is a legitimate concern of a comprehensive style guide. The reader will search in vain for any article on *political correctness*, aka *ideological soundness*, with all its ethical and aesthetic ramifications for language, written or spoken. Nor is there any entry under *non-discriminatory language*. The entry under *disabled* is superficial compared, for instance, with the piece Carol D'Costa contributed to *Blue Pencil* (July 1994).

Yet it's hard to see how any account of the living language can avoid making some investigation of our current efforts to neuter it, sweeten it and render it innocuous, and of the consequences of these. It seems ironic that a writer deeply versed in linguistics, knowing the power of language and the nuances it can convey, should stick so close to her last.

The alphabetical arrangement of her work, so helpful for quick reference, has perhaps done Ms Peters a disservice in obscuring the need for several long, well considered articles examining the broader issues of language 'on the threshold of the twenty-first century'. There is no attempt at balancing the profit and the cost of our age's sensitivities; for instance, if you rid a prose passage of all discriminatory language will you find you've also robbed it of economy and directness? Can you preserve its rhythm? Does it still convey your meaning? Or does it look and sound like a lump of flaccid legalese -- and either way, does that matter? Perhaps the criteria of 'a good prose style' are changing? Pam Peters's views, grounded in material evidence from her 'large computerised databases of contemporary English' would have been valuable.

What it boils down to is this. It's

been fascinating reading about all those words, those thousands of words; but now, please Ms Peters, tell us, if you will, what is the state of the *language*?

*Josephine Bastian*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Praise for the Pres

I would like to express my appreciation to Robin Appleton for the fantastic job she has done as President. In particular I am encouraged by the choice of meeting topics and the extracurricular events she organises. The topics are current and relevant and sometimes even challenging.

I was especially motivated by the October speakers and thankful to have a transcript of Pat Woolley's address printed in the December issue of *Blue Pencil*. I found some of her ideas exciting and inspiring and hope to make use of her thoughts over the next few months.

Thankyou Robin for your persistence and active involvement with the members.

*Jane Whisker*

### Comments on the Register

I was pleased to receive the new edition of the *Register of Editorial Services* this week, but there are some comments I must make.

1. Why has production taken so long? It is more than six months since the original deadline, and two or three months since the final review of copy. It must already be quite out of date.

2. This is not a good time of the year to publish the register -- very few publishers are looking for freelance people in November and by the time they are (around March or so) many of the entries will be

even more out of date.

3. While I think the previous issue was over-indexed, this one has gone the other way, offering only a ridiculously complete contents list of editors' names (which users would find with little difficulty assuming they are familiar with the alphabet) and no index to assist in locating people with specific skills.

4. With a better-thought-out form for the entries, we could end up with a more useful register -- try looking at the kind of things Greg Dickens sends out for his media listing. This really helps people to list their particular skills and would be tremendously helpful to publishers and other media people in locating the right people.

5. Because there is so much to read in each entry, it takes a long time to isolate the skills of each person and I fear that this could deter potential users.

6. The layout -- most entries are about a page long, some a little more, some a little less. The way the layout has been approached it means that many of the entries start low on a page and finish midway through the next. How about a standard size for each entry so that we could have one to a page, always starting at the top. Actually, looking at the entries, with some organisation and removal of all superfluous info included, you could probably have two to a page.

While it is certainly pleasing to know that it has been published at last, I don't think it does much to enhance the professional credibility of editors to produce a rather late, excessively wordy publication.

*Brenda Pittard*

## **EDITOR-IN-RESIDENCE 1996: IT COULD BE YOU**

The Editor-in-Residence scheme dates back to the National Ideas Summit organised in 1990 by the Australia Council and to a subsequent forum called Unlocking the Academies. The scheme began in 1992 and the first three awards went to members of the Society of Editors (NSW).

Editors who wish to be considered for the award should submit an expression of interest to the Australia Council. Universities and other tertiary institutions submit their requests for a resident editor and the Literature Board of the Australia Council considers all applications and marries the most suitable applicant to an appropriate institution. The 1996 editor-in-residence will be going to an institute in Victoria.

The Editor-in-Residence Project Officer, Nicola Evans, has commented that the scheme will continue as long as expressions of interest are received from the right sort of editors and she makes a plea to any who are interested to submit an expression of interest by August 1995 for the 1996 residency and for subsequent years. The CVs of applicants who submit their indication of interest now will be held on file for consideration at an appropriate time. There will still be three states and territories to cover after 1996: Tasmania, New South Wales, and the ACT. Applicants should be free to travel and to be in residence for six months, and have experience in book publishing as well as editing.

The editor-in-residence may be required to undertake a variety of tasks which could include:

providing editorial advice to staff across all disciplines on their own writing; conducting workshops and seminars aimed at improving participants' style and presentation of their work; liaising with editors of in-house journals, other institutions and local publishing houses; and providing general advice to students and the wider community on publishing and editing.

Members can get further details by contacting Nicola Evans at the Australia Council on (02) 950 9000. Beverley Barnes, (02) 969 1981, would be pleased to talk about the scheme with any interested member.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

Welcome to Christa Munns and Anne Sutton; welcome back to Jim Stephenson.

## ***Blue Pencil***

Copy for *Blue Pencil* and letters to the editor should be faxed to (02) 529 9764 or posted direct to The Editor, *Blue Pencil*, 49 Evans Street, Sans Souci NSW 2219.

The deadlines for 1995 issues are:

14 February	14 March
11 April	9 May
13 June	11 July
8 August	12 September
10 October	14 November

## **OUR 1994 COMMITTEE**

### **President and Publicity**

Robin Appleton  
Ph: 560 1017  
Fax: 560 1017

### **Secretary**

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Ph: 697 4345 (w)  
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Ph: 529 8638  
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Ph: 954 0711

# BULLETIN BOARD

## Changing your address?

Let the membership secretary, Rhana Pike, know by phoning her on (02) 569 7831 (ah).

## Successful Freelancing Workshop

Saturday 18 February 1995 at the Writers' Centre, Roselle, from 12.30 pm until 5.00. Cost \$30.

This workshop will be convened by Margaret Foster, former society president, established freelance editor, and proprietor of Foster Communications. She will be assisted by:

\* Brenda Pittard, recent newcomer to freelancing after extensive in-house experience

\* Peter Newton, Science editor, jazz writer, specialist in Aboriginal studies and successful freelance editor

\* Michael Wyatt, established city-based freelance indexer and editor

\* Terance Clarke, freelance accountant and adviser on accounting for freelancers.

Ample time will be available for discussion of participants' concerns or issues arising from the presentations.

Book by ringing Robin Appleton on (02) 560 1017 by Friday 10 February.

## Changed Address

Robyn Flemming is now living at 80 Elizabeth Street, Rosalie Qld 4064, Ph: (07) 368 4978, Fax: (07) 368 7838.

## Macquarie Dictionary Workshop

Friday 10 February 1995 at the Macquarie Dictionary offices beginning at 11.00 am.

A precursor to Style Council 95, the workshop will give participants an opportunity to participate in discussion on the Third Edition of *The Macquarie Dictionary*.

For further details and bookings contact Maureen Leslie, phone: (02) 850 9800, or fax: (02) 888 2984.

## Workshop on Functional Grammar in the Process of Editing

Saturday 25 March 1995 at the Writers' Centre, Gladesville from 12.30 pm to 4.30. Cost \$30.

Helen Joyce is an experience editor of educational publications in areas of English as a second language, literacy, and workplace education and has a special interest in the linguistic/grammatical dimensions of the editing process. She will be assisted in the workshop by Kay Greenleaf who will deal with publications for second language learning.

The presentations, discussions, and activities will give participants an appreciation of functional grammar in our current society.

Book by 17 March by ringing Robin Appleton on (02) 560 1017.

Tell your friends and your authors.

## Conference of Indexers

The first international conference of indexers -- Indexers, Partners in Publishing -- will be held in Marysville, Victoria, from Friday 31 March to Sunday 2 April 1995.

The conference for indexing professionals and the wider publishing community will deal with a wide range of topics including:

- \* indexing from an international perspective
- \* the publisher's point of view
- \* indexing and the computer
- \* law indexing
- \* the ethics of indexing
- \* pricing the index.

The conference brochure has been sent to you with a previous issue of *BP*; if you can't find it, registration details can be obtained from the conference organiser, Margaret Findlay, 3A Goodall Street, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122. Phone/fax: (613) 818 1760.

## Proofreading

Robin Appleton will present a six-and-a-half hour (one-day) course on proofreading for novices and authors on 4 March 1995. The course will deal with the nature, requirements, and language of proof-reading and the limitations of the proof-reader's intervention at the proof stage. There will be time for exercises and discussion.

For details of the place, times and cost, contact Robin on (02) 560 1017, on 20 February.

# OUR NEXT MEETING: A DOUBLE BILL

**First, the Annual General Meeting of the Society**  
(Information about the meeting is in your January issue of Blue Pencil.)

and then

## **Sue Ashton: Editor, *Computer Living*.**

Sue has taken on the task of starting Australia's first family computing magazine from scratch -- from employing the production staff to producing the first run of one million copies.

Sue has had varied experience in the computer industry. After a six-year stint in sales and management in the computer trade, she move into publishing four years ago as the Computer Network Editor for *PC Week* at ACP. From there she went to IDG Communications, the world's largest publisher of computer magazines, as News Editor of *Computer World*. In 1994, Sue was then appointed Editor of *Computer Living*, a joint venture between IDG and Pacific Publications.

Sue speaks each week on Newcastle and Perth radio and has appeared on Newcastle television as well.

The meeting will be held at **6.30 pm on Tuesday 7 February 1995** in the Rooftop Function Centre, 4th Floor, Australian Museum. Enter from William Street.

Drinks and light food will be provided. We need to know the number of people who will attend, so for catering purposes, **RSVP by 5 February** by phoning or faxing Robin Appleton on 560 1017.

Members \$10; non-members and those who forget to notify us before the RSVP date, \$12.

## MEETING DATES FOR 1995

All meetings are at 6.30 for 7.00 pm on the first Tuesday of each month:

7 February (AGM)	
7 March	4 April
2 May	6 June
4 July	1 August
5 September	3 October
7 November	5 December.