



BOOK  
PUBLISHERS  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NEW ZEALAND

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# The Publisher

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## THE PRESIDENT'S FILE

The BPANZ office is operating successfully from the state-of-the-art Pearson Education building in Rosedale, Auckland. The folks at Pearson and Penguin gave BPANZ a warm welcome, and we are very comfortable in our new home. For efficient and accurate correspondence, we request that all members change our contact details on their databases:

The Book Publishers Association of New Zealand (BPANZ)  
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New Zealand publishers consistently find success at international book fairs: making sales, buying rights and establishing contacts. BPANZ has the important responsibility of providing our members with effective facilitation and representation at the many international book trade events. We are very keen to document the success stories that have originated from local publishers' presence at international trade fairs (please e-mail Anne de Lautour with your feedback). While we know formal contracts, such as rights agreements, can take time to confirm, consistent and current information about book fair trade will help us to secure future support and funding from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), who want to quantify the success of book fair participation.

We are happy to report that registration for this year's book fairs has been strong. BPANZ secured NZTE funding for the Hong Kong Book Fair 2007, and as a result, eleven publishers participated. This was an excellent opportunity, especially for smaller publishers, to exhibit at an international trade fair for a small outlay. We will report on the fair in the next issue.

Planning for the Frankfurt Book Fair is progressing well: eighteen publishers have registered

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for our collective stand. We are particularly pleased to welcome eight first-time exhibitors. It is also gratifying to see that other publishers who have previously exhibited with us are building on the experience and success they found with the BPANZ stand and booking their own display areas at this year's fair. While the deadline for applications for Frankfurt has expired, limited spaces are still available at our stand, and Anne de Lautour will consider late submissions until 20 August 2007.

In order to help publishers find export success at international fairs and beyond, BPANZ, with the support of NZTE, is currently organising export workshops for Auckland (13 August) and Wellington (16 August). Hosted by Bob Ross, with Juliet Hawkeswood of WHK Gosling Chapman, the workshops will have a particular emphasis on preparing for the Frankfurt fair, but publishers will find the information gained during the sessions can be applied to any exporting initiative.

Those members who took part in the first industry salary survey have received the results of the survey; I am sure it makes for interesting reading! We were very pleased with the level of participation in this survey; 20 publishers contributed, which was the number we needed for self-funding and to achieve a balanced picture of salaries in the industry.

You should have already received information about the next Colmar Brunton industry survey. I urge you all to complete the questionnaire as soon as you can to help us meet our October deadline for the presentation of the survey results.

The BPANZ Council has scheduled an annual Strategy Day for mid-August. We plan to discuss the present state of the organisation, where we want it to head in the future, and what new initiatives we can bring to the industry. I look forward to presenting the outcome of this meeting to you.

For more information on any of the initiatives and programmes mentioned above, please contact Association Director, Anne de Lautour, [anne@bpanz.org.nz](mailto:anne@bpanz.org.nz)

Wishing you well for the spring quarter.

*Michael Moynahan, President BPANZ, [michael@randomhouse.co.nz](mailto:michael@randomhouse.co.nz)*

## BPANZ COUNCIL 2007

**P**resident: Michael Moynahan (Random House), Vice President: Tony Fisk (Harper Collins), Past President: Elizabeth Caffin (co-opted), Councillors: Chris Baty (Macmillan Publishers), Gillian Candler (Learning Media), Linda Cassells (Calico Publishing), Adrian Keane (Pearson Education), Martin Taylor (Addenda Publishing).

Michael Moynahan thanks outgoing councillor David Ling for his contribution, especially in the financial area, and Bob Ross (co-opted onto Council last year) for his knowledge and expertise in the area of export.

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# THE PERSONNEL FILE



## SAM ELWORTHY

Director, Auckland University Press

I arrived back in New Zealand a few weeks ago and still feel like I'm walking in a fog: the combination of new culture, new time zone and new job makes life exhausting and exhilarating. I have spent the past fifteen years in the United States – doing a PhD in American history and then working at Princeton University Press – and I've come back to the Director's job at Auckland University Press.

Publishing is, in part, an international craft and much feels familiar to me in Auckland. Authors like a good lunch. Edited volumes are more pain than they're worth. Late changes to prices and schedules leave everybody groaning. However, a couple of interesting differences struck me in the first few weeks ashore. They may well prove to be wrong, but they seem worth recording before I am fully assimilated and lose any angle that I once had.

First, moving from a larger to a smaller company (100 staff at Princeton to five at Auckland University Press) and from a larger country to a smaller country has great benefits. At Princeton, we took twelve months to produce most books – longer for art books and field guides. If you analysed a production schedule, you worked out pretty quickly that most of those twelve months were taken up with manuscripts moving through 37 or 74 stages, each stage allowing people a few days to pull the project to the top of their pile, do their five-minute task (assign an ISBN, check copyright page) and pass it on. It was like one of Henry Ford's factories where the employees had stolen the conveyor belt. That same sclerosis hit other parts of the publishing process too: large companies in large countries can be slow, bureaucratic and inflexible. At Auckland University Press, our great little team can whip out an art book in three or four months if necessary. Throughout the publishing process, they show a drive, flexibility and commitment to our books that is invigorating for me and, I think, a great sign of the vitality in New Zealand publishing.

Second, while the Internet has transformed publishing in the United States, New Zealanders have instead developed a web of personal networks for publishing books. Over the last ten years in the United States, the Internet has become central to sales, marketing and acquisitions. In sales, Amazon became Princeton's biggest customer a few years ago, and every year it has continued to take another few percentage points of the business. If you believe writers like Chris Anderson of *Long Tail* fame, sites like Amazon have actually expanded the book market. On the marketing side, more and more people every year find out about Princeton books

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on the Internet – getting e-mails about books in their subject area, looking up a concept and finding the best information from a Princeton book in Google Print, reading reviews of Princeton books on their favourite blog. Even my work as an editor was increasingly on the Internet – almost any scholar that you wanted to hit up for a book had their whole life on the web: latest publications, course notes, photographs of colleagues, dogs and lovers.

In New Zealand, that Internet transformation seems a fair way off. Internet bookselling, the blogosphere, Google Print, Internet marketing and even university websites here look underdeveloped to me. I think this represents a publishing opportunity in this country, but it also strikes me that New Zealanders have developed their own very personal alternative. In New Zealand, it's no secret that everybody you meet turns out to be the neighbour of your first cousin twice removed. But, in the book trade, those small world effects are used to great advantage. The proliferation of literary festivals enables readers to know writers, writers to know publishers, and publishers to know the media on an intimate basis. The New Zealand media's hunger for local stories makes our authors more familiar to the public than authors in the United States. In acquisitions, you don't need the Internet to find out about a potential author: just ask the person you're having lunch with, and they'll usually turn out to be the prospect's husband, colleague or neighbour.

I'm enjoying the dynamism and personal networks that flourish in a smaller company and a smaller country a whole lot.

*Sam Elworthy, s.elworthy@auckland.ac.nz*

## AWARDS & HONOURS

### SPECTRUM PRINT BOOK DESIGN AWARDS

#### Best Book, Best Cover and Best Illustrated



*Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand* by Audrey Eagle  
(Te Papa Press)

Designers: covers by Neil Pardington (Base Two),  
interior by Robyn Sivewright (Afineline)

#### Best Non-Illustrated Book



*Brief Lives* by Chris Price (Auckland University Press)

Designers: cover by Sarah Maxey, interior by Katrina Duncan

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## Best Educational Book



*Te Kete Kupu* (Huia Publishers)

Designer: Rose Miller

## Best Children's Book



*Legends of Ngatoro-i-rangi* by Karen Taiaroa-Smithies and Mervyn Taiaroa  
(Reed Publishing)

Designer: Cheryl Rowe

# BPANZ REVIEW AWARDS 2007

## BPANZ REVIEWER OF THE YEAR AWARD

From the judges' report: We valued the statement of informed opinion, a reasoned, robust and well-argued response, good writing, clear communication of ideas and point-of-view, and then appropriate comparisons across books by the same author or in the same genre, snippets of interesting, relevant and/or useless (but fascinating) bits of information, imaginative use of language, memorable phrases and intriguing asides. We focused on rewarding good communication ... along with the reviewer's ability to put the work discussed in context.

## BPANZ REVIEWER OF THE YEAR

David Eggleton for reviews published in the *New Zealand Listener*

From the judges' report: David Eggleton's reviews stand out in part due to his own virtuosity with the written word – his reviews are consistently a serious exploration of the book in question. He obviously commits a great deal of thought, time and energy to his reviews. David's reviews are ... knowledgeable, non-patronising, enlightening and inventive ... and he is a master of scorpion-tailed last lines.

Other finalists: Charlotte Grimshaw and Nicholas Reid, both for reviews published in the *New Zealand Listener*.

## BPANZ BEST REVIEW PAGE OR PROGRAMME AWARD

From the judges' report: We looked for a real sense of commitment from editors to book reviews, in terms of designated space, design and, of course, gathering together a stable of reviewers who were knowledgeable, eloquent, engaging, informative and straight talking – offering opinion rather than just summarising the plot. The key was consistency – in terms of the quality of the reviewers (individually and collectively) and the quality of editing ... Limited space devoted to book sections on paper and in terms of airtime was a big concern.

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All too often it was obvious that a reviewer's wings were clipped by tight word limits and encroaching advertising. Every review has to tell a story and most of the time they are not short stories. Quality analysis of a book, especially a substantial one, demands space, along with word-craft and structure ... In terms of the right 'mix', we looked at a variety of genres, the ratio of New Zealand and overseas books reviewed and, where applicable, author interviews. The combination of long analytical reviews and short punchy reviews were also taken into consideration.

## BPANZ BEST REVIEW PAGE

*The New Zealand Listener*

From the judges' report: This publication continues to champion authors, particularly New Zealand writers, by offering generous column inches to book reviews and author interviews, and by sourcing robust, opinionated reviewers, many of them writers themselves. The reviews are beautifully written, well structured, insightful and eminently readable. Writers prepared to review their peers are brave indeed in this small country and even smaller literary community. Punches are seldom pulled in these reviews, but the criticism is generally constructive. The calibre of *New Zealand Listener's* reviewers is also reflected in the fact that all three finalists in the Best Book Reviewer of the Year Award this year are amongst its stable of writers.

Other finalists: *Metro* and *Sunday Star-Times*.

## THE STATISTICS

Publishers following the recent discussions of review coverage of NZ books may be interested in the following extract from the judges' comments.

We noted the judges' comments in 2006 that 'Many of the reviews submitted were of New Zealand books, but most were of books published in Britain or the United States.' In analysing the individual reviews submitted this year, it was interesting, and a little surprising, to see that the reviews were split virtually 50/50 between local and international books. A basic breakdown of genre revealed the following: 31% international vs. 18% NZ fiction reviews (49% fiction reviews overall); 20% international vs. 25% NZ non-fiction (or 45% non-fiction overall), and 6% poetry (the bulk of which were local publications).

Interestingly, the proportion of fiction titles vs. non-fiction titles varies most when grouped by international vs. local publications: 61% fiction against 39% non-fiction for international titles; and 36% fiction vs. 50% non-fiction for New Zealand titles (the shortfall consisting of poetry titles). This might be an indication that reviewers are reluctant to critique local fiction in the small town we call New Zealand; or merely a reflection of the ratio of fiction to non-fiction books published. Figures gathered by Colmar Brunton on behalf of BPANZ for a survey published in December 2006 would seem to support this. Interestingly, there was an increase in the number of new fiction titles published in 2006: 67 new fiction titles (compared to 39 in 2005), and a slight decrease in non-fiction, for example, 58 history and 38 biographical

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titles (compared to 66 and 47 in 2005).

So, why the obsession with figures? For one, we were curious to test the sometimes-stated view that New Zealand books are not well represented in local review coverage. The disproportion of New Zealand books reviewed against international titles is appropriate when you consider the sheer number of books published worldwide. Local literary criticism and debate are essential indicators of a healthy culture. The 50/50 split seems to us to be a fair balance when you consider that New Zealand readers' tastes range far and wide. Most readers will try out books of infinite variety, as long as they're good. We can't imagine how editors of book pages or producers of broadcast reviews would cope with an added requirement that they follow a complicated ratio of books from particular parts of the world in addition to juggling the commercial pressures of space within their particular medium. Of course, it is important to see local books reviewed, but is it necessarily a bad thing that review coverage reflects the wide-ranging interests of the audience?

The full judges' report is available on [www.bpanz.org.nz](http://www.bpanz.org.nz)

*Lynn Freeman & Jill Rawnsley, judges 2007*

## MONTANA NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS 2007

### Montana Medal for Fiction or Poetry, Fiction winner and Readers Choice award

*Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones (Penguin Books)

#### Fiction runners-up

*The Fainter* by Damien Wilkins (Victoria University Press)

*The Cowboy Dog* by Nigel Cox (Victoria University Press)

#### Poetry

*The Goose Bath* by Janet Frame (Vintage)

### Montana Medal for Non-Fiction, and Illustrative winner

*Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand* by Audrey Eagle (Te Papa Press)

#### Biography

*Douglas Lilburn: His Life and Music* by Philip Norman (Canterbury University Press)

#### Environment

*Ghosts of Gondwana: The History of Life in New Zealand* by George Gibbs  
(Craig Potton Publishing)

#### History

*Vaka Moana: Voyages of the Ancestors* edited by K R Howe (David Bateman Ltd)

#### Lifestyle & Contemporary Culture

*Stitch: Contemporary New Zealand Textile Artists* by Ann Packer (Random House)

#### Reference and Anthology

*Furniture of the New Zealand Colonial Era: An Illustrated History 1830–1900*  
by William Cottrell (Reed Publishing)

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## NZ SOCIETY OF AUTHORS BEST FIRST BOOK AWARDS 2007

### NZSA Hubert Church Best First Book Award for Fiction

*The Sound of Butterflies* by Rachael King (Black Swan)

### NZSA Jessie Mackay Best First Book Award for Poetry

*Secret Heart* by Airini Beautrais (Victoria University Press)

### NZSA E. H. McCormick Best First Book Award for Non-fiction

*Furniture of the New Zealand Colonial Era: An Illustrated History 1830–1900*  
by William Cottrell (Reed Publishing)

## THORPE-BOWKER INDUSTRY AWARDS 2007

**Independent Bookshop of the Year:** Books A Plenty, Tauranga

**Bookshop of the Year:** Dymocks Booksellers Lambton Quay, Wellington  
and Borders Queen St, Auckland

**Regional Bookshop of the Year:** University Bookshop (Otago) Ltd, Dunedin

**Agent/Distributor Representing Overseas Publishers:** Random House New Zealand

**Promotional and Sales Support:** Random House New Zealand

**New Zealand Publishing:** Random House New Zealand

**Sales Rep of the Year:** Marthie Markstein (Random House New Zealand)

## NIELSEN BOOKDATA NZ BOOKSELLERS' CHOICE AWARD

*Tramping in New Zealand* by Shaun Barnett (Craig Potton Publishing)

## NOTICES

### THEN THERE WERE EIGHT ... NZ JOINS BOOKSCAN

Following extensive consultation with the New Zealand book trade, Nielsen Book Group is pleased to confirm that it has now secured sufficient support to launch a retail book sales tracking service in New Zealand. As the eighth country to join the BookScan family, New Zealand follows in the footsteps of the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Ireland, South Africa, Spain and Italy.

The Operations Director of Nielsen Book Group, Richard Knight, says, 'I am pleased that we are at last in a position to move forward with this exciting project. I was first approached by the New Zealand book trade to launch BookScan in 2002. Last August it became clear that one major retailer felt that they could not join the project, and at that time, I wrote to the trade via an open letter in *Booksellers News* to say that we were putting the project on ice whilst we

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took further soundings about the future viability of the proposed service. We received a large response following this letter and I am now delighted that we have sufficient support from all sectors of the trade to move ahead to the launch phase. I am, of course, disappointed that one major retailer will not be participating at this initial stage, but we will always be ready to work with them should circumstances change in the future.'

Martine Poiree of Nielsen BookData will coordinate BookScan New Zealand, with support provided by Shaun Symonds from the Australian BookScan office in Sydney. The initial stages of data testing have already begun, and it is expected that the data service will start delivering information to participating retailers and publishers in time for them to monitor the Christmas season sales this year.

Robyn Bargh, Chair of Booksellers New Zealand, said: 'This is great news for both booksellers and publishers. Facts and figures are important to any industry wanting to grow and compete successfully in the world market and the New Zealand book industry must be one of the few in the world that has been operating with so little information. We can now move into the future with more certainty and confidence.'

*Martine Poiree, 06 877 9531, 021 477 534, martine.poiree@nielsenbookdata.co.nz*

*Ka Meechan, 06 9360 3294, ka.meechan@nielsenbookdata.co.nz*

## BRAINS WIN OUT FOR WELDON OWEN EDUCATION



**B**PANZ congratulates new member Weldon Owen Education Inc. on their international success at the 2007 American Association of Educational Publishers Awards.

The New Zealand-based publishing company won two AEP Distinguished Achievement Awards for their *Brain Bank* programme (published by Scholastic US). The Distinguished Achievement Awards recognise the best educational materials – such as books, periodicals, educational toys and software – within subject categories and by audience. *Brain Bank* won two awards in the curriculum category: Best Science and Best Social Studies Reference Instruction Books, Grades K–5 (Years 5–12). *Brain Bank* is a supplementary, independent reading series that encourages children to build knowledge and develop critical thinking skills across the core content areas of social studies and science.

Weldon Owen Education Inc. specialises in creating supplementary educational material, primarily for the United States and other international markets. Anne Simpson, International Sales and Marketing Manager, says the company is looking forward to forging closer ties with the New Zealand publishing community and learning more about the local industry.

*Weldon Owen Education, 39 Market Place, Viaduct Basin, Auckland, 09 358 0910*

*anne.simpson@weldonowen.co.nz*

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## A DECADE OF DAZZLING BOOK DESIGN

**B**PANZ presents A Decade of Dazzling Book Design, in association with New Zealand Book Month and Random House. To celebrate the tenth year of the Book Design awards, BPANZ will host a panel discussion featuring leading New Zealand designers and publishers. The event will also launch *Cover Up*, a history of New Zealand book cover art by Wellington designer Hamish Thompson.

Date: Wednesday 12 September 2007, 6–7.30 pm, \$5 waged, \$2 concession

Venue: Groundfloor Theatrette (20 Customhouse Quay, BP House, Wellington)

*For further details and bookings contact: [bookdesign07@gmail.com](mailto:bookdesign07@gmail.com)*

## NEW MEMBERS FILE



**A**t Book Design Ltd, our designers are driven by a passion to inject the ‘wow’ factor into every project that comes our way. We are midwives, helping publishers and authors give birth to their work. We are matchmakers, ensuring the relationship between writer and reader is appropriate and rewarding. We are missionaries, working with our clients to produce publications we are both proud of, and that readers will be drawn to pick up.

We work on a variety of publications, including novels, non-fiction, educational and technical books, magazines, directories and profiles. We aim to present an author’s words in a way that shows his or her work to greatest effect. All projects are managed in a one-to-one relationship; when you work with Book Design, you will deal directly with one of our designers. We listen to what you say and work from cover to cover to provide all the elements of a good read.

We love text. Typography is our obsession. An author’s function is to put thoughts, concepts and ideas into words. A book designer will take those words and shape them into physical form. In the first design submitted for consideration, we interpret the words and intention of the author to create an overall shape and feel. Once our client is happy with that, we move ahead to typeset, at which point we become zealous pedants. Like anyone who lives in books, we are fanatical about them, and we know that the look of the words, the structure and the shape of a book all play a crucial part in the intimate act that binds an author to his or her readers.

Attention to detail, particularly through checking and proofing, are what sets our projects apart, ensuring happy clients and a smooth relationship between the text and the reader. As well as cover design, template design and book or general typesetting, our services include low and high resolution scanning, print liaison, translation, data entry, file reformatting, illustration and graphic retouching and full production services.

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Communication between designer and publisher is the first and last word in a successful project. This is easy through our 0800 number, email or ftp site. As a matter of routine, we provide files to printers all over the world.

By being a member of BPANZ, we hope to be able to understand our client's issues better and keep up-to-date with information in the publishing world.

*Book Design Ltd, 0800 266 533, [www.bookdesign.co.nz](http://www.bookdesign.co.nz)*



Clean Slate Press opened its doors for business in August 2005. As we celebrate our second birthday, we are delighted with the inroads we have made into the international education market. We are publishers of innovative, high-quality children's books – grade-levelled fiction and non-fiction linked to international curricula, standards and learning outcomes for Grades K–9 (Years 1–10). Our books sell in series, each comprising eight to 80 titles. We produce all of our work in-house, from initial concept through writing, editing and designing, to delivery to our international publishers.

Clean Slate Press has three directors: Sandy Roydhouse, Business Director; Frances Bacon, Publishing and Sales Director; and Melissa Murchison, Creative Director. Collectively, we have more than 25 years' experience in all aspects of publishing. We started the company with the philosophy that it is not only important to teach students how to read, it is equally important to teach them how to think. Our books both promote the development of critical thinking skills and foster a love of reading and learning.

We are currently working closely with a number of North American and Australian customers. In the near future, we hope to add to our international customer base as well as developing a partnership with a New Zealand publisher or distributor.

We are delighted to join BPANZ. We have already benefited from our membership by participating in this year's Hong Kong Book Fair. BPANZ's close ties with NZTE are extremely useful, and we appreciate the opportunities that will arise for us to participate in international book fairs other than those that we already regularly attend.

At Clean Slate Press, we delight in the challenge of creating distinctive and dynamic products. We are also enjoying the process of building our company and establishing new relationships with other publishers. New Zealand publishers have a wealth of experience in publishing for the international market, and we are keen to learn from the experience of others.

*Clean Slate Press Ltd, 93 Dominion Road, Mt Eden, Auckland, 09 630 0382*

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# A MUTUALLY ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION

One has the sense that in writing about an issue or subject of general interest – in this case, the experience of a small publishing company employing an intern for six months – there should be balance. You know, a sort of pros and cons list, a ‘well yes, it was valuable *but* you have to give a lot of time, so there’s a real cost too’ statement. There is no way around the fact that this is going to be an ‘unbalanced’ article because it has been, from my side of the fence at least, all good.

I applied for an intern because I needed help – we are all that selfish, aren’t we? And the deal is, in my view, an attractive one. BPAZ funds half the salaries of several graduates of the Whitireia Diploma in Publishing for six-month positions, and the publishers offer on-the-job experience – real book work that will provide an entrée to publishing. That a mutually attractive employment opportunity may also arise from this, should circumstances permit, is not required, nor expected – although perhaps this is hoped for.

After thinking about all the things that my business might benefit from in having an intern – things that were burdening me in a reborn business; the flights from frenzied activity to panic and occasional paralysis – I did, though, start thinking about it from the other side. What could my business offer a no-doubt smart student, who (having spent another year studying and suffering the double pain of sacrificing salary and paying yet more fees, or quelling the need for income after completing a degree) would be yearning for some confirmation that this was, indeed, an industry that would satisfy and reward them?

My own time in publishing has offered very broad experiences, challenges and many rewards, so I decided that the best way to work with an intern would be to offer as much variety in the six months as possible. This can be done in a small publishing company in ways that it may not be possible in larger organisations, where functions are restricted by job descriptions and the difficulties of overlapping roles and identities. Here, with a very small team, you may, and do, in a day, work on a cover brief, promotion, editing and, yes, ‘dispatch’, an elegant and elevating term I recently heard another publisher use to describe wrapping and posting books. Actually, we love packing books and compete for the excitement of doing it. It means you are selling them, and only small publishers have the joy of getting that close to their sales!

The six months have simply flown by and are now almost at an end. I can only write this short story from my viewpoint, but for this business, there has been no downside. Our intern, who worked as my publishing assistant, offered excellent skills in editing and marketing, enthusiasm for the business, technical know-how and sometimes just a good sympathetic ear for the gripes I simply had to air at times. How did we ever do without this intelligent, focused and enthusiastic assistance? Certainly not as well as we do now. I hope my intern learned as much as she hoped to from the work she did – I learned too. I enthusiastically recommend

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that other small publishers with heavy workloads embrace this programme. It may give you the breather you need to think about your business instead of relentlessly doing it. For the graduate, the way small publishing houses work may offer the broadest experience interns can find in their new careers and help them to decide on the area they would most like to work in – in case they ever have the luxury of choosing!

It is clear that publishing in Aotearoa New Zealand will be in good hands and good heart in the years to come if the best of the graduates now forging their futures in it can begin to have a hand in shaping it too.

*Sharmian Firth, Dunmore Publishing Ltd, books@dunmore.co.nz*

## THE MORE THE MERRIER

When asked why so many New Zealand plays are being published this year, I'm compelled to remind people that the usual question is quite the opposite – why are so few plays published in New Zealand?

First, the good news: by recent comparison there is a bumper crop of play publishing this year. Dedicated play publisher, the Play Press, publish one or two plays annually, with Dean Parker's *Baghdad, Baby!* and Albert Belz's *Awhi Tapu* both out in the last twelve months. Huia Publishers will publish classic works *Sons* by Victor Rodger and *When Sun and Moon Collide* by Briar Grace-Smith this year, while Tawata Productions have recently published talented emerging playwright Miria George's *And What Remains*. Thomson New House are planning an abridged schools' version of Oscar Kightley and Dave Armstrong's *Niu Sila*, and Steele Roberts will publish *Te Wai Pounamu*, a trilogy of South Island history plays by Brian Potiki.

In November, Playmarket, New Zealand's playwrights' agency and playwright development organisation, will launch the New Zealand Play Series with the publication of two volumes: Gary Henderson's *Skin Tight, An Unseasonable Fall of Snow* and *Mo and Jess Kill Susie*, and Toa Fraser's *No.2* and *Bare*. It's a series we've designed with the goal of gradually building a library of major New Zealand plays currently not in print.

So, what's the problem? It all sounds healthy enough. Well, in truth the picture is more complex. Only two or three of these works premiered recently – the rest are major works that have demanded publication for some time. This year's bumper crop represents, in part, the fact that we've got a lot of catching up to do. Play publishing of late has been a patchy activity.

When Victoria University Press's New Zealand Playscripts Series slowed its output in the 1990s, no other major publisher filled the gap. At 43 plays strong, the VUP series is the foundation of play publishing in New Zealand. The series began in the 1970s when the publisher reissued Bruce Mason's *The Pohutukawa Tree, End of the Golden Weather* and *Awatea*, previously published by Price Milburn. John Thomson of the English Department was brought in as series editor, and the first VUP title was Roger Hall's *Glide Time* in 1977. The publisher ensured a sustained play-publishing programme until 1994, putting two or more

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plays into print annually. Six more titles have appeared in the subsequent twelve years.

In the early 1980s, Playmarket also got into publishing with – in manuscript form – the Playmarket New Zealand Theatrescripts series under the editorship of David Carnegie. The Theatrescripts series came at a time when Playmarket was based at Victoria University. These publications were a modest step up from what Playmarket does as a matter of course to this day – selling manuscript copies of New Zealand plays. Playmarket continued to publish occasionally, notably *He Reo Hou*, three Maori plays under the editorship of Simon Garrett, and Roger Hall's *Hot Tips for Hot Scripts*. In this time, play publishing continued elsewhere, but in a more fragmented form. Notably, the Women's Play Press ensured the publication of many major new New Zealand plays by women, and Huia guaranteed the publication of major contemporary Maori work.

Having gained experience in publishing her own work with the Women's Play Press, playwright Jean Betts set up the Play Press and has now published twelve plays (six in partnership with VUP or the Women's Play Press). Other publishers have come and gone. Reed tested the water, eyeing the education market with two books a few years back, and there is the occasional piece of self-publishing. Some of these works, but certainly not all, might once have been published by VUP. We gained a diversity of voices in the 1990s and into this new century, but we have lost much in the centre ground.

VUP Publisher Fergus Barrowman holds a number of factors responsible for VUP's reduction in play publishing, but says that the main reason was the collapse of both general and educational sales in the late 1980s. In the early 1990s, series editor John Thomson retired, and as VUP's publishing of fiction and poetry expanded with growing opportunities in these areas, play publishing contracted.

Barrowman also cites issues with Creative New Zealand (CNZ) funding as a contributing factor. Barrowman explains: 'After a point we found our playscript applications were much less likely to be successful than our fiction and poetry applications. And when CNZ introduced a publishers' block grant scheme, with a maximum entitlement, we were refused permission to put the New Zealand Playscripts series forward as a separate programme.'

Jean Betts, in *Playmarket News*, has also suggested that issues with CNZ funding might explain why so few plays are published. She recalls the Play Press being asked to choose between the theatre and literature fund, depending on whether the work was for study or rehearsals. 'I explained,' she writes, 'I expected them to be used for both.' Play publishing, it seems, has been falling through the cracks, and it is hoped CNZ's current reassessment of project funding will address this problem.

In any robust arts culture, major works for the stage must be published – and they are published in other markets. In Australia, Currency Press is devoted to ensuring play publication, while script organisations, such as the Australian Script Centre and Queensland's Playlab, also publish. In Germany, where I travelled last year, most theatre agents are also publishing houses – both bodies are recognised as integral to playwright representation and promotion.

Given our erratic publishing history, it is perhaps worth a reminder that plays can be

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major works of literature. They deserve to be read, studied and consistently produced. Their publication is an important part of ensuring such playscripts have a healthy literary and theatrical life. As Betts notes, ‘There’s a very low demand for photocopies of a play manuscript. Once published, as well as magically assuming new dignity, status and permanence, a play becomes far more accessible ... publication can also simply ensure that playscripts aren’t lost forever – the last known copy of *Frangipani Perfume* was found down the back of the choreographer’s sofa.’

For professional writers of all kinds, publishing matters a great deal. That ‘dignity, status and permanence’ Betts writes of is not to be taken lightly. Working as a playwrights’ agent, I know how much not being published concerns (nay, hurts) many outstanding playwrights. Publication provides the playwright with a physical production that asserts who they are and what they do long after the audience that packed the theatre has left.

I can also confirm that a play’s publication leads to further production and study – these are the works that go on the school curriculum, are taught in universities and achieve ongoing and widespread promotion because they’re physically out there. They’re on bookshelves – their spines asking us to pick them up and flick through them. Every week, I find it a great pleasure to sign off a trickle of money going out to playwrights from New Zealand’s education and amateur markets – and it’s often those that have been published that have the longer lives.

However, the most difficult aspect of sustaining a healthy environment for play publishing is to make the practice financially viable. History shows play publishing relies on a funding kick-start and the contribution of publishers, like VUP and the Play Press, in it for the long haul. I believe the major challenge at present is to reinstate a consistent play publishing programme, a series that can take the central ground that the VUP series used to hold. This requires a publisher like Playmarket dedicated to ensuring the publication of plays that attain major status – others can publish as it suits their ethos (reactions such as, ‘huh, you call that major!’ are to be encouraged!).

The growth of independent play publishing in the last fifteen or so years has been most welcome. Yet a significant number of major New Zealand plays (many arguably worthy of that dubious accolade ‘classic’) remain unpublished. The New Zealand Play Series works by Toa Fraser and Gary Henderson that Playmarket will publish this year are merely the tip of this iceberg.

I hope that others will continue to publish plays. If they do, it will be a sign of a healthy and diverse publishing and theatre culture. The more the merrier.

*Mark Amery, [director@playmarket.org.nz](mailto:director@playmarket.org.nz)*

*All published New Zealand plays are available through Playmarket’s ‘one-stop play bookshop’ in Wellington (Level 2, 16 Cambridge Terrace, around the corner from Courtenay Place) and online, [www.playmarket.org.nz/bookshop](http://www.playmarket.org.nz/bookshop)*

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# CAREER SNAPSHOT

REBECCA LAL

It seems somewhat misleading to be writing about my career in publishing, as I'm not sure I have a proper job in the industry that qualifies me to be doing this. I suppose my career in book publishing began in the bookstore at the Tate Modern in London. I was selling books but soon moved to a fairly pedestrian administration job, where I had the opportunity to watch the rather ferocious Irish book buyer in action. I decided I was more interested in working on the other side of the trade. I managed to secure a stint at Cassell & Co., working for a sales manager in the rights and co-editions department, as well as doing some freelance sub-editing for a very erratic project manager who conducted most of our meetings over a beer in the local pub. Soon, however, my visa ran out and I returned to New Zealand.

I was still keen to work in publishing – it felt like a good fit. After several phone calls to the various publishing houses (including one to my boss-to-be Geoff Walker) it seemed I'd have to do the Whitireia publishing course. After completing the Diploma, I was happy to work in any part of the publishing industry. I landed a position as editor at Penguin Books, where I'd be working on fiction and non-fiction titles. As a voracious fiction reader, I couldn't have asked for a better job; the roll-call of authors read like a dream.

Friends would say to me, 'Wow, you'll get to read all day and get paid for it. How cool is that?' It did sound pretty cool. I imagined I'd spend my days discussing character and themes in novels, art-directing beautiful covers and writing witty, clever blurbs. Reading all day maybe, but it's not as if you're lying in bed on a Sunday morning with the book of your choice. You try reading in an open-plan office with office chit-chat swirling about your ears.

The commercial realities of working in a trade publishing house soon hit home in the form of deadlines, deadlines, deadlines. Editing, proofreading, briefing cover designers and typesetters, getting authors to trust you, getting slides scanned, managing budgets, writing blurbs, clearing permissions, finding pictures: the tasks at times seemed endless and it felt like a baptism of fire. But it wasn't all bad. Here I was, working with some of the top authors in New Zealand, getting to contribute to their writing and bringing it to the public. I remember being always astounded when a top author would ask me if I thought one version of a sentence sounded better than another.

During my time at Penguin, I was able to commission a few books. Discovering and nurturing new writers was something that appealed immensely to me. Working with authors from my peer group was also exciting; it felt as if we were moving forward together.

When a new book arrived from the printer, it was as thrilling as Christmas for a two-year-old. Fortunately, I never lost my delight and amazement at the ability of books to transport me to another world, or to show me how this world works and how I find my place in it. I guess it's a simple conviction that books matter.

After spending four and a half years at Penguin, I now find myself on the 'dark side'. Though

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I stress I am still an editor, right now I'm writing marketing copy for an arts organisation. My list of superlatives is fast being exhausted and I swear I've never used so many adjectives in my life. However, it's a whole new challenge in a whole new industry. Although my jobs have spanned different ends of the publishing spectrum, it's the words and their ability to convince that are important.

Rebecca Lal, [becs.lal@gmail.com](mailto:becs.lal@gmail.com)

## NICKY PAGE

A publishing friend e-mailed recently to say she'd spotted a stranger on a bus in Wellington reading a book that we'd laboured over together ten years ago. Her e-mail encapsulates two of the things I particularly like about publishing: both the good friendships and the good books endure. Our five-year-old daughter would agree – she is mesmerised by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. I know that feeling – the impulse to keep reading, but at the same time not wanting the book to end.

After nearly fifteen years in publishing, I can honestly say that I've seldom been bored. I would loathe a clock-watching type of job; the problem in the publishing industry is that the clock usually advances a little too fast! Nonetheless, publishing is deliciously addictive. Diana Athill describes this best in *Stet*: 'I have just visited one: the first time in seven years that I have set foot in a publisher's office. It astonished me: how familiar it was, the way I knew what was happening behind its doors ... and how much I loved it.'

The New Zealand publishing industry is populated by interesting and lively colleagues and writers – which is fun. And more are signing up all the time; I really appreciated the energy of the students and graduates when I was tutoring the Whitireia Diploma in Publishing.

I am very happy in my new role at Longacre Press, where I have been working as production manager for six months. It is a novelty to be in my home town of Dunedin again – previously I was based in Wellington and Auckland, most recently with Daphne Brasell Associates. In contrast to my other publishing work, which has mainly been editorial, my Longacre role involves scheduling and export. This is another area of publishing that I find very stimulating. I'm a big fan of dates and calendars, and enjoy compiling schedules – they are a bit like jigsaws. It is very satisfying when the books are safely delivered to our distributor, Random House, in Auckland.

It's also a role that involves plenty of communication. There's never a dull moment organising quotes, liaising with printers and determinedly tracking our gorgeous books on trucks and vessels, as they dodge snow flurries and the occasional iceberg. As well, the reprints, royalty statements, permissions and – a particular favourite of mine – the invigorating challenge of selling overseas rights, keep me gainfully employed. What a talented, committed, cheerful team we have at Longacre Press – morning tea is a hoot!

I'm also continuing with my freelance work through my business, Page Editing. I have been thriving on a diet of non-fiction books, many of which come from academics with overseas

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publishers. The topics are so varied and surprising. I am introduced to material I would never otherwise have read and that I invariably find interesting. The authors' passion for their books is energising.

I'm very glad I work in publishing, not least because (cliché or not) I like to read! One of my greatest pleasures is settling down with a novel – especially beside water. (I know someone who actually reads while cooking: stirring a sauce, with a novel in her other hand. I haven't tried it, but it sounds difficult.)

Always in publishing, the tantalising possibility exists that a book will touch generation after generation of readers. Lewis Carroll imagines (yes, we finished it last night!) that Alice will 'gather about her other little children, and make their eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago ...'

*Nicky Page, page.editing@ihug.co.nz*

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