

#TheEclecticChair

From the eclectic chair



I was today years old ...

I remember the first time I came across the phrase 'I was today years old'. Although it's ungrammatical, I understood its meaning immediately – helped by some contextual clues, I'm sure. If you aren't familiar with the phrase (I suspect it might have something to do with how much time you spend online and which corners of the internet you hang out in), it's used to express surprise that one has got this far in life without having learnt or realised something.

I love those unexpected little learnings – facts and trivia, 'life hacks', aspects of language that I hadn't considered before (and other people's strong opinions on them). I enjoy the insights about myself and others. And all of this I pick up through reading or scrolling (which these days is an exercise in discerning actual fact from mis/disinformation), listening to podcasts or chatting to colleagues and friends.

'I was today years old' realisations are often those things that might be considered common knowledge or something that others learnt when they were young. Admitting it with this humorous phrase can be humbling, but sharing it with others might just save someone else from embarrassment. It's a great reminder that each of us is shaped by our own context and frame of reference, but that's not to say we can't learn from others.

Whether editing, proofreading, indexing or translating, we're generally working on someone else's text. That's fruitful ground for new (to you) information. For example, thanks to a book I was working on, I recently learnt not only that a section of the border between Botswana and Zimbabwe is a perfectly circular arc, but also the reason for this formation: it doesn't follow any natural geographical feature but is the result of a colonial-era land concession determined by a 10-mile radius from Fort Tuli as a *cordón sanitaire* to prevent the spread of disease among cattle. I'd heard of the Tuli Circle many times before – I just didn't realise it was that literal!

Also in my work, I picked up that *canvass* (the verb, to drum up support) is not spelt the same as *canvas* (the noun, the strong material you paint on or use to cover things) – clearly not a word I had ever needed to spell before. That led to an interesting side discussion with a colleague about similar tricky pairs, such as *carat/karat*, *discrete/discreet*, *leach/leech*, *mantel/mantle* and the trio *palette/palate/pallet*. (They're all on my 'Confusables' list, which I update often after a 'today years old' moment. And thanks to PerfectIt or Paul Beverley's fabulous *macro* of the same name, you can be sure to catch these sneaky spellcheck evaders.)

It seems that every day's a school day. What have some of your 'I was today years old' moments been? And long may they continue!

Kevin Walker



The Tuli Circle, a section of the border between Botswana and Zimbabwe (<https://africageographic.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/tuli-block-map.jpg>)

CONTENTS

From the eclectic chair	1
PBEdit&Earn Quiz 1	2
Doing diversity: Equity in academic editing (Part 2)	3
Eish, they suffer from such neglect and misuse, the semicolon, the colon and the dash!	5
Wie is jou kollega eintlik? Salomé van Niekerk	8
From the regions	
• 'Words, words, words' – PEG Gauteng's end-of-year get-together	9
• The era of casual tax compliance is over: Be compliant!	10
• PEG KZN navigates memoir concerns and compass controversies	12
• Being edited ... The good, the bad and the ugly	14
• Ending with fun and starting with determination	15
• Calm after the storm of 2025	16
Bibliophile heaven: Bookbinding in the Art Deco period	17
From Copilot to co-author: AI and the future of fiction	18
Launch of the 2nd revised edition of <i>Engleish</i> , our <i>Engleish</i>	19

PEGboard

Newsletter of the Professional Editors' Guild

ISSN 1815-3607

Email: administrator@editors.org.za

Website: editors.org.za

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/the-professional-editors-guild](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-professional-editors-guild)

Facebook: [facebook.com/ProfessionalEditorsGuild](https://www.facebook.com/ProfessionalEditorsGuild)

Editor

Janice Hunt: janicehunt@xsinet.co.za

Subeditors and proofreaders

Alexia Lawson, Alexis Grewan, Annamarie Mostert, Anne Denniston, Caroline Jeannerat, Danya Ristic-Schacher, Ilana Sachar, John Linnegar, Jane Mqamalo, Mary-Anne van Biljon, Ricky Woods, Shanitha Ramharak, Tracy Farquhar, Warda Abdurahman, Wendy Weyermüller

Designer

Wynand Coetzee: wynandc@gmail.com

PEG National Executive Committee

Chairperson

Kevin Walker: doppiotempo@gmail.com

Secretary

An De Fortier: hello@andefortier.co.za

Egroups coordinator

Kim R²: tzar42@gmail.com

Treasurer

Sandra Smook: sandra.smook@icloud.com

Mentoring scheme coordinator

Melissa Davidson: mentoring@editors.org.za

Accreditation scheme coordinator

John Linnegar: accredscheme@editors.org.za

Publications coordinator

Shanitha Ramharak: ramharakshani@gmail.com

Marketing and communications coordinator

Stephanie Brough: stephanie@langprac.co.za

Webinar coordinator

Shanitha Ramharak: ramharakshani@gmail.com

Website coordinator

Anne Denniston: website@editors.org.za

Indexing representative

Karien Hutchison: karien@hutchinhand.co.za

Members at large

Fiona Hulme Brophy: thewordworks.online@gmail.com

Janice Hunt: janicehunt@xsinet.co.za

Regional representative: Eastern Cape

Kate Davies: katedavies500@gmail.com

Regional representative: Gauteng

Mary-Anne van Biljon: maryanne.vanbiljon@gmail.com

Regional representative: KwaZulu-Natal

Wendy Weyermüller: wendy@strelitziaediting.co.za

Regional representative: Western Cape

John Linnegar: johndlinnegar@gmail.com

Views expressed are not necessarily shared by the editor or the publishers.

#PBEEdit&EarnQuiz

PBEEdit&Earn Quiz 1

Here is *PEGboard's* first PBEEdit&Earn Quiz, as announced in the December issue. This quiz will give you the opportunity to test your comma knowledge and earn yourself a CPD hour in the process. You will need to get at least five choices correct (six is better!) to qualify for the CPD hour.

Once entries close (on 30 April), you will be told by email whether or not you have earned your CPD hour. At that stage, the answers will be published on the PEG website.

As this is the first 'hour-earning' *PEGboard* quiz, we are easing you in gently with only six questions. In the next issue, we will up the number of questions to 10 or so.

In this comma pairs quiz, each pair illustrates a different problem with comma usage. A random mixture of sentences illustrates correct usage.

To send your answers, please click on [this link](#), which will take you to a Google form to complete. Click submit and you will receive a confirmation email that your submission has been received. We will confirm whether or not you have earned your CPD hour after April 30.

The deadline for entries is midday on 30 April 2026.

1. Which is correct, a or b?

- For citing sources, more guidelines have been added, that make citing online sources easier and clearer.
- For citing sources, more guidelines have been added that make citing online sources easier and clearer.

2. Which is correct, a or b?

- Among the major changes in the 7th edition (2021) are these:
- Among the major changes in the 7th edition (2021), are these:

3. Which is correct, a or b?

- The colours of the French tricolour are red, white and blue.
- The colours of the French tricolour are red, white, and blue.

4. Which is correct, a or b?

- My friend, Gus who is a great sci-fi author, is also an engaging raconteur.
- My friend Gus, who is a great sci-fi author, is also an engaging raconteur.

5. Which is correct, a or b?

- When she entered the room, she was clad in a magnificent silk gutter-length Armani coat.
- When she entered the room, she was clad in a magnificent, silk, gutter-length Armani coat.

6. Which is correct, a or b?

- 'Dad. If you want me to accompany you, if you really do I'll be happy to do so.'
- 'Dad, if you want me to accompany you, if you really do, I'll be happy to do so.' 🍌

Doing diversity: Equity in academic editing (Part 2)

Ursula Arends

In our previous issue, we considered the need to include ‘equity’ in all PEG forums, documents and statements pertaining to diversity and inclusion (D&I). In a related Coffee Conversation, the participants responded positively to this idea.

This discussion focuses on *inequity* in the fields of academic editing and language services, which often manifests in subtle and systemic ways. South Africa presents a unique context: a multilingual society with deep historical inequities and a vibrant academic and publishing sector.

Here are examples that highlight the ways in which disparities affect professionals and their clients, and also strategies to redress them.

Inequity	Strategy
<i>Among professionals</i>	
<p>Lack of recognition of non-English expertise:</p> <p>Language practitioners working in non-dominant or Indigenous languages may be overlooked for awards, publications or leadership roles, despite their critical contributions to linguistic diversity and cultural preservation.</p>	<p>Language justice advocacy:</p> <p>Supporting initiatives that challenge the dominance of English in academia, such as multilingual publishing platforms or translation grants, helps to elevate non-dominant languages and epistemologies.</p>
<p>Newcomers and imposter syndrome:</p> <p>Professional organisations that lack a structured professional development programme run the risk of adding to the vulnerability of newcomers, particularly individuals transitioning to editing and related work from other fields.</p>	<p>Professional empowerment and solidarity:</p> <p>Building inclusive communities where experienced professionals mentor newcomers, especially those from under-represented backgrounds, can help to bridge gaps in access, visibility and opportunity.</p>
<p>Pay disparities across regions:</p> <p>Editors and language practitioners in the global South or non-Western countries are often paid significantly less than their counterparts in wealthier nations, even when delivering work of equal quality and complexity.</p>	<p>Fair pay and rate transparency:</p> <p>Advocating regionally adjusted but globally fair compensation helps counter exploitative pricing and recognises the value of local expertise.</p>
<p>Gatekeeping in professional associations:</p> <p>Membership fees, accreditation requirements and networking events often cater to professionals in the global North, excluding talented practitioners who cannot afford or access these resources.</p>	<p>Inclusive professional networks:</p> <p>Building regional associations and peer mentorship programmes strengthens solidarity and offers support outside Western-dominated institutions.</p>
<p>Bias in hiring and freelance platforms:</p> <p>Freelance marketplaces and academic institutions may favour native English speakers or graduates from elite universities, sidelining equally qualified professionals from diverse backgrounds.</p>	<p>Equity audits:</p> <p>Encouraging publishers, universities and agencies to assess their hiring, pay and promotion practices through an equity lens can expose and correct systemic biases. ➤</p>

Inequity	Strategy
<i>In client relationships</i>	
<p>Unethical demands from clients:</p> <p>Some clients expect editors or language practitioners to rewrite entire theses or research papers, crossing ethical boundaries and placing undue pressure on professionals, especially those in precarious financial situations.</p>	<p>Client education and ethical boundaries:</p> <p>Asserting ethical limits (eg avoiding plagiarism and the irresponsible use of AI) while educating clients about the value and scope of language services could become a professional responsibility.</p>
<p>Language bias in academic publishing:</p> <p>Non-native English-speaking clients often face rejection or harsh criticism from journals owing to linguistic problems. Editors and language practitioners are then tasked with 'fixing' language in ways that erase the author's voice or cultural nuances.</p>	<p>Inclusive language practices:</p> <p>Advocating language that respects cultural identity, avoids bias and reflects the client's authentic voice, especially in academic publishing.</p>
<p>Limited access to services:</p> <p>Clients from underfunded institutions or marginalised communities may struggle to afford professional language support, perpetuating academic exclusion and limiting their ability to publish or present research.</p>	<p>Sliding scales and public sector support:</p> <p>Offering flexible pricing or pro bono work for under-resourced scholars ensures that language support is not a luxury reserved for elites. Government and academic institutions can fund editing services for researchers from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, promoting inclusive scholarship.</p>
<i>Systemic and structural inequities</i>	
<p>Colonial legacies in language work:</p> <p>The dominance of English in academia often marginalises other languages and reinforces power imbalances. Language practitioners and editors working in African, Asian or Indigenous languages may find their work undervalued or excluded from mainstream academic discourse.</p>	<p>Decolonising language work:</p> <p>Supporting academic work and publishing in Indigenous languages, including isiXhosa, isiZulu, Afrikaans and other local and regional languages counters linguistic marginalisation and affirms cultural identity.</p>
<p>Gender and racial bias:</p> <p>People of colour and women in these professions frequently report being paid less, receiving fewer opportunities or being treated with less respect than their white male peers.</p>	<p>Gender and racial equity:</p> <p>Tertiary institutions can implement equity audits for language services, ensuring fair hiring, pay and promotion for language professionals, especially black and women practitioners.</p>
<p>Invisible labour:</p> <p>Many language professionals perform unpaid emotional labour, such as mentoring clients, navigating cultural sensitivities or advocating fair treatment that goes unrecognised and uncompensated.</p>	<p>Community-based networks:</p> <p>Editors and language practitioners can form collectives to share resources, negotiate rates for 'unfunded mandates' and amplify their voices in policy discussions.</p>
<p>Western-based accreditation models:</p> <p>Accreditation tests in the global Majority (aka the global South) are often modelled on credentialing systems from the global North and fail to adequately acknowledge or foreground the diverse linguistic and cultural expertise of Indigenous language practitioners.</p>	<p>Decentralised accreditation models:</p> <p>Advocating credentialing systems that recognise diverse linguistic and cultural expertise, rather than privileging Western academic norms, helps to validate a wider range of professionals.</p>

These examples show why equity is not merely a nice-to-have – it is essential to creating a fair, inclusive and sustainable professional landscape.

Moreover, these strategies are not just corrective – they are transformative. They help to build a language services ecosystem that reflects South Africa's richness, resilience and diversity. 🌱



Ursula Arends is a lifelong social justice activist committed to the creation of a more just, inclusive world. For more than a decade she has used her platform as an academic editor to engage with the work of interdisciplinary scholars across the humanities and social sciences to live out this commitment. She has been a PEG member for the past six years and invests her energies in the achievement of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging for all PEG members.

Eish, they suffer from such neglect and misuse, the semicolon, the colon and the dash!

John Linnegar



Quite why authors shy away from using, or misusing, the semicolon, the colon and the dash remains a mystery. Perhaps they were not taught how to use them correctly or sensitively (or at all!) at school. Perhaps they were even told to avoid using them at all costs by their teachers and lecturers. But the truth of the matter is that these punctuation marks can support both fiction writing and academic discourse in powerful ways – if used correctly and sensitively. So let's dive in immediately to the correct use of these marks as ways of supporting the expression of writers' intended meaning.

Semicolon

The gentlest, perhaps most contemplative of these three marks is the semicolon. Lukeman (2007: 56) says of it that '[p]ausing more strongly than the comma, yet dividing more weakly than the full stop, it is a mediator'. It's mediating at its best when it balances two juxtaposed statements (which must be full, thematically similar sentences, by the way) that are either complementary or contrastive:

To err is human; to forgive (is) divine.

The wind blew over several poles in our street alone; reinstating them will be a major undertaking.

A contemplative and reflective punctuation mark, the semicolon forces us to read up to it, pause, absorb what has just been read, and only then to read the second part. Finally, it encourages us to reflect on the sentence as a whole, weighing up the meaning of the two parts taken together. And because the semicolon requires a longer pause than the comma, the reader is inclined not to rush through a sentence constructed in this way.



Now, the two pairs of sentences above could have been separated by a full stop:

To err is human. To forgive is divine.

The wind blew over several poles in our street alone. Reinstating them will be a major undertaking.

But what happens here is that, while the full stop is perfectly legitimate, the two thoughts are uncoupled, the effect more disjointed and jerky, and the reader is more likely to consider them to be separate and unrelated. The resulting construction is therefore less contemplative, and less powerful, than that with the semicolon as the connector.

The error that writers often make, though, is to use a comma as a connector of two independent though connected thoughts or statements when there is no conjunction between them (the semicolon is usually the go-to solution here):

To err is human, to forgive is divine.

The wind blew over several poles in our street alone, reinstating them will be a major undertaking.

These are instances of what is known as a 'comma splice' ('splice' means to join together), an absolute no-no in English. So should we encounter such comma splices, our decision should be a relatively easy one, based on the closeness of the association between the two sentences. Usually, replacing the comma with a semicolon solves the problem most easily.

In line with this, the following sentence constructions are also incorrect:

Herbert is an excellent musician, however, he will not put in sufficient practice.

He is not putting in the effort he ought to, therefore, his grades are substandard. ➤

In both cases, two contrasting or complementary thoughts or statements have been joined and so therefore it is not a comma that should join them but a semicolon:

Herbert is an excellent musician; however, he will not put in sufficient practice.
She is not putting in the effort she ought to; therefore, her grades are substandard.

The semicolon is also useful or even essential in lists, whether they appear in the run of text or as vertical lists, usually when the list is preceded by a colon and there is a surfeit of commas holding the items in the list together. For instance, readers will usually find it difficult to make their way through and make sense of the detail in a sentence such as this:

On his worktop there were pens of several colours, pencils, rulers of varying lengths (both wooden and plastic), a typewriter, several sharpeners, Tippex, a magnifying glass, his afternoon tea cups, saucers and cake plate, two pairs of scissors, his reading spectacles and the day's mail items delivered by the local postman.

Phew! But if we rearrange and regroup the items and then form sublists that can be enclosed within semicolons, not only do we slow down the reading pace, we also make the content more accessible to readers as a result:

On his worktop there were pens of several colours, pencils, rulers of varying lengths (both wooden and plastic), several sharpeners and Tippex; a typewriter; a magnifying glass; two pairs of scissors; his reading spectacles; the day's mail items delivered by the local postman; and his afternoon tea cups, saucers and cake plate.

In the case of vertical lists where each bullet item runs on from or completes the introductory sentence, each item should start with a lowercase first letter and terminate in a semicolon (not a comma or a full stop, except the final item in the list). For example:

- You can achieve these goals by
- working hard;
 - applying yourself relentlessly;
 - keeping to your set deadlines.



Colon

Typically, and perhaps most familiarly, 'the colon can be appropriately used to separate a clause that introduces a list, quotation, summary or corollary from the actual list itself' (Carey 1973: 35) or even an explanation. For example:

Our chief exports have been these: coal, copper, lead, nitrate, sugar and timber.

My circumstances now differ from what they were before: I am now a single person again, living in a space of my own.

Modern English Usage defines the function of the colon metaphorically in this way: '... delivering the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words.'

In addition, the colon can be used to create a high point or a climax in a sentence; this means that the two parts on either side of the colon are usually unbalanced. Accordingly, Lukeman (2007: 76) describes its role in sentences more dramatically: 'The colon is the magician of the punctuation world. It holds its audience in suspense, waits until the right moment, then *voilà*: it pulls back the curtain to reveal the result ... the denouement ... one of the most effective punctuation marks to propel a word or a clause into the limelight.' In this role it forces the reader to want to read further for an explanation, an illustration or a resolution.

He is a fool: he gambles his savings away.

That is true: we must accept it as the reality we have to live with.

To give you an example: on Mondays, the refuse is supposed to be collected, but ...

For this reason, the colon is regarded as a dramatic punctuation mark: read to the colon; pause briefly, filled with expectation and wanting resolution; then read the words that follow. Then, the matter or issue having been resolved, the answer given and our curiosity satisfied, we do not reflect back – we move on instead.

Dashes and parentheses: opposites as interrupters

When used in pairs, parentheses and dashes perform the same function: that of interrupters. However, whereas parentheses tend to downplay the words or sentiments between them, dashes add 'an extra touch of abruptness' (Carey 1973: 72).

Used in pairs, commas, parentheses and dashes therefore have the intended effect of throwing emphasis onto words both intentionally and somewhat differently. Compare these constructions:

My uncle, who is a great fisherman, caught a blue marlin today.

My uncle (who is a great fisherman) caught a blue marlin today.

My uncle – who is a great fisherman – caught a blue marlin today.

In the first sentence the commas merely demarcate the subordinate statement, the relative adjectival clause 'who is a great fisherman' simply commenting on 'uncle'. The parentheses in the second sentence subordinate those words even more, turning them into an aside or almost a whisper. In stark contrast, the pair of dashes in the third sentence renders those words enclosed between them emphatic, the focal point of the sentence.

Used singly, the dash can also be used adeptly to throw emphasis intentionally onto the last statement in a sentence: ➤

My uncle is a great fisherman, father and husband – and also a jerk!

The statesmen have deliberately preferred to offer a compromise – at a price.

Re-examining the passage cited by Gardiner, he suggested the word referred not to a 'foreigner' but to a 'scholar' capable of grasping complex discourse – the jibe mocking speech so convoluted that even a learned person would struggle to follow it.

The dash can also be useful when, in a long sentence, subordinate content is separated from the main idea by commas when the sentence already contains a number of commas – the surfeit of commas rendering it difficult for the reader to distinguish the more important from the less important elements of the sentence:

As stated in my introduction, having returned to South Africa where I now lecture and regularly perform, I felt the need to share the practical experience of my journey as professional singer, which includes 17 years of singing the music of different style periods and genres in opera houses in Germany, in a scholarly manner.

With two commas replaced by dashes, the long sentence becomes more navigable:

As stated in my introduction, having returned to South Africa where I now lecture and regularly perform, I felt the need to share the practical experience of my journey as professional singer – which includes 17 years of singing the music of different style periods and genres in opera houses in Germany – in a scholarly manner.

Another useful function of the dash is to enable an opinion or a comment to be inserted into a sentence without seriously interrupting the flow of the sentence as a whole:

Autoethnography must look at experience analytically, otherwise one is simply telling one's story – and that's nice – but people do that on Oprah every day.

A pair of dashes can also be used effectively to highlight an illustration, explanation or embellishment of the point being made in a sentence:

Being a young singer at that time, I thought that this versatility – that is, singing different genres – would ruin my voice.

In South African and British publications, the dash is usually a spaced en-rule (type CTRL+minus key), never a hyphen. In American publications, the dash is preferably an unspaced em-rule (CTRL+ALT+minus key). For example:

SA/UK: Reducing expenditure by this means has not been a great success – some might consider it a complete failure.

US: Reducing expenditure by this means has not been a great success—some might consider it a complete failure.

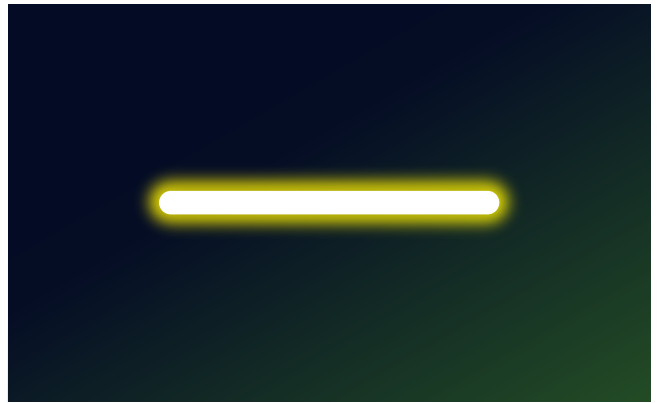
These two styles of the dash should never be used in the same document. This means that in direct quotations taken from US publications that are included in texts intended for SA/UK readers, the unspaced em-rules must be converted to spaced en-rules.

Another common error committed by many authors is to use the hyphen in page and date ranges, and also as the negative symbol. Universally, the en-rule must be used for these purposes (*New Hart's Rules* 11.1.4):

11–13, 1 481–560, 89 000–92 000, 185–122 BCE, 1992–2001, –24,56.

In all such ranges, the en-rule conveys the meaning 'to' or 'between'; it does so even between words (eg the Cape–Cairo route, the Biden–Trump debate). It can also be used to convey the meaning 'and' (eg 'the Labour–Liberal view of Britain's role').

An important aspect of our role as improvers of writers' words is to enhance their writing by inserting these punctuation marks as sensitively as we're able where our clients have erred or fallen short. 🍀



References

- Allen, R 2005 *How to write better English*. London: Penguin.
- Carey, GV 1973 *Mind the stop*. Penguin.
- Cutts, M 2013 (4th ed) *Oxford guide to plain English*. OUP.
- Field, M 2007 (2nd ed) *Improve your punctuation and grammar*. How To Books.
- Garner, B 2016 (4th ed) *Garner's modern English usage*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kahn, J (ed) 2016 *The right word at the right time*. London: Reader's Digest 1985.
- Linnegar, J & McGillivray, K 2019 *Grammar, punctuation and all that jazz ...* Cape Town: MLA Publishers.
- Linnegar, J & McGillivray, K 2026 (2nd ed) *Engleish, our Engleish: More common errors in South African English and how to resolve them*. Cape Town: MLA Publishers.
- Lukeman, N 2007 *The art of punctuation*. Oxford: OUP
- New Hart's rules: The Oxford style guide* 2014 (2nd ed). Oxford: OUP.
- Partridge, E 1999 (3rd ed) *Usage and abuse*. London: Penguin.
- Partridge, E 1978 *You have a point there*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Seely, J 2007 *Oxford A–Z of grammar & punctuation*. Oxford: OUP.
- Trask, RL 1997 *Penguin guide to punctuation*. London: Penguin.



A former teacher of English at both secondary and tertiary levels, John has been an avid 'improver of authors' words' for more than four decades now; he remains dedicated to making their texts read as clearly as possible (and in the process saving a reputation or two!). John is the (co-)author of several texts dealing with matters

grammatical and stylistic, including *Engleish, our Engleish: Common errors in South African English and how to resolve them* (Pharos, 2013), *Oxford English grammar: The advanced guide* (OUP, 2015) and, most recently, with Ken McGillivray, *grammar, punctuation and all that jazz ...* (MLA Publishers, 2019). He currently offers a personalised online English Grammar for Editors course aimed at those who need to brush up their English grammar and use of punctuation to support authors' intended meaning. Since 2000, he has been training copy editors and proofreaders for South Africa's book publishing industry and championing the professionalisation of our craft and its practitioners. To this end, he co-authored *Text editing: A handbook for students and practitioners* (UPA, Brussels, 2012) and has micro-published its translations into isiZulu and Sesotho.

Wie is jou kollega eintlik? Salomé van Niekerk

#WYCA?InAfrikaans

Albert Swanepoel



In hierdie uitgawe word ons geïnspireer deur die skerp oog en ruim gees van Salomé, een van PEG se voorste redigeerders en vertalers. Salomé herinner ons aan redigering se kragtige impak op begrip, vertroue en verbondenheid oor tale heen. Sy dra haar passie vir gelykheid en bemagtiging deur woorde oor. Hier deel sy 'n bietjie van haarself met ons.

Hoe het jy in redigering beland?

Aanvanklik was dit my groot liefde vir taal – en die vermoë om onmiddellik taalfoute raak te sien – wat daartoe gelei het dat ek op 'n informele wyse begin het om doktorsale studente se akademiese werk te redigeer. Terwyl ek swanger was met my eerste dogter, het ek as vryskutredigeerder begin werk. Selfs al was ek nie baie goed om te adverteer of om groot kliënte te kry nie, het mondelinge reklame mettertyd gesorg dat ek redelik gereeld werk begin kry het.

Wat is jou spesialiteitsgebiede?

Toe ek nog voltyds redigeer het, het ek in 'n stadium heelwat tesisse in politieke wetenskap vir 'n kennis by die Universiteit van Pretoria se studente redigeer. Danksy my agtergrond in teologie, het ek ook dikwels werk op hierdie vakgebied gedoen.

Wanneer en hoekom het jy by PEG aangesluit?

Dit was 'n wonderlike wending. 'n Kollega in vertaling het my vertel van die waarde van 'n PEG-lidmaatskap. Dit was uit die staanspoor duidelik dat ek 'n waardevolle skat misloop en al was die spens 'n bietjie leeg, het ek in 2021 aangesluit. Ek het ook in 2022 my PEG ATE-sertifikaat verkry; dit was vir my 'n groot eer en dit gee my daaglikse selfvertroue!

Wat is die beste deel van jou werk? Waarvan hou jy die minste?

Ek hou daarvan om vertalers iets nuuts te kan leer wat hulle lewens kan vergemaklik en hulle ook in die toekoms sal kan help. Administratiewe take laat my koud, want dit meng in met lekker leef (maar natuurlik het ek nie 'n keuse nie!).

Sonder watter vakgereedskap of toerusting kan jy nie klaarkom nie?

Ons maatskappy se sagteware, Trados Studio, het ek al gebruik lank voordat ek by RWS begin werk het – sonder my Pharosaanlyn- en Viva+-intekeninge kan ek nie lewe nie!

Wat is jou doelwit as taalpraktisyn vir die komende jaar?

Ek wil graag leer hoe om kunsmatige intelligensie (KI) sinvol in te span. Ek het dit lank vermy.

Hoe ervaar jy, as 'n professionele Afrikaanse taalkundige, die gebruik van Afrikaans? Hoe het die taal oor die tyd heen verander? Sien jy dalk tekens van 'n evolusie?

Ek dink Afrikaans is in die gelukkige posisie dat dit steeds hoë blootstelling en 'n ontsettende sterk basis geniet. Die hoeveelheid Afrikaanse bronne is ontsaglik – iets wat baie nodig is in ander Suid-Afrikaanse tale. Ek is mal oor die Afrikaanse Taalraad se klem op Afrikaans as deel van 'n meertalige landskap. Dit voel ook vir my of Afrikaans besig is om *losser* te raak en dat daar meer fokus is op suiwer taal wat gewone mense nietemin kan verstaan. Ek het so 'n jaar en 'n half gelede op die raad van SAVI (Suid-Afrikaanse Vertalerinstituut) beland, en dis nog 'n sfeer waarin ek my bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van Afrikaans kan lewer.

Watter belangrike lesse het jy tot dusver in jou loopbaan geleer?

Ek sou sê die belangrikste les was die gevaar om te maklik aannames te maak oor byvoorbeeld jou vertaal- of redigeerkeuses. Ek glo mens moet nederig en nuuskierig bly en bereid wees om dit te erken as jy verkeerd was.

Wanneer jy nie met woorde werk of as taalkundige optree nie, wat doen jy om te ontspan en stres te verlig?

Ongelukkig te min, maar hierdie komende jaar wil ek probeer om meer gereeld joga te doen, en ek stap elke dag, selfs al het ek net 'n kort rukkie. Buiten oefening ontspan ek maar net met lees.

LinkedIn dui aan dat jy vir RWS werk. Vertel 'n bietjie meer van die organisasie en jou werk daar.

My posbeskrywing by RWS is taalspesialis, maar ek hanteer ook projekkoördinerings en gehaltebestuur. RWS is 'n wêreldwye maatskappy wat tegnologies toonaangewende werk in vertaling en intellektuele eiendom doen, met 'n sterk fokus op KI.

As 'n taalkundige, watter raad sou jy met mederedigeerders wil deel?

Die grootste geskenk wat jy vir jouself kan gee, is om taalreëls te begryp en te internaliseer. Daaronder is jy altyd van ander mense afhanklik om jou te help met moeilike vertaal- of taalversorgingsbesluite. 🐦



Albert is a Johannesburg-based editor with a marketing background and a serious soft spot for purposeful language. Over the past few years and as a PEG member, he has focused on sharpening

his craft and helping organisations to say what they actually mean. While his daily endeavours involve corporate communications and fixing website messaging to make brands feel more empathetic, Albert's life isn't all about the red pen. When he's off the clock, you'll likely find him scribbling in a notebook, sipping good coffee or delicious wine, or indulging his love for birding, music and dreaming about flying.

#GautengYearEnd

‘Words, words, words’ – PEG Gauteng’s year-end gathering

Nicolette Gardiner



An intriguing invitation with a word challenge heralded PEG Gauteng’s final in-person social get-together of 2025.

As the date drew closer, it transpired that our date, 22 November, coincided with the G20 international conference. Consequently, the organisers circulated advice to attendees to check on road closures on their routes before heading to the venue. Some members, including me, encountered these and had to find alternative routes. Thanks heavens for the Waze and Google Maps apps!

Once we had found our way there, a lively group of Gauteng members gathered at EriX Tea Garden in Riviera, Pretoria. Set in the grounds of what was previously a school, this engaging venue offers excellent service and tasty eats. Initially, we sat in a sunny area covered by a canopy, but the heat later chased us to the covered, much cooler patio.

The cryptic invitation – ‘Words, Words, Words!’ – started to make sense when the organisers brought out several sets of the **Bananagrams** game. This is a fun game where players make as many words as they can with the letters they are given (though normally played by individuals, we played in teams). Tiles from various Scrabble and Rummikub sets were called into service as there were not enough letters for everyone in the Bananagrams bags.

Soon there was a happy racket with yells of ‘split’ (to start a game), ‘peel’ (everyone draws a new tile when a player has used up all their letters), and ‘dump’ (to swap one letter for three new ones). Players make words using their letters and can change words and move letters as needed. It is far less prescriptive than Scrabble. The first player to use up all their tiles yells ‘BANANAS’ to win. I have no idea who won the various games we played, but I do know that much fun was had by all members attending.

Continuing the ‘Words’ theme, we had been invited to bring along a book to swap or sell. An interesting variety of books was already displayed on a table and those who had brought a book could swap it for one on the table. Others were haggled over, and most had found new homes by the time the meeting ended.

Although this get-together was not as content rich as the previous 2025 meetings, it was great fun and concluded our year on a happy, convivial note! We indeed look forward to finding out what the organisers have on the menu for 2026. Thank you to all involved for coming up with interesting topics and sourcing unusual venues for members to experience. 🍷



Festive Gauteng PEGgers!



Hester von Wielligh



Queen of Bananagrams – Linda King!



The book table

Nicolette, a Full member today, joined PEG in 2007. She holds a BA English and Communication and a BTech in Public Relations. Before becoming a freelancer, she worked in PR and communications. In 2006 she was boarded as a result of her unwelcome companion, multiple sclerosis, which she doesn’t allow to get her down. Freelance writing and editing have kept her busy since then. Favourite editing areas are books and corporate work. Writing, Pilates, swimming, grandchildren (and writing for them), aqua and other exercise are passions. Having fulfilled a bucket list dream to swim with wild dolphins, she’s looking at her list again.



#GautengDoesTax

The era of casual tax compliance is over: Be compliant!

Alexis Grewan and Kudakwashe Muli



Gauteng members met online just before the financial year end to talk about tax. Alexis Grewan shared input from a representative of South African Revenue Service (SARS) who had offered a comprehensive breakdown of tax to PEG members in a national webinar two weeks earlier. She added in a few pointers from a tax practitioner whose presentation she had attended in 2025. Although one of these contributors works to collect more while the other works to save more, one common message was echoed loud and clear by both: be compliant!

From the region, 32 members joined the webinar to work through key issues related to tax compliance, specifically personal income tax. The following points were shared:

SARS

SARS collects our taxes and requires every employed or income-earning person or entity to be registered. Once registered, you will be issued with a tax number. You can register as a taxpayer via one of several mechanisms: SARS eFiling (recommended), mobile app, WhatsApp, call centre or walk-in offices. You can also watch SARS YouTube videos. So, there is no excuse not to be registered!

Tax compliance

For individual taxpayers, the tax year runs from 1 March to 28/29 February every year. Individuals must first determine whether they are required to submit tax returns. Individuals who are required to submit tax returns need to do so annually (at a minimum), whether there is tax to be paid or not. Guess what? It's not only about paying tax; if you have paid in more tax during the year than you are liable for, at the end of the tax year, you might even get a refund (SARS might pay you back some of the tax you had paid previously).

Deductions

Deductions are the amounts taken off your income (gross income minus exempt income) before determining the amount that the tax due will be based on (taxable income). This is a way of reducing how much tax you have to pay, but in a legitimate manner! Several expenses can be deducted from your income such as section 18A donations (donations to registered public benefit organisations that issues 18A tax certificates), wear-and-tear allowances on qualifying assets used in your trade, and other allowable expenses incurred that are related directly to your earning an income.

That last point brings us to home office expense deductions. Note these important points:

1. In order to claim home office expenses, and for deductions to seem plausible, more than 50% of your income should come from freelance work.
2. Your home office should be used exclusively (100%) and regularly for purposes of trade (SARS may request a photograph or floor plan as proof).
3. Home office utilities (rent, electricity, services) are calculated as a percentage of total floor space and, for consumables used exclusively for the purposes of trade, no apportionment may be deemed necessary (eg software, equipment, phone, internet, etc). SARS may demand proof of purchase or expense so you need to keep records of all supporting documents (invoices, receipts, etc).

Advance payment of income tax

In order to minimise the impact of tax on a person's cashflow, the South African tax system allows for advance payments of the estimated tax liability throughout the tax year. We discussed the two types of advance payments for personal income tax. ➤



PAYE

PAYE is tax that is paid from salaried individuals and is the responsibility of employers to submit. It is calculated on a scale of earnings. Even if your employer takes your tax and hands it to SARS, it's worth your submitting a tax return to confirm that your financial and tax affairs with your employer are captured correctly on the SARS system as reflected on your IRP5 certificate(s).

SARS has introduced auto-assessments (to anticipate incoming tax from registered taxpayers). It is good practice to confirm the accuracy of the information contained in the auto-assessed tax return because some of the information, such as other allowable deductions, may not be complete and you don't want to be at risk of losing money that is due to you or paying more than you legally need to!

Provisional tax

Provisional tax is paid by companies, close corporations (CCs) and anyone who earns an income from a source that is not a salary. Such income could include income from sources such as services rendered (copy-editing, translating, indexing, etc), rent, investments or profits from the sale of products (books or training courses). There are exemptions in terms of who is liable for provisional tax – this is where professional advice should be sought.

Provisional tax is paid in two portions, with a third voluntary top-up payment. For individuals, companies and CCs with years of assessment starting on 1 March, the first payment is due by 31 August (or the last business day before that date if it falls on a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday). The second provisional payment is due by the last business day of February. Should you have miscalculated your earnings and the tax due for that particular year of assessment, a third payment can be made to rectify this by the last business day of September. In order to avoid penalties and fines for provisional tax, try to be as accurate as possible when declaring your income and submit your tax returns as promptly as possible.

Fines, interest and penalties

SARS will fine you if you have underestimated the amount of tax you need to pay or if you have not submitted your return on time or at all. Penalties are calculated relative to the amount owed or based on a fixed amount. Where tax payments are not made on time, SARS may charge you interest on outstanding amounts. In some situations, SARS may allow payment arrangements. Communicate with SARS timeously if there is a change in your circumstances and your ability to honour your tax obligations.

How to find and verify a tax practitioner

A tax practitioner needs to be registered with both a recognised controlling professional body and with SARS. You can confirm a tax practitioner's registration with SARS on the SARS website and by contacting the relevant registered controlling body. A list of registered controlling bodies is available on the [SARS](#) website.

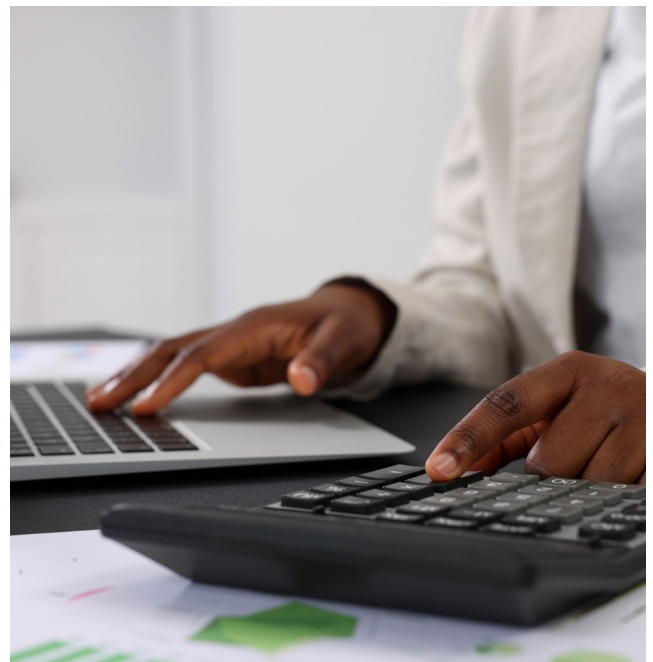
Final thoughts

Gauteng members engaged in some discussion and what emerged were the following points:

1. Use a tax practitioner if you do not feel confident to submit returns independently.
2. Also use a tax practitioner to establish the full extent of deductions as some of these have conditions.
3. Avoid more than 80% of your income coming from one source – that source is then obliged to take 25% for tax and submit to SARS on your behalf. They must then issue to you an IRP5 for your tax submission. In the freelance world, many employers take 25% even if 80% of your income does not come from them. See this as a forward payment to SARS that will reduce the amount owed when you must submit returns.
4. Put a percentage of your income from each payment received in a dedicated account (when you receive it). This will make the amount owed payable when the time comes!
5. Assume everything is taxable, for example, travel expenses (the employers paying these will declare them, so SARS may check that you do too).
6. Do NOT under-declare, fail to declare or omit essential information.
7. Keep supporting documents in electronic format.
8. Check SARS eFiling for ALL correspondence. It is your responsibility to ensure information is correct, even if you pay a professional.

Essentially, it's better to remain compliant and avoid red flags. Pay your tax and stay compliant!

PS. After the meeting, Gauteng member Linda King shared with us a handy booklet, which summarises the most important information relating to taxes, duties and levies for 2026/2027. You can access this guide here: [SARS budget guide](#). 📖



Clean copy, on time, makes sense. Alexis is ethical, vigilant, disciplined and reliable. She is a collaborator bent on playing a role in keeping things moving for all in our field (freelancing and copy-editing). She is particularly excited about her initiative CREDIT (editing to make things better). You can read more about this at alexisgrewan.co.za.

Kudakwashe is a registered Master Tax Practitioner (SAIT), a Chartered Business Accountant in Practice (CIBA) and an Associate member of PEG.

#KZNNavigates

PEG KZN navigates memoir concerns and compass controversies

Patricia McCracken



Sun glistening on the Indian Ocean, palms beckoning at the sliding doors, the mingled aromas of samosas, cheesecake and coffee ... There was plenty to distract us from the business of our annual KZN in-person PEG meeting, but we were all eager to navigate the enthralling world of words and how to get the best out of them.

Handle with care

The keynote advice from our main speaker, Tracy Buenk, when it comes to editing memoirs and autobiographies, was to remember you're dealing with someone's life story and always to handle them with care – indeed, just the way she handled the many questions thrown at her by PEGgers that morning.

'Your client will be sharing personal experiences and you may find yourself working across cultures, so it's important to draw on our shared humanity as you work together. In your initial dealings with the author, it's vital to sense the potential of a good rapport.

'If you're not able to create that connection, it might be wise to consider turning down the project. You need to be able to be sensitive to the writer's feeling exposed and vulnerable. In turn, the writer needs to feel "safe" working with you and to sense that you understand their feelings and how they've chosen to write about them.'

'If you're not able to create that connection, it might be wise to consider turning down the project.'

Before you dive in

Before you agree to the project, quote very carefully, Tracy warns: 'Skim-read before you quote in case the manuscript needs significant structural editing.'

- Assess the style, voice, grammar, spelling and story arc.
- Get a feel for how many people, places and dates will need to be checked.
- Consider practical indicators such as the potential length of your style sheet.

'The editor isn't liable for detailed fact-checking but, sadly, it is likely to reflect badly on you if readers pick up errors in the published book.'

Honour the author's voice

Memoir and autobiography need to be readable and relatable, but the author's voice is paramount – you need to stay authentic to this and to the author's spirit. You'll work on smoothing out inconsistencies, such as when tenses are off, but generally allow the author to sound like themselves. You're aiming to clarify and uplift that voice, but not erase it by over-editing: 'It's about honouring the emotional truth and sustaining the connection between the writer and the reader.' >

'It's about honouring the emotional truth and sustaining the connection between the writer and the reader.'



Tracy Buenk



Shanitha Ramharak

Consider consequences

On the other hand, you also need to flag ethical and legal risks that might exist in the content, Tracy noted. If a reader believes they've suffered reputational damage from the way they're presented in the text, they might bring a legal case for defamation. An author's testimony might be heartfelt, but memories are subjective, and the writer's version of events could cause ripple effects in extended families, leading to conflict and long-term damage to relationships. So it's wise to counsel (not dictate to) the author to consider this before finally deciding on whether to include a section as is or even at all.

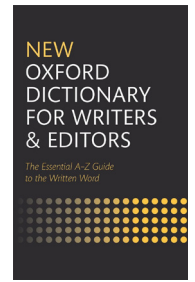
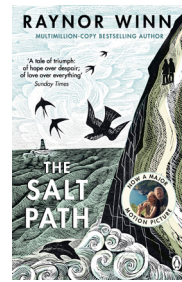
An author's testimony might be heartfelt, but memories are subjective, and the writer's version of events could cause ripple effects in extended families ...

Tracy pointed to the cautionary tale and controversial case of the popular 2018 memoir *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn, which was investigated by a team from the UK *Observer* newspaper. The author was accused of misrepresenting major pillars of the narrative, from the couple's tenuous financial position to the husband's near-miraculous recovery of health.

Shaping a good read

Readers want a good story so you may need to help the author improve that experience for the reader. That involves applying the general rules of fiction, such as:

- Show, don't tell
- Portray well-rounded characters
- Create narrative and emotional arcs
- Structure for impact
- Vary the pace.



While you are undertaking all these tasks, remember to respect your author's vulnerability with this often very personal material, recommended Tracy – always maintain a safe, non-judgemental space in which you can both communicate and work together.

Compass concerns

It sounds like a simple question – how do you write the points of the compass and associated adjectives? To capitalise or not to capitalise?

We thought we knew until Shanitha Ramharak produced a sheet of paper with almost 20 sentences, each an example with different variations ...

Although we were taken aback by the document, it didn't silence us for long. Soon there was long and lively debate about context, the merits of various style manuals and even a call for a plain English approach of no capital unless there was a rare likelihood of confusion. *Hart's* was even found to have admitted that the usage is 'very fluid in reality'.

Ultimately, Shanitha came up with a pragmatic response – contrive your sentence so that south or southern, for instance, has to be the first word and there's no capital battle left to fight!

Jokes aside, we were reminded that besides *New Hart's Rules*, the *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* also gives guidance. The test is whether reference is made to a position on the map (eg, we drove south for two hours), in which case lower case is to be used. When reference is made to a proper noun, then capital letters are needed. 🍷



KZN PEGgers in navigation mode



Patricia holds a BA Hons/MA from the University of Cambridge and began her career in investment banking before moving into journalism, earning about 40 reporting awards

in areas including finance, business, health and environment. She has served as an editorial consultant to clients and organisations such as UNICEF, the African Development Bank and the SA Tourism Enterprise Partnership. Patricia co-authored *Strelitzias of the World* (2018) and is a Vodacom Journalist of the Year judge, non-executive director of the Consumer Goods and Services Ombud and Mitchell Park Trust and vice-president of the KZN Irish South Africa Association.

#KZN&Authors

Being edited ...

The good, the bad and the ugly

Govin Reddy



A question-and-answer Zoom session held in January with Karen Cilliers (The Burning Earth series) and Mandy Hoddinott (The Marshmallow Theory).

Wendy Weyermüller opened the meeting and thanked the authors who were sharing their experiences of being edited.

There was a sense of anticipation as the 17 editors present prepared to learn what editing is like from the authors' point of view. This was an opportunity to gain insights that would strengthen our interactions with authors and our overall editing practice.

An De Fortier gave a brief background on the speakers and the books they had submitted for editing. Karen wears many hats: she is a medic, singer, songwriter, artist, worship leader, author and mother. Mandy is a physiotherapist and psychotherapist by profession and also a mother. Neither author initially believed they would one day become writers. Mandy has written a novel, while Karen has completed a trilogy.

Format of the session

The meeting took the form of a guided discussion, with An posing questions and inviting each author to share her perspective. The questions explored themes such as the authors' expectations and preparedness, the emotional impact of editorial feedback, the quality of that feedback and how they managed their relationships with their editors.

Questions and responses

Several questions focused on the authors' expectations of the editing process and their preparedness for it. An asked the authors to reflect on their writing journeys, particularly the point at which they realised they needed an editor, and whether the editing process ultimately met their expectations.

Mandy approached an editor when she was already well into her novel, having recognised the need for assistance with language, formatting and plot development. The feedback she received was so discouraging that she stopped writing altogether for several years. She began to doubt her ability as a writer, and it took a long time for her to recover sufficiently to resume her work.

Karen's experience was similar in that she too received feedback she had not anticipated. Before submitting her novel to an editor, she had shared it with several readers, all of whom had praised her work. As a result, she expected the editor – who was someone she knew personally – to be equally impressed. Instead, she was unprepared for what she described as a 'bloodbath'. Unfamiliar with the track changes function commonly used by editors to communicate feedback, she initially experienced the volume of comments as overwhelming. However, after moving beyond her initial reaction, she recognised that the feedback was fair, supportive, and provided much-needed direction.

- An then shifted the conversation to the emotional impact of editorial feedback. Mandy's and Karen's responses to the comments were markedly different. For Mandy, the feedback from her first editor was devastating. Her second editor, in contrast, offered constructive feedback and made clear, concise suggestions that Mandy could choose either to accept or reject. Her gentle tone contrasted with the bluntness of the first editor. Karen's response to the volume of suggested changes was initially 'shock and horror'; however, she soon recognised that the feedback was both appropriate and supportive. She moved past her initial reaction quickly, reread the comments carefully, and came to see that the suggestions would strengthen her work.
- An then asked about the nature of the feedback itself, whether it was global or specific. The authors agreed that the feedback received was both, explaining that most came through track changes and comments, with some discussion taking place face to face. They also appreciated being able to contact their editors via WhatsApp when they needed clarity about an issue. In addition, they found the editing process to be a valuable learning experience. Mandy said she now reads novels differently, noticing far more than she did before. What she learnt through editing has given her a clearer sense of what to look out for, and she often spots things she would previously have missed. For Karen, the feedback completely changed the way she writes. Her writing has become more engaging, and she feels far more confident about shaping her work as she goes. ➤



Karen Cilliers (blogs.sun.ac.za/mbhgblog/2020/06/22/youth-month-dr-karen-cilliers/)



Mandy Hoddinott (www.coachingbymandy.com)

- **Assumptions** were discussed at length, with everyone agreeing on how easily assumptions can mislead both editors and authors. For example, one author was unfamiliar with track changes, which initially caused confusion. In another case, an editor assumed that an author who did not express her emotions openly was indifferent to her work, only to discover how deeply invested the author was when she broke down in tears during a discussion. Authors often make assumptions about the editing process and what is involved in preparing a book for publication.
- **Both authors recognised the importance of establishing a strong working relationship with their editors.** Through ongoing dialogue, they were able to build good rapport, sometimes viewing their editors as teachers, collaborators or authority figures. They greatly appreciated the editors' gentle, non-judgemental tone and the clear explanations offered for suggested changes. One author noted that this approach significantly increased her confidence in her writing, while the other acknowledged that she needed 'another brain' to review her work, because being so deeply immersed made it difficult to identify inconsistencies in her writing. Both authors felt that easy access to their editors, along with regular and timely feedback, contributed greatly to the success of the editor–author relationship and the final product.

Conclusion

It is clear that editors need to strike a balance between honesty and empathy in their feedback and overall approach, while remaining mindful of how best to support authors emotionally. Editing should be understood as an ongoing dialogue between editor and author, rather than simply an exercise in identifying errors. Effective feedback also serves as a teaching tool and an opportunity for professional growth. Harsh, insensitive comments can have a damaging effect on authors, whereas a supportive approach can make the editing process uplifting and inspiring. Establishing clear expectations from the outset, through open and honest conversations, is therefore essential to fostering a healthy and productive editor–author relationship. 🐾



Govin is a freelance editor based in KZN. He began his career as an educator and later worked as a project manager at an NGO, specialising in the teaching

of English. He subsequently joined Wordweavers Materials Developers, where he contributed to the production of English literature study guides. He holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

From the regions

#PEGRegions

#ECFun&Games

Ending with fun and starting with determination

Kate Davies



The PEG EC group had a little fun at the end of last year, playing virtual *Scattergories* and answering some quiz questions unknowingly set by none other than the QI team!

Having stumbled somewhat at *Scattergories*, our worthy winner, Simone Wray, came from behind to pip Mike McCoy and Annette Lovemore at the post. Despite some technical gremlins, we shared plenty of banter and laughs and learned some decidedly less-than-useful information.

After a good break, we started 2026 with determination and a little bit of strategy. This year, we will tackle the accreditation test as a group! In a well-attended learning session in January, a panel made up of Eastern Cape ATEs (Nikki Watkins, Ricky Woods and Kate Davies), joined by Shanitha Ramharak from KZN – a brand new ATE (congrats!) – shared their experiences of the dreaded test and provided perspective, input and lots of offers of help. With at least half of the audience intending to write the AT this year or next, we hope to build a programme of small-group virtual and one-on-one in-person sessions that, we hope, will bolster these editors' chances of cracking the 80% pass mark. Watch this space!

February, being the month of love, seemed the perfect time to consider putting ourselves 'out there'. To this end, we invited the inimitable Alexis Grewan to chat to us about websites and a bunch of other online platforms. She provided insight into the benefits of being 'findable' and the professional credibility this can bring. From LinkedIn to Instagram, developing your own website or simply ensuring that your email signature works for you, Alexis made the idea of raising our profiles seem much more doable – and a lot less scary! We look forward to seeing whether she inspired Mike to update his website after a 12-year hiatus!

In March, we sink our teeth into the nitty-gritty of MS Word with some technical editing practice. For April, our tireless secretary Nikki Watkins has lined up some stalwart members to share practical insights and a few tried-and-tested strategies for finding work. It's busy, busy, busy in the Eastern Cape! 🐾



Kate has been a full-time freelance editor in Bokesstrand since 2021 and achieved ATE status in 2025. She serves as the regional chair of PEG Eastern Cape.

When she isn't in front of her computer, she enjoys fishing with her husband and cheese and wine with her daughter. Stephen King is by far her favourite author.

#WC&Shipwrecks

Calm after the storm of 2025

Cassidy Roberts



The final in-person branch meeting of the year for Western Cape PEGgers was held on Saturday, 6 December 2025, at the Pinelands Library. The peaceful affair featured a quietly passionate presentation ('Tales of Shipwrecks') on a number of local vessels and their fascinating history by our very own Marilyn Dougall Thomas.

Marilyn is a well-travelled freelance public relations expert and editor who specialises in wildlife conservation, archaeology and more. Her wealth of knowledge and passion shone throughout the presentation as we were treated to scripted and off-the-cuff facts about a series of shipwrecks concentrated in the Cape of Storms. Hundreds of shipwrecks can be found in Table Bay alone. These wrecks are 'time capsules of history', Marilyn said; despite extensive plundering, the surviving ship bodies, bells, cannons and keelhauled artefacts remain immensely valuable portholes to the past.

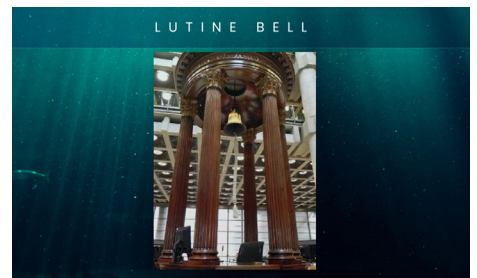
The presentation focused on the human interests of shipwrecks, including the aspects many of us may not consider: for example, the rich lives of survivors and the long-reaching environmental impact of a wreck. Debris and artefacts (Ming Dynasty porcelain, no less!) can be found not only at the bottom of the ocean, but also riding the waves and washing up on beaches long after their ships sank.

Another fascinating aspect discussed was the use of advancing technology to find and retrieve wrecks, such as overlaying old maps with contemporary satellite photography, and the hiring of helicopters to repatriate heavy cannons – a job that would usually take nine hours, Marilyn said, reduced to a few 'expensive but effective' minutes.

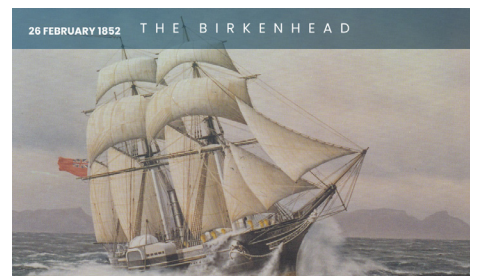
A few noteworthy shipwrecks in the presentation were the *Nieuw Haarlem*, which wrecked in 1647 and is still missing; the *Dodington*, which wrecked in 1755 and became a finger-wagging stickler in the history of maritime law after it was anonymously looted of its gold; the HMS *Birkenhead*, an 1852 wreck famous for spearheading the evacuation protocol of 'women and children first' (and perhaps the bit about the sharks too); the SS *Thermopylae*, which wrecked in 1899; the SS *Maori*, which wrecked in 1909 and remains a popular diving site; and the SS *Waratah*, which disappeared without a trace in 1909.

This charming presentation concluded the 2025 year of Western Cape PEGging. In summary, WC branch members were treated to a publishing presentation by COMPRESS.dsl CEO Felicity Gallagher in March, followed by an interview with novelist Paige Nick in May and an informative discussion on the Kaaps language by Professor Quentin Williams in August.

Marilyn extended her gratitude to graphic designer Primrose Muzvuru and diver Steve Valentine. Many thanks to our committee for going the extra mile (or a hundred) to provide comfortable and engaging meetings and to our members for their support and tasty treats. 🌿



Housed at the underwriters Lloyd's of London, the historic Lutine Bell was rung when a ship went missing and if it was found. Now cracked, it is no longer in regular use, except for international disasters and the death of British royalty



The HMS *Birkenhead* took several cavalries to the frontier wars. Troops stood fast so that the women and children could be rescued first. The vessel sank off Danger Point near Gansbaai in 1852, sadly with many lives lost



A gentle yet lively end to the PEG year for Western Cape members, together with our presenter, Marilyn (on the far right in the third row from the front)

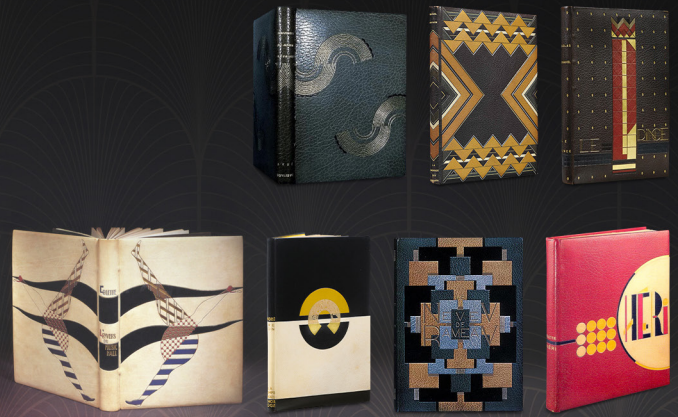


Cassidy is an English editor (professionally) and writer (obsessively). She cut her nitpicking teeth editing the fiction of peers in writing communities and began her

professional career in 2024 as a freelance editor. Her editing passion is fiction, though she is happiest whenever she is shepherding lost and shivering punctuation into its rightful place.

Bibliophile heaven: Bookbinding in the Art Deco period

Ken McGillivray



Dazzling designs of Art Deco bookbinding

In the 1920s and 1930s, one decorative art form reached a height never before or since dreamt of: bookbinding in the Art Deco* style. France, in particular, has always had a long tradition of luxurious bookbinding and, until at least World War II, you could purchase your book as a paged manuscript and then choose how you wanted to have it bound. In some cases it was a matter of cost; for example, when my mother taught in France in the mid-1930s, her teacher's salary didn't even stretch to basic bindings so all her books on French history remain unbound. In these days of ubiquitous soft-covers even dust jackets appear almost a distant memory!

Added to luxurious binding, there was also a tradition of commissioning prominent contemporary artists such as Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau and Georges Braque to provide illustrations for these publications. There were also occasions when new fonts were specifically designed for certain authors.

In this period the dazzling designs, particularly those of Pierre Legrain (1889–1929) and Rose Adler (1890–1959), stand out. They both created the designs; however, they left the benchwork to skilled artisans to execute. Their work propelled bookbinding and the designer–bookbinder relationship to a major new art form, and their work reached a pinnacle which bears few comparisons. Legrain (Peyré & Fletcher 2004: 18) stated:

Let us do away with the traditional dentelle borders, the old printer's fleurons, the complicated mosaics, and the prominent raised bands that divide the spine compartments. Instead let us view the totality of our current aesthetic desires, taking our inspiration from this potent blossoming of new industries that is transforming life as well as art.

Most of the designs of these two artists were specifically intended for their patron, Jacques Doucet (1853–1929), the fashion designer, connoisseur and modern art collector, who had sold his entire 18th-century antique collection and furnished his home with the creations of the major Art Deco designers. At the same time, Doucet was assembling a library of modern French authors whose creativity he admired and who seemed to represent the literary wave of the future.

The distinctive feature of Legrain's and Adler's work was their use of rich and varied materials. Multiple dyed colours of vellum, calfskin, sheepskin, goatskin, heavy-grained leather and sharkskin were combined with rich fabrics, handmade oil endpapers, embossing, gilding and original typography. Luxury and simplicity – hallmarks of Art Deco – were blended without the overuse of decoration.

During this post-World War I period, when art expanded its range of expression, new freedom and inventiveness meant that bookbinding aligned itself more closely with the arts with which it was linked: poetry, typography, painting, sculpture, furniture and architecture. 🍷



Pierre Legrain



Rose Adler

***Art Deco** is a design movement that emerged between the two World Wars and is characterised by geometric shapes, vivid colour, symmetry and bold forms. The style blends modernity with luxury, drawing inspiration from industrial progress, ancient cultures and the Machine Age. In decorative arts and architecture it emphasises both functionality and artistic expression.

Note: This article is an adaption and extension of part of three presentations – 'Art Deco: Spirit & Splendour' – given at the UCT Summer School 2026.

Reference

Peyré, Y & Fletcher, HG 2004 *Art Deco bookbindings: The work of Pierre Legrain and Rose Adler*. New York City: Princeton Architectural Press, from whence the illustrations are sourced.

Editor, artist and author **Ken** is a Natal-born, Transvaal-raised Cape immigrant. His preferred fields of editing are law and academia. He co-authored the widely selling *grammar, punctuation and all that jazz ...* and *Academic writing & editing: Towards clear, concise and coherent texts* with John Linnegar. As a partner in McGillivray Linnegar Associates, he was involved in the production of *Text editing*, not only in the English edition but also later in the Sesotho (*Metheo ya ditokiso tsa sengolwa*) and most recently in the isiZulu (*Izisekelo Zokulungisa Okubhaliwe*) editions.



#AIExperiment

From Copilot to co-author: AI and the future of fiction

Ashwini Singh



There are many things one can expect when using artificial intelligence (AI): an over-powered search engine, excellent productivity in completing soul-destroying tasks and a friendly reminder that robots still don't know how to write fiction like humans do.

The experiment and a disclaimer

Owing to the inclusion of this AI tool in Microsoft 365 subscriptions, Microsoft's Copilot is practically a household name by now. In December of 2025, I embarked on a brief experiment with Copilot to find out whether it could write fiction convincingly. Specifically, I wanted to know if it could write novel chapters and make them appear to be written by a human.

Writing a novel is no easy feat (even for humans) and it's a subjective endeavour, so I gave Copilot some leniency when I was looking at what it produced during this experiment. My focus was more on seeing how advanced AI has become in its ability to emulate human language realistically.

The prompt

I prompted Copilot to write several scenes of a horror-comedy-thriller story about a girl trying to survive a zombie apocalypse outbreak at her school while simultaneously dealing with her biology group project. I instructed the AI to write the story from a first-person point of view, from the perspective of the protagonist (the girl). Could I have given Copilot an easier premise to work with? Yes. Did I? Absolutely not. Why? Because writing fiction isn't a walk in the park. It's about creativity, conflict, raising the stakes and keeping readers engaged.

The first finding: AI can be funny

Yes, AI can have a sense of humour. As in actual wit, sass and sarcasm. Here's an excerpt of what I'm talking about, taken straight from the first chapter written by Copilot:

CHAPTER ONE: The Day the Rubric Tried to Kill Us

If anyone ever asks how the world ended, I'm going to tell them the truth: it started with a biology group project.

Not the zombies. Not the screaming. Not the government alerts or the evacuation sirens or the fact that my neighbour Mrs Pillay tried to eat her cat. No. The real apocalypse began when Mr Daniels, our eternally disappointed biology teacher, said the words that haunt me more than any undead groan ever could:

'This project is worth 40% of your term mark.'

Forty. Per cent.

I swear the fluorescent lights flickered just to emphasise the doom.

There are six of us in the group — which is already a sign of cosmic cruelty — and somehow I, Ashley Naidoo, ended up being the 'responsible one'. I don't know how that happened. I once set my microwave on fire trying to reheat samosas. But compared to the rest of my group, I'm practically a functioning adult.

Clearly, Copilot learned comedy from the Internet. How? Through Large Language Models (LLMs), of course.

Large Language Models

An article published by Elsevier explains that an LLM is a type of AI that processes human language for use in tasks involving the generation of language. Basically, LLMs learn human language (ie grammar, phrasing, writing styles). A simple glimpse at [Microsoft's notes](#) shows that Copilot uses LLM models from Azure and Anthropic.

Claude (the developer of Anthropic) confirmed in their [developer's notes](#) that their LLM uses information that is publicly available on the internet, meaning that any text online (news articles, blog posts, books, etc) is used to train Anthropic (which is subsequently used by Copilot). Essentially, Copilot's writing is learnt from and influenced by the World Wide Web. ➤

The second finding: the AI hallucinations are real

If you've ever dealt with AI, you've undoubtedly heard of AI hallucinations. [Multinational tech giant IBM](#) describes AI hallucinations as deviations from their training data, resulting in output that is fabricated or inaccurate. In simple terms, it means the robot has gone crazy and is making stuff up.

Unsurprisingly, when I asked Copilot to draft more chapters of the story, it started mixing up aspects (ie character names, verb tenses, the point of view) so much that it was distracting. To me, this indicates that the AI tool hasn't learnt continuity in storytelling yet.

The third finding: content restrictions

Did you know that Copilot has an age rating for the content it can produce? Whenever I asked it to draft a chapter that leaned more into the horror genre of the above zombie apocalypse story, it would give me a gentle reminder that it cannot produce content that could be perceived as graphic or harmful. The implications of these restrictions extend beyond Copilot's ability to write fiction and further apply to researching any other content that would fall into any of Copilot's categories of inappropriate content [as detailed on Copilot's website](#).

Concluding thoughts

Based on this experiment, I was pleasantly surprised with the way Copilot wrote the first few chapters of the story based on the prompt. It certainly is a form of amusement to have AI scribble out a wacky story idea that you have in mind, especially when there's no existing novel for the concept.

But will AI ever replace real human writing?

At this stage, I think not. No machine can mimic the critical thinking that comes with authentic human authorship and also the extensive editing and publishing processes that ensue.

AI may be able to imitate writing fiction superficially, but it can't replace the human touch that comes from a real writer. 🐾

Ashwini Singh is a multidisciplinary academic and author, with more than a dozen publications to her name. Her work is featured in *The Star*, *The Witness*, the *Cape Argus*, the *Zululand Observer* and *SowetanLIVE*. She holds a Master of Laws in Medical Law; a PGDip in Forensic Investigation & Criminal Justice; a BA in Communication Science and certificates in TESOL (Pass B) and the SA Writers' College's Basics of Creative Writing Course (Distinction). She is an affiliate of the ACFE® South Africa and an associate of the Professional Editors' Guild.



#Announcement

Launch of the 2nd revised edition of *Engleish, our Engleish*

It is with great pleasure (and the odd 'eish!') that the authors and publishers announce the publication of the second edition of this title – a fairly substantial revision of the first edition, published way back in 2009.

This new edition incorporates the many additional errors that have been observed as occurring commonly in South African writers' texts. They include the influence of American English and the misuse of the comma – the most frequently used punctuation mark by far – plus problems with the unidiomatic use of prepositions and adverbs, and in expressing gender neutrality appropriately.

In addition, the A–Z of common confusables – an important feature of the book – has been augmented by the insertion of words and expressions that we have observed wordsmiths struggling with during the past 16 years.

It is our earnest hope that his new edition, titled *Engleish, our Engleish: More common errors in South African English and how to resolve them* (MLA Publishers), will prove to be as comforting a companion to wordsmiths as its predecessor has been. 🐾

Available from 15 April 2026. Enquiries and orders: kenimcgill@gmail.com
 RSP: R475,00. Pre-launch price for PEG members: R405,00 (+ courier charge)