

South Korea

## Let's Have a World Punctuation Day In the U.S. it's held on Sept. 24. Why not take it worldwide?

BY ERIC SHACKLE

Published 2007-09-16 10:01 (KST)

Nine out of 10 emails seem to contain at least one typographical error, better known as a typo. Never before have so many words been mangled. Is it caused by carelessness, keyboard clumsiness, or just plain ignorance?

The U.S. will celebrate its fourth annual National Punctuation Day on Sept. 24. Let's make it a worldwide affair, when we name and shame offenders, and return faulty emails to their senders, with mistakes highlighted in red.

National Punctuation Day is the brainchild of Jeff Rubin, a former Californian newspaperman, now a writer and newsletter designer. You can read more about him in [A Punctuation Celebration](#) (PDF).

Three years ago, irked by "the heedless punctuation that infests American life" (make that Australian, too) he kicked off the first National Punctuation Day, "a celebration of the lowly comma, correctly used quotes and other proper uses of periods [Brits and Aussies call them full stops], semicolons and the ever-mysterious ellipsis."

Teachers, writers and other word lovers greeted the idea with enthusiasm. National Punctuation Day is gaining more supporters every year.

Americans aren't the only ones who worry about faulty punctuation. It's far too common in many other countries. In Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald's Column 8* for many years fought a losing battle against the misuse of apostrophes, through a nitpicking character called Apostrophe Man.

Britain too has an Apostrophe Man, a former journalist, John Richards. As chairman of the [Apostrophe Protection Society](#), he could be invited to join America and Australia in a World Punctuation Day.

He founded the APS in 2001 "with the specific aim of preserving the correct use of this currently much abused punctuation mark in all forms of text written in the English language."

He used to send a formal letter to numerous apostrophe offenders in his hometown (Boston, Lincolnshire).

"Dear Sir or Madam," he wrote. "Because there seems to be some doubt about the use of the apostrophe, we are taking the liberty of drawing your attention to an incorrect use. We would like to emphasise that we do not intend any criticism, but are just reminding you of correct usage should you wish to put right the mistake."

Following media publicity, he received more than 500 letters of support. Derek Snoxall, of West Sussex, wrote: “I applaud the foundation of the Apostrophe Protection Society. This is long overdue and tush to those who say otherwise. I suggest that the misuse of commas be attended to at the same time. On a recent visit to Australia I read in a pub lavatory a notice asking people to refrain from putting, amongst other things, ‘babies, nappies down the toilet’.”

I asked John Richards what he thought of the suggested World Punctuation Day. He replied, “I think it’s a great idea, but the organisation would be enormous. If anyone does tackle it I would certainly support him or her.”

Back in the U.S., Rubin suggested celebrating National Punctuation Day by reading a newspaper and circling punctuation blues with a red pen. (A blue is a colorful Oz slang word for an error). He also recommended Americans to note store signs with wrongly punctuated words and inform the owners of any mistakes.

Well, how about us doing likewise?

Jennifer Robinson, a blogger in San Jose, California, emailed us after *OhmyNews* recently published a story titled “The printer’s devil: Typo is his name.”

“Your story about typos is fun,” she wrote. “I kind of want one of those [Wicked] Bibles . . . I was actually just talking to someone last night about how if I find a blog that’s full of typos or mis-spellings, I take the content less seriously. I’m afraid that I have no control over National vs. World Punctuation Day, but I’m pretty sure you could declare it yourself, and no one would argue with you.”

OK, Jen. Thanks for the suggestion.