

SS7.

***simpl speling* November 1998**
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

Web: www.spellingsociety.org

Net sampling

About one in five SSS members has email access. Others miss the many points made on the Society's chat group. For a small taste of what's posted, we reprint extracts from three items

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1. Member moves to establish International Spelling Day

For a long time an advocate of an annual spelling day to focus on the need for orthographic change, Society vice-president Valerie Yule made a 'unilateral declaration' of October 9 1998 as International Spelling Day to coincide with South Korea's Great Letters Day (below).

She suggested a number of activities to mark the day, including starting a week of spelling-spotting and spelling-watching for students in schools, and for the public in newspapers.

A columnist in the Melbourne *Age* newspaper wrote sympathetically of the occasion, and promised to enter it in his diary for next year.

Valerie is asking the Society to pick up the plan for October 1999.

Spelling jokes competition

The 1998 international competition for Spelling Day is for the best collection of spelling jokes.

Collect cartoons, limericks, quips, riddles, anecdotes, drawings, or make up your own.

Prizes: Individual collections — Booklets on spelling games, and spelling cartoon memo books.

Best school collection — A take-home Teach Yourself to Read and Spell half-hour cartoon video.

The usual competition rules apply. All contributions without a prior copyright may be included in a Spelling Joke Book being compiled in aid of literacy innovations. Send your entry to: The Spelling Jokes Competition by email to Valerie Yule. Closing date: February 9, 1999

Why Koreans honor their spelling

Valerie Yule, Australia

King Sejong the Great, fourth monarch of the Yi dynasty of the Chosen Kingdom in Korea hundreds of years ago, ordered his scholars to find a simple method of writing Korean so that even the common people could express their thoughts in writing. They looked overseas, found nothing they thought good enough, and so, typically Korean, invented their own. It was promulgated in 1493 — a set of 11 vowels and 17 consonants now simplified further to 10 vowels and 14 consonants. The letters are arranged into syllables, which then block into words that look like simple Chinese characters. (When the king died the mandarins revoked it, reverting to Chinese writing, on the grounds that Hangul enabled the common people to read and write.)

Under Japanese occupation, using the Hangul system instead of Japanese became a major tool in expressing Korean nationalism. After liberation, Hangul Day became part of the celebrations, with an annual national holiday. It is no longer a holiday, but is still celebrated with distinguished guests and scholars commemorating the Hangul system and conferring on ways to keep it as useful as possible.

The Hangul alphabet is acclaimed one of the world's great literary achievements and the most remarkable fonetic alphabet ever produced.

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

Drop in number of fluent Maori speakers

Marking the tenth anniversary of Maori being legislated an official New Zealand language, Maori language commissioner Timoti Karetu said in that time the number of fluent Maori speakers of the language had declined from 18% to about 8%.

However, the numbers learning it had grown, as a result of *kohanga reo* (language nest) preschools and *kura kaupapa* (culture and language schools).

Samoa, second most widely spoken Polynesian language in New Zealand, has become a School Certificate (O level) subject. — Ed.

Poll supports need for language authority

Ron Footer, England

A weekly program on BBC Radio 4, called *Straw Poll*, discusses various topics and then takes the views of listeners. At the end of July the subject was *A language authority is essential*. A later program gave the result:

Agree it is essential 85%; disagree 15 %.

Globish — global English

Madhukar N Gogate, of Pune, India, has proposed Globish as an informal global auxiliary language using 2000 fonetically spelt English words. It would not challenge the supremacy of normal English.

Britons reluctant linguists

According to the London Daily Telegraph a 12-month study by academics, diplomats, and business people will try to determine whether Britons' reluctance to master languages is the result of arrogance or ignorance. England came bottom of a league table of European teenagers' proficiency in foreign languages.

Core subjects being squeezed

Because of the crowded curriculum, New Zealand secondary school students may become generalists in everything, experts in nothing.

Schools say that as more subjects are squeezed into the time-table, core skills such as literacy and numeracy are at risk.

Next year technology is compulsory for students until the end of fourth form (year 10), and schools are cutting back on English, maths, or optional subjects to fit it in, teachers say.

3. Coping with the German reforms:

Subtle shifts still spark strife

Reuter

'Drat this German tongue. I shall never be able to learn it,' wrote American author Mark Twain on his first visit to Germany in 1878.

For anyone, native or foreigner, who has thrown up their hands in similar despair at the complexities of the German language, there may now be some hope.

The sweeping overhaul Twain proposed to 'the awful German language' in his 1880 book, *A Tramp Abroad* is not yet in the offing, but Germany's highest court has ruled that controversial plans to reform German grammar and spelling were in line with the constitution and could go ahead.

The changes proposed are subtle shifts in comparison to Twain's suggestions, but they have still managed to spark months of heated controversy in the German-speaking world.

Many have denounced the *recht-schreibreform* — literally *proper writing reform* — as practically sacrilegious, while others have called it simply unnecessary.

The changes became the norm in German schools with the start of the new school year in August, and the civil service will follow a year later. Old rules will be allowed to remain in use elsewhere until 2005.

Advocates say it simplifies and standardizes many ancient rules of grammar and spelling in the language, making it easier for both natives and foreigners to master.

Many of the spelling changes involve the 'Germanization' of borrowed foreign words. Thus *Mayonnaise* becomes *Majonaese*, and *Ketchup* is reborn as *Ketschup*.

The mass-circulation Bild newspaper reassured readers there was no need to panic over the proposed changes because only 185 words were changing out of a total of some 12,000.

Difficult for some

Glasgow Herald

Critics of the new German language reform (including spelling) complain the new rules, intended to simplify the way German is written, actually make things more complicated, and were still pushing, on the eve of implementation, to delay them.

Many government bureaucrats were reluctant to start writing the new way at work. Some states said they were not ready with new forms and computer programs, and would need to delay the switch.

But Gabriele Behler, of the state culture and education ministers' conference insisted the new rules are clearer and better. They made writing snappier by eliminating many comma rules. 'The man who came to dinner' would, for example, no longer need a comma after man.

They also separated many strung-together compound words — *remainsitting* becomes *remain sitting* — and introduced more Germanized words, like *Kommunikee* for *Kommuniqué*.

The Austrians and Swiss generally accept them, but many leading authors and ordinary citizens object.

Altho reprinted school texts have the new writing, many authors have demanded excerpts from their works remain as first written.

4. What one member has been doing

Teaching one's ideas, seeking reactions

Paul Cunningham, USA

Since becoming interested in spelling simplification, I have devised Spel Riet, which I have used for both children and adults.

My first classes in Spel Riet were for 4th graders, the first in a neighborhood elementary school, the second in a public library because the school 'shut the door' on me.

The classes began with 34 students. In the first, three students dropped out after the first session. One mother was afraid Spel Riet 'would mess up my child's brain'. In the second class none dropped out.

Some school principals expressed concern to me that Spel Riet would confuse their students. I had no evidence to refute this, so I tested for it in both classes.

After the last session I asked students to complete an evaluation. One question was, 'If a class in Spel Riet were offered to 5th graders next year, would U want to be in the class?' Twenty-four said yes, seven no.

Another question was, 'Of all the Spel Riet rules U studied, which one did U like best?' A majority of both classes said, 'The one that drops silent letters.'

With 64 adults in three seminars my emphasis was on getting reactions to the Spel Riet version of simplified spelling rather than teaching them details of the plan. Using small group meetings I worked thru a list of several hundred adults I have known for many years. I decided these would be the most likely to attend a meeting or fill out a survey. For those who did not come, I mailed an opinion survey. I had to follow up to keep the surveys from getting lost. For later sessions I advertised and had to pay \$20 to each volunteer to attract enuf interest. Most are not nearly as interested as I am.

The most often voiced objection was the supposed high cost of reprinting books if Spel Riet were adopted.

In a typical session I found that as the number of suggested spelling changes increased, so did participant resistance.

Some adults find one particular change unacceptable; others another change. Most resistance surfaced when I talked about respelling vowels. They didn't have a problem with a double e to spell the long e sound. It was when I suggested dropping the e at the end of hide and changing the *i* to *ie* that it became more than they would accept.

One surprise for me was how age is not a reliable predictor of how an adult will react to change. Of more importance is whether an adult considers himself or herself a good speller. Good spellers, consciously or unconsciously, seem to be proud of the fact they are in a special group, not like the masses who can't spell. For them, adopting easier English spelling would lower the value of their 'private club' membership.

I have found a 25-year-old mother with preschool children can be just as close-minded as a 75-year-old widow. I have also sensed some adults see simplified spelling' as downgrading English.

They see it as a form of 'dumbing down' for the mother tongue. Maybe we need to call it something other than 'simplified spelling'. How about 'fonics-based spelling'?

When I began my excursion into spelling reform, I assumed the best approach was a comprehensive plan that would correct all of the problems in today's English. After sampling adult reactions, I am having second thoughts. I am not yet ready to embrace a plan of 'gradualism', but I'm leaning in that direction.

Rating the changes

Asked to rate some spelling changes, participants responded:

Change *ph* to *f*: 82% accept; 18% reject

Reduce unnecessary doubled consonants: 65%; 35%

Spell short *e* with an *e*: 76%; 24%

Drop all silent letters: 78%; 22%

Spell *s* sound with *s*: 76%; 24%

Spell *er/ir/ur* sound with *er*: 73%; 27%

Spell schwa with single *u*: 70%; 30%

Spell word endings like *ile* (US) and *al* as *ul*: 69%; 31 %

What they thought

At the end of each session, participants were asked to evaluate.

Here are some questions and overall responses:

Where do U think Spel Riet should be introduced?

Adults first 20%

First-graders in all states together 48%

All grades in all states together 5%

No chance under any plan 27%

If Spel Riet were introduced in all schools at some future date (say, 2005), how would U respond?

Actively oppose it 33%

Leave it for schools to decide 20%

Support it 34%

Actively support it 13%

Do U think spelling problems are a contributing factor to illiteracy in America?

No 11%

Yes, but not worth the effort to correct them 25%

Yes, and we should proceed to correct them 64%

What is the biggest hurdle to spelling reform?

Adults unwilling to learn new forms 47%

Resistance from educators 20%

Cost of updating publications 28%

Lack of understanding of problem 5%

5. Letters

Deleting silent letters

George Lahey, USA

Following my letter in SSMarch98, I have started to list words from which letters might be dropped without changing the pronunciation or requiring respelling; eg, dropping an *f* from *affright*, but not the *gh*, which would require respelling to retain the long vowel sound. The results are interesting.

Let[t]ers to be deleted are shown in bra[c]kets. Spel[l]ings with an asterisk are ap[p]roved by Webster's Intercollegiate Dictionary, Random House, 1995.

a[a]rdvark a[a]rdwolf abac(k) abandon[e]d abat[t]oir a[b]breviate aber(r)ant abhor[r]ence ablativ[e] abo[a]rd abortiv[e] abov[e] abrasiv[e] abre[a]st abridg[e] abs[c]es[s] absolv[e] abstemi[o]us abusiv[e] abys[s] a cap[p]el[l]a ac[c]laim ac[c]om[m]odate ac[k]no[w]ledg[e] acquisitiv[e] acrimoni[o]us activ[e] adaptiv[e] ad[d]end adjectiv[e] a[d]j[urn] administrativ[e] admis(s)ion adventuresom[e] [a[e]sthete* [a]esthetic* a[f]fair a[f]finitiy a[f]firm a[f]fix a[f]flict af[f]ford a[f]forest a[f]franchise a[f]fray a[f]fricate a[f]front afor[e] ag[g]lomerate a[g]g1utinant a[g]grandize a[g]gres[s]ion a(g)gres[s]iv[e] ahe[a]d (a)i[s]le a[l]lay a[l]lege a[l]lergic a[l]leviate a[l]literate a[l]literation a[l]lot a[l]low a[l]lude a[l]lure a[l]lusion a[l]lusiv[e] a[l]luvium alternativ[e] aly[s]sum Amari[l]lo amary[l]lis ambidextr[o]us ambiti[o]us a[m]monia amphibi[o]us anac[h]ronism an[a]esthesia* analog[o]us analog[ue]* anc[h]or anhydr[o]us anilin[e]* an[n]a an[n]alist a[n]neal a[n]nounce a[n]noy a[n]nul afn[n]unciate anomal[o]us anonym[o]us ans[w]er anthropomorph[o]us antifr[e]eze antihistamin[e] antimaca[s]sar antimis[s]il[e] anxi[o]us aplom(b) apo(ph)the[g]m* a[p]pall a[p]panage* a[p]parel a[p]parent a[p]peal a[p]pear a[p]pease a[p]pe[l]lant a[p]pe[l]lation a[p]pend a[p]plaud a[p]ply a[p]point a[p]portion a[p]pose a[p]praise a[p]preciate a[p]prentice a[p]prise a[p]prize a[p]proach a[p]propriate a[p]prove approximate a[p]purtenance aque[o]us arch[ae]ology* annadi[l]lo Armage[d]don armor(e)d arpe[g]gio a[r]rai[g]n a[r]rjrange a[r]rrears a[r]rrest a[r]rrove as[c]end as[c]ertain as[c]etic as[c]idian as[c]idium a[s]sail a[s]sassin a[s]sa[ut]lt a[s]say a[s]semble a[s]sent a[s]sert a[s]sertiv[e] a[s]sess a[s]severate a[s]siduous a[s]sign a[s]similate a[s]sist a[s]size a[s]sociate a[s]soil a[s]sonance a[s]sort a[s]sume a[s]sure asy[m]metry athen[a]eum* atroci[o]us a[t]tach a[t]tac[k] a[t]tain a[t]tempt a[t]tend a[t]tentiv[e] a[t]tenuate a[t]ttest a[t]tire a[t]torney a[t]tract a[t]tritition a[t]tune au[gh]t auspici[o]us aw[e]som(e) axi[l]lary.

I submit this list to continue the discussion. Please send your comments to George Lahey

A tale of one international languages

Joe Cober, Canada

SSS members are hardly united in their aims, since they seem to support only their own preferences. Let me tell a story.

At one time, people regretted there were all those different languages. Would it not be nice if they could all talk to each other? We knew it couldn't be. Then we were offered a complete new language that was easy to learn, easy to spell, with easy grammar. We had an international language.

In Europe, divided by many languages, it became rather popular, with outstanding results. If the computer had started in Europe, Esperanto might have been its language.

Trouble began when someone brought out another international language, claiming it to be better. Maybe it was. But it split the people: those who learned Esperanto, those who learned Ido. A third

language came on the market. Not only was the population divided by different languages; now they were also divided by several 'one international' languages.

Some people were so smart they put a new language together, but not smart enuf to send it to Esperanto's head-quarters, for study on whether their ideas could later be introduced gradually to all Esperantists. First, let's all learn one.

Learning spelling as a series of reflexes

Peter Gilet, Australia

I have recently taken up primary teaching after a 10-year interval. I find the kids learn more viscerally than I remembered. Perhaps this is why it has been so difficult to introduce any sort of spelling reform.

We learn our spelling as a series of reflexes and any reform has to occur at the bottom. We can only proceed piecemeal and individually and change things slowly, by using more rational spellings ourselves. Total systems will not work, at least not at first.

The other thought I have had is that the kids learn very quickly to spell and read by sight. They do not read fonetically, but hieroglyphically. For this reason I feel the way to go might well be Cut Spelling or something of that sort, aiming at one or two letters being used in place of whole groups, dropping out not just unpronounced letters but also those which add nothing to the visual differentiations of words (*cd* for *could*).

One could of course go for a totally ideographic system like Chinese (the phase I was in when I wrote my letter, *SSSNJuly97*), but with the letter combinations I suggest, a link is kept with the spoken word and this is a help in remembering how to spell.

A final thought. If we are going to reform spelling, why not grammar too? The English verb system is atrociously irregular, for instance. Small children constantly improve it with the *virtuous errors*, as one calls them, saying 'I seed it' instead of 'I saw it'.

Disaffected at early age

Frank Jones, England

When I was small I learned the sounds associated with the alphabet. I tried to use my new knowledge but was told that 'k-a-t does not spell cat'. I was incensed. Clearly, incontrovertibly, if the alphabet I had been taught has any meaning, k-a-t does spell cat.



The good lady could have said I would not pass my exams if I spelled cat with a k, that I'd never get to university or a job in a bank, or the school would be blacklisted and visited by an educational hit squad. I might have understood and accepted and not spelt cat with a k.

But instead she told me something I was totally unable to accept as true. It is no wonder so many pupils, especially boys, are disaffected from the educational system at an early age and carry that disaffection thru life, passing it on to following generations.

The old argument that we must maintain standards simply is not good enuf. We don't buy cars built to the standards of 60 years ago. We expect our doctor and dentist to work to standards that are constantly improving. If products do not meet our changing standards of economy, usefulness, greenness, style, taste, etc, we do not buy them. To say that *i* must come before *e* in some words when for the same sound *e* comes before *i* in others is equivalent to saying all controls in a jumbo jet ought to be operated by wires pulled by the pilot because that's how it used to be done, or

demanding that doctors should hold a pad soaked in ether over the nose of a patient undergoing surgery because that's how it used to be done, or arguing all Ford cars should be black.

We ought to be teaching children how best to use and develop humanity's greatest technological achievement thus far — the alphabet.

Improve literacy with fonics teaching

Jennifer Chew, England

Simplifying English spelling is one solution to what many people see as the chaos of traditional orthography (TO). However, it still encounters much resistance. Another solution is to improve the teaching of initial literacy.

Many current spelling problems can be traced to poor or nonexistent fonics teaching in primary schools. Antipathy to fonics in English-speaking countries increased in the 1970s and 1980s as educationists developed a well-documented enthusiasm for the ideas of 'whole language' advocates like Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman. People believed, with Smith, that 'children learn to read by reading', and the explicit teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences slipped down the agenda. This adversely affected reading standards and, even more, spelling standards.

The advantages of fonics for regular words are obvious. What seems to happen with irregular words is that children sound them out, in reading, as if they were regular and then learn to adjust their pronunciation. They still mentally retain the original mispronunciation, however, as an aid to spelling. For example, the initial mispronunciation of broad to rhyme with road in reading becomes a useful aid to spelling. Repeated exposure to such words in print also helps.

Whatever the exact mechanics, early systematic fonics teaching does produce better spellers. In South Africa, cultural isolation during the apartheid years kept the whole-language movement at bay, and fonics teaching remained strong. In 1987, I found spelling standards among 16-year-olds there higher than in England. Moreover, the South Africans (about 20% from non-English-speaking homes) made more logical errors: for *equipped*, for example, the weakest South Africans wrote *equiped*, *equipt*, *equipte* and *ecept*; the weakest English students wrote *expentic*, *errepet*, *equit*, *epitt*, *accipt* and *equie*.

Resistance to wholesale spelling reform is likely to continue. The SSS's best course might be to press for greater tolerance of genuinely fonetic misspellings while supporting the campaign for good fonics teaching.

Taking orthographic orthodoxy to court?

Patrick Dunne, Australia

What we face, in every English-speaking country, is a conspiracy to enforce a spelling orthodoxy on the population as a whole.

Let me explain by asking what happens to a reporter on a newspaper who starts to use fonetic spelling in his or her articles?

What happens to a teacher who allows his or her pupils to use spellings such as *kof* and *flem*? What happens to a clerk in a bank who starts using fonetic spelling in letters to clients? I'll tell U what happens: Either they quickly conform or they are out on their ear.

While it may not be the most practical solution, given our circumstances, I think we will ultimately be forced to take action thru the courts to test the right of education authorities and employers to impose an orthodoxy.

6. Net chat. Excerpts from a few of the posts in the SSS internet chat group

Strong memory (July). Damian Bonsall, UK

I think the worst feature of TO is that it demands not so much a high IQ, but a very strong visual memory — you have to remember the whole dictionary. As an example, I met a perfectly intelligent lady once, who read by sounding out the words, and when she could not identify a word, looked it up in the dictionary, and from the pronunciation guide was able to get it. Astonishingly, 2min later she might come across the same word, but had no recollection of it — it was as if it was the first time she had ever seen the word — and she looked it up again. She was very fast in leafing thru the dictionary.

She explained to me — 'don't teach me how to read, I know how to read — you give me your memory — and then I'll read like you'. She had undergone remedial lessons over many years and had finally abandoned hope of any further improvement. For people like this, a much more regular spelling system is the difference between functional literacy and illiteracy. It is our struggle to help them.



Engineer's principle (July). John Reilly, US

I have been studying Mandarin in a desultory fashion for about a year. The writing system is beautiful, and learning it is fascinating. There are all kinds of little tricks and helpful hints you pick up along the way. Persons of quite ordinary intelligence have been learning the system for thousands of years. This does not change the fact the system is demented. English spelling is not nearly as demented, but it still violates the engineer's principle that you should never make anything more complicated than it has to be.

No mor pachiz. Tiem tue reeppaev. (May). Taam (Tom) Zurinskas. USA

Tue pach Eenglish speleeng just poots pachiz aan taap uv pachiz. If wee aar tue pach, then pach uggan, and uggan, at wut point due peepool get tieyerd uv lerneeng nue pachiz and sae eennuf iz eennuf. This wil never due. Wee need tue faes up tue thu fakt that thu roed needs reeppaeveng. (Rittin in Truespel)

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

7. Jean Wilkinson, USA writes Why wrestle with *wrestle*?

I was listening to a 13-year-old and his father discussing the abbreviation of the World Wrestling Federation. They decided it was *WWF*, but my mind said *WRF*. What's the *w* doing there? Why are there so many *wr* words in English?

I dug into my dictionary. It traces *wrestle* back to *wer-*, an apparent syllable in Indo-European meaning to bend, twist, or turn. Well, I guess that's what wrestling is, all right.

Intriguing. I found 19 more words tracing back to the same root, and I can see bending, twisting, or turning in every one of them: *wrap*, *wreath*, *writhe*, *wrench*, *wrest*, *wreck*, *wriggle*, *wring*, *wrinkle*, *wrist*, *write* (!), *writhe*, *wrong* (via the idea of crooked or twisted), *wrath*, *wroth*, *wry*, — even *warp* and *worm*, tho *w* and *r* are not contiguous.

So, what's Indo-European?

I burrowed some more, and learned it's the hypothetical language that most European languages came from, as well as many languages of Southwestern Asia and India. It birthed Sanskrit in about the fourth century BC.

Okay, so a few thousand years ago *w* was pronounced. How about today? Old Norse seems to have dropped it before the 14th century. In German our *wrench* compares with *renken*, and *write* with *reissen*. No *ws*.

But English — old, middle, and modern — has held onto *w* like glue. What has it gained us? Precisely, that many words come from the same ancient word meaning to bend, twist, or turn. And each of the present words retains some implication of the original thought. I find this neat! It's sort of like shaking hands with Adam and Eve.

But what has it lost us? With the other archaic letters in English words, it has lost us quick literacy. Actually, we've never had quick literacy, so we don't know what we're missing. But we'd know if we went to a foreign country and saw how readily their children learn to read.

Hugging our silent letters is losing us our competitive place in the world. 'Half our 17-year-olds don't have the basic language and math skills to hold a production job' — Frank Levy, professor at MIT and co-author of *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, on Jim Lehrer's *News Hour*, 1997.

We're a polyglot nation. Foreign parents of many students are still learning English themselves. Others have heritages that underemphasize literacy. And few American children have learned to work diligently with their parents. They stay out of the way by being entertained by TV. They come to school still in entertainment mode. We can teach them to write with invented spelling and each one go their own way. Or we can give them a simplified, consistent spelling that will make reading — and writing! — by age 8 a **reachable** goal.

[Chris Gledhill: see [Journals](#)]

8. What can we learn from Esperanto?

Chris Gledhill, Scotland

I have often been struck by comparisons between the Simplified Spelling Society and other organizations campaigning to reform language. How can spelling reformers learn from the experience of Esperanto, a movement for an international auxiliary language?

They share a number of characteristics:

- Ideology: Both simplified spelling and the international language movement propose conscious intervention in language policy.
- History: Both have a century-long history, affected by influential individuals (G B Shaw, spelling; L Zamenhof, Esperanto).
- Factions: Both are faced by competing systems.
- Organization: Both campaigns enjoy constant but modest support from 'senior' and amateur enthusiasts.
- Public relations: Both monitor their presence very carefully in the media and both have lobbied education bodies.

To get a picture of where simplified spelling might go, let's look at how Esperanto's public image and strategy have slowly changed.

The clichéd perception of Esperanto is of a potentially great project that didn't really catch on. Although there is no evidence to suggest so, many Esperantists were afraid of the language's perceived crankiness or left-wing ideology. The life work of Ivo Lapenna was to try to remove communist overtones. More recently Bernard Golden has attacked fellow Esperantists for their cranky looks and manners. Neither aspect is true of most Esperantists, so where does the public perception of failure originate?

First, once the public hears of an exciting project and then hears no more, they rightly or wrongly think the project has failed. Esperanto had almost instantaneous world coverage in the early 1900s. Then squabbling about the purity of the language, and the intervention of two world wars, effectively blew the wind out of its sails.

Second, the movement suffered from introversion. Because many Esperantists strove to create a rich 'world literature', Esperanto's critics focused on literary issues. This stifled debate about other aspects of auxiliary languages, such as learnability and flexibility. We can see the extent to which a movement can be led by its detractors.

Ironically, Esperanto's public image became fixed as a failure at a time when the movement's membership and other indicators (eg, book sales) were actually rising. The movement has responded by developing a more businesslike style. The recent *Kampanjo 2000* strategy sets out two aspects of this which are of relevance to spelling:

First, after years of debate the criterion for success has been settled on: there isn't one! Instead of a link language, *Kampanjo 2000* proposes Esperanto as a guarantor of language rights and diversity, an alternative to the dominant English culture. This amounts to an acceptance of the movement as a self-supporting community and as a set of ideas rather than a proposal for an absolutely rational, neutral language system.

The second element of *Kampanjo 2000* is an attempt to open outwards by providing useful tools for translation, advising on technical terminology, or helping to train language teachers and learners. Elsewhere these services are expensive, so Esperantists hope by giving them free they will provide an incentive for people to at least come to Esperantists, if not to actually learn the language.

Like Esperantists, spelling reformers have skills and proposals that can be exploited in small-scale applications. They can help in schools, exploit or advise on computer programs, help with disputed issues in literacy. If the public can use these facilities on an ad hoc basis, the principles of spelling reform don't need to be published or argued but are simply integrated directly into the language system. It is a question of providing a service for outsiders to exploit and ultimately perhaps to appreciate.

To some extent, image and ideology are not as problematic for spelling reformers as for Esperantists, but even the image of failure is not necessarily all bad.

What is important is that there should be some presence in the public mind. Esperanto has succeeded in that the word itself is still accurately defined in dictionaries, but more importantly is used in the media as a synonym for a grand but ultimately doomed design. I am not unhappy with this.

One test of the success of an idea is the extent to which its main principles can be recalled by the public. For this, spelling reform will need to create a reasonably clear proposal that can be accepted or rejected. At least, as with Esperanto, it won't be forgotten.

Spelling reformers have skills and proposals that can be exploited in small-scale applications public.

Chris Gledhill is an SSS member. He is also a member of and has worked for the Universala Esperanto Asocio, Rotterdam

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

9. Spelling on the net with Steve Bett

Upgrading graphics capabilities

The web was built in 1994 to simplify the task of sending and receiving graphical information. Before this, it was possible to send graphics as attachments to one's email but this placed a burden on the receiver. Not only did the attachment have to be decoded, but also it could not be opened unless the receiving party had the appropriate software.

A brief study I conducted among 25 or so participants in the simplified spelling discussion group indicated most were still using old email software and could not receive or send graphics better than pre-1990 users.

Spelling reformers, amateur alphabeteers, and orthographers do need to exchange graphics files. Since the required software is freeware that can be downloaded from the Internet there is no reason for not having this compatibility.

If your email software is out of date or if you simply want to have an e-mail site that you can access when you are away from homebase, sign up for one of the free email services. Most of them are MIME compatible, which means they can send, receive, and display many graphics files without going through an encoding/decoding routine.

Free e-mail services include: mailcity.com, juno.com, yahoo.com, bigfoot.com, and hotmail.com.

The total solution is provided by Netscape. With Netscape mail, U can upgrade your access to your local mail server. This does not require a configuration (U have to tell the software exactly where to find your email) but it is something that can be done in 5min.

When U download Netscape Communicator 4.0 or higher, U also get a built-in HTML editor for creating web pages that is as easy and straightforward as your word processing software.

With the NS Communicator, you can open your graphics files in the editor. Then U can simply 'drag and drop' the picture or any segment containing pictures, tables, and text into Netscape mail or 'cut and paste' into most modern email programs.

What is the cost of these modern solutions? About one hour of your time and the annoyance of having to view a 1x3in banner ad on your screen each time you access your mail. Free mail servers also add a two-line promotional message of the bottom of our e-mail message. Since Netscape Mail uses your existing mail server there is no advertising. To download Netscape Communicator 4.5, go to www.Netscape.com.

If your connection is thru an institutional computer check first with your network personnel. You may need helping configuring the preferences so the browser will properly access your mail server. Some institutions do not allow people to install Netscape Communicator because they believe it may compromise security.

Important URLs for spelling

We have needed a place to go that would list the top ten spelling links. This is now closer to realization with the posting of the following page.

[no longer available]

The informal simplified spelling mailing list is doing fine but it does not invite others to participate or allow them to subscribe and unsubscribe at will. A replacement for spelling@coollist has been found. This site will eventually contain an FAQ (list of frequently asked questions with answers) and a GLOSSARY. Currently, it contains 12 discussion categories. When U have something U want archived, please use this site.

[no longer available]

George Lahey, author of the recently published *PV6*, has upgraded his website at

[no longer available]

Paul Cunningham has upgraded his site and changed the name *Spell Right* to *Spel Riet*.

[no longer available]

Alan Mole's page has more than just a copy of the original BTRSPL orthographic converter.

<http://ententetranslator.com/btrspl.html>

Original BTRSPL converter

Steven Bett's automated BTRSPL converter has been moved. It can now be found at

[no longer available]

Valerie Yule's bibliography of spelling related books and articles can be found at

www.valeriyule.com.au

The Unifon English Society has upgraded its website

[no longer available]

Tale peace

Creative speller, passive teller

A would-be bank robber in San Francisco handed a withdrawal slip to the teller. On it he had written: 'pot al the moni in ma beg or i wil bloe u awa.' The teller's decrypting skills matched the writer's spelling ability. Without batting an eyelid she handed the form back and told him he had filled it out incorrectly, which left him unsure. He headed off across the street to another bank, where he had a similar experience. He was arrested when he returned to the first one to try again.

10. *simpl speling*. members' supplement. November 1998.

Editor: Allan Campbell.

Micro-reform for AGM agenda.

A motion 'that an official limited, first-stage reform proposal would be of value and that members be informed such a proposal will be put on the agenda of the 1999 AGM' was carried unanimously at the July meeting.

Work on refining the limited proposal needed to begin now and the widest possible agreement within the SSS should be sought.

Gwen Thorstad would present her research findings about children's suggestions for spelling improvements to the October meeting to help members focus on the kind of micro-reform that is most needed initially. It was thought to be useful for web surfers who came across relevant research findings to pass them to Gwen to evaluate.

Sue Lloyd is doing research into the effectiveness of fonics teaching in Scotland using Chris Jolly's *Jollyphonics*.

Sister John's research (reported by Downing), which compared how children's experience with TO and ITA subsequently affected their ability to match patterns, might be worth looking at again, in that it suggests TO, apart from being difficult to learn, impedes brain development.

Leo Chapman reported he was collecting fonetically sound spelling errors which could be useful in helping to determine the starting point and extent of a micro-reform.

New membership not a priority.

Recruiting new members should not be the priority of the Society for the time being, the committee felt. It would instead concentrate initially on making the Society's existence better known and on persuading whoever, wherever we can, that TO is the worst possible spelling solution for English.

But Allan Campbell was authorized to go ahead with a proposed six-issue advertising campaign in a New Zealand newspaper for teachers (circulation 22,000) at an estimated cost of £125. This relatively cheap pilot in New Zealand could indicate whether it would be worth trying the same in the UK or elsewhere.

July committee meeting reports.

State of play with schemes and PVs.

Spelling schemes and Personal Views were discussed at length at the July committee meeting.

It was decided to reprint Bob Brown's Personal View No. 1, and his Spelling Reform in Context (with slight updating by Chris Upward); Nue Speling (with introduction revised by Nick Kerr, David Barnsdale, and Chris; and Tough, Though, Thought (a partial reform scheme from 15 years ago). John Bryant was to check with Tony Burns and offer to photocopy PVs, and suggest these be sent out with either *Simpl Speling* or the *Journal*, depending on which was closer, to save effort and costs.

Paul Fletcher sent in a report on the current state of [Personal Views](#):

Completed —

1 Brown: *Literacy & the way we spell English*.

2 Fletcher: *Yurospel* (1996).

3 Sinclair: *Sistem 2* (1997).

4 Burns: *Milenyum* (1997).

5 Goodwin: *Yurabet* (1997).

6 Lahey: *Inglish* (1998).

Schemes in the pipeline —

Bett: *New Follick* Passed to Tony Burns for printing.

Rondthaler: *Soundspel*. Received complete January; needed typing of handwritten phoneme list and two small amendments. Passed for printing.

Greenland: *ROSE*. Passed for printing.

Zurinkas: *Truespel*. Referred back 1997 for resubmission in standard format.

Yule: *Surplus-cut*, *Interspel*. Valerie has submitted in the required format but hopes to publish more fully in her book on spelling in general.

Mitrevski: *English Phonetic Alphabet*. Submitted in May, since when protracted correspondence aiming to get Paul Mitrevski to accept style and grammar corrections (English is not his native language) and to weld submission into a continuous 12-page whole.

Other inquiries received and standard format submission invited —

Hughes: *Shortskript*. November 1997.

Craig: *Romano-Greek*. November 1997.

Bromley: *Englishspeak*. October 1997 (so far scheme aims to simplify whole language).

Tucker: *Spel-Eze*. Submitted March; some necessary material sent but not suitable for gradualist ideas.

Phadke. *Lojikal*. Requirements for PV sent to Shri GV Phadke in 1997 but reply March refers back to prolix manuscript previously sent August 1997. Reply April. Resubmission in required camera-ready format was requested by letter April 1997 but none had been sent yet:

Ascott (*Sound Spelling*), Atkinson (*Equals-Plus*), Alexander Wilson (*IMPS*), Pidd (*Lojivow*), Stygall (*TOPOS*), McKnight (*Pass Review*), Weatherall (*Real Spelling*).

For guidelines on presentation of members' schemes as Personal Views, contact Paul Fletcher.

SS suggested for libraries.

It was suggested SSS members be sent an extra copy of *Simpl Speling* and asked to approach their local (or biggest nearby) library and ask them to carry a copy in the reading room. But, to minimize adverse reaction at first sight, the title should be changed to *Simpl Spelling*. It was thought simpl alone would give an adequate but less offensive intimation of our aims. It was to be discussed again at the October meeting.

- Many members were thanked for services. Among them was Gwen Thorstad, for finding a pleasant and reasonably priced new venue for meetings, and arranging lunch.
- The SSS now had 129 members, but 20 had not yet paid their 1998 subs. (Five had joined since April, 55 were on email or fax email; the email chat group consisted of 25.)
- *English Today* had carried a Society article on the Langscape project, plus information about the SSS.
- A letter in *The Times Educational Supplement*, responding to an editorial about dyslexics and Spanish, had elicited four inquiries.
- A spelling scheme had been received from Don Morrison.

Present at the July meeting:

Committee — Nicholas Kerr (chair), David Barnsdale, Masha Bell, John Bryant, Leo Chapman, Jean Hutchins, Gwenllian Thorstad, Chris Upward;
members — Adrian Murphy, Edward Marchant.

Apologies — Chris Jolly, Paul Fletcher, Gerald Palmer, Tony Burns.

Inducting the secretary.

Masha Bell was welcomed at the July meeting as secretary of the Society and was immediately harnessed to the job. It was decided:

She should attempt to improve the impact of the SSS web site, especially in terms of the information contained on the first page, and pass her ideas on to Nick Kerr and David Barnsdale for further refinement.

She would carry out the recurring business tasks, like booking the venue for meetings, settling bills, compiling and distributing the minutes and circulating agendas. She would also contact the treasurer, Alun Bye, and offer to take on his work if, as indicated, he found it too onerous. [He has suggested changing at the end of the year. — Ed.]

She would also approach educational organizations offering to speak to teachers at conferences; offer articles and press releases to print media; seek help and advice from members on publicity; and pursue our application for space in the Millennium Dome.

[Masha Bell: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamphlet](#), [Leaflet](#), [Media](#). [PV13](#), [Book](#),

Meanwhile, back at the office ...

First impressions.

Masha Bell.

When Chris Jolly first appointed me as secretary, he suggested that to begin with I should just try to acquaint myself with the SSS as well as I could before the next committee meeting at the end of July.



As it was then only the beginning of June, I deemed his time allocation very generous, but he had made an astute estimate of the extent of my ignorance and of the task confronting me.

Finding out how the SSS worked was relatively straightforward. Jean Hutchins knows all there is to know about how the Society operates, and she proved a very willing and patient tutor during my initiation period. Allan Campbell, Chris Upward, and Valerie Yule were also generous with their time, and recent copies of the JSSS were hugely informative too.

I was soon made aware that one of the reasons for appointing me, in addition to having someone organize meetings and take the minutes, was a fairly widely perceived need for the Society to make itself better known.

I share this view, but have become increasingly disabused about my ability to remedy the situation.

I had imagined that within a month or too I would get a fairly clear idea of what the SSS stood for and what its aims were, and that I could then begin to tackle the task of promoting it. Unfortunately, everyone in the SSS appears to agree only that TO be reformed. On how to reform it there are nearly as many ideas as SSS members. This may explain why the SSS has made even less progress with advancing the cause of simplification in the second half of this century than it had done in the first.

The British government's current literacy strategy, with its emphasis on phonics, is helping British primary teachers to become more aware of the irregularities and difficulties of TO, and we should be able to further this process. But if we want reform to come even a little closer, we need to find more agreement among ourselves.

Until more than just a handful of members can agree on a bundle of simple suggestions for reducing the irregularities of TO (which stand a realistic chance of being accepted), there seems little point in trying to sell the SSS to the wider world.

So for now, while giving some time to publicity too, I am directing my efforts mainly towards that end.