



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

27th January 2011

Start 9:30

Present: Gary, Debby, Heather, Dawn, Ian, Nick, Wendy, Jane, Marjory, Maria S., Chip, Sandy, Jeff, Beverley

Apologies: Not recorded.

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

Our New Little Cocoon: Without sounding ungrateful, we will undoubtedly miss the comfort of the room we've been housed in since January 1999, when both Carindale Writers' Group and the Carindale Library were brand new events. Our new meeting space lacks so much of what we have taken for granted. However, time has moved on, as it does, and what was new is old, and so it goes...

We *will* reap the reward of an even better meeting space in the brand new, upgraded Library once the expansion of the Westfield Shopping Centre is completed, so our patience is recommended. Already, we have two of our members taking care of the major problem for writers, the need for a cup of coffee or tea at around 10:30! Dawn has volunteered to be water girl and Ian will be Urn Ian.

Phew! Thanks people.

A word of warning: The demountable building has twin, wall mounted air-conditioning units (a bit noisy) which will undoubtedly prevent us from frying in the heat of the tin box, but which, I've been told by people sitting adjacent to them, might, on the other hand, lead to deep-freezing. Please bring a jacket so this unfortunate event won't occur.

How to find your way: For those who couldn't make it to the first meeting, the procedure is to sign in at the counter and pick up the key to open the padlock. Then we need to reverse this procedure at the end of the meeting. To get to the room, go around the corner at the Dick Smith end of the shopping strip and you can't help but see the building. Entrance is on Harvey Norman side.

More Housekeeping: One of the challenges ahead of us in 2011 will be how to handle our membership numbers. Last year, for the very first time since our inception, we put a hold on new memberships because we weren't too sure how we would cope this year in our temporary new space. Well, our room is not huge, but I feel it could seat around 25-30 people at a pinch. We currently have approximately 40 members on our mailing list and a growing list of people who would like to join us. So, what we need to do is consolidate our position. **If you don't intend coming to the meetings this year because of other commitments, or even if you will only be coming in the latter part of the year, could you please let me (Bev) know so we can bring in people from the waiting list? If you are on the mailing list and haven't been to a meeting for some time, could you also let me know if your circumstances have changed and you'd like to be dropped from the mailouts.**

Saying 'au revoir': Karen has been in touch to say she'll be away from us for the first part of the year due to a wonderful contract she's secured to head a team writing the Brisbane version of an Eatery Guidebook. Congratulations, Karen! We'll be buying the book when it comes out.

Lydia has also called to say she needs to take 'time out' this year to juggle business affairs as well as spend quality time with her preschooler. She sends her thoughts to us and has accepted the invitation to drop in whenever she has spare time on a meeting Thursday. We look forward to seeing you anytime, Lydia.

Feature Reader: Ian was eager to receive feedback from the group for the first story in a planned children's series he's writing specifically to teach children practical life lessons. Ian explained he was drawing on his training as a psychologist to present the content and that he was writing for children grouped between four and nine years of age. His main character is a little dog, 'Daggy'. The colourful, beautifully illustrated prototype he brought with him was the first in the series and was entitled "Daggy Makes a Splash". What particularly stood out for most of us was the addition of interactive puzzles at the end of this book. The chapter Ian read was *Daggy Gets into Trouble* and it drew quite a few chuckles from his audience.

Critique: Comments were first sourced from people with access to children in the intended age group. The discussion generated from this seemed to suggest that the book might appeal to a younger group than the one Ian had envisioned—more likely the top end being seven. It was suggested children now have sophisticated tastes in reading material at a very young age. One grandmother also brought up the point that some very young children can be frightened by dialogue they don't understand and that tone of voice has to be clearly shown to avoid misunderstanding, and the possibility of night terrors.

Opening the discussion to 'around the table' resulted in overall agreement that the storyline is sound and should appeal to children, and that the addition of limericks is a nice touch to set the books apart. A little lightness of spirit evolved as Ian asked for a 'fixit' for one limerick that involved a shoe and doogy-do. (*I believe Wendy is getting a mention in Ian's book for her squishy, squelchy rhyme!*) The majority also thought the chapters should be a little shorter and stay focussed on one event.

Thanks Ian!

This meeting's exercise: We were treated to some very interesting short readings, some written to make us ponder and some written to make us laugh out loud. A short story about love and memories kept us guessing until the writer hit us with the twist in his story in his very last paragraph. (Gary) Another writer drew on her public speaking skills to present her unwritten (as yet) story about her holiday from hell. (Heather) There were others: One writer wrote her report on the effect of the recent floods. (Marjory) Then another wrote about the effects of disasters on the people who risk their lives during these events. How about considering what it's like, if you happen to be a volunteer with the S.E.S, to not know if an emergency is likely to take you away from your family on Christmas day. (Debby) On a lighter note, who wouldn't love a witch who curls the hair growing from the tip of her nose to look beautiful at the witches' ball? (Maria) And, if, like me, you experience 'Senior Moment of Forgetfulness' then you would certainly have recognised the honesty in the story about not knowing the day of the week. (Chip)

Thanks to all of you for sharing your considerable talents.

Feature Reader for next meeting (10/2/2011): Nick is going to give us a sneak preview of his 'almost ready for publication' latest memoir. Don't miss this one! Nick's last book about growing up in New Zealand is in its second publishing run and is still selling well.

Judith will read at the meeting after that on the 24th February.

And another thing: This year we are going to trail something new. Instead of putting your name on a dated list to receive that all-important opportunity to gauge peer reactions to your work, we are asking for feature readers to nominate only 2 meeting in advance. We feel this is a fairer system. Next meeting, we will take names for the 10th and the 24th March readings.

For members intending to be a feature reader: We expect this work to be at the last edit stage; for you to have an excerpt of a suitable length to read for about 20 minutes; to provide spare copies if you would like written feedback and grammatical corrections, and to expect a critique that aims to help you discover what works and what doesn't, from the point of view of your peers. It is not intended to make you feel uncomfortable, but it is intended to help you become an objective editor for your own writing.

Exercise to work on if you have time: "Whimsy". Try your hand (and your mettle) writing a short piece (250 words) in this genre.

In simple terms, whimsy is fanciful, unlikely to be taken seriously. Think of parallels in light verse, such as Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat."

One last thing: Jeff wants to share a useful site he found when he was looking for help to write French dialogue. He recommends: <http://tlt.Psu.edu/suggestions/international/bylanguage/French.html>.

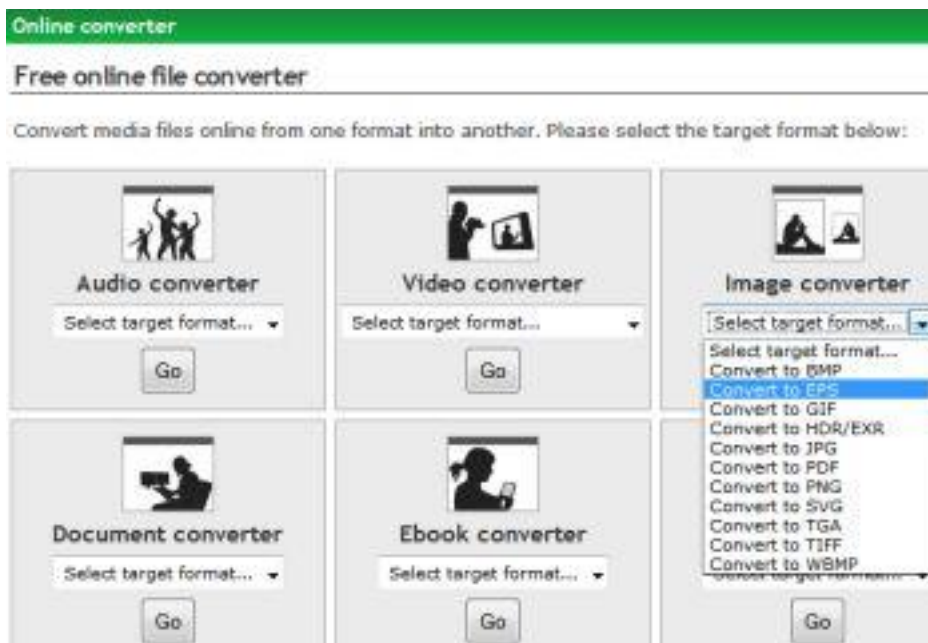
**Until next time... happy writing everyone,
Bev**

Chip's Computer Tips

Convert Files to Other Formats

At a recent CWG meeting, one of our members said he had a problem opening a graphic file. Well the graphic file was a logo that none of his programs recognised.. The logo turned out to be in EPS format--something that few programs outside of Photoshop can create. (Freeware favorite Paint.NET can't do it; neither can GIMP.)

He asked me if there was a file converter around that he could use. I told him about online-ConVert.com, a free site that can convert any image file to just about any format you need (including EPS). You can also convert PDF files if you don't have Adobe Acrobat to read them.



All you do is select your file, choose any extra settings you may want (like sharpen or convert to monochrome), and then click *Convert file*. In just a few moments, the site uploads your file, converts it, and gives you a download that's ready to save to your hard drive.

You can also enter an e-mail address if you want to share the converted file with someone else or retrieve it later--but that's optional.

The site handles more than just images: it can convert audio files, documents, e-books, and videos. I find it particularly useful for my e-book reader, which can read only five different file formats. I've taken e-zine articles, jazz selections and books, converted them to a compatible format and was able to read or listen to them.

This is a great little tool, one I highly recommend. Try it.

Chip

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