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**Say what you mean—
hire an editor**

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**COPY DEADLINE NEXT
ISSUE
Tuesday 7 July, 2009**



From the President

Editing reminiscences and accompanying annoyances

My first job was teaching English grammar to Aussie and Asian students aged from 16 to 30. I was 23 and apart from the emotional trauma, which I won't go into here, this was the first time I really had to learn grammar. I learnt it the night before I was going to teach and managed to bluff my way through a couple of traumatic years in this way. I owe a lot to Gladys Snodgrass, author of the textbook I was using ('Business English', still available at good online bookstores). My next forced entry into grammar came with being an editor at Longman Cheshire in Melbourne, while simultaneously studying the editing/publishing course at RMITU. There was no escaping grammar. Follow that with 17 years of working as an editor and you get used to amending texts of all kinds.

Colleagues and I discussed endlessly editorial observances and issues of style. And we did it with gusto and smiles at the pub or over dinner! I'm cautiously happy to say those days are gone and I can now carry on lively discussions without noticing (too much) the discrepancies of the English language and 'how she is spoke — or writ'!

Having admitted to that, I still find that some things get to me. Bugbears I see around town are the irreverent (and blissfully unaware) uses of the apostrophe. This is a topic spoken of at length in various books and forums. Errors of copyediting abound. It's or its? As no one appears to know, addition appears more intelligent than omission. Another is 'your' when 'you're' is meant; 'inconvenience' is popular; 'mischievous' another; and 'drive safe' doesn't even turn a hair anymore. A style issue that is particularly annoying for me is the use of 'West Australian'. Because we have a newspaper with that title, it allows its editors to use its name as an adjective. This Western Australian doesn't agree!

Happy editing...

Robin

**Robin Bower
President**



This Month's Meeting Tuesday 16 June, 2009 7.30pm

'The ethics of editing academic work' with Anne Surma

Do you edit student work, particularly at postgraduate level? Or is this the kind of work in which you're keen to become involved?

Come along to this session to discuss the challenges of this area of editing, the ethical issues that often arise, and the policy guidelines you need to follow to ensure your - and students' - integrity is maintained.

Venue: Subiaco Community Centre (Activity Room) 203 Bagot Road, Subiaco. Entrance: Glass double doors opposite courtyard; Activity Room left.
Parking: street parking and Crossways Shopping centre car park opposite

Cost: \$2 members \$5 non members

RSVP: <josmith@wordsmithwa.com.au> by Friday 12 June



Spotlight on Bruce Robins

redrobins@bigpond.com

<http://robinsontate.redbubble.com/>

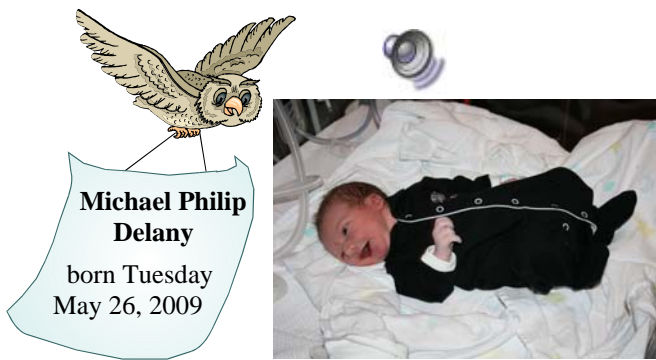
I don't know where it comes from, but I have always had an editor's eye (and ear) – and been able to spot the typos and tell when written words don't sound right. Though I'm a product of the Western Australian state school system in the 50s and 60s, I don't recall copping the high level of English Grammar teaching that resulted in an affinity for parsing.

A love of books and reading, imparted by the receipt of many books as birthday and Christmas prezzies from Mum from an early age, is probably the real reason. That, and years of having to read and approve other people's words, in a government and management context, seems to have given me an eagle-eye for when something's not right. I don't always have a name for it (what's an infinitive and how do you split it?) but I do know it's not right.

Having been an editor for nearly 20 years in government (and having developed a reputation – watch out for Bruce's dreaded green pen mark-ups!), now that I have left its employ I have decided to turn it into an income stream (fingers crossed).

RobinsonTate has opened its doors for business and editing is one of the services it provides. Time will tell if work flows my way, other than the love jobs that my better half Vida routinely brings me, but I do know that, stemming from my innate love of the English language, I really enjoy editing and proofreading (almost as much as I like writing the words in the first place).

A thought has just occurred to me – an earlier part of my professional career saw me operating as a quality controller, comparing manufactured food products against known standards. This might be where I get my editor's love of the style guide and style sheet from – those standards against which we compare the author's work. How else do you know if what you're reading is good or bad, right or wrong? (At least from an editing perspective.) As a freelance editor the first question I like to ask prospective contract principals is: "Do you have a style guide?" If they do, then my editor's life is suddenly so much easier.



Congratulations to Polly and Sam Delany on the safe arrival of their beautiful baby son.



South Australia's Own... 4th IPED National Editors Conference

Getting the message across

The Fourth IPED National Editors Conference will bring together specialists and leaders in various fields related to publishing, editing and writing in all media. This conference aims to reach across these disciplines in order to present a comprehensive overview of today's world of editing, writing and publishing.

The conference will be held in Adelaide, South Australia, from 8 to 10 October 2009, at the Adelaide Festival Centre, situated on the picturesque banks of the River Torrens, a short walk from the CBD.

This conference is a meeting of writers, editors, publishers and individuals working in related fields. This year the conference boasts four keynote speakers: Neal Porter, a US-based editor; Julian Burnside, a well-known human rights advocate and barrister; Wendy McCarthy, a mentoring and education specialist; and last, but not least, South Australia's own Natasha Stott Despoja, a prominent figure in politics and the leader of the Democrats from 2001 to 2002.

The program includes:

- keynote addresses
- panel discussions on 'editors being edited', editors in the role of mentors, and a discussion on the future of editing
- papers on the editor-author relationship, 'green' editing, digital/future editing, and food
- an informal ceremony acknowledging the first accredited editors in Australia and wine editing, among many others
- practical workshops on the Saturday of the conference.

Social events are not forgotten: the welcome party at the University of South Australia; the civic reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Adelaide in the Queen Adelaide Room of the Adelaide Town Hall; and a conference dinner at the National Wine Centre, which lays claim to some of Australia's finest food and wines. Participants can enjoy: the scenic view of the River Torrens; a stroll through the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, next to the National Wine Centre; and all the entertainment the City of Adelaide has to offer, as the heart of the city is within a short walking distance of the accommodation proposed to conference participants and guests.

Conference registrations are open now. Earlybird registrations close on 14 July 2009.

The call for papers is now closed.

The major sponsors of the 4th IPED National Editors Conference are John Wiley & Sons Australia and the Cultural Fund of the Copyright Agency Limited. Other sponsors include Wakefield Press, She Creative, Seaview Press and Coriole Vineyards.

For more information on the conference, see the conference website <http://www.editors-sa.org.au/?q=conference>

Register for the conference now at:

<http://www.sapro.com.au/editors/register.htm>

For further information or media enquiries, contact: <SAPresident@editors-sa.org.au>.

Welcome to New Members

- * Marilyn Beresford
- * Rosy Borland * Mia Gibson-Powell
- * Kerry Goldsworthy
- * Linda Hodgkinson
- * Kelly Somers

POSTSCRIPT:**2009 IPEd National Editors Conference**

<http://www.editors-sa.org.au/?q=conference/conferenceprogram>

Registrations are open at:

<http://www.sapro.com.au/editors/register.htm>

Earlybird registrations close on 14 July 2009, so register now before the date slips by! There are generous discounts for students and cardholders.

The conference:

Where: Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide, South Australia

When: 8-10 October 2009

This is the premier professional development opportunity for editors in Australia. As well, we now have delegates from New Zealand and the US already registered.

REPORT on MEETING
19 May 2009

by Marilyn Beresford



Defamation demystified - or How to protect clients, and yourself!

Jamie Blanchard, a solicitor from Jackson McDonald Lawyers and a member of its commercial litigation team, alerted those present to the circumstances under which editors might be sued.

In his introduction, Jamie indicated his talk provided only a general overview and was not intended as legal advice.

His presentation covered the Defamation Act 2005, an introduction to defamation and defamation in practice, supplemented by seventeen pages of notes originally intended to accompany a set of slides.

Jamie's check of the Supreme Court website indicated that few defamation cases proceed to court, and that, since 2005, only 48 were successful.

The Defamation Act 2005 is a relatively simple piece of legislation and is available as a free download from the State Law Publisher website at

<http://www.slp.wa.gov.au>

The objects of the Act are (i) to enact uniform laws of defamation in Australia; (ii) to ensure that the law of defamation does not place unreasonable limits on freedom of expression; (iii) to provide redress to persons whose reputations are harmed; and, (iv) to promote speedy and non-litigious methods of resolution.

The Act defines defamation as private wrong between two people, abolishes the distinction between slander and libel, and provides no causes of action for defamation of, or against, deceased persons.

While the Act allows one year in which to bring action against a defendant, the court may extend this time if, for example, an individual takes 18 months to get hold of the offending document via FOI legislation and the one year time limit is deemed unreasonable.

For a successful prosecution the three elements of defamation – publication, defamatory imputation or meaning, and identification – have to be present. In addition, none of the defences should apply.

With respect to publication it is important to note that every participant with any control over a publication may be sued, including editors. In the case of *Webb v. Bloch* where two committee members checked a document, they were each seen to have had some control over that document and were liable for defamation.

Even a report of another's statement is judged a re-publication and the re-publisher liable to prosecution if a person's reputation is being harmed – quoting another does not absolve the re-publisher.

Lawyers become particularly involved in the 'defamatory imputation or

meaning' element of defamation. They look for a defamatory meaning (the 'imputation' or 'sting') in the published material or what 'hurt' the plaintiff's feelings and damaged the plaintiff's reputation.

The 'ordinary reasonable reader test' also applies in defamation cases – that is, whether the ordinary reasonable person with general knowledge or experience of worldly affairs would find the statement defamatory. In the case of *Favell v. Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd*, there was an imputation that the Flavells had committed a crime of arson. Even though the article didn't say that they had burnt down their house, the information was presented in such a way that any 'ordinary reasonable reader' would have taken that to be the meaning.

The final element of defamation, identification, must also be present. Essentially, if a person can be easily identified then this element is present.

The Defences outlined in the Act include: Truth, Absolute Privilege, Public Reports, Fair Report of Proceedings of Public Concern, Qualified Privilege, Honest Opinion and Innocent Dissemination. Section 30 of the Act sets out a helpful checklist.

The resolution of disputes without litigation is another area pertinent to editors working in this area. Apologies in the press are increasing. If a publisher receives a 'concerns notice' (which outlines the defamatory imputations of concern to the aggrieved person) he or she has the opportunity to make amends before there is court action – and even if not

accepted by the plaintiff, this may still be included in the defence.

The final part of Jamie Blanchard's presentation covered the practical implications of the Defamation Act 2005 and testing whether a matter is defamatory by asking:

- Is it published to a third party? To whom and where?
- Is there a defamatory imputation? What does it mean?
- Can the person being defamed be identified?
- Are there defences available:
 - Truth – can it be proven?
 - Contextual truth?
 - Fair report?
 - Qualified privilege – does the reasonableness test apply? (checklist)
 - Honest opinion – is it based on proper material?

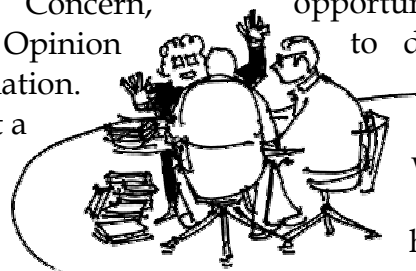
Other practical implications relate to action required in response to a concerns notice – seek professional advice, consider publishing an apology and consider an offer to make amends.

From a plaintiff's perspective, going to court is not the best way to deal with defamation: it can increase the harm to the person's reputation; it may provide opportunity for the defendant's team to dig around in the person's background for information that the person would not want made public.

In closing, Jamie indicated his willingness to talk through any concerns that members might have but warned that to deal with more complicated issues, he may have to open a file.

Amanda Curtin, who chaired the meeting, invited questions from members and guests.

Q: In defence of honest opinion, do you have to get the other person's view?



A: There is a fine line here but if the opinion is honestly held then there is no harm in contacting the person for their view.

Q: Is a reviewer liable for defamation?

A: Comments in a review might be a circumstance of public interest.

Q: If you have recommended against something as an editor but the self-publishing author ignores your advice, are you liable?

A: It depends on how much control you have. You might have to dissociate yourself from the publication. In the case of self-publishing, it would be judicious to remove yourself and keep a copy of the details of your removal.

Q: What happens if a partner or other person is defamed in an autobiography?

A: The author could either wait until the partner or other person dies or could collect enough evidence to prove the truth of their statements. It would be unlikely to go to court but you might get a concerns notice. Suing for defamation is not a way to make money. Damages are capped at \$250,000.

Q: What would an offer to make amends have to include?

A: The offer to make amends is what **you** think is reasonable. For example, you might not think it reasonable to get rid of the whole print run.

Q: What if an interviewee defames someone but you, as editor, are removed from the writing?

A: If your name is on the publication, if you have participated, every time someone reads the statement there is another instance of defamation and you are liable.

Q: What if a real person is defamed in a work of fiction?

A: If the person can be identified, you can be liable. However, you can't defame a corporation but you can defame an organisation of less than 10 people.

Q: What if there is innuendo in a book?

A: The fact that other people have made a statement is not a defence. You have to think about what the words actually mean. It's what the reasonable reader thinks not the person concerned or the author. If a person is said to have a 'dodgy' reputation, how would you prove that the person is dodgy?

Q: What are the legal fees associated with checking for defamation?

A: For a short article it would cost between \$500 and \$2000 to check for defamation. In the case of a book, it's hard to say. To reduce the cost you could write a report outlining your concerns and providing a chronology and supporting documents.

Q: If you enter into a signed contract with an author, does a disclaimer legally hold up in relation to defamation.

A: You would have to state that the author is responsible for any damages associated with defamation.

Q: What if you are publishing internationally?

A: The law is different in the USA but similar in the UK. With publishing on the internet you can now be subject to 186 jurisdictions but you would look at where the person is and where they might be most harmed.

Amanda thanked Jamie and he repeated his offer to talk to members. His contact details are: Tel: 9426 6611 Direct: 9426 6698
Email: jblanchard@jacmac.com.au

[Thank you, Marilyn for a very comprehensive report on this important issue.]

Want more letters after your name?

Postnominals: AE, AAE and DE

There have been a number of requests for clarification about the terms **AE**, **AAE** and **DE**. The following explains the background to the scheme and attempts to answer these questions.

Background

The IPed accreditation scheme is the result of some 10 years of planning and consultation, initially by the Accreditation Working Group (2001–2004) and then by the Accreditation Board (from 2005). A national vote put to all society members in 2007 endorsed two levels of accreditation, earned through assessment:

- Accredited Editor, or AE
- Advanced Accredited Editor, or AAE.

To enable any assessment to occur, one needs examiners and markers. The Accreditation Working Group's Final Report (2004) included the following recommendation: 'in consultation with each state and territory, to set up an interim pool of assessors comprising distinguished editors acceptable to their peers'.

Each society was asked to nominate individuals who met the criteria for being considered a 'distinguished editor': career editors who were endorsed by their societies, who were accomplished and respected by their peers, who were ethical, and who were active supporters of editing standards. The nominees had to have the unanimous approval of their committee, and also had to accept the role. (Several declined.)

The 26 editors thus nominated formed the Assessors Forum and have been entrusted with the role of accreditation assessment.

Because they are ineligible to apply for accreditation, they have been granted the honorary rank of 'Distinguished Editor', or 'DE'.

This process was described in CredAbility 1, May 2007, and is on the IPed website at <http://www.iped-editors.org/node/59>. All of the assessors' profiles are on the IPed website at <http://www.iped-editors.org/node/81> (CredAbility 3, July 2007).

The first exam, held in October 2008, saw a total of 112 editors across the country achieve AE status. The second level – Advanced Accredited Editor – is now being developed. IPed anticipates that this will be introduced in 2010 or 2011.

Accredited Editor, or AE

To achieve Accredited Editor status, candidates must sit a three-hour editing exam based on *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. Those who are successful earn the right to use the postnominal 'AE' (Accredited Editor) and receive a certificate stating their accredited status. Accreditation is valid for five years, after which accredited editors may apply for re-accreditation by providing evidence of their continuing involvement in the industry and their participation in professional development activities (through vocational training, conference attendance, presentation of papers, and so on). A modest renewal application fee will apply.

Advanced Accredited Editor, or AAE

It is expected that at some point in 2010 or 2011, Accredited Editors will have the right to apply for the more senior level of accreditation, Advanced Accredited Editor, or AAE. The mechanism for granting advanced accreditation is being developed by the

Assessors Forum, in consultation with the Accreditation Board. A scheme will be put forward for discussion as soon as it is ready, possibly at the fourth National Editors Conference in Adelaide in October 2009.

Distinguished Editor, or DE

While at present all members of the Assessors Forum are Distinguished Editors, the stated intention of the accreditation scheme is for more editors to be asked to join the Assessors Forum as the accreditation scheme develops, drawn from the ranks of those who have achieved Advanced Accreditation. The aim is to ensure that the profession as a whole regulates itself, and that accreditation is not controlled by a small and possibly unrepresentative group.

The efforts of the assessors since their appointment have been focused on helping develop the database of exam questions, providing advice to the exam development team on exam content, and marking the 2008 exams.

However, the Assessors Forum has on its 2009 agenda the matter of determining how it functions in future, i.e. whether this initial pool of assessors is the only group granted DE rank, because they are the only ones ineligible to sit for accreditation. All future assessors will by definition be accredited to AAE level, and could perhaps be appointed for a fixed term (2, 3 or 5 years, say) and carry a different honorary title. This is all up for discussion this year, and recommendations will be put to the Accreditation Board for review. Members will have the opportunity to put their views.

There has been some suggestion that those granted DE status have a competitive advantage over AEs. The reality is that these people, many of them Honorary Life Members of their societies, are not generally competing with other freelancers for work: they have full-time work in tertiary institutions or industry, or have an established client base if they are freelancing; others are either retired or close to it. They have no vested interest in being a DE, and have put far more into the accreditation process than they will get back.

Guidelines for postnominals

As these postnominals are new, IPed suggests that editors ensure that either an explanation or a full spelling is provided when using AE, AAE or DE. It may also be necessary to explain IPed.

For example, 'Jane Doe, AE (Accredited Editor, Institute of Professional Editors Limited)', or 'Jane Doe is an Accredited Editor (AE)'.

Qualifications should be listed in this order:

- national and Royal honours (AO, AM, AC, KCMG etc)
- degrees, diplomas
- fellowships then memberships (including AE, AAE and DE).
