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Intro

Hello, and welcome to the society's first newsletter for 2011.

By now, most of us are back at work and fully immersed in the year, and memories of the festive season feel rather distant. I hope yours was happy, peaceful and safe – and if you or your loved ones have been affected by the floods either here in Victoria or, like my family, by those in Queensland or NSW, I hope the damage isn't too extensive and repairs don't take too long or cost too much.

2010 was a big year for the society, as you'll recall if you were one of the 100-plus people who made it to our 40th anniversary party in December. Relive the fun (or, if you didn't make it, see what you missed) via the excellent photos the society's Website Manager, Irina Fainberg, took on the night. There's a selection provided below, and you can view the full set – and maybe spot yourself! – at <http://picasaweb.google.com/socedvic>.

2011, meanwhile, is shaping up to be another huge year for the society and counterparts across the nation, with an IPED [accreditation exam](#) in May, the fifth IPED [National Conference for Editors](#) in September, a busy program of excellent dinner meetings and training programs already booked in and more.

Read on for more details and we look forward to keeping you up-to-date with everything that's happening in the society this year.

Melanie Sheridan

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Trivia Question

The answer to last issue's question – What pseudonym did Alastair Ardoch Morrison use when he published his books on Strine? – was 'Afferbeck Lauder'. Stefanie Pearce was randomly selected from the pool of correct respondents and will receive a free dinner meeting admission. Congratulations, Stefanie!

This month's question:

What does 'CMYK' stand for?

Email your answer to meetings@socedvic.org (with the subject line 'Trivia') by 5pm on Friday 25 February. Correct answers will go into a random draw for one free dinner meeting admission. Prize is non-transferable and must be used within 12 months.

Dates for Your Diary

March

Dinner Meeting

Stephen Banham (Letterbox Studio), type designer and writer
Wednesday 16 March, 6.30pm for 7pm,
CQ Functions, 113 Queen Street, City

Training

Intermediate Grammar for Editors, with Glenys Osborne
Friday 25 March, at the CAE in Melbourne

Literary Editing, with Pamela Hewitt
Saturday 26 March, at the CAE in Melbourne

April

Dinner Meeting



Our delicious 40th birthday cake.



Society president Melanie Dankel cuts the cake.



Honorary Life Member Nick Hudson entertaining the crowd.

IPEd Accreditation Exam Preparation
Wednesday 20 April, 6.30pm for 7pm,
CQ Functions, 113 Queen Street, City

Training

Manuscript Appraisal for Editors and Writers, with Pamela Hewitt
Saturday 16 April, in the regional town of Warragul, in Gippsland

Freelance Lunch

Freelance lunches are a great opportunity to get out of the office and meet and talk with like minds.
Wednesday 13 April, details to come

May

IPEd Accreditation Exam

Saturday 21 May (time and place TBA)

Training

Advanced Grammar for Editors, with Glenys Osborne
Saturday 28 May, at the CAE in Melbourne

July

Training

Introduction to Proofreading (Onscreen and Hard Copy), with Pamela Hewitt
Saturday 16, in the regional city of Ballarat

October

Freelance Lunch

Wednesday 12 October, details to come

Stay Up-to-Date with Our New Events Calendar

We're pleased to announce our new online events calendar, which contains information for our events for the upcoming year: dinner meetings, freelance lunches, newsletter deadlines, co-sponsored VVC sessions, editing conferences and more. It's available on our [website](#) (Events > Calendar), and will be updated regularly. Simply click on an event to see more information.

You can also embed it in your own calendar program if it accepts iCalendar (.ics) files, as do Microsoft Outlook, Apple iCal, Google Calendar and many others. To subscribe, download the .ics file from the calendar page and add it to whichever program you're using (see your program's help documentation for more information).

Over the coming months we'll also be introducing a number of other improvements to our website and our processes, including online membership



Captivated crowd members listening to guest speakers.



The 40th anniversary party organisers, Ali Lemer and Melanie Dankel.

TOP

Next Dinner Meeting

Jenny Lee speaking on the University of Melbourne Book Industry Study

Wednesday 16 February 2011, 6.30pm for 7pm

Lanai Bar, 113 Queen Street (cnr Little Collins Street), City (car parking available on site, kerbside or near Queen Victoria Market)

applications and event registration and more streamlined online payments. We'll announce these in future newsletters, so watch this space.

Typo of the Month

This month's typo was spotted in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Erskineville by Sydney-based ABC employee Rod McGuinness, aka Twitter user @rod3000.



If you've seen any howlers, send them to us at newsletter@socedvic.org.

Funnies

A linguistics professor was lecturing his class.

"In English," he explained, "a double negative forms a positive. In some languages, such as Russian, a double negative is still a negative".

"However," the professor continued, "there is no language wherein a double positive can form a negative."

A voice from the back of the room piped up: "Yeah, right."

Society Website Manager Irina Fainberg spotted these 'menace to society' leeks recently at Queen Victoria Markets:

available on site, kerbside or near Queen Victoria Market)

In a follow-up to her very popular appearance here last year, editor and university lecturer Jenny Lee will discuss the results of the second round of the University of Melbourne Book Industry Study, which focuses on the implications of digital technologies for the Australian book industry. The study, which is soon to be published, focuses not only on the rising popularity of ebooks but also on the digital delivery of printed works.

Jenny Lee is a historian who became an editor by accident in 1982, when she began working on a critical history of Australia (*A People's History of Australia*, 4 vols, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988). She edited the cultural quarterly *Meanjin* from 1987 to 1994, then spent six years working as a freelance editor and writer. She taught in the university system from 2000 to 2008, first as a lecturer at Deakin University, then as the founding co-ordinator of the publishing program at the University of Melbourne, where she is now a senior research associate. Her little book *Making Modern Melbourne* was published by Arcade Publications in July 2008, and a slightly larger book, *Australian Book Publishers 2009*, by Thorpe-Bowker in 2009. In 2010, she completed a research study on digital technologies in the book supply chain for the federal Book Industry Strategy Group.

New payment option! We are now taking online payment for dinner meetings in advance via credit card, which should greatly improve the check-in process. To pay online, go to www.paymate.com and select the 'Pay Now' button. Enter payments@socedvic.org for the email address and 'Feb dinner mtg' for the order number and then follow the instructions to complete payment (see prices below). Please bring a printout of your receipt and any other necessary documents (eg student ID) with you to the meeting. Please don't forget to also email bookings@socedvic.org to book your place!

BOOKING DETAILS FOR DINNER MEETINGS

- Book with Lu Sexton at bookings@socedvic.org by 5pm on Monday 14 February
- Please state if you are a Soc Eds member, or a member of VWC, ASTC, ANZSI, APA, or a student. If this will be the first dinner meeting you've ever attended, it would be great if you could let us know this too!
- Please state if you would like to book a vegetarian meal. (Note: vegetarian meals are available only for guests who have booked them in advance.)
- Cost: \$25 members, \$20 students, \$30 non-members. (Pay cash or cheque on the night, or online via credit card by Tuesday 15 February.)
- If you need to cancel, please contact Lu as soon as possible.
- If you cancel after 7pm on Tuesday 15 February, you will be asked to pay for the meal, as they are ordered in advance.
- People who arrive on the night without a booking will be unable to attend.

TOP

Accreditation Exam

The third IPEd accreditation exam will be held on Saturday 21 May 2011. Like the 2008 and 2009 exams, this will be a pen (or pencil) and paper exam.

The exam costs \$530 (with no GST applicable) for financial members of societies of editors and \$680 for non-members or those who are not financial at the close of registrations. Exam fees are tax deductible.

Registrations for the exam opened on Tuesday 1 February and close on Thursday 21 April. All registrations must be made on the application form and be accompanied by payment.

The fee has been calculated as the minimum required to cover exam costs in 2011. It is based on a target number of applicants, and in the unlikely event that this target is not reached the Accreditation Board will postpone the exam until 2012. There is no limit placed on the number of candidates who may sit the exam: all candidates who register and pay the fee will be accommodated.

A second sample exam will be placed on the IPEd [website](#) by Monday 28 February. Both sample exams are very good indicators of what you can expect in May, and trialling them will help you decide whether you are ready for the real thing. It is not recommended that you attempt the exam



Word Wide Web

Below you'll find links to editing stories and news we've seen during the past month. If you have anything – long or short, funny or serious – you think may be of interest to your fellow editors, let us know: newsletter@socedvic.org.

The OED ends an important war:
<http://moourl.com/pavlova>

Why we don't double space after full stops: <http://moourl.com/doublespace>

An oldie but a goodie – Giles Coren's letter to Times subs:
<http://moourl.com/gilescoren>

How two little letters saved a man from a traffic infringement:
<http://moourl.com/2letters>

And the winner is ... Macquarie Dictionary's Word Of The Year for 2010 was announced on 2 February:
<http://moourl.com/woty2010>

Etymology

deriving from the Greek for 'true' (eteos/etymos) and 'word' (logos)

Curious about the origin of a word or term? Send it to us and we shall go forth and investigate.

Cyclone/Typhoon/Hurricane

2011 kicked off dramatically, weather-wise, and as we were putting this newsletter together Cyclone Yasi was dominating the news, with many predicting it would be Australia's Hurricane Katrina. Thankfully, we've been

unless you have at least three years' full-time editing experience. All societies of editors will be organising pre-exam activities to help prepare candidates. An exam preparation workshop will be held in Melbourne on Wednesday 20 April.

To obtain further information, contact our Accreditation Board delegate (Julie-Anne Justus: iped_accred@socedvic.org) or consult the guidelines for candidates and FAQs on the IPEd website.

TOP

Book Review

Are you one of those people who cannot resist pointing out menu mistakes to your dining companions? You know the sort: 'cuppacino', 'drink's list', 'desert'.

As an editor, typo correction is part of my job description, but it never occurred to me to actually go one step further and fix those slip-ups. It did to two friends, Jeff Deck and Benjamin D Herson. *The Great Typo Hunt: Two Friends Changing the World, One Correction at a Time* details a journey across the USA to find and correct as many typos as possible.

Irked by a 'No Trespassing' sign, Jeff arms himself with pens, chalk and correction fluid, recruits some keen-eyed friends and forms the Typo Eradication Advancement League (TEAL). And so begins this road trip with a purpose, as Jeff sets out from New England on a months-long typo-hunt skirting the perimeter of the country.

The search proves fruitful, with Jeff and his buddies finding and fixing rogue apostrophes, misplaced punctuation and erroneous spelling in signs across the nation. They amend 'souviners' in Atlanta, 'cemetary' in New Orleans and 'Milwuakee' in, yes, Milwaukee.

At Grand Canyon National Park the corrected-typo tally passes the 100 mark. Apostrophe and comma added, they continue their journey, though this landmark correction later lands the protagonists in court for vandalising federal property.

As one of those people who relishes sharing the typos they find with friends, family and the occasional random stranger, I was expecting to chortle and nod my way through this book. I did smile, but this story was not the standard travelogue I had been expecting. It proved a more complex offering, with sociological discussions on issues such as America's customer service workers and education system, and a bonus appendix (a 'field guide to typo avoidance'). Just the thing to take along next time you head out to dinner.

Sasha Baskett

This review was previously published on lonelyplanet.com.

TOP

Writing Australia

In January 2011 the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts launched Writing Australia, a national organisation that combines state-funded writers' centres from Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

Writing Australia aims to provide skills development and promotion for Australian writers, and will work with these state centres in much the same way the Institute of Professional Editors does with state societies of editors, fostering cooperation between the state centres, supporting the rights and interests of writers, and strengthening the craft of writing across Australia. It is based in Canberra; find out more [here](#).

Kirsten Rawlings

spared that kind of damage, but it got us thinking: what's the difference between a cyclone, a hurricane and a typhoon, and where do all these words come from?

All three words essentially mean the same thing (although they rotate in different directions, depending on the hemisphere) but, as defined by the Bureau of Meteorology, "the terms *hurricane* and *typhoon* are regionally specific names for a severe tropical cyclone (sustained winds of more than 118 km/h). *Hurricane* is used in the North Atlantic Ocean, the Northeast Pacific Ocean east of the dateline, or the South Pacific Ocean east of 160E. *Typhoon* is used in the Northwest Pacific Ocean west of the dateline."

Cyclone refers to everything else. The word was coined in 1848 by British East India Company official Henry Piddington to describe a devastating 1789 storm in Coringa, India. It is formed from the Greek *kyklon* 'moving in a circle, whirling around'. Says the Oxford English Dictionary, "Piddington's account of his formation of the word is vague; the sense he assigns suggests that the Greek word he meant was *κύκλωμα*, which means *inter alia* 'the coil of a serpent'."

Hurricane comes from the Spanish *huracán*, which is derived from a Caribbean word meaning 'storm'. There were several early English forms, with *hurricane* becoming frequent after 1650, and established from 1688.

Typhoon appears to be derived from two different words: *tufan*, a Persian Arabic word meaning 'violent storm of wind and rain', sometimes said to have derived from the Greek *typhon* (the name of a mythological monster considered the father of the winds); and *tai fung*, a Chinese (Cantonese) word meaning 'a great wind'. It was first recorded in English in 1555.

Membership Matters

New Members

At its December 2010 meeting, the committee was pleased to welcome the following new associate members: Lesh Karan, Cheryl Richards, Greg Nicholson, Christine Darcos, Andrew Wenn and Penelope Rankin.

It has been remiss of us not to report the members accepted at the October 2010 meeting: Carolyn Alexander joined as a full member; and new associate members included Ingrid Bond, Vickie Fotakis, Fiona Ransom and Darren Stones.

A warm welcome to all! We hope you enjoy your memberships and that we will see you at several society functions throughout the year.

Karyn Noble
Membership and Correspondence
Secretary

New Membership Secretary

You may have noticed a new name

IPED Notes

News from the Institute of Professional Editors Limited

www.iped-editors.org

January–February 2011

The IPed Council extends best wishes for 2011 to all members of state and territory societies of editors. As you will see from the activities mentioned below, it will be a busy one for our profession, building on the progress made during 2010 in promoting and raising the profile of our profession at the national level. Highlights of the year included:

- development and launch of a new, attractive, fully functional website
- production of a promotional flyer freely available to all members
- publication of the annual report and distribution of a printed version to key players in the publishing world
- revision of the guidelines for professional editing of research theses and their acceptance by the relevant academic authority
- launch of an IPed Occasional Papers series to encourage research on topics of contemporary interest to editors.

A disappointment was that a submission by an IPed-organised team to work towards development of a new edition of the Australian Government's *Style Manual* went no further than the expression-of-interest stage. The project now remains in limbo. We can, nevertheless, take some pride in the high calibre of our submission.

Barbara Ramsden Award

IPed's 2011 activities are already underway, with the judging of the entries submitted by publishers for the 2010 Barbara Ramsden Award for excellence in editing, sponsored by IPed and the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW). The award (details at writers.asn.au), which is one of the National Literary Awards managed by FAW, recognises the author–editor partnership in the creation of a high-quality publication. The IPed-appointed judges for the 2010 award are Pamela Hewitt, AE, a member of the Canberra Society of Editors and the Society of Editors (NSW), and Craig Munro, author, former publishing manager at the University of Queensland Press, and winner of the Barbara Ramsden Award in 1985. They are judging the following three fiction and four non-fiction works:

- *Night Street*, by Kristel Thornell, publisher Allen & Unwin, editor Clara Finlay
- *The Old School*, by P.M. Newton, publisher Penguin Viking, editor Jo Rosenberg
- *Utopian Man*, by Lisa Lang, publisher Allen & Unwin, editor Ali Lavau
- *Singing Saltwater Country*, by John Bradley with Yanyuwa families, publisher Allen & Unwin, editor Jackie Yowell
- *One: Living as One and Loving It*, by Victoria Alexander, publisher Murdoch Books, editor Katrina O'Brien
- *Shoes for the Moscow Circus: Scenes from a Hidden World. From Foundries and Flagmakers to Stonemasons and Taxidermists*, by Leta Keens, publisher Pier 9 (Murdoch Books), editor Katrina O'Brien
- *Still Life: Inside the Antarctic Huts of Scott and Shackleton*, by Jane Ussher (photography), Nigel Watson (essays), publisher Murdoch Books, editor Katrina O'Brien.

The judges must report to FAW by the end of January, but the winner of the award will not be announced until the National Literary Awards ceremony later in the year.

Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship

IPed is now also a sponsor, with the Australian Publishers Association (APA) and Australian publishers, of the Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship, which is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council (Literature Board).

The 12-week fellowship, awarded biennially, allows the successful candidate to undertake a research project attached to the editorial department of one or more US publishing houses or literary agencies for up to 10 weeks. The fellow can thus garner knowledge and expertise in the largest book-publishing market in the English-speaking world. A further two weeks is allocated for professional development events and information sharing opportunities on the fellow's return.

you may have noticed a new name popping up on a regular basis in your email accounts. Since January 2011, I replaced Ron Thiele on the committee as Membership & Correspondence Secretary. Brave or crazy? Time will tell! It goes without saying that Ron has done a sterling job and, having seen first-hand all the procedures he has in place, it's clear I have very big shoes to fill. Please think of me as wearing training wheels for a little while (with the committee holding the handlebars) and be patient and kind. (And when making any membership payments, please remember to also post a form to PO Box 176 Carlton South VIC 3053). To exhaust the analogy, by the time the July renewals roll around, I hope to be doing wheelies and shrieking, 'Look, no hands!'

Karyn Noble

Membership & Correspondence Secretary

The Society of Editors (Vic.) would like to extend their sincere thanks to Ron Thiele for all his hard work and support. He has done an amazing job on behalf of the committee and all our members. We hope he enjoys his retirement (from the committee at any rate) and we warmly welcome Karyn Noble into the ranks as our new Membership & Correspondence Secretary.

Melanie Dankel

President

Calling for Contributions

Thanks as always to our regular contributors, and to Christina Ratcliffe, Liz Steele and Sasha Baskett for their contributions to this month's newsletter.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, ideas for articles, books you'd like to review, or want to contribute in any other way to this newsletter please drop Melanie and Kirsten a line at newsletter@socedvic.org. We'd love to hear from you.

PDF of this Newsletter

To view this newsletter as a PDF, click [here](#).

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

THE COMMITTEE



A call for applications for the 12th fellowship was made on 13 December 2010, with a closing date of Friday 25 March 2011. Interested editors should contact Dee Read, APA Industry Professional Development and Training Manager: phone 02 9281 9788, 0424 603 251; email dee.read@publishers.asn.au.

An Exam Year

IPEd will hold its third accreditation exam this year, on Saturday 21 May. Registrations will open in early February. Interested candidates can find information about the exam on the IPEd website, including a sample exam and marking guide. The information on the website will be updated as the IPEd Accreditation Board (AB) finalises specific details of the 2011 exam, so candidates should revisit it regularly.

As were the exams in 2008 and 2009, the 2011 test will be paper and pen. The AB is continuing its research to develop an onscreen version of the exam, but logistical and cost obstacles to achieving this have yet to be overcome.

A National Conference Year

All editors are invited to Sydney this year to participate in the fifth IPEd National Conference for Editors, organised on behalf of the national body by the Society of Editors (NSW). The conference will run from Wednesday 7 to Friday 9 September, with the first program item on Wednesday evening. Earlier on Wednesday, a program of pre-conference, professional workshops will be offered. A Style Council meeting will be held on Saturday 10 September.

A call for papers will be made shortly and registrations will open not long thereafter. Keep an eye on the IPEd website for details.

Making Training Transportable

The IPEd Council, in association with the member societies, will be making a major effort this year to develop and implement a program whereby successful professional development events can be moved between venues on demand. The council has already catalogued the courses and workshops run by the societies over the past two to three years, revealing rich resources that could, and should, be shared with editors across the country.

The IPEd councillors, in conjunction with the state society committees, are currently seeking to identify the training topic or topics most in demand by their members. If, for example, members of the Tasmanian society were most interested in training in 'proofing' PDF files and the best training in such had been offered in Queensland, IPEd would seek to facilitate the transport of that training between the states. So, if you have a need for training in a particular area, or indeed in several areas, let your committee or councillor know. Just so you know who is your society's IPEd Councillor, they are: Ted Briggs (Canberra), Pam Peters (NSW), Robin Bennett (Qld), Rosemary Luke (SA), Elizabeth Spiegel (Tas), Rosemary Noble (Vic), Anne Surma (WA).

Ed Highley
Secretary, IPEd

TOP

Call for Papers: National Editors Conference



This is the first call for papers for 'New Horizons for Editing and Publishing', the National Editors main conference, 8-9 September 2011.

'New Horizons for Editing and Publishing' is a broad, flexible theme that encompasses trends, innovations and new markets across all genres of editing, and includes both traditional and electronic publishing. Three

streams will cover different areas of publishing: trade (fiction and non-fiction); academic, education and technical; government and corporate.

The conference will celebrate the art of editing and the profession of editor. We especially encourage senior in-house editors to submit papers for the conference.

- Papers are for 25–30 minute sessions.
- The closing date for submitting abstracts has been extended until 20 February 2011.
- Download the submission form for abstracts (300 words) from the conference website.
- Full accepted papers are due 7 August 2011.
- Papers will be considered for inclusion in the conference proceedings, which will be published electronically. Visit the conference webpage: www.editorsnsw.com/conference2011.htm

TOP

Letter to the Editors

Dear Eds,

I've just read Elaine's advice for Samantha, and keeping your clients informed of clashes is a good idea. (When the clashing projects come from the one company – and it does happen – ask the client which one is their priority.)

But there are other options. As an independent contractor, Samantha has the right to subcontract one of the projects (or parts of one) to another freelancer. Of course, Samantha should check the work that comes back to make sure it's as she wants it before passing it on to the client. I'm not a lawyer but I believe one of the things the ATO uses to distinguish an independent contractor from an employee is that a contractor is free to subcontract the work to a third party. Your client can't actually insist that you personally do the work.

If Samantha decides to turn down one of the projects, she should suggest at least one or two people she knows who may be able to take it on at short notice. In reality, the number of people who could do it is usually very small (non-existent); negotiating a batched delivery for the late project will often keep things moving more quickly than the client having to find another editor and then fit into their schedule.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Keogh

TOP

Introducing Accredited Editors

The third IPEd accreditation exam will be held in May of this year. A list of accredited editors can be found on IPEd's [website](#), and over the next year we'll be profiling some of these folks in the newsletter. First up are Ali Lemer and Kirsten Rawlings, class of 2009.

Ali Lemer

How long have you been editing?

I've been editing full-time for about three years now, though I edited student magazines in high school and university and did some freelance proofreading in New York City in the late 1990s.

What is your current job?

I'm an editor in the production department at Lonely Planet.

When did you receive accreditation?

November 2009, at the second IPEd exam.

Why did you decide to seek accreditation?

Partly because at the time I had only about two years of full-time editing work on my CV, and I thought that having an accreditation would shore up my relative lack of in-house experience for future job applications. Also, I may move away from Australia at some point in the future, and I thought a national accreditation would be valuable to have in overseas job markets.

Any tips for aspiring AEs?

Take the practice tests, certainly; they'll give you a good idea of what to expect. Also, because you have a time limit, have a strategy for what order you'll use to complete the sections (for example, I knew the first section would take me the least amount of time, so I left it for the end). Allocate a time limit for each section in advance, and stick to it as best you can. Also, use the reading period to decide which questions from the third section you're going to answer, so you don't waste time on thinking about it later when you're under the gun.

Read any good books lately?

I'm currently reading the quite enjoyable *Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality*, as well as the latest edition of *Kill Your Darlings*, a new journal being published here in Melbourne. Also (in theory) the still-half-started *Getting Things Done* and *Unclutter Your Life in One Week*. (Watch this space for updates.)

Kirsten Rawlings

How long have you been editing?

Full-time for about five years; on and off for about 10 before that.

What is your current job?

Managing Editor at Lonely Planet

When did you receive accreditation?

2009

Why did you decide to seek accreditation?

I thought it was really important to support the accreditation process – the more people that pass the exam, the more publicity the scheme will get and the closer editing will move to being a valued profession (that is, valued in money *and* esteem). I wanted to put some more letters after my name (not really, but it seemed easier than getting a PhD).

Any tips for aspiring AEs?

Study up on your reference book of choice. I marked the pages of the areas I was not super-confident in and took that in to the exam. Do the sample exams; they'll give you a really good indication of whether you're ready to sit the exam. I also found the society's exam preparation workshop really useful (they'll be holding one again before this year's exam). A host of AEs there can give you more tips than you'll find in this profile!

Read any good books lately?

I've almost finished *A Fraction of the Whole*, by Steve Toltz. It really is as good as the hype suggests – it's funny, original, extremely entertaining and very well written, if a touch too long (by, oh, about 400 pages).

TOP

Dear Ed ...

Dear Ed

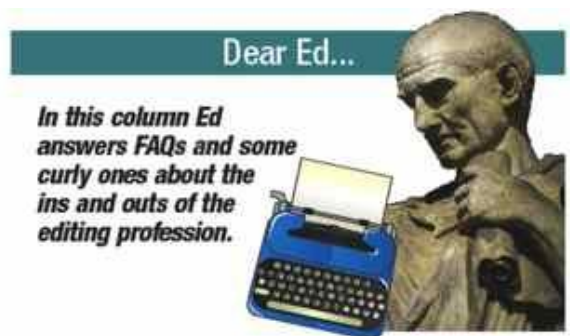
You amuse me when you go on a rant, so why don't you have a big whinge?

Verity

Dear Verity

Thanks, Verity: much obliged. I'm concerned that history is disappearing. It's almost like Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*, where time starts regressing and items brought from the current era return to their base materials, becoming useless. Except in this case the base ingredient is ignorance.

I'm not sure if it's because I'm becoming an old fart but aspects of history that are easily verifiable are being erased because either: a) writers are too lazy to do the research, or b) writers are blinkered by life as we know it, Jim, and assume existence has always been thus (which leads to being too lazy to do the research, thus setting up an endless loop of the type that



made Mr Moebius famous).

Case in point: an advertisement on SBS about the World War I dogfights that 'rewrote the book on aerial combat'. Well, no, they didn't. They couldn't rewrite the book because there was no book. The aeroplane was invented in 1903 (or not, depending on which book you read) and was used for warfare for the first time in World War I*, so there was no book on aerial combat to rewrite. It's fairly hard to rewrite a book that doesn't exist, although many a ghostwriter has tried.

Case in point: a recent article in *The Age* about the suburb of Sunshine claimed that it was named Sunshine 'because it always rains there'. That would be no, twice. This is a case of someone inventing a factoid to cover their own laziness. The suburb of Sunshine was named after the Sunshine Harvester factory, which in its 1920s heyday was the largest factory in the southern hemisphere. Most claims to be the greatest/largest/fastest/tallest anything in the southern hemisphere are spurious, given the almost total lack of competition on this side of the equator. But the Sunshine Harvester was an Australian invention of such importance that it changed Australian farming and was exported around the world ... and the only residue is a suburb where, according to some lazy hack, it 'always rains'.

However, lazy hacks do have something going for them: they keep us in business.

Verifiably yours,
Ed

* You're an editor: I assume you either know the dates or know where to look them up.

[TOP](#)

News, comments, letters and other material for publication, review or mention in the *Newsletter* should be addressed to the [Newsletter Editor](#).

Disclaimer: The views expressed by individuals in this *Newsletter* are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society of Editors (Victoria) Inc.