Comrades, one and all.

Someone asked - why celebrate a 48th birthday? A fiftieth makes more sense, so why bother with 48 years.

It was chosen because at this stage who knows if we've ever make into 50, and 48 is usually the age of a mid-life crisis.

Justinian has spent an entirety in a state of crisis and it's a miracle that we're here at all.

It was a publication conceived with special requirements: there would be no deadlines; no business plan; no mission statements; and no readership surveys.

Tonight is an excellent opportunity to thank many people. Not everyone can be here because of the tyranny of distance, and I've received apologies from staff reporters in our overseas bureaux: Kenneth Widmerpool in London; Silvana Olivetti in Rome; Meme Camembert on the Paris desk; and Roger Fitch in Washington.

Distance was not a barrier to some of our guests who have trekked from Perth and Brisbane.

We're also well represented here by some of the great contributors who wrote for Justinian while doing law degrees and trying to work out what to do with the rest of their life.

Geoff Thompson (who went and had a brilliant time as a foreign correspondent at the ABC);

Cynthia Banham (who migrated to the SMH and also covered the foreign affairs beat and is now a a writer of distinction);

Michael Easton (who invented the internet, had his own law firm, and is now a teacher at Punchbowl Public School);

Joe Kerr (who has escaped from DFAT);

Hannah Ryan (the rising star at the bar);

Nick Bonyhady (until moments ago the business editor of the Herald and now on the ramparts);

Janek Drevikovsky (the splendid legal affairs man at the Financial Review);

Anthony Kanaan (at the Office of the DPP);

And of course **Craig Reucassel** (an amazing ABC broadcaster and multi-pronged talent).

All did brilliant work for Justinian, introducing concepts like Data Journalism, afternoon power-naps, typos, and the radical no punctuation rule.

Actual, real-life subscribers should not be overlooked in these lavish tributes who, without them, none of us would be here.

One of the things I've come to realise is that a good number of our paid subscribers signed on because of the cartoons, not so much the journalism. And so it's a honour that the Head of the Art Department, Jenny Coopes is here.

Jenny also had to fill in for Dawn, our dispatch lady, who has been prone to stretches of absenteeism.

Michael FitzJames also kindly donated illustrations when Ms Coopes was on periodic stress leave.

Reaching back into the evolutionary history of Justinian it's also appropriate to acknowledge the Merchandising Department, run by Olwen Henstridge and Libby Blainey.

Some time back, an innovative papparazzi had photographed former NSW Minister, Rex (Buckets) Jackson, over the back fence of his home at Dapto while he was hanging out his very large items of underwear on the Hills Hoist.

This would probably be a breach of what is now Schedule 2, section 7, of the *Privacy Act*. Rex was not long out of Berrima jail and was trying to get on with life.

The artists in our Merchandising Department decided to print this photo on some very fine pieces of Polish linen and they were marketed as Justinian t-towels.

The realisation that lawyers across the continent were drying up their dishes, and glass-ware, with Rex Jackson's underpants is a merchandising moment of rare brilliance.

After continued violations of good taste, sadly, the Merchandising Crew was dismantled.

And the Media Watch gang are here, and I'm very happy about that - they are people who dedicated their time to undermining the gilded and gaudy careers of John Laws and Alan Jones, and there could scarcely be a more important mission than that.

For Justinian, the task of reporting on law and lawyers, their interaction with politics, the courts and the media has not been entirely trouble free.

Slings and arrows, threats, abuse and litigation itself have to be contended with and to that end Bruce Burke and Matt Collins could not have been more valiant and effective defenders of truth, freedom and justice.

I'm very chuffed my children are here and even a representative of the generation after that - none of whom want to work in the grimy mill of journalism.

And Yvonne, who is a power of brilliant ideas, advice, wisdom, wit, and love, who can spot a typo at 10 paces and is an incredible voice of reason to my fears, neuroses, and obsessions.

Justinian would be an infinitely poorer organ, and I would be a significantly poorer human being without her.

Justinian has been fun for me. I've enjoyed writing, editing, and publishing and everyone here in one form or another has either been supportive, inspirational, helpful, or completely unhelpful.

This is my life in a room.

Thank you everyone, and in the traditional words of one of our distinguished guests, that brings to an end the formal part of the proceedings, so you may all get on with the important business of drinking and chatting.

Ends