



PEGboard

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THE INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Musings on the highways and byways of a freelance existence

By Marion Boers

Freelancing can be a very frightening experience. It always seems to be flood or famine – when you are busy there is no time to consider marketing or organising the next job, and when you have no work you worry about the month's income and so are unable to enjoy the break you have earned through last week's burning of the candle at both ends. I'm sure this is a familiar scenario to many PEG members.

None the less, freelancing can also be a very fulfilling experience. You are the boss, but you don't have to worry about running a whole corporate organisation. You have the opportunity to diversify through learning a new skill, or to build up a niche market by specialising in a certain area, or to take six months off to trek through Africa. You get to decide the priorities in your life.

But how does one get to this point? Be warned – it's a long, winding road! Often unexpected crossroads appear around corners and the pathway is frequently bumpy and may at times lead to a dead end.

I consider myself very fortunate, because I have never really had to work at making a career. The start was a little stressful – finishing 'varsity with a BA degree but not really equipped to walk into any particular job. As

luck would have it, I chanced on an advert that sounded interesting and as a result started work the following January at the government language office in Pretoria, now known as the National Language Service. My four years there were a wonderful training period and equipped me with many of the skills I needed when I started freelancing.

When I left, I regarded myself essentially as a translator, as most of the work I had done up to then was translation. My former employers and some contacts I had made there and for whom I'd done some freelance work on the side were my first clients. The work did not come in in droves, but since I was a new mother that suited me fine, because there were plenty of other duties to keep me occupied.

The first deviation in my career path was the fact that my husband's original training had been as an editor and he had continued editing trade journals on a freelance basis as his work had changed over the years. And so I was introduced to the world of magazine sub-editing. I had of course done language editing as part of my translation work, but now I learnt about ems and points and galleys and page proofs, how to mark up text for the typesetter and how a

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Remember the PEG AGM on Saturday 15 January 2005. Details will be sent out by e-mail.

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The independent editor

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magazine is put together. I simply accepted that this was now part of my life, helping my husband with his work, but the change has stood me in good stead because it later gave me the ability to offer my services to other journals as well. Thus expands one's world of work.

As a freelancer it is useful to have more than one string to your bow, and my next new skill was also developed in a roundabout way. I had become a member of the executive of the South African Translators' Institute and was requested to take over the editorship of their newsletter. This was a fairly simple publication and I wasn't paid for the work, but it gave me the opportunity to learn how to use a desktop publishing program. Once again, this skill came into its own further along my career path and enabled me to offer clients another service and to become involved in some interesting projects.

Similarly, my newest skill – working on Web-sites – has also come through my involvement with the Translators' Institute. I'm still rather unsure of myself in this area, but the work is fun and satisfying and I know that the more I do the easier it will become. In time, I will be able to add Web authoring to my portfolio of services as well.

Just as my set of skills has been developed by following different paths, so my clients have come to me in a variety of ways. I firmly believe that word of mouth is the best form of advertising and so it is worth making an effort to attend meetings, get-togethers and workshops in order to meet others in the profession and make contact. As I said before, my former employers were also my first clients and they passed my name on to clients they were unable to assist as well. Through my work with the Translators' Institute I have also got to know people and picked up some work that way. Other clients have come through PEG, through friends and family, and through clients themselves – doing a good job and keeping your clients happy pays dividends over time.

As the language scene in South Africa has changed, so I have found that the focus of my work has changed as well. Whereas I initially did mainly translation, these days I do far more editing, as the trend is for non-mother-tongue speakers to write in English and have the document edited rather than translated. While it may appear that this would make the job simpler, this is not always the case; it is often quicker and easier to translate a well written text than to edit a poorly written one. I'm a generalist and so have clients in a variety of fields, which keeps the work interesting. The first few projects for a new client are always a learning curve, coming to terms with unfamiliar terminology, usage and content, but it is satisfying to find things becoming easier over time, which makes me understand why some people specialise in a particular field. Although I think I'm a fairly organised person (my husband wouldn't agree!), lists and schedules don't work for me and I find that no matter how well I try to organise my time I end up with a "to do" pile at my elbow and I simply move from one job to the next, keeping my schedule and planning in my head. Occasionally, when things do not go according to plan, I find myself digging something out from halfway down the pile that has to be done in a hurry, but generally this system works for me.

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Blame the gremlins

Stuart Marr

On the day after All Souls Day, as the light began to fade and herons made their way home to the nearby golf course, a small group of PEGgers gathered on the verandah of Greg McCutcheon's colonial home.

Reading by the light of an electric lantern (well okay, it was really just some sort of torch), Mary Hazelton introduced the evening's topic – "Blame the gremlins" – by reading an article on a similar evening entitled "Nightmare on Em Street" held by the Society of Editors in Victoria, Australia, which had inspired us to get together to consider horror stories from the world of editing and publishing.

After an amusing (if somewhat discouraging) poem from Miles Markus concerning the formidable supernatural powers of the typographical error, the group heard in chilling detail all the grisly facts of the Australian nightmares: mutilated, disappearing or changeling contents pages; famous professors and experts whose impressive qualifications were mysteriously spirited away from the relevant sections of books; spines and covers that proved beyond doubt that they are certainly not what a book should be judged on; and mischievous, inadvertent and inexplicable transformations of words and characters.

The only glimmer of hope amidst the fatally flawed dye lines, tip-ins, errata slips and pulpings was the observation that in fact many such errors go strangely unnoticed by anyone – invisibly reincarnated, impression after impression, through generations of unsuspecting readers. With this faint promise of light in the

darkness, participants were invited to speak their tales of embarrassment and disaster into the night.

Let's start at the very beginning

Several of the stories involved mistakes in titles and headings. These are notoriously difficult to spot, perhaps because these elements seem so bold and authoritative. They are also far more embarrassing than something that appears near the bottom of page 73.

Pictures and captions also featured strongly, since these carry their own particular dangers. In one case, the German word for temple was mistaken for the name of a place in Burma and a photograph was captioned accordingly. Far worse would have been a publication on small arms trafficking with a picture showing shipping containers like those used to smuggle arms around the world, with a prominent shipping company's logo clearly discernible on the containers. Fortunately, this was noticed in time, albeit at a very late stage in the production process, and could be fixed.

The metric system, for all its virtues, has introduced its own set of gremlins. Apart from the danger of unwanted or missing zeros (which can happen in any system), there is the question of US vs imperial tons, which has caused great confusion in some publications.

Also arising from American/British differences is the question whether a billion has nine or twelve zeros – an ambiguity that is often simply passed on to the reader. Similarly (in railway terminology), when is a *truck* the same as a *wagon*, and when is *track* the same as *wheelset*?

Blame the technology?

A recurring theme throughout the evening was the role of technology in all of this. Far from exorcising the gremlins that have plagued book production through the ages, modern technology seems to have introduced new gremlins of its own. While computers are extremely good at manipulating raw data and even

EDITOR'S LAMENT

[Anonymous]

The typographic error
Is a slippery thing and sly;
You can hunt it 'til you're dizzy,
But it somehow will get by.

'Til the forms are off the presses,
It is strange how still it keeps.
It shrinks down in a corner,
And it never stirs or peeps.

That typographic error
Is too small for human eyes,
'Til the ink is on the paper –
Then it grows to mountain size.

The boss, he stares with horror,
Then he grabs his hair and groans;
The copy-reader drops his head
Upon his hands and moans.

The remainder of the issue
May be clean as clean can be,
But that typographic error
Is the only thing you see.

P.S.
He who perfect copy wrote,
Never got a single note,
But booboo once in what you've writ –
You'll never hear the end of it!

This appeared in a publication of the Society of Professional Journalists (UK) some years ago and was submitted by Miles Markus for the "Blame the Gremlins" meeting.

Blame the gremlins *(continued)*

information, they are not great when it comes to knowledge and meaning.

Electronic indexes can be produced using a couple of keystrokes (“Alt+i, d, Enter” if you’re using MS Word, and assuming that you have already marked some words in the text as being indexable). However, these are really just word counts, and someone will still need to sift through and delete the superfluous entries. Also, unless the document was written using a controlled vocabulary, many significant connections may be lost.

Spell-checks are a great help in personal correspondence and they may stop you from printing *development* or *suppply* on your title page, but they are not up to the demands of producing publication-quality text. They don’t check for clarity and they won’t necessarily spot a missing word or help you with apostrophes (not to mention the notorious *pubic policy*). Computers also won’t remind you if you forget to update things (such as printing *Internal document: Not for circulation* on the final version of a government White Paper).

Technology has not introduced all these problems; it has just made it very easy to publish something without rigorous checking. So the need for proofreading and editing remains the same. But there are other ways in which there is now an even greater need for proofing than previously.

Typed-in changes, notes and comments are more dangerous than pencil marks, because they are not different enough from the text that is being marked. Mary had a story of an exasperated copy editor who typed in *When is the author going to learn how to reference?* The footnotes

were not proofed properly, and the comment went to print.

On a machine with more than one document or program open, it is quite easy to add a word, letter or punctuation mark to the wrong document. This can not only render a sentence meaningless, but may affect all subsequent line, column and page breaks.

So what happens when things go utterly wrong – when the advance copy arrives the day after the consignment had been shipped and 40 000 poetry books are about to be distributed with four pages of acknowledgements missing? In this particular case, shifts of women were brought in to strip the books and rectify the mistake, and the printer’s profit went out of the window. But you can’t do that with 40 000 tins of Plascon paint, all with the manufacturer’s logo printed upside down. At some point you have to throw it all away and start again.

Which brings us to the rather ghoulish subject of pulping. Only one of those present had first-hand experience of the pulping process, and she remembers the pulpers being particularly concerned about “extracting contraries” – which is really what editors do too, except that they are looking for defects in the text rather than for staples and blobs of glue. □

An editorial exercise

How far is it possible to split an infinitive? This quote from a lease agreement was submitted by Derrick Hurlin:

“The tenant agrees to immediately any litter or disorder shall have been made by him or for his purpose on the staircase or landings or any other part of the said buildings or garden remove the same.”

Q&A meeting

PEG tried something new this year and in August presented the same meeting on a weekday evening and a Saturday, to give the maximum number of members an opportunity to attend. The meeting in question was a Q&A session, with members invited to submit questions in advance, to be answered by a panel with audience participation and discussion.

The formula was popular and both meetings were lively and covered a range of topics. The major issues discussed will be put into a column over the next few issues of *PEG-board* (starting on page 6 of this issue), but if you really cannot wait, consult the Web-site, as we will put the complete report up in due course.

The subjects that came up covered perennial problems, but also more recent developments. In the latter category was the question of whether one should use the Africanised form of the national languages (e.g. *isiZulu* and *Tshivenda*) or the conventional English forms. Although it was agreed that there are instances where one simply has to be politically correct and use these forms, in general the feeling was that in English one should use English forms, in the same way that one talks about *French* and *German* and not *Français* or *Deutsch*.

Another point was how to acknowledge material taken from the Internet. No one disputed that this must be done, and PEG will try to find out more on exactly how.

There was agreement on some issues and disagreement on others, but as always it was nice for editors to be able to compare notes and agree to disagree where necessary. □

Using Google

Our thanks to **Eldene Eyssell** for the tips below on using Google (www.google.com) to find what you want in the vastness of cyberspace. Spaces, no spaces and double quotation marks are there for a reason, Eldene insists, and she claims that she finds Google far more efficient than local search engines like Ananzi, provided it is properly used and especially if one includes South Africa in the keywords.

Check your spelling: Type the word you are not sure how to spell in the search box, hit Enter, and Google will suggest the correct spelling. This is especially useful for checking names and places that don't appear in standard spell checkers. (Google doesn't care if you use capitals, small letters or a combination of both.)

Dictionary: Find out what a word means by typing *define* into Google's search box, followed by your word, e.g. *define serendipity*. If you want only a list of definitions and no other search results, type in *define: serendipity* (with no spaces on either side of the colon).

Search within results: If you get too many results, click on the "Search within results" link at the bottom of any results page and add another keyword.

Get results for synonyms: You can do this by typing in the ~ symbol (top left of your keyboard). For example, if you are looking for technical help, type *~help PowerPoint*, and you will also get results for tips, hints, advice, guide, support, instructions, tutorials and FAQs.

Find a particular phrase, or words in a specific order, by enclosing them in double quotation marks, e.g. "*red red rose*".

Include the necessary: Google ignores common words like *and*, *to*, *the*, *a*. If a word is important to your search, include it by putting a + sign in front of it, e.g. *War +and Peace*. (Include a space before the + sign.)

Eliminate the unnecessary by using a minus sign or hyphen (-) before the words you don't want, e.g. *tanks -"think tanks"*.

Find the missing word by using an asterisk (*) in place of a whole word, e.g. "*the * is mightier than the sword*".

Try a different address: The Web address (or URL) of each page is shown in the results. If you click on the underlined blue link (title) and you get a message that says "page cannot be displayed", go back and try the green line that gives the address of the site.

Go to the home page: Say Google took you to <http://www-gap.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Mathematicians/Einstein.html> and you want to go to the home page of the site to see what else it offers or what it is, go to your browser's address box and cut, from the end, the sections after each slash (/), e.g. leaving you with <http://www-gap.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/>

Limit the number of results and (usually) go directly to a home page by typing your keyword(s) in the search box and clicking the *I'm Feeling Lucky™* button.

Formats your computer programs can read: By clicking on the link "View as HTML" below the page title in blue, you can view an HTML copy of a file as a normal Web page. This is particularly useful if you don't have the program (e.g. Corel Draw, Adobe Acrobat or Word Perfect) to read the original file. It

also allows you to avoid viruses that are carried in certain formats and it loads more quickly.

Search for particular file types with extensions such as pdf, doc, pps. Type your keyword(s) and then *filetype:* and the extension in the Search box, e.g. *access forms filetype:pdf*.

Find out more by clicking the "Similar pages" link after a result. This will help you to find a large number of resources about a particular topic without having to think of other keywords.

Confine your search to titles: If you really want to focus on a topic, confine your search to titles (the underlined words in blue that appear at the top of each Google search result). Type *intitle:* or *allintitle:* and your keyword, e.g. *intitle:bird watching* will find titles that contain each of your keywords; *intitle:"bird watching"* will result in titles that contain the exact phrase; *allintitle:bird watching South Africa* will find pages that have all your keywords in the title, in any order.

Search by category: If you are not quite sure what keywords to use, try going to Google's Web Directory (directory.google.com). For example, if you search for *Mars* in the category *Science > Astronomy*, you will get results related to Mars the planet and not to Mars the god of war.

Search within a site when Web sites don't have their own search ⇨

features. In Google's Search box, type *site*, the Web address of the site (without *http* or *www*) and the keyword(s), e.g. using *site:suntimes.co.za global warming* will search the *Sunday Times* newspaper for articles on global warming.

Exclude a site: For example if you want to look for sites about space, but don't want results from NASA, place a hyphen before the command, e.g. *space -site:nasa.com*.

Who links to whom: Find out by typing *link:* followed by the URL of a site (not a keyword), e.g. *link:www.nrf.ac.za* will give you all the sites that are linked to the National Research Foundation.

Avoid adult sites: Make sure that the "SafeSearch" filter is on by adding *&safe=on* to the search URL.

Get the latest material by adding *&as_qdr=m#* to the end of the address of the result (the long string that appears in your browser's address bar after you have hit the Search button). Change the # symbol to any number from 1 to 12 to change the maximum age of the results in months, e.g. *&as_qdr=m6* will give you results that are, at most, six months old.

Get more results per page by temporarily changing the number of results that Google gives you on a results page. (The default is 10 results at a time.) If you don't see *num=* at the end of the address of the Google results in your browser's address box, then add *&* to the end (no space) and type in *num=x*, where *x* is the number of results you want, e.g. *&num=60*.

Find the original page by clicking on the "Cached" link. This will take you to the copy Google made when it indexed the page. The cache is useful when a page has changed and no longer contains something you remember from a previous visit or

when a page has been deleted or its link is broken.

Calculate: Google's Search box can be used as a calculator. Use these operators for simple functions: + for addition; - for subtraction; * for multiplication; / for division; ^ for exponentiation (raise to a power of, e.g. 8^2). You can also find roots, percentages, trigonometric functions, logs and much more. Go to <http://www.google.com/help/calculator.html>.

Convert units of measurement: For example, in the Search box type: *39 inches in metres*.

Images: Search for 880 million images by clicking the "Images" tab or going to <http://images.google.com>. Search as you would for a text search, using file types, sites, advanced search, and so on. On the results page, click the thumbnail to see a larger version of the image.

* * *

Remember that this "TechnoTalk" column depends on YOU, the members of PEG. Share your favourite tips and tricks for simplifying our lives in the technological sphere with your colleagues in the profession. The information does not have to be highly sophisticated or complicated – this column is meant to be more like "Technical Tips for Dummies". So if you have something useful to share, send your contribution to me at publications@translators.org.za.

Marion Boers, Editor

Welcome!

A warm welcome to our new PEGgers; we hope you will have many happy years with us!

Carin Lichtenstein, Parkmore, Johannesburg: Editing

Guy Mortimer, Pietermaritzburg: Editing and proofreading

Marianne Saddington, McGregor: Editing, proofreading, writing

Khudayja Saloojee, Johannesburg: Editing, sub-editing, proofreading

Q&A

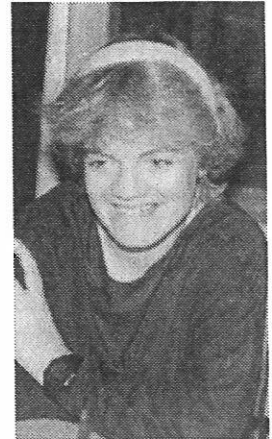
This is the first instalment of the reportback on the issues discussed at PEG's Q & A meetings in August. The report will be presented over the next few issues of PEGboard and will be put in full on the PEG Web-site in due course.

Q: Hélène Mendes had asked for a definition of proofreading, claiming that it means reading a re-keyed version against an original manuscript or typescript (which hardly ever happens today) or checking a corrected version against an earlier version that has corrections marked manually on the hard copy. In all other cases, she claims, one is copy-editing.

A: It was pointed out that the term "proofreading" is also used to mean (a) checking the version that comes from layout, as various errors do happen in the conversion between word-processing software and desktop publishing software, particularly in the area of special symbols (en dashes were mentioned in this connection), and because most desktop publishing packages do not work on a scroll system, so bits of text can easily fall off a page or column; and (b) general checking at a late stage in the process as a safety net.

If, however, the problem is one of the client underestimating the work involved in a job, that is a different issue. Attention was drawn to the useful freelance contract made available by the Editors' Association of Canada (www.editors.ca/pubs/contract.htm), which details what the various tasks do and do not entail (the list is comprehensive and includes developmental or project editing, structural editing, stylistic editing, copy-editing, proofreading, production co-ordination, indexing, fact checking, electronic coding and reference checking). Members were also referred to the distinction in Judith Butcher's *Copy-editing*. □

Judith Marsden



In the unarguably parlous world of the freelance editor, Judith Marsden's record should give courage to anyone teetering on the brink of deciding to go it alone. She went freelance ten years ago and is today one of Gauteng's better-known editors, and one who is always busy.

Not that the decision was easy to make. Her first child (she has three) was only two years old when she embarked on this tricky venture, but she did have solid experience behind her.

Early career decisions

Judith knew from an early age that she wanted – specifically – to be an editor. She was always a prolific reader, and enjoyed grappling with *le mot juste* and all the other meticulous matters demanded of anyone who earns their living that way. She started a BJourn at Rhodes University but after a year decided it was not right for her, so switched to a BA majoring in English and history. She went on to do Honours in English literature, where she was fortunate to be tutored in Renaissance drama by the late, great Guy Butler.

Her second love, after the intricacy of words, was travel, and her first job was in that field. Publishing exerted an irresistible pull, however, and she joined Maskew Miller Longman (MML) as a tertiary representative. Promotion rather than direct selling of books was involved, and her job was to travel throughout the then Transvaal and Natal, showing professional academics at the universities and technikons the new MML and Penguin titles, with the aim of getting these used as course networks or reference material. The subjects ranged from English and the social sciences to maths and physics.

Judith made no secret of the fact that editing was what she wanted to do, so after three years MML appointed her as a junior editor, later promoting her to senior editor. She stayed with the company for nine years, acquiring an ideal publishing background along the way.

Soul-searching

Judith married fellow Rhodian Arthur in 1988 and, in 1994, after much soul-searching, decided to enter the precarious world of those who work from home. The flexibility in schedule that this allows was her strongest motivation. Now with three children all under 12, she has established a routine where mornings (and often nights and part of weekends) are for work and the afternoons are for the kids. She has a cushion on the floor in her office and claims that she takes a nap there when looming deadlines portend exhaustion. The cushion is not comfortable enough for a prolonged rest!

Judith and Arthur are both keen hikers and after earning their stripes in the Drakensberg they took on Kilimanjaro in April 1996. Their son was only six months old at the time. When they hit the summit, a blizzard completely wiped out any glimmering of the fabled view of Africa. In later years Arthur went on to conquer the Mountains of the Moon in Uganda and Mount Aconcagua in South America.

Lessons learnt

Self-discipline, Judith says, is the most important thing she has learnt from freelancing. The most difficult aspect is the frequent conflict between the need to meet a deadline – sometimes a derisory deadline – and the inherent drive for a perfect job that bedevils editors. Another chal-

lenge is the fine line between editing and proofreading – what do you do when you find yourself

proofreading a job that has not been adequately edited and that therefore needs editing itself?

Individuals contemplating taking this direction should learn to pace themselves, she says, and build up a reputation for doing an excellent job in the time available – a tough call. Tackle a big job in manageable chunks and – most important – tell the client if you have a problem at any stage. In educational publishing, rewriting or editing at the right level is mandatory, but (usually) far from easy to do. If a manuscript is poor or seems unsalvageable, you must alert the client immediately. It is then up to the publisher to set parameters.

On the ever-bristly subject of fees, editors have nothing to lose but their insecurities if they insist that the degree of urgency should be reflected in their rate of pay. Should editors not insist, for example, that working an entire weekend with little notice pays more than a job that has a reasonable deadline?

In her spare time (what spare time?) Judith has recently discovered the pleasures of early-morning jogging to clear her head and set her up for the day. She also enjoys taking part in half-marathons.

Ten years as a freelance editor could perhaps be called another kind of marathon.

Nicky De Bene

BOOK REVIEW

Cinderella and her fur slipper

Port Out, Starboard Home and Other Language Myths. Michael Quinion. Allen Lane: Great Britain. ISBN 1-58834-219-0. Price: £12.99.

Everybody knows that *kangaroo* is the Aborigine for “I don’t know” – the response to a question by Captain Cook as to the animal’s name. Everybody knows that Cinderella really wore a slipper of fur (*vair*) and not of glass (*verre*). And everybody knows that posh comes from Indian civil servants having their steamer tickets booked as “Port Out, Starboard Home”.

But everybody is wrong, as Michael Quinion entertainingly demonstrates in his rambles through the thickets of English etymology. As a harmless drudge for Oxford Dictionaries he is well placed to know, and he has been bombarded by queries from users of his Web-site www.worldwidewords.org – which now holds 1 400 articles on word history.

The Internet is not without blame in the extraordinary persistence of error. People hear a tale from someone else, and the story is intriguing, and they remember it and pass it on. The myth (in this context, false) of posh is demolished in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. No shipping company ever issued such tickets.

The late lexicographer George Chowdhary-Best looked into it and published a learned article in *Mariner’s Mirror* (January 1971). I read it before writing about the word in the *Spectator*. It didn’t stop anyone. They still tell you the false origin of posh. (The true one is not quite certain, but seems to relate to the slang term for “money”, probably derived from the Romany posh, meaning “a half”, hence “a halfpenny”.)

What of Cinderella? Well, we find her story in Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*. It also gave the stories of the Babes in the Wood, Puss in Boots, Tom Thumb, Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty and Bluebeard (the last just as popular as the rest in straitlaced Victorian days, but not much told to wee children now). Perrault was translated into English by Robert Samber in 1729. He found Cinderella’s fairy godmother giving her “une paire de pantoufles de verre, les plus jolies du monde” and quite correctly translated it “a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the world”. It is meant to be a fairy-tale.

As for the kangaroo, it is true that Captain Cook’s guest botanist, the great Joseph Banks, recorded in his diary for 14 July 1770 “Kill Kanguru”, and that on 4 August of the same year Cook noted in his own journal: “The Animal which I have before mentioned called by the natives Kangooroo or Kanguru”. But settlers in Botany Bay found that the native people did not know what they meant when they referred to a “kangooroo”. So they concluded that Cook had got it wrong.

In these circumstances the cover-story, as it were, for the word’s origin flourished. According to Dr Quinion, recent fieldwork has discovered that the language spoken by the people met by Cook differed from those spoken by others encountered by early settlers. Hence the incomprehension. But Cook’s men met Aborigines who spoke Guugu Yimidjirr, and in that language *ganjurru* was the name for a large blackish kind of kangaroo. So Cook was pretty near.

I can’t get enough of this sort of

thing, and I shall buy as a Christmas present for my husband, who acts as an armchair critic of my amateur philological endeavours, the next volume of word stories by Michael Quinion, which I see is coming out in October.

*Review by Dot Wordsworth.
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The independent editor

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As a freelancer you can never rest on your laurels, thinking your client base is now large enough and you don’t need to take on any new work. The situation can change from one month to the next. At one stage I was doing large amounts of work for a big corporate client, which came in very regularly and kept me ticking over. At the start of a new financial year the client decided that the various business units had to pay one another for services provided, and overnight the supply of language work dried up! I spent several agonised months finding new clients to replace this source of work. This is an occupational hazard in our field; most people regard language work as an unnecessary extra – it’s nice to have if it’s available, but as soon as the financial pressure is on, out it goes! So it’s a good idea to establish a relationship with a colleague who can assist you in the times of plenty rather than turning away work and finding yourself with an empty desk further down the line.

I seem to have rambled on a bit ... If you’re still with me, let me sum up. Freelancing is wonderful, but can be very stressful. Go into it with your eyes open and realise that you have to make an input too, and you can end up with a very satisfying career.