

## SS4.

### **simpl speling November 1997 newsletter of the simplified spelling society Editor: Allan Campbell**

Society founded 1908

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

#### **A new name**

This is the first issue of the Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter to appear as *Simpl Speling*. Proposed by the editor, the name was adopted by the committee at its April meeting. Background and comment: see editorial.

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[Ted Relton: see [Newsletters](#)]

#### **1. Publish — and be damned ...**

In spite of peer criticism, a Society member will use a small range of improved spellings in his publication.

Ted Relton, of Ilford, England, has decided to use the forms *alinement*, *altho*, *congestion*, *gage*, *program*, *strait*, and *thru* throughout part of the *World Gazetteer of Tram, Trolleybus, and Rapid Transit Systems*, which covers North America. Most crop up frequently in a transport context.

I am firmly of the opinion that the way to get improved spellings adopted is to use them in publications," he says. "They should therefore appear in dictionaries in due course, because

dictionaries record usage; they do not attempt to be arbiters of spelling."

He has had adverse reactions member from an expert reader in Chicago, and from the former editor of *Trolleybus Magazine*. He sought the advice of Chris Upward, the Society's editor-in-chief and literature secretary, and as a result has decided to stand his ground.

On rereading part 3 — Europe — he has found he used *thru* consistently in that issue, with no adverse comment.

"I therefore feel justified in using "the limited reforms. I think as long as I am consistent, I obviate the charge of 'poor spelling'; a 'poor speller' is likely to have different forms in different places," he comments.

[Joe Little: see [Journal 29](#), [Newsletters](#), [Media](#)]

## 2. ... or simply praise the Lord

Joe Little, American Literacy Council, USA

The forms, *thru*, *thruout*, and *tho* are now being used in the weekly bulletins of a big New York City church. The bulletins include various well-known Christian worship songs, such as *Just a Closer Walk with Thee*.

I used to sing along and grumble when I came to through, etc. Finally I spoke to the worship director. Tho I had known him for years, something told me he needed more than a face-to-face proposal. So I demonstrated ALC's new Sound-Spell literacy software and then moved to our one-page *Close Look at the Variations of English Spelling*.

I took the scenic route in my quest. I asked about the logistics of bulletins, printed lyric sheets, and music. Once he saw I was interested in his know-how, I repeated some of the words or themes he had used to segue into my proposal, which was to consider a very short list of simpler spellings within the hymn portion of the bulletin because each

- 1) matches the word's sound;
- 2) is listed in dictionaries;
- 3) is conservative so as not to distract;
- 4) saves line space.

When he could get a word in, he offered a fifth reason:  
Shorter spelling helps match note width to word width.

He agreed to go along without announcing the change or my involvement. And I call him when a hymn slips thru without the simpler spelling.

He would also likely favor other spellings I recommend. The best ones with dictionary cache I can think of are *nite* and *tonite*. But I'll bide my time.

Can other *Simpl Speling* readers match this in their church or synagog? I hope to hear from them. It's doable!

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

#### **Phonological awareness important**

*Evening Standard*, Palmerston North, NZ

No one expects a teenager to know how to drive a car without a step-by-step learning program, and the same should be true of the approach to reading, says Professor Robert Calfee, of Stanford University.

His lecture to a *Reading on Track* reading conference in New Zealand was based on his findings in the Read Plus research.

He said phonological awareness was an important role of learning English spelling, as the English phonic was a real mess unless U know how to carve it up".

He said some children did not have the 'foggiest idea' what the teacher was talking about when asked to match letters to sounds, because they had not been taught. When asked during an exercise what they were doing, some children didn't know. They said they were doing it because the teacher had told them to.

Professor Calfee said spelling was a recent invention, and the best way to advance children was to have teachers available to "help children understand this technology".

#### **Bilingual kids see relationship sooner**

*Washington Post*

Bilingual preschool children understand the relationship between writing and words earlier than children who know only one language, a study published in the journal *Developmental Psychology* reports. This difference may help bilingual children learn to read more easily.

The study of 137 4- and 5-year-olds compared the performance of bilingual children (French-English or Chinese-English) with that of monolingual children (English only) on tests evaluating their grasp of the relationship between written letters or characters and words.

#### **Cornell's plan a Sunday feature**

An article, *Spelling for dummies*, on member Cornell Kimball's plan for improved spellings appeared in July in the *San Jose Mercury News* (California) Sunday magazine. It was partly tongue-in-cheek, but publicized the absurdities of spelling.

His plan was reported as persuading newspapers to adopt better spelling forms.

The article noted misspellings such as *Lanscaping* on a Caltrans (California highway department) sign (Cornell works for Caltrans, but disclaims responsibility!).

In August a follow-up article, *Misspelling Bee*, was published. Later, a series of letters appeared: A reading program volunteer related the difficulties he encountered explaining exceptions to spelling rules, and now understood why people gave up trying to learn English. Another writer facetiously asked which dialect would spelling be standardized on.

Cornell also had a letter published correcting the original report, which erred in indicating he was advocating phonetic spelling.

## **Wagging the dog**

### **Bruce Beach, World Language Program, Canada**

ANJEL Tug (Angel Tongue) is a language/ spelling system with a difference: It targets non-English speakers.

It is used as part of the World Language Program (WLP) which aims to teach the language in 18 days, using captioned video, workbooks, teacher's manuals, and eventually such aids as a captioned simplified English animation series and comic books.

The WLP was developed by the Unkommon (**U**niversal **K**ommunications por la **M**onde) Foundation (a Canadian federally incorporated nonprofit organization) in response to worldwide interest in English. The WLP is a project of the IAEWP (International Association of Educators for World Peace), an NGO to the UN and Unesco. The WLP has chancellors in over 30 countries. It hopes to train and send out 1000 volunteer teachers from its base in North America, and eventually to establish interact procedures, along with schools and classes thruout the world.

ANJEL Tug is named from the biblical concept of humanity once speaking a single language in common with the angels, until confused at Babel. It is phonemically based. So that there will be a unique symbol for each sound, it assigns separate sounds to both the upper and lower case letters used in TO.

WLP uses the Access (Auxiliary Closed Captioned English with Simplified Spelling) system along with its pedagogical principles to teach ANJEL Tug in 18 days. Access involves closed captioned entertainment video which provides motivation for learners to continue to improve their ability to hear English and increase their vocabulary.

ANJEL Tug is promoted as an intermediate teaching language (ITL) for teaching EFL (English as a foreign language). An ITL makes simplifications in the target language to make it easier to learn. ANJEL Tug simplifies English spelling, syntax, and vocabulary.

The billions who might be inclined to learn English could do so more easily thru this ITL. If this should occur they could be wagging the dog of the mere millions of native English speakers.

[Robert Craig: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

## **4. What one member has been doing — and observing**

### **Long service has seen many proposals**

#### **Robert Craig. LANGO, Isle of Man**

I first became acquainted with the SSS and Nue Speling in 1948 when language reform was being applied to Irish and Dutch. It then took me many years to rediscover it, mainly because it never occurred to me, or anyone else, to seek the 'Spelling Reform Society' under the heading 'Simplified'.

It was not till the early 1960s that I eventually found it again. The membership consisted largely of enthusiastic, committed people who had given many years to the cause. Predominantly they were elderly school teachers, whose sole object appeared to be to lessen the problems of infant school children. They seemed to regard Nue Speling as the whole answer, perhaps needing a little tweaking to make it generally acceptable.

This culminated in the World English Spelling of the 1970s. Apart from the school teachers, there were a number of people with their own schemes which were in conflict. A valiant few predominantly elderly people kept the flag flying, producing a mimeographed newsletter, *The Pioneer*, until that eventually petered out. By the 1980s things were at a low ebb with a dedicated core membership soldiering on (altho there had been a successful international conference).

It was then that things began to turn around, largely I think because of the dynamic presence of Chris Upward. I attended the AGM in 1984 where I supported motions in favor of a revision of Nue Speling proposed by Larry Fennelly and in favor of adopting Stanley Gibbs' 'Big Five' stage 1 reform. While I was not a supporter of NS, and had reservations about the 'Big Five', I felt it was better to do something than to do nothing, preferring praxis to theory. The revised version of NS was produced as NS90, which effectively killed it off. Altho the 'Big Five' was the official policy for many years, it failed to thrive.

### **Shift of emphasis**

It was as a way to overcome the subjectivity of the 'Big Five' that Chris Upward developed Cut Spelling. This gave rise to strong opposition from the old teaching faction, because it shifted the emphasis from speech to the existing written language, and from children's needs to adult convenience.

The next important event was when Bob Brown took over as secretary, bringing professional organizing skills to the task, and a certain flair. His death was a great loss. He shifted the Society's thrust from promoting an agreed scheme to establishing the principle of reform among the public and opinion formers.

My own views developed following correspondence with the editor of the *Bristol Evening Post*, who brought to my attention the need for a house style, and the preference for narrow letters — *i* and *u* to *e*, *y*, and *w* — by the press (cf, *gipsy*, *dispatch* vs *gypsy*, *despatch*). I feel that rather than pressing for our own particular systems we should co-operate to promote those changes which have majority support. I also think that we should have an official house style so that we can show the public that our proposals work in practise (there should be a house-style subcommittee).

In the last couple of years I have cooperated with Antony Alexander in writing Lango. It is our contention that if it has not proved possible to reform traditional English spelling then the answer is a parallel gelect which, while being mutually intelligible with English, would influence traditional English in all its aspects, including spelling.

We need to find open doors and press on them — 'American' spelling, shorter words, international forms; eg, I conducted a one-person campaign for *jail* in newspapers. I have also campaigned for the 'American' spellings, and had some favorable response — from public people in Ireland until they became aware of my connection with the Society. I put my name on the Avon Register of Societies as the county representative of the Society. This is distributed to local libraries thruout the county.

Why is *abbreviation* such a long word? And *long* such a short one?

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

## 5. Editorial

### More than a glimmer

Allan Campbell

My first day at secondary school was a disaster. The 1200 boys gathered in the school hall to be addressed by the headmaster and allocated their various classes. Long lists of names were read out and I listened ... and listened ... and heard no mention of my name

— *Sir Edmund Hillary. Nothing Venture, Nothing Win*

What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other word would smell as sweet

— *Romeo and Juliet 2:1*

Names can seem important, but it is more likely it was Juliet's plaint that crossed the minds of members as they picked up this newly titled issue of the newsletter. After all, what was wrong with the old title?

Essentially, nothing! It told exactly what the publication was and who published it. A good label.

Nonessentially, it was a mouthful (13 syllables). Even 'SSS Newsletter' was long enuf and ment nothing to the uninitiated; 'The Newsletter' even less.

And it was bland. It gave very little vision, only a glimmer of its mission. No example of what might be, a glance into the future.

The newsletter's title can be a regular reminder of the goal of the Society. And a prod to the conscience: What have I done lately to lead us closer to this goal?

Nonmembers who read it or read of it will see from both the words and their spellings what we are on about.

I proposed the words and spellings to the committee in April after considering a number of options. There was an objection that *Speling* didn't unambiguously show the short value of the e. But there are no actual clashing forms, so that didn't seem too serious a concern. On the suggestion of a member, the words were simplified further by dropping the initial capitals in the ikon, tho we will capitalize in text.

The spellings indicate simplification and shortening, and illustrate forms from at least two of the spelling systems that have been put to the Society

The new title is not set in concrete and can be changed again if and when that will help the campaign.

## **Simpl Speling's 'style**

**Allan Campbell, New Zealand**

When I took on editing the Newsletter, I decided against a hotchpotch of competing (and off-putting) spelling systems. But I also wanted to practise what we preached.'

So, taking a global view of the language, I settled on a system that uses the best forms (in my opinion) from any reputable dictionary published anywhere in the world.

These include formal (*center, dialog, realize, fulfil, color, practise*) and informal (*tho, thru, boro*; and now *U*).

In addition I wanted to stretch the boundaries. Cornell Kimball, publisher, and I came up with a restricted use of Harry Lindgren's SR 1 (about a quarter of the total): e only for short /e/ (*deth, frend, breth*) I have also tilted at ough (enuf, tuf, cof, bou).

If I miss a better, dictionary-recognized form, please let me know.

## **6. Letters**

### **An opportunity to develop a 'house style'**

**Robert Craig, England**

Simpl Speling gives us an opportunity to develop a 'house style'. The problem with tackling orthography is that English is a mondial language and should have a mondial spelling.

Clearly, what is required is an orthography which would in, be suitable for all users of English, not one based on any particular national type.

What I suggest is to compile a list of spellings and to invite SSS members to approve them, perhaps by ballot. This could be opened up to the public thru the internet for comment.

### **Ergonomics has a lesson for spelling reformers**

**Dan MacLeod, USA.**

I am a consulting ergonomics engineer who earns a living designing workplace equipment that is easier to use, and I make money only when I make things work. I have no expertise in linguistics, but am an expert in designing simplified things and getting user acceptance.

Simplified spelling is the point where ergonomics and the English language intersect.

The major lesson of ergonomics to anyone designing anything is to consult the users. It is one thing to sit in an R&D lab and design a logical system. It is quite another to see if the system fits in with what users see as being better.

So, it seems to me some ergonomics techniques might offer value to spelling reform. For example, one method is called a usability lab, where researchers study how users make mistakes when trying to operate equipment. These mistakes provide insights into how users tend to intuitively want to operate it, and therefore how it ought to be designed.

I'm curious how much surveying of native English-speakers has been done on the various alternative-spelling systems. Are there any focus groups or experiments? Is there any analysis of how people make spelling mistakes that would provide answers?

Since joining the Society I have been more observant and noticed how Americans are already simplifying spelling. I'm struck by the widespread use here of *nite*, *lite*, *tho*, and *thru*, especially in advertisements and the names of companies and brands.

I think most Americans now write *thru* in handwritten notes, but *through* in formal letters or publications. If there were some way of giving 'permission' to use simpler forms, my guess is most Americans would eliminate every *gh* combination tomorrow.

The point is the population is telling us how they want to spell these words. Formulating a system to spell them *throo* or *tait* (*tight*) or whatever would run counter to a natural tendency and might be harder to achieve.

## **Dutch reform a model for English?**

### **Anthony Maye. Belgium**

I discovered the Simplified Spelling Society whilst surfing the internet. I have been living in Belgium since 1984 and, tho not a linguist, I have learned the main languages, French and Dutch (Flemish).

I regularly analyze the differences and similarities between these languages and English, and feel the modernization of Dutch would form a model for the revision of English. It is of course much easier to bring about changes in a language spoken by 20m people living in neighboring societies but this is no excuse for not trying to modernize our own.

Various reforms have been introduced into Dutch since the 1950s aimed at removing redundant letters, simplifying genders, and standardizing spelling whilst retaining a link to the etymology. Dutch is now generally pronounced as it is written, meaning when I read Dutch I know directly how to pronounce it without knowing all of the words (getting my tongue round some sounds is another matter). Another advantage is if I hear a word, I have a good chance of finding it in the dictionary.

A good example of the uniformity of Dutch is the use of single and double consonants and vowels. Double vowels lengthen a syllable (cf, the English words *reed*/ *red*). Double consonants shorten the preceding vowel sound if it is not the final syllable (as in British English *travel*/*travelling*). I would be delighted to discuss in greater detail how Dutch spelling reform could be applied to English.

My main interest in the Society is to track down information on i.t.a. I vaguely remember being taught to read using this in my Lancashire school, have fond memories of the books and would love to get hold of some examples to show people who look at me blankly when I mention it. I remember having great pleasure 'in reading at infant school. The only negative aspect was I had already been taught to read at home, and my parents were upset at being told not to teach me any more as it would affect my progress in i.t.a., or was it because it would affect the experiment results?

## **Don't judge good spellers as wise; poor as ignorant**

**Alan Mole. USA**

English spelling is an atrocity, but we all learn it and read a lot, so we often recognize a misspelled word even when we could not spell it ourselves. Because smart people master even spelling well, we judge good spellers as wise, and poor spellers as ignorant.

I urge that we change this. If English spelling is to be reformed, there will be an intermediate period with spellings from different systems and, as people learn the new systems, with spellings which are wrong in every system. We should recognize this and accept it.

As we understand what is happening, and that it is for the best, we should make a conscious decision not to judge a work on its spelling, but merely say "Oh! There's a different spelling. It's better (or worse) than my own, so I'll adopt it (or not)." And then move on.

This is a strange resolution but one we must make if we are ever to fix the horrible old system. Memorization of nonsense was never the mark of a genius, anyway.

## **Faster to read — but who needs speed?**

**(Dr) Peter Gilet. Indonesia**

The most powerful argument in favor of retaining the old spelling is that it has become in part ideographic, in the sense that we draw visual patterns using letters to differentiate various words, and do not just use those letters phonetically.

This means that *thought* has a strikingly different profile from other words that might occur about it. *Tho* looks like *the* and we would have to slow reading if we replace *though* by *tho*.

Basically, then, traditional spelling is faster to read. The answer to this is, I think, that very few of us really need to read that fast. If we want to do so, then there is no reason why such 'ideographic' spelling should not be taught as a special course in places where it might be of use, say at universities, where the classics could still be read in this way to retain the feel of the old writing, and for speed.

Another way is to go thru a form of cut spelling, where the abbreviations would in fact be just as ideographic as current spelling. This is no new thing. Records of medieval court proceedings, taken on the spot in legal Latin, often have the most enterprising cuts in their spelling; eg, *R* for *rogatus*, as, on doctors' prescriptions.

When U think of it, we are obliged to use a spelling system designed for the educated elite, who could profit from faster reading, and this is just not one of the priorities of the common reader today.

## **Partly accepted spellings**

**Harry Cookson. Portugal**

I have seen *tho*, *thru*, *thoro* used in US books. They seem to be partly accepted spellings. I support them, but the first *o* in *thoro* may later have to be *u*. Also I support *thro* for *throw*. I find *tho* and *thru* as alternatives in *Webster's New Pocket Dictionary*.

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

## 7. Jean writes.

**Jean Wilkinson, USA**, in the July Newsletter related what she had been doing for spelling modernization. Her account told of writing short pieces, reflecting her thoughts on spelling, to anyone who would read them. We plan to publish some of these as the opportunity offers. They are not copyright

### **If U could spell *Wednesday* any way U liked ...**

While passing out free zucchini from our garden, I conducted this small survey at random from our middle-class neighborhood and relatives, July–August 1997. I questioned 25 people, aged 11 to 88, including two teenagers. Not everyone answered every question. Talled votes are:

6 *Wednesday*; 13 *Wensday*; also *Winsday*, *Whensday*, *Wednsday* (intended to be TO spelling by boy age 11), *Wenesday*, *Wed*.

6 *February*; 10 *Febuary* (one vote intended to be TO, by same boy); also: 3 *Febuwary*; *Pheb-you-aiery* (there's always a clown among us), *Feburary*, *Febury*.

9 *enough*; 8 *enuf*; also: 3 *enuff*, *enouf*.

10 *women*; 6 *wemen*; 2 *wimen*; also: *weoman*, *wimman*, *wimmen*, *wman*.

10 *one*; 3 *wun*; 3 *won*; also: 1, *wone*, *wn*.

In asking for the spelling of *February*, I pronounced it 'Febuary,' as American TV broadcasters now do. Without exception, those who used the word in our conversation said 'Febu-', even if they chose 'Febru-' as their preferred spelling. Two people commented "We should be saying 'Febru-!'"

Another said: "It took me 40 years to learn how to spell *February* and I'm not going to change it now!" The next day, at my home, he said: "I'd like to change that response to *Febuary*."

Another said of February: "I always try to put the r in. If only I knew where to put it!" She had Feburary as her preference.

A retired junior high school secretary said we should be pronouncing *Wednesday* as it is spelled: Wed-nes-day. It is our pronunciation that is incorrect. "People are so embroiled in the current pronunciation that the spelling has become unimportant."

One person observed one could not be changed because won meant something else. One was the only TO spelling that polled more than its total alternate spellings.

Another participant felt strongly that *weoman* was an accepted spelling of *women*, but was unable to find it in the dictionary. I found two occurrences of it among the many archaic spellings of *women* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Out of 25 people questioned, only two were consistently satisfied with current dictionary spellings. "Because it's right." "Because U can't change the world."

Five or six of the questioned people previously knew I was interested in spelling. Only three advocated changes in all five words. Two of the three could have been influenced by previously knowing of my hobby.

I asked one if she had already received my paper on the evolution of *Wednesday* as recorded in the OED. She said: "Yes. I still have it. I made photocopies of it and sent them to my frends." I was touched.

A frend added: "I tutored a couple of Japanese students; that's when U find how crazy your

language is."

When I asked a Flemish neighbor how she'd spell *Wednesday*, she asked: "Can I spell it in French?" She had no idea how to simplify it, but did say "Why we have a *d* in there? We don't need that." She mentioned that since she had moved from Belgium, Flemish spelling had undergone an updating. [See letters, — Ed.]

My cousin suggested *wman* and *wn*, not knowing that cut spelling attempts to eliminate silent letters that have no function; ie, *silnt lettrs*, *wrds*. I'm going to suggest she call her technique 'Supercuts' (which is also a barbershop franchise popular around here).

A trap in producing a publication espousing simplified spelling is that sometimes the 'correct' spelling is incorrect, and *vice versa*. Spell checkers are no help!

In Jean Wilkinson's 'Op-Ed letter' in the July issue, 'Febuary' was twice printed with an *r* too many — in the final sentences of the first and fifth paragraphs. We apologize to Jean and readers for our error and suggest a reread with the corrections marked.

[Chris Upward: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamflet](#), [Leaflets](#), [Media](#), [Book and Papers](#).]

## 8. Straight answer to *Bizarre* request

[The Society has been asked for an update of an entry in *The Bizarre Leisure Book*. Chris Upward obliges.]

Dear Stephen Jarvis

I must admit to being rather taken aback that the simplification of spelling could have an entry in a work entitled *The Bizarre Leisure Book* But I suppose the campaigns for the abolition of slavery or for women's suffrage would have been similarly classified in times gone by, so for the sake of the publicity, I guess we should submit to inclusion in your new edition.

However, we have moved on significantly since the account in your present edition was researched — one of your references is 50 years old, several hark back decades, and one I have never heard of? No doubt some people still consider it bizarre to work for the removal of orthographic obstacles to literacy, but we would hope that your next edition will serve to enlighten them.

I enclose some information leaflets about our Society's current thinking, which I suggest you study in conjunction with relevant entries (eg, 'spelling reform') in the *Oxford Companion to the English Language*. I also enclose the latest issue of our *Journal*, from which I hope you will see that our work is not all that bizarre, nor particularly leisurely.

In answer to your specific questions:

You may give our membership secretary as point of contact: Jean Hutchins [address supplied].

We have links with similar bodies in France, Germany and Switzerland, and there are a couple of affiliated organizations in the USA; but by and large people concerned with the modernization of English spelling look to the SSS itself. Our membership extends to Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, the USA.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch again if we can be of further assistance in helping you prepare the new entry.

## 9. If it's not this, it's that

Jean Hutchins, England

I am investigating voice activated software. One of my concerns about it for dyslexic users is proofreading — has it put in the words spoken to it?

I asked a dyslexic 14-year-old, Grant, if he could choose correctly between homophones or between a correctly spelt word and an incorrectly spelt word. When reading we look at words and read what is there. When spelling, we have to recall the letters in the word, out of thin air. It is a task between those two to choose the correct one of two or more options

Interestingly, Grant said that he usually knows one of the confusables and therefore the other word must be the other meaning! He has noticed that he has particular trouble with spelling *whether* but if he sees *weather/ whether* he knows what the first one means, so the other one must be the other meaning. (It was really mean of me to introduce wether = sheep which he had not heard of.' Sorry, Grant.)

A small number of Harry Lindgren's paperback *Spelling Reform: A New Approach* are available free to members.

### Some comments from members

Jean Hutchins, membership secretary, gets many comments with subscriptions. A selection:

- I think I was still a teacher when I joined the SSS. I thought how ludicrous it was to have children not being able to spell beautiful at 7 and still not being able to spell it when they left primary school at 11.

— *Tilly Friederich*

- As a child ... I wasn't too bothered about my spelling errors as I felt my way was the most sensible way! As a student teacher I realized the great waste of time and money caused by TO and how miserable it was for children who hadn't a gift that way. I felt very strongly it leads to behavior problems.

— *Jean Shelley*

- I am hopeful the re-defined aims of the SSS will get better results than in the past. It seems to be more friendly now.

— *Jessie Wilson*

- I teach an A-level English language course which includes spelling reform as a topic.

— *Jennifer Chew*

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

## 10. Spelling on the 'net

### Members get cool and automate

Steve Bett

Since the July Newsletter the informal SSS mailing list has become an automated list using the server software and facilities of Coollist.

I was thinking of finding a university that would provide server space at no cost. Nick Kerr not only came up with the idea of using a commercial service but also volunteered to be the list manager. Since this is a non-censored list, anything anyone writes gets posted; the manager's duties are explaining the joining and the unsubscribing procedure to current and new members, and checking that all is going smoothly.

The informal list worked fine until someone wanted to subscribe or unsubscribe. Since there was not one list but as many lists as there were subscribers, it was hard to get on and off everyone's individual list. The automated list solves this problem by having a single centralized list and a simple standardized way to subscribe and unsubscribe. When U send a message, it is automatically forwarded to all on the list. Remember to send your requests to start or stop the mail to another address.

There are three ways to join the list: [no longer available]

- 1 Send a blank message to the Coollist robot:
- 2 Send an email to Nick:
- 3 Visit Nick's web site and follow the instructions.

Here you can type in your email address and click the *Add me* button

The list currently has between 20 and 25 subscribers who generate about 20 messages a day. Not everyone is a participant, usual in lists forums and acceptable, tho it would be good to hear from the quiet ones occasionally.

The principal benefit of the list so far has been to clarify issues and learn about various solutions to the problem of simplifying English orthography. Creative orthographers need to know every possible critique of their notation proposals. The list has been a great source of critiques.

While it has created better understanding of alternative notational systems and alternative solutions to various problems, it has not (yet) resulted in any consensus.

The principal reason is there are several goals and no agreement on their relative importance. If your main goal is providing a pronunciation guide, your solution will be different than that of the person whose goal is to provide minimal notation for communication or the person who wants to make TO just a little more regular without changing the basic word pattern.

There has been progress in stating the issues dividing warring factions. This is not consensus, but it is a start.

The closest thing to an agreement has been the use of the apostrophe for the (unstressed /uh/) where not marking it would lead to ambiguity. The schwa has now been incorporated into four notational systems, so there is still hope for further convergence.

While there is agreement on the general goals to be achieved by the new spelling (listed below) there is little agreement on their relative importance:

- Simpler than TO. Easier to teach and learn
- More economical than TO
- Closer to IPA but without diacritical marks
- As close as possible to at least one spelling pattern found in TO
- More regular and consistent than TO
- A better guide to pronunciation than TO
- Fewer spelling rules than TO
- Closer correspondence between symbols (graphemes) and sounds

Taken to the extreme, many of these goals are not mutually achievable; eg, the optimum guide to pronunciation is not going to be simple or easily taught.

## **Tale peace**

### **A very correct postal sistme**

Dear Miss C

we have made enquiries at auer end also abut your parcel. The post office in Zurich is serten that the parcel as got as far as England.

Wie have a very correct postal sistme.

Wiw have also spocken to Mrs. A ..... and got a description of the parcel.

Wie are also certen that the parcel was correctly adressed becouse otherwise the parcel would have come bach to us. We hope that you will be able to find the parcel at your end.

Wie are sorry that wie are not able to do more for you

Your sincerli.

A. M

[An old typewritten letter found in an Ipswich insurance office and submitted by Tony, of England.]