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# IPEd, Style Council and ANZSI: Three conferences for information professionals

Glenda Browne\*

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*Three recent conferences – on editing, style and indexing – highlighted some of the issues of importance to people involved with writing, publishing, managing and using books and journals in electronic and print formats. Broad topics of relevance to information professionals included: the increasing production of ebooks and other digital media; metadata and findability; and stylistic issues including Asian names, the Australian Government Style Manual, and English usage.*

## INTRODUCTION

The IPEd (Institute of Professional Editors Limited) 5th National Editors Conference was titled “New Horizons for Editing and Publishing”. It was organised and hosted by the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc and ran from 7 to 9 September 2011 at Cockle Bay, Sydney, NSW (<http://www.editorsnsw.com/conference2011.htm>).<sup>1</sup>

The Style Council 2011 Conference was held on Saturday, 10 September 2011 in the Sydney CBD.

The ANZSI (Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers) Indexing Conference was titled “Indexing *see* Change” and ran from 12 to 14 September 2011 at Brighton, Victoria (<http://www.anzsi.org/site/2011Conference.asp>).

## EBOOKS AND OTHER DIGITAL MEDIA

The major theme at the editors conference was the production of ebooks, including quality issues, workflow and the editor’s role.

Speakers included scholarly journal publishers who have been publishing content electronically for years, trade publishers who are integrating ebook publication with print publication, and new digital publishers who are publishing content only in digital format.

Keynote speaker Stephen May’s plenary was titled “Future Gazing: Where Do Editors Fit in the Brave New World of Digital Publishing?” He noted, “[m]any things in publishing are becoming unfamiliar to many of us in publishing”. Changes affect writing, editing, printing, distribution/wholesaling, and library purchasing and lending.

This year is a significant one for ebook production. Stephen May commented: “We are past the tipping point for ebooks. There is a race to corner the market.” There is also convergence of different roles in publishing, with publishers becoming booksellers (Pearson has bought RedGroups online bookstore) and booksellers becoming publishers (eg Dymocks). In addition, literary agents are becoming involved in the publication of backlists, and authors are self-publishing both works that could have been taken on by traditional publishers and works that would probably not otherwise have had an airing.

The demographics of ebook purchases are more varied than those for print publications – markets are more segmented and ebooks are read on a variety of devices including phones, computers, iPads and ebook readers. There are also more varied forums in which people express themselves, including

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\* Glenda Browne works as an indexer, librarian and writer. Her indexing work ranges from books and websites to glossary construction. She works one day per week at Westmead Hospital Library, teaches indexing at Macleay College, and has published her third book, *The Indexing Companion Workbook: Book Indexing* (<http://www.webindexing.biz>). She is Vice-President of the NSW Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI).

All websites and webpages referred to in this article were viewed December 2011.

<sup>1</sup> This article describes papers from the sessions on 8 September 2011 only.

blogs, tweets and other social media environments. Physical books are still the preferred format for gifts, and presentation of print books may therefore become more important, eg with the production of attractively boxed sets.

Ebook publishing brings technical and other challenges to traditional editors. Speakers were, in general, not in favour of companies having one person whose job is focused on ebooks, saying that all editors will have to adapt to electronic publishing – the “e” part should be part of all jobs.

Technically, editors need to become aware of the devices on which ebooks are read and the formats needed for production. It is important for editors to have a basic understanding of XML, but as one speaker noted: “You don’t need an IT degree in XML Publishing to know how it works.” One of the trade displays was Xmplar (<http://www.xmplar.biz>) – an XML publishing company. Its principal, Dave Gardiner, has written an article on “Discovering XML for Editing”.<sup>2</sup>

Sarah Hazelton’s thorough overview of ebook editing and publishing – “eBooks and the In-house Editor” has been published in *Blue Pencil*.<sup>3</sup>

### **Educational ebooks**

Penny Martin from Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins spoke on the topic “Across the Great Divide: Education Publishing”.

She said that while trade publishing has only moved to ebooks recently (about three years ago), educational publishing has had a very successful online model for journals for the last 20-25 years. There is now interactive content available for students from primary school to postgraduate level. Books also come with an ancilliary suite of products including lecture notes, test banks, presentations and simulation models, and software apps are used to test and map student and class progress.

The ebook publishing arena comprises many stakeholders with their own demands. People expect ebooks but also want print, and they expect to be able to download books to mobile devices. Libraries expect text to be free, online and modular (broken down into chapters). Lecturers expect free online ancillaries – these may clinch a sale but they are expensive to produce. Authors expect reward. Shareholders expect a return on investment.

The problems are that budgets are limited and markets are small, as they are segmented by level and subject. Balancing profit and loss is complex, especially when publishers are competing with aggressive internet selling by offshore etailers.

### **Indexes for ebooks**

Ebooks are also high in the priorities of indexers, especially with some publishers moving towards the “lazy approach” of ignoring indexes altogether.

Maureen MacGlashan, editor of *The Indexer: The International Journal of Indexing*, spoke at the ANZSI conference. She described indexers as “mediators of the text, showing threads and the like” and predicted that indexes will be transformed and will stop looking like traditional indexes.

The theme of the March 2012 issue of the journal is digital publishing, with Jan Wright as guest editor. Jan Wright is also one of the organisers of the American Society of Indexers (ASI) Digital Trends Task Force, which is a LinkedIn group working with publishers and standards developers to ensure appropriate technology for ebook indexes into the future. A report on achievements of the group (“Updates from the ASI Digital Trends Task Force” on LinkedIn on 26 October 2011) notes successes including:

- work on an ePub index proposal;
- testing of a plug-in with Open Office to link indexes;
- representation on two National Information Standards Organization working groups;
- a member to speak at the O’Reilly Tools of Change for Publishing Conference in 2012 and the WritersUA 2012 Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> See (2010) 19(4) *Newsletter of the Canberra Society of Editors* 6.

<sup>3</sup> See *Blue Pencil* (October 2011), pp 1-2, 4-5, <http://www.editorsnsw.com/pdfs/blue%20pencil/bp%202011/BP%20Oct%202011.pdf>.

## Web-based content

Tim Sherratt<sup>4</sup> spoke at the ANZSI conference in Melbourne. He blogs at <http://www.discontents.com.au>. Tim used a storytelling approach to show different ways of visualising data. Software is fundamental to data visualisation, but the goal is finding patterns, making connections and crafting meanings. Success depends on the collaborative effort of the linked data movement, and the creation and sharing of controlled vocabularies.

Software programs that Sherratt mentioned included Voyeur Tools and Visible Archive.

Voyeur Tools is used for text analysis of structured and unstructured data. It presents content as a word cloud visualisation, summary, distribution graph and KWIC (Key Words in Context) index. The Criminal Intent site, based on content from the Old Bailey, shows how Voyeur Tools can be used to enhance access to information (<http://www.criminalintent.org/voyeur-tools>).

Visible Archive development was sponsored by the National Archive of Australia. It is a visualisation tool to help people explore collections that are too big to browse. In a TedX talk at <http://www.visiblearchive.blogspot.com>, Mitchell Whitelaw asks “Is Search all we Have?” He then presents examples where visualisation is an alternative to search and a way of facilitating the “joy of discovery” in a digital collection.

## METADATA AND FINDABILITY

Metadata is important to publishers and libraries. Publishers need to capture metadata as they create a product and to categorise their books so that they can be successfully marketed.

Metadata gathering should be in the production workflow for books, so that when each element is determined (title, author, ISBN and so on) it is entered into a database. Editors don’t need to know all of the technical details, but should be able to use a centralised database and understand metadata in relation to the processes they use. One speaker described metadata as “really important and really boring”.

In journal production, linking between articles to cited references is also important. The industry developed the Cross-Ref program for this purpose – it uses DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) for linking.

Joel Naoum from the recently launched digital-only imprint Momentum described ebook publishing as having low overheads and big dreams, with global reach but no shelf problems. The problem, he said, is “discoverability”, which is more difficult with books that lack a physical presence. Naoum blogs at <http://www.thesmellofbooks.com>.

Xmplar, mentioned above, includes in its epublication books “relevant mandatory, recommended and conditional AGLS and Dublin Core metadata elements. Clients may also choose to provide ... other document details so we can include optional elements. Metadata covers various information about documents that helps with data storage and retrieval, marketing purposes, and assists the discoverability of material online and through databases.”

Susan Hawthorne, co-founder of Spinifex Press, was a keynote speaker at the ANZSI conference. In 2006, Spinifex Press began introducing ebooks in multiple formats, and she said “a significant learning curve followed this decision!” She says metadata is not difficult, but that it is time-consuming and needs to be done well.

Hawthorne has seen massive changes in publishing and has explored how we can learn from ecology in dealing with these changes, with the aim of avoiding assimilation and creating diverse culturally sustainable systems (bibliodiversity). Spinifex Press has always “published at the margins”. It finds that the standard BISAC codes are not appropriate for the works it creates, and will not maximise findability. (The BISAC subject heading list was developed by the Book Industry Study Group (<http://www.bisg.org/what-we-do-0-136-bisac-subject-headings-list-major-subjects.php>) and is used as a controlled vocabulary to categorise the overall topics of books that are published.)

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<sup>4</sup>Tim Sherratt was also a developer of Bright Spares, discussed in Sutherland D, “The Encyclopedia of Australian Science” (2011) 25 OLC 178.

## STYLISTIC ISSUES

A variety of style issues were discussed at the conferences. The indexing of Asian names was the topic of two sessions at the ANZSI conference, and at the Style Council conference audience members discussed the development of the *Style Manual* and watched a debate between three panelists about determinants of English usage.

### Asian names

Spelling and sequencing/filing non-English names is an issue for anyone who has to maintain a personal name catalogue or list.

The ANZSI conference session on Chinese names was run by Lai Lam from Auckland, New Zealand. She has been involved in a one-year project indexing the New Zealand Chinese Journal Database.

She answered a question that has puzzled me – “How can transliteration schemes be so different that the same word is written in English as both ‘Peking’ and ‘Beijing’?” The answer is that the original Wade-Giles scheme that gave us “Peking” followed Cantonese pronunciation, while the Pinyin scheme, developed by and for Chinese people, especially to help the transition to Mandarin as the national dialect, was based on Mandarin pronunciation.

I was also fascinated to hear that Chinese students in Hong Kong use transliterated Chinese in Western characters for their first two years at school, only then moving on to learning Chinese characters.

Variations in names occur because of: the use of different transliteration schemes; taking or not by a woman of her husband’s name; a name in a Chinese dialect or from a minority group; and the Anglicisation of part or all of a name, including changing the word order.

Further information about names for indexers and librarians can be found in “Centrepieces” at the website of *The Indexer*, ([http://www.theindexer.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=56](http://www.theindexer.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=56)) and in the book *Success with Asian Names* by Fiona Swee-Lin Price (Allen & Unwin, 2007). Anthony Sin proposes the use of block capitals for family names (<http://www.anthonysin.suite101.com/dealing-with-transliterated-chinese-names---a-capital-idea-a248761>).

### Updating the Australian Government Style Manual

The first session at the Style Council conference was on the Australian Government *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (6th ed, John Wiley, 2002). Pam Peters talked about the history of the different editions of the *Style Manual*, while Loma Snooks and David Whitbread gave an insight into the project management and consultation involved in the most recent revision (the 6th edition). There was strong support in the audience for a new edition of the manual, and people were invited to contact Dr Neil James from the Plain English Foundation to express their support for a revision.

Changes in the six editions which have been published include:

- cultural changes, including franchising of Aborigines, decimal currency, and the inclusive language movement;
- expanding readerships beyond federal government;
- linguistic changes in Australian English.

The current edition was designed to work as a website, however, there was no funding to implement this. Various structures visible in the print book would have been used as tabs, links, drop-down menus and cross-references in an electronic version, and videos would have been used to demonstrate some processes.

Future editions will probably use an online version as the priority format, with print as secondary.

### English usage

The Style Council discussion on the topic “Are the Mass Media the Clearing Houses of English Usage? Which Has the Greatest Impact on the Language?” was supported by the CAL Cultural Fund and recorded for the ABC *Big Ideas* program. It was broadcast on radio and television in late 2011 and is on the web at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/bigideas>.

The Chair was Alan Sunderland and the debaters were Julian Burnside (for the press), David Astle (for broadcasting) and Kate Burridge (for social media).

When asked by the Chair “What gets your goat?”, audience members complained about pronunciation and usage that they felt was sloppy. Linguists are often more accepting of variation than the general public, and Kate Burridge quoted a phonetician as saying “[I]anguage does what it has to for efficiency, and gets away with what it can.”

Although she had been chosen to speak on the side of social media, Kate Burridge admitted that she had only recently bought a mobile phone, although she had once rendered the minutes of a meeting in 20 tweets as a linguistic experiment.

Kate Burridge also discussed the teenage “like” (the emphatic “like”), and suggested that the seeds of its use may have been sown 500 years ago, when someone wrote “Yon man is like out of his mind”, although we do not know exactly what that writer was trying to say. The same may be true of our teenagers!<sup>5</sup>

One audience member complained about the pronunciation of news as “noos”. This phenomenon has a name – yod dropping – and it is a trend that has been going on for a while: at one time people would have pronounced Lucy as “lyucy”. In this trend the United States is ahead and the United Kingdom is behind us.

## **CONCLUSION**

For those interested in and working in the field of words and books, these three conferences provided enjoyable, stimulating and challenging sessions. They all highlighted the vitality and variability of language and the technological trends seeing in some of the most significant changes in our industry.

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<sup>5</sup> For those of you unfamiliar with the teenage like, here is an example: “He’s like, ‘What are ebooks’ and she’s like, ‘They’re books but like they’re electronic, like you can read them on a Kindle or iPad.’”