

Simplified Spelling Society

Founded in 1908.

Past Presidents: Walter Skeet, Gilbert Murray, Daniel Jones, Sir James Pitman, John Downing

President: Dr. Donald G Scragg.

Vice-Presidents: Professor D. Abercrombie. Lord Simon of Glaisdale

Newsletter September 1991 [N2] from Chris Upward (Editor)

Contents

1. [Letters: Comments received on New Spelling 90](#)
2. [Reply from DES to Open Letter from SSS](#)
3. [Progress Report on Cut Spelling](#). Chris Upward
4. [Publications available to members](#) [at the time of publication only, though some are now online.]

Meetings

For your diary: dates of Society meetings for the next year are as follows:

26 October 1991, 11 January 1992, 25 April 1992 (AGM).

Meetings are normally held on Saturday mornings at.

All members and interested non-members are welcome to attend and join in discussions. The committee hopes to see new members at meetings and that some will wish to participate actively in the Society's work.

Full details of committee meetings are sent out by Secretary to committee members in the first instance, and to other members of the Society on request. Why not call him?

1. Comments received on New Spelling 90

Introduction by Bob Brown

The publication in April this year of the new, and slightly revised, summary in edition of New Spelling, under the title *New Spelling 90*, represented a watershed in the Society's publishing history. It demonstrated that our long era of silence in print (apart from *Journals* and *Newsletters*) has definitely ended in 1991.

In earlier times the Society was a prolific publisher but *New Spelling 90* is the first work of substance on spelling reform to be issued in very many years - probably since 1948 - though it is intended to be only one of three works due this year. The others are *Spelling Reform in Context*, primarily the scene-setter for those new to the subject, and the long-awaited *Handbook and Guide/Dictionary* for Cut Spelling.

New Spelling 90 is the latest incarnation of the system of reform spelling first proposed in 1910 and, to stress continuity of that tradition, it was published as No.12 in the Society's general series of pamphlets. [1]

It was also latterly the work of one dedicated person, Laurie Fennelly, from whom I took over the role of Secretary earlier this year. Laurie self-effacingly declined to include his name in the booklet, but that is amended, along with some errors of the type that usually creep into producing a book such as this, by the Errata Slip which is enclosed. Please mark up your copy accordingly or insert the slip in it. Further copies of the slip are available on demand.

The issue of the booklet gave rise to a torrent of correspondence from members now slowed to a trickle but still coming in regularly. Comment and criticism is inevitable in publishing the work such as this, especially in a society which harbours a wide range of opinion on spelling reform and how it could be brought about. The aim of the Society is to encourage debate, so the Committee felt it desirable to publish a cross-section of the comments to the membership at large.

You are welcome to write to the Editor with further comments for a later issue. I hope it will not in the letter-writers complaining that I have misrepresented their original comments here! Some editing has been essential to avoid repetition, and to keep this *Newsletter* to a sensible size, so I apologise now if I have not done justice to every submission.

If you wish to write to a member whose views are published here, please do so through me. It is not our policy to give members' addresses without permission but I will be pleased to pass on letters.

1 To confirm the point about our long silence, it is twenty years exactly since Number 11 - a brief history of the Society by Maurice Harrison - was issued.

From Ron Footer, Kent

Many thanks for *New Spelling 90*. I think it is an excellent publication and it is the way forward. I note that - modestly - Laurie has not included his name in the book.

I believe it would be helpful to include a glossary of NS90 words shown in the book and I have made such a list, copy enclosed...

[Ron then goes on to make many useful suggestions for improving the layout of any subsequent edition. Copies of his glossary can be had from the Secretary on demand.]

From Andrew Brookes, South Yorks.

... The publication was excellently written. With much of the population never having even contemplated the possibility of spelling reform (and thus making the general unaware public the most important target audience) it is vital that the Society's publications be as clear and accessible as possible, and I think *NS90* has achieved that aim. *NS90* was also important in making sure New Spelling does not slip slowly into oblivion, which would have been a shame...

From Ronald Threadgall, General Secretary, UK ita Federation

... The system proposed is a great improvement on the original New Spelling. I would like to make some comments in the hope of being helpful, [as someone) involved in teaching literacy through the medium of *ita* since 1965, particularly with older children and adults ...

1. There is no need to distinguish between the vowel sounds in *good* and *food* or between the initial sounds in *the* and *thin*.
2. Although it is logical to replace *qu* and *x*, it makes reading much more difficult as it alters the shape, of the words...

From Prof. J C Wells, University College, London

... Something has gone slightly wrong on p19 "In words like *advise*..." "The Americans do not spell *advise* with a *z*, You ought to use an example like *advertise/ize* or *organise/ize*

.... On p17 I am not enthusiastic about the expression "standard southern English" (line 6), still less "Southern English" (line 12). In fact, loss of historical /r/ in nonprevocalic position is more widespread in the north of England than in the south: think of the local accents of Bristol, Exeter or Southampton (all with /r/), as against those of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle (all without it). What is meant here is Received Pronunciation. If you want to avoid this term, why not "standard English of England".

On p20 "s + consonantal y", the statement needs qualification. Although some say *suit* with the y-sound (NS "suet") and others without (NS "soot"), nobody pronounces it like *shoot*, as here implied...

From Stanley Gibbs, Leicester

Thank you for your patience in listening to my groans about *NS90* over the telephone. This letter will be ritten in the medium of the House Style (Stage 1) passed as a Resolution at the AGM of April 1984. Further to this the Gibbs Stage 2 medium will be used... You will redily note that these two Stages together solv completely the short vowel problem except for /u/. All of the *ough* and *augh* words are delt with ruthlessly.

I'm afraid that this letter will be less than pleasurabl to study - in fact rather tedious! Will you please

note that in any correspondence concerning the SSS, no matter to whom I write, the Society's official Stage 1 is used always. Since I am a practising, convinced spelling reformer I never use TO, which is a national disgrace.

[Stanley then identifies many apparent errors and inconsistencies in the use of the new medium in NS90. A second, much longer letter, identified dozens more.]

From H Cookson, Portugal

... I have received copies of *NS90*. Laurie's to be congratulated on having tried to get New Spelling out of the South East English trap but he has not been very successful. Also, more than half the words in *The Star* are altered in spelling. There is no hope of acceptance, in any of the three forms shown, by the public. Previously we had Upward's "Ban the Bum" campaign; now we have Laurie's nun-starter'!

The first paragraph of *The Star* needs only a 10% alteration to make it perfectly regular for reading. A total reform for writing - that is, assigning a grapheme to each phoneme - is not possible. There are 39 to 50 phonemes, based on choice of pronunciation. Half of the vowels and diphthongs cannot be changed or only partly because of varying pronunciations. To many millions, *cot* and *caught* are homophones, but the same speakers may or may not have the same vowel in *gone*. *Father* and *gather* differ only in the first letter to many millions, and so on...

From Louise Aitken, British Dyslexia Association

... We are, most interested in your proposals and wish you every success in your attempts to rationalise the absurd inheritance of the English spelling system. The booklet will go into our resource library.

From Jesse Wilson, Devon

... I was surprised to find how similar my own system was to yours, although the SSS system was more complete and technical than mine.

The long vowels ending in *e* cause problems when grouped together, producing words such as *paeer*, *poeet*, *toeer*, *fueel*. The double *ee* dominates the words causing other vowels to become obscure. A literate adult would have no problem but for a child who is learning they will be just as perplexing as some of the words we are trying to simplify. The reaction of the general public to these words would be to ridicule them...

I think your booklet explains your system quite clearly. I agree with most of its contents but I think *q* and *x* should be retained, perhaps as *q* without the *u-* *qik* is easier than *quick*. The two sounds of *x* cannot both be represented with *ks* We do not need *rr* in *error*. I enclose a copy of my spelling system.

[A copy can be made available on request to the Secretary.]

From Ed Rondthaler, President, American Literacy Council, New York

I want to thank you for *New Spelling 90*. It's a first rate job and by far the best thing that has come from England since 1955. We're encouraged to find that more than pipe dreams are taking place there. *NS90* is filled with evidence of good sound thinking.

[A long section compares and contrasts NS90 treatment of particular phonemes with the ALC approach.]

It may be pure coincidence but on the day I received your pamphlet I was struggling with terminal s *for -ce* in words like *sees*, and particularly *sins* [since] which begins so many sentences. I was encouraged and at the same time sorry to see that the best you have been able to come up with is *ss*. Bad as that is, we've just about arrived at the same conclusion...

And now we come to the real toughie - the one that I'm sure your committee has its heart set on because it's seen as their one Great Creative Idea: removing *y* from its traditional role. That would affect 95,020 words in a million - more than one in every line - and the only virtue that we can see is that it shortens many words and helps a few important ones like *by* and *my*. We go at it differently. We get major shortening by using the wordsign *th* for *the* and terminal long vowel *-i* and *-o* (*mi*, *go*). Assigning a new job to *y* is we fear too oddball...

From Pwe-Linn Ling, Ganzhou, China

... Up to now, sorry to say, the Society hasn't got aware that, apart from some other troubles, both the New and the Cut Spelling wouldn't be received for their lack of spelling rules which is just why the conventional spelling should be reformed.

It's meaningless for anyone to continue with publishing to recommend any spelling system destined to failure. So it's high time for the Society to take such trouble as to send an accessible scholar or two to China to get personal understanding of the CFR spelling system as briefly introduced in the Open Message enclosed [*held for possible later publication. Copy available on application. Sec.*].

That system would be apt to be approved after several smooth personal consultations and brought back to England for a naturally receivable reform of the Society... Some delicate knowledge implied in that new spelling system has been discovered at its discoverer's heavy cost and, once lost, wouldn't be able to be captured again.

From Ayb Citron, President, Better Education thru Simplified Spelling, Michigan

... [NS90] marks important progress for spelling reform. In general it is a good effort but from my point of view I note an omission and five errors.

The omission is no mention of the names of the people who worked on this pamphlet, or an address where folks can write who hav comments or questions or who want more copies...

The errors (from my point of view) are:

1. I used to use *y* as long *i*, but I now use upr cAs letz as long vowelz. Since *y* is normally intended as a consonant, we should not confuse the kids by using it as a vowel...
2. I do not see how U can spel *pity* as *piti*. The final sound is long *e* so this cannot he exprest by an *i* of any kind. It should be *pitee*.
3. I oppose the use of *er* to express the final sound in such words as *better*, *collar*...
4. I feel the best spelling for *was* is *wz*, and *wawnt* or *waunt* for *want*. *Wont* does not giv the sound of the word as pronounced here.
5. I believe U should adopt the rule - all final vowels are long. Then U could spel *lo*, *blo*, *tru*, *su*, etc. This is a handy rule.
6. I believe we r betr off if we hold on to hard c.... This means two letz with the same sound but it givz learners no trubl if it is constant. Also I believe we should hold onto *q*.
7. We should not junk *x*.

I have other differences with *NS90* but these are the main ones.

From Valerie Yule, Victoria, Australia

I am glad to have *New Spelling 90*. I would like to give my comments on reading through quickly because that is how most people will read it first.

1. It is a well set-out, attractive looking booklet. I personally find sans-serif hard to read for material that needs clear thinking, particularly when the line spacing is relatively close, but I know others find it easy.

2. It is essential to have the gist set out clearly, and the back page does that, except for the reference to the obscure vowel and even after reading the relevant pages I am not quite clear about it.

3. Reading quickly, it is not clear which of the three versions of *The Star* is being recommended. I presume it is the first version.

4. I think my general comments on WES [*World English Spelling - US scheme produced after harmonisation with NS in the 1950s and now subsumed into Ed Rondthaler's American Spelling*. Ed.] and New Spelling have been made before. They do not consider the problems of learners sufficiently - that phonemic analysis is actually quite difficult in long words, so that *expectation* and *unusual* are easier for them to read and write than *ekspektaeshen* and *unuezhueal*.

From Susan Baddeley, Paris

I received the latest New Spelling booklet and I must say I was rather disappointed - it seems very superficial, and the spirit of it obviously has not progressed since Daniel Jones, etc. Cut Spelling seems to me a much more serious candidate.

From Traugott Rohner, President, Basic English Spelling, Illinois

... BASIC is an educational, not-for-profit organization. I enclose a copy of our booklet, a revised edition of which we are getting ready for publication. I would like to hear from you [with a view to producing] a single system which we could promote everywhere.

Our biggest problem is to create a system that will have the least resistance from the English-speaking world. Thus, it must make the minimum number of changes but those changes must have maximum benefit. As you know, the best system will get nowhere if people won't accept it.

I would like to list a few areas where there might be some sort of compromise:

1. Retain the use of *x* and *qu* for the present time. ...
2. Add *aa* to the alphabet so that the sound can be definitely written...
3. Can we reach a compromise on *of* which you spell *ov* but Basic spells *uv*?
4. I agree, that adding *e* to spell the long vowel is simple, but there are hundreds of words that spell the long *a* with *ai* that perhaps should be retained.
5. We also like *y* for the long *i* but prefer to retain it as an ending...
6. You spell *was* as *woz*. Is not the *a* pronounced more like a *u*?...
7. One of the pillars of Basic is the final *e* rule, which avoids having to respell thousands of words.

2. Reply from DES to Open Letter from SSS

Readers will recall that in our last *Newsletter* (April 1991, p.5) we carried the text of an open letter from the Society to the British government dated 25 March 1991, pointing out that, laudable though its aim of improving spelling standards is, it needs to be reinforced by measures to make English spelling easier to learn. We now give the relevant section of the reply received from the Department of Education and Science (DES), along with the relevant documentation and some reactions, on which readers' views are invited. They may serve as a basis for formulating an eventual reply by the SSS.

1 Reply from the DES

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, London
23 May 1991

... apologise for [delay in replying] ... volume of correspondence addressed to Ministers makes it necessary to have many letters dealt with by officials on their behalf.

We appreciate your concern and found the points raised in your letter very interesting.

However, the Government is tackling the need for improved spelling performance in quite a different way. Its aim in introducing the National Curriculum progressively into schools is to improve literacy standards, including spelling. The statutory Order for English includes an Attainment Target (AT4) specifically for spelling. It is supported by programmes of study and comprises 7 levels which are appropriate to the different abilities and maturities of the pupils being taught. This will ensure that pupils are taught spelling in a structured way. Regular assessment will mean that children having problems will be identified at an early stage and appropriate help can be given.

Yours sincerely

P R Watson Schools branch 3.

2 National Curriculum Documentation

Relevant excerpts from English in the National Curriculum (No.2), Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, FB4SO, March 1990.

(Explanatory note from Newsletter editor-The levels apply to age-ranges as follows:

Age 5-7 (schoolyears 1-2): Levels 1-3.

Age 7-11 (schoolyears 3-6): Levels 2-5

Age 11-14 (schoolyears 7-9): Levels 3-8

Age 14-16 (schoolyears 10-11): Levels 3-10.)

p.7, Attainment target 2: reading.

Pupils should be able to:

Level 1:

b) begin to recognize individual words or letters in familiar contexts.

e.g. In role-play read simple signs such as shop names or brand names; recognise 'bus-stop', 'exit',

Level 2:

b) demonstrate knowledge of the alphabet in using word books and simple dictionaries.

e.g. Turn towards the end to find words beginning with 's', rather than always starting from the beginning.

p.12, Attainment target 3: writing.

Pupils should be able to:

Level 1:

a) use pictures, symbols or isolated letters, words or phrases to communicate meaning.

e.g. Show work to others, saying what writing and drawing mean.

Level 2:

a) produce, independently, pieces of writing using complete sentences, some of them demarcated with capital letters and full stops or question marks.

Level 3:

a) produce, independently, pieces of writing using complete sentences, mainly demarcated with capital letters and full stops or question marks.

p.17, Attainment target 4: spelling

Pupils should be able to:

Level 1:

a) begin to show an understanding of the difference between drawing and writing, and between numbers and letters.

b) write some letter shapes in response to speech sounds and letter names.

e.g. Initial letter of own name.

c) use at least single letters or groups of letters to represent whole words or parts of words.

Level 2:

a) produce recognisable (though not necessarily always correct) spelling of a range of common words.

b) spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, simple monosyllabic words they use regularly which observe common patterns.

e.g. see car man sun hot cold thank

c) recognise that spelling has patterns, and begin to apply their knowledge of those patterns in their attempts to spell a wider range of words.

e.g. coat goal feet street

d) show knowledge of the names and order of the letters of the alphabet.

e.g. Name the letters when spelling out loud from a simple dictionary or word book.

Level 3:

a) spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, simple polysyllabic words they use regularly which observe common patterns.

e.g. because after open teacher animal together

b) recognise and use correctly regular patterns for vowel sounds and common letter strings.

e.g. grow growth growing grown grew

c) in revising and redrafting their writing, begin to check the accuracy of their spelling.

e.g. Use a simple dictionary, word book, spell checker, or other classroom resources; make spelling books or picture books.

Level 4:

a) spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, words which display other main patterns in English spelling.

e.g. Words using the main prefixes and suffixes.

p.19, Attainment target 4/5: presentation

Pupils should be able to:

Level 5:

a) spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, words of greater complexity.

e.g. Words with inflectional suffixes, such as -ed and -ing, where consonant doubling ('running') or -e deletion ('coming') are required.

b) check final drafts of writing for misspelling and other errors of presentation.

e.g. Use a dictionary or computer spelling checker where appropriate.

Level 6:

a) recognise that words with related meanings may have related spellings, even though they sound different; recognise that the spelling of unstressed syllables can often be deduced from the spelling of a stressed syllable in a related word.

e.g. sign, signature; medical, medicine; muscle, muscular; history, historical; grammar, grammatical; manager, managerial.

Level 7:

a) spell (and understand the meaning of) common roots that have been borrowed from other languages and that play an important role in word-building; recognise that where words have been borrowed in the last 400 years, there are some characteristic sound-symbol relationships that reflect the word's origin.

e.g. micro-, psycho, tele-, therm-;

ch- in French words like 'champagne', 'chauffeur', 'charade'. and ***ch-*** in Greek words like 'chaos', 'chiropody'; compared with the ***ch-*** in long-established English words like 'chaff', 'cheese', 'chin'.

p.30, Programmes of study for reading-

7. Through the programme of study pupils should be guided so as to:
build up, in the context of their reading, a vocabulary of words recognised on sight;
use the available cues, such as pictures, context, phonic cues, word shapes and meaning of a passage to decipher new words;
be ready to make informed guesses, and to correct themselves in the light of additional information, *eg. by reading ahead or looking back in the text.*

12. In order to achieve **level 4**, pupils should be taught how to use lists of contents, indexes, databases, a library classification system and catalogues to select information.

p.35, Programmes of study for writing, spelling and handwriting

8. As they become familiar with the conventions of writing, pupils should be introduced to the most common spelling patterns of consonant and short vowel sounds. Pupils should be taught how to spell words which occur frequently in their writing, or which are important to them, and those which exemplify regular spelling patterns. They should be encouraged to spell words for themselves, and to remember the correct spelling, *eg. by compiling their own list of words they have used.* They should be taught the names and order of the letters of the alphabet.

18. Pupils should:

- be shown how to set out and punctuate direct speech;
- be introduced to some of the uses of the comma and apostrophe;
- be taught the meaning and spelling of some common prefixes and suffixes, *eg. un-, in- (and im-, il-, ir-), -able, -ness, -ful, etc.* in the context of their own writing and reading.
- be introduced to the complex regularity that underlies the spelling of words with inflectional endings, *eg. bead-ing, beaded, bad-d-ing, bed-d-ed*, in the context of their own writing and reading.

20. Pupils should discuss the history of writing and consider some of the ways in which writing contributes to the organisation of society, the transmission of knowledge, the sharing of experiences and the capturing of imagination.

23. Pupils should be helped to recognise explicitly the different stages in the writing process: proof-reading (checking for errors, *eg. omitted or repeated words, mistakes in spelling or punctuation.*

25. Pupils should have opportunities to:

- be helped to recognise, in the context of their own writing and reading, that words with related meanings may have related spellings and that this can sometimes be an aid to the spelling of words where the sound alone does not provide sufficient information.

3 Editorial comments

The following are some immediate reactions from the Editor to the above documentation. They are intended for discussion by the Society's committee, with a view to developing a possible response to the DES. Readers are asked to send any comments they may wish to make to the Editor by October 10.

1. It is good that the Government wishes to ensure spelling is taught in a structured way. However, such structuring as is apparent in the documentation is confined to general hints and a few examples, and it is hard to see how they can help to give the classroom teacher more than the vaguest idea of targets to be achieved. The central issue of the irregularity of English spelling and its consequences for teaching is largely ignored. The crucial question of how far pupils are expected to spell correctly by the time they leave school is not addressed.

2. Since phonics is the only basis for structured teaching of an alphabetic writing system (however defective it may be in English), it is surprising that it scarcely figures in the documentation. Phonics, as the psychological key to the learning process, should be clearly stated as such and given appropriate attention. For instance, when asking children to distinguish *shop*, *stop*, it is important they understand the specific functional difference' between them.

3. Phonics implies that pupils are made aware first of the sounds of English (they will need to contrast them with the sounds of other languages later on in the National Curriculum anyway) and then how the letters of the alphabet ideally represent those sounds. This is a psychologically structured approach, moving from the known to the unknown: pupils normally enter school with at least some command of English pronunciation, and are taught to analyse the sounds made in speech and then their main symbolic correspondences.

4. The vagueness and tentative tone of the documentation suggests a lack of conviction. Children are only to 'begin to recognise', 'show knowledge of', 'begin to show an understanding', 'write some letter shapes', 'produce ... not necessarily always correct... spelling', etc. While full knowledge and fully developed skills are of course acquired gradually, teachers surely need clear targets to aim for at each stage. The aim should be that pupils recognize, know, understand, write all letter shapes, and produce correct spelling. Actual achievement will fall short in some cases, but then the deficit would be identifiable.

Two examples: 1) the documentation says that when looking for <s> in the dictionary, pupils are expected to "turn towards the end, rather than always starting from the beginning". If pupils are trained to recite the alphabet, the instruction here could read that pupils should look between <r> and <t>, rather than vaguely towards the end of the dictionary. 2) Pupils are to write *some* letter shapes in response to speech sounds and letter names. Which ones? Why not all? Which are they not required to write and why not?

5. Instead of a systematic phonic approach to spelling, we find haphazard coverage of certain types of spelling pattern, most of which are not clearly specified. How are teachers to know what these patterns are if they are not specified? Are pupils expected to write all words correctly or not? If not, which words do not have to be spelt correctly? For example, if pupils are to learn to write *grammar* by analogy with *grammatical*, are they not expected to learn *error*, because of the false analogy of *erratic*?

6. The constant repetition of the phrase "in the context of their own writing and reading" seems to imply that pupils will not be expected to learn anything that goes beyond their own linguistic experience. Is there to be no systematic expansion of vocabulary and the spellings that go with it?

7. It appears that the significance of some of the spelling examples given is not properly understood. Amongst the words described as observing common patterns are *because*, *animal*; it is precisely because they do not observe common patterns that these two words are found difficult (*because* is unique, and *decimal* is the only other word of the pattern *animal* that pupils are likely to encounter in early years). Similarly, the pattern of *grow* etc contrasts confusingly with the patterns of *go* and *to bow*. The point about the prefixes <un-, in-> etc is not their own spelling, which could not be simpler, but the consonant doubling they may entail (so distinguishing *innocuous/inoculate* etc. And the point about the suffixes <-able>, <-ful> is that they must be distinguished from the suffix <-ible> and the adjective *full*. The *beaded/bedded* contrast misses the main difficulty, which arises from 'magic' <e> in pairs like *hope/hop*, leading to *hoped/hopped*.

8. The caveat that words with related meanings may have related spellings is important: English so often gives related words (or morphemes) incongruent spellings that this technique is unreliable. Beside the case of *error/erratic* mentioned above, such pairs as *speak/speech*, *high/height*, *line/align*, *proceed/procedure* are naturally confusing, and the inconsistent spelling of bound morphemes in particular causes great difficulty (*insistent/resistant*, *receipt/deceit*, *panic/panicky* etc).

9. Pupils are expected to check their spellings using a dictionary. This is easier said than done: how do pupils know which words to check for misspelling? How do they find an irregularly or wrongly spelt word in the dictionary?

10. It is good that pupils should study exotic sound-symbol correspondences such as <ch> in *chauffeur*, *chaos*. However it is illogical that they should do so without apparently already having learnt the reasons for such fundamental, and fascinating, native patterns as the silent letters in *gnaw*, *know*, *who*, *write*, *through*, the discrepancies of sound-symbol correspondence between *bead/bread/bed*, and the spurious <s> in *island*, <c> in *scissors*, <gh> in *delight*, etc. When pupils are having to grapple with an irregular system, they need to understand the nature of that system.

11. The constant emphasis on the visual at the expense of the phonic is disturbingly one-sided " raising questions such as the following:

1) does building up a vocabulary of words recognized on sight mean the spelling of these words need not be learnt?

2) why are pictures, word-shapes and guesswork given the same status as 'phonic cues' in identifying words? Literacy means being able to distinguish words without pictures or context, even when their word-shapes differ by just a single letter.

12. It is good that pupils should study the social history of writing. However, if such knowledge is intended to be relevant to their task of mastering English spelling, it is of far greater relevance that they learn of the linguistic history of writing. Above all, they should learn about the alphabet and how it came to be corrupted in English.

3. Progress Report on Cut Spelling from Chris Upward

Impatience has been understandably growing at the delay in publishing the long-promised documentation on Cut Spelling (CS). Readers deserve an update on progress.

A brief note for readers who may not yet be familiar with CS. CS seeks to simplify English spelling chiefly by omitting redundant letters by three rules. CS cuts

- 1) letters irrelevant to pronunciation,
- 2) vowels preceding post-accentual schwa before <l, m, n, r> ,
- 3) doubled consonants.

There are also 3 letter-substitutions:

- 1) <f> for <gh, ph> ,
- 2) <j> for soft <g> ,
- 3) <y> for <igh> . CS is demonstrated in this report.

Since the write-up began in early 1990 of the work of the Cut Spelling Working Group (Paul Fletcher, Jean Hutchins, Chris Jolly, chaired by Chris Upward), the task has steadily grown in magnitude. Originally planned in the form of 3 slim pamphlets, a *Handbook*, a *Dictionary* and a *Learners Guide*, it soon became clear that the *Handbook* would be too big for binding as a pamphlet, indeed it is now nearly 150 pages long and will need to appear as a paperback. Because of this, it was then decided that, to give the documentation a symmetrical format, it would be best to combine the *Dictionary* and *Learners Guide* into a similar paperback, so making two larger volumes instead of three smaller ones.

As far as the content is concerned, it can be reported that, apart from an index, the *Handbook* is effectively complete (though the introduction will need some rewriting). The raw *Dictionary* was completed at the turn of the year 1990-91, but since then a radical amendment has been introduced into the CS system which will mean that most <-ing> forms will need changing in the *Dictionary* to just <ng>. Work on the *Learners Guide*, which will consist mainly of exercises, is now well underway, but it remains the largest uncompleted part of the documentation.

When will it all be finished, and when will SSS members and the many people outside the Society have expressed an interest in CS receive their copies? It is optimistically hoped that the text may be complete by the end of September, and that copies will be distributed by the end of the year. But past experience suggests that some further patience may be called for...

4. Publications available to members

[at the time of publication only]

1 AIROE

Leaflet on the work of the Society's opposite number in France, the *Association pour l'information et la recherche sur les orthographes et les systèmes d'écriture*.

2 Adam BROWN *Homophones and Homographs in Thai, and their Implications*, 117pp. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1988. An illuminating and detailed account of some salient features of a writing system not based on the Roman alphabet.

3 Harry LINDGREN *Spelling Reform - New Approach*, 152pp., Sydney: Alpha Books, 1969. Exceptionally lively (not to say polemical) plea for English spelling reform, including some wickedly witty cartoons, leading up to a proposal for a multi-stage reform, of which the first stage is SR1 (=short /e/ always to be spelt <e>). Two spelling systems of striking originality (Phonetic A & B, the latter using numerous diacritics) are then suggested as long-term possibilities.

4 Laurie FENNELLY *New Spelling 90*, Simplified Spelling Society Pamphlet, 33pp., No.12, 1991, amended simplified outline of the Society's classic spelling reform proposal of 1948.

5 James PITMAN/J StJohn *Alphabets and Reading--the Initial Teaching Alphabet*, 349pp., London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd, 1969. The first third of this substantial book discusses the psychology of reading (and especially reading failure) and gives one of the fullest available accounts of the evolution of English spelling and ideas for its reform; the rest then describes the evolution of and experience with the i.t.a. The Society has recently purchased 3 more copies from the remaining stock of the i.t.a. Federation, and is offering them to members at only £7 each, including postage and packing. An outstanding bargain and a must for members wanting to read up about some striking facets of the basic theory of literacy and writing systems.

6 Arnold RUPERT *School with less pain*, 12pp, pamphlet on a system for reforming English spelling by adding 14/15 extra letters to the alphabet.

7 Bernard SHAW *Androcles & the Lion*, Shaw Alphabet Public Trustee's Edition, 151pp + Shaw Alphabet Key Card for reading and writing, 1962. Explanatory foreword and introduction, with parallel texts on facing pages. Shaw bequeathed money to finance a competition for a new alphabet for English, and this volume demonstrates the winning entry, by Kingsley Read.

8 Christopher UPWARD *English Spelling and Educational Progress*, CLEE (Committee for Linguistics in Education of the British Association for Applied Linguistics & the Linguistics Association of Great Britain) Working Paper No. 11, July 1988, 28pp. A broad survey of the state of Traditional Orthography, discussing some recent statements in its support and its historical and geographical context, as well as techniques of analysis (especially functional), and concluding with a brief rationale of Cut Spelling.

Back numbers of the Society's *Journals and Newsletters*.

Copies of the following are available:

Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter-Summer 1985, Spring 1986, Summer 1986.

Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society-1987 Nos. 1, 2, 3; 1988 Nos. 1, 2, 3; 1989 Nos. 1, 2.

Long-standing SSS member Ken Ives of Chicago has generously offered to produce an American edition of *the JSSS*, to appear later this year. Not merely will this give a further lease of life to a publication which has regrettably failed to appear since 1989 (owing to pressure of other orthographical activity), but it will give added strength to the vital American dimension of our world-wide cause.