

WEBWORDS 23:

Innovations

Caroline Bowen

They dominate the room: a big package, just delivered, an entire wall fitted with shelves, and a computer. There are boxes in the package, or books – it's difficult to feel through the padding. No point in massaging it any longer. The thing is, I have promised myself not to open it until I've done 600 words. It's a carrot¹ thing.

Friends

The wall-to-wall, floor to ceiling installation is quite new: custom made by Joe Plecko, carpenter extraordinaire, to my exacting specifications. Picture the long, low rectangles with books and journals neatly arranged in date order; the snug square compartments stacked with software and CD-ROMS; the messy alcove, notice board to the rear and 60 years accumulation of treasures and useful things, shrine-like, in front; and on the top shelf, almost touching the ceiling, massive folders, ring binders, albums, and containers. Friends within arm's reach. Unlike the other bookcases in the house, which mainly contain books, it does not beckon guests to browse. It is special, personal, mine: everyone who visits knows intuitively not to touch without asking.

No one would want to touch the computer. Feline, frosty and full of itself, the computer co-operates on its own terms. It's friendly enough at the moment, purring smugly, companionably channelling the Internet, and content to let me play with its mouse. It has its uses, obviously, but the old cat really is old in computer terms: over the hill at 60 months, and about to be replaced with something newer, faster, less expensive, with more memory, and – in my dreams – less temperamental. Always wanting to be bought stuff, it bristles with software that includes the Microsoft Office suite with its all-pervading, very helpful, totally humourless, no-frills thesaurus, *The Newish Arbiter of English Usage*. Rarely verbose, *The Arbiter* sees "innovation" bundled with modernism, modernisation, improvement, advance and originality.

"Any one who wishes to become a good writer should endeavour, before he allows himself to be tempted by the more showy qualities, to be direct, simple, brief, vigorous, and lucid." H. W. Fowler, 1908²

The trusty web dictionary³, on-line and plain-speaking, like a stern Henry Watson Fowler warning to tautologists⁴ to beware the three-part trilogy, defines innovation, noun and verb, as something newly introduced, and as the act of introducing something new. Tight lipped, Roget's *New Millennium Thesaurus*⁵ (2005) labels it monosyllabically as "change" and *then*, in traditional Roget style, blasts the enquirer, alphabetically and rather quaintly, with: addition, alteration, contraption, cutting edge, departure, deviation, in thing, introduction, last word, latest thing, latest wrinkle, leading edge, modernism, modernization, modification, mutation, new wrinkle, new-fangled idea, newness, notion, novelty, permutation, shift, variation, vicissitude, what's happening, wrinkle.

Webwords is suspicious of new fangled contraptions, on edge about happening mutations, and crushed by new wrinkles. But right there in the Roget salvo, "vicissitude" is arresting. Frequently used in the plural to denote the sudden or unexpected changes or shifts an individual often encounters in life, activities, or surroundings, the word "vicissitudes" implies factors that are out of our control. At

first it does not quite seem to fit with the essence of innovation: that idea of our acting, deliberately, on the environment to evoke change, and to unveil the new.

Would the Warden of English (McMorris, 2001) have approved this juxtaposition of vicissitude and innovation? Possibly not. But in relating the two words to SLP scholarship, pedagogy, research, administration, and practice, it seems that it is often when our external world suddenly changes, shifts and presents problems that beg solutions that we find the capacity to innovate. Somewhere from within ourselves come the creativity, imagination, inspiration, inventiveness and ingenuity that lead to development of new things, new applications for old things, professional-self renewal and revitalised enthusiasm. Innovation is adaptive, progressive, and exciting. If necessity is the mother of invention, maybe innovation is vicissitude's child!

OK, I'm sure that's a good 600 words.

"Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own." Jonathan Swift⁶



Talking twaddle

Boxes? Books? Not a bad guess. The package contains a book called "Twaddle-S and YOU!", a glossy magazine with "Talking Twaddle: Look for the Bull on Every Page" on the cover, a fake fur shoulder bag, and a bundle of leaflets. The boxes are unexciting – sometimes a good sign⁷ – brown cardboard with black-stencilled labels: T-S on the larger one, and H on the other. There is a covering letter.



TALKING BULL

Talking Twaddle International

MEMO FROM

J. Charles Randolph III
 Director of Marketing
 Twaddlers International
 (410) 684-7433
 (410) 684-7448 – fax

Dr Bowen,

Hi there again. I have a request to you as a person familiar with the patois "Down Under"?

We have translated our product launch letter into Australasian "English" in order to better communicate with you guys. Please check it for us? Feel free to make any changes so that it is in authentic "Aussie", "Kiwi" and Taswegian lingo.

Be assured that we at T.T.I. appreciate the work you do.

Respectfully yours,
 Chuck

"Let us talk twaddle to you!"



TALKING BULL

Talking Twaddle International

(410) 684-7433
(410) 684-7448 – fax

PRODUCT LAUNCH

Good day and kia ora
Aussie, Kiwi or Tassie Colleague,
Troublesome clients?
EBP getting you down?
No time?
No ideas?
No worries mate!

Finally, our four nations have worked together in collaboration to create a truly international product that combines good ol' American know-how with the ANZAC legend.

INNOVATIVE!

Yes! Wendy Bender, MS, CCC-SLP, ASHA member and CEU provider, has joined forces with Australian, New Zealand and Tasmanian speech experts to develop an INNOVATIVE product to meet the needs of grass roots therapists "Down Under" in the trenches. As Wendy tells it, "Right from the outset, we planned to give colonial SLPs something completely rooted. It's the new, you beaut, Totally Wonderful Articulatory Development Device and Language Enhancement Schedule (Twaddle-S). Why, to use your charming vernacular, Twaddle-S is the best thing since rip top stubbies."

INSPIRED!

Inspired by a quarter of a century of true blue Speech Pathology Aussie Wisdom (SPAW), Twaddle-S, with its PROVEN, revolutionary two-in-one, bull dust coated, Oscillating Voice Tuner and Revolving Lip Twanger Excursion Tool (simulated koala and echidna skin reversible carry bag optional, at the unbelievably low price of \$12.95), is set to revolutionize the way you implement therapy for practically any communication disorder you care to name.

TESTIMONIAL

Bubbles Sweetwords, MA (Sp Path) CPSP of Kellerberrin, WA, is convinced! "Thank you, Wendy Bender, for Twaddle-S", she writes, enthusiastically, "it's a genuine relief to me to know that I will never need to think again".

ORDER WITHIN 60 DAYS!

Verbs irregular? Don't miss out on our amazing introductory offer: a FREE prune juice fuelled Handheld Orbital Tense Sander (HOTS). Versatile and popular, HOTS, with its step by step instruction manual, is a PROVEN therapy aid, allowing you to regularize those pesky little varmints in minutes. This once-in-a lifetime offer is limited to one per customer with each order of Twaddle-S received within the next 60 days.

HOT STUFF!

Prominent New Zealand speech personality Dionijs van Keuren, D.Phil (Oxon), MRCSLT of Hastings, NZ (formerly of Milton Keynes, North Bucks), raves about his Sander. "I mean. One's sso PLEASED. Work has never been such, well, you know, fun! Not a day sort of, well, passes without my ssimply dashing to the equipment room for it." Communication Support Worker Minnie Miner chimes in, "It's true. I always seem to be getting the HOTS for Dr Van!"

Conditions apply.
Bench-top (BOTS) and wall-mounted (WOTS) styles
are not included in this offer.
(410) 684-7448 – fax

"Let us talk twaddle to you!"

Visit

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au



TALKING BULL

Talking Twaddle International

Dear Dr. Bowen,

I am writing to seek your input and/or suggestions regarding the Australian speech-language pathology market. Talking Twaddle International (T.T.I.), based in Sida Falls, Iowa provides a variety of educational materials and associated diagnostic and therapy tools for the SLP market. We have been quite successful in the U.S. market and are now in the process of reaching out to several markets internationally. We have just recently started selling into the Canadian market and the interest has been very high for our products.

One of our company's owners, Wendy Bender, the brains behind the Bendy Wendy Therapeutic Toys range will be in both New Zealand and Australia during the autumn months to make presentations.

I am trying to identify the best way for us to sell our products in these two markets but am having trouble identifying a potential partner or partners. While I am sure that is not something you would spend too much time understanding, I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts you might have. I have contacted the Australian speech pathology association but have not received any answers yet to my specific questions. I am sure, though, that I'll hear from them eventually. If you can provide any insight, I'd be very much appreciated.

Attached is a brief note from Wendy who has asked me to send you examples of our latest products (enclosed).

Best regards,
Chuck

J. Charles Randolph III
Director of Marketing
Twaddle International
(410) 684-7433
(410) 684-7448 – fax

"Let us talk twaddle to you!"

Dear Wendy and Chuck,

Thank you for seeking my opinion. Here is my frank response, which you may find a little disappointing in relation to your marketing plan.

In assessing innovative products such as yours, it has often been my experience that Australian speech pathologists, and New Zealand speech and language therapists are influenced by the peer-reviewed, scientific literature. There is a strong emphasis in both countries on evidence-based practice and therapy outcome measures.

To create an "in" to these markets, you might consider allocating funds to a research effort with a view to publishing therapy efficacy data for the Wendy Bender Talking Twaddle International methods and products.

As you would know, the articles and testimonials on the Talking Twaddle International web site and in your promotional packages do not constitute peer-reviewed publications. Similarly, TTI's status as an ASHA CEU provider does not amount to the same thing as properly documented evidence. I would suggest that you aim to publish your findings in an ASHA journal, or other peer-reviewed publication.

Without an appropriate evidence-base, I think your marketing hopes in Australia and New Zealand are rather dismal. To impress these particularly discerning markets you really need to answer some of your critics with strong research evidence.

We live in testing times!

Best wishes,
Caroline



TALKING BULL

Talking Twaddle International

From the desk of
Wendy Bender

Hey Caroline!

I have a favor to ask of you? Would you be able to give me the names of some distributors of speech materials who you think are good companies? We will be working with the US and Australian consulates but I would like to have a peer's perceptions before we arrive for the meetings. I would really appreciate it.

If you agree to have us use your name when we approach Australian companies be sure to list the credentials you want used when we at Talking Twaddle International mention you and acknowledge your contribution.

Will I be seeing you in Australia at the speech conference? I would love for us to meet up.

Best,
Wendy
Wendy Bender MS, CCC-SLP
(410) 684-7432
(410) 684-7447 – fax

"Let us talk twaddle to you!"

References

Fowler, H. W. (1908). *The King's english*, Second Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Bartleby (1999). <http://www.bartleby.com/116/>
McMorris, J. (2001). *The warden of English: The life of H.W. Fowler*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Roget's new millennium thesaurus, First Edition: v 1.1.1. (2005). Lexico Publishing Group, LLC. <http://thesaurus.reference.com/>

Links

1. <http://www.obvious.fsnet.co.uk/carrots/carrots.htm>
2. <http://www.bartleby.com/116/>
3. <http://dictionary.reference.com/>
4. <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/dictionaries/english/data/d0082908.html>
5. <http://thesaurus.reference.com/>
6. <http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/swift/swiftov.html>
7. <http://www.etni.org.il/farside/badlyworded.htm>
Find Webwords 23 with live links at http://members.tripod.com/Caroline_Bowen/webwords23.htm