



MW SIG forum: Other paths to publication

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Reference Data:

Gledall, I., Cullen, B., Droukis, D., Gemmell, P., Goodmacher, G., LeBeau, C. & Luster, G. (2007). MW SIG forum: Other paths to publication. In K. Bradford-Watts (Ed.), *JALT2006 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

The forum was divided into four sessions: Experiences with Japanese Publishers; The Transition from Writer to Publisher; Paperless Publishing; and The Marketing of Independent Texts. For each session, one or more of the panelists gave a brief presentation, followed by a short time for questions directed at clarifying the author's account of his experiences, and at the end of the session more questions were taken and the discussion was thrown open. The paths to publication covered during this forum included working with major commercial publishers (both Japanese and foreign), working with small publishers, becoming a niche publisher, and publishing via the Internet and purely on line. In the final session, attention was drawn to issues involving the obtaining of an ISBN and the role of MWSIG in this process. Notice was given of the establishment of a co-operative to fill some of the gaps in this process and to offer supporting services to materials writers.

フォーラムは次の4部構成で行った。1. 日本の出版社との経験談 2. 著述から出版への変化 3. ペーパーレス出版 4. 自費出版市場 各セッションでは1名以上のパネリストが簡単に発表を行った後、著者の経験談をより詳しく理解してもらうために短い質問時間を設けた。セッションの終わりには参加者からの質問が相次ぎ、ディスカッションとなった。出版への道というこのフォーラムでは、主要な出版社(国内外の出版社)との業務、小さな出版社との業務、すき間市場への参入、インターネットを介してのオンライン出版などが取り上げられた。最後のセッションでは、ISBNの取得とMWSIGの役割について注目が集まった。一連の作業で今後対応すべき問題を扱う互恵的な組織の必要性についても話が及んだ。

There are several different paths to publishing a textbook. These paths include working with a major commercial publisher, working with a small publisher, becoming a niche publisher, and publishing on-line. Finding the most suitable path depends on one's goals and those of the students and their needs. It also depends on who the author is, what the author's ambitions are, and how much control the author wants to retain over the project.

At the JALT 2005 MWSIG forum, a panel of commercial editors gave their advice on how to submit and proceed with standard commercial language textbook projects. However, many MWSIG members have published their language textbooks without using the services of the larger

commercial book companies, or are seriously considering such options. Discussing, informing, and advising on alternative paths to publication have been among the major themes of MWSIG over the years.

This year, then, the JALT 2006 MWSIG forum considered some of the alternative paths and explored the motivation, methodology, and rationale of those who have decided to follow their own chosen path to seeing their ideas encapsulated in book or electronic form. The presenters gave concise accounts of their path to successfully publishing their own set of learning materials, including particular problem areas encountered as the projects progressed. The forum was divided into four sessions, for each of which one or more of the panelists gave a brief presentation, followed by a few questions from the audience to clarify the author's account of his experiences, and at the end of the session more questions were taken and the discussion was opened.

Session 1. Experiences with Japanese publishers *Publishing, as part of a team, with a Japanese publisher*

Daniel Droukis gave a concise account of his experiences publishing the textbook *English Learning with Athletes* as part of a team, using a local printing company. This textbook was needed for the Kyushu Kyoritsu University Sports Department, established in April 2006. It was determined that no books available on the market would meet the interests or the language level expected of the incoming students, so a textbook writing team was established and a 12-unit book was written about 12 famous athletes. The

aim was to have successful and appropriate classes for the target students. The athletes finally agreed upon were chosen mostly on the basis of being known to the students. At the insistence of the publisher, another two units were added (on Ichiro Suzuki and Shizuka Arakawa). The book was piloted in manuscript format with the first intake of students. One of the teaching-writing team subsequently discussed it with a Japanese publisher who liked the book, and it will soon be published commercially.

In addition to Droukis, the writing team included six Japanese teachers who worked on the grammar activities, dividing the units equally amongst them. As the lone native English speaker, Droukis wrote the main opening passages for each unit, the closing dialogues and the corresponding questions for both. However, the format was determined by group consensus to consist of an opening passage, followed by questions, grammar examples, grammar exercises, and finally a closing dialogue with true-false questions to end each unit.

One teacher served as an unofficial coordinator, making one person the resource for questions and direction on what everyone else was doing. Two of the Japanese teachers did all of the computer work to make the units presentable and easy to follow. Droukis submitted material to the others, who read it over and then made comments and suggestions. This was a very frustrating time, as each athlete had been carefully selected and researched in order to write the opening passage of each unit, so Droukis admitted to some feelings of friction as the process evolved and his original submissions gradually became less recognizable. Despite being furious at some of the alterations on occasion, their

advice was generally followed and the material was either rewritten or otherwise edited as requested. Mostly, this involved condensing the material and trying harder to make connections with the grammar focus of the unit. In practice, this was actually a lot easier to do than he had expected.

Working across departments (Economics and Engineering) was a source of trouble because they have slightly different class times, making it difficult to arrange meetings that all team members could attend. Relying on the Internet for information on athletes was not always possible. For example, researching the sumo wrestler Asashoryu (who is Mongolian) required information about Mongolian sumo, about which there is little information on the Internet. Additionally, it was very difficult to find anything written on Japanese athletes in English. There was little depth, with many web sites have almost exactly the same information, providing barely enough to write about each athlete.

Looking back after the first semester of using this textbook with students in the new department, Droukis felt that embarking on this textbook was the right decision. However, as regards working alone as part of a team dominated by Japanese writers, when Droukis was asked whether or not he would take part in such a team effort again, he replied that probably he would not.

Publishing with a Japanese publisher: problems and benefits

Greg Goodmacher started off by speaking about his difficulty using commercial materials for an environmental issues-based ESL class, prompting him to make many of his own

materials. When giving a presentation at a JALT meeting, he successfully persuaded an editor to attend and was able then to discuss his materials and an idea for a book. He also spoke with many other editors at the conference. A larger company, Macmillan, expressed serious interest, but they could not make a final decision until after the deadline of a Japanese publishing company, who had told him that they were definitely interested. Fearing that he would lose a chance to publish, he chose the Japanese publisher. That publisher wanted close-ended activities, and Goodmacher had to insist on the necessity for a small section of open-ended questions. He made many compromises, and at that time regretted doing so. However, this regret evaporated as many students and teachers around Japan began to compliment his work, and it was rewarding to find that many students changed their attitude towards the environment after taking his class and using his book.

The second book mentioned involved a different form of control issue. With this publisher, Goodmacher could have many creative open-ended activities, which are actually quite rare in textbooks. However, the editor wanted to completely change his writing style, and he was very rude about it. Goodmacher wanted to quit and the editor threatened to stop the project. However, his calm and patient co-author managed to keep the project on track so they continued writing the book.

The benefits of writing those books included (in addition to receiving good feedback and using materials that he believes in) having a more powerful resumé, obtaining a teaching position, and gaining a little money. A question was asked about the value of a textbook when job hunting,

and Goodmacher spoke about how universities have different point systems in assessing publications, so the value of a textbook varies, but he believes very strongly that having a textbook on one's resumé is very valuable. He also backed this up with the example of his co-writer, who successfully obtained a teaching position after sending the interview committee a copy of the book, upon which she was complimented during the interview.

Someone asked about royalties, and other panelists answered that authors normally receive around ten percent, but that could be ten percent of the retail or the wholesale price, depending on the publisher and how much they value you as a writer. Someone else asked how to send a proposal, to which Goodmacher gave a brief explanation. It was also pointed out that author guidelines for some of the publishers are available on the MWSIG Yahoo! group web site.

Session 2. The transition from writer to publisher

Going it alone: Publishing with Lulu

Paul Gemmell talked about his experiences using Lulu to create course books for his classes. Lulu (www.lulu.com) is an online self-publishing house in the United States: a web site where authors can upload materials and within weeks receive them as a professionally produced book. In total, Gemmell has produced four textbooks with Lulu, which he used for the first time in the 2006-2007 academic year. He explained his motivation for choosing this method, and discussed some of the pros and cons of using Lulu, as opposed to a traditional publisher.

Gemmell opened with some background information about his writing career in Canada. As a teacher in Japan, he had created a course book (an English travel text) which he had printed, collated and stapled together himself. He first heard about Lulu at the JALT 2005 Material Writer's SIG forum. On returning home from the conference, Gemmell went through the online tutorial, and the rest is history. He formatted the travel text (in Microsoft *Word*) to conform to the Lulu text size specifications, and polished it up a bit more, which included replacing the clip art pictures with photos gathered from his own collection, and those of friends, and of companies willing to give him rights for this text. He then converted it to PDF format, and uploaded his first text, *Here You Are*, to the Lulu server. Within two weeks he had an inspection copy in his hands.

Gemmell went on to create three more texts for his classes to use in the 2006-7 academic year. He explained his two main motives for doing this. One was the exceptionally simple way Lulu could make a bunch of handouts look

professional and organized in a bound text, including colour, at a very reasonable print-on-demand price. The other motive was the lack of appropriate texts already in the market. This was particularly the case for his text, *Psychology in Conversation*, for his second year psychology students. He approached the publishers directly seeking a text to introduce psychological concepts in a discussion-based approach for ESL and EFL students. None were found. He was encouraged by one publisher to send in a sample, but most publishers said the topic was too narrow for a large publisher to be able to take on. Gemmell felt, however, that it was a topic that would be very useful to a specific target market, and so he set to work on his first draft with a global market in mind, quite the opposite of his other texts. He did extensive research and took a great deal of time preparing the content of this text, which resembled a graded reader of psychology (a bit of an oxymoron), aimed at supporting discussion topics for ESL/EFL students, or for native English psychology students who wanted a discussion based course.

An important feature of this method of publishing is that Lulu allows writers total flexibility. Gemmell pointed out that this is a double-edged sword, in that at the same time as allowing for complete control over the text from start to finish (Lulu only contributes the necessary binding unless you want to add on options) there are no safeguards other than those the author decides to put in place. The author alone is responsible for finding or hiring everyone from proof-readers to cover designers, to lawyers. Lulu provides supporting business links to all of the above, and more, including a free FAQ section and a chat room, but the degree of use of these services lies solely in the hands of the original author.

Gemmell then briefly explained the (very easy) steps involved in publishing with Lulu. After creating an account, the author uploads files in PDF format and then clicks the desired choices on a series of web pages concerning book size, binding type, colour options, covers, and pricing. For an experienced Lulu publisher, a book can be uploaded and ordered within 30 minutes. At the end, Lulu provides a final base price at which it can print and deliver the text. The author can specify if they want the text available to anyone browsing the Lulu site or if it is to remain hidden. If the author wishes to do all the ordering for personal use, such as classroom use, the price can be left as it is and nothing further will be charged by Lulu. If the author wishes to make the text available on the net through Lulu's own browsing service, or sites such as Amazon.com, the author can set the price they wish Lulu to charge outside customers, and Lulu takes a 25% commission.

Finally, Gemmell emphasized that Lulu is not necessarily for everyone. If an author searching for stardom has a book with broad appeal that a publisher will take on and support, that support would be invaluable, although, as other forum contributors have mentioned, a certain degree of decision-making power may be taken out of the author's hands. If an author wants to try going it on their own, or is only interested in putting their materials into an attractive package for their students, with or without setting their own mark-up, Lulu may be an ideal way to achieve this. At the "personal use" level, International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) are generally not even necessary unless the author's school requires them, and Lulu provides an ISBN acquisition link for those who want or need them.

Gemmell's next upload to Lulu will be the collection of short stories he started writing in university, and although he may be the only ever buyer of that text, he'll be content to see his dream of being a published creative writer go full circle.

From both sides now: views as a writer and as a publisher

Ten years ago, Brian Cullen became a textbook writer. This came about because the department where he worked had decided to write a book and Cullen volunteered to do everything rather than have to go through the endless committee meetings resulting if it were a group effort, especially since the IQ of a group is equal to the IQ of the lowest member, divided by the number of people in the group. Writing the book was fun—far better than long and boring meetings.

That first book was the start of a series of textbook writing projects, including books for culture, conversation, scientific English, computer skills, and children. Experience working with different editors and publishers has been interesting and useful. Working with a good editor and the support of a good publisher can make everyone give their best to make the best possible textbook. Three experiences helped shape Cullen's current beliefs.

Cullen's first book, *Humanity and Technology*, was with Intercom Press in Kyushu: a very professional and dedicated company. They were very open to a range of ideas and worked closely with Cullen over a number of years to get the book just right. They are small enough to be flexible

and to offer a personal touch. Yet while they do not have the resources of a huge international publisher, they are big enough to reach out to teachers all over Japan.

When Cullen worked on children's materials with Oxford University Press (OUP), he was impressed by their attention to detail, the resources to develop top-quality illustrations and superb editing. However, large companies like OUP lose out on flexibility: their large scale of operations makes it difficult for them to offer the constant updates that a smaller company can.

Experiences with Japanese publishers were a little less positive, with Cullen sometimes observing the inflexibility of a large company coupled with the limited marketing resources of a small company. In his experience, Japanese educational publishers offer little real editorial feedback, and are reluctant to make the changes necessary to improve a textbook, so they function more like a printer than a publisher. The focus seems to be on limited markets, rather than on carrying out the full marketing functions of a publisher. Other writers certainly have had more positive experiences, so Cullen recommends that writers carefully consider for themselves the pros and cons of each publisher.

In 2004, Cullen started up his own company, Perceptia Press. The direct impetus for starting the company was to publish a book that he felt he could sell better than anyone else in Japan: a content-based book based on Irish culture. Although this book will never have a huge market, Cullen was highly motivated to write it, and felt he could market it effectively. Since then, he and his partner have published many other books (see www.perceptiapress.com). Cullen promises to work closely with book authors for as long as necessary to

optimize the final product. Prospective authors are advised to assess the pros and cons of Perceptia Press as with any other company. All manuscripts are considered. Regardless of whom you decide to publish your masterpiece with, it's always fun to share ideas and give feedback. Education is important work and there are a lot of good textbooks to be written.

Using a 'big' publisher and your own company

When David Harrington and Charles LeBeau were writing their first book, *Speaking of Speech* (SOS), they defined themselves not as authors or publishers but *bookmakers*. This afforded the latitude to work with a large publisher, and later to become *Language Solutions*, a niche publisher.

SOS was eventually published by Macmillan, but its path to the printers was unconventional. Shortly after Macmillan undertook the project, the *SOS* editor quit. The authors saw this as an opportunity, rather than an obstacle. As bookmakers, they assumed that many editorial functions now fell to them, whereas defining themselves as authors they would perhaps have turned over their manuscript and waited patiently for a new editor. In the meantime, *SOS* might have been stalled and lost its momentum and its place in the production pipeline. As bookmakers, though, they picked up the project and ran with it. Among other things, they commissioned all the artwork, including that for the covers; drew up a dummy layout for each page; and argued successfully for an A4 sized book. This emphasizes the benefit of being *bookmakers* rather than *authors*.

LeBeau claimed, however, that the real hero of this story

is Macmillan Language House Japan, and that the success of *SOS* today stands as a tribute to Macmillan's entrepreneurial spirit and flexibility in risking two unknowns to carry the ball. *SOS* was Macmillan LHJ's first A4 sized book, with the first full-color cover (prior to *SOS*, Macmillan Language House covers had a white background and some sort of a color graphic). Plus, no-one knew then if there was a niche in the university textbook market for a speech text. There was certainly risk: *SOS* had an attitude and an edge. The title started as a joke: *SOS* stood for Same Old Stuff, to remind the authors what not to do. *Speaking of Speech* was not written simply to fill a hole in the market. It was based on LeBeau's experience running hundreds of 2-day seminars at IBM Japan's research and development lab in Yamato, and on Harrington's years of experience teaching presentation classes at university. The look and feel of *SOS* also reflected their sense of humor, their way of looking at the world. It reflected them.

The success of *SOS* encouraged LeBeau and Harrington to establish *Language Solutions*, a niche publisher built as a team rather than a business: the publisher that assembles the best team wins the market share. In addition to a sound business team of accountants and distributors, on the design, production and creative side of things they use the same artist that helped create the world of *Speaking of Speech*. This adds a sense of continuity and identity. They use a great recording studio for CD production in Hollywood, with a tremendously deep pool of voice talent, and David Harrington has already been involved in the start-up of six companies in the book business. Having such a great team has put them in a position to be successful. However,

LeBeau emphasized that they are not a small publisher trying to become bigger, they are a niche publisher being successful in their niche. Their goal is simply to become large enough to do what they love, and that is to create more books.

Language Solutions' first book was *Discover Debate*, a follow-up to *SOS*. Again, the key was to write what they know and knowing who they are. LeBeau and Harrington did not have much experience in debate. LeBeau spent a year reading up on the subject, but in the end saw that it was just knowledge, not experience. At JALT in 1997 they met Michael Lubetsky, who at that time had a newspaper column on debate. He was also the International Christian University debate coach, had been the top speaker at the North American Debate Championships in 1993, and had been on the Princeton University debate team. He was immediately recognized as the missing member of the team, and two years later *Discover Debate* came out, followed by *Getting Ready for Speech*, *Listen Kids*, and *Discussion Process and Principles*.

In closing, LeBeau emphasized the need for the courage to write in your own, authentic style.

Session 3. Paperless publishing

Professional publishing on the Internet.

Gordon Luster taught company classes in Japan for many years, and one of the characteristics of almost all company classes is that teachers have little power over their students. They do not give the students grades, so they cannot flunk them if they do not attend class or do not do their homework. It is more a vendor-client relationship than a teacher-student one. When teaching such classes, the teacher must make sure that the students enjoy the course and feel that they are making some progress, or they may not invite the teacher back next time.

Because there is no way to make company students do anything in English outside of class, they can get rusty between one class and the next, and progress is hard to achieve. Fortunately, Luster found a way to make his students *want* to practice English on their own. Most of them could readily be convinced to use graded readers with cassettes or CDs to get some easy, stress-free English input on the train, after lunch, or in free moments at home. They could enjoy this *homeplay* (instead of *homework*) while using only bits of time that they would have wasted otherwise. They needed that input badly, because students in Japan cannot depend on their local environment or media to deliver much English input that they can easily understand and learn from.

This system worked because Luster's students were willing to pay extra for a small circulating library of books and listening media, and because Luster was willing to carry the ever-expanding library around with him all day as he traveled from class to class. However, that heavy

bag of books started him to thinking about how reading and listening materials might be made cheaper and more convenient, and that is where the idea for his business came from.

In 2003, he convinced two friends to help him start a service that would provide graded reading and listening content on the Internet, including content for mobile devices. The objective was to produce a cheap source of multi-level text and sound in a wide variety of genres that EFL students anywhere in the world could easily access in their free moments. Although there is still work to be done on the mobile versions, the project's computer website (at learnintl.com) has been available since 2004. The articles are short, just a few hundred words each, so the service does not directly compete with lengthier sources of input such as graded readers. All of the stories have both sound and illustrated text, most appear in more than one level, and most have pop-up notes to explain language that might be unclear to learners.

When the project started in 2003, the members knew that the effort was going to be time consuming and expensive, so they formed a corporation, Language Education and Research Network (L.E.A.R.N.), as a way of organizing the finances. They came up with a system to allocate stock to the company owners in exchange for financial contributions, the expenses they incurred, and the time they spent working on the project. Originally there were three owners: a content developer and editor, a business manager, and a technical manager. Paid contractors (mostly current or former English teachers) also were engaged for writing, editing, voice work, and software development.

Like most start-up companies, L.E.A.R.N. has had problems, and if there is anything of value in this story it is in the lesson to be learned from the project's biggest problem. Although the two other owners Luster started with were capable and enthusiastic about the project in the beginning, both eventually withdrew because they could not find enough time in their real-world schedules to fulfill their commitments to the project. Fortunately others have joined, so the project continues, though it is behind schedule and over budget. Along the way, many people have expressed an interest in the project but few have been able to follow through with real contributions. It seems that in the language-teaching field few people are inclined to take on *venture* tasks with deferred and uncertain payouts.

Many small start-ups have such problems. In a business venture, a good idea is certainly necessary, but it is the *execution* of the idea that really matters. Successful execution depends on the will of those involved to follow through with their commitments, and this has been L.E.A.R.N.'s greatest weakness.

Online projects usually take several hard years to succeed, and failure is more common than success. Project participants need to be realistic about their project's chances and about the level of effort required to get the project off the ground, which can run into thousands of hours. To invest so much time and perhaps money as well, one has to be convinced of the project's value, determined to persevere long enough to achieve success, and prepared to endure pain and setbacks along the way. Projects like this are killed off by a lack of determination more often than by a shortage of money, competence, or good ideas.

The L.E.A.R.N. project is now well down the road, yet still far from completion. At the time of the forum, the service is still offered for free. The team members need a lot more help, and Luster invites talented individuals with the required determination to talk to him about joining.

Session 4. The marketing of independent texts

This session began with a brief introduction by Ian Gledall, concerning the non-profit organization (NPO) status of JALT and what this means to the policy of MWSIG of giving away free ISBNs to independent writers or publishers who are members of MWSIG. This policy, begun 10 years ago with ISBNs remaining after publishing the MWSIG compilation *Our Share*, is no longer sustainable in its present form because under the previous system these numbers could go to authors who gain profit from the sale of their books. Putting profits into private hands obviously goes against what an NPO should be doing, so continuing such a policy would put JALT's NPO status at risk.

As a way to kick off the discussion about what MWSIG should now do about ISBNs, Bob Long gave a short talk about his ideas for a non-JALT writers co-operative which could include a source of ISBNs for publishing for profit. Opinions were then exchanged and it was decided that more discussion would be needed to formalize the writers co-operative and its relationship with MWSIG. This concluded the forum.

Acknowledgements

The presenters, authors, organizer and editor would like to thank Jim Smiley (Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University, Sendai) for his help in many ways, including the time-keeping of the forum sessions. Jim and Charles LeBeau had the original idea for this forum, independently, and discussions with Jim regarding the original proposal went a long way to bringing this successful forum to fruition. We also thank Michiyo Masui, also at Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University, for providing the Japanese abstract of this paper.

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Brian Cullen is an associate professor at Nagoya Institute of Technology and a director of Perceptia Press. His research interests include materials development and L2 creativity.

Daniel Droukis has been teaching English in Japan for over 26 years. He is currently an Associate Professor at Kyushu Kyoritsu University in Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka Prefecture. He has co-authored three textbooks and published many papers and articles on language teaching.

Paul Gemmell is a teacher at Sapporo Gakuin University, in Hokkaido, Japan. His pedagogical interests are project and immersion based learning and the writing of materials of said learning methods.

Greg Goodmacher teaches literature, intercultural communication, global issues, and American culture content-

based classes at Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture.
He is very interested in materials development and second
language acquisition.