

**SS8.**

***simpl spelling* March 1999**  
**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](http://www.spellingsociety.org)

**A greater voice?**

The committee's action (lead story) in seeking rank-and-file opinion on a strategy could be a forerunner to greater member participation in the Society's decision making.

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## 1. Committee polls members on strategy

The Society's committee, at its January meeting, decided to seek members' views on the direction the Society should take in its campaign for spelling change.

On a voting paper being sent to them with this issue of *Simpl Speling*, members are asked to state their preference for one of three choices:

- a comprehensive, single-stage reform, such as Nue Speling;
- a staged reform, either in a few big stages or many small steps;
- or some other choice, to be described by the respondents.

This is the first time, at least in recent years, in which the committee has sought the guidance of members in this way.

Results will be tabled at the AGM, where it is hoped a decision will be made, so the Society's resources are not dissipated by trying to work in a number of directions at once.

Knowing the views of the membership will also be helpful to those on the committee who write letters to newspaper editors in the name of the Society or have to reply to inquiries about its aims.

Those who regard reform as impossible or extremely unlikely, like David Crystal in his *Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 'invariably cite as one perceived cause for this the fact that aspiring reformers themselves cannot agree on any of the many proposals they have devised,' Masha Bell, the Society's secretary, commented.

'Perhaps the SSS as a whole is far more united than we are thought to be by outsiders,' she added.

### **AGM. The Annual General Meeting of the Simplified Spelling Society**

will be held at our new venue for meetings at 10:45am, Saturday, April 24, 1999

Masha Bell will speak on: *What I've learned about the Society and spelling reform since becoming secretary, and some thoughts about our future.*

A committee meeting, open to all members, will follow.

### **Jokes deadline extended**

Valerie Yule reports there has been only one entrant to the spelling jokes competition for International Spelling Day. She has extended the deadline until June 30. For other details, see the November 1998 *Simpl Speling*.

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

### Columnist's sympathetic view of ISD Terry Lane (in his Post Script column)

Yesterday was International Spelling Day. U probably missed it, but U can put it in your diary for next year.

Why October 9? Dr Valerie Yule, the tireless evangelist for spelling reform, emailed me with an explanation of why this day arouses optimism in the breasts of much-ridiculed and vilified spelling reformers everywhere.

[Then follows the history of Hangul see [SSNov98](#) Item 1. — Ed.]

How marvelous for the English writing system to be also celebrated and made as useful as possible!

True enuf, but U probably need a wise and good absolute monarch to get the reform moving. Left to a committee of pedants the prospects are not encouraging.

Dr Yule's website on spelling reform is at <http://avoca.vicnet.net.au/-ozideas/spelref.htm>

George Bernard Shaw said he knew that people being incorrigibly brain lazy just laugh at spelling reformers as silly cranks.

But that didn't stop him providing in his will that, for 21 years after his death, income from his royalties was to go to the creation and promotion of a new fonetic alphabet containing at least 40 letters, 'one symbol for each sound'.

Just for the record, I am not a committed spelling reformer, so I would ask the brain lazy not to abuse me.

But why should we not keep an open mind on the matter? I am making a note in my diary to take Spelling Day seriously next year. — *The Age*, Melbourne

### 'Spell for the dole' proposal in Australia

#### Valerie Yule

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has announced that people on the dole who can't read or write properly must do literacy courses or lose the dole. The media have termed his proposal 'Spell for the dole.'

There has been a great deal of money spent on literacy courses in Australia, with effects varying, according to who is reporting them. A college offering a course, for example, would receive \$3200 for every literacy student referred to it by a job center who turned up — but was not getting the students because they were not turning up.

The responses to this initiative are predictable according to who responds. The Right say: 'So they jolly well should learn to read and write.' The Left say: 'They shouldn't be humiliated by being forced to learn. It's a Rightist plot.'

Teachers say, 'We need more money and teachers.' If I say, have a close and public look at how they are being taught to read and write — first when they fail at school, and then when they face adult literacy tuition — and second, what they are given to read to make them want to read — or not want to.

So, I'm adding my voice to the racket. Will it be heard? As soon as my 30min literacy video is remade — slow job — I'm going to sock it to them. ('ABC Go! Help yourself to read and spell.')

### **Workplace literacy skills low**

A survey published at the end of 1997 by the New Zealand Ministry of Education found 40% of employed people and 75% of unemployed people to be below the minimum level of literacy competence for everyday life and work.

Workbase, the National Centre for Workplace Literacy and Language, has worked with the ministry to make further data available from the survey, part of the International Adult Literacy Survey in 20 OECD countries.

The new data from New Zealand's participation confirms literacy and numeracy skills are important contributors to labor market status, Workbase says.

The OECD strongly suggests the workplace be a focus for literacy skill development in the future. It provides an environment requiring literacy skills to be used regularly, unlike the home life of many adults.

'Findings from these national surveys prove literacy can no longer be considered a third world issue,' says Liz Moore, executive director of Workbase. 'Industrialized countries are seriously disadvantaged by low literacy. There are very few jobs today where U don't have to read and write.'

'The data from the survey should provide impetus for prioritizing literacy and English language training in workforce training strategies.'

### **Nen the wiser?**

#### **Steve Brayshaw (Northamptonshire County Council)**

Q. Where does the River Nene, pronounced *Neen* (Wisbech) become the River Neen, pronounced *Nen* (Northampton)?

A. As Nene Valley project manager and an incomer to Northants, I've had to grapple with this knotty problem. At public meetings I ask for a show of hands to decide on pronunciation in order to avoid offending the assembled masses. At Northampton *Nen* is always the winner; at Peterborough it is always *Neen*; a vote at Oundle or Higham Ferrers is less conclusive; at Thrapston confusion reigns.

The spelling has changed over time with the old cartographers naming the river variously as *Nene*, *Nen*, *Nenne*, *Niene* and *Neen*.

A definitive transition point? Painstaking consultation leads to the Nine Arches Bridge linking Thrapston and Islip. *Nen* is favored upstream and *Neen* downstream.

— *Notes & Queries* feature, *The Guardian* ©

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

### 3. A good year for the ALC

#### Joe Little

In 1998, the American Literacy Council transformed Sound-Spell (aka Spell-Well) into a seamless Windows 95 literacy tool, a big breakthrough. Though it arrived too late for Christmas, there were many happy faces last year. Here are a few:

**William Perry**, a veteran resident of Harlem with war-related learning disabilities, continued to visit the State University of New York College of Optometry to use Sound-Spell. He called us each month regarding the availability of the W95 version for home use. His persistence paid off with our installation of a new version on his laptop, which he now uses to demonstrate Sound-Spell for friends and family with similar disabilities. He is a walking talking billboard for the program.

**Sumaya Jackson** and **Tommy Hipper** are the stars of ALC's public service announcement, premiered on the QVC home shopping TV network in late December. The 30sec PSA, titled *Bomb Tomb Comb*, features Sumaya and Tommy puzzling over the spelling of these and other common words. Seconds later, Sumaya links this spelling illogic with illiteracy and Tommy suggests viewers contact ALC for more information. QVC, which donated 17 airings to us, is the largest electronic retailer in the US and reaches 67 million homes. Thus, our PSA, produced pro bono by a professional team headed by Monica Anderson of Black Watch Productions, reached millions of homes with our literacy message.

As a result, interest is way up.

**Ryan Rancatore**, 14, lives in Foster City, California, and will have his award-winning poem, *Writer's Block*, featured in the new W95 version of Sound-Spell. Why? Because of collaboration with ALC, the America Library of Poetry, which with ALC, the America Library of Poetry, which sponsored a regional poetry contest and published the results as a handsome 268-page collection, donated \$500 of its profits to ALC, and featured a one-page plug for Sound-Spell early in the book.

**Joel Davis**, chief editor at the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, compiled a list of *AHD* variant (simplified) spellings and donated it to ALC. This list is on our website, serving as a plug for *AHD*) and, together with our Random House *Websters College Dictionary* variant spellings list, has led to a modest spelling simplification at a mainstream periodical, and is informing a preferred spellings update in the US Government Printing Office *Style Manual*. This manual has inspired the retirement of once preferred spellings (eg, *axe*, *theatre*, *programme*, *gaol*, *phantasy*, *catalogue* and *hiccough*). These dictionary lists and style manual are forces for simple literacy.

#### **4. What one member remembers**

##### **When Parliament voted to simplify spelling!**

**Tom Lang,**

My interest in spelling reform dates back some 50 years. There were lively debates in the British House of Commons in 1949 and 1953 when Mont Follick, MP, introduced private member's bills in favor of some simplification of English spelling.

Surprisingly, the second bill passed the committee stage, but Mont Follick agreed to withdraw it, following assurances that the Government would show interest and goodwill for any proposal designed to investigate possible improvements in the field of education.\*

It seems that the only practical progress resulting was the experiment using ita (Initial Teaching Alphabet) in a number of schools. This experiment had limited success, however, and now is largely forgotten.

For some years I was a member of the Fonetice Alfabet Association, which focused mainly on the Shaw alphabet competition. The alphabet which resulted (known as Shavian) was new, comprising 48 letters which resembled shorthand symbols. This revolutionary alphabet gained little support, and faded away quickly. I lost touch with the FAA, probably due to my various moves around England. I suppose it was disbanded.

Also, I had the pleasure of corresponding with Dr Godfrey Dewey, the then secretary of the Simpler Spelling Association of New York, between 1960 and 1970. I admired the SSA fonetic system of 41 letters (26 existing plus 15 new ones) but I agreed with him that 'while it is eminently suitable for fonetic purposes right now, in textbooks or dictionaries, unfortunately any thought of bringing new characters into general use in tens of thousands of printing plants and tens of millions of typewriters belongs to a period two or three generations in the future.'

Dr Dewey advocated World English Spelling, a fonetic System based on the existing alphabet plus a number of digraphs.

Since Joining the SSS I have found several interesting correspondents. I feel that any system requiring extensive changes in spelling stands no chance of gaining general acceptance. So I look forward to further discussions within the Society, which hopefully will enable us to reach a consensus as to the best system to recommend.

I am pleased to see that micro-reform will be on the agenda for the 1999 AGM.\*\* I suggest the AGM should carefully consider the 'long short' list of Random House Websters College Dictionary variant spellings. This list can be obtained from Joe Little, American Literacy Council, USA.

\* See Maurice Harrison, Pamflet and *A History of the Society up to 1970*, SSSN 1986/2

\*\* For update, see AGM news.

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

## **5. Editorial**

### **Another milestone**

**Allan Campbell, NZ**

Enclosed with members' copies of this Issue of *Simpl Speling* is a voting form that marks a milestone in the Society's history.

We are being asked by the committee to give it a lead in deciding which path we should be taking in our campaign for change.

Until now, the committee itself has made such decisions, our only constitutional input being to elect its members and then only if at the AGM in London.

This new approach is welcome and timely.

It gives us non-southern England members a chance to be part of the decision making. In this age of electronic communication, having the decisions made by only a few attending a meeting in London becomes more difficult to justify.

Our late secretary, Bob Brown, foresaw the time when we would be an electronic society doing most of our work on the net. Trends supporting this contention are here now.

Almost half of our members have access to email. The emailing group discusses matters as they arise: no waiting three months to meet, four months for *Simpl Speling*, or six for the *Journal*.

The time may come sooner than we think when the committee will become a smaller executive (and secretariat?) charged with 1) implementing decisions made by the membership, 2) housekeeping, 3) sorting out organizational problems.

## 6. Letters

### Benefits of suggested spellings should seem self-evident

**Nelson Helm, USA**

When we go public about changing, I think we should say as little as possible about justifying changing. We should write as if the script and benefits were self-evident.

Everyone sees things slightly differently. Persons may favor or oppose changing because they expect the changing to play out different ways.

Disagreements muddy the water we ask everyone to drink, so we want to avoid arguing with anyone.

I want persons to buy my whisky. I don't much care if they put it in their bellies or in their cakes or behind their ears or strip paint with it. But I do not want the paint-strippers to discourage the cooks and drinkers or vice versa.

### ***K-a-t* DOES spell *cat*!**

**Frank Jones, England**

[*Editor's note*: Editing of Frank's letter in November *Simpl Speling* led to his main point being missed. It is explained here.]

If someone writes *kat* one could respond that *k-a-t* does not spell anything, does not spell *dog*, or does not spell *rat*. But no one ever does say *dog* or *rat*: they always say '*k-a-t* does not spell *cat*'. Why? Because *k-a-t* DOES spell *cat*. They have just read *k-a-t* as *cat*. Their statement confirms that *k-a-t* spells *cat*.



As a teacher of computing for some years I frequently wrote down lists of unrelated words to be entered into a database to be sorted. I would always include a few like *fone*, *kof*, *nee*, and I was always told they do not spell *phone*, *cough*, or *knee*, thus proving that they do!

### **Reform strategy is needed**

**Robert Craig, England**

What is required is a strategy for reform. Valerie Yule's International Spelling Day is spot on.

The first part of the strategy should be acceptance from the educational establishment of the so-called 'American' spellings as being 'correct'.

It is a myth that spelling reformers cannot agree about anything.

What they do not agree about is everything. No reformer would keep *w* in *write*, or first *k* in *knock*.

1. Drop initial letters such as *w* in *write*, and replace them by an apostrophe for the transition period; eg, *know* > '*now* to save confusion with *now*.

2. Let there be only one consonant after a schwa vowel (most of George Lahey's list has words with that pattern): *afect*, *colect*, *asail*, *atempt*, *comittee*, etc. A list of the type he is compiling should be part of the strategy.

3. Cut *e* after *n* in *doctrine* etc, but not after *v*, yet.
4. Replace initial *ph* only by *f*, so as to avoid questions about whether it should be *fotograffing* or *fotografing*, *saffire*, *sapfire*, etc.
5. If U're brave, replace initial *c* by *k*, initial only for the same reason as above.
6. Write *to*, *do*, *true*, *through* as *tu*, *du*, *tru*, *thru* (cf, *so*, *no*, *Jo*, *Flo*, etc).
7. Write *coud* (or *koud*), *shoud*, *woud*, *breik*, *greit*, *steik*.

[Editor's note: Masha Bell's recent letter in *The Express* (London) drew a response from a Nigel Kidd, who deplored greater difficulty of distinguishing meaning between homonyms. This led to SSS member **John Gledhill** sending this letter, which was published.]

### **Leaving no room for confusion!**

Sir — Nigel Kidd is quite correct in saying that if we simplified spelling 'we would have no way of distinguishing between the meaning of words such as *meet* and *meat*'. Yes, I often confuse them. You should also add the word *mete*.

So Mr Kidd is quite *right*. Or do I mean *write*? Or *rite*? Or *wright*?

Oh dear, *right* is ambiguous too — 'not left' or 'not wrong', so perhaps we also need *wreight* as in height)?

Oops, there's also *right* as in 'privilege', so we also need, erm, *reight*?

And what about the extreme right wing of the Conservatives — perhaps *wraight*? And I think we need another spelling for *rights* as in the skull and antlers of a dead stag — perhaps *wreights*?

Yes Mr Kidd, you are *right*, *rite*, *write*, *wright*, *reight*, *wreight*, *wrealght*. That will make it so much easier to teach children to read.

I think.

### **An agreed style for SSS publications?**

#### **Ron Footer. England**

Since joining the SSS I have received many of its publications, each with many interesting articles. Most have painted pictures of how terrible English spelling is. However, there has always been something missing for me. This is some kind of SSS spelling reform progress report.

In an ideal world each issue of *Simpl Speling* would use the same spelling; spelling that members had agreed was optimum. Every word would be an example of how sensible spelling could be and no member would be disillusioned by one doubtful word of reform spelling.

This would mean that for some special moments each member would experience the wonderful world of sensible spelling, the world that one day we hope all users of English spelling will experience.

However, as this cannot be achieved overnight may I suggest we could work towards it by printing in every issue of SSS publications:

1. Principles that have been agreed
2. Classes and examples of word changes that have been agreed for a full spelling reform
3. Classes and examples of word changes that have been agreed for the initial spelling reform.

As far as I know the following principles have been agreed so far by the email group:

1. Proper names to be left unchanged
2. Only the 26 letters of the alphabet to be used
- 3 No diacritics to be used to spell words.

A sample of how word examples could look is:

Classes	Examples
<f> for /f/	alphabet alfabet, elephant elefant, phase fase
surplus <e> endings	are ar, before befor, give giv
silent letters	every evry, friend frend, school scool
consistent <i> ... <e>	might mite, night nite, right rite
consistent <o> ... <e>	road rode, load lode, toad tode
consistent <oo>	could cood, should shood, would wood

Giving classes and three examples is pragmatic, not occupying too much space but highlighting the principles involved.

I suggest only the agreed initial reform spelling vocabulary should be used in SSS publications.

Further principles and vocabularies could be developed by giving members opportunities to vote for them in each issue of SSS publications so that gradually we would approach the ideal world mentioned above.

### **Time on spelling tedium 'amazing'** **Raymond Weisling. Indonesia**

I found your SSS website and I must agree that your program is very important as spelling reform is sorely needed.

I have lived in Indonesia for 13 years (I am an American, my wife is Indonesian), and our two American children go to Indonesian schools. The Indonesian language is extremely fonetic in orthography and very consistent. My daughters learned to read very quickly. The time wasted on tedious spelling lessons in English-language schools is utterly amazing.

I applaud your efforts, altho some critics must think it is insane and an impossible battle. Good luck.

## 7. Net chat

Excerpts from a few of the posts in the SSS internet discussion groups

### Newspapers (May)

#### Damian Bonsall. England

Newspaper editors are always incredibly busy and have a planning horizon of a few days. Every political party, charity and pressure group is trying to persuade them to support their cause.



Newspaper proprietors are different. They can devote time to constrictive proposals, they have a planning horizon of years, and they know newspaper sales rely on literacy rates. Proprietors are the ones to persuade. It is not necessary to find and contact the owner of every title. There is usually a trade association.

If the trade associations could be persuaded to support a reform, the industry as a whole will support it. But they will only be persuaded by a clear-cut and concrete proposal. For example, at 0000 hours on January 1 .... these words .... will cease to be so spelt, and will then be spelt ....

### Simplifying English grammar (Aug)

#### Valerie Yule. Australia

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, when the ruling class spoke Norman-French and the clerics used Latin, these were the official written languages. The peasant English underclass was illiterate. Literacy was still taught in Norman French in schools until around the 14th century, when the Black Death caused a shortage of competent teachers. The common people had continued to speak English and as they were not interested in inflections and complicated grammar, and there was no written English to maintain it, only the most common verbs kept up their irregular conjugations.

Meanwhile, the vernacular English was taking over as the spoken language of the upper classes as well, and they did not pick up the complex Anglo-Saxon grammar either. So when after the Black Death they had to admit teachers who could not speak French and taught in English, spoken English had now been scoured rather clean.

So it was not one enlightened individual who simplified English grammar — altho writers like Chaucer, who made writing in the vernacular respectable again, did not dredge back the old grammar.

### Micro-reform (May)

#### David Barnsdale. England

Seeing slang as a signpost pointing in the direction the language wants to go seems a strong argument. One of the reasons for me dropping the e of *ve* (*hav*) is the precedent of *spiv*. Clearly the idea that *v* must be followed by *e* is a dead convention.

### Millennium prospects (Oct)

#### John Reilly. USA

Matters were quite different during the last *fin de siècle*. In 1900, making spelling more consistent had been an obvious good among right-thinking people in the English-speaking world for at least 20 years. Standard dictionaries printed appendices of suggested respellings.

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

## 8. Jean Wilkinson, USA, writes: 'Daddy, how do you spell, *air*?'

'Well, that depends on what word it's in. If it's in *chair*, you're okay. But if it's in *bear* or *care* or *where* you're going to have a problem. If it's in *their*, *there*, or *they're*, you may be in for big trouble. And if it starts with *p*, you're in another homonym triple trap, with *pear*, *pair*, and *pare*.'

Why are we doing this to our kids?

With the homonyms, some people feel we need the different spellings to know which meaning we're writing about. But when we're talking, all homonyms sound the same. And 99.9% of the time, we know which one the speaker has in mind.

There are those who feel we must be loyal to meanings in common. We can't write *thay* (as children do) to match *say*, *day*, *way*, *may*. *They* must match *their* and *them*, because the meanings are related. But *go* and *went* are related, and so are *be*, *am*, *is*, *are*, *were*, and *been*. Language doesn't draw boundaries around related words.

Many people feel we must be loyal to historical roots. We must keep the silent *g* in *sign* to show it's related historically to *signal* and *signature*. But the three words are moving farther and farther apart in meaning. Which is more important: To know historical relationships or to be able to spell *sign*?

Children expect their language to make sense. When it tricks them, they blame themselves for being dumb. They may rebel. Or they may die inside. Thus the illiterate population expands and, with it, delinquency/crime and the drug population.

We don't have to do this to them. We can make it easier.

We need — they need — a more practical system of spelling.

Can we work together, with capable leadership, to nail that system down?

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

## 9. Can we pin down the number of phonemes in English?

In her letter to The Express, Masha Bell said: 'We have 256 ways of representing the 45 basic sounds of our language'. According to Jean Hutchins, Diane McGuinness (1998) gives the figure for American English as 42. In Allan Campbell's letter to The Press (Christchurch, NZ), he said, 'There are 41 sounds in English and almost 600 ways of spelling them'. In PV7, Steve Bett said, 'There are 41 significant speech sounds or phonemes. In the traditional English writing system they are spelled over 500 ways'. Godfrey Dewey (1971) listed examples of 561 ways that 41 English sounds could be spelled. Allan asked, 'Is there any way to pin down these statistics so there is some consistency in our public claims?'

**Steve Bett, USA**, reports.

The quick answer is probably not. While we can be specific about the minimum number of pure (uncombined) phonemes required to fully describe English speech — 34 — it is nearly impossible

to reach agreement on the number of phonemes when combinations are included. The key reasons for this are:

- (1) There is no obligation for a particular orthography to list any combination or blend.
- (2) An orthography that listed every combination or blend used in a transcription as a separate phoneme would have over 60 phonemes.

A phoneme is a range of sounds that are treated as equivalent by a speech community. The phoneme inventory for English was charted over 100 years ago by Pitman, Ellis, Jones and Sweet. They were all searching for the minimum number of phonemes required to graphically represent educated southern English speech, sometimes referred to as BBC English or R.P. While they agreed on 34 pure phonemes, the number with combinations, varied from 40 to 50.

The *Longman Dictionary for American English* recognizes 45 phonemes (21v, 24c). *Longman* recognizes schwa but merges a: and o. *Longman* does not single out the combinations *hw* and *yu*. If the *r*-combinations are eliminated, the number of significant phonemes in the *Longman* inventory drops to 40.

The first two columns in the chart list the 12 pure vowels (6 chekt, 6 free). Chekt vowels are always short and always followed by a consonant. Descriptive orthographies include all 12 pure vowels. Pragmatic notational systems, such as Unigraf, may merge similar sounding phonemes such as the central vowels *u = a'* and *u'* or the back vowels *q = o* and *a:*.

Almost everyone agrees that the consonant combinations tsh [chl and dzh [j] and the diphthongs *ei*, *ai*, *ou*, *au*, and *oi* are essential. These seven combinations added to 34 yields 41 essential phonemes.

Sweet and Jones add four schwa combinations, increasing the number of phonemes in their inventory of 45. In their transcriptions Jones and Sweet used more than the 45 phonemes. Their list did not include combinations with consonants *ju* or triphthongs *ai@* and *au@*. Chekt Spelling adds *iu* and three more schwa combinations, resulting in 50 essential phonemes.

The minimum number of pure phonemes required to accurately transcribe English speech is 34 (12 vowels + 22 consonants). Pragmatic orthographers have frequently chosen to merge *a:/o*, *u/schwa*, and *th/dh*, reducing the number of phonemes by three. Truespel and Globish also ignore *ng*. Eliminating any pure vowel tends to distort the description of RP and most other variants of English. However, a carefully pruned 30 pure phoneme version of English would still be intelligible.

25 Vowel Phonemes for English - 12 pure			
IPA - Chkt Spl - Unigraf downsize			
6 Chekt - short	6 Free - long	Diphthongs	4r with schwa
ae a. a	a: a q	ai 'y I	ae ar qr   ais yr Ir
at, ax, eat, cat	aima, want, watch	eye, ice, bite	are, ear,   ire, fire
e e e	3: 'r R	ei ei A	ec er er
edge, edit, elbow	her, girl, skirt, urban	ace, ape, vein	air, care, there, barely
i i. i	i: i E	oi oi O	i:c ir ir
it, in, index, ill	real, east, mate, very	oil, boy, loyal	ear, fear, dear, pier
o (un)ed a o. q	o: (un)ed e o o	ou o o	or or or
ox, offer, out, pot	are, call, cent, loss	oh, oat, low	ot, our, foot, more
u u e	u: u O	ju ju U	uc ur Ur
hook, put, would	ooze, zulu, zoo, duty	you, law, fuse	your, sure, tour, poor
A u' U	c (un)ed e a' u	au au M	auc aur Mr
up, out, about skit	ago, sofa, atom, silent	out, down, cow	our, flower, power

A complete broad representation of spoken English requires 34 pure phonemes. The minimum number of essential phonemes (not counting *r*-combinations) in a descriptive orthography is 41.

## 10. Spelling on the net with Steve Bett, USA

### Henry Higgins' spelling ideas

Henry Sweet, a friend of George Bernard Shaw and reputed model for Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady*, had some first class thoughts on how to reform English spelling. His proposal, developed before 1900, was similar to Jones' IPA notation. Check out [URL no longer available] and map-IPA.

The Perl Script on-line orthographic converter can be found at [URL no longer available]

U can cut and paste whole books of text into it on-line and get a reformed version in any of three proposed systems: cut spelling ALC phonetic, and Truespel.

Mark Twain wrote several essays and gave several speeches on the topic of simplified spelling. One can be found at <http://www.mantex.co.uk/2009/10/26/spelling-reform/>

References and notes for my article, *Can we pin down the number of phonemes?* can be found at [URL no longer available]

These include at the same prefix: [dewey.html] which lists the results of Godfrey Dewey's analysis of the various ways that 41 basic English speech sounds are spelled in (1) an abridged dictionary and (2) in 100.000 words of actual writing. The information in this html document is drawn from Dewey's two books *English Spelling* (1971) and *Relative Frequency of English Spellings* (1970). See the bibliography on spelling at [spel-bib.html](#). If you divide 461 spellings by 41 phonemes, it yields an average of 13.7 different spellings per phoneme. The last note references a page that shows how to map New Spelling, Fonetic, Broad Romic, Globish and other reform orthographies onto the 21 vowel (46 phonemes) IPA inventory of speech sounds.

For information on Society member John Reilly's Restored English Proposal visit his website at [URL no longer available]

If your surfing uncovers any other interesting sites, please let me know for mention in later issues of *Simpl Speling*.

### Opportunities missed with newsgroups

#### David Barnsdale

I have been puzzled why we have heated discussion on the emailing list yet I never see any of the other members of the group on [alt.language.english.spelling.reform](#) newsgroup.

Indeed several people have asked me questions which make me wonder if many of them have used newsgroups at all.

News groups are really just a sophisticated mailing list except that the articles are stored on your provider's disks, not your own. Subscribing to a newsgroup is far easier than subscribing to a mailing list. U use completely different software to read the groups so U don't get your mail box filled up with emails as U do with mailing lists.

A mailing list tends to be for the converted and the enthusiast. A newsgroup often have people wandering in who are just mildly curious about the subject. Hence they give excellent opportunities to try and convince people who would not otherwise meet the arguments for reform.

And on newsgroups that have no relevance to spelling reform U can do your bit for the cause by simply using a reformed spelling for your posting.

If U don't know how to use newsgroups ask your provider. Sometimes the groups are called Usenet but strictly speaking not all of them have that status.

### **Society seeking a second website**

At the January committee meeting Masha Bell was asked to continue to liaise with Bernard Sypniewski about a possible second SSS website, and to find out where this might be hosted. If the new site adopted a different style of presentation it would contrast with the Aston one.

Masha's idea of using the site mainly for presenting the problems of English spelling was seen as a good one. She felt that, after lengthy consultations with Bernard and several other members, she had a clearer idea how to present the difficulties of English spelling via a website, but that it would take her several months to put the material together.

There was a case for continuing with the Aston site in its present academic format, but its home page could perhaps be made more attractive.

Nick Kerr had constructed two alternatives about a year ago.

### **Talepeace**

On a TV show ex-vice president Dan Quayle, of *potatoe* fame, was interviewed on his plans to seek the Republican presidential nomination. 'How can U shake this image that U had during your vice-presidency as sort of a bumbling vice president who couldn't spell?' he was asked.

'I'll tell U what,' he replied. 'I'll let all the perfect spellers support Al Gore and those who have trouble spelling should support me.'

## 11. simpl speling. members' supplement. March 1999

### October.

Masha Bell had misgivings reconciling her own views on reform with the overall aims of the SSS, and how to make the most effective use of her time. She thought her secretarial duties (and possibly later those of treasurer) might leave her with insufficient energy for effective publicity, which she saw as almost more urgent. She would not take over the treasurer's duties without additional paid time.

Chris Upward needed more time in the next 18 months to complete a book. He also wanted someone to train for his editorial role.

Tony Burns said longer travel time required by a new job left insufficient time for copying *PV*'s, and this had caused a backlog.

It was agreed *Simpl Speling* retain the present title spelling; there was no enthusiasm for an email version:

Masha was to go ahead with designing a leaflet for the public and the website: Chris Upward, Masha, and Gerald were to be a subcommittee to work out a proposal for a limited first-stage reform to be put to the AGM in April.

It was decided not to reprint the leaflet *Tough, though, thought*: 200 copies of Bob Brown's *PV1* were to be reprinted.

It was suggested: That in the next *JSSS* Chris Upward advertise for someone to become editor of the *Journal* for a limited period: that Allan Campbell in the supplement to *Simpl Speling* invite members to photocopy *Simpl Speling* and ask libraries to carry it in their reading room: that the publicity subcommittee be disbanded (the efforts by Masha and Allan were acknowledged): that Masha liaise with Bernard Sypniewski on the layout of the website: that she also investigate what size of pamphlet is best suited for displaying in libraries: that Allan suggest how his game plan ideas could best be put into practise by the committee; that Masha find out to what extent American spellings were accepted in public examination by Scottish boards.

It was reported Bob Brown's *Spelling Reform in Context*, with slight updating by Chris Upward, was nearly ready for printing: that *PV8* by Edward Rondthaler, *PV9* by Katherine Greenland, *PV10* by Valerie Yule, and *PV11* by Paul Mitrevski were also almost ready, and that Don Morrison's and G V Phadke's still needed editing by the authors.

### January

Masha Bell was appointed paid treasurer on a one-day-per-week basis for six months. The job would take more time initially, but she would keep an eye on her workload and hoped that, after she had set up accounts spreadsheets and worked out a routine, she would need less time. She accepted the position because nobody else volunteered. If any member is willing to take on the role. she would be happy to relinquish it at the earliest convenient date.

Masha replaced Alun Bye as signatory for checks. Jean Hutchins and Chris Upward continue as signatories. The changeover of trustees had finally been completed.

Committee members were to inform Masha before the AGM if they wanted to stand for re-election.

Allan Campbell was appointed official spokesman for the Society in New Zealand.

The committee was more interested in supporting an 'International Spelling Reform Day' than just 'International Spelling Day' as proposed by Valerie Yule. It was, however, unlikely that the committee would be able to do anything much to promote such a day in the near future. The subcommittee for micro reform had made slow progress in the absence of David Barnsdale and during Chris Upward's illness. Only consistent use of the letter *f* for *f* phoneme and replacing *you* with *U* had so far found a good measure of support in the email discussion group.

Masha had postponed redesigning a simpler version of the SSS information leaflet until members views about the future direction of the Society had been obtained.

She would try to learn by the AGM if Scottish boards accepted American spellings in public examination.

Chris Upward's article *In Defense of Spelling Reform*, refuting David Crystal's view that English did not need reform, had been published in English Today.

Chris Upward had had offers of help with producing the JSSS from Joe Little, Chris Gledhill and Stanley Gibbs. He will keep no more than 20 copies of back numbers of JSSS more than five years old.

Before the AGM Paul Fletcher intended to compare and evaluate all schemes so far published.

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

### **Committee attendances**

October: Committee — Chris Jolly (chair), Masha Bell (minutes), John Bryant, Tony Burns, Leo Chapman, Paul Fletcher, Jean Hutchins, Gerald Palmer, Gwenllian Thorstad, Chris Upward: member — Edward Marchant; apologies — David Barnsdale, Nicholas Kerr, Alun Bye.

January: Committee — Chris Jolly (chair), Masha Bell (minutes), John Bryant, Leo Chapman, Jean Hutchins, Nicholas Kerr, Gerald Palmer, Gwenllian Thorstad, Chris Upward: members — Frank Garnett, Edward Marchant; apologies — Alun Bye, Tony Burns, Paul Fletcher.

Subscriptions still go to Jean

Altho Masha is secretary, Jean Hutchins remains membership secretary, and all subscriptions and membership queries should be addressed to her. Subs for 1999 (£10 or \$US20, cash or check — payable to SSS) are now due.

The Society has 128 members: 18 joined in 1998 and 11 left. Only a few have so far paid their subs for 1999.

Members who are interested in serving on the committee should indicate this to Masha Bell before the AGM

*Simpl Speling* in libraries?

Would your local library display *Simpl Speling* in its reading room? Are U willing to find out? The October committee meeting suggested we try.

Last year I tried six New Zealand public libraries. Three. Canterbury (ie. Christchurch, which I approached personally. and at which I left three issues at once), Dunedin, and Auckland declined.

The others — Wellington, Palmerston North, and Timaru — have still to respond. I send a copy of two successive issues before asking for a decision.

The committee has suggested U photocopy your copy — minus this members supplement Section.

Our aim is to make SS readable and attractive for those with a passing interest in spelling change.  
— *Allan Campbell*

What's happened to BEtSS?

At the January committee meeting it was reported the Detroit based sister organization Better Education thru Simplified Spelling (BEtSS) had not replied to correspondence from Chris Upward for some time.

Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing, in the world's estimation. — Susan B Anthony, American proponent of women's rights in the late 19th century.

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

## **Meanwhile back at the office**

### **A lesson from history.**

#### **Masha Bell**

A few months ago I had cause to find out a little about Andrew Carnegie's connection with spelling reform. SSS member George Anderson had approached Fife Library and also the Carnegie Cottage Museum in Dunfermline, where the famous philanthropist was born, about getting them to display something about his involvement with the movement. The possibility of a leaflet mentioning Carnegie and the present aims of the SSS had been discussed.



I knew nothing of Carnegie's connection with spelling reform at the time. but was lucky to turn for help to Cornell Kimball. He knew a great deal, and kindly also sent me a great wadge of material from which I could learn myself. After a weekend spent doing little else except perusing it. I now know quite a bit about Carnegie's connection with spelling reform and also the whole history of the spelling reform movement.

I used to think reforming English spelling was a fairly difficult undertaking — I am now starting to wonder whether it is not completely impossible. I used to imagine that if we got some influential, rich or famous people on our side, and if we had greater financial resources, our chances of success would improve enormously.

It turns out the movement enjoyed quite substantial amounts of both fame and fortune at times in its 150-year history without bringing reform very much closer. The support of President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, the \$250,000 (about 25 million in today's money) of Carnegie, or the sackful of petitions from people in England did not make much difference. Only lexicographer Noah Webster enjoyed a modicum of lasting success.

This does suggest to me that being thoroly informed about the intricacies of the English language is probably one of the most essential prerequisites for aspiring reformers. Being able to enlighten the public effectively about what is wrong with TO would certainly be impossible otherwise. We also need to understand the difficulties presented by TO exceptionally well to come up with some sensible improvements.

Looking at the history of the spelling reform movement I found myself reacting repeatedly with an 'If only...'. If only the early reformers had suggested improvements by principle like the ones Webster made some headway with rather than lists of words: if only they had co-operated more instead of trying to advance their own obsessions: if only GBS had never given any one the silly notion that inventing a new alphabet is the answer; if only Pitman had not introduced fancy new symbols in his ITA. I'll try to find out a bit more about Webster next.

## **the simplified spelling society — voting form**

As a member of the SSS, you are asked to vote on the question below to indicate to the committee the direction you think the Society should be taking in its endeavors to reform English spelling.

Please tick ONE square box 0 below; and give your name

IF you choose to tick square B, you may ALSO tick ONE of the two circles O under B

### **Should the SSS direct its efforts towards bringing about:**

- A. A comprehensive, single-stage reform (eg, Nue Speling)
- B. O 1. Improving English spelling in a few big stages
- B. O 2. Improving English spelling via a series of small steps
- C. Other — To be explained in not more than 20 words:

Comments of not more than 25 words about the choices on offer are also invited:

Votes to be sent to SSS Secretary Masha Bell, or by email — by April 17, 1999, so that the results can be collated and presented to the AGM on April 24, 1999.