

First steps towards accreditation

CPD committee

Within a year after the formation of the expanded Continuing Professional Development (CPD) committee, PEG has taken the first step towards establishing discrete membership categories. Up until now, anyone could join PEG and offer their services as editors. Unfortunately this led to some incidents of less than competent practitioners operating under PEG's umbrella – and it did not really help that the directory carried a caveat. The word 'Professional' in PEG's name implies that members know what they are doing!

The committee have been guided in their overall approach by several considerations. One is the increasing demand from clients for 'accredited editors', whatever that may mean, while another is the rapid increase in PEG membership, and the concomitant obligation on the organisation to ensure that applicants are in fact competent. At the same time, there has been resistance from some members who feel affronted by the suggestion that their ability is being questioned, or that they may have to prove their competence after years of working experience.

It was felt, however, that there is still a need to screen new applicants. A distinction was therefore introduced between people who are new to the profession, to be accepted initially as Associates, and those who are already trained or practising editors. (The exact criteria are set out on page 4.) It was also decided to apply these conditions retrospectively to those who joined at any time from January 2008, as that is when our membership started to increase dramatically. About 200 members were asked to provide evidence of one of the three new criteria for membership or revert to being Associates. This proved unpopular in some quarters, and indeed it is not entirely logical, but it is a starting point. About 40 of a possible 200 people have cooperated with this request – which is not that many – and the system is being evaluated.

In initial discussions about the criteria for Accredited Member, CPD committee members were torn between the route of a test (as used by Soceds, the editors' society in Victoria, Australia, and by SfEP in the UK) and a

points system (as administered by SfEP). So currently both are being developed. A test has been prepared and the committee has invited several experienced PEG members to pilot it. The responses of these members in several demanding editing tasks, on paper and on screen, should help in the setting of realistic benchmarks for future candidates.

The word 'Professional' in PEG's name implies that members know what they are doing!

At the same time a points system for accreditation is being discussed. The system will enable PEGgers to earn points for enhancing their professional status through acquiring knowledge and skills on training courses, at conferences, and so on. Any

member who feels able to contribute to evaluating the proposed points system (which in some ways is like comparing apples with pears) is asked to contact a member of the committee.

These steps may require some amendments to the constitution, but it is hoped that by the next AGM in June 2010 there will be enough hard evidence of what works well and what works less well, both in terms of filtering new applicants and in terms of accreditation. Members will then be given an opportunity to vote on the new scheme.

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PEGboard goes electronic

At the 2009 AGM, PEG members voted to discontinue the printed version of *PEGboard*. This means that this edition will be the last that is both printed and mailed. In future, *PEGboard* will be uploaded to the website and members will be alerted to this via a monthly e-zine (more about the e-zines in Juliet Gillies' report on the Marketing committee). It will not be sent as an attachment as that has caused technical problems for some members.

To date, a small number of PEG members have requested that the print edition still be sent to them. This is unfortunately no longer possible. One reason is that the outer sheet with the PEG livery in colour was previously preprinted in large quantities and stored at the printers to keep the cost down. The stock of preprints is now exhausted. Your Exco has decided to reallocate the printing budget to other, equally pressing needs – notably the costs that will be incurred by participation at the London Book Fair and other marketing events.

Another overriding issue is the inefficiencies involved in producing a print version with PEG's scarce resources. Since there is no centralised PEG administrative office, the work was done by volunteers scattered all over Pretoria and Johannesburg – from producing mailing labels to fetching the printed copies, stuffing envelopes, and then arranging for postage and delivery to the nearest post office. Most of these volunteers also work full-time for employers or as freelancers, which restricts the time and energies they are able to allocate to PEG work. A final consideration is the sheer cost of postage and the number of lost items.

Those who wish to do so can, of course, print their own copies – in colour or black and white.



Ed's inkspot

Your editor has a confession to make: I'm suffering from writer's block, end-of-year block, thesis editing block. And just round the corner is 2010, *vuvuzelas* blaring like a latter-day African version of the Grand March from *Aida*. And that's not all: I suffer from diary block too. The dates lined up in the coming year are just too much for me to contemplate – see the *voorsmakie* elsewhere in *PEGboard*. Oh, yes, and the festive season is also upon us. No wonder some call it the Silly Season – most of us have been worked silly and are dreaming of Santa Claus bringing sacks of work, a Ferrari or two, and, naturally, gentler deadlines (how silly of us!).

Silliness aside, though, the *PEGboard* team wishes all PEGgers a peaceful, joyful and restful festive season and a new year in which we really will see the back of this recession. With the line-up of events and innovations PEG has planned, we're doing all we can to give the cloud a sterling silver lining!

To those of you travelling over the holidays: return safely and well refreshed. – *Hester*

Experts show how to make it plainer

On Saturday, 14 November, members attended PEG's first conference – 'A handle on plain language issues and practice' – at the University of the Witwatersrand. Delegates were challenged by speakers of high standing in academic and legal circles, enjoyed the droll humour of business writer Robert Gentle, and in the afternoon wrestled with the practicalities of plain English principles in a hands-on workshop led by consultant David Langan.

The plain language movement has been gaining strength worldwide over more than a century. South Africa, with its high levels of illiteracy and concomitant consumer vulnerability, has taken a big step forward with the promulgation of the Consumer Protection Act in April 2009. Though English is the language of business and official communication, and though it is the medium of instruction for many people, very few South Africans are mother-tongue speakers of English. In South Africa the law – and specifically legislation – has often been used to deny people their basic human rights; and it is still being regarded with suspicion and fear. Difficult language compounds this problem.

The February 2010 issue of *PEGboard* will give a synoptic overview of the papers presented at the conference.

Where it started

According to Wikipedia, plain language as a concept can be traced back as far as Cicero, who argued: 'When you wish to instruct, be brief; that men's minds take in quickly what you say, learn its lesson, and retain it faithfully. Every word that is unnecessary only pours over the side of a brimming mind' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plain_language).

Cicero writes that the plain style is not easy. While it may seem close to everyday speech, achieving the effect in formal discourse is a high and difficult art: 'Plainness of style seems easy to imitate at first thought, but when attempted, nothing is more difficult.'

Closer to the present day is the statement by Professor Joseph Kimble, Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Michigan, that plain language is the most important law-reform issue of our time.

Photograph by Linda Pretorius



Marion Boers (left) and Candice Burt exchange business cards. Marion is past PEG Chair and currently President of the International Federation of Translators. One of the few plain language lawyers in South Africa, Candice addressed delegates on plain language and the law in South Africa.

Chair's chatter

I have been both fascinated and heartened by the open exchanges of views in the PEG chat groups that have flowed from the recent announcement of the introduction of membership categories, accreditation testing, and the various avenues via which member status, accredited membership and, ultimately, advanced membership can be attained. The views expressed tell me one thing: that PEG is alive and well, and kicking. All good signs of vibrant health in a teenager, I think. Your committee members value and heed your feedback on these matters.

Many of our members are self-taught – which is admirable, but potentially hazardous, since it could mean that they operate oblivious to the standards to which they should be performing their work. Accreditation in some form or other can only do such practitioners good, surely, if they honestly aspire to delivering a thoroughly professional service and gaining repeat business.

I also ask members of longer standing to consider the position of younger or less experienced editors. Some do not have access to a formal education in editing, or to on-the-job training, and are largely products of an appalling, usually grammarless, system of preparation for the workplace. How do they benchmark themselves, other than through training, mentoring, testing and obtaining clients' approval and commendations?

For them, the only rungs up the ladder to greater professionalism, and recognition of it, are our new membership categories. Seen in this light, the new system is a healthy one; one, I believe, it is our duty to offer you all. It certainly is not a case of bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake!

To the detractors, I'd like to point out the following: the UK Society of Indexers, an august body more mature than ours, has itself recently introduced membership categories (for the same reasons as PEG has), and the reaction of its members mirrors that of ours: strong

dissension and heated arguments pro and con. But at the end of the day the new scheme was carried by an overwhelming majority at the Society's AGM in September 2009. At the other extreme, two years ago the Australian editors voted in favour of a 'sudden death'-type alternative: a single accreditation exam. That, I believe, is too restrictive for accreditation, not a route to be imposed on you as obligatory, though certainly acceptable as just one of several routes to accreditation.

I'd like to point out, further, that, for some years now, our government has been manoeuvring towards regulating language practitioners through a statutory body. There has already been a draft Bill in existence since 2002, which seems, mercifully in my opinion, to have either died a natural death or become comatose.

The prospect of our being regulated by politicians (Yet another regulator! Yet more corruption and infighting?) makes me shudder, especially if we are not yet recognised as a professional body with a voice. And that's pretty much where we are at present.

We as an association of practitioners should be doing all we can to inculcate professional standards, to regulate ourselves so that, should the fateful day arrive, we can be taken seriously as a professional body, just as the accountants, the architects and the public relations practitioners are.

This, in essence, is what all the changes sweeping through PEG are about: self-regulation and becoming fully professional. And this, moreover, motivates the attempts by your committee to forge links with other influential organisations so that PEG is taken seriously in deliberations that affect us all.

Yours in editing
John

Current PEG membership categories

Student: Unchanged. This category is for students on a recognised publishing, editing or language practitioner course. The fee is lower and students may not be included in the Directory of Members' Services.

Associate: Anyone new to editing, as well as people in related professions (such as indexing) who do not work as editors but belong to PEG for the professional interaction.

Member: Anyone who can show that they have a degree with an editing component, or have worked in editing, or have successfully completed a short training course and a mentorship.

While the process is being developed, membership status will not be part of a Directory entry. For the 2010 Directory, members are being asked to state 'Number of years of editing experience'. So even if your entry remains unchanged in all other respects, please remember to email this information to Fiona Wallace at wallacefiona@gmail.com. (For Directory deadlines see p. 6.)

Book review

Paul Schamberger reviews the recently released book by none other than our chair, John Linnegar

English, our English: common errors in South African English and how to resolve them

Includes two forewords, a bibliography and a glossary of terms used. Illustrated by PEG's Meg Jordi
Pharos Dictionaries, Cape Town, 2009

John's delightful, much-needed and brand-new book with a particular emphasis on the influence of Afrikaans on South African English reminds me of a favourite joke. Adam and Eve are enjoying the Garden of Eden but, because there is nobody else to talk to, they don't know whether they are Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking. Eve is dying to know, so she sends Adam to the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the garden to find out. Adam shakes the tree, looks up and asks: 'Excuse me, can you tell us whether we are Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking?' The tree answers mildly and majestically: 'You are what you are.'

Which is all very well, but it doesn't answer Eve's burning question. At her insistence, Adam has to ask the tree again and again, but always receives the same reply: 'You are what you are.'

Poor Eve grows more and more despondent. Then one day Adam exclaims: 'I've got it! We are English-speaking!'

'Oh, that's nice to know, but – how do you know?'

'Well, if we were Afrikaans-speaking, the tree would have replied: "You *is* what you *is*."'

English, our English is a practical, non-academic and easy-to-read book of 163 pages, with tables and cartoons to support the text. The page layout is easy on the eye, with lots of white space, and the author has adopted a friendly, conversational tone. Many headings are delightfully humorous, e.g., 'No "Afringlish"; please, we're British', 'Falling into a comma', 'Pickle fish and corn beef: our past participles are getting the chop', and my favourite one: 'Preposition me!' (a not-to-be missed discussion about prepositions and prepositional phrases follows).

As the title indicates, this slim volume deals with the kinds of error writers often (and habitually) make. The explanations are brief and to the point; all examples are from current, everyday usage, and incorrect and corrected sentences (sometimes with alternative suggestions) are cleverly displayed one above the other, rather than side by side. This arrangement obviates an awkward forwards-and-backwards reading of both sentences – one can spot the mistakes instantly.

Particularly helpful is the 25-page section on the correct use of prepositions. John's warning that 'a sure tell-tale sign of a non-mother tongue speaker of English is the

incorrect use of prepositions' could be extended to include even those whose home language is English. This is largely because of the still-prevalent influence of Afrikaans. The book has a useful list of idiomatically correct or appropriate prepositions; a longer list of Afrikaans prepositions and their (correct) English equivalents, and also a table of English prepositions and their equivalents in four of the other South African languages. Here one encounters old hiccups such as 'He threw Mary with the ball' instead of 'He threw the ball at Mary'. The accompanying cartoon shows a guy throwing a ball at a confused-looking batsman with his jaw dropping – while a giggling Mary with outstretched arms and legs balances precariously on the ball as it sails through the air! Geddit?

A few niggles.

- The abbreviations eg and ie (no full stops or commas) are used throughout the book; the usage is explained on p. 118. Call me old-fashioned, but I prefer e.g. and i.e.
- The translation of 'Loop en spring is tog te lekker, maar ek geniet dit ook as ek kan lê en boeke lees' is rendered as: 'It's so nice *walking* and *jumping*, but I also enjoy *lying* and *reading* books.' *Lying*? To obviate any misunderstanding, I would prefer '*lying* down and *reading* books', as it also serves to highlight the contrast with *walking* and *jumping* (p. 7). However, other alternatives are given.
- Whereas the example 'I bought *me* a dress' is obviously wrong (p. 11), the corrected version 'I bought *myself* a dress' is not the best. I would probably pare this down to read simply: 'I bought a dress', as *myself* is implied and seems redundant.
- A discussion on gender-neutral singular pronouns has: 'Each child ... says their name out aloud' (p. 17). Yes, acceptable, but isn't a child an 'it'?
- We are told that the plural form of the abbreviation NPO's is correct (p. 21) yet on p. 71 we are told not to write NGO's but NGOs. (I would omit the apostrophes, as well as in *60's* and in *1980's*.)
- Biannual or biennial? (p. 106). Ja well, no fine, but most grammar books would simply recommend avoiding these words altogether to make the reader's life a little easier. Rather spell out whether you mean 'occurring twice a year' or 'occurring once every two years'.

Yay! for the distinction which the author (still) makes between *each other* and *one another* (p. 113). I stick to it rigorously, despite having read somewhere that there is no distinction, and never has been, between the two. And I've also learnt that 'owing to' starts a sentence whereas 'due to' should be placed inside a sentence (p. 132). Thanks for the tip!

Niggles aside, there is lots in here that I either didn't know or had forgotten. In summary, this volume is a must-have for any South African language practitioner, either to read through from A to Z, and/or to use as a handy reference book. To quote that lovely 'incorrect' example on p. 26: I am very much happy with this book.
– Paul Schamberger

John Linnegar is offering the book to PEG members at a special price of R130 if you are able to collect your copy in Randburg, Pretoria or Cape Town, or obtain it at a PEG meeting. The bookshop price is about R148. For further details, contact John at johnlinnegar@gmail.com.

Classification and the pencil test

Sitting in a JPO concert rehearsal recently, watching the violinist who had been one of the soloists the week before – a member of a Soweto family with a long-standing classical musical background – I was transported back to the early Nineties. When Buskaid started promoting classical music in Soweto at the time, they gave the impression that no-one had ever taught music there before. And that reminded me of what apartheid had done in its classification processes – categorised people, in effect, as infantile or ignorant, giving no value to their past learning or status. I was again struck by how dangerous classification is, and how one of its biggest problems is the grey areas.

You will realise how little of the concert I then heard, pondering the parallels with our PEG membership categorisation process! I suddenly wondered if the whole concept was faulty. Why are some people allowed to be Members just because they have been members for years, while others are being asked to provide proof of eligibility? Should we use committee discretion or should we apply the criteria strictly, even when we know people have been editing for years and years? How can we really equate hours worked and references with passing a test, and which is more meaningful?

Some members have expressed these and other concerns. But others have sent messages of support and congratulations for grasping the nettle. And when it comes to accreditation the pencil test will be optional! That makes me feel a lot better. – Mary

2010 PEG DIRECTORY DEADLINES

Print/CD orders: 31 January 2010
Members' entries: 12 February 2010
Adverts: 19 February 2010

Contact Fiona on wallacefionajean@gmail.com for more information.

NB – 31 January 2010 is also the deadline for membership renewal – see email sent to all members on 24 November.

Keyboard shortcuts in MS Word	
SHIFT+F3	Change the case of letters
CTRL+SHIFT+A	Format letters as all capitals
CTRL+SHIFT+K	Format letters as small capitals
CTRL+=	Apply subscripts
CTRL+SHIFT+=	Apply superscripts
CTRL+SHIFT+Z	Remove formatting (plain text)
F4 or CTRL+Y	Repeat last action
F12	Save as
CTRL+SHIFT+C	Copy formats
CTRL+SHIFT+V	Paste formats
SHIFT+F5	Move to a previous revision
CTRL+Q	Remove paragraph formatting
CTRL+SHIFT+spacebar	Non-breaking space
CTRL+ALT+minus on numberpad	Em dash
CTRL+minus on numberpad	En dash

Secretary's scribbles

This is not intended to be a regular column, but what are the options when you put PEGboard together on Boxing Day, and the material fills seven pages out of eight? Quicker to write myself than go back to the editor for another contribution! In any case, I am only involved this time because of the end-of-year pressure alluded to by Hester in her Inkspot.

We had about eight offers of layout help from members of this wonderful Group, one of which we accepted for this issue, and I sincerely hope Lesley Price will become a permanent member of the newsletter team. Thank you, Lesley, for a great job.

One thing that strikes me reading this issue of *PEG-board* is that everyone is asking for help to carry out all the plans we have for PEG. But if the generous offers of layout help are anything to go by, other members will come forward to help Juliet, our new Marketing coordinator (see her plans and hopes overleaf), and the CPD (Continuing Professional Development) committee. As mentioned elsewhere, the CPD has approached people to pilot the accreditation test, but also needs a couple of extra people for the group working on the points route to accreditation.

Fiona Wallace also has a request – that you submit your Directory entry, or the additional information needed for your existing entry, in good time (see box on p. 6). And by the way, last year it was suggested, not entirely as a joke, that new members who submit an accurate Directory entry, in accordance with the instructions and prescribed style, at their first attempt, should thereby gain points towards accredited status! I'm not sure about that, but I might be inclined to take points off for members who cannot follow style instructions. Be warned!

BryDWE to compete with ODWE?

A very welcome Christmas present was a copy of Bill Bryson's *Dictionary for Writers and Editors*. Dipping into it so far has produced some really useful nuggets of information and clarity – it has fewer entries than *ODWE* (the *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*), but its chatty explanatory style creates confidence. As well as providing guidelines on capitalisation, hyphenation and whether or not words and phrases are still italicised, Bryson deals with pairs of confused words together in a succinct no-nonsense manner. The impression is that few, if any, decisions are arbitrary.

On that note, is everyone aware that OUP has now produced a *New Hart's Rules*, and a new *ODWE*, both (re-)adapted from Robert Ritter's recent volumes, and once more in the traditional old *Hart's Rules* size? A quick scan of the new *ODWE* revealed that KwaZulu-

Natal is now thus, not with a forward slash (solidus) as before (and about time too); but the @ sign is now described as 'used in internet addresses', whereas in Ritter's *ODWE* it was accurately described as 'used in email addresses' – oh well, win some, lose some.

The entries for our local South African languages have also changed, rather arbitrarily. Sesotho and Setswana are still given thus, along with Xhosa and Zulu *tout court* – go figure. (The other five do not feature at all!) We have had plenty of discussion on this issue on the PEG chat group.

Best of the chat group

Talking of the chat group, this is a good place to repeat some of the valuable advice or information that has emerged on the chat group recently, particularly for the benefit of those members who do not choose to belong (those among us who are too busy or more disciplined, I suspect).

Lynette Downes-Webb provided this link for referencing methods: http://www.presentit.co.za/media//DIR_21801/DIR_24801/DIR_38401/4aa477c484e488d2ffff80f8ffff3.pdf (it would clearly be better if you could copy this into your browser from your electronic copy of *PEGboard!*).

Eldene Eysell posted a wonderful list of keyboard shortcuts (for Word), mentioning that her favourite is Shift+F5 (see p. 6).

Janice Hunt attended the launch of Porcupine Press, Gail and David Robbins's new Johannesburg-based publishing venture. Visit their website at www.porcupinepress.co.za. There is even a place where you can register your editing/proofreading services.

PEG Guide to Style Guides

Talking of style guides, our Publications committee has released a very useful booklet entitled *PEG Guide to Style Guides*, cost R40. Copies are available from Jill Bishop in Pretoria, or John Linnegar in Cape Town. You can buy one at your next branch meeting, or email Jill or John and ask them to post one. Please include proof of payment into our bank account, add R10 for postage, use the words 'Guide' and your name as payer reference, and be sure to copy to Lulu van Molendorff (all email addresses on p. 2).

Happy New Year – *Mary*

PEG bank details: ABSA Bank, Professional Editors' Group, a/c no. 9045286642, branch code: 632005 (Hyde Park)

From the Marketing committee

There are some changes afoot on the marketing side. The most visible of these are:

Advertising

The decision to do away with the printed version of *PEGboard*, taken by formal vote at the 2009 AGM, is being implemented. This will release a rather nice sum for advertising PEG, its members and their services, and editing in general, to clients and potential clients. We should see the results of this new strategy starting to take effect during the second half of 2010.

E-zine

Official documents, notices and other important documents will be uploaded to the website. Notification of this news, plus all other news relating to conferences, PEG developments, etc., will be provided to members via a monthly e-zine. The e-zine will guide members and non-members (principally clients and potential clients) to the website pages that contain detailed information. This will generate traffic to the site. With websites, traffic generates traffic and the e-zine tool should, therefore, kick-start the website into becoming a resource that draws viewers and that works for members.

Website

The website will be upgraded to provide an interactive, user-friendly resource with facilities being made available for clients to list jobs immediately and for editors to search for jobs at their convenience. Other interactive facilities will also be made available – but more on this at a later stage as this is a longer-term project that will be dealt with in phases.

At the moment, we are working at updating the website and revamping it in terms of best practice, after a website audit has been done.

Other

In addition, the Marketing committee is hoping to tackle the following wish list:

- re-looking at strategy
- undertaking a comprehensive research project in order to understand exactly who PEG members are, how they function and how we can best assist them
- building a marketing database that will be used to market PEG and its members
- ensuring PEG participation at the London Book Fair, Cape Town Book Fair, Franschoek Literary Festival and Jozi Book Fair
- building a relationship with the British Council and exploring various possibilities
- looking at annual editing awards
- engaging with DTI regarding funding, specifically for international book fairs
- updating and/or revamping PEG brochures
- preparing suitable exhibition material.

Unfortunately, there are very few hands available to do an enormous amount of voluntary work for the benefit of all PEG members. This means that the Marketing committee wish list will not be attended to overnight and that there may be hiccups along the way. The committee currently comprises Juliet Gillies, Lia Marus, Joan Fairhurst and Brenda Keen. We are looking for three more members to take on some of the tasks, so please contact me if you are willing to serve (email: julietg@icon.co.za).

Till next time – *Juliet Gillies*

2010 AGM venue switch

Your Exco has decided that the 2010 AGM will after all be held in Gauteng – on Saturday, 5 June. This despite the fact that at the January 2009 annual general meeting it was indicated that the next AGM would be held in Cape Town in June 2010. But the Soccer World Cup starts on 10 June and runs until mid-July, so between those dates all our cities and all transportation between them will probably be either choked or disrupted. So it was decided to retain Gauteng as the venue for the AGM, as this will require movement by fewer members. We hope that Cape Town will be able to enjoy its turn to host the AGM in June 2011.

For your diary

London Book Fair: 19–21 April

PEG conference, *Editing works of fiction*:

Franschoek, 13 and 14 May

Franschoek Literary Festival: 14–16 May

PEG AGM: 5 June

Cape Town Book Fair: 28 July – 2 August

PEG conference, *Editing theses and*

dissertations: Gauteng, date to be announced

(probably August–September)