

Editing *matters*

The Magazine of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders

July/August 2019

» Upholding editorial excellence

DISCOVERY IN DUNDEE

A fine old ship

Splendid old words– p8



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COVER: RRS *Discovery* in her permanent dock, Dundee, and the V&A design museum. Photo courtesy of Dundee Heritage.



HISTORY OUTSIDE AND INSIDE

You may be wondering why there is a sailing ship on the cover of this issue of *Editing Matters*. It is actually a barque, not a ship, but what, you may ask, has it to do with editing or proofreading?

This vessel, built in Dundee and launched in 1901, is Royal Research Ship (RRS) *Discovery*, which took Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his fellow explorers to the Antarctic in 1902. Among the passengers was Ernest Shackleton. This was not Scott's journey to the South Pole: that came later in 1912; this was the British National Antarctic Expedition whose purpose was scientific research into this as yet uncharted part of the world. After many adventures the *Discovery* returned to Dundee in 1904.

In April 2019, another expedition set out, this time to Dundee, to take part in the North/East Scotland local group 'eventette' (see [p8](#)). This was held in Discovery Point, the visitor centre about the ship and the expedition. The RRS *Discovery* was right outside our window, with the new V&A Dundee design museum beyond. We enjoyed a fascinating journey through the OED's *Historical Thesaurus*, how it came about and the laborious manual processes it took to put it together.

So, a day of history, all round!

Hazel Reid Editor

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**HILARY CADMAN**

is a technical editor who has been using PerfectIt for nearly 10 years. She is the author of PerfectIt's WHO style and runs online courses on the software. cadmantraining.teachable.com

PerfectIt gets even better!

With PerfectIt 4 launching at the end of June, HILARY CADMAN, a long-time devotee of PerfectIt, reviews the updated program.

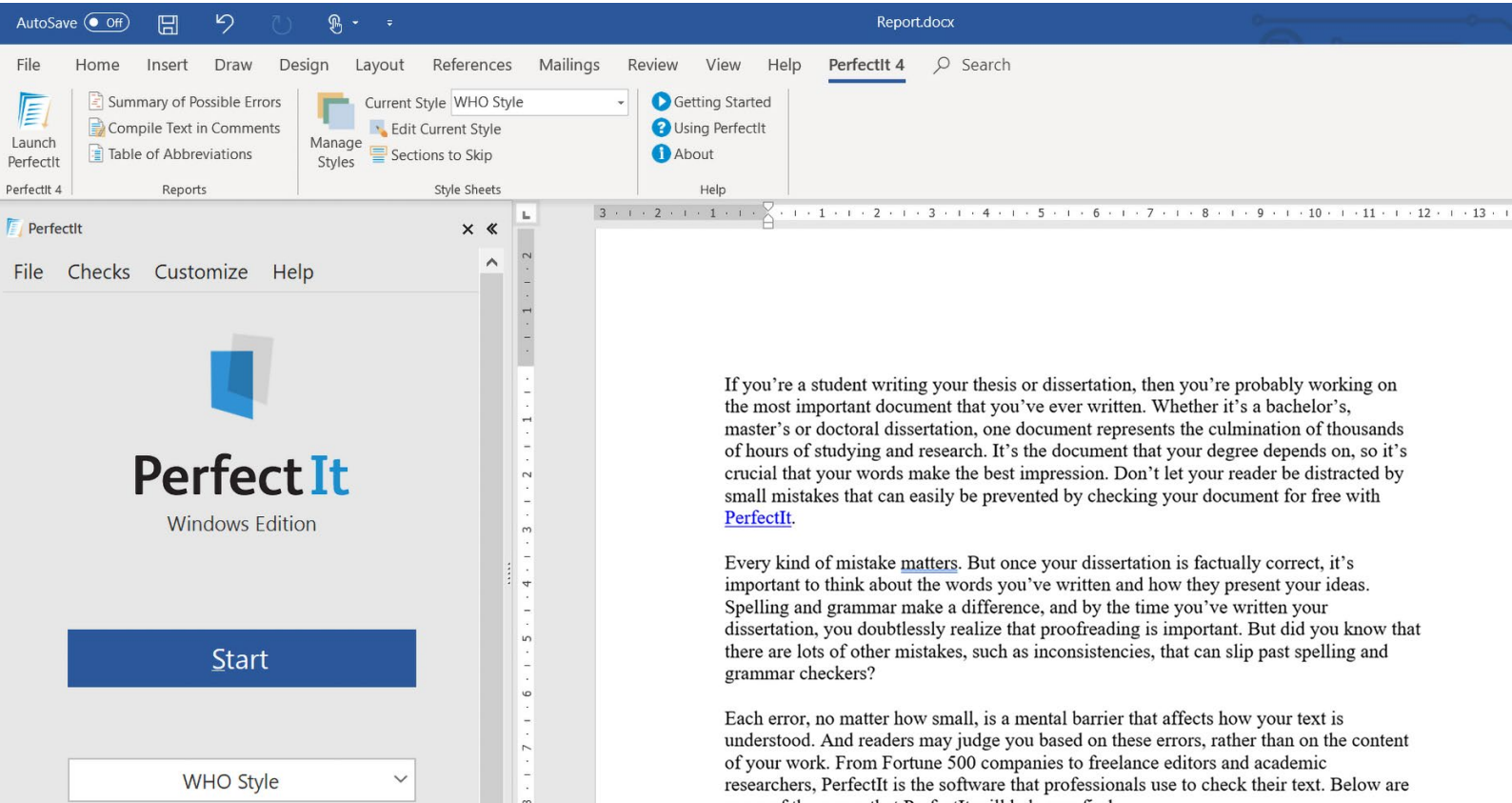
Daniel Heuman (Mr PerfectIt) and the team at Intelligent Editing have heeded the feedback from users and made this program even more impressive.

SIMPLER TO START

PerfectIt has always been user friendly, but now it is even more so, with an expanded Start panel. As soon as PerfectIt launches, it is immediately obvious which

style is selected, and you can change it using the dropdown list in the Start panel rather than having to go to the ribbon. Also, with 'Choose Checks' upfront, it is quick and easy to see which tests are selected. Previously, if you deselected particular tests when running PerfectIt, it was easy to forget you'd done that – and then wonder why PerfectIt missed things the next time you used it (speaking from experience 😊).

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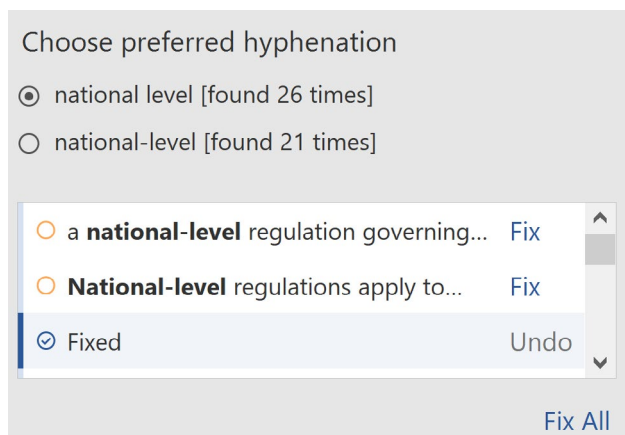


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FASTER AND CLEANER

A major improvement from previous versions is the speed of PerfectIt 4. The initial step of assessing the document is impressively speedy, with PerfectIt now taking only seconds to complete its scan – even if a document is hundreds of pages long or contains lots of tables and data.

Another new feature of PerfectIt 4 that makes it faster is the function to fix errors. Whereas in previous versions the 'Fix' button was to the right of the 'Locations to check' window, it now sits within that window, and each location to check has its own 'Fix' button. If you drag the task pane to make it wider, the 'Locations to check' window expands, making it easy to see each possible error in context. So, instead of having to click on a location, look at it in the document to see it in context and then return to the PerfectIt task pane to fix it, you can now work just within the task pane, saving time and effort.



Initially, I clicked randomly in the highlighted location to apply the fix, without success – but I soon realised that you need to place the cursor on the word 'Fix'. Activating the keyboard shortcuts (with F6)

speeds up the process even more, because you can use one hand to move the mouse down the list and the other to click 'F' to apply a fix.

STYLES MADE EASIER

Managing styles is another thing that is better in PerfectIt 4. Creating a new style sheet based on an existing one used to involve exporting a style sheet, saving it to a folder and importing it with a new name. Now, the whole thing can be done from within PerfectIt simply by opening 'Manage Styles' and selecting 'New' – this opens a window in which you can give your new style a name and say which style you want to base it on.

Another welcome style change is that the built-in styles are now preserved, but if you want to make a change to one of those styles (eg to UK spelling), PerfectIt will automatically create a new version of that style sheet (eg 'My UK spelling'), which you can modify. Also, the built-in styles will automatically update if Intelligent Editing makes changes to them. Another useful new feature is the option to combine style sheets, nominating which style should override the other where they differ.

Finally, the style sheet editor, which works behind the scenes, was always a rather daunting part of PerfectIt, particularly in comparison with the front end of the program. The basic set-up looks much the same, but a welcome improvement is that changes to the style sheet editor now save automatically, rather than the user having to click on 'Save and exit' to save changes.

THE VERDICT

I highly recommend updating to PerfectIt 4. If you purchased PerfectIt before it moved to subscription payment (1 June 2018), the upgrade is relatively cheap (\$49/year). If you purchased it in the last 12 months, this upgrade is available without charge. The benefits will be obvious immediately – particularly in terms of time saving. Also, for those who are used to previous versions, the interface is sufficiently similar that updating won't hold up your work.

If you're still in doubt, why not give it a try? Free trials for permanent licence holders and new customers will be available at the end of June (and any style sheets that were created in PerfectIt 3 will automatically be brought into PerfectIt 4). **EM**

Disclosure: Hilary received a free subscription to PerfectIt 4 as a 'thank you' for writing this article.



CATHERINE DUNN

is a copy-editor who specialises in helping self-publishing authors. No job too odd.

Main genres: sci-fi, fantasy, romance and erotica. Subjects: arts and humanities.

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More comfortable with people and their quirks

Alison Baverstock and Rich Cutler discussed working with self-publishing authors in the last two issues of *Editing Matters*. CATHERINE DUNN contributes to the debate.

About half of my work comes from self-publishing authors – 21 such clients so far, some of whom have been repeat customers. This doesn't feel like a huge sample, but if opinions are wanted, I have them!

The majority of self-published books that I've undertaken have been fiction. This probably skews my view, because I find fiction more enjoyable to work on. But I can honestly say that I prefer self-publishing authors to publishers or agencies.

"It's a client base worth exploring"

Rich makes the point that authors tend to balk at the prices involved, and in his experience they want to negotiate the price downwards – and have even refused to pay after the work has been done.

I always build a cushion into my quotes so that, if someone tries to haggle, I have some wriggle room, and this works well for me. If someone is struggling, I also offer the option of staged payments. I do get people trying to negotiate my fees down, but if my prices are too far from their expectations, they usually disappear without a trace or give me a polite excuse.

A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE CAN RAISE RATES

I suspect that one factor that might make a difference is the service Rich offers. It sounds like a comprehensive package to help the author take their book from a Word typescript to a printed 'final product'. This is expensive, and rightly so because of the amount of work involved. I offer copy-editing or proofreading. While still a significant amount, none of my quotes have ever been in four figures. The amounts I'm talking about aren't as scary for authors.

All my self-publishing clients have paid me a rate that worked out better per hour than those offered by most publishers or agencies, the only exception being a lovely small publisher that never quibbles with my quotes. I always ask for half of the payment up front from new clients, and no one has ever argued.

Maybe I've just been lucky, but my clients have also been realistic about their deadlines and the amount of work included in my service. I like the fact that I can set my own deadlines rather than working to the tight schedules dictated by publishers. I've had clients tell me 'it doesn't matter if it takes a bit longer', although I've never taken them up on this. Very occasionally, people have even offered to pay more for work they perceived as 'extra' – even when it was covered in the original agreement – without being prompted. On the few occasions I've had to ask for an additional fee, it's been paid without question.

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A LESS FORMAL RELATIONSHIP

I like the less formal relationship I have with my self-publishing clients, and we often carry on an email conversation over the course of the edit. When working for publishers, I am discouraged from bothering the author except when the schedule dictates or if I have a major query. However, those informal conversations often give me a valuable insight into the author's mindset, their style and their vision for the book and characters. This informs my approach to the edit, and I believe it helps me to do a better job.

Rich makes the point that self-publishing authors are often unaware of all the stages in the publishing process. For a start, they usually need the difference between copy-editing and proofreading to be explained to them, and they haven't usually given typesetting much thought.

This also links to those clients who want to continue editing indefinitely and won't leave things alone. In both cases, it will affect the finished book and is caused by people's lack of understanding of 'the process'.

PART OF THE SERVICE - OR NOT

Nineteen times out of twenty, I'm copy-editing. It's my responsibility to set out exactly what clients are getting as part of the service. At the same time, I will

mention other services such as typesetting because they are relevant and help put what I do into context. I'm also firm about not continuing to edit changes indefinitely, and I'm clear about what will happen if things are changed once the copy-edit is finished.

I care about my clients and take pride in doing a good job, but for my own sanity I have to be able to switch off when the book is out of my hands. It may come across as ruthless when I put this into words, but I try to draw appropriate boundaries around what is my responsibility both as a professional and as a decent human being. If I think an author is unlikely to take my advice ... it might be both bad for my pride and bad for their book, but I also have to be able to tell myself, 'It's not my problem.'

If you haven't tried working with self-publishing authors, don't be put off giving it a try. It might be hard work taking a book from a sow's ear to something approaching a silk purse, but it's very satisfying and a lot of fun! Let the people who argue over your fee go elsewhere, and enjoy the positive feedback from those who appreciate what you do. But whether you enjoy working with self-publishing authors or not is probably as much about personality as anything else. If you are more comfortable with people and their quirks than with organisations and their procedures, it's a client base worth exploring. **EM**

A post on SfEPLine and the answer it elicited continued the discussion on the pros and cons of working with self-publishing authors as follows ...

Copy editing fiction manuscript that is not ready

Graham Clarke, 12 April 2019

I've been hired to do a copy-edit on a bit of fiction, and I'm doing it, but what's becoming apparent to me is that this book is in kind of a mess, narrative and structure-wise. This is for a self-publishing author, and it's pretty clear (in my opinion) that they've not taken into account all of the structural requirements necessary for their story to work. I feel uneasy about copy-editing something that doesn't work on a more fundamental level, especially given that it's fixable if they choose to get into it. Similar situations must have come up for other editors. What have you done? I feel like I should go back to them and offer something focused on developmental editing instead, but I'm wary: they've not asked for my opinion, so if I stick my neck out will they go mad, or suspect me of upselling? On the other hand, if I'm just papering over the cracks, then that's kind of irresponsible isn't it? I'd appreciate some input, if anyone has some.

Re: Copy editing fiction manuscript that is not ready

Julie Hopkins-O'Keeffe, 12 April 2019

The problem with self-publishing authors is that they often have no notion of what we do. Anyone can publish a book these days, so anyone thinks they can write one! It's been my experience that many first-timers only know about proofreading – and think that everything, from structural and developmental editing to copy-editing and proofreading comes under the one umbrella of 'proofreading'. It's not their fault. All they think we (need to) do is check for typos, because they've worked long and hard on their manuscript and, to them, it's near perfect when they think about using us. They don't have our level of expertise and training, and I've often had to spend a very

long time explaining the differences between all the various levels of editing and proofreading, and that's before moving on to things like style, consistency, tone of voice, structure, etc.

In fact, I've had the selfsame thing with a first-time author recently. I ended up being out of pocket, because he'd already blown his budget on a proofreader (who wasn't an SfEPer) who had only done a basic proofread. He thought he could get me to rewrite his intro and it would be ready to go. When I looked over it I found that it needed much more than just the preface and intro amending ... I had to take a long time and many, many emails to explain what he really needed. I've offered to re-edit the entire ms for him, but he's obviously decided he can't afford to pay me to do it as I've not heard back. Whilst I do feel for him, I'm a business not a registered charity at the end of the day ... You have to know when to walk away. Personally, I feel it's important to get the message about what we do out there to as many people as we can. You shouldn't feel like you're 'upselling' – it's all about being honest with your clients and offering them what they need – not what they think they want!

Your author may not understand all the various levels of editing/proofreading. If I were you, I'd explain to them as clearly as you can what you feel they need, and let them decide.

HOW DID IT ALL TURN OUT?

Graham adds the last bit of the story:

I went back to the client and outlined my concerns. As I predicted, he took it very badly indeed. He called me up and we spent a long time discussing it. I tried to make him understand where I was coming from, but he just wasn't interested in doing any more work on his manuscript. He insisted that he was a 'rule breaker', and poured a fair amount of scorn on my 'establishment' approach.

I asked him to consider his options, but in the end he found another editor, presumably one who was happy to do what he wanted.

So it ended badly, and I didn't get paid for the work I had done. **EM**

Thanks to Julie and Graham for permission to reprint their posts.

LESLEY CLAYTON

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What's Tudor for sofa?

To find out what a SfEP local group eventette is, you really have to go to one. LESLEY CLAYTON, a member of the North/East Scotland local group, did just that to experience this 'happening' first-hand.

You never know when or where you may come across fascinating new insights into the English language. And so, at an evening exhibition at the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, a small display demonstrating the work of Glasgow University's Department of English Language and Linguistics became the inspiration for a SfEP local group 'eventette'.

This was the second such half-day meeting of members of the Glasgow, Edinburgh and North/East Scotland local groups, and was held on 17 April at the

Discovery Centre in Dundee, next to the city's new iconic museum of design, the V&A Dundee.

After coffee, participants had the opportunity to meet members of the SfEP council and Hazel Reid, the editor of *Editing Matters*, and to find out more about the Society.

The main 'entertainment' was a fascinating talk by Dr Fraser Dallachy, lecturer in English language and linguistics and deputy director of the *Historical Thesaurus of English* project at the University of Glasgow.

"The end result is the first historical thesaurus"

INITIAL LABORIOUS ANNOTATION

This project, begun in 1967 and spanning almost five decades, arranges all the words in our language, from the earliest Old English to the present, in a way that allows users to investigate vocabulary and its concepts throughout history. Fraser described the process of annotation that initially, and laboriously, used a card index and slips of paper, moving onto computers in the 1980s. Many generations of graduate students contributed to the enterprise; there were many slides illustrating the evolution of hairstyles, clothes and computer hardware during the project! The end result – the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* – is the first historical

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Dr Fraser Dallachy



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thesaurus for any of the world's languages. It was published in hard copy in 2009 and is also freely available online through the University of Glasgow's website: ht.ac.uk.

SOFA, SO GOOD

This valuable resource can be used for research into, for example, word usage throughout history. Fraser demonstrated that the *Historical Thesaurus* showed the history of the word *sofa*, and other words describing the concept, revealing its first use in 1717. Thus, earlier than this, in Tudor

times, such an item might have been called a couch, day-bed or crabat.

It is also possible to trace the evolution of ideas, following the different words used to express them through time, and the *Historical Thesaurus* provides a rich resource for research into social linguistics – which words are used by different socio-economic groups.

MODERN COMPUTING AND DATA MINING

One active field of research is *mapping metaphor*, which aims to show 'metaphorical links in language and thought between different areas of meaning'. Future uses that can be envisaged are in creative writing, historical fiction, biography and films. The power of modern computing and the data mining of text corpora have added new dimensions to linguistics research.

Fraser's talk on the thesaurus illustrated the immense amount of effort that has gone into generating this remarkable achievement and invaluable resource. I encourage you to look up some of your favourite words and investigate their history. Who knew linguistics could be so much fun!

A spirited round of 'what I learned from my last job' concluded the meeting – leaving attendees free to visit Scott's Antarctic research vessel *Discovery*, and the brand-new V&A museum of design in its distinctive building designed by Kengo Kuma.

I wonder if 'eventette' will make it into the next *Historical Thesaurus* update? **EM**





MARIEKE KRIJNEN

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Over the sea ... to Newcastle

Most people came by car or train but MARIEKE KRIJNEN made the journey to Newcastle by sea. It turned out to be a thoroughly worthwhile visit – and not just for the cakes.

On 22 May 2019, the SfEP's North East England local group organised a mini-conference in Newcastle. As a relatively new member, I was determined to attend my first-ever SfEP conference, even though it involved taking the overnight ferry from the Netherlands to Newcastle. People warned me that it was a notorious party boat and that I would probably not get much sleep. Thankfully, the trip was perfect: it was more like a pleasant mini-cruise than a hyped-up stag party.

"It was great to recognise people from Twitter!"

Expectations for this conference were high. Not only was everyone enthusiastic about the programme and looking forward to meeting up with old and new friends but a debate erupted on Twitter that raised the stakes for the treats served during the intervals. The pressure was on for co-organiser and cake sourcer, Kia Thomas!

After a wonderful trip, I met up with fellow editors the evening before for a pre-conference dinner. We went to a gorgeous restaurant in the centre of Newcastle, where we shared stories and had a few laughs about my unnecessary boat worries. I love how inclusive and welcoming the editing community is! The following morning, people arrived at the conference venue early, eager to get started. After registering, I socialised with old and new friends. It

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Cakes and scones a-plenty



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was great to recognise people from Twitter!

FIRST SESSION

When we had been welcomed by co-organiser Nik Prowse, it was time for the first session, entitled 'Marketing your editing business' and presented by [Denise Cowle](#), a very experienced non-fiction editor who co-hosts [The Editing Podcast](#). She engaged us in a lively session on what marketing is, how to get started, and the importance of interacting with potential clients and other editors on- and offline. Your perfect clients are out there and you can find them and convince them to work with you.

How? Not by advertising your services all over social media telling people, 'I'm good, hire me!', Denise said. Instead, make yourself known, establish trust and focus on what problems you can solve for clients: interact with them at events they attend or in social media groups, offer advice and share content such as blog posts. In this way, you establish a relationship and show them who you are before they even meet you. This is important because clients will not only look at your website but see you in these other contexts as well. Don't try to do everything at once, though, Denise warned: start small, reshare and repurpose your content, and use tools such as [Buffer](#) to help you.

After this great start, we paused for a coffee-and-cake break. I'm happy to report that the cakes were glorious. The jam stains on my notebook's pages will always remind me of the delicious scones!

ACADEMIC PUBLISHING AND CPD

Next up was Matt Deacon from [Wearset](#), with a session entitled 'The changing world of academic publishing and the ripple effect on editors'. Far-reaching changes in academic publishing – caused by the rise of the internet and the increasing pressure on academics worldwide to publish more and in higher-impact journals – have led to the erosion of publishing schedules and manuscript quality. Academic publishers compete by offering new



Networking

products such as ebooks, online-first or online-only journal issues, digitised older content and paid open-access publishing. Editors should embrace and work with these changes rather than fear them. Tools such as PerfectIt (see [p3](#)) free us from repetitive tasks, allowing us to focus on improving a text's language and sense – which is needed now more than ever. Writing-improvement tools such as [Grammarly](#) cannot compete with an editor's ability to understand context and style. Editors could also drive standardisation by asking publishers to provide obligatory templates.

After our relaxed and tasty lunch, business guru [Melissa Middleton](#) from PNE Enterprise took over to talk to us about continuing professional development (CPD). This session turned into a very active one, with us having to actually get up and walk across the room (gasp!). We began by reflecting on what kinds of CPD activities we do and how we record them. It became clear that many of us engage in CPD activities that we don't think of as CPD, including conversations on social media (which made me feel a lot better about myself!). Moreover, many of us do not keep a record of these activities. Melissa shared a [useful tool](#) to get started with this. Next, we engaged in a skill swap, where we could offer a service to other editors and

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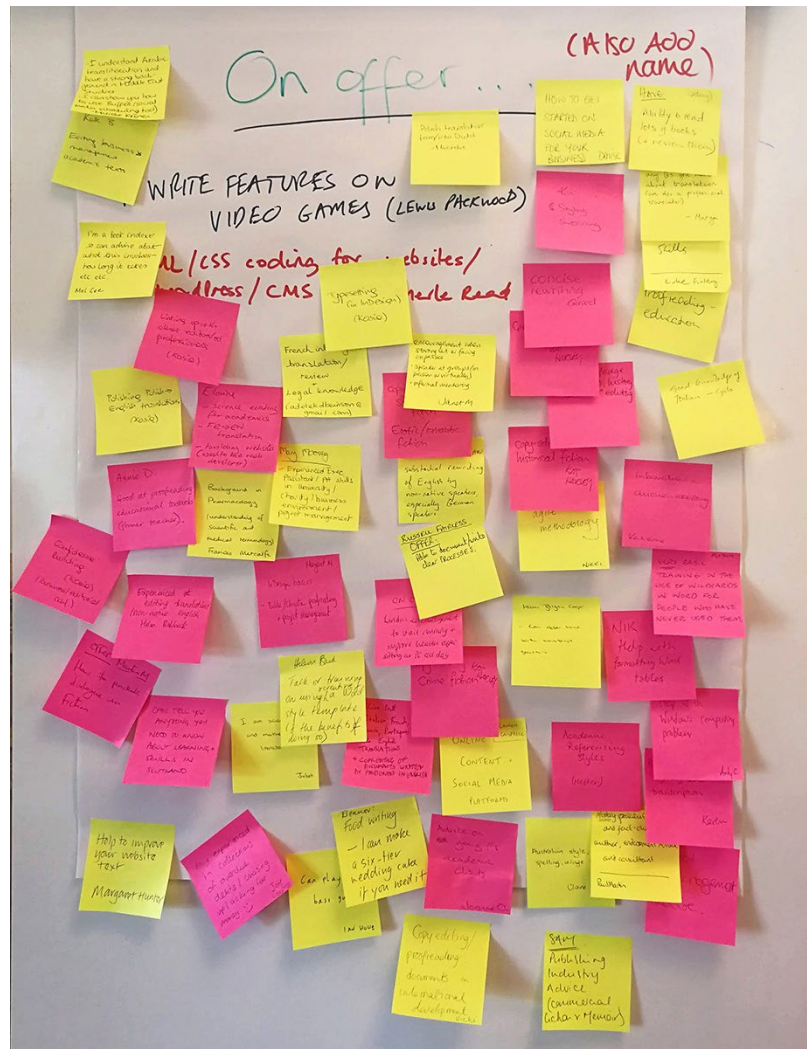
ask for support ourselves. I can't wait to see which matches Melissa made based on these! She reminded us that it is important to work with others in this way.

Next, [Hester Higton](#), a highly experienced academic editor, taught us a number of tips and tricks to maximise efficiency in her session entitled 'Efficient editing: how to make the most of your fee'. The main takeaway: don't do the job that you think is needed, do the best job you can in the time available. She then asked us to look at some very useful sample projects that she had worked on herself, asking us to evaluate the briefs and identify what was essential. How much time would be needed to fix the most urgent issues – for example the footnotes – before editing the main text? How many hours would all that take, and can it be done within the budget and by the deadline? Taking the time to evaluate a project in this way provides you with a clear, evidence-based estimate of what can be done in the time you have.

OUR WORK IS INVISIBLE – DISCUSS

Finally, the day ended with a panel discussion with writers/editors [Sarah Wray](#), [Debbie Taylor](#) and [Alex Niven](#), led by [Luke Finley](#). The panel agreed that editing is an extremely underrated job. People don't understand the skill involved, because good editing is invisible. The panel brainstormed with us on how this problem could be solved. Debbie suggested that famous authors could share a first draft of their work to make people understand the impact of editing. The panel also imparted some of their writing routines, with Alex assigning a particular day to write, and Debbie and Sarah writing about 500 words a day – the former first thing in the morning.

After wrapping up the conference with a raffle, into which we had all been entered unwittingly (thanks, organisers!), some headed home while others went to the pub for a well-deserved drink after a wonderful day crammed with informative sessions. **EM**



The skills swap – one colour for ‘I need’, the other for ‘I can do’



CATHY TINGLE

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Compound issues

The hyphen – its inclusion or omission – is a useful marker of the evolution of language. CATHY TINGLE tries to get a sense of the fast-moving hyphen landscape.

If you ask an editor or proofreader to reveal the punctuation mark they most agonise over on a daily basis, commas would no doubt feature. But I'd wager that deciding whether or not to include a hyphen in a compound phrase or word causes at least equal amounts of brainache. (Or should that be brain ache? Or brain-ache?)

The sorts of words and phrases that are under, or have at some point been under, what we might call the 'hyphen radar' of editors could be put into two main categories. The first the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) calls *permanent* compounds. These are in the dictionary (well, hopefully – see below), and can be open (*ice cream*), closed (*email*) or

hyphenated (*tear-jerker*). The second category of compounds is *temporary*. These are words joined for the communication of meaning at that moment. We are familiar with the hyphenated versions, usually used as modifiers – such as in *worst-dressed grammarian* – but less familiar with open ones. The current CMOS (published in 2017) gives *impeachment hound* (plucked from thin air, no doubt) as an example of the latter.

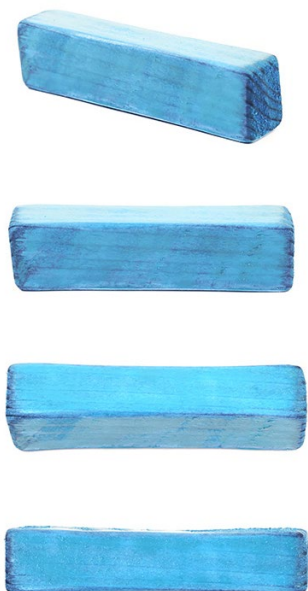
All these permutations are a lot to consider. Since I only have two pages, I'm going to plump for looking at the hyphenation of permanent compounds.

“Are these hyphens ‘antiquated and pointless?’”

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

One of the most helpful, and entertaining, accounts of hyphens I've found is in David Crystal's *Making a Point: The Pernickety Story of English Punctuation* (Profile, 2015), which devotes an entire chapter to their history and usage. But even here our introduction to these marks is somewhat daunting:

If I were to cover all variations in the use of the hyphen, I would have to write an entire dictionary, because each compound word has its own story. It is the most unpredictable of marks. Henry Fowler sums it up well in the opening sentence of his entry on hyphens in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*: 'chaos'.



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Oh, right. But maybe we could actually consult a dictionary to find out which words and phrases to hyphenate? Well, not so fast. Continuing with Crystal:

Changes in fashion are the main reason why the obvious solution to any question about hyphenation – look it up in a dictionary! – won't always help.

He testifies how both *flower-pot* and *flowerpot* appear in the online *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), and describes the carnage of 'hyphengate', when 16,000 items in the OED had their hyphens removed in 2007 to make open or closed compounds: 'Reactions ranged from the hysterical to the bemused.'

So, what's to be done? If a dictionary search yields nothing but confusion, *Butcher's Copy-editing* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) has sensible advice:

Some subjects have a conventional usage, and some authors have strong views, so ask before imposing your own system. Introduce hyphens only to avoid ambiguity ... and do not feel that similar words must be treated 'consistently', e.g. lifebelt, life-jacket.

THE MARK OF PROGRESS

Before it became a solid compound in Oxford dictionaries, one word was seized on in 1997 by RL Trask, in the *Penguin Guide to Punctuation*, as proof that some dictionaries (Oxford, Chambers) are more stuffy than others (Collins, Longman):

What about *electro-magnetic* versus *electromagnetic*? Collins and Longman confirm that only the second is in use among those who use the term regularly, but Oxford clings stubbornly to the antiquated and pointless hyphen.

Trask's view illustrates the oft-noted evolution of compounds. CMOS devotes a numbered point to the phenomenon (7.83): 'With frequent use, open or hyphenated compounds tend to become closed (*on line* to *on-line* to *online*).' Or as Benjamin Dreyer puts it in *Dreyer's English* (US version, Random House, 2019): 'compounds have a tendency, over time, to spit out unnecessary hyphens and close themselves up'.

Sometimes evolution works to open compounds up. *Butcher's* states: 'Note that African American has no hyphen even when used as an adjective' – an approach backed in the UK by the Oxford stable (eg the *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*, 2014) and in the US by CMOS. However, as late as

2018 it was necessary to issue a plea for the hyphen in such descriptors of racial heritage to be universally dispensed with. In '[Drop the hyphen in Asian American](#)', Henry Fuhrmann commented:

Those hyphens serve to divide even as they are meant to connect. Their use in racial and ethnic identifiers can connote an otherness, a sense that people of color are somehow not full citizens or fully American: part American, sure, but also something *not* American.

Finally, in 2019, to mutterings of 'about time' by some, the *Associated Press* (AP) *Stylebook* dropped the hyphen in these terms.

THE RISK OF CLINGING ON

We all have compound terms that look 'right' to us open, closed or hyphenated. Benjamin Dreyer laments the loss of the hyphen in *email*:

Doesn't 'e-mail' look better and, more important, look like what it sounds like? But 'email' was happening whether I liked it or not, and, as in so many things, one can be either on the bus or under the bus.

Language moves on, and in fact – I'm going to whisper this – *perhaps it's time to look at how we refer to ourselves*. For some time, *proofreader* has been firmly closed in established usage. Fine. In the US, AP style has *copy editor/copy editing* and Chicago *copyeditor/copyediting*. No hyphens.

Along with Oxford and Cambridge University Presses and other UK publishers, the SfEP hyphenates *copy-editor* and *copy-editing*. But should we? Or are these hyphens 'antiquated and pointless', best spat out? We *could* amend this style. After all, as Dreyer says, 'the dictionary takes its cue from us: If writers don't change things, the dictionary doesn't change things'. He adds: 'I hope that makes you feel powerful. It should.' And surely it would be better to be on the bus – perhaps even at the steering wheel – than, well, under it? **EM**

BREAKING NEWS

By coincidence, the council has just agreed some updates to preferred SfEP style, and this includes going hyphenless with 'copyeditor' and 'copyediting'. We'll be rolling out the change as we update web pages and publications.



LYN STRUTT

studied linguistics and learned you could travel the world teaching English. Then, in 2003, she discovered freelance editing and proofreading. [SfEP Advanced Professional Member](#)

It's all relative in the end

How many words do Eskimos have for snow? The answer has long been contentious. LYN STRUTT tells us the history behind this question and explains that it's down to relativity and determinism. Of course!

During the winter of early 2018, in my London-borough garden, I discovered snow of a type I'd never seen before – even though I've lived in Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic and like to think I have more experience of snow than the average Londoner. Naturally I turned first to Wikipedia and then to Twitter to find out what it might be called, requesting the name – humorously, I believed – in Inuit or in English, but failed to reach a conclusion.

“Whorf made the mistake of mentioning Eskimo snow”

Ignoring the fact that not all Eskimos speak Inuit, the ‘Eskimo words for snow’ dispute has been ongoing for over a century. Linguists still argue about whether anthropologist Franz Boas was correct in his supposed claim that Eskimo languages have a larger number of words for snow than other languages do. Over the years, the number of words was inflated from Boas’s original four to as many as 100 (as reported in the *New York Times* in 1984), and the idea developed into what might be called a legend, even as linguists continued to refute it. As recently as 2010, an article was published in the *New Scientist* suggesting that Boas had been correct all along.

Benjamin Lee Whorf was an American chemical

engineering graduate who later became interested in linguistics and started part-time study at Yale University with Edward Sapir, who himself had been a student of Boas. Whorf made the mistake of mentioning Eskimo snow in one of his publications, and Boas’s original observation then became associated with the principles of linguistic relativity and determinism, and what is known as the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis.

RELATIVELY DETERMINED

Linguistic relativity suggests that people who speak different languages think about the world, and perceive it, differently. A popular example concerns the Namibian Himba people. They use five categories for colour – English has 11 – and their categories are therefore broader. Blue and green are generally categorised together. Shown a pattern of squares where all but one are what we would call green, Himba people struggle to identify the one blue square. However, the Himba language has more terms than we do to describe different shades of green. And shown all green squares, they are able to spot the subtlest difference in one shade of green – one that we would probably overlook. This seems to confirm the relativity hypothesis – that language influences thought.

Linguistic determinism argues that language *determines* the way that its speakers think and the way they see the world, and places limits on knowledge and thought. The popular example here relates to

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the Hopi, a Native American tribe in Arizona studied by Whorf. His conclusions were reported as claiming that, since their language had no noun for *time*, nor any grammatical constructions for the past or the future, they had no concept of time. This claim has also been the subject of much argument since Whorf's *Science and Linguistics* was published in 1940, just one year before he died. More recent research in this area shows that some aboriginal Australian languages do not use *left*, *right*, *back* and *front* to define space in relation to the body, but direction words such as *north*, *south*, *east* and *west*. So if I want to tell you that there is a honey bee on your north shoulder, I need to know where I am in relation to the compass points. And if I want to tell you I saw a honey bee on my shoulder yesterday, I need to know where I was then relative to these directions – as speakers of these languages indeed do.

HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

As if all this wasn't already interesting enough, the world of linguistics gets rather intriguing when

we look at the history of linguistic relativity and determinism – and the intrigue is not just in the subject matter. First, it is generally agreed nowadays that there is no such thing as the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, because they did not publish together and neither person ever produced a hypothesis. Whorf did suggest a principle for linguistic relativity, but the 'hypothesis' label was apparently added by others who seemed to interpret the principle to fit their own research (and then proceeded to blame Whorf for any shortcomings).

Second, reading and interpretation of Whorf's work seem to have been highly selective, and it is often cited out of context. Boas did not claim there were 100 Eskimo words for snow, and there's a suggestion that he was actually saying the number of words is similar to English. Whorf mentioned only five terms, which effectively expanded Boas's list to seven. Nevertheless, Whorf was inextricably linked with the controversial claim. Linguistics professor Geoff Pullum has a similarly non-standard background to Whorf, having co-founded the soul group Geno Washington

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& the Ram Jam Band before turning to linguistics. He has suggested that what he calls ‘the great Eskimo vocabulary hoax’ is due to falling standards in academia and ‘fundamentally anti-intellectual “gee-whiz” modes of discourse’.

And third, a closer reading of Whorf’s work with the Hopi tribe reveals that they *do* have a concept of time, but that they do not have *our* concept of time – theirs is non-linear, while ours is cyclical. Whorf’s work may be debated, but there’s no denying the charm of his suggestion that, for the Hopi, a new day is ‘felt as the return of the same person, a little older ... not as “another day,” i.e. like an entirely different person’.

And as for that snow in my garden? I suggested it might be *graupe!*, but I got no response. Interestingly, a more recent search for the word on Twitter shows that its use is more prevalent in tweets from the US, where the special white stuff also appears more often. I’ll let you know if it ever shows up in my garden again. **EM**

THE END OF THE ROAD

Sadly, this is Lyn Strutt’s final linguistics column. For a year she has kept us fascinated and entertained about how our language works and the history behind the words we use. Thank you, Lyn, for educating us so well!

That means we need a new linguistics columnist. If you would like to fill this gap, contact the [editor](#).

SOUNDS WEIRD!

What if English were phonetically consistent?

Aaron Alon suggests how English could be made easier for non-native speakers in his [YouTube video](#). **EM**



ANDREW COULSON

is a copy-editor, recovering engineer and unashamed geek.

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Top of the pods

The popularity of podcasts is growing. ANDY COULSON gives us a handy guide to four of them – looking at sound quality, ease of use and subscription options.

Over the past couple of years I've become a convert to podcasts. It started with using [iPlayer](#) to catch up on various BBC programmes, but has led to me setting sail on the high seas of the podcasting world to explore its many and varied corners. So, this month I'm going to look at some podcast players for iOS and Android devices.

Podcasts are simply downloadable audio files. They are often on a theme such as a radio series. They can either be downloaded to play later or downloaded as they are played ('streamed'). These are hosted on platforms, eg [Apple iTunes](#), and can often be found on several different platforms. Many are free, but sometimes there are ad-free subscription versions.

"You can listen on the move too"

I use my Android phone connected via Bluetooth to a speaker and stream the programmes over WiFi. Most podcasts will also download or stream on mobile data connections – meaning you can listen on the move too.

BRING ON THE PLAYERS

I picked four podcast players from the top of the Google Play search – [BBC Sounds](#), [Stitcher](#), [Acast](#) and [Castbox](#). Three of these (BBC Sounds, Stitcher and Acast) also have web-based hosts for a lot of

podcasts. I've experimented with the apps of all four, looking at sound quality and how easy they are to use – especially in terms of finding and subscribing to podcasts and organising those subscribed podcasts. I used various BBC podcasts to try to get a consistent quality from the sound file.

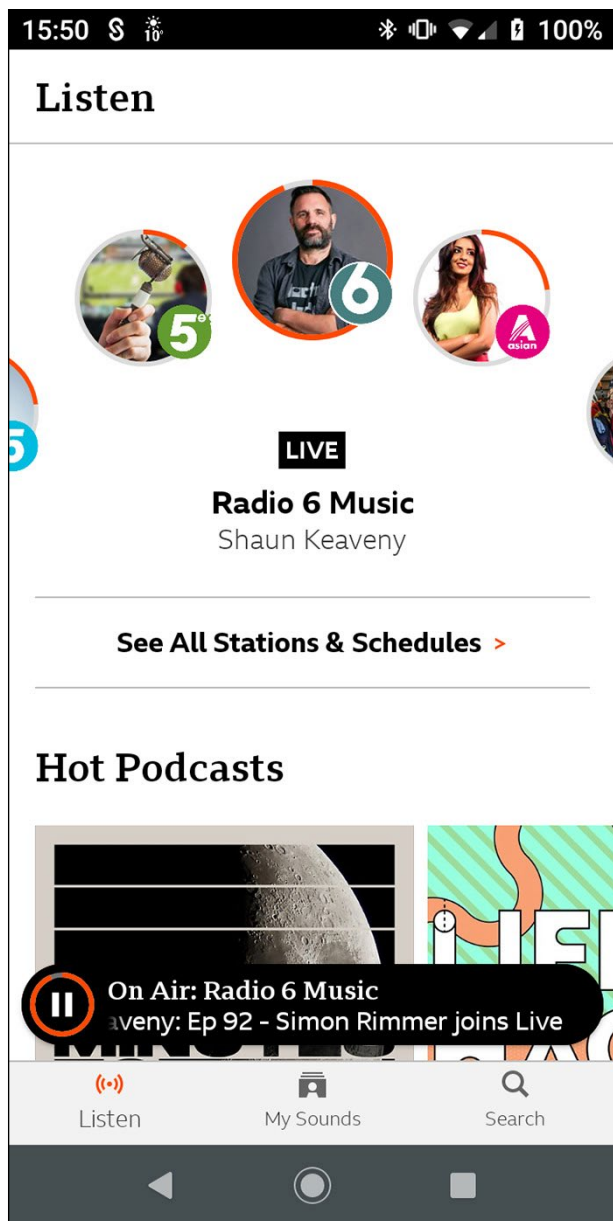
BBC SOUNDS

This is probably my favourite of the four but is limited to the BBC's not insubstantial library. The audio quality is excellent, rarely dropping out. The interface is reasonably straightforward, with access to the BBC's digital radio output at the top and various recommendation lists below. Three buttons at the bottom flip between this screen, your subscriptions and a search facility. The categories and recommendations are great for finding new things, and the search quickly homes in on your target. Visually, the display is clear and easy to follow. Another plus point is you don't get constant nagging reminders.

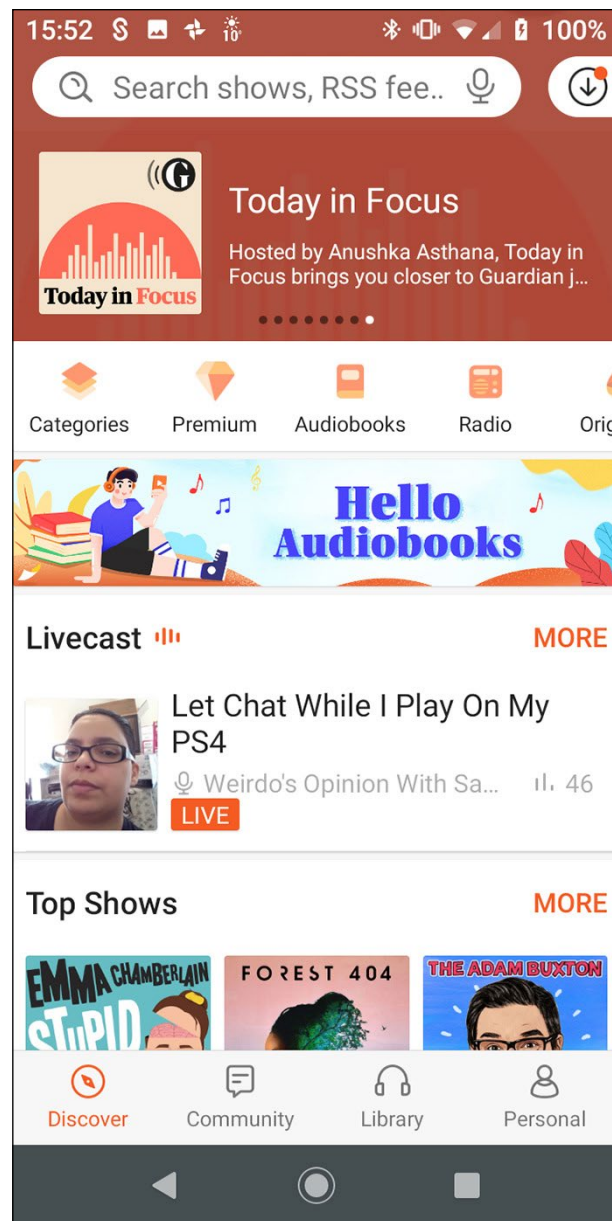
CASTBOX

Castbox's interface initially looks very busy – but there is a big search box at the top and category buttons that are obvious. Once you have a few subscriptions, it downloads the most recent three episodes of each subscription by default. It also automatically deletes them once listened to, so doesn't take up all your storage. The downloads button gives you access to a neat chronological list, and the library button accesses your subscriptions in a manageable way.

continued »



BBC Sounds



Castbox

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What lets Castbox down for me is its audio quality. Using Bluetooth, I frequently got skips in the playback when there's a pause in speech. Using headphones, I think it sounds 'echoey' compared with BBC Sounds.

ACAST

Acast has a simpler interface than Castbox, with two tabs: Feed, which has your subscribed episodes, and Discover, which has suggestions. There is also a big button for searches at the top of the screen. The

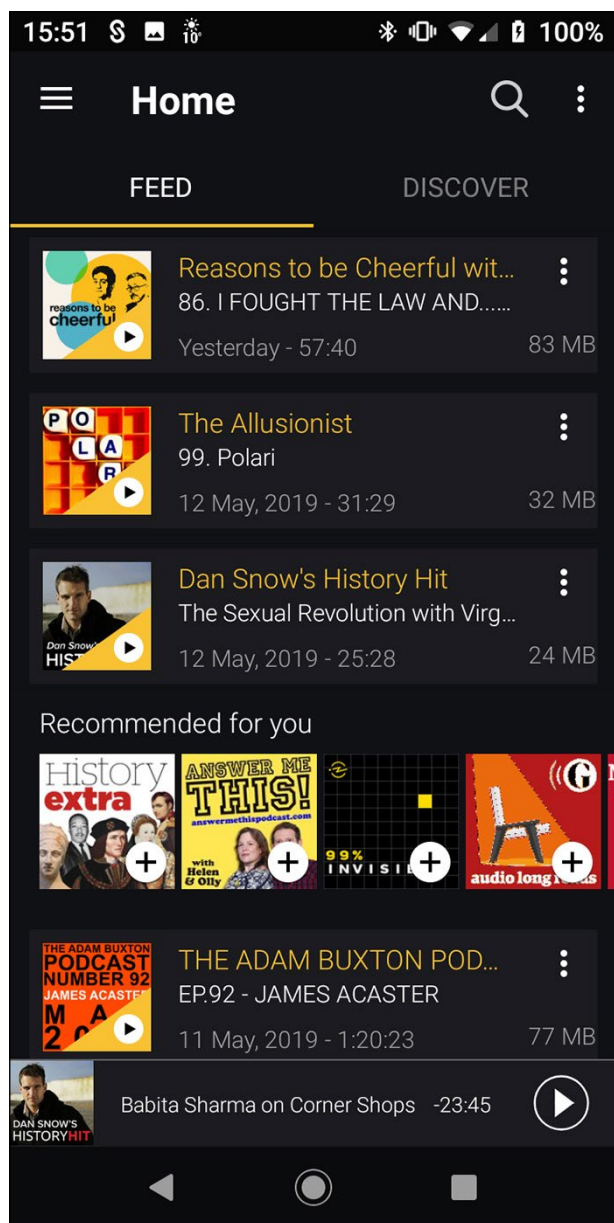
subscribed content is presented in chronological order and is easy to navigate.

Acast's player does occasionally have the Bluetooth playback issues I mentioned earlier for Castbox, but these are very rare. Overall, I think the sound quality is better and nearly as good as BBC Sounds, without the echoey playback of Castbox.

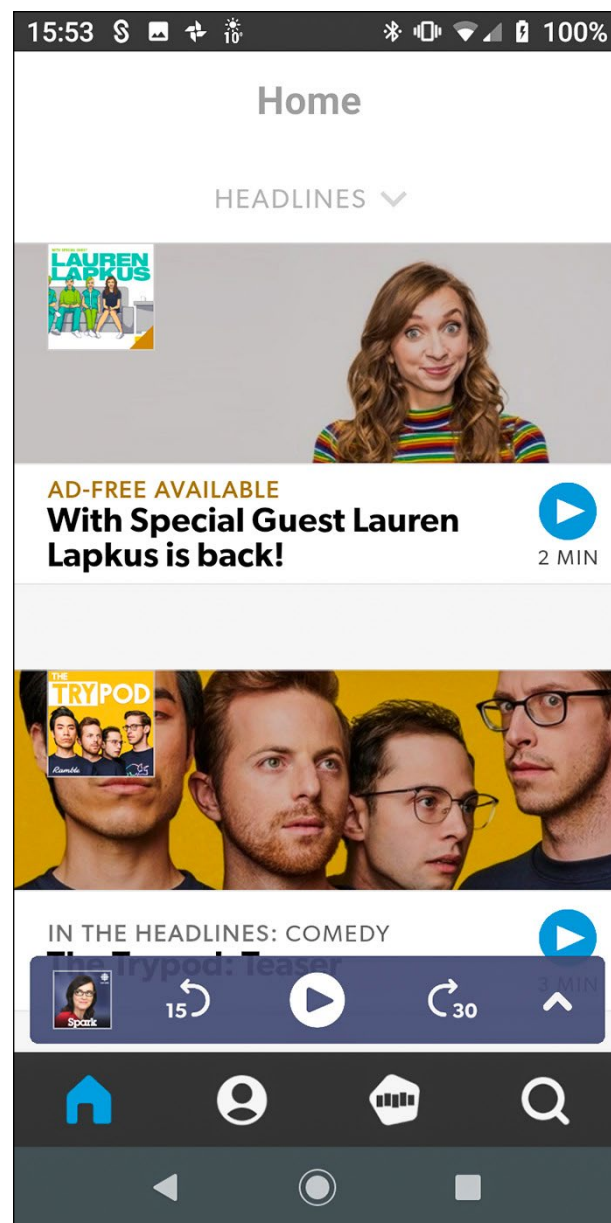
STITCHER

Of the four players, I think the interface on Stitcher is my least favourite. I find the home screen difficult

continued »



Acast



Stitcher

continued »

to scroll through without causing something to pop up.

Like BBC Sounds and Castbox there are buttons for home, search and your saved items – but across the bottom in this app. Search works well, but I found the categories were not particularly helpful. Overall, I found this a messier interface compared with BBC Sounds and Acast.

The audio quality was pretty good, though. Dropouts were rare, and you get none of the echoey quality of some apps in headphones.

PICK A POD

My favourite player is BBC Sounds, but it only accesses the BBC's output. Of the other three apps, Acast is my favourite, as I like the user interface – it's less busy than the other two, and I find it easier to navigate.

If you're short of something to listen to, don't forget that Season 1 of *The Editing Podcast* from our own Denise Cowle and Louise Harnby is available on all good podcasters.

Happy listening! **EM**

Cartoons ... lesson six

What could be nicer than snatching a few hours in the sun, sitting under a tree and doing something creative such as writing or sketching – or learning to draw cartoons. Read on!

You may remember that we had a feature about learning to draw cartoons in the January–February 2018 issue of *Editing Matters*. Neil Kerber very kindly offered SfEP members a 20 per cent discount on the price of his course. It's online, delivered in weekly sessions by email over five weeks. Neil draws cartoons for a living, and his work appears in many publications, including *Private Eye*, the *Daily Mirror*, *GQ* and *Vogue*. He also runs cartoon workshops at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London, with very noticeable therapeutic effects.

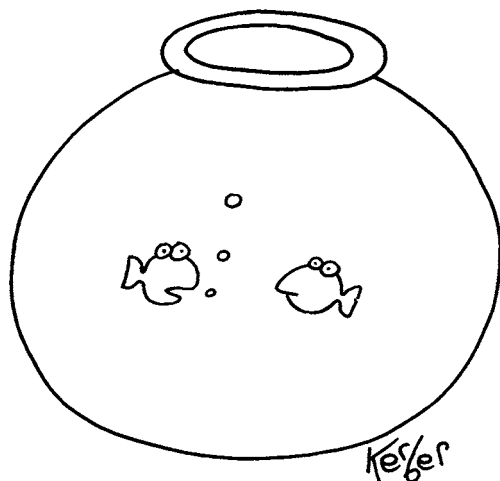
Neil has now added a sixth lesson, called 'Modern day things' to the course. This shows how to cartoon an eclectic mix of modern 'must-haves' – mobile phones, computers, tablets, satnavs, as well as weird dog breeds, meditation, coffee, sushi, botox and watching box sets. Once again, Neil is offering SfEP members a 20% discount on the £79 five-week

course, which will be £63.20 for SfEP members. The sixth lesson will be free if you buy the whole course – if you only want the new lesson, it will cost £19.

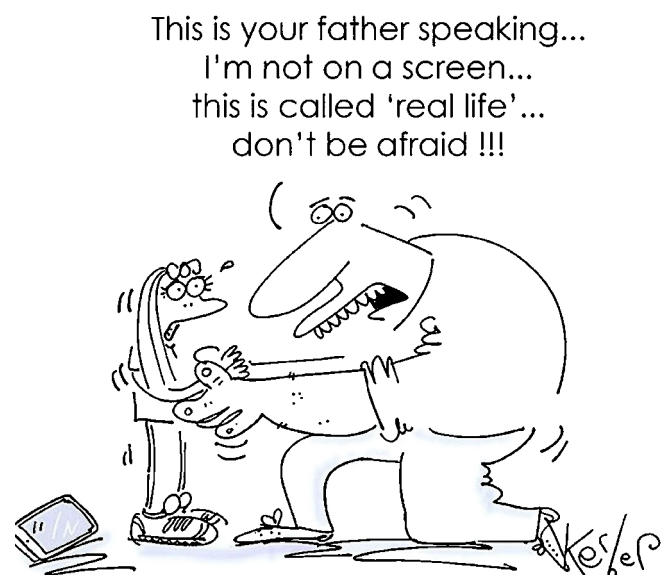
Increasingly, Neil points out, cartoons are being used in training sessions, on blogs, for team meetings or to introduce some new directive and make it less intimidating. Communication through laughter works!

The details of the course are on Neil's website, neilkerber.com. Contact him by email, with 'SfEP cartoon course' as the subject line, and once you've signed up, pick up your pen and ... cartoon! **EM**

On Neil's website is an [article by Sara Donaldson](#) – an Advanced Professional Member of the SfEP – about her experience of learning to cartoon with Neil.



"I try to do 10,000 steps a day,
but it isn't always easy!"





This column comes from the band of SfEP members who volunteer as forum moderators.

To Marketplace or not to Marketplace

We all sometimes need to look for work – but where to start? As ever, it is worth starting within the SfEP. Forum Facts explains.

One huge advantage of being an SfEP member is getting work – and there are many ways this happens:

- if you are an Intermediate Member, you can place your details on the IM Available listing that goes to all members who subscribe to that list
- if you are a Professional or Advanced Professional Member, your Directory listing is your shop front for potential clients looking for editors with specific skills or in a certain location and so on
- Professional and Advanced Professional Members receive paid-for job adverts from businesses and organisations looking for professional copy-editors or proofreaders.

Another source of work is through being part of the SfEP network. Members often team up to provide a complete skill set for a client or they recommend a member they trust. These recommendations come from having worked together in the past, from having met at our conference or in a local meeting, or by following an SfEP forum thread. But there is one SfEP forum dedicated to placing work: the [Marketplace](#).

WHEN TO USE THE MARKETPLACE

This forum is **not** intended to undercut the value of the Directory nor to replace job ad emails for an ongoing professional service; neither is it a place to put a general note about having spotted an

opportunity that might be of interest (in which case it would serve the SfEP best if that organisation paid for a job ad email).

The Marketplace is for individual members to use in two particular scenarios: when you can't take on a job that has come from one of your clients directly to you and you want to find an editor who can take it on; or when you need someone to help you with a specific piece of work.

Do read the [Marketplace guidelines](#) sticky at the top of the forum.

HOW TO POST

When you post in the Marketplace, include the important details of the job (skills needed, timescale, money and so on) but not the client's contact details – posts that contain these will be taken down. As the poster, you are taking on responsibility for whoever you put in contact with your client, and you need to vet the answers and pass on the appropriate information for the client to choose their preferred candidate. After that, you can put down the responsibility reins and get on with other things!

HOW TO STOP THE FLOOD

Some posters find themselves swamped by a flood of jobseekers (one reason to be very specific about your requirements), but as soon as you have received enough replies you can close the floodgates. It is also

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a courtesy to future forum readers to let them know the job is no longer available. Just re-open your original post, click 'Edit', put 'CLOSED' at the start of the subject line, then click 'Save changes'. Old postings remain on the forum so users can see the types of job that have been posted.

HOW TO GET A JOB

You need to see a post to answer a post! So why not make the Marketplace one of your favourites (then it will appear at the top of the page)? If you subscribe through your settings page you will also receive email notifications of a posting.

If you think you are a fit for a Marketplace posting, then make sure you respond in the way requested (PM or email), not on the forum itself. Don't just send a CV; include your details and what makes you suitable for the job, but be brief. Also, don't expect the poster to correct any mistakes in your spelling and grammar. **EM**

WELCOME TO THE SfEP!

- A warm welcome to the 149 **new members** and two new **Corporate Subscribers** who have joined the Society since the last issue of *Editing Matters*. Welcome back to the seven members who have rejoined.
- Congratulations/welcome to the following members who have upgraded to or joined the SfEP at **Intermediate Member** level: Geraldine Begley, Felicity Bestwick, Charlotte Coppack, Hayley Diamond, Sarah Faye, Claire Gell, Andrew Hodges, Katherine Latham, Laura Machat-From, Jeffrey Maughan, Jo Murray, Anika Parsons, Danielle Pickering, Hannah Rawlinson, Laura Walker, Aimee Walker and Riffat Yusuf.
- Congratulations/welcome to the following members who have upgraded to or joined the SfEP at **Professional Member** level: Julie Banton, Kate Hartley, Alan Heal, Sara Kitaoji, Serena Lyon, Lindsay MacLean, Rachael Mortimer, Michelle Nugent, Jess Rogers, Alice Whately and Atalanta Willcox.
- Congratulations to the following members who have upgraded to **Advanced Professional Member** level: Aidan Christian and Gerard Delaney. **EM**

Hunt for jobs in the SfEP's Marketplace



On Editing: How to Edit Your Novel the Professional Way

H Corner-Bryant and K Price, John Murray, 2018, 304pp, £14.99 (pbk)
ISBN 978 14 73666 69 6

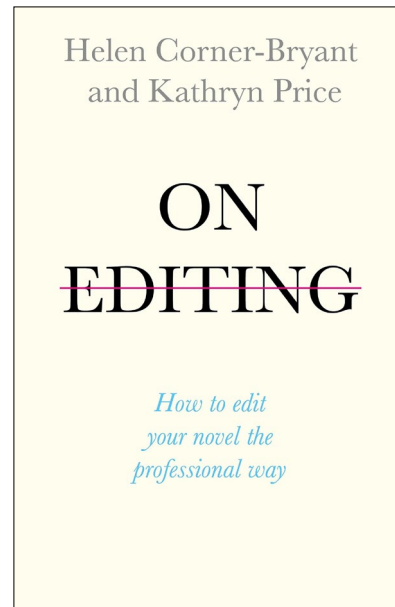
Reviewed by **HANNAH McCALL**

***On Editing* is from the team behind Cornerstones Literary Consultancy, and is designed to guide authors through self-editing their novels.** Does *On Editing* have value for fiction editors? I think so. Most of the guidance is suitable for the process of developmental editing, but there is much that can be applied at the line- and copy-editing levels.

The first (and main) part of the book deals with the editing of the novel. It's thorough but not overwhelming. The authors start with the basics of getting ready to edit, such as setting goals, and move rapidly on to the nitty-gritty of what makes a novel work. Corner-Bryant and Price certainly know their craft. They present how to create and maintain rounded, memorable characters, and there's a good exploration of viewpoint, and how to use it to its best effect, with techniques for dealing with head-hopping. The book then moves on to plot structure – the authors being in favour of a three-act structure, which they illustrate – and looks at how to maximise the impact of the opening and conclusion. This is followed by an investigation into how to create great dialogue, and support it with vivid description. The penultimate chapter of the first part deals with pacing, how to create and maintain tension, and how to identify where cuts could, and should, be made. The authors close with a detailed exploration of the 'show not tell' mindset in relation to everything they have already discussed.

None of this drags – at no point does *On Editing* become a dull, dry tome. It's well written and the style is friendly and engaging – you feel as if you are being talked to by a knowledgeable friend. The explanations are easy to follow and understand, and the advice is sound. Perhaps one of the most helpful features is that the authors provide good, clear demonstrations of how to apply the principles they are discussing.

Fiction editors may find the first section useful on two counts. The first is to help sharpen our own



editing practice. The authors reinforce a lot of what we (probably) already know, but there are some excellent tools provided that can only help our offering to clients. The section gives the reader time and space to consider what is important when editing a novel, and gives an interesting insight

into how a leading literacy consultancy approaches the work. Looking through the eyes of Corner-Bryant and Price is an excellent opportunity to improve our understanding of our own role as editors, and to reflect on how we can approach our work to best assist the writers we work with.

The second count is to have as a standby to recommend how to progress to potential clients whose manuscripts just aren't ready for the services we offer. I can't imagine a serious author reading this book, applying its concepts and not coming up with an improved novel.

The second part of the book tackles the submission process, and aims to guide authors through it. Cornerstones Literary Consultancy is a transatlantic operation, and this is reflected here in the specific additional insights given for the US market. The section seems a good resource to be able to refer clients to, and potentially to guide editors if we are asked to weigh in on synopses and cover letters.

I'm sure you will be pleased to know that it does have an index, so you can dip in and out as you need to, as I certainly will. **EM**

The Publishing Business: A Guide to Starting Out and Getting On

K Smith and M Ramdarshan Bold, Bloomsbury, 2018 (2nd edn), 240pp, £28.99 (pbk)

ISBN 978 1474249 51 5

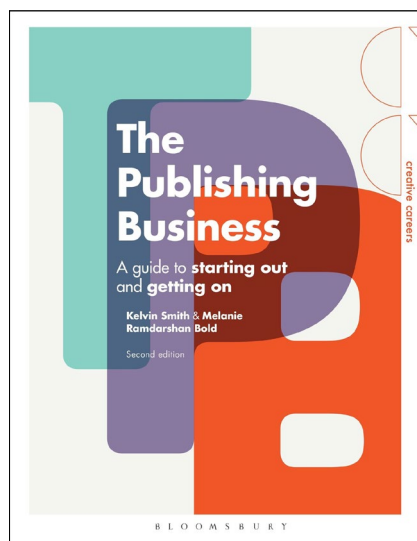
Reviewed by **CATHY TINGLE**

This is an attractive book. Its layout, with tabs and different colours for different chapters, boxed-out content and illustrative photos, has the feel of a textbook inspired by web design. It is one of a series of Creative Careers guides that, in Bloomsbury's words, 'are designed to bridge the gap between education and a first job in the visual arts industries'.

Although this book presents a detailed picture of 'the publishing business', including its history, processes, stakeholders and possible future directions, I wonder how much it is a 'guide to starting out and getting on'. There are industry case studies and interviews with senior professionals in different areas of publishing, from children's books to rights, which contain some useful career tips such as not building your job application around the 'I love reading' premise. However, there is a sense in which these tips have to be mined from the text. There is a page-long conclusion that summarises the book's contents, followed by a bibliography and resources section, but perhaps a 'next steps' chapter, with clear advice in subsections and lists, would be better.

In other ways, too, the book isn't as crystal clear as it could be. The end-of-chapter summaries turn out to be not potted versions of the chapters but of their case studies, and the chapters' activities also have this focus, although the further resources lists underneath seem to be chapter-wide.

For editors and proofreaders, this book's value is not only in the idea it conveys of our small place in a much larger process ('the publishing ecosystem'), which would be particularly useful for those who haven't come to editing through a publishing route, but also in its anticipation of the future. The latest trends, including rapid print-on-demand machines in bookshops, m-books (books designed for reading on mobile phones) and ebooks, and the extras,



such as websites, games and other interactive media, that can accompany 'p-books' (printed or physical books), are all covered. We will need to adapt to the new processes that emerge as a result. You could read *The Publishing Business* if you're

reviewing your own business, looking at the types of clients you're taking on, thinking about how you might get ahead of the curve. It's a source of ideas, of fodder for the 'opportunities and threats' parts of a SWOT analysis.

The final pleasure in this book for editors and proofreaders will come from spotting its typos (eg 'in the United State', p53). This in itself, of course, is something of a 'tell' about the industry. The SfEP is listed in the resources section, and copy-editors and proofreaders are lionised in Chapter 5, which looks at design and production, but our particular breed of publishing professional could have done with more time honing the finished article. I'm not being pedantic here: read it and see for yourself. Thankfully, though, there are better reasons to pick up this book. These include seeing past what can become an editing bubble, hearing from our industry's decision-makers and, ultimately, understanding why budgets are sometimes quite so tight. There's also a helpful glossary.

Overall, however, the heartening message that *The Publishing Business* gives is that publishing, in whatever form it takes, remains a growing industry. **EM**

A Poetics of Editing

SL Greenberg, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 284pp, £59.99 (hbk)
ISBN 978 3319 922 45 4

Reviewed by **PETER NORRINGTON**

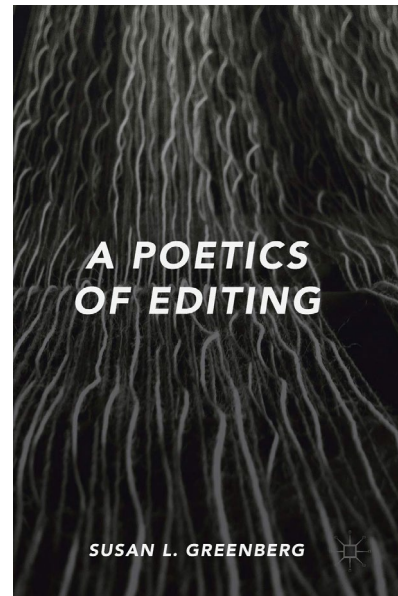
This book is a scholarly work with significant intentions for editing and editors. The author aims, for the first time, to set editing as a primary area of research, just as writing, reading and translating are.

This book supports the demand to value editing, in all its forms, and to see editing as a positive and important contributory activity, not just as a negatively viewed one of rigid correction. The author's working definition of 'editing', which I elide for brevity, is: 'a decision-making process, usually ... in professional practice, ... to select, shape and link the text ... [to] help deliver ... the work to readers' (p14). This enables a refreshingly wide range of activities to be considered, including 'anti-editing', without over-formalising generally or professionally debated terms, such as 'proofreading' or 'line editing'.

What is a 'poetics of editing'? The deceptively simple definition arrives late in the book – 'a set of principles for the making of a text' (p225) – fine for those familiar with poetics in literary theory. But it's easy to find via the book's headings if you need to see the direction of travel first, and the definition is there expanded on, for both the making of particular texts and a wider view on the production of texts.

The book comprises three parts: Part 1 brings editing into the foreground and describes its practices, and Part 2 sets editing in historical and current contexts, identifying editing's emergence as a distinct professional role. These are perhaps the easier reads. They deal with both broad and detailed comparative discussion over the histories of editing, from manuscript through digital, from manual through technology-supported. The material here is – even with the scholarly positioning – open to readers who want to know more.

Part 3 then develops the 'poetics of editing' – the author's theoretical perspective. Important aspects of this are the involvement of a wide variety of theories on the production of text – eg social, psychological, technological – and the value given to practitioners' experiences and views. Critically, the author takes the view that many perspectives can be found, and



that this diversity isn't to be moulded into a simplistic, normalising theory.

SfEP forum readers will recognise the issues, regardless of their position on them. The book may offer challenges to a variety of sectoral perspectives, and then opportunities for debate on the kinds of editing we practise and want

to practise. Of course, as a first poetics it is open to challenge and extension. In the longer term, we may find that the study that takes us seriously is welcome (though not without risks), and may influence the industry and lead to (positive) change in the ways we value ourselves and are valued.

Greenberg is a senior lecturer in creative writing. This book develops her 2013 PhD on publishing. Her 2015 book *Editors Talk about Editing* comprises interviews with practitioner editors for her PhD, including SfEP members. **EM**

Have you found a book that would make a good review? Or perhaps you'd like to be a reviewer? If so, email Nik Prowse, our book reviews coordinator: edit@nikprowse.com.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

A photo from Professional Member [Joe Laredo's](#) hobby of snapping dubious signs. **EM**



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Titles, titles and more titles

Academic books can be fascinating. But PAUL KING sometimes finds himself lost in the depths of the maelstrom that is the bibliography.

In the last issue of *Editing Matters* I discussed (which is my way of saying I had a good moan and rant) the value of notes in academic books. So, for this issue I thought it would be a good idea to turn my laser-like editorial gaze (which means I get to have another moan and rant) upon that other frustration we experience in such books: the bibliography.

"I achieved a transcendental-like state of lateral thinking"

Like notes, a bibliography is an essential part of academic material. The catch is, no one seems to follow the same rules. We all know that *Hart's Rules* gives clear guidelines on how to construct a bibliography, and the entries within follow clear divisions: author, title, place of publication, date of publication. Except ... the order of items can be adjusted slightly. Then there are the explosions of additional information in terms of translations, editions and so on. As for details on periodicals, don't even attempt to get me started – it's a minefield (see, I told you there would be explosions) of data.

The problem is, while everyone accepts what should be in a bibliographical reference, everyone (especially authors) seems to have their own idea on

the best way to lay out the entries. Take my sons at university: whenever I proofread one of their essays I would find that bibliographical entries differed; each stuck to their own version. Yet they all went to the same university, and the twins were even studying within the same department. To be fair, the entries only differed slightly in terms of punctuation, but it did jar with me.

CITATIONAL BACK-SCRATCHING

And in academia, it (literally) pays to be cited in books. Academics have a 'citation index'. The more your work is cited, the more you are rated, academic-wise. So, multi-author books cite other authors in the same book – a kind of 'I'll cite you if you cite me' approach. And the number of times I read through a bibliography and find (surprise, surprise) that the author lists several of their own works (even if not mentioned in the text) does make me begin to doubt the value of the entries.

As for publishing houses, there are the inevitable variations. 'We follow *Hart's Rules*, but for the bibliography we prefer it if you ...' The publishing house will throw in its style thoughts on the matter; but even here a great deal of latitude is given. I'm often told to simply 'follow the author's style', and this is the mantra frequently given whenever it will clearly be too costly to revise material.

Once a full entry is given in a bibliography there

continued »



'Our next mission is to prevent double negatives.'
'So, Dr No-No is back ...'

continued »

seems an inexplicable urge on the part of authors to provide the barest of details when the same source is referred to more than once. Again, there are rules to follow. Yet, I am convinced that authors will try to be as confusing as possible, simply by shortening a title to a few obscure words but then not sticking to the same few words – resulting in the reader not knowing what is being referred to. Also, the good old 'ibid.' is an author's friend, but not to the person who will be making links to material in ebook versions.

MI6 CODE MEETS THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Of course, some authors have difficulties when it comes to writing a bibliography. One of my latest forays into the world of academia led me into deciphering entries worthy of an MI6 code. Did you know that 'Kenneth Bourne, D. C. W. a. M. P., Ed. (1997). Congo Fr. State. U PA' actually meant 'Bourne, Kenneth, D. C. Watt, D. Throup and M. Partridge, eds (1997), *The Congo Free State 1863–1906*, British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers

from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. n.p., University Publications of America.'*

I tracked it down (eventually I achieved a transcendental-like state of lateral thinking to figure these out), but editing this bibliography wasn't a task for the faint-hearted as there were another 35 others just like it. Dreams of writing a thriller in the style of Dan Brown, with an intrepid heroine copy-editor rushing around the globe, jetting off to exotic locations, to track down errant bibliography entries and foil the dastardly machinations of a villain known only as 'the Bibliophile' began to form in my fevered brain. It was at that point I realised I clearly needed a break. **EM**

*Paul is unsure of his decoding skills and, in true secret agent style, has informed *Editing Matters* that he also thinks the cryptic bibliography entry might have read as 'Meet Bourne under the bridge at midnight to receive details on Congo developments' – but I think he got it right the first time. [Ed.]