

# The SOCIETY of EDITORS (VICTORIA)

## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 5/6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004

### Next meeting

#### **Christmas Celebration Dinner and Book Launch for The Australian Editing Handbook, 2nd edition**

**Wednesday, 1 December 2004**

**Rathdowne Tavern (upstairs in Ballroom)**

184 Rathdowne Street, Carlton

**6.45 p.m. for 7.15 p.m.**

Festive three-course Christmas menu including tea and coffee.  
\$40 members, \$45 non-members. Drinks at bar prices.

Join us for Christmas dinner and celebrate the launching of the new edition of Elizabeth Flann's and Beryl Hill's *The Australian Editing Handbook*.

The first edition of *The Australian Editing Handbook* was published in 1994 and quickly became an essential reference book for every editor and editing student in Australia. Now the authors have republished it, updating some parts and improving others. Editor of the first edition, Sharon Nevile, will launch the second edition.

**Book sales:** Lesley Beaumont, publisher at Wiley, will bring lots of books for sale and signing – just in time to buy a great Christmas gift.

#### **Your Choice Editing Awards 2004**

If you're coming to enjoy the festive fun and this important launch, we want YOUR nominations for these awards of the year. Email your nomination to <kerry.biram@bigpond.com> for any or all of the following awards, with supporting evidence where possible. Nominees may be challenged to talk up their nominations on the night!

### In this issue

Weeds and words	2-3
CASE update	4
About us – Ron Thiele	7

- The 'Big Booker Award' – for the person making a booking for the biggest group to the Christmas party.
- The 'Nightmare Award' – tell us about your 'tear-your-hair-out' experience this year.
- The 'Eye Teeth Award' – the job you'd give your eye teeth to work on (can be real or fictitious).
- The 'Em-Dash Award' – for the manuscript with the most inappropriate use of punctuation marks. Nomination must be supported by at least a paragraph displaying the offensive features, and bonus points will be awarded if you read it at the dinner with appropriate sound effects.
- The 'Irrelevance Award' – for the book title with least possible relevance to the book content.
- The '17th Proof Award' – most unique title for an edited report (research report, annual report, etc).

Prizes on the night! Check the Society's website  
<<http://www.socedvic.org/>> and emails for more details.

#### **PLEASE NOTE NEW BOOKING DETAILS**

*Due to a number of problems with bookings at the last few dinner meetings, the Society has decided to make a number of changes to procedure. The dinner meetings are organised by volunteer committee members – please assist them in this very time-consuming task by taking note of the following:*

*continued on page 3*

**Note: Book early for the Christmas dinner as seating will be limited!**



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# The boundless chaos of a living speech\*

## November dinner meeting report

By guest writer Mary Pearl



*Kate Burridge has been Chair of Linguistics at Monash University since February 2003. She is a member of the Australian Academy of Humanities and is also a regular presenter of language segments on ABC Radio. Kate spoke at our November meeting about her recently published book, Weeds in the Garden of Words: Further*

observations on the tangled history of the English language.

Shakespeare's unweeded garden growing to seed was what initially inspired Kate to write *Weeds in the Garden of Words*. Kate uses the metaphor of the garden to explain what happens when words mutate into weeds. The phrase 'yeah-no' repeated often enough, becomes an irritant that distracts from communication. On the other hand, a weed can change into a perfectly acceptable word like 'bamboozle'. Samuel Johnson disapproved of 'bamboozle' and also rejected 'novel' and 'nowadays' as entries for the first dictionary, published in 1775. The words are standard English today. Popular words like 'gotten' and 'ain't', once favoured by respected writers, have now been relegated to weed category.

Kate says people in the community misunderstand the linguist's job. Some feel that linguists are there to 'ring in the changes', others that it's a linguist's job to keep to the status quo. A fan of the possessive apostrophe wrote to Kate, incensed at her suggestion that the language would be better off without it. Without the apostrophe, he said, there would be no structure to our language. English would become unteachable, unintelligible and eventually useless as a means of communication. This letter writer and others like him are passionate about their language. Unfortunately, they believe that they have a symbiotic relationship with linguists. They provide the ideas and the linguist's job is to action them.

Kate asks why people are so passionate about punctuation. Is it the influence of dictionary makers, stylebook writers and editors? Can this passion be dated from the introduction of grammar books? Kate calls them linguistic hothouses that preserve the language, and protect it from what Samuel

Johnson described as, 'the boundless chaos of a living speech'. But people have always potted about the linguistic garden well before the hothouse constructs. Take 'conlangers'. They are people who spend their time dreaming up and constructing artificial languages like Esperanto and Klingon just for fun. There are support groups for the possessive apostrophe and a society for the abolition of the verb 'to be'. Language gardeners, Kate says, are people who love playing with language, looking up things in dictionaries and usage guides, or criticising the language of others.

Isn't it always the way? We hate our own weeds, but admire, or at least don't criticise, the nasal vowels or the dropped consonants of French. The double negation, 'I don't know nothing', is considered a mark of illiteracy in English but not in many other languages, including French.

Not only linguists, but also editors have a hard time of it. Editors are constantly on the lookout for changes in grammar and meaning. An unenviable feature of their job is to judge what is needed in that limbo time before crossover of change or meaning occurs. Editors must also deal with purists who complain about declining standards. They don't like changes, but are not prepared to put their money where their mouth is. Fine dictionaries like Funk and Wagnalls that did not keep up to date, Kate says, have disappeared.

Are there nasty weeds that do terrible damage to the linguistic system? Kate thinks that generally weeds can be pesky and bothersome, but never truly pernicious. Given the many and varied ways human beings use speech, even the sort of language that turns the death of a patient into a 'negative patient care outcome' or 'therapeutic misadventure of the highest magnitude' has its place.

Kate is all for weeds as a necessary part of a constantly evolving language. Like the organic garden, language needs to cultivate some of its weeds to keep the garden from stagnating. You're entering into a partnership with natural processes, Kate says. Neither gardens, nor standard languages are ever going to be finished products. They are always going to change and adapt.

*The Society wishes to sincerely thank Mary Pearl for writing this month's report.*

\* Samuel Johnson

## November dinner meeting snapshots



A packed house listens attentively.



Kate Burridge chats with Society vice-president and MC, Kerry Biram

continued from page 1

## December dinner meeting

### Bookings are essential:

- Book with Amanda Coverdale – email preferred – at [amanda@clari.net.au](mailto:amanda@clari.net.au) or telephone (03) 8802 4482.
- **Book STRICTLY before 5 p.m. on Friday, 26 November.** Bookings received after this deadline will not be accepted.
- **People who arrive on the night without a prior booking will be unable to attend.** The venue wishes to cater well for these events and is impeded by those who arrive unannounced.
- **When booking on behalf of a group, you will be responsible for paying for each member of the group even if they do not attend.**
- State if you are a member, student, ASTC member, AusSI member or non-member.
- Give an email address or telephone number.
- If you need to cancel, please email or telephone Amanda as soon as possible so we don't waste money on catering for people who don't turn up.
- If you cancel after 7 p.m. on the day before the meeting, the Treasurer will contact you shortly after and ask you to pay as if you had attended.

**Coming up:** Please read the February newsletter and our website for details of our 2005 program. If you have a brilliant idea for a speaker or activity for next year, we'd love to hear about it – email <[lydia.distefano@eds.com](mailto:lydia.distefano@eds.com)>.

## Thanks to all

This is the last newsletter for the Society until next year. Thanks to all those who work tirelessly each month to make it all happen – the committee and the rest of the newsletter team. Thanks also to those who have contributed from out there this year. It's always a pleasure to get feedback and receive literary contributions from the membership. We hope you all enjoy some break over the Christmas period and wish everyone a Happy New Year!

*Liz Steele*

# CASE Notes

November 2004

CASE is on the brink of a new phase in its existence as two of its working groups report on future directions.

- The Accreditation Working Group has presented its final report, and CASE is considering how to put the proposed scheme to members nationwide. The vote may go ahead at the end of November, or CASE may decide to hold it over till the New Year rather than allow this crucial professional issue to disappear in the holiday rush.
- The National Organisation Working Group has reported on how CASE might become a legal entity. At present CASE has no legal standing: it comprises simply the presidents of the eight Australian editors' societies (or their nominees) and works by making recommendations to the societies. This is a clumsy way to operate and CASE needs to adopt a formal structure, especially if accreditation is to proceed. Again, CASE will consider how to consult members about the options.

CASE met in Sydney on 13–14 November to discuss these and other matters. This is the first time the group has met face-to-face since the Brisbane conference in July 2003.

As CASE steps up its activities, it has realised the need to upgrade its communication with members. From February 2005, CASE will report monthly via the newsletters of the editors' societies.

## From the newsletters

*Blue Pencil* reports on the NSW Society's September meeting, which heard from Paul Brunton, senior curator at the Mitchell Library and editor of *The Diaries of Miles Franklin*. Books reviewed include *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* by Pam Peters and Lynne Spender's *Between the Lines: A Legal Guide for Writers and Illustrators* (Keesing), and there is a report on a recent proofreading workshop by Tim Learner.

*Offpress* tells us that Queensland editors are looking forward to their end-of-year event, a fabulous opportunity for Society members and guests to hear from and meet acclaimed author Don Watson at Beadles Café and purchase his new book, *Watson's Dictionary of Weasel Words*.

In Victoria, the December meeting will launch the new edition of the indispensable *Australian Editing Handbook* (John Wiley & Sons), whose authors Beryl Hill and Elizabeth Flann are both long-term members of the Society. Pam Hewitt and Shelley Kenigsberg from Sydney repeated their popular workshop on structural editing last weekend.

News from the other societies will appear as it comes to hand.

Janet Mackenzie  
Liaison Officer  
Council of Australian Societies of Editors  
<[www.case-editors.org](http://www.case-editors.org)>

## Web manager's report

The Society's new-look website is being developed by a capable group of volunteer members. A fresh, easy-to-use interface has been designed for the new site, along with useful interactive facilities. Online bill payment and discussion forums (for professional knowledge-sharing) will be some of the features available on the Society's new website. These improvements are being worked on in response to member requests. We hope to launch the new website early in 2005. In the meantime, please contact me with any ideas or suggestions you may have for our website.

Fleur Goding  
Web Manager  
<[fleurg@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fleurg@bigpond.net.au)>

## Bookshop discounts

Members receive 10% discount on book purchases over \$20 (specials excluded) at the following bookshops, on presentation of a current membership card:

- Technical Book Shop  
295 Swanston Street, Melbourne
- Brunswick Street Bookstore  
305 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy
- Pages Bookshop  
167 High Street, Kew
- Collins Booksellers  
56 Toorak Road, South Yarra (not other Collins Booksellers stores)
- Spellbound Books  
460 Lygon Street, Brunswick East

# Is your membership renewal overdue?

This month we welcome Laura Gibb, Nicole Gallant, Lorelei Waite, Andrew Preston. And Kirstie Innes-Will to associate membership of the Society.

It is most satisfying to report that a very high percentage of members renewed their membership when the list was closed off in early November. If you know anyone who missed the deadline, but is interested in renewing their membership, would you ask them to email me at <mail@smartss.com.au>? They are no longer receiving the newsletter or society emails.

To save a few trees, much time and a few dollars, the committee decided this year not to send out plasticised membership cards as a matter of course (although members who want one at any time can request one). The response generally has been very positive, as the comments below indicate.

'All very sensible.'

'No need for another card!'

'Congratulations to the society on this development. You must be saving a packet in postage, printing, laminating etc. I'm delighted to be a member of such a sensible organisation. I have printed my receipt on 'recycled' paper (paper that had been through the printer only once) and I'm happy to report that my membership card is printed on a bit of someone's itinerary for a trip to Europe.'

'I don't feel the need of a membership card. I haven't used mine more than once or twice, when they were first issued, since so many shops brought in their own loyalty

schemes around the same time. Maybe the society could drop them altogether and save some time and expense.'

'Thanks for the receipt. Much obliged ... and very impressed by the high-tech acknowledgement of my payment!'

'Well done, it looks good!'

There were, however, a number of problems with people not being able to open PDFs, and one member did not like the change:

'I appreciate the Society's efforts to improve administration and reduce costs. But, the decision to stop mailing membership cards, asking members instead to cut out a rectangle of paper measuring no more than two and a half inches by one and a half inches to use as proof of membership as required? That's disappointing. By 30 June 2005 that slip of paper will be very dog-eared and shabby. I realise, administratively, this would be an extra task for someone, but perhaps membership cards could be mailed with the newsletter? They could be fixed onto the masthead with magic tape, then folded, labelled and stuck down in the usual way.'

Unfortunately, the newsletter mailout is automated and people's motivation to get their renewals in on time is not. Trying to synchronise membership renewals with mailouts would be a bit of a headache. Plasticised cards are still available for members who would like one.

*Ron Thiele*

*Membership and Correspondence Secretary*

## Editing in Context – Melbourne, 13–15 October 2005



### Conference update

The Editing in Context conference organising sub-committee has been hard at work preparing for the next national editors conference.

Not only have we been seeking sponsorship, but we have also been securing our keynote speakers and brainstorming lots of exciting programming ideas.

Our activities will slow down a little over Christmas and New Year, but we will be calling for papers in April/May

next year, and early-bird registrations will open around July. So watch out for the announcements of these important events.

Don't forget that all details will be available on our website at <[www.socedvic.org/editingincontext/](http://www.socedvic.org/editingincontext/)>. If you have any suggestions or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at <[editingincontext@optushome.com.au](mailto:editingincontext@optushome.com.au)>.

*Lan Wang*  
*Conference Convenor*

## Handy hints for the editorial computer

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### Zoom in, zoom out!

When you want to zoom in or zoom out of a Word document, do you find it irritating to have to interrupt your typing or editing to navigate with your mouse to the toolbar at the top?

Well, you can save quite a bit of time and energy doing this if you have a mouse with a scroll wheel.

Just hold down the Control (Ctrl) key and scroll up to zoom in and scroll down to zoom out. This should work with both PC and Mac versions of recent versions of Word (at least Word 2000 onwards for PC and Word X onwards for Mac).

Another useful shortcut that I use is to assign a keyboard shortcut to one of Word's inbuilt zoom commands.

1. Go to *Tools > Customize...*
2. In the resulting dialogue box, click on the *Keyboard...* button at the bottom.
3. This will bring up the *Customize Keyboard* dialogue box.
4. In the *Categories:* pane, top left, select *View*.
5. This will bring up, in the pane on the right, all the related built-in commands for *View*.
6. Scroll down to the bottom of this list of options and you will see the various zoom commands: *ViewZoom100*, *ViewZoom200*, *ViewZoom75*, *ViewZoomPageWidth* or *ViewZoomWholePage*, which, as you might expect, result in zooming to 100%, 200%, 75%, the page width or the whole page respectively. I personally prefer to use the *ViewZoomPageWidth* option as that works best for me when I edit.
7. Click on this once and then click once on the box called *Press new shortcut key*.
8. Select a keyboard shortcut which you would like to use, preferably one that is memorable and doesn't clash with one of the inbuilt keyboard shortcuts – I use *Ctrl+W* on my Mac, PC users might want to use *Ctrl+Shift+W*.
9. Exit the dialogue boxes by clicking on the *Okay* buttons and now you can use your new shortcut to instantly make the text zoom as required.

This latter method is especially useful if you don't have a mouse with a scroll wheel and therefore can't use the first tip.

Lan Wang

## Web distractions

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Here are three distracting websites to browse when you are looking for any chance to not work:

### Swot's Corner

<<http://www.yaelf.com/swot.shtml>>

Good for anyone wanting to know what the word is to describe someone with no sense of smell, or the term that refers to words like 'I scream' and 'ice cream', 'some others' and 'some mothers' or 'Toyota' and 'toy Yoda'.

### Words: Woe and Wonder

<<http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/words/>>

Handy for drawing a line between freedom fighters and terrorists and clarifying which jets, specifically, may be referred to as 'jumbo'.

### OneLook Reverse Dictionary

<<http://www.onelook.com/reverse-dictionary.shtml>>

Lets you describe a concept and get back a list of words and phrases related to that concept. So if you can't remember the phrase which means 'to be tried twice for the same crime', this dictionary will return 'double jeopardy', heading a long list of other related items.

## What the?

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the strong burly adjectivestretched out his dangling  
armand pulled the wideeyed nouninto his sentencei want  
to hyphenate youhe whisperedoh nocame the replyim  
a proper nounnot for longhe repliedas he proceeded to  
modify herperfect grammarsaid the gratified adjectiveeyes  
it was completeagreed the contented nounbut she  
addedyou should have used some punctuation

### Your news and views

We welcome any contributions to your Society's monthly newsletter. Please send your letters, anecdotes or issues you would like discussed to Liz Steele at <[lzsteele@melbpc.org.au](mailto:lzsteele@melbpc.org.au)> or to the address on the front cover of this newsletter.

# ABOUT US

## Ron Thiele

Freelance editor



*After a brief stint in student unionism and the public service, Ron has been self-employed most of his working life. He has worked in most areas of collecting, organising, analysing and outputting information and once ran a medium-sized consultancy that did all these*

*things. His practice has been in social change areas – public policy, unionism and education and training. Now Ron works from home and editing is his ‘bread and butter’.*

### **What’s the best thing about your job?**

I like the variety, the intellectual challenge and the opportunity to make a contribution in a wide variety of public policy areas. I like working from home, with plenty of quiet time to think about the big structural questions underlying the documents I edit. I really like when a client is delighted with how the concepts they have struggled for months to express have been arranged and polished up.

### **What’s the worst thing about your job?**

As an advisor, final decisions are out of my hands. Clients often go with poor English or poor structures of ideas for a variety of reasons, all of which I would prevent if I had the final say. Also, there’s rarely enough time (or budget) to do outstanding work.

### **What’s the best thing about being an editor?**

I love working in the realm of ideas. I can sit from morning to night with anyone and talk ideas, and being an editor gives me the opportunity not only to do it, but be paid to do it!

### **What was your first editing job?**

My school newsletter, back in prehistory. We hand set it (yes, every single letter) and printed it on a Platen press.

### **How did you become an editor?**

My first proper editing job was Editor of the Canberra College of Advanced Education newspaper *Ccaesarian*, which I was awarded after interview. It was either that or go and live as a hippie in Hurstbridge. I sometimes wonder if I made the right decision.

### **Describe some of the training you have had to become an editor**

None, actually. I just picked it up. Structural thinking comes easily to me. If I’d been younger, I probably would have become a computer programmer or some type of systems person.

### **What are the essential qualities of being a good editor?**

Being a good structural thinker. Having a good short-term memory. An eye for detail. An interest in ideas across a wide variety of topics. A good understanding of human nature and an ability to empathise and work with a wide variety of different types of people, most of whom can be expected to feel a high degree of ownership of their work. The ability to be assertive while exercising a great deal of tact. Most importantly, the ability, and desire, to listen carefully and change your opinion on the basis of new evidence.

### **What is the most rewarding job you have ever done?**

Editing three national strategies for vocational education and training was very satisfying. But the most rewarding work I have done was communications campaign planning and execution for the Victorian AIDS Council, in the mid 1980s. That work helped save many hundreds, if not thousands, of lives.

### **With which grammatical style/rule do you have the most trouble?**

Capitalisation. People always want to make their pet interests sound important by capitalising them. I had a difference of opinion once with a state government minister who wanted his title capitalised in a shorthand reference and I told him he couldn’t. I lost.

### **What is your favourite reference source?**

*The Style Manual*, sixth edition.

### **Do you prefer to edit on hard copy or on screen?**

On screen, absolutely. I can subedit and proof on paper, but I could not provide the level of advice that I do, on paper.

### **What advice would you give to editing students?**

Think of yourself as in the knowledge management business, one of the fastest-growing and exciting fields of work today. Turn off the TV and read, read, read. Anyone with an excellent grasp of English and an enquiring mind will never go hungry, even in our screen-dominated world.

### **What book would you most like to have edited?**

The original manuscript for the Old Testament. There is probably no book with a greater potential for good, yet it has done so much harm. By getting the authors to think about what they were saying, and by toning down the misogyny and prejudice, maybe I could have improved things in the world.

## Dates for your diary

### *Next meeting*

**Wednesday, 1 December 2004**

### ***This the last newsletter for 2004.***

The next newsletter will be published in February 2005.

February 2005 dinner meeting details will be emailed to members and will appear on our website.



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John Curtain (d. 1999)  
Beatrice Davis (d. 1992)  
Frank Eyre (d. 1988)

Stephen Murray-Smith (d. 1988)  
Anne Godden (d. 2004)

Membership of the Society is open to anyone engaged professionally in any aspect of editing for publication, or who has had such experience in the past. Associate membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's activities. Associate members may not vote or hold office in the Society.

Membership application/renewal forms are available from the Secretary, the Membership Secretary or the Society's website:  
<<http://www.socedvic.org>>

#### **Subscriptions**

Full membership \$66  
Associate membership \$66

Distant membership \$38.50