

## SS13.

### **simpl speling November 2000 newsletter of the simplified spelling society Editor: Alan Campbell**

Society founded 1908

Working for planned change in English spelling for the benefit of learners and users everywhere

Web: [www.spellingsociety.org](http://www.spellingsociety.org)

#### **Keeping on**

Testing a caution made here in March, the German experience shows it's never plain sailing.

That and the news from England and New Zealand should remind us the work's to be tackled, and we can't let up.

#### **Contents**

1. [Promising start to millennium](#)

2. This 'n' that from here 'n' there

['American spellings' issue raises the profile](#). Allan Campbell

[Ballot result](#)

[English spelling blamed in another literacy study](#). Prof S J Prais

[Eminent member dies](#). Mona Cross

[Snippets](#)

3. What one member has been doing:

[Spelling-reform books in libraries?](#) Alan Mole

4. Letters:

[Promoting reform in general](#). Chris Kiwi

[WordStar still up to the job](#). Ted Relton

[Letters → syllables → words → literacy!](#) Ruth Ann Hendrix.

[Technically yes, psychologically ...?](#) Patrick Groff

[Revised English spelling — w and y](#). G V Phadke

['Overwhelming choice' not favored](#). Robert Craig

5, [German newspaper backtracks on change](#). Zé do Rock

6. Jean Wilkinson, writes: [Litl madnesses](#)

7. [The rite of replying](#). Allan Campbell

8. [Spelling on the net with Steve Bett:](#)

[Talepeace](#): Literacy posters reprinted

9. [Members' supplement](#)

# 1. Promising start to millennium

Media contacts lead to [publicity](#) and new members

The millennium has started well for the Society, with hope that two parliamentary submissions might bear some fruit, and with more people in England and New Zealand knowing about its cause than a year ago. Chair Chris Jolly was moved to say there had been publicity on a scale he has not known before in his 20 years' membership.

There have been an unusual number of radio and TV interviews and articles and letters in newspapers. Allan Campbell reports, here and later.

Before he addressed the Society's AGM ([SSJuly00](#) Item 7) member Ken Spencer was interviewed on LBC radio, London, on which he painted a vivid picture of the problems of English spelling. It was to be the first of a number of members' media activities. Secretary Masha Bell's contact with Judith Judd, education writer of *The Independent*, and letter to *The Times* led to radio interviews, further letters, and new members.

After a fone call she sent a copy of the parliamentary submission on early years education to Judd, who published an article on it. This led to BBC4 seeking an interview.

- Professor John Wells, a vice-president, put the case for spelling reform in a live broadcast a week later on the *You and Yours* program. Chair Chris Jolly commented he was outstanding, and Masha described his performance as 'absolutely brilliant'.
- In the *Times* letter Masha was responding to a report of French authorities rejecting a request at a Paris conference of teachers of French, seeking changes in French spelling.
- Chris Jolly spoke on the Justin Lee program on BBC Radio Devon for about 5min in August. A Pole had asked about the difficulties of English spelling. The station found Chris thru the Society's website. He was interviewed as a 'warm-up' to listeners foning in their views. The interview focused on the difficulties of learning English spelling, and examples of words to reform.
- Committee member Tony Bums was interviewed by BBC4, on *Today* breakfast program.
- Masha taped an interview for BBC Radio Belfast's Sound Education.
- There also followed letters in *The Times*, including one from Ron Footer.
- Masha also spotted a report in *The Independent* about the Conservative health spokesman drawing attention to the poor English of some foreign doctors working in Britain. Her reply to this, that even educated people such as doctors have trouble with English because of its difficult spelling, led to spate of letters in that paper, including those from John Gledhill, Ron Footer, and Doug Everingham (Queensland). Ron was particularly pleased as part of his was published in Rite spelling.

- In addition the Society's Langscape project submission was published, Nick Kerr had a letter in his local paper, and Jean Hutchins initiated spelling discussion in a dyslexia email group of 400 members, resulting in a new member.
- Membership secretary John Gledhill told the committee last month 22 people had inquired since mid-July, sparked by Masha's *Independent* item (2); her *Times* letter (9); *You and Yours* (3); SSS web site (3); personal contacts (2). Five of the inquirers have joined.

## Keeping up the publicity

It is hoped to maintain the rising publicity in England and New Zealand

The Society is preparing to issue a statement when the Education subcommittee reports to the House of Commons, and has an open letter for David Blunkett, State Secretary for Education, on his '600 words' that secondary school pupils will be expected to know.

Chris Jolly speaks to the Books section of the National Union of Journalists this month. An SSS item in their newsletter precedes this.

In New Zealand releases are ready to follow the select committee's report to parliament. Member Zé do Rock is visiting this month, and is available to speak on German spelling. Chris Upward has also, by request, written an article on 'American spelling' for the English teachers' journal.

## 2. This 'n' that from here 'n' there

### 'American spellings' issue raises the profile

Spelling's somewhat higher profile in New Zealand this year began with the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE) saying it was looking at allowing 'American spellings' in high schools.

Some newspaper columnists had their say, mainly doubting or opposing, including those in *The Otago Daily Times*, Dunedin, *The Press*, Christchurch (*American spellings do 'u' no favor*), and *The New Zealand Herald*, Auckland ('We fuddies howl and twist. We should instead nod in contentment. The Americans are saving English; we can go to our graves untroubled by the need to learn another language').

Phil Coogan, NZATE president, was pleased to receive a copy of the [JSSS21 1997/1](#) Item 12 article, *American Spelling for British Schools?* He sent a copy with a reply to a columnist in *The Listener*, a hi-brow radio and TV magazine, who discussed the topic over two successive issues, referring to both the Society and JSSS. I responded to all the columnists.

The Society's submission to the Select Committee on Education and Science's inquiry into the teaching of reading, was heard in August. Tom Shanks (Oamaru), new member Chrissy Parker and I (both Christchurch) shared the presentation. It was a new experience for us all.

We were heard attentively, were asked a few questions, and were later requested to send documentary evidence that simpler spelling led to greater literacy in other languages.

We have sent copies of Gwen Thorstad's [1991 English-Italian study](#), Chris Upward's review of Harris and Hatano's *Learning to Read and Write* ([JSSS27 Item 12](#)); two Ken Spencer articles from *The Guardian* and *Simpl Speling*; per favor of Ken, the research articles he quoted: Oney and Goldman: *Decoding and comprehension skills in Turkish and English*; and Landerl, Wimmer, and Frith: *The impact of orthographic consistency on dyslexia; A cultural effect on brain function*, from *Nature Neuroscience*, January 2000, researching the demands different orthografies make on the brain.

Copies of the submission have gone to NZATE ('Many thanks for sending me that lucid, compelling submission'); NZ Reading Assn; NZ Educational Institute, the primary teachers' union; and the managing director of Independent Newspapers Ltd, our major newspaper chain.

A local channel and a national TV news ran our presentation, with comments from other parties.

A *Press* columnist, Joe Bennett, picked it up and laid into us 'Simplies'. His article drew responses for two weeks not only from us locals (split about 60/40 with him), but also from 'Simplies' Masha Bell, Nick Kerr, Valerie Yule, and Doug Everingham.

Thanks, Joe: without your help the publicity may have died with the TV items!

### **Ballot result**

In the recent members' poll on the direction the Society should take, 82 people voted.

Results were:

1. Debating society only — 1
2. Pragmatic, agreed set of suggestions — 35
3. Agreed complete scheme — 13
4. Range of solutions — 20
5. Other — 13

(Three further votes were received after the closing date.)

The committee at its October meeting took no action on the result.

### **English spelling blamed in another literacy study**

Professor S J Prais, senior research fellow at the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, London, has sent the Society a draft of his major research report *Social Disparities and the Teaching of literacy: reflections following visits to Swiss and English schools to compare attainments and teaching methods in language and literacy*.

It blames English spelling irregularity for much of the poorer performance of English children, and hints strongly at the desirability of spelling reform.

[Mona Cross: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

### **Eminent member dies**

Mona Cross, a long-serving member of the Society, has died in Northampton. She joined in 1962, and worked in a number of capacities, including editor of the *SSS Newsletter*, forerunner of the *Journal*.

Some members have attributed the survival of the Society thru some very difficult times in the late 70s and early 80s to her. Chris Upward comments: 'She was a voice of courtesy and calm, when other voices around her were raised and excited'.

She produced the *Newsletter* until 1985. She regularly attended meetings thru the 1980s, tho her hearing was poor and travel to London was becoming increasingly arduous. Before she retired she was headteacher of a village school that used ita.

### **Snippets**

- A meeting was held recently between the American Literacy Council (ALC) and Better Education thru Simplified Spelling (BEtSS). Nothing of consequence is reported to have come from it.
- In three books on ergonomics, published in 1998, 1999, and 2000, ex-SSS member Dan MacLeod uses improved spellings, such as *tho*, *altho*, *thru*, *thruout*, *tendonitis* (for *tendinitis*).
- Tatarstan, one of Russia's republics, has dropped Cyrillic in favor of the Roman alfabet, in part because it wants closer ties with Europe. The Roman alfabet will be used in schools for written work in the local Tatar language, and the transition is expected to take 10 years. Tatarstan. — 750km east of Moscow, has a population of 4 million.
- The government of Maharashtra state (capital Mumbai — Bombay) in India has begun compulsory English lessons from grade 6 onwards. This is a reversal of the state government policy of teaching only the local language, Marathi. West Bengal, on the opposite coast of the subcontinent, has reintroduced the teaching of English in schools. In the 1980s it had scrapped English and insisted on teaching the local language, Bengali. Punjab and Kerala have also introduced English as a subject at grade 1 level. Delhi state is soon to follow. Populists decry English as a symbol of elitism. But millions of Indians have found that with the emergence of the internet and globalized markets, English is a key to opportunity and prosperity. The official national language, Hindi, is spoken by about 400 million people; English by about 60 million.
- James Murdoch, son of Rupert and head of Asia Star TV, said in a speech at the Edinburgh International Film Festival, that so-called global media groups had not recognized the need to use local dominant languages — Mandarin, English, Hindi, and Spanish — to compete in the global market place. Media companies were mistaken if they thought English would be the future default language.

[Alan Mole: see [Newsletters](#)]

### **3. What one member has been doing**

#### **Spelling reform books for libraries**

##### **Alan Mole, USA**

Most American libraries, and probably libraries in other English-speaking countries, contain no book on spelling reform. There are about 8000 such US libraries of decent size. I have determined that quantity printing of suitable books (eg, hardback, 320 pages) is only about \$2.75 a copy. (See [www.profpres.com/pricehard.html](http://www.profpres.com/pricehard.html) and write for details).

It may be within the financial capability of a society to:

- a. Write all libraries asking if they'd accept a free copy of a book describing reform and containing several novels and stories in reformed spelling (RS) — a 'reader' as it were.
- b. Print 3 000 copies and send them to the first 3 000 libraries to say 'yes'. This would cost about \$12,000.

But will libraries accept such an offer?

For test purposes I produced a book containing *Oz*, *The Time Machine*, *Wind in the Willows* and *Secret Garden* in RS (most in SoundSpel, *Wind* in Cut Spelling) and a few short stories, plus a couple of chapters on reform. At 320 pages and custom bound it ran to \$37 a copy. I only made four. (Low costs come only with mass production.) It was on eight-and-a-half by eleven inch paper and bound like an American high school yearbook in leatheret. It was pitched as general interest plus an aid to struggling readers.

The Boulder Library, of 250,000 volumes, accepted a copy. The librarian for the smaller Littleton Library said she would accept one and would say 'Yes' to the sample letter I showed her. 'We haven't much money but if it's free...' The librarian in the Denver Public Library, which is quite large, looked at the letter and approved. She looked at the book and said 'Yes, I'd like to buy two copies for the main library and one for each of the branches.' I was ecstatic, but had to explain to her that while I could give her one copy, there were only four in existence, so that was all she could have.

I presented the idea to the ALC but they decided there isn't money enuff. At least for now.

ALC is working on a new computer program. I am managing it and Bernard Sypniewski is doing the work.

The idea is that it should be easy to produce text in SoundSpel. BTRSPL, even the Windows version, is too clumsy and daunting for most users. Thus there should be an add-on for Word and other word processing programs. Users open Word and type their material, then click an icon on the toolbar and get instant SoundSpel. Likewise for the common email program, Microsoft Outlook.

#### **120 years ago**

1880 The English Philological Association adopted a list of simplified spellings.

## 4. Letters

### Promoting reform in general

#### Chris Kiwi, New Zealand

Having spent 25 years (half my life) in political parties, I have observed a trend in membership which seems to follow a consistent pattern. The membership embraces everybody from nominal (paid fee, otherwise inactive) thru the seat warmer (attends meetings), activist (promotes, attends conferences, advances ideas old and new), candidate (rejected, selected, elected) to career politician and party servant.

SSS had existed well beyond all my life before I discovered it in 1999 (Allan Campbell in the South Island had written to my local daily paper in the North Island).

In my so-far limited encounter with SSS, I suspect the Society has a membership spanning something like all the involvement levels typical of a voluntary organization with intellectual appeal.

If this is so, perhaps we need realistic expectations of what we as an all-welcoming Society can achieve in consensus, otherwise agreeing to disagree.

Speaking as a once-upon-a-time Esperantist, I think the promotion of a 'fully-baked idea' is the function of a defined group, ideally within SSS.

### WordStar still up to the job

#### Ted Relton. England (Abridged)

Reading Accessing special characters (SSJuly99), I was horrified at the complexity of MS Word. Readers facing this problem may be interested in my experience. I often type letters in French or German, and Spanish, Danish, and Swedish. I have typeset a book in Spanish using the following method!

WordStar, one of the first word processor programs was overshadowed by much-hyped later rivals. However, it remains comprehensive and versatile. Some of the control codes are illogical and need memorizing, but once this is done it is easy to use. Some codes have been superseded by newer keyboards (eg, with Page Up/Down), and u can set your own control codes on the function keys. An international character set can be selected in the default-setting program. Once done, the German ä, ö, ü and Dutch ë can be typed by typing " followed by the letter; French (and Spanish) acute-accent letters by apostrophe plus the letter; a grave by the strange key at the top-left of the keyboard plus the letter; circumflex by circumflex-letter; cedilla-c by comma-c and ñ by tilde-n. Swedish letters and German ß can be accessed by typing Control-*P*-zero, which brings up a table of additional characters; u select the one u want by number-Return, and the letter appears in your text.

Once u have memorized the numbers, u can then reuse them with an ALT-code number. The Danish ø is not available, but a Greek theta is a satisfactory alternative. Other European characters are in the CTL-*P*-zero table. WordStar allows overprinting, so u can make up more letters such as the Polish L with a bar in it.

The drawback to selecting the international default is when u need to type a quotation mark followed by a vowel, u need to type the quote mark twice; and if u are typing a comma delimited database, u need to put in each comma twice. These are small prices to pay for flexible language access.

## **Letters → syllables → words → literacy!**

**Ruth Ann Hendrix, USA**

During the 1994–1995 school year, when our children Skye, Elias, and Moriah were ages eight, six and three, I had the opportunity to observe literacy teaching firsthand in Brazil, where I taught English as a second language.

Elias (6) was ready to learn to read. At the school in which they studied, the children are first taught the individual letters, then after the mastery of these they move to syllables or two letter combinations, which are sometimes parts of words that they know, sometimes not, just possible sound combinations of the language.

They begin with the most common consonants, being m, l, s, b and so on. Only after mastery of these 'nonsense syllables' do the children progress to words.

The advancement is smooth, constant and without giant leaps to the next level.

When I asked about tutoring or special helps for children who had difficulties learning to read, the teacher responded that by the time the children learn all of the letters and their associated sounds, there are no problems: the children figure it out and are ready to move to the next level.

Soon they are literate!

## **Technically yes, psychologically ...?**

**Patrick Groff, USA. Professor of Education Emeritus**

The remarks attributed to educational technologist Ken Spencer (SSJuly2000) about the 'foneticity' or 'foneticness' of written words deserve a critical examination. According to Spencer, 'foneticity' of a written word is determined by 'calculating how frequently a particular foneme was represented (spelled) by various grafemes.' Spencer does not divulge why he believes this process is more valid for its purpose than is calculation of the various ways a letter or letter cluster can be sounded out, ie, the identification of the various speech sounds that can be attached to a given letter or letter cluster. In *JSSS* 25, 1999/1 I reported the total numbers involved in these two kinds of calculation are approximately the same.

However, is the mechanical, ie, non-psychological, determination of the foneticity of written words a reliable process? My experimental research findings, cited in the above *JSSS*, suggest that Spencer's views are technically correct, but psychologically indefensible.

In this respect, I found that when beginning readers gain the approximate pronunciation of words which Spencer deems to have a low foneticity rating (such as *have*), they readily infer the correct pronunciation of the words. This evidence clearly refutes the results of Spencer's technical computations of 'unfonetic words.'

I thus propose that a future goal of the SSS be to discover the full psychological nature of fonetic spellings, as I attempted to do in my experimental research. I argue that until members of the SSS obtain much more of such psychological information, the recommendations they make for fonetic alphabets be put on hold. At least, I hope that my remarks will generate an exchange of views between defenders of Spencer's type of research on fonetic words, and those who find my evidence compelling.

## Revised English spelling — *w* and *y*

G V Phadke, India

*W* and *y* are as good as the remaining 19 consonants. However, they have an additional aspect: at times they act as vowels. *W* requires to be preceded by *a*, *e*, or *o*, for example: *raw*, *new*, *cow*, *grow*. In *new* and *cow* its sound is clear, but in the others it is unascertainable. In fact, vowel sounds of *w* are obtainable otherwise. For example: *raw* → *ro*, *new* → *neu*, *cow* → *cou*, *grow* → *grau*.

Is it absolutely necessary to have the help of *w* to obtain a vowel sound? Its use as a vowel should be discontinued. According to the Revised English Spelling System, the vowel sound as in *pot* is obtainable exclusively from *o* and certainly not from *au* or *aw*. Similarly, vowel sound as in *show* is obtainable exclusively from the digraf *au* and not from those such as *b(oa)t*, *t(oe)*, *m(ou)ld*, *gr(ow)*, etc.

The case of *y* is different. It gives two sounds: 1) *i* as in (p)*y*(ramid), (k)ey, (pl)ay, etc; and 2) *aay* as in *my*. This shows that *y* may or may not have any preceding vowel. Sounds *aa* and *y(es)* are combined and the resultant is treated as one vowel sound *aay*, its alphabetic name being *waay* (*y*) and not *aay* or as in (*w*)*i*(*ne*) (*l*). *Y* (and not *l*) am a teacher.

## 'Overwhelming choice' not favored

Robert Craig, England

I see that a new draft chart evaluating spelling schemes has been compiled. From it, it is clear that *j* is the overwhelming choice for the /dzh/ sound.

However, I feel I must dissent from that choice.

We cannot get away from the fact that most European languages use *j* for the /y/ sound. Compare the transcription *Rossiya* with *Rossija* and the second is clearly preferable.

Using *j* like this also releases *y*, which gives us an extra vowel symbol. The /dzh/ sound would then have to be represented by a digraf (*x* = /sh/, *tx* = /tsh/, *dx* [gx] = /dzh/, *zx* = /zh/ might be considered).

[Zé do Rock: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Personal Views](#), [Media](#), [Book](#).]

## 5. German newspaper backtracks on change

### Zé do Rock, Germany

In August one of the two most important daily newspapers in Germany, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), stopped using the new orthography which was agreed in 1996.

Since that date, schools have gradually begun teaching it, and since August last year all the news agencies and papers have started using it. Now FAZ is using the old orthography again, arguing that it was too difficult to use the new one.

The German Academy of Language and Poetry immediately issued a statement agreeing with the decision. Altho there were enuff letters to the editor disapproving of the measure, the majority were in favor. This is not too surprising for a paper known for being conservative.

Certainly it wasn't a perfect reform: even if some rules definitely simplified the spelling, some changes weren't made consistently. There was never a rule on when to write words together or separately; only usage determined it.

Now there are some rules, but the criteria are too subjective. The reformers gave a few hundred examples (many of them contradictory even for a reformer like me), but didn't work out all the possible combinations, so that every dictionary and every newspaper has its own interpretation.

The *Duden*, which was the official German dictionary until the introduction of the reform, appeared in August with a few hundred 'new' old spellings, like *auf wiedersehen* instead of *auf wieder sehen* ('until we see (each other) again'). This was one of the features the anti-reformers had criticized most.

Anti-reformers were certain the FAZ decision would unleash a chain reacion, but it seems it will not happen. No other newspaper has followed so far, and the subject seems to have been passed over. The government of the *land* Schleswig-Holstein managed, by judicial means, to resume teaching the new spellings in its schools, after 57% of its population had voted to go back to the old spelling. It seems that only ardent anti-reformers are still struggling against the decision: parents want their children to learn according to the new rules, since a return to the old spellings would mean higher costs, and their children would have spelling problems when studying in another land (eg, Hamburg, which is almost inside Schleswig-Holstein).

Before the reform was finalized, there was a good deal of criticism from the government, but after the agreement was signed, the government was very firm in its decision to carry the reform to its end.

Politically there wasn't much to lose: even with all the protests, spelling never was one of the top 10 topics for the German-speaking population, and since the decision was taken by the culture ministers of the *länder* and they belong to both left- and right-wing parties, there was no way to protest against it by voting for the 'other' party.

[Jean Wilkinson: see [Newsletters](#)]

## 6. Jean Wilkinson, USA, writes: Litl madnesses

There is no *a* in *eight*, no *r* in *colonel*, no *o* in *sew*, no *i* in *buy* (nor in *women* or *busy*), no *f* in *laugh*, no *w* in *one*, no *sh* in *sugar*...

On the other hand, there are *ls* in *talk* and *half*, *bs* in *doubt* and *thumb*, a *p* in *raspberry*, an *o* in *people*, an *n* in *column*, a *t* in *mortgage* . . . the lists go on and on.

Every English-speaking writer is expected to memorize these exceptional spellings.

And is it *collectable* or *collectible*? U know how u have struggled with this list.

And how about *meter*, *motor*, *zephyr*, *ogre*, *cellar*, *fur*, and *fir*? Can we predict them when they have no sound? No.

Have I mentioned it before? We memorize them. **About half the words in the English language!**

If half the kids in other countries were going thru this same torture, I might curl up and shut up. Maybe. But they are not! All languages have some spelling inconsistencies, some more than others. But — and let this sink in — English takes the cake! How dare we be the worst in the world!

Actually British English is even worse than American English. They have *manoeuvre*, and they spell *draft draught!* Americans may cringe, but the other nations of the world cringe at the US as well.

And yet, the US has no *u* in *honour*, *colour*, *labour* Hurrah! We **can** change!

Who can change? U! !! When enuff people change, the dictionaries will change. We're waiting for them, while they're waiting for us! Are u waiting for permission? There is no law to break. Only custom.

Where would u like to start? *Enuff*. *Thru*? *Tho*? *Wensday*? *Febuary*? *Peple*?  
Do it for the kids.

[Allan Campbell: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Spell4Literacy](#)]

## 7. The rite of replying Allan Campbell

Not all of us are orators or great writers able to rouse the masses to our cause with a clever turn of frase. Nor are we all comfortable in front of a microfone or TV camera. While our cause is the poorer for this, there is no need for despair. Most of us can put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and conjure up some words for the masses or a specific audience to ponder.

Letters to the editor — joined now by talkback radio — are a time-honored outlet for those wanting to have a say and make a convert or two. While in isolation they wield only a spasmodic influence — here today, gone tomorrow — they can, if done often enuff, leave an impression. They are one way for the ordinary person to bring matters to the attention of the public, and that's just what we need to do with spelling. And we need to be open to opportunities.

A person connected with the media once told me that, in New Zealand, media people saw one letter-writer as representing the views of about 10,000 people.

So, what effect do letters have? Individually, possibly not that much. Cumulatively, I suspect much more. Public attitudes that change, change mainly slowly.

Advertisers spend much on repeating expensive TV ads — to have their message sink in. It's the steady drip, drip, drip that wears the stone, and if our letter can be part of a series, the better our chances.

We members are thin on the ground, but, as the recent correspondence in the Christchurch Press showed, email support from others around the globe is not far away.

Letters do get read. Friends have commented to me on some I've written. Sometimes a published letter has led to my receiving private letters in return.

Look for chances (see Masha and the foreign doctors. There are not always great events happening about spelling, and the cause can be in danger of dying for lack of publicity — any publicity.

Where to send them? Obviously any publication that reports or comments on spelling or literacy. Do not turn down the chance because it is a small, local paper. Readers are more likely to identify with u — some may even know u — than in a larger publication. The newspaper may not have the readership figures u'd like, but u have more chance of being published. Every reader counts: if u can influence a handful of them, that's progress!

Avoid the temptation to answer everything. Concentrate on the one point that annoys u most or that u feel most confident in answering, and go for it. Let others take up other aspects.

Stick religiously to the publication's instructions on maximum wordage. Space is scarce, and editors have to omit and abridge letters. Don't make it easier for them to choose yours for the wastepaper bin by making it too long. Some publications will not accept letters sent elsewhere: reassure them.

If u have some idea of the publication's 'style', follow it. Make editing easier. I have sometimes asked that because spelling's the topic, would they please follow my — very minimal — spelling changes, usually *f* for *ph* and *gh*, and *tho*, *thru*. They usually do.

Send by email if u can, but include all necessary details — address, fone, fax. Emailed letters don't have to be retyped. But don't cc your letter to others. If they reply to u they may unintentionally send the reply to the editor.

Make your contribution appropriate to the audience. Eg, a letter on spelling to a specialist publication such as English Today can be more detailed than one to The Times, which in turn can be 'deeper' than one to a tabloid or local paper, very few of whose readers are spelling buffs. But keep it simple. U want as many as possible to read it.

Edit your letter before sending it. But edit lightly. If there is passion in it, do not edit that passion out. Look to improve or remove loose argument, poor wording, grammar, and punctuation. Of course, make sure your spelling is what u ment it to be!

Try to introduce new evidence on the topic.

Be positive. Attack your opponent's arguments, not your opponent. It's not really your opponent u are trying to convert — it's the 'silent majority' of readers. Your opponent's arguments are a means of reaching them.

Should u identify yourself as a member of the Society? U be the judge. If u are the only member in your area, or the only member likely to be writing, why not? It may open the door for u, and entice other writers, thereby extending the correspondence. It may also encourage inquiries about the Society.

[Steve Bett: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

## 8. Spelling on the net with Steve Bett

[Unfortunately, most of the links are no longer available.]

### A new web ring on writing systems

A new web ring on writing systems has been set up to complement the one on spelling reform that John Reilly established over a year ago. A ring is an automated link exchange system which maintains links between similar sites. On the web, about 30% of the links will go dead within a year. The web ring automatically checks for this and removes dead links. Anyone can join a web ring simply by placing a return link on their page. For more information on how to connect your site to one of these rings, contact Steve.

Valerie Yule has posted an article on writing systems found on both the ozideas site and on saundspel. [www.valeriyule.com.au](http://www.valeriyule.com.au)

### Limitations of fonics instruction

An article attempting to introduce middle school teachers to the limitations of fonics in a writing system that matches the dictionary pronunciation guide less than 40% of the

### Order out of web chaos?

A new page, on Weblish, begins with an account of the spelling practises found on the web and suggestions for bringing some order out of the chaos of invented spellings.

### Applied linguistics course

Linguist David Kelley and members of the saundspel discussion group are attempting to build a short course on applied linguistics spelling that reformers and amateur orthograpers would find informative and useful.

### Alan Mole's site for kids

### The alfabet restoration project

The alfabet project aims to make it possible to pronounce words as they are spelled — next to impossible when a symbol is associated with more than two or three sounds. The goal is to reduce the number of sounds per symbol and symbols per sound to less than three. This is similar to but not the same as the near one-to-one relationship of fonemic spelling.

There is general agreement on what four sounds should be associated with each symbol and with each sound. Getting below four, however, is a challenge.

### URL top ten spelling list

1. Spelling sites: links to over 50 rapid:
2. Principles of spelling reform — H Sweet:
3. Writing samples in different orthografies — side by side comparison:
4. Visible speech and the Great Vowel Shift:
5. Oz ideas — Valerie Yule on writing systems: [www.valeriyule.com.au](http://www.valeriyule.com.au)
6. The sounds of English — the foneme inventory:
7. Definitions of key linguistic terms: alfabet, foneme:
8. Romaji (nu roman for ESL)
9. Is stress fonemic? — the truespel solution:
10. Fonetic spelling that shows stress: [www.truespel.com](http://www.truespel.com)

### Talepeace

It cost education authorities in England £7000 to reprint 48,000 posters promoting literacy. The originals, distributed nationwide, had to be destroyed because of spelling mistakes: *vocabluary*, and *though* for *through*. Proofreaders were blamed.

## 9. simpl speling November 2000 members' supplement

**Editor: Allan Campbell**

Fourteen members were taking part in or following the email discussions on RITE (Reducing Irregularity in Traditional English) spelling reform strategy, Masha Bell, Zé do Rock, Guy Otten, and Elizabeth Kuizenga told the July committee meeting.

After the 1999 membership vote for staged improvements to English spelling, the committee set up a subcommittee (Chris Upward, Gerald Palmer, Masha Bell) to frame suggestions for such improvements. The subcommittee faltered and Masha opened the discussions to the email discussion group.

The strategy advocated extending the use of currently dominant or unambiguous spelling patterns where possible, thereby reducing the need to memorize lists of exceptions, which children are taught in their fonics lessons. This would frequently involve just the cutting of surplus letters, and quite often using substitutions as well.

Over the year, the RITE group had tried to establish to what extent such simplifications were possible for all 43 English fonemes. Masha presented a list of 25 possible changes selected so far and voted on by 10 RITE-spellers. The group would like members to grade them 0–10, to see membership support.

The group understood the committee would first await the outcome of the current ballot.

This also applied to ballots requested by other members of emailing groups, and a proposal on American spelling by Gerald Palmer.

**Personal Views editor** Paul Fletcher hoped the electronic version of his summary of the foneme representation in PVs would soon be completed. Paul, Tony, and Gwen had discussed P Mitrevski's PV but felt it was not yet ready for publication. M Carey had inquired about presenting a PV. It was suggested that Paul should send a copy of his handwritten foneme summary to prospective PV authors, as they are required to demonstrate that they have new ideas to offer.

### **Attendances**

**July:** Committee: Jean Hutchins (chair), Masha Bell (minutes), Tony Burns, Paul Fletcher, John Gledhill, Nicholas Kerr, Gerald Palmer, Gwenllian Thorstad, Chris Upward.

Members: Zé do Rock (Germany), Elizabeth Kuizenga (USA), Constantine Dimitriou, Edward Marchant, Vilma Scott. Apology: Chris Jolly

**October:** Committee: Chris Jolly (chair), Masha Bell (minutes), John Gledhill, Jean Hutchins, Nicholas Kerr, Chris Upward.

Members: Edward Marchant, Jack Bovill. Apologies: Tony Burns, Paul Fletcher, Guy Otten, Gerald Palmer, Gwenllian Thorstad.

Absent without apology: Leo Chapman.

## No charitable status for Society

Masha Bell, as treasurer, had written to the Charity Commissioners expressing disappointment at being refused charitable status and asking what evidence was needed for an appeal against their decision. They replied that previous court decisions against the Society made it impossible for it to be registered as a charity while it kept its present name, aims, and constitution. Guy Otten outlined possibilities for separating the two aspects of the Society or registering it abroad. There was no certainty that such changes, expensive and time-consuming, would be of benefit. It was agreed not to pursue the idea.

After outstanding bills following this meeting had been paid the bank and building society assets were about £20,000.

The committee told editor-in-chief Chris Upward that further historical documents like the essay by William Archer in [JSSS27](#) Item 1 would be welcome. Chris said the arrangement with John Reilly as American sub-editor was developing well, and John might take on more page-setting in future.

The July English Today included SSS's full Langscape 6 submission a year after it was submitted. It also included an article by Adam Brown, SSS member in Singapore.

An article on American spellings had been submitted to a NZ teachers' journal as input to their debate on the subject, and should appear toward the end of the year. New member Jonathan Free wanted the medical profession to adopt American spellings for their journal. The committee agreed that he should be encouraged to suggest this.

Chris has written an article for member Nicoletta Tonizzo's professor of English in Italy for publication in an Italian journal. The professor may be able to use CS experimentally with Italian students in the autumn.

Professor Sig Prais, a member, has researched literacy acquisition in Switzerland. It should be completed this year.

Secretary Masha Bell said discussion of the wording for the ballot had been time-consuming. With help from the RITE group she had almost finished her classification of divergent spellings for common English words for all 43 fonemes and would try to organize her findings in a way that could be effectively displayed on the internet or published as a resource for teachers, parents, students and all would-be reformers of English spelling.

## Procedural issues dominate

In a meeting largely devoted to procedural matters, the committee last month decided:

1. Committee business should not be discussed with the wider membership unless agreed beforehand.
2. There should be no personal criticism by committee members of other committee members to the membership.
3. If a committee member, despite prior written warning from the chair, continues with inappropriate behaviour to the membership, the chair has the right to suspend that person's committee membership subject to ratification at the next committee meeting.
4. Committee members should not attempt to influence ballots.
5. Formal submissions by the SSS and supporting evidence must be approved by the committee beforehand. Masha should not take a lead in drafting SSS communications to authorities, which should be left to editor-in-chief Chris Upward. Masha's draft letter to Education Secretary David Blunkett about his 600 difficult words for 11-year-olds to learn was therefore to be deferred.
6. Communications to the press by Masha, Allan Campbell and others were warmly welcomed, and all members were encouraged to undertake such correspondence, noting that it should be made clear whether speaking personally or for the Society.

RITE spelling could be presented in the format of a PV (with a members' response sheet), a ballot form, or an article in *Simpl Speling*.

If the RITE or any group wanted to ballot all SSS members on proposals for change, these would have to be put to the committee first. The results of such a ballot would not be binding or definitive in any way.

Masha found the Society is not liable for corporation tax on dividends from investments, as led to believe. Tax is deducted at source. She has therefore submitted an amended corporation tax return. After receiving the final tax demand for 1999 she will check if previous overpaid tax can be reclaimed. Society assets with the Portman Building Society and Barclays Bank were close to £19,000.

An email SSS committee would not be easy to operate, as it is far more difficult to word motions by email, without face-to-face contact. It would need to be a chat-type system operating in real time.

English Today, October issue, has a short article by Chris Upward on British-American spellings.

Members were welcome to make suggestions for lobbying about the need for reform, provided they were prepared to implement those ideas.

Membership secretary John Gledhill reported 134 paid members, three life members, three members with subscriptions waived for 2000; eight individuals or groups receive complimentary copies of *Simpl Speling*, 29 receive complimentary copies of the *Journal* (libraries, editorial teams, etc). Since the July meeting there had been the following changes: 13 new members, one lapsed member re-joined, eight members were removed from the list for non-payment of subscriptions, three members had left, one the result of the final reminder, and one had died.

Jean Hutchins, list moderator, said the SSSlist automated email discussion group had started on February 26 this year, and in that time 4314 messages had been sent, 154 in September. The RITEspel group separated from it on May 22. It had logged 1560 messages, 213 in September.

There are 21 members on the SSSlist and 19 on RITEspel, mostly but not entirely the same people on both. SSSnews, for sending SSS news announcements to any member on email, was started on May 12. Eight messages have been sent, one in September. There were currently 50 on this list. Some new members have not replied to the invitation to join. There were frequent changes to all lists.

The question of copyright of SSS publications had arisen at least twice recently. To clarify matters, Chris Upward proposed adding the following statement to the JSSS guidelines for authors: 'Unless other arrangements are explicitly made, copyright for all publications of the Simplified Spelling, Society resides with the Society, which may use such materials as it thinks fit in pursuit of its goal of English spelling reform'. Chris intends to seek advice from Guy Otten on legal implications in the UK, and from JSSS's American editor John J Reilly (also a lawyer) on the suitability of this statement for America.

- Next committee meeting: January 27, 2001.

Guidelines for presenting members' schemes as *Personal Views* available: Paul Fletcher, England.

Meanwhile, back at the office ...

Masha Bell's column will resume in the next issue. – Ed

Stop press: As this issue was being published, a proposal was before the general and committee emailing groups suggesting email membership of the committee be encouraged, with postal election. More in March issue.