



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

11 February 2010

Start 9:30

Welcome to: Craig

Present: Richard, Beverley, Jeff, Sandy, Rolando, Leslee-Anne, Lydia, Karen, Dorothy, Marilyn, Judy, Nick, Marjory, Chip, Michael, Ed, Brian, Debby, Wendy, Hilary, Dawn, Naomi

Apologies: Len, Heather, Sandy S., Shirley

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

- *The first item on the agenda at this meeting was to decide on the fate of this newsletter. Happily, Naomi volunteered to continue where I have left off, and thus you are about to read her very first newsletter/ meeting report. If at the end of reading it you are as impressed as I am, then you might like to tell Naomi and add your congratulations to mine. Our newsletter is in very capable hands indeed.
Over to you Naomi! – Bev*

1. Karen gave us the news that she was unfortunately offered a kill fee for one of her articles, but on the bright side has also been asked to go on a 5 night trip to the Margaret River to review restaurants and vineyards. She reminds us that the highs in the industry are high and the lows are low but to just keep rolling with it. Congratulations Karen.

2. Beverley received an email from a potential member wanting to join a writing group although being unable to attend meetings due to a medical condition that makes him uncomfortable with group situations. The entire group agreed this would be a great thing and agreed to critique this person's writing by correspondence and to welcome him to the meetings if he ever feels comfortable enough to do so.

3. Members are reminded to send their profile and picture to be included on the Carindale Writers' Group website: (www.carindalewritersgroup.org/au) Please send to Desley. (desley.melrose@bigpond.com)

4. Richard is compiling the 'Great Aussie Jigsaw' collection into eBook format. It was agreed that the first copy for members will be free. Any additional copies will be charged at \$2.50. Please let Richard know directly how many copies you would like. (richardmeyer20@hotmail.com)

Feature Readers:

Rolando firstly gave us some tips on self-publishing. He has recommended a website called www.writerbeware.org that looks at publishers and scams in the publishing world. It's run by a lady named Victoria Strauss and you can email her with questions you have about the publishing world. The site also has a blog page: www.accrispin.blogspot.com.

Rolando then read his short story called "The Switch – How I got off my ass and made a living". It was a reflection on life and its different stages. The group agreed that it flowed well and suggested it might even be the first chapter of a book rather than a forward as it was so engaging.

Marjorie read her mysterious story about a couple killed in a car accident who came back to watch over their children, much to the confusion of their new carer who heard the children laughing in their rooms at night. It was suggested that the dialogue may flow more freely if 'he said' and 'she said' were removed after each line of speech as the attribution of the dialogue can be understood from the narration.

Michael shared his story called "My First Flight" about an engineer/sailor who takes to the skies for the first time. As sceptical as the mechanically minded can be he made himself quite anxious imagining all the potential defects of the plane he is a passenger on. Some comments were that it had a great rollicking pace with excellent humour and the scepticism of the sailor made it easy for readers to identify with the characters feelings.

A little Ditty from Debby, 'Ode to Common Things'. A lovely reflection on things we can't live without but may not always remember, such as Vaseline, can openers, batteries, cattle, crops and flies. Let us take a moment to appreciate the common things. Thanks Debby.

Small Sandy had two tales to read to us, but after much discussion on the first, we only got to hear one, a children's interactive picture book called 'Dear me, What a silly book'. And there was much discussion indeed. Everyone seemed to like the idea of the picture book with its colourful animal pictures which were described incorrectly allowing the child to correct the story teller as the tale progresses. The group thought the story would probably be aimed at children anywhere between 1-6 and had good repetition which that age group would find easy to follow. It was suggested that the similarities to Old McDonalds farm be

removed due to potential copyright problems and in general to keep the story very simple with a good rhyming rhythm. Voice chips were suggested as an idea for inclusion to make the noises of the animals as the children read along. Great idea Sandy. We look forward to seeing the next edit.

Lydia was the last reader of the day reading her story 'The Secrets of the Walnut Chest' a story about Claire, the main character who travels to Australia from South Africa and has her belongings quarantined. Each chapter of the book is a different story about each of the items in the walnut chest. Beautiful reading. Thank you Lydia, and what a good flow to the story. Unfortunately, Lydia started her reading very close to our 1pm library kick out time so it was agreed that she didn't get adequate time for a thorough critique and we'd like to hear more of the story at another meeting in the future to offer her some more in depth feedback.

Morning Tea. Thanks again Dorothy for providing the varied and tasty morning tea with lots of healthy options.

Guest Speakers:

Don shared his experiences of self-publishing his book, 'The adventures of Iqbal Smith'. After self-publishing his book the traditional paperback way at much cost to himself, Don decided to take hold of the digital revolution by looking into the option of downloadable eBooks. With the knowledge that only 1 in 100 books written are ever published, and that a majority of the profit from those that are a goes towards overheads including publishers, distributors, agents etc., rather than the writer, Don thought more writers should have the opportunity for their work to be seen and that the public should decide what is a good book.

So he set up a website called www.zuluexpress.com whereby any writer can upload their finished manuscript and receive payment for any copies downloaded – with 85% of the profit going to themselves and 15% going to Zulu express, hence cutting out a lot of the middle men, time and pain associated with traditional publishing. While eBooks are only just starting to take hold in Australia as well as the rest of the world, they are becoming more popular, especially with the younger generations. They also save trees, reduce greenhouse emissions and are a lot cheaper, selling for as little as \$2.95 per eBook. Don is also making the download of eBooks easier by providing a number of formats so the downloaded books can be read on a variety of reading devices.

Thanks Don for making us aware of the new options and potential opportunities emerging for all writers out there. The group asked if Don would consider handling the copyrighting process for writers. He said he doesn't at the moment but it may be something he will look into in the future. (If you weren't there, or would like to know more, you can read the full summary of Don's presentation on the end pages of the newsletter)

Feature Reader/s for next meeting: Michael

Exercise to work on if you have time: Writing sensually to show affection or disaffection. Or reading of your pitch or synopsis.

Happy Writing Everyone! **Chip's Computer Tidbits**

Chip's Computer Notations--

Attack Pages

Below is an actual attack page email, I've changed the numbers so you can't access it. An attack page email is one like this that you receive in your email. If you go to this website, it will put in a Trojan. I opened it through an anonymous website just to see what the Trojan was. This one would flood you with spam. It would use but not harm your Internet and operating system.

Hello.
My friend found some
info about you <http://218.167.63.57/~olessia/trays.htm>
mistake?
Best regards,
Helen Collins

Even if you get an email from a person you know who recommends a website, make sure it's genuine. Names and their contacts can be hijacked from the social networks. Some are fairly subtle and use your first or nick-name, taken from you last communication to the signatory. One way to tell whether an email is from a friend, look at the "from;" in your email inbox list. You can usually tell by where it's from. The "from" on this one reads s.koetsveld@shaw.ca
CA=Canada.

Make the Most of Your 'Home' and 'End' Keys

I don't use many shortcut keys, however, I make good use of my keyboard shortcuts. The **Home** and **End** keys aren't shortcuts in the traditional sense, but many users never bother to lay a finger on them--and that's a mistake.

Indeed, you may hold **Home** and **End** in the same regard as **Pause/Break** and **Scroll Lock**, but while those keys are downright useless, your **Page Up/Page Down** neighbors most certainly are not.

Here are three places the Home and End keys come in very handy:

In Microsoft Outlook:

While in Mail view, a tap of the **End** key jumps you to the bottom of your Folders list, Inbox, or individual message (depending on which pane is selected). Tapping **Home** jumps you back up top.

In Your Word Processor:

I'd wager **Home** and **End** were created with word processors in mind, as the programs make valuable use of them. Tapping **End** moves your cursor to the end (natch) of a line, while **Home** moves it to the beginning. **Ctrl-Home** and **Ctrl-End**, meanwhile, jump you to the top and bottom of your document, respectively.

In Your Web Browser:

Borrowing from word processors, Web browsers use **Home** and **End** to jump to the top and bottom of a Web page. The only difference: no **Ctrl** key required.

Attachments:

Most users don't know how to open attachments in the inbox safely. Contacting the sender may not be practical or he or she may have unknowingly attached an infected file!

My routine strategy is to save any unopened attachment to my desktop or other location and scan the file with my virus program before opening the file."

As we've seen time after time, no combination of software settings can replace a little innate skepticism and a lot of common sense.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH SELF PUBLISHING

by Don Stallman

WHY I WROTE MY BOOK

I have 5 children from ages 37 down to 12. That makes me either **silly or a soft touch**, depending on your point of view, but it's thanks to my youngest son that I wrote a book. I used to write a weekly column called the "**Whisper**" in the local paper in Noosa, like Seinfeld, it was a column about nothing, but it gained a following and so rightly or wrongly, I thought I must be able to write a bit.

TOLKEIN

So, like JRR Tolkein, I sat down one night and started to write a story for Harrison about a kid who saved the world. I finished it **4 years later**, and by then he was very ho hum about it, because it had taken so long.

COPIES READ

We lived in Vanuatu at the time, so I printed off a few copies, sent them to family and friends to be read and passed around, and quietly prepared myself for the worst. In less than a week I had two complimentary emails. Harry enjoyed it too, and it turned out that everyone who read it loved it, from 12 year olds to adults, including a brain surgeon, a Naval Architect, and even a 70 year old retiree. It was a bit Harry Potterish in that way, unwittingly I had somehow written a book for all ages.

PUBLISHERS

This encouraged me to send it to publishers. I sent it to twelve, including Bloomsbury, and received 6 replies, "Thanks for your manuscript, but we're not publishing that genre at present." It was precisely what I had been led to believe would happen so I wasn't at all dismayed, disappointed, but not surprised.

SELF PUBLISHING

Unbeknown to me, my partner **Wendy** was exploring the possibility of self publishing. Eventually she chose **Fontaine Press**, a printer in Perth, who proved excellent to work with. Recklessly, (in hindsight) we ordered **3,000 books**, not knowing that if I sold them all through a bookstore I'd be at the top of Australia's best seller list! How naïve and how well, reckless. That cost me **\$14,000, a web site another \$2,000**, so there I was with 3,000 books, a web site that attracted about 2 hits a year, and no idea what to do next.

INCENTIVE

There's no better incentive than the winds of disaster blowing up your backside, so creativity flowed, and we held a fundraiser for the International School where Harry went, a **Book Launch** where I gave \$5 a book to the school. I sold about **200 books** that night, which directly led to another almost **700 referral sales**, the result of word of mouth back to Australia and NZ, even some Frenchies bought some and sent them to friends. One of the characters is a french Chef.

NOT RECOMMENDED

By the time we came back to Brisbane a year or so ago, I only had about 600 left, and after giving a lot away, I reckon **I'm only down a few grand**. Even though I feel good that more than 2,000 people have read and enjoyed the fruits of my 4 year labour, **I wouldn't recommend the process to anyone**.

FINDING A POSITIVE OUT OF ALL THAT

However, **I believe that you can find a positive even in the most dire situations**, so I put my mind to working out a way that great writers, (I don't mean me for one second, I mean those fantastic writers out there who can't get the attention of a publisher no matter what they do, I'm sure there are a few here) could get their books in front of readers and **let the readers be the judge rather than the know it all publishers**.

I discovered that only 1% that's **1 in 100 books** that are written are published, and of those, **only 3 out of every 100 will make money for the publisher and the writer**. Those are shocking odds, and its no wonder publishers are so careful about which books they accept. However, **it also means that a lot of awesome books are rejected**, in fact legend has it that **JKR** was rejected by as many as 30 publishers before Bloomsbury told here they'd print 300. I believe the Publisher now owns his own island in the Caribbean!

JAGGER

It reminds me of the record label that auditioned and rejected the Stones telling them, 'Not a bad band, get rid of the lead singer and we'll reconsider!'

THE ANSWER

So, how can we help writers get their books in front of readers without the immense costs of printing, distribution, and sale? Take a \$30 paperback. From my research this is a typical breakdown.

Author		\$2
Agent		\$1
Editor	The per book cost depends on how many you sell, say	\$1
Printing		\$3
Publisher overheads and profit		\$5
Wholesaler		\$1
Distributor including transport costs		<u>\$1</u>
Sub total	Cost to Retailer	\$14
100% mark up		<u>\$14</u>
Retail sale price		<u>\$28 - \$30</u>

This ignores your costs of travel, communication, etc etc as Nick pointed out.

EXCITING TIMES!

Most of us don't know it yet, but its an incredibly exciting time to be involved in the world of literature, much like the days of **Gutenberg**. Believe me, there is a revolution afoot, and if you don't get involved, prepare to be left behind and miss out on a lot of **fun**, a lot of **stimulation**, and maybe a lot of **money**! The walls of Big Publishing are cracking, and after a couple of centuries of rejection, **we little folk are about to have our days in the sun**.

Come forth ebooks, escape from the murky mists of your 20 year evolution.

HAVANNAH

I haven't mentioned yet that I lived on the beach at a place called Havannah Harbor, a remote part of the main island of Vanuatu, called Efate, about an hours drive from the capital Port Vila. There were about 20 expats there, we were well spread out, and I had **a mate Steve** who lived about 200 metres from us along the beach. In between us were lovely Ni Vanuatu villagers and lots of gorgeous kids who we helped out from time to time, but Steve and I probably saw each other about once a month when we were having a swim or catching a fish for dinner.

WORD DOC

I had given Steve a copy of my book in a word document, and being a **geek**, he had massaged it into a book on his lap top. I saw him in Port Vila one day, sitting in his truck waiting for his wife to finish at the hairdresser, he was **staring at something** near his steering wheel. I yelled out to him and he looked up and beckoned me over. 'Check this out mate,' he said, 'that's your book!'

He was reading Saving Mankind on his bloody phone! It was a small phone, not a big one like you get today, **an old Nokia** I think. He had saved it on his phone so he could read it when he went to town! That was my first ebook experience.

RESEARCH

A few weeks later we came back to Brisbane for a few days to visit Wendy's mum and dad. At a loose end, I found myself researching ebooks on her dads computer. I discovered that **the world of ebooks was confusing, complicated, disorderly, and out for a quick buck**. I should say at this point that I am a qualified **Accountant**, possibly the worlds worst, having a complete aversity for attention to detail, so after 10 years I graduated to the world of real estate.

QUALITY OF OPPOSITION

While struggling to prove myself as a tax Accountant in Noosa, an old school sporting adversary convinced me to ditch the profession of Accountancy for the wild world of Real Estate sales with the line, **"Don, the opportunity in real estate is the quality of the opposition."** How true that proved to be.

And so I thought, is the world of ebooks.

30 PAGE REPORT

I prepared a 30 page report on my findings and took it home to Port Havannah. I gave it to Steve to read, intent on asking him what he though about it, (he'd been **reading ebooks for 5 years**) and who I should approach to write the program. About a week later he sauntered along the beach, clambered up onto our deck and sat down. I grabbed him a beer and we chatted about island matters for a few minutes.

As you do, I had a terrible feeling that he was about to shoot my ideas down in flames, he had the look of **intelligentsia negativilty** about him. It got too much for me, “So what do you reckon about an ebook publishing site then?”

He conned another beer, took a swig and replied, “Mate, Its awesome.”

“Can you recommend a programmer then?”

“Mate, I’ll do it.”

“How much will it cost?”

“Nothing, but I want a piece of the action.”

“How much of the action?”

“5% will do, its going to be huge mate.”

“How long will it take?”

“A couple of months should see us out there on the ether mate.”

A YEAR LATER 50/50

We started out like that but now we’re 50/50 partners, it’s a bit over a year later, and the site is just operational. I’ve sold over **200 ebooks** to readers in the USA, Canada, Russia (I did have a walk up start, Wendy’s brother lives in Moscow and is spreading the word) the UK, and of course here in Aus. Our books cost just **\$2.95 Aud, Pay Pal take .37 cents, we take .58**, and the writer gets **\$2.00**. I am thinking of changing it to \$US so we don’t shortchange overseas writers.

WHY EBOOKS?

Save *trees*

Reduce *emissions*

Save *\$\$’s*

We can *edit, add, change it anytime!*

Writers get a chance and are *better off \$ wise*

They are *instant*

They *save space*

They can *save your eyes*

You can *read in the dark*

They will eventually give you a *wide choice*, potentially every book in the world will be available from your home computer.

Ebooks can be *updated and customised*

Your market is in the *billions*

No border, distribution, copyright, or publishing restrictions if you don’t commit yourself to one territorial publisher or distributor. EG Amazon USA, Asia, etc etc

We've had the home page translated into 8 languages so the site comes up in international language search engines. Most people search in their own language. This gives us a potential readership of nearly **3 billion people**.

I LOVE BOOKS, they have given me years and years of enjoyment, but now I read ebooks on my little PDA. I think I'll probably buy an iPad when they come out here, they look pretty cool.

WHAT IS AN EBOOK?

Its just an electronic file that you read on an electronic device such as a Kindle, a Sony Reader, a Nook (B and N) and in total there are 18 dedicated Readers available, BUT millions of people don't spend money on a special device, they happily read them on their Smart Phones, iPhones, Blackberries, and PSP's.

Before you think, I could never do that, think about this, **WE GET USED TO WHATEVER WE WANT TO GET USED TO!** We live in an age of constant and rapid evolution. The ebook is a small part of that, and trust me, millions, and soon billions of people are switching to ebooks.

DISADVANTAGES

Yes, like anything there are some disadvantages. As Nick pointed out last week, **security** is one, pirating has been rife. But, if you have to worry about pirating of your book, perhaps it won't be such a problem, because **your book will only be pirated if its selling like hot cakes**. For JKR, Dan Brown, Stephen King etc, yes it's a problem, but why would anyone pirate our books?

HARD COPY DOWNSIDE

Also, think about this. You sell a hard copy, the buyer reads it and gives it to his mate, he reads it and maybe passes it on. Eventually someone either sells it to a 2nd hand book store or donates it to a charity, who sell it and so on until its so frayed and faded that it is thrown out. And of course there are libraries where one book is read maybe thousands of times without the writer getting a cent.

COUNTERFEITING

I read a horrendous story too recently about how some of the first buyers of Harry Potter, Dan Brown and most well known authors are counterfeiters who buy the book and race off to have it copied, bound, and on bookshelves around the world 24 hours later, with not a cent going to the writer. We are kidding ourselves if we worry about pirating of our ebooks. Best sellers will be ripped off because that's where the money is.

DRM

Digital Rights Management is another contentious issue. EG when you buy a **Kindle** book from Amazon I think you only get **one copy**. I may be out of date here but it certainly was the case. If you read on more than one device, like Steve, you'd have to buy it twice, and if you lose or bust the Kindle you lose the book.

BOOKS FOR LIFE

Thanks to Steve, at zuluexpress, our site, when you buy the ebook its yours in our Library for ever. You can download it as many times as you like to one or more of your devices. At \$2.95, very few people will even bother to send it to their mates, think about it, if you find a book you like, how many people would you give it to? Not many, as we all like different genres. The music and ebook pirates are more intent on ripping off profiteers like Amazon who charge nearly as much for an ebook which costs them almost nothing, as they do for a hardcopy.

HARDCOPY RESTRICTIONS

Telling a reader they can't pass on an ebook to a friend is akin to telling them they can't give a hardcopy to a friend. Its hard to comprehend this enormous shift in the world of books, but **'We get used to anything we want to get used to.'**

CONCLUSION

Its an incredibly exciting time to be involved in the world of literature, much like the days of Gutenberg. Believe me, there is a revolution afoot, and if you don't get involved, prepare to be left behind and miss out on a lot of fun, a lot of stimulation, and maybe a lot of money! The walls of Big Publishing are cracking, and after a couple of centuries of rejection, we little folk are about to have our days in the sun.

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Our motto is Get Discovered - Get on board the zulu express!