

Editing matters

The magazine for editors and proofreaders

Jan/Feb 2007

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In this issue: **Sylvia Sullivan** and **Caroline Petherick** review Presidential and Vice-Presidential books; **Anna-Marie Swann** explores reference books; **Barbara Horn** treats self-publishing with caution – but it's not a cautionary tale; **Caroline Landon** ponders the finer points of science editing; **plus** news and all the regular features.

£3.50



SfEP trainees keen to upgrade their skills tackle proofreading problems.

Money for new rope

Jane Ward

Starting a new career involves the painful realization that you cannot simply say 'I am a proofreader' or 'I am a copy-editor' and magically be one. The SfEP stresses the importance of learning the skills for the job, and offers training courses for those starting out. There are also courses for more advanced people, as well as professional development days and the annual conference, to confirm that we see continued learning as an important part of maintaining our professionalism.

However, such events have to be funded, often out of a freelance income. This is most difficult at the early stages, when income is low. We are delighted, therefore, to announce that the SfEP has been awarded a grant from the Sue Thomson Foundation to support training within the Society.

The intention of this grant is to help associates reach the standards required for full membership of the SfEP. Each year, the Society has a sizeable intake of new associates. Some of these are simply testing the water for a new career, but others remain committed; it is those in this latter group that we feel need the most help. We see these associates as people who have already shown commitment by undertaking the early training courses but need to do one more course to achieve the training points required to upgrade to full membership and have the option of advertising in the *SfEP Directory*.

Further initiatives

We already give training vouchers to new associates. Moves initiated at the last AGM will waive the upgrade fees for associates who upgrade within two years of joining the Society. For members, we continue to introduce new courses, and the professional development days are for those who are already working actively in a particular field, to enable them to hone their skills and to network. Our annual conference covers issues of professionalism, gives tasters for new skills and provides a valuable opportunity to learn through networking.

We need to broaden the range of opportunities open to SfEP members for gaining and practising skills. At present, we are reviewing ways to provide more training opportunities. The aim we must all have is to ensure that when someone looks for an editorial professional, their first port of call is the SfEP.

To find out more about the grants for training, see p14. The booking forms for Conference 2007 and the associated training day accompany this issue.

About the author ...

Jane Ward is now the professional development director of the Society, and is an experienced science editor.

E D I T O R I A L

Editing the Rumsfeld way

Christina Thomas



Once Anna-Marie Swann had completed her initial proof-reading training, she very properly turned her mind to building a reference library. On p4 you can find out what she decided to invest in. There are few absolutes when deciding which titles should adorn your bookshelf. Gillian Clarke and I have more than once debated the relative merits of *The Penguin Guide to Punctuation* and *Mind the Stop*: she favours the latter, which I find too discursive; but neither book is wrong, it's a matter of preference.

When I was at university I presented one of my tutors with a copy of his book to sign. Since I had done little work in his subject and he marked the written paper I had to take for finals, it seemed like a sensible precaution. The gesture backfired – he graciously wrote on the title page and remarked that another time he would like to see some evidence of well-thumbed pages. Nowadays I usually read a new reference book, if not cover to cover, at least substantially. This means that I have a better idea of how to use it.

There is no point in having a shelf full of reference books if you don't have an enquiring mind that insists not only that you look up the things you know you don't know, but also that you cultivate an awareness of where your blind spots might be. But even the best reference work will have its limitations. In some cases you can gain an awareness of the issues involved, but you need more than a passage in a book on a skill or an area of expertise to be able to add the kind of value a client requires.

For once the ex-defense secretary of the US has something useful to say: 'there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.'

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Editing matters

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Why did I do it?

Once bitten, twice shy. Barbara Horn decided that it was worth braving the waters of self-publishing – and didn't catch a cold.

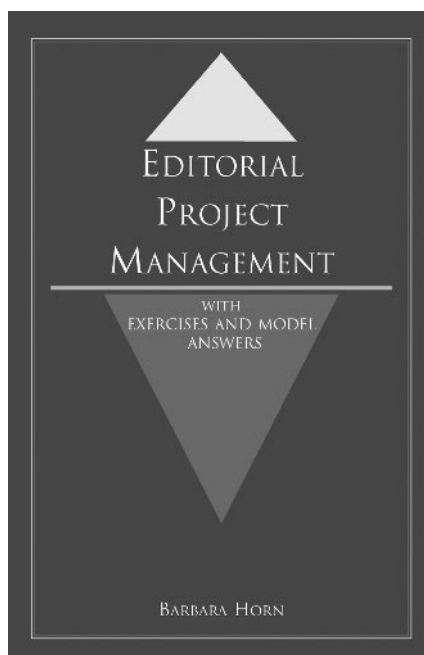
The first book I wrote, *The Effective Editor's Handbook*, was commissioned and published by a large specialist publisher. It was an interesting experience for an editor, but the marketing was more limited than I was originally led to believe. It was difficult to communicate with the firm too: I had to make sustained efforts even to find out that my editor and the marketing contact had left, and, because the company changed its policy on what kind of books it would produce, the remaining stock of my book was pulped without giving me an opportunity to buy it. I suspect that many other authors would say this was par for the course.

Nonetheless, when I wrote *Editorial Project Management by Distance Learning*, I approached a large publisher (I'll call it LP for ease of reference) with a publishing list to see whether it would be interested in doing a trade book version. It took longer than I expected – during which time the post of commissioning editor was held by three people in succession – to reach a decision, but the good news was that it had examined the proposal and had decided it could sell enough copies to make a contribution to its profits. And so LP sent me a contract – a standard contract with standard terms: a small advance and a royalty of 7.5% of net receipts. No surprises there. Although I was pleased at the positive outcome and didn't expect to get rich on this book, or any other I might write, I couldn't help being struck by how very little I stood to earn.

It was clear to me that there were three alternatives to accepting the offer: don't publish, look for another publisher or self-publish. I believed that my book would be useful, and LP had confirmed that there was a market for it, so I discounted the first alternative. I thought that LP had got

the size of the market right and that the few other firms publishing for this market would not come up with a significantly better offer, so no need to pursue alternative two. That left self-publishing.

Just because you can publish doesn't mean that there is a market for your book or that you can reach it and make a profit or even break even. Although I am in the industry, I wouldn't self-publish a book with a wide target audience, because the



marketing and distribution would be beyond my understanding and means. However, my book on project management was aimed at a niche market, so I weighed the pros and cons of proceeding.

● **Pros:** I am an experienced project manager, have contacts in all aspects of the business, have a clearly identified market and would have complete control of the project, which would reduce the potential for stress and frustration. For example, whereas any large publisher would publicize

such a book once, if at all, I could publicize the book as often as, and in any way that, I thought appropriate. I spoke to a colleague who had self-published a work with a similarly niche market, and was encouraged by her experience and her profit margin.

● **Cons:** it would be a lot of work. I would have to not only prepare the text but also manage the project. I would have to pay for all the work, from editing to printing, and do my own marketing and fulfillment or pay for someone to do that too.

I knew I could manage the extra work, so the only issue was whether I could afford – and would be willing – to risk the money.

Chapter 2 of my book is about budgets, so I took my own advice and prepared one. Although my costs were probably higher than LP's, because I didn't have any economy of scale in paper and printing, I saw that I could afford to produce the book. However, there would be no point in taking on the extra work and the risk if my profits weren't going to be significantly higher than LP's. Why should they be? Because I am a freelancer publishing a single book in a year, which I would be selling mainly by direct mail, and most of my overheads would be covered by my other work, whereas LP is an enormous firm publishing about 700 titles a year, selling to retailers at large discounts, and it has overheads of perhaps 40 per cent. Money that LP would have to allocate to discounts and overheads, I could take as profit.

Was self-publishing worth the effort and risk? Sure. Both the author and the publisher are satisfied with the book, and are likely to earn a lot more than LP could offer.

About the author ...

Barbara Horn is a highly experienced editor, project manager, trainer and author. She is SfEP's representative at the BSI, and is a director of Paperlessproofs.

The importance of being earnest

Anna-Marie Swan was faced with the problem that many proofreaders and editors encounter of deciding which reference books are absolute 'must haves'. Here, she gives her definitive selection.



In 2006 I completed a home-study course in proofreading. Throughout my study I felt that I was not given enough practice material, and was thus unprepared to start marketing myself as a professional proofreader (let alone actually bill anyone for my services) once I had finished. Initially, I could offer my services for free to more experienced SfEP proofreaders and editors in return for mentoring. But there was still a huge gap in my confidence concerning my knowledge of English grammar and punctuation. I felt that at the tender age of twenty-eight I was woefully unschooled in the vast ocean of rules and regulations that apply to the English language – despite what was meant to be a very good education.

My course material did include a reference and further study section, to which I had eagerly turned. It recommended that I purchase a standard dictionary or two, plus a spelling dictionary, an American dictionary, a word-break dictionary and, of course, a good thesaurus. Then there were the 'essentials': *The Writer's Handbook*, Judith Butcher's *Copy-editing* and *The Oxford Guide to Style*. Also of interest might be books on publishing, books on style, books on designing ... Phew, both my brain and my bank account were exhausted!

A beginner's library

I originally purchased the *Oxford Style Manual*, which I was wonderfully surprised to find was actually an amalgamated version of *Hart's Rules* and *The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (my bank account breathed a sigh of relief!), and which

has since become a much thumbed point of reference; *The Writer's Handbook 2006*; the *New Oxford Spelling Dictionary*, which I'm still hoping will come into its own during the course of my career; and the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which has ousted my best friend from pride of place. I also own a copy of *The Complete Plain Words* by Gowers, a Christmas present during one of my 'I want to know absolutely everything there is to know about grammar' phases – in my opinion, a dreary and inaccessible read.

And so, thus prepared, I started to proofread. However, it seemed that either I had chosen unwisely or I just needed more books! With SfEPLine having become my first port of call (can I take this moment to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you who take time out of your busy days to answer 'newbie' questions), I turned to more experienced members, and posted a message asking people to recommend the reference books that they felt were the most useful (I needed an American dictionary) and to recommend a grammar book that was inviting and written this millennium (sorry Gowers fans).

The responses were limited but informative. Judith Butcher's *Copy-editing* came out on top. The *Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation* is, as recommended, wonderfully easy to dip into (and it uses lots of nice colours). Finding the 'perfect' American dictionary wasn't so easy, as there were a few different suggestions. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is said to be excellent, but has a lofty price tag. (I'm currently deciding which items of furniture I could pawn for that one – after all, who needs chairs and a bed?) What I've really learnt from my varied responses is that everyone finds different books helpful, and I'm just

going to have to comb through all the different opinions and decide which ones sound the best for me.

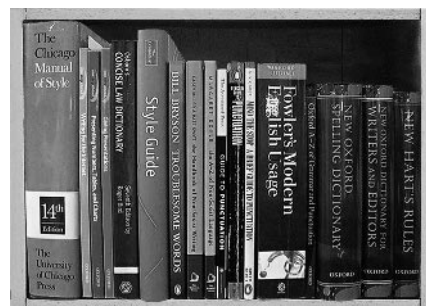
The one problem I have with SfEPLine is the feeling that my queries have probably come up before. I have at times found myself wishing that SfEPLine had a 'frequently asked questions' section; not just suggesting recommended books but with useful information on grammar, punctuation, software, etc. It seems to me that the Society is in the unique position of having experienced members with similar skills, and pooling that knowledge into an easily accessible place would be a godsend for us 'tadpoles' in the pond of editing and proofreading.

And so, this is my recommended 'newbie's starter kit':

- A dictionary (*OED* is my favourite)
- *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*
- *New Hart's Rules*
- *New Oxford Spelling Dictionary* (this includes word breaks)
- *Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation* (I'm honestly not sponsored by Oxford University Press!)
- Bill Bryson's *Troublesome Words*
- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (if you can afford it).

About the author ...

Anna-Marie Swan is now partway through the PTC course on copy-editing. She offers freelance services under the trading name Pixie Pages.



Enhancing your Word life

Since much of the modern editor's life revolves around Microsoft Word, it's as well to consider ways in which you can make it work better, to enhance those desk-bound hours. Paul Sensecall explains how.



There are numerous software titles out there vying for your attention and hard-earned cash to help with your Word experience, and the choice you make

will depend on your personal preferences and requirements. The following, affordable, software products are my own personal recommendations for 21st-century on-screen copy-editors.

Top five software hit parade

1. Editor's ToolKit Plus

Mac and Windows, free trial version available (www.editorium.com) Nothing else comes close to the usefulness of this software suite for cleaning files and making your editing life easier. The software contains numerous shortcuts, quick keys and time-saving features. If you edit and produce polished Word files, you need this.

2. MegaReplacer

Mac and Windows, free trial version available (www.editorium.com) Essential if you often have to search and replace specific words/formatting, according to publication style. You simply create a list of 'before' and 'after' text, then click the button, and MegaReplacer will make the changes for you simultaneously, or you can be prompted and approve each change sequentially. A huge time-saver.

3. ReferenceChecker

Windows only, free trial version available (www.goodcitations.com) I'm slightly biased, being a co-developer of ReferenceChecker, but why toil over checking reference

lists and citations when you can get a machine to do the work for you?

4. MathType

Mac and Windows, free trial version available (www.dessci.com) An easy-to-use program for creating/editing mathematical text, with flexible formatting features. If you work on a moderate/large number of publications with displayed and inline equations, don't just rely on the equation editor in Word.

5. DeskPins

Windows only, freeware (<http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis/programs/deskpins.html>) This handy little program keeps any application topmost. It is particularly useful for managing files in Windows Explorer – and it's free!

Handy websites

There are many websites offering invaluable tips and advice for Word users of different levels of experience. Microsoft's own knowledge base (www.microsoft.com/office/frontpage/support/KB.asp) is huge in content, though it is sometimes cumbersome to find the exact information one is looking for. Jack Lyon's aforementioned Editorium website has invaluable advice and tips in the newsletter back-issues section (www.editorium.com/euindex.htm), and Allen Wyatt's Word Tips website (<http://wordtips.vitalnews.com>) has some useful information and shortcuts for Word users.

Further thoughts

RSI is an ever-present threat to us all. You can lower its likelihood by dumping that weighty old mouse with the ball inside that keeps picking up dust and dirt, and investing in a smoother, lighter,

optical mouse with an easily scrollable mouse-wheel button. Not all mouse-wheel buttons are the same, though, even from the same manufacturer. For example, Microsoft's Wireless Optical Mouse 5000 has a smooth scroll feature and does indeed have a wheel button, but it is extremely hard to press, so much so that it rather defeats the object. In contrast, Microsoft's three-button Wheel Mouse Optical 1.1A USB/PS2 Compatible is blissful to use, owing to its easily depressible wheel button, light weight (a *very* important factor) and easily customizable button settings. A word of caution: cordless mice often use batteries, and can thus be heavy. If in doubt, try before you buy.

Back up those files! Don't mess about with nasty spinning external hard drives for file back-up – just buy a 1-GB USB solid-state flash drive for a few quid and be done with it (preferably USB 2.0 for higher speed, if supported by your machine). Until mRAM (magnetoresistive random-access memory; see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/5202486.stm) becomes commercially available at the same price per megabyte as current flash drives, USB 2.0 flash drives are the most convenient option for backing up those valuable Word files. Handy tip: if you have several spare compact flash cards, memory sticks, SD cards, etc. (which you might have for digital cameras or other devices), you can use these with a USB 2.0 card reader, which you simply plug into your machine's USB 2.0 slot. Many readers don't require any additional software – just plug in and go.

About the author ...

Paul Sensecall is an advanced member of the SfEP, full-time freelance editor and a co-developer of the innovative ReferenceChecker for Word (www.goodcitations.com).

Work from the Directory

Some time ago on SfEPLine there was a flurry of emails about work obtained, or not obtained, through advertising in the *Directory*. Loulou Brown tells her own, very positive, experience of taking a *Directory* entry.

When I advertised for work in the 2002 *Directory* I was studying for a master's degree in English literature. That my mind was more on my studies than on my work clearly shows. For instance, none of the subjects that I said I knew something about were listed in bold, so they didn't stand out. Also, I certainly didn't spend much time working out what to say to publicize myself: there was little to indicate that I could edit or proofread anything at all! The 2002 entry is about what I had done or was doing, rather than what I knew and could do. I now see that saying, in a rather haughty, pompous tone, 'Three careers titles published' and 'Currently studying for an MA in English literature', together with 'In-depth knowledge of literary theory', was not going to get me very far. In fact, I'm amazed that I got any work at all from that *Directory* entry – but I did get two jobs, and the amount I earned from them paid not only for my *Directory* entry but also for the following year's SfEP membership.

Second thoughts

I didn't take another entry in the *Directory* until 2005. I was then much more careful and, quite apart from emphasizing subjects I knew about in bold, I spent a great deal of time thinking about what to say about myself and working out the relevant words to use. There was now far less about the books I'd written and work I'd done, and far more about the expertise I've gained over the years, indicating what I know and can do.

I seem to have got the words right, because I've had a lot of work over the last two years, which has been varied and extremely interesting. This year, for example, I spent three months editing an almanac of Chinese medicine. There were nearly

50 articles, and everything, but everything, had to be checked: names, references, dates and spelling. A major difficulty was dealing with non-idiomatic English. I really enjoyed myself, and also learnt a great deal – not only about Chinese medicine but also how to search the internet using Google. I also gained a lot more knowledge about editing on-screen. More recently, I've been plunged into the mountain mists of Guatemala, editing a wonderful book about the Maya and the way they live.

Last year I worked on a book about creative writing, which was very well written but nevertheless required a lot of editing to achieve consistency. It also had to be placed in a peculiar template that the publisher provided, which I found difficult. I've also worked on a number of novels, including two thrillers, one based in Tokyo and one in the UK, a literary novel based in both mainland Europe and Ireland, and a historical novel with the heroine a contemporary of the 17th-century Duke of Buckingham.

Since I've been listed in the *Directory* I've been very happy with my work. I've managed to work on books that I'm really interested in; and, what's more important, people find and employ me! During the last two years I've worked on about ten projects coming from the *Directory*, together with another (approximately) 15 projects from elsewhere. I've turned down around 20 *Directory* projects – only two because I didn't find the work appealing (they were bodice rippers). One job was truly agonizing to say no to – editing a very famous feminist's new work – but I really could not take the job on because I had more than enough work to cope with at the time.

Why me?

I'm not altogether sure why I get work from the *Directory*, and other SfEP members apparently don't. It can't be because of my grade of membership – I'm only an ordinary member (perhaps I'd better do something about that). It might be something to do with my name – I'm the only person called Loulou; it might also be because I'm near the front of the *Directory* (B for Brown) and have always appeared on a right-hand page. It's possibly because I do have a lot of qualifications, though these cannot ensure that I'm good as either an editor or a proofreader. More probably it's because I really do have a lot of expertise – that is, I know about a lot of things in many areas – because I've worked in publishing for many years and have also read a mountain of books.

If you are thinking of advertising in the *Directory*, I reckon that if you concentrate on getting your entry right, you will get work. I did and do; you can too.

About the author ...

Loulou Brown is slightly dyslexic, can't spell and never learnt any grammar at school. She discovered, however, early on in her career that she had a flair for the nuances and idiomatic use of the English language, and has been an editor and proofreader for more years than she cares to remember. She would welcome feedback on this article, and can be contacted at louloubrown@btinternet.com.

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A cut above: How to become a true editorial professional

Building working relationships

Eleanor Stanley



It takes far less effort to retain existing clients than to court new ones, so once you've got a good client it's worth hanging on to

them. You can help create a good rapport by focusing on two areas: what the client needs from you, and how you communicate with them.

Know what the client wants

The foundation of a successful working relationship is your ability to meet the client's needs – but working out what these are can be tricky. The ideal way to understand the commissioning editor's lot is to become one yourself, or to work alongside one. If any opportunities arise to work in-house, or to project manage, then take them. If that isn't possible, then try some lateral thinking – it's not only in our editorial work that we get the chance to commission. Think about the last time that you had a builder or plumber in. What annoyed you the most? In the unlikely event that you've actually found a contractor who deserves no complaints at all, you're likely to refer to them as 'gold dust'. Well, that's how things work in the world of the commissioning editor too.

More than anything, commissioning editors like working with freelancers who inspire confidence. As a freelance, it's easy to feel like a very passive party, waiting humbly for the all-powerful client to give you some work. But as a commissioner, the most appealing contractors are those who are confident in their skills and able to empathize with what you need. Gaining qualifications and taking part in networks will give you a

boost to help you sound reassuringly confident, but working on your communication skills is important too.

Beyond the basic requirements, it's important to remember that every commissioning editor has different needs, depending on the organization and the project in hand. Some have managers with an unrealistic sense of scheduling, so they need people who can work at short notice. Others may find it hard to find freelancers who specialize in a given field, and so need editors who can really engage with the subject matter. Still others may often produce reports written (badly!) by senior managers, and so crave people who can liaise effectively with authors. Think about the particular challenges that each client faces and how you can help meet them.

Become a 'real' person

However well your work is targeted to the client's needs, it's a sad fact that if all you are to your client is a name on a list of freelancers, you may well be overlooked. So you need to know the name of one main contact, and to help them know who you are. Again, in-house work is ideal, but, otherwise, try to use the phone sometimes rather than always emailing, and once you've done a couple of jobs for a client, ask if you can fix up a time to pop in for a quick chat. If they're not keen, then no harm done, but once they've met you, you'll have a better sense of what their needs are, and to them you'll become more than just a database entry.

Stay in touch

Once you've completed one commission for a client, get in touch every so often so they don't forget who you are. If the person leaves the company, make a point of introducing yourself to their replacement. If you're going through a quiet patch, you can always put out feelers for work, but

avoid sounding needy. Saying 'I'm booking up my schedule for the next few months, and I'd like to make sure I can keep some time aside for you' sounds better than 'Have you got any work available?'. Similarly, if you're moving house, or if you've passed an SfEP test, email clients to let them know. Don't bombard them though – it's probably best not to send uninvited emails more than two or three times a year.

Speak the same language

Finally, try to take your social cues from the client. If their emails start 'Hi', don't start yours with 'Dear'. If they are chatty, be chatty back. If they wear suits to meetings, don't turn up in jeans. No commissioner likes to think that the person they're paying is getting a better deal out of their working life than they are, so when the phone rings, turn down the radio, and send emails during normal office hours where possible. In short, show the client that even though you're a freelance, you're 'one of them'.

Tips for thriving working relations

- Think of your client as a fellow colleague with needs and stresses.
- Meet them face to face, and phone as well as email.
- Make it clear that you enjoy working for them.
- Ask for feedback.
- Highlight potential problems early and suggest solutions where appropriate.
- Be sensitive, but not overly so – if they're abrupt, they may well just be busy.

About the author ...

Eleanor Stanley is a writer, editor and trainer. She is a member of the NUJ, an associate member of the SfEP and an Approved Consultant with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Visit her website at www.eleanorstanley.co.uk

Finer points

Science editing: ethical considerations



Caroline Landon

Is your knowledge up to the challenge of scientific editing? There is more to this than having an academic qualification, and this article – the first in a series of ‘Finer points’ that aims to highlight the details that they do not teach us at school – furthers our education by examining ethics.

It is especially important in the relatively lucrative and prolific area of medical editing to be aware of ethical considerations that are imposed by the industry in an effort to keep its image shiny and clean.

Terminology

The terminology used to refer to people who take part in studies is very important, and whole books have been written on how not to dehumanize research subjects. Both the Council for Scientific Editors and the American Medical Association style manuals have useful sections on inclusive and bias-free language.

One of the basic rules is not to use the disease as a label for the person. Hence, we do not speak of diabetics, epileptics and asthmatics but of patients with diabetes, patients with epilepsy and patients with asthma. As ever, there are exceptions to this rule: it is allowable to talk of HIV-positive patients and cancer survivors.

It is also not acceptable to talk of an ‘attack’, as being ill is not a war. Instead of an asthma attack, we should refer to an asthma exacerbation; rather than a heart attack, talk of a myocardial infarction; it’s not an attack of hiccups but an episode of hiccups.

We must be careful to use the correct terms for the people involved in research. A patient is a person receiving medical care whose condition is described. A case is not a person but an episode of a condition occurring in a patient that is reported. Hence, it is inappropriate to refer to a

‘43-year-old case of pneumonia’; instead, this should be phrased as a ‘43-year-old patient with a case of pneumonia’.

Last but not least, racial origin can be an important factor in the aetiology of disease, and hence it is often appropriate to report this characteristic. Caution is needed, however, and you should refer to a reference book (see above) if at all unsure. It is usual to go with author preferences for descriptions of race, such as ‘white’, ‘black’ and ‘Asian’. One exception to this is the use of ‘Caucasian’, which is now considered an archaic term for white, and actually means someone from the Caucasus region.

Manuscript requirements

In recent years, many medical journals have formalized their guidelines to cover the ethical principles that must be adhered to by scientists in order to get published.

Most journals refer to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors’ requirements (www.icmje.org), which in turn refer to a detailed checklist contained in the CONSORT statement (www.consort-statement.org). This check-list sets out all of the information that must be supplied from a randomized controlled trial if its validity is to be adequately assessed, including:

- all the interventions used
- patient inclusion and exclusion criteria
- end-points (i.e. what they are measuring)
- statistical analyses and their rationale
- a patient flow diagram (so that all are accounted for) – this is commonly omitted by authors
- results for the end-points with patient numbers given in the form n/N (%), e.g. 10 out of 20 patients

(50%) responded to treatment – this is another common omission by authors

- adverse events.

It is also normal to have statements to the effect that:

- The trial was conducted according to good clinical practice guidelines and according to the Declaration of Helsinki.
- The protocol was approved by ethics committees/institutional review boards at each trial centre.
- Written informed consent was obtained from all participants (or from their parents/legal guardians where appropriate).

If such statements are not included where appropriate (a study in rats is unlikely to need written informed consent), then an author query should be raised, as the editor cannot assume that the study was conducted appropriately.

Something that the editor must watch for is breaches of patient anonymity. It is the right of all patients whose cases are reported in publications to remain anonymous. Distinguishing features in photos, exact dates of birth and patient initials should all be avoided.

Two other ethical issues are touched on in most journals’ instructions for authors.

First, the editor should request a declaration of competing interests if the author has not supplied one. If an author is a paid consultant to the pharmaceutical company whose drug is being investigated, this is an important fact that people need to be aware of in order to assess reporting bias.

Leading on from the declaration of competing interests is the acknowledgement of financial support and of ‘editorial assistance’. It is common for professional writers to report the findings from a trial, and this is considered acceptable (well, just

about) so long as their involvement is acknowledged and a statement is included to the effect that the 'authors' whose names appear on the byline had full control at every stage of manuscript preparation.

Obviously, this article can only skim the surface of this contentious issue, but it should alert those of you who are thinking of making the move into this new area that it is not all about what you learnt at school.

About the author ...

Caroline Landon is a freelance copy-editor and proofreader who specializes in scientific texts. She has lived in Cheshire long enough to acquire two children with northern accents who correct her southern vowels.

Business matters

Be careful what you say and agree to

Catherine Green



In an effort to increase the number of clients, and ultimately profit, when you are offering a service in an area that is competitive,

it can be easy to overlook what you have said and what you have agreed. If something goes wrong, then your client is entitled to refer to the statements that you made in any advertisement or on the phone before they agreed to engage your services, and to the terms of their contract with you. It is therefore important to be careful what you say, and to ensure that the terms you want apply every time to each client.

You need to be very wary of what you say or write to a client before they enter into a contract with you. If you make a false statement of fact that you intend the client to rely on and it induces them to enter into the contract, you have made a misrepresentation. The client can then recover any monies paid out and treat the contract as if it had never been entered into and/or claim damages for losses that they have incurred, depending on what type of misrepresentation has taken place.

A fraudulent misrepresentation occurs when a person makes a

statement without having an honest belief in the statement. A negligent misrepresentation occurs when a person makes a statement carelessly and without reasonable grounds for believing that it is true. If a statement is made innocently that turns out to be false, it may be that it becomes a term of the contract when that is entered into. Therefore, when the client discovers that the statement is false, they can sue for losses incurred as a result of your breach of contract.

When a party sues for breach of contract, they claim the losses that they have suffered (terms and conditions try to limit the losses that can be claimed). They have to demonstrate to the court that they have tried to mitigate their losses, as there is a duty on parties to do this. So, for example, if ten red apples are supplied instead of ten green ones, the purchaser must try to sell the red apples to recoup some of the losses incurred as a result of the breach of contract.

Businesses have to ensure that any descriptions that they provide of their services are accurate and not misleading, otherwise they will fall foul of the Trade Descriptions Act. A description can be spoken, in writing, in a picture or implied. In order for an offence to be committed, the false description has to have a significant impact on the client's ability to use the service. The Act is not designed

to penalize small inaccuracies, although what constitutes 'small' depends on the individual circumstances and is up to the court to determine.

The Act makes it an offence to make a statement that you know is false or misleading or to be reckless in your statement in respect of many matters, including your qualifications and experience, the type of service provided and the involvement of accredited bodies. It is a criminal offence with a maximum fine of £5000 per offence at a magistrates' court. At a Crown Court the fine is unlimited, and you can be imprisoned for up to two years. In addition, your clients will probably claim the return of any money paid or losses incurred through the courts (for further details see www.tradingstandards.gov.uk).

When placing advertisements you have to consider their content carefully, as the Advertising Standards Authority will take action if advertisements are harmful, misleading or offensive. Many businesses are penalized, in particular, for misleading advertisements (for further details see www.asa.org.uk).

Most businesses have standard terms and conditions. Do you, and, if so, are they updated regularly to take into account changes in the law and do they apply to each and every contract? ►

In simple terms, if a client is not aware of your terms and conditions before entering into the contract, they do not apply. If they don't apply, a mixture of oral and written terms are likely to apply. There will be express terms, implied terms and statutory rights, such as those under the Sale and Supply of Goods Act (as amended).

Be careful of the 'battle of the forms'! If you send out your terms and conditions and your client writes back attaching their terms and conditions and you provide the service, their terms and conditions, not yours, will apply. If your terms and conditions say that your terms will prevail, quite often the court decides that neither party's terms apply.

If you have been acting for a client for a long time, you can argue they are aware of your terms and conditions, so you don't have to prove that they saw your terms before each separate contract. This is an argument of last resort – you should put in place procedures so that the terms are received each time. If your client can request your services through an internet site, make sure that your terms have to be read before progressing, and that the client acknowledges that they have read them.

In relation to the supply of services, it is implied that they are carried out with reasonable skill and care. If the terms do not cover a service, it should be provided for a reasonable price within a reasonable time.

This article gives a general overview only, and cannot be relied upon in any particular case. The need for specific legal advice must always be considered. For further information, please contact Catherine Green on 01793 527141 or by email at cg@lemon-co.co.uk.

About the author ...

Catherine Green is a senior solicitor in the commercial litigation team at Lemon & Co Solicitors (www.lemon-co.co.uk).

BOOK REVIEWS



The Fight for English: How Language Pundits Ate, Shot, and Left

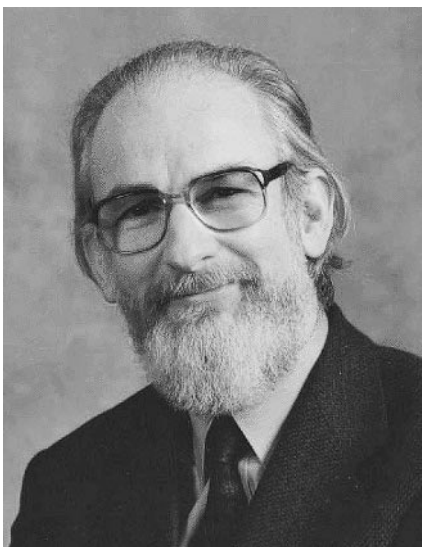
By David Crystal, OUP, Oxford, 2006.
256pp, £9.99 (hbk).
ISBN 0 19 920764 X

A page-turner on *linguistics*? Could such ever exist? Well, here's one; even in the face of a fearsome and immovable deadline, I found myself with my bedside light on at 3.00 am.

The subtitle gives an initial indication, and the start of the main text, confirmation, that those who are going to derive maximum enjoyment and enlightenment from this book will be people with a fair amount of intelligence, a hefty dose of experience and a seriously silly sense of humour.

So it's a response to ESL ...

The prime motivation for the writing of this book is clearly to provide a refutation of the prescriptive approach to language, alerting us that, beneath the wacky strapline 'the zero tolerance approach to punctuation', and *ESL's* jokey, inviting presentation, there lurks an attitude that is destructive, or worse: 'I am indeed unhappy about the trend represented by *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, and I think we should resist it' (p ix).



David Crystal, Vice-President of the Society

And, 'I fear that it has already done some damage. Which is a great shame, for that was not Lynne's intention at all' (p144).

... and a detective story ...

We share Crystal's mystification at the runaway success of *ESL*, and set out to discover why it occurred. First, there's a strong (as we of the SfEP well know) emotional *desire* to write right; and, second, there's been an educational hiatus since the 1960s. To meet those needs, Lynne Truss has provided the answers, and provided them with more than a spoonful of sugar.

... and a pedagogic text ...

Throughout the text, jostling for position around the core message of appropriateness in the use of language, are nuggets of useful information, conjured up in beguilingly entertaining form. They range from tackling the problems caused by the twin purposes of punctuation to the effective use of the historic present.

... and an autobiography

On p ix, Crystal asserts that 'fight' is not his metaphor. And he says on p72, 'It seems to be one of the consequences of becoming a usage critic that your own usage will be pilloried sooner or later.' Er, yes – those who live by the sword die by the sword. But despite that, the title of this book is more accurate than it might, those statements notwithstanding, appear. Why? Because, while much of it is concerned with setting out the context, the story turns out to be fundamentally that of David Crystal's own personal and lifelong fight for English.

Not just linguistics but our entire culture

There's a quiet revolution going on, right here in the UK. What's happening is a shift in our culture: we're gradually moving out of the

'might is right' system into a world in which each of us affords respect to all humans, regardless of colour, sex, age or type of intelligence.

This shift has taken place within the perception of power as well. No longer 'power over' others; our perception of authority is moving from godlike to fallible. Crystal helps it on its way with, on p94, 'We get prescriptions from the doctor ... and we hope their recommendations will make us better.' 'We hope' and 'recommendations' – a sea change from 'under doctor's orders'. Perhaps this shift in perception was given an initial impetus by the descriptive, rather than prescriptive, attitude of the compilers of *OED*. It is certainly visible in the more liberal attitude apparent in the *New Hart's Rules*.

Crystal addresses his theme in terms of our use of the English language. On p91, he says: 'one of the mysteries of the history of English usage is that [the liberal] side of [Johnson's] thinking did not become as influential as this other side. The side that everyone remembers is his pontificating.' On p93, he comments on the perennial presence of those who moan about corruption and decay in language, but although this is a long-term phenomenon he doesn't attempt to explain why this should be so. But, of course, the reasons underlying both of these forms of behaviour lie in human instinct, not in linguistics. So it seems to me that Crystal's world – within this book, at any rate – is somewhat bound by the limitations of his principal academic speciality.

And if that is so, he may be unaware, too, of the effect that the National Literary Strategy is set to have on the whole of the English-speaking world – because when we learn to use the language of people different from ourselves, we learn to respond to those people appropriately, and with respect. And respect for other human beings is what this quiet revolution is all about. So, Crystal is instrumental in this progression. This book, focusing as it does on perhaps the most important

of the more advanced aspects of our culture, is a beacon that lights the way forward, not just in the world of linguistics but to humanity as a whole. Read it. Move forward.

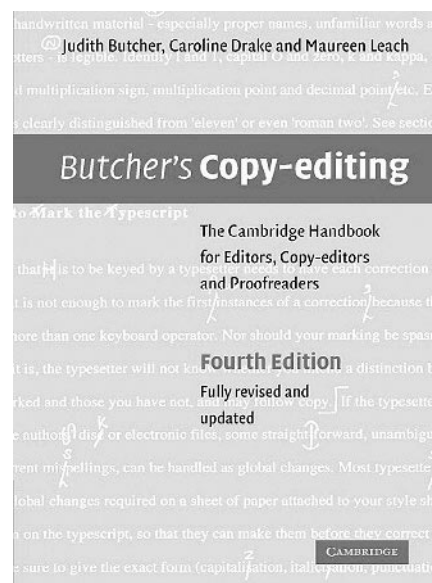
Caroline Petherick

Butcher's Copy-editing: The Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Copy-editors and Proofreaders

By Judith Butcher, Caroline Drake and Maureen Leach, CUP, Cambridge, 2006 (4th edition). 548pp, £45.00 (hbk). ISBN 0 521 84713 3

When I first started freelancing, I visited a prospective client in search of work. The interviewer picked up a green book and waved it at me: 'Are you familiar with this?' 'Ah,' I was able to reply, 'my bible.' And so it has been ever since – *Butcher* has sat on my shelf of reference books, within arm's reach of my desk. She (I cannot think of this particular book separately from its author) has provided support in times of confusion, instant solution in times of crisis and a constant reassuring presence of best practice. But after nearly 15 years, my copy – the third edition – is somewhat frayed, so I seized on the fourth edition, only to be daunted at the task of reviewing it. How does one look objectively at what has become an integral part of one's working life? It's rather like commenting on a make-over given to a close member of the family that one sees every day.

To reiterate my own phrase, emphasized by Gillian Clarke's back-cover endorsement, 'the fourth edition maintains its place as the copy-editor's bible'. This is despite all the technological changes that the publishing industry has embraced in recent years, the growth of the internet and the smudging of the delineation between various roles. One might even say that the need for good copy-editing and proofreading skills has never been greater, just as the burgeoning number of cars on the road demands ever more discipline to negotiate safely the route from A to B. This edition is a little longer



than the third one (548 pages compared with 483): it has an extra chapter, two additional appendices and an extra illustration. It follows a format and structure broadly similar to the third edition. The main headings are slightly larger, making for clearer text that is easier to navigate, and the phrasing of the headings is often slightly more elegant.

For those not already familiar with *Butcher*, the fourth edition provides a clear and methodical introduction to the copy-editing process, a guide to dealing with all the elements that have to be fitted together to produce 'a well-organized and consistent book'. It contains chapters devoted to preparing the text for the typesetter, illustrations, proofs, house style, preliminary pages, indexes and bibliographical references. Other chapters deal with more specialized areas, including literary material, multi-author and multi-volume works, science and mathematics books, and other special subjects such as classical books, law and music.

So what of the extra material? There is a very useful chapter by Anne Waddingham about on-screen editing, which includes a helpful checklist for the various processes involved; there is an appendix listing the countries of the former USSR, Baltic States and the former Yugoslavia, and another giving instructions on how to check that

an ISBN is correct (which I confess to never having exercised my brain too much about before, but no doubt will check assiduously from now on); and the extra illustration is a copy-editor's checklist for illustrations.

Although the book is geared especially to the requirements of Cambridge University Press, it acknowledges that many editors are freelancers who work for a variety of clients. It continues to provide a model for best practice for other publishers, who may have slightly different styles. For the newcomer to proofreading or copy-editing, *Butcher* gives the best theoretical grounding in the book-publishing process as it applies to their particular roles. For the experienced proofreader and copy-editor, it remains invaluable for its many checklists, its appendices and as a quick port of call for answers to all sorts of queries from matters of punctuation and spelling to points of editorial style and mark-up.

I used the fourth edition in the course of my work over a few weeks. For example, I had queries on copyright, and referred to 'How to treat lists' in the face of a client's somewhat idiosyncratic house style and a designer's even more idiosyncratic interpretation, and 'How to treat quotations'. The overall navigability of the index I found even easier than that to the third edition (itself a vast improvement on the second).

To be honest, if you have been living with the third edition, and have taken the trouble to adopt the new British Standard proofreading symbols, to update yourself on changes to copyright and in your own specialist subjects, to attend training courses and to make a successful transition to on-screen editing, I would think twice about reinvesting in the fourth edition (albeit tax deductible). However, there is no doubt that every publishing professional should have a copy of *Butcher*, and I am very happy to reinstate this thoroughbred in my reference stable.

Sylvia Sullivan ■

LETTERS



Local groups

Janet Reed

I am a member of the York Editors' Group, which comprises SfEP members and others in the field of editing. I joined when I moved to Leeds last year and found it was my local group. Having moved from Anglesey, where I had been in professional isolation for 14 months, I was glad of the contact with others doing similar work.

The York Editors' Group meets once a month between September and July. The meetings swap between lunchtime and evening, to allow the greatest flexibility and as many members as possible to attend. Lunchtime meetings usually cover a professional topic such as typesetting, computer problems, reference materials and the new BS symbols. The evening meetings tend to be more social affairs.

The group provides a valuable source of support and advice as well as an opportunity to discuss difficulties and issues arising from working at home and alone. There is a wealth of experience in the group, and members are happy to share knowledge and anecdotes. It is also refreshing to talk to someone in jargon and to be understood.

I have been welcomed into the York Editors' Group, and I make the effort to attend as many meetings as possible. The group has been indispensable for my professional development, for networking, for meeting new friends and for solving problems. I have learned in the last year that face-to-face contact with peers is invaluable, and I intend to join the local group wherever I end up living in the future.

Meetings are vital to my sanity and to prevent my hermitic tendencies taking over too much. I have met some lovely people who have given me support and friendship in a new location. I don't know how long I will be in Leeds (I am a nomad and have moved 25 times in my life, with move number 26 fairly imminent) but I intend to keep up with the York group for as long as I can, and if I move away but can still get to York, I will continue to attend the meetings.

A bygone age

Mary Korndorffer

Editing Matters always prompts further diversion. The search for *tingo* and other words with a geographical dimension is paralleled by my fascination with the historical. I am currently studying palaeography: the courtly and elegant handwriting developed during the 15th and 16th centuries. It is found in royal documents and edicts, court rolls of bye laws and judgements, apprenticeship indentures, wills and probate inventories. Most people remember Elizabeth I's florid signature, but what of my ancestor Wlm. ffreshwater? His 'mark' is a tipsy cross at the foot of his will, evidently dictated in extremis: 'I bequeathe my soule to the protection of God and my Bodie to be decently buried'.

The vagaries of spelling and the development of language can be traced, and yet sometimes what seems indecipherable really is an antique word. William left several stockes of beese: presumably, and maybe superstitiously, ensuring that his beehives would be cared for.

One John Glover of Darneton (Darlington) possessed, as well as tables and candlestickes, five

queschions (cushions), a beefe kitt (barrel) and a wood fleeke (hurdle): are these dialect terms? A gentleman from Hampshire was wealthier: his house comprised a hall, parler, butterie, kitchen and larder. In the boulting house, where flour was sieved, we find a dow grate, interpreted as a slatted shelf where dough could be left to prove. In the three chambers were plate (silver), pewter and linnen; napkins of calikoe, hollan or diaper; and a Spanish quilt and cushions of vel(v)ett and satten. (I predict a research project on ancient textiles!) Strangely, 'his

wearing apparell' was 'in the maides chambere'!

Those of us with an interest in typography will appreciate the formality of 'court hand', which evolved from mediaeval manuscript style; the introduction of the flowing 'secretary hand' from Italy was followed by the precise 'italic' form. Examples of these, and more information, can be found on the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/where_to_start.htm.

Thus do I present my respects to this auguste Society, and remain your humble servaunt. ■

up to discuss and plan the way forward for training, accreditation and mentoring. The first meeting of this committee was in November.

Christina Thomas presented the results of her readership survey of *Editing Matters*, and further details of this will be available in a future issue of this magazine.

Council meetings are held at approximately two-month intervals; the dates of meetings for 2007 are 15 January, 12 March, 14 May and 16 July.

If you have any points you wish the council to discuss, please advise either Penny Williams (chair@sfep.org.uk) or Val Rice (secretary@sfep.org.uk) at least ten days before a meeting.

Minutes of the previous meeting are approved at the following meeting, and copies are then available on request from the Secretary, Val Rice.

NEWS

What the council's been doing

The first council meeting to be held after the AGM was a short one during the conference. We welcomed Lotika Singha and John Marsden, who were voted into office at the AGM. Lotika has taken over from Jane Ward as the conference director (conference@sfep.org.uk) and John, in addition to his work as SfEP webspinner, is now the membership liaison director (liaison@sfep.org.uk). Jane Ward has a new job as the continuing professional development director (cpd@sfep.org.uk) and she will continue to organize the highly successful CPD days as well as seeking sources of funding for developing training and accreditation. She will still be involved in organizing the 2007 conference, though in the background.

Janice Baiton, formerly the publications director, stood down at last year's AGM, and was thanked by Penny Williams for her work since her election in 2003. Matthew Seal

has taken over Jan's responsibilities as the publications director.

At the council meeting in October, accounts for the half year to August were presented, and ways of cutting costs were discussed. Our VAT problem is now being sorted out, and the amount of unrecoverable VAT should be lessened this year. VAT is now being charged on training courses to bring us into line with other training organizations (effective from 1 September last year). Course fees have now been revised, and are posted on the website. In order to reduce the costs of administering payments by credit card, we decided to introduce a surcharge of £1.50 for payments by credit card; payments by cheque and debit card will not be affected. Val Rice is due to retire at the next AGM. She has been greatly helped in the post of finance director by her husband, who is a chartered accountant, and we accepted that it would be difficult to find a replacement. We agreed to appoint a part-time accountant to do most of the work that Val has been doing for the past few years.

A steering committee under the chairmanship of Jane Ward was set

18th annual SfEP conference at the University of Sussex, Brighton

Mon 3 Sep to Wed 5 Sep 2007

This year the AGM will be on Monday 3 September, and the main conference days will be 4–5 September. A training course and a professional development day will run simultaneously on 6 September. These days were chosen to avoid the surcharge for a weekend event at this university and to respond to requests for a change to the days and time of the month for the conference.

The theme for the 18th conference is 'Learning is always in season', and the programme and booking forms are with this issue of *Editing Matters*. Some sessions will be specifically for associates and those new to freelancing. Others will cover topics for the more experienced, ►

TRAINING

SfEP courses

Jan–July 2007

Brush up your copy-editing

Thursday 19 April

BA, London

Brush up your grammar

Tuesday 30 January

BA, London

Thursday 8 February

YTR, York

Saturday 12 May

CI, Bristol

Thursday 17 May

SBC, Edinburgh

Brush up your proofreading

Saturday 14 April

CI, Bristol

Wednesday 18 April

BA, London

Editing mathematics

Wednesday 21 February

BA, London

Efficient copy-editing

Saturday 24 March

CI, Bristol

Thursday 19 July

BA, London

Going freelance and staying there

Thursday 1 February

BA, London

Thursday 21 June

YTR, York

Introduction to copy-editing

Saturday 28 April

CI, Bristol

Tuesday 22 May

BA, London

Introduction to illustrations

Tuesday 17 July

BA, London

Introduction to proofreading

Tuesday 23 January

BA, London

Wednesday 7 February

YTR, York

Wednesday 7 March

BA, London

Saturday 31 March

CI, Bristol

Wednesday 11 April

BA, London

Wednesday 9 May

BA, London

Wednesday 16 May

SBC, Edinburgh

Wednesday 6 June

BA, London

Wednesday 20 June

YTR, York

Wednesday 18 July

BA, London

On-screen editing 1

Monday 22 January

HC, London

Friday 20 April

HC, London

Monday 25 June

HC, London

On-screen editing 2

Monday 19 February

HC, London

Professional copy-editing

Thursday 7 June

BA, London

Project management

Tuesday 20 March

BA, London

Proofreading problems

Wednesday 23 May

BA, London

Tuesday 19 June

YTR, York

Working for non-publishers

Tuesday 20 February

BA, London

BA: Booksellers Association, 272 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1BA

CI: City Inn, Temple Way, Bristol BS1 6BF

HC: Happy Computers, Cityside House, 40 Alder Street, London E1 1EE

SBC: Scottish Book Centre, 137 Dundee Street, Edinburgh EH11 1BG

YTR: York Theatre Royal, St Leonard's Place, York YO1 7HD

All our courses are described on the Society's website (see www.sfep.org.uk/pages/training.asp). Bookings should be sent to the SfEP general secretary (training), Riverbank House, 1 Putney Bridge Approach, London SW6 3JD (trainingenquiries@sfep.org.uk).

including new ways of working and expanding skills. And, as always, alongside the learning will be the chance to recharge your spirits and network with old and new friends.

The SfEP and Sue Thomson Foundation training grants

Grants for training are available for any associate who needs three more training points to upgrade to full membership; preference will be given to those who intend to apply to upgrade once they have completed the grant-aided course. The grants will provide 75% of the cost of the course, and it is expected that the course will be one that supports the basic skills.

An application form can be downloaded from the SfEP website or obtained from the office. Please send your completed form to the training director at Riverbank House.

SI 50th anniversary conference

As the 50th anniversary of its founding, 2007 is an important year for the Society of Indexers. To celebrate, the society is holding a special conference in London, at Roehampton University, the site of the SI's first international conference in 1978. A three-day event has been planned, running from the afternoon of Friday 13 July to lunchtime on Monday 16 July 2007.

To highlight the particular role of indexing in publishing, there will be a special half-day event for publishers and editors on the Monday morning – a unique opportunity to listen to

speakers on the publishing industry and to meet and interact with indexers. There will also be a range of talks, seminars and training sessions throughout the three-day event for those wishing to attend the whole conference.

Highlights of the weekend include a banquet to be held on Saturday evening in a converted Jesuit chapel, and visits to Kew Gardens and the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office). As always, networking has been given a high priority. All of this will be based in a beautiful location overlooking Richmond Park.

For further details of the conference, please contact Howard Cooke at 2007conference@indexers.org.uk.

For specific details of the publishers and editors morning, please contact Michèle Clarke at publishersevent2007@indexers.co.uk.

Company moves and developments

Compiled by Imogen Olsen

We gratefully acknowledge *The Bookseller* as the main source of these news items, reported during September–November 2006.

- **Accent Press** has moved to The Old School, Upper High Street, Bedlinog CF46 6SA (01443 710309).
- **Arcadia** is to launch a new series of human-rights books, and is also planning to double its non-fiction publishing.
- **Bluemoose Books** is a new independent publisher that will concentrate on 'creative, imaginative writers, regardless of formulaic genres' (www.bluemoosebooks.com).
- **Cambridge Media Group** has acquired Independence Educational Publishers.
- **Cambridge University Press** plans to double its educational publishing, and has brought all of its lists together under a new umbrella unit, Cambridge Learning, which is

set to become the major part of CUP business.

- **Crimson Publishing** has acquired Vacation Work Publications, a publisher of business and consumer travel books.
- **HarperPress** is to launch a new fiction list of around 15 titles a year aimed squarely at the 'Richard and Judy' market. The first books will be published in January 2007.
- **Harriman House** is to develop its political publishing after acquiring the online bookshop Politicos.co.uk.
- **Hodder** is to invest in pushing its fiction paperback publishing, and is also restructuring its religious division for a greater trade focus.
- **Hodder Education** is to relaunch Michel Thomas's range of language-learning courses.
- **Informa** has acquired US academic publisher Laurence Erlbaum Associates. The list will come under the T&F umbrella alongside Routledge and Psychology Press.
- **The Linen Press** is a new independent publisher in Edinburgh, focusing on original writing by local women (www.linenpressbooks.co.uk).
- **Neil Wilson Publishing** has moved to Suite Ex 8, Pentagon Centre, 36 Washington Street, Glasgow G3 8AZ.
- **Oneworld Publications** is to launch a new list of classics, amounting to 60 titles a year and incorporating high production values. It will have two strands: a series of mainstream classics, including a range of critical apparatus, and a 'connoisseur' series that will focus on more obscure works, often in translation.
- **Orchard Books** is to launch a new series of books for boys aged six to nine, called *Beast Quest*.
- **Pan Macmillan** plans to launch a website for new authors, offering advice on being published. It is also bringing out five of its Macmillan New Writing titles as Pan or Picador paperbacks. MNW output, however, will go down from 24 to 12 books a year.

- **Portico** is a new popular culture imprint set up by Anova and planning to publish 30 titles a year.
- **Quadrille** is to move into the US market, with 25–30 titles to be published this year, all produced by its UK office.
- **Quercus** is backing Christopher MacLehose to set up a new list of translated literary fiction. Around ten titles a year will be published under the joint MacLehose Press/Quercus imprint, beginning in autumn 2007. MacLehose Press, 3 Westbourne Road, London N7 8AR (020 7700 5106).
- **Robson Books** is cutting its list from 80 books a year to 20–30 now that Jeremy Robson has left. He plans to set up another independent publishing house.
- **Salt Publishing**, the independent poetry specialist, plans to transform itself into a web-focused business and quadruple its turnover.
- **Simon & Schuster Children's Books** has agreed with Nickelodeon and Viacom Consumer Products to publish its pre-school and children's licences.
- **T&F Informa's** humanities and social science books and journals outstripped its STM performance in the six months to 30 June 2006.
- **Wiley** is to expand its output of Dummies titles, including the UK list. ■

DIARY

Wed 31 Jan Southampton Group meeting

12.30 pm at the Cricketers' Arms, 232 Chestnut Avenue, Chandler's Ford. Do come and join us for a friendly chat over lunch. Please contact Penny Sucharov for further details (023 8029 2266, psucharov@sfeep.net). ■

A day in the life

0900 Arrive at office. Pick up mail, curse all those who can't spell surname correctly. Switch on editor's most important tool, kettle. Earl Grey, granary roll.

0915 Resume brain-bending copy-editing work on optimality in generative syntax. Wonder if anyone will understand this book. Wonder why Author 1 keeps saying 'perpetrate' when it makes no sense. Author 2 emails, saying nobody in their department understands Author 1 either. Suggests 'incite'.

1030 Brain clouding over. Coffee, date-and-walnut flapjack.

1200 Proofs of the theology book state that 'vicar's robes reveal him publicly as a man of substance'. Pick hysterical self off floor, phone a friend to share mirth. (Ah, a freelancer's isolation!)

1300 Salad, oatcakes. Wander down road to refresh self. Admire market linen stall.

1330 Back to office. Regret buying cheap pillowcases, put on pile for charity shop.

1500 Map proofs (third round) faxed through for checking. 'Budapist' now correctly 'Budapest', but 'Prague' now 'Plague'. Do these idiots never *check* anything? Crisps (two bags).

1600 Resume checking index till eyes spin and brain no longer numerate. Is '73' before or after '64'? Mars Bar (king size).

1700 Tired now. Type posting for SfEPLine, get own name wrong. Three times. No 'f' in 'Margaret' (which reminds self of joke too rude to repeat).

1730 Achieve new winning streak on Free Cell. Go home.

Margaret Aherne ■

The column in which reasoned argument is cast to the winds, prejudices are aired and the opinions are:

Biased, dogmatic and right

I have recently been obliged to resort to the British legal system in pursuit of a claim, and have discovered that the law is not only an ass but a veritable mule (and that is, I assure you, maligning the animal).

In February 2006 I consulted a solicitor, on a free-half-hour-interview basis, but after an exchange of emails, I decided not to continue, mainly because I felt that the solicitor concerned was not sufficiently on the ball.

So I consulted another solicitor, and I asked about the probability of my case being settled by September. I was told that, the law moving as slowly as it does, this was extremely unlikely. But what I hadn't bargained for was that it was actually the solicitor I'd hired who was, er, less than active.

A week after my initial consultation, I received an email from him saying 'I confirm that I am taking steps to register your interest ...'. 'Great!', I thought, and anticipated receiving, within a couple of working days, news that the registration of my interest had indeed been applied for. But it was only in September that I received the application for registration. And I don't believe I'd have it yet had I not spent a great deal of time and effort during the intervening months reminding, prodding and nagging.

And then in October I received a bill for over £300 from the solicitor I'd consulted in February, including £75 for 'attendance'. This, I discovered, related to the fact that I'd been there longer than the agreed half-hour interview. What wasn't mentioned, though, was that this was time I'd spent waiting in reception for the solicitor, who was half an hour late for the appointment.

First Assist ably fielded my wrath, and their advice has helped me reduce the bill to just over £100, including cancellation of the charge that I'd been expected to pay for the privilege of being kept waiting.

What's all this got to do with editing? So far, nothing. But in conversation about the production of this piece, I considered writing about my pet hate – the way in which Microsoft pursues its policy of unfair monopoly. Microsoft is being fined, as I write, millions of dollars weekly by the EU, yet this apparently has no effect on the stranglehold that it has on the sale of computers and software in this and many other countries.

So, here's a cautionary tale for editors. A trade journal that I edit reproduced, before my time, a piece that had appeared in *Private Eye*. The rogue who was exposed in that piece sued for libel. It took seven years from the start of the case for it to be heard in court. During that time, the journal editor and his associates were perforce busily occupied for much of their valuable time in constructing their defence. The hearing proceeded for six weeks before the judge called a halt, indicating that it was clear that the rogue was indeed a rogue, and a liar to boot.

So the journal won the case. But the way in which the law works resulted in the editor and his associates being obliged to spend tens of thousands of pounds and huge amounts of time and effort on something that had clearly been, right from the start, vexatious. The editor, a highly competent and erudite man, dissolved into tears at the announcement of the result and is now ill.

So, beware the jabberwock, my friend. Only for 'jabberwock' read ... well, you'd better insert whatever word you think appropriate.

About the author ...

Caroline Petherick incorporates her copy-editing work into a complex and busy lifestyle, including helping raise the profile of a local food festival (a scrumptious task), learning ki-aikido and recycling the nest, now it's (more or less) empty, into a springboard.