

THE EDITORS

P.O. Box 567, Neutral Bay 2089

NEWSLETTER NO.7

REPORT ON LAST MEETING

Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
Wednesday 20 February 1980

TOPIC: SMALL PUBLISHERS

Speakers were Marjorie Pizer and Anne Spencer Parry (Pinchgut Press); Rod Mead (Mead and Beckett); and Keith Johnstone (The Library of Australian History).

The meeting was chaired by Barbara Ker Wilson, who started off by telling several encouraging stories about publishers who started small and retired big, and some discouraging tales of others who started and stopped. One Walter Hines Page commented sourly in 1905: "every successful publisher could make more money by going into another business". As he started Doubleday, he growled all the way to the bank.

First speaker was Anne Spencer Parry of Pinchgut Press. She said that she had decided to print her own books because publishers in Australia are generally unwilling to do small print runs. She gave a brief précis of Pinchgut's history - it was founded in 1947, but did very little until about five years ago. In 1976, she and Marjorie Pizer each put in \$1000 to produce Anne's first book Land Behind the World. They decided on a run of 3000 copies, because they couldn't cope with more books than that in Anne's living room. Land Behind the World sold 2300 copies in three years, and made a gross profit of \$3065 after costs. In 1977, they produced a more expensive book; a 3000 print run (she didn't specify the title) cost them \$4060 to produce, but paid for itself within two years.

Last year, Anne and Marjorie put in \$1300 each and took out \$1400 each two months later. Anne said that obviously Pinchgut wasn't making much money, but that the object of the company was to get books to people. She said that it was nice to print exactly what you wanted to write, without some mean and carping editor saying that Chapter 4 was awful. On the other hand, Chapter 4 might be awful; the drawback in publishing your own work is that you are on your own, and it's very easy to be too close to it. The freedom's good, but it can be a bit scary. By the same token, you can design your own book - but you might choose a non-selling cover.

Pinchgut Press do their printing here, not overseas. As far as promotion goes, Anne said she finds it difficult; it is much easier if somebody else says you're great than having to do it yourself. Sales and promotions are directly linked in small publishing companies. Pinchgut do a lot of the distribution themselves - Second Back Row Press distribute their books from time to time.

Anne ended by saying that if people don't publish their own work, or start up their own small companies, a very important component of Australian literature will be silenced. Writers of limited edition books will no longer have the chance to be heard ... financial considerations are not the only ones. (All the people in the audience employed by publishing companies nodded sympathetically).

Marjorie Pizer followed, corroborating many of Anne's points. She stressed that if you were publishing your own books, it was necessary to have enthusiasm. Marjorie writes poetry. She said that it's a very difficult marketing area - publishers don't really want to touch people who write poetry unless their name happens to be John Laws. She wrote three books of poetry (the first one had a run of 400, the second 500) and by the time she had written the third one, she was sick of going into bookshops and trying to sell her poetry cold. She decided to reconstitute Pinchgut Press, and since 1976 she has written three more books of poetry; in all, 7000 copies have been produced, of which Pinchgut has sold 4500.

Marjorie Pizer said that many small booksellers are now more interested in poetry. She agreed with Anne Spencer Parry that publicity is important, and said that publishing one's own poetry is a rewarding experience.

Rod Mead was the third speaker, injecting a bit of hard-nosed commercialism into the meeting. First of all he asked the question: "What is a small publisher?" and followed it up with the opinion that most people were small publishers this year (hollow laughter). He mentioned that the Reader's Digest, for example, could qualify as small publishers - they do relatively few books, though they publish enormous quantities.

Mead & Beckett do about ten books a year, freelancing the rest out. Rod Mead prefers being a packager to working for a large publishing company, because the publishing process tends to be simpler; he enjoys working on books rather than on corporate problems.

He said that distribution is a big problem in Australia, and publishers are becoming less and less inclined to take risks. For this reason, Mead & Beckett tend to approach established authors whom they know can produce the goods; they rarely (if ever) follow up unsolicited manuscripts. Though Mead & Beckett print in Hong Kong, they use local typesetters.

He said that the advantage of being small is that Mead & Beckett is able to give the author more help in writing and structuring a book than a big publisher.

The final speaker for the evening was Keith Johnstone. The Library of Australian History publishes books on local and family history; Keith Johnstone and Malcolm Sainty saw a lot of Australia's history disappearing under the developer's hammer and decided to do something about it. Their first book, a study of Cadman's Cottage, was published in 1970; they did 1500 copies. It sold out in nine months. A booklet based on the complete work, of which 5000 copies were produced, sold out in three years. Keith conceded that these are not huge quantities, but the results were confidence-boosting. He and Malcolm Sainty then did a few books of interest to specialist historians (including a copy of the records of the old Sydney burial ground, and the births, deaths and marriages records in the old Sydney Morning Herald) and they all sold very well indeed. Library of Australian History specialises in facsimile editions, as well as books of local interest. Their History of Hornsby Shire was published in August 1979. 3000 copies were printed, and the book is now unavailable.

Keith said that their facsimiles are valuable as source material; they are bought by research students and used in libraries. He said that original manuscripts in the Mitchell were a great source of original research, and therefore useful and worth reproducing. He said that the Library of Australian History can't possibly publish half of the historical stuff that's worthy of publication. They've survived three years, employ five people, and are happy with the way the company is going.

Barbara Ker Wilson threw the meeting open for questions, and people immediately became embroiled in a certain amount of discussion about profit margins, which was guarded on all sides. Carol Dettman asked Keith Johnstone how a small company coped with long-term bad debts; were they a problem? Keith Johnstone said that they were pretty small, really. Everybody agreed that booksellers asked for far too much discount. The meeting was just settling down to a highly technical debate about selling, printing costs and discount clauses in contracts when the word was given: "Come and eat before the food gets warm".

ABPA SEMINAR

On April 22 and 23, the ABPA is holding a Seminar titled Book Publishing in Australia 1980: An Introduction to Current Practice and Problems, at the Science Centre, 35-43 Clarence Street Sydney. For your \$150 (which includes Seminar papers and a copy of John Dessauer's book Book Publishing ... unless you're not a member of the ABPA when the whole thing will cost you \$200) you get:

Brian Clouston (ANUP) on Publishing in Australia: An Overview
 Bob Sessions (Nelson) on Acquisitions and Editing
 Dennis Creer (Golden Press) on Production and Printing
 George Dale (Penguin) on Art and Design
 Kevin Weldon on Marketing and Sales
 Jan Garven (Collins) on Publicity and People
 Rod Mead (Mead and Beckett) on Subsidiary Rights
 Dick Philip (Industry Consultant) on Distribution and Service
 Bill Mackarell (ABP) on Financial Control

AND

Frank Thompson (UQP) on The Industry Outlook
 ... as well as four lots of coffee and two lots of lunch. The Seminar starts at 9.30 a.m. and finishes at 4 p.m. each day. Ring Sandra Forbes on 29 2570 for details.

NATIONAL BOOK COUNCIL - NSW

A Chinese banquet is being held at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 30 April at the Mandarin Club, 396 Pitt Street, Sydney. Margaret Jones, author of The Confucius Enigma and Foreign Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, will be guest speaker. Tickets \$16.00. Bookings - contact Sue Wratten on 699-0111 Ext.434.

GALLEY CLUB OF SYDNEY AGM

The officers of the Galley Club for 1980, elected at the recent Annual General Meeting, are:

President: Robin James
 Treasurer: Bryone Cosgrove (P.O. Box 51, Surry Hills 2010)
 Secretary: Beverley Barnes (c/o PO Box 544, Potts Point 2011)
 and Adrian Clayton, Kim Falkenmire and Sue Wagner.

(Inquiries: Beverley Barnes, phone Sydney 31-8211)

NEW ADDRESSES

The following freelance people have moved house:

Judy Vago, 8/23 Holbrook Avenue, Kirribilli 2061. (92 7925)
 Jacqueline Kent, 3/2 Bardsley Gardens, North Sydney 2060. (929 2615)
 Jonathan Shaw, 358 Annandale Street, Annandale 2038.
 (Please erase previous addresses from your memory banks).

ADDITIONS TO THE FREELANCE REGISTER

HILARY ARNOLD, 11 Olive Street, Paddington 2021.

Tel: 31 8160.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Editor at Weidenfeld Publishers, London (1974-77); Senior editor at Paddington Press, London (1978-79).

DUTIES: Copy-editing, writing captions, selecting and researching illustrations, blurb writing, rewriting - general supervision of manuscript through entire editorial process.

SPECIALITIES: Large format, fully integrated, illustrated editions for mass market, biographies, history books, fiction.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: BA (Hons) in English and Philosophy. Short articles published in Time Out and The New Statesman.

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LEN CRONIN, 2/48 Neild Avenue, Paddington 2021.

Tel: 356 1142.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Marshall Cavendish, London (1974-76); Reader's Digest, Sydney (1977-78); Falconwood Publications, London (1979).

DUTIES: Editing, briefing and commissioning authors, research, writing.

SPECIALITIES: Educational, science, technical works, natural history.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: Sub-editing partworks and current affairs magazines.

FREELANCE EXPERIENCE: Reader's Digest, Marshall Cavendish, Methuen, Aldus Books.

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MAGGIE GILSON, 40 Eglinton Road, Glebe 2037.

Tel: 660 7665.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Copy reader for Croomhelm Publishing, London.

DUTIES: Proof reading

SPECIALITIES: Modern fiction, drama, history, literary criticism.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: BA (Hons) Oxon, English, 1978.

FREELANCE EXPERIENCE: Croomhelm Publishing Co., London.

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SUBADRA RAMNATH, 3/3 Bradley Street, Randwick 2031.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Editorial Assistant to "Delhi Diary" (1971-72); Freelance (1973); Editorial Assistant - Bulletin and Journals of Krishnamurti Foundation of India and Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (1974-75); Editorial Assistant Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company (1975); Editorial and Production Assistant for Indian Journal of Communication Arts; Assistant Editor with Vikas Publications, New Delhi.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: BA (Hons) Economics, 1968, Delhi University, New Delhi. Currently employed as proof reader at Southwood Press, Marrickville.

FREELANCE EXPERIENCE: McGraw-Hill.

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JULIET RICHTERS, 12 Avon Tower, 2a Forsyth Street, Glebe Point 2037.

Tel: 660 8762.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: 1977-8 Consumers' Association, London. Editorial Verifier on Which?, checking factual and conceptual accuracy of reports; 1979 Reader's Digest, Sydney, Editor - prelim. work on How to Improve Your Home and Australian adaptation of the Complete Guide to Needlecraft.

SPECIALITIES: Translating technical matter into layman's English, food and wine, music, languages.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: Freelance academic proof-reading (1968-71); sub-editing Journal of International Wine & Food Society (1976-7); freelance editing, Angus & Robertson (1979-80).

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HELEN WORTHAM, 11/10 Punch Street, Mosman 2088.

Tel: 969 1367.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Assistant Editor Genetics Journal, Information Retrieval Ltd (1975-77); Book Production Editor, Academic Press (1977-79).

DUTIES: All aspects of book editing; production.

SPECIALITIES: Scientific and educational books.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: B.Sc (Hons) Microbiology and Genetics.

FREELANCE EXPERIENCE: University of New South Wales Press.

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SANDRA BUCHANAN, 11 Olive Street, Paddington 2021.

Tel: 318160 (home); 660 5384 (studio).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Art Editor/Designer at Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Senior Designer Paddington Press; Senior Graphic Designer Audio Visual Centre, University of London.

DUTIES: Determining overall design approach, designing grid, typography and display typography; laying out; commissioning artwork, maps and diagrams; jacket design from concept through to production artwork; design and preparation of highly finished dummies.

SPECIALITIES: Large format, fully integrated illustrated books for co-edition market on historical and popular subjects, working on visual aids - 2-D and 3-D graphics; complex animated diagrams and pictorial graphics.

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: 4 year diploma course in Graphic Design, Harrow School of Art.

Examples of work available.

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NEXT MEETING ... NEXT MEETING ... NEXT MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will take place at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli, on Wednesday 16 April from 6.30 p.m.

Don't think that just because it's the AGM you needn't bother to come. This is more than just a matter of reading financial reports, etc. We want to hear your opinions about:

- . The constitution (ours, not Australia's)
- . The freelance register - do you think it's doing its job? (We've had several interesting suggestions on this one)
- . New committee member to handle said interesting suggestions (see immediately above)
- . Contact and communication with Melbourne and other people in other places

Please ring Narelle Konte (438.1451) by Monday 14 April and let us know whether you're coming. (We'll be dispensing wine and food as usual.)
