



THE EDITORS

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P.O. Box 567,
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NEWSLETTER NO. 6

November 1979

REPORT ON LAST MEETING

Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
24 October 1979

Topic: THE EDITOR AND PRODUCTION

The speaker was Robin James. Robin has wide experience in book production which includes working as a typographer for Readers Digest and as production manager for Whitcombe and Tombs and for William Collins. For the last two years she has been running her own design studio. She recently returned from the Northern Territory after visiting five Aboriginal settlements where she taught book design for the Commonwealth Government Bilingual Programme.

Robin originally intended to discuss her ten 'beefs' (beeves?) about editors but her talk became a discussion on what editors should know. Her main points were:

(a) Keying manuscript headings. If this is not done, production managers or designers have to go through the whole book keying in headings. This can make the difference between two days' work and a weeks' work.

(b) Knowing and using proofreaders marks: using an incorrect mark can mean extensive resetting (an example - a colleague who used wavy lines under key words in a manuscript and thought they meant italic!).

(c) Accurate word counts. In advertising, a character count = one word = five letters; in publishing one word = six letters. Editors should insist that the author uses one typewriter throughout the manuscript and types it with consistent margins. Ideally the whole manuscript should be done in a character count, or at least half. Kerning (i.e. the spacing between set characters) should be allowed for in counting. Also space should be allowed for headings - 5 per cent of the total is a rough guide. End counts are a production manager's responsibility but editors should know how to do them.

(d) Always supply prelims when giving completed manuscript to production, or at least say what is to come.

(e) If any extra copy is to be supplied, don't add it in caps; write or type it in as it should appear in the finished copy.

(f) Make an early decision (or policy statement!) about how far to let the author go at proof stage in making corrections. A one-word change or addition can affect a ten-line paragraph. If more words are to be added, cut out the equivalent number - this is particularly important on page proofs.

Comment by Jane Arms on this point: You have to make allowances here for the author, especially for first-time authors. A manuscript looks very different in type than in typescript form. Suddenly it's a book that the author has to live with!

These various points made by Robin led to many questions. Among the more interesting were:

Neville Drury: Are Australian books too conventional in design?
RJ: Not really. There are reasons for some conventions. The eye goes to the right-hand page top corner, runs around the page to the optical centre (above the middle of the page), to the bottom, across to the left-hand side of the same page and then to the optical centre again. Then you start reading. That is why title

pages are right-hand pages.

Neville Drury: What do you think of two-page title pages?

RJ: They are OK if it is an expensive book.

Steve Dearnley: Have you ever had any complaints from authors or editors about typography?

RJ: Authors have never complained about my typography. I tend to use understatement in choosing type (not much bold, etc.).

Jane Arms: Are authors aware of what you have done and are they able to discriminate?

RJ: Journalists do. I have had positive feedback from them. They know what I do and have reacted positively.

Comment by David Ell: Authors and designers should meet so that they can establish a feeling for the book that they are both working on.

Barbara Ker Wilson: As a freelance do you feel hamstrung by publishers' different styles? Do you try and keep within the styles that they give you?

RJ: Some publishers let me design the way I want to and give the manuscript my personality, but I like to look at previous titles that the publisher has done and I can perhaps be guided from those, e.g. questions of house style - this obviously applies to designing a book in a series.

Bruce Champion: Does design make much difference to sales of school books?

RJ: It depends who buys the book. School books are very important typographically - they must be well designed and clear because they have to be read over and over again. But we need to remember that teachers, not students, buy school textbooks.

FREELANCE REGISTER: ARTISTS AND BOOK DESIGNERS SECTION

ANN TAYLOR, P.O. Dangar Island, 2253

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PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Cartoons in Nation Review; covers for primary education.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: Has written a history of roads textbook (Lothians) and supplied all visuals; as a remedial teacher has illustrated stories, games, etc. at work.

SPECIALITIES: Humour, fantasy, children's illustrations.

Examples of work available.

NEXT MEETING

Cut this out and put it in your new diary.

Date: Wednesday 20 February 1980

Topic: Small publishers (height bigotry lives!)

Venue: Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli

We'll be sending you reminder notices in the New Year

Another date to mark in your diary: Annual General Meeting will be held on 16 April 1980.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

One hundred and seventeen members and guests came to the Mosman Rowing Club on December, 5th, and enjoyed the good food and splendid atmosphere. We intend to make this an annual event.