Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins

Penny Martin

The Australian Educational Publishing Awards: raising the benchmarks and extending the scope of Australian educational publishing

Abstract:

This article discusses the history of the Australian Educational Publishing awards. It argues that these awards have extended the scope, and raised the quality, of Australian educational publishing.

Biographical note:

Penny Martin's MA research at Macquarie University in 2002 focused on the complementarity of digital ancillaries with print products in textbooks, and their effectiveness. She has industry experience in both educational/professional and trade publishing, and was a convenor and lecturer in the Post-graduate Diploma of Editing and Publishing at Macquarie University. She is currently senior acquisitions editor, Australia and New Zealand, with Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins. She has been involved in the Australian Educational Awards as both entrant and judge.

Keywords:

Educational publishing – Australia – Publishing awards

Introduction

The Australian Educational Publishing Awards were inaugurated by Mike Horsley and the Australian Publishers Association in 1993, to 'promote innovative and leading edge educational publishing' (Horsley 2007: 1, Dargusch, Persaud & Horsley 2011). They have since become a powerful influence on the standards and scope of Australian educational publishing. As both an entrant publisher and occasional empanelled judge in the awards since their inception, I have observed that these awards reflect a year-on-year rise in the standards of pedagogical design and presentation – both as print and online technologies converge, and as authors and publishers embrace the new opportunities so presented to enhance the teaching and learning values in their publications.

Although internationally 'there is a rapid proliferation of textbook competitions, prizes and awards' (Horsley 2007: 1), there is no comparable recognition of excellence in Australian publishing that acknowledges the trends and directions of educational publishing output. It is unsurprising, then, that in a survey conducted in 2007, 'there was a consensus that the Awards promoted educational values and highlighted pedagogical awareness' (Horsley 2007: 8). This was because the process of the awards was seen 'to speed up ways of thinking about pedagogy across the publishing [industry] as new pedagogical approaches were applied across different areas in the publishing enterprise' (Horsley 2007: 8).

Background

My professional experience in both trade and educational publishing in Australia and New Zealand have encompassed a multiplicity of different roles (publisher, acquisitions editor, editorial and production manager, art editor). From this experience, I suggest that educational publishing is a far more rigorous and complex discipline than trade publishing. For an educational publisher, the act of balancing the equation of pedagogical needs, market demands, aesthetics and curriculum-driven deadlines against stringent budgets and the precarious economics dictated by very small market segments requires a hybrid skillset of strongly developed business acumen, almost mystical clairvoyance and a high degree of intellectual flexibility.

While contending with the financial restrictions of publication budgets that must forecast a predicated threshold of return on investment, Australian educational publishers have also had to deal with major economic changes that have had a significant impact on publishing, such as the introduction of the goods and services tax, the government withdrawal of book subsidies and a reduction in copyright protection (Horsley 2007: 3). These factors have compounded the economic challenge of producing a meaningful return on investment for their corporate owners and investors. The general increase in uncertainty in publishing – from considering different business models to considering changes to school curriculum and classroom pedagogy – are also creating new challenges for educational publishers. In this financial climate, it is often difficult for publishers to secure the funding required to enable authors, editors, web developers and designers to fully exploit the opportunities offered by new and emerging publishing technologies in producing

either a new educational publication or a new edition of an established one. Yet despite this limitation, entries in the Australian Educational Publishing Awards demonstrate that Australian publishers, authors, editors and designers continue to produce publications of a remarkably high standard. This provides, I believe, evidence of not only overriding professionalism and commitment to best practice but clearly evidence of people who as both creative individuals and teams have 'used their native wit and talent to huge effect to overcome low funding' (Larkins 2008).

Trends in educational publishing

In March 2002, I submitted a dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts program in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. The following paragraph was included in the Acknowledgments:

> A great debt is also owed to Mr Michael Horsley, whose innovative and excellent work in The Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing first prompted the researcher to consider the elements of this study from the publisher's perspective; and who, most generously, allowed access to the collection of publications entered in the Awards for Excellence, held by the Teaching Resources and Textbook Research Unit (TREAT) in the Faculty of Education at The University of Sydney.

The focus of the research that informed my dissertation was an analysis – by it's very nature, merely a snapshot in time – of the complementarity between ancillary content in support of educational publications that was delivered via the channel of print, and that delivered by the, then, new technologies of CD-ROMs and the Internet; and whether these ancillary materials were viewed as being effective in assisting the teaching and learning process. At the time, new technologies were readily embraced by publishers, but not so readily taken up by teachers or their students. The TREAT database of awards entries offered a rich resource for research.

By the last quarter of the 1990s, Australian publishers of educational, professional and reference texts had established their position at the forefront of the convergence of old and new technologies. At the time, there was considerable discussion in this sector of the publishing industry about the possibilities of completely migrating the content of books from print to cyberspace, and the larger professional and reference publishers – such as CCH Australia Limited and the Law Book Company – had already instigated such a migratory process. Many educational publishers had also, by then, begun to move away from the tradition of publishing purely print-based textbooks to publish textbooks that incorporated references to accompanying CD-ROMs and/or related websites that provided extension or ancillary activities for students. In 1997, some educational textbooks such as *New century mathematics*, published by Nelson, were offered in both print and on CD-ROM, with the CD-ROM or digital version being what Hallam describes as 'page-fidelity products … created from the publisher's PDF source files' (2012: 4).

By 2001, when I was conducting my initial research into this area, Australian educational publishers were frequently complementing their print product with ancillary material using the new publishing technologies. Publishers were generally

bundling this additional digital content with the printed textbook, rather than offering it as a separate commercial or saleable item; however, such material still carried development costs, so this had an impact on the economics of producing such publications, especially in the very small Australian market. While educational publishers are now very much engaged with offering eBooks as well as, or rather than, printed editions, and while the costs of technological development have dropped, it is interesting to note that the economic model of bundling free ancillaries with the primary publication has not changed substantially in the intervening period, despite the significantly altered economic climate for publishing generally.

The influence of the awards

Until the establishment of the Australian Educational Publishing Awards, educational publishing in Australia enjoyed very little, if any, professional recognition. The establishment of the awards gave Australian educational publishers not only the opportunity to demonstrate their innovation, flair and professionalism, but also to aspire to ever-higher standards. From a judge's perspective, the increasing quality of entries over recent years demonstrates the invaluable contribution the awards continue to make to educational publishing in terms of raising the benchmarks, surely and steadily, every year. As a frequent participant in the awards from the publication side, I can also attest that having publications either short-listed or listed as winners, provides an on-going incentive to achieve higher standards in every publication in development.

During my research, discussions about the awards with colleagues in educational publishing led to this statement in my dissertation, reflecting the publishing community's views:

> For Australian educational publishers, the … Awards have become a significant recognition of best practice in the writing, presentation and production of textbooks and learning materials. They offer the opportunity for authors, instructional designers, editors, designers and other contributors to demonstrate that Australian educational publishers produce innovative, world-class publications; and consequently, the Awards have become a significant event in the annual calendar of most major educational publishers in Australia. Placement of a publication, either as a short-listed entry or as a winner, in any category offered by the Awards is generally regarded as an accolade in the community of people concerned with the quality of textbooks, including publishers, teachers and booksellers. And … the placement of a software product as a short-listed or winning entry in the Awards gives it a highly desirable stamp of approval in that same community (Martin 2002: 5).

In each year of the Australian Awards for Educational Publishing, a catalogue of the short-listed and winning titles is produced. This colour catalogue is initially distributed at the awards ceremony and then sent to all the educational publishing members of the Australian Publishers Association. For the first 15 years of the awards, the colour catalogue was also distributed to every school and public library in Australia. Publishing the catalogue in this way thus provided schools, teachers and librarians with guidance to high quality classroom teaching and learning materials. As

in trade publishing, many educational publishers displayed their winning, or short-listed, status on the covers of their educational publications. In more recent years, the catalogues have been available on-line from the Australian Publishers Association website.[1] The catalogues have thus acted to distribute the work of the educational awards to interested members of the entire educational community and set benchmarks in both the community and the educational publishing industry for quality in educational publishing.

Evolution of categories

The University of Sydney's Teaching Resources and Textbook Research Unit's (TREAT) collection of textbooks and learning materials, gathered during research into the characteristics of good textbooks and learning materials and the source of the Australian Educational Publishing Awards was collated and curated by Mike Horsley. This meant that when the inaugural awards were held under his aegis, educational publishers in Australia were offered their first official opportunity for both industry and academic recognition of the contribution that their publications were able to make to the corpus of creative resources for teaching and learning.

The awards were designed to highlight educational resources that provide 'examples of best practice to which all educational writers and publishers will aspire' (Horsley 2001b). The awards reflected TREAT's belief that 'the Australian educational publishing industry produces world-class materials. First established in 1994, the Awards are designed to encourage and promote innovative, high quality educational writing and publishing by Australians' (Horsley 2001b). The catalogue for the 2001 awards stated that:

> The Awards recognise the work of educational publishers in all areas including the publication of resources which link screen-based and print-based materials. These materials enrich the learning environment of students in schools and tertiary institutions. … The Awards … which were instituted in 1994 are judged by a panel of teachers, educators, academics and others under the auspices of the Teaching Resources and Textbook Research Unit (TREAT) at The University of Sydney. Since 1986 TREAT has been researching the use and quality of textbooks and other educational resources (Horsley 2001a: 2).

Publications submitted for consideration in the awards were, and still are, subjected to a rigorous process of analysis by the judges in order to determine their status in the award hierarchy, and to ensure that they met some, if not all, of the criteria of the awards, which were: 'clarity of writing; pedagogical implications; quality of illustrations; representation of the discipline; special features and characteristics; quality of subject matter; innovation and flair; importance of the market' (Horsley 2007: 2).

Over 400 judges have served on the judging panels of the Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing in the 20 years since the inception of the awards. The judging panel originally comprised three members of TREAT with primary, secondary and tertiary teaching experience; practising primary and

secondary school teachers; publishing consultants who were successful authors; tertiary publishers' representatives; and the editor of the Higher Education section of *The Australian* newspaper. The individuals on the panel varied from year to year. The constituency of the panel has changed over time. Prior to 2005, the chief judge empanelled judges from independent publishers; teachers and students, booksellers, researchers and teacher librarians. The judging panels now consist primarily of judges from publishing companies, selected from the Australian educational publishers in consultation with the Australian Publishers Association's primary and secondary publisher schools committee and the tertiary and professional committee. This change in the composition of judging was made in 2005 in response to publisher requests for a more industry focus to the judging process.

The change and evolution of categories in the awards provides a commentary on the progress of the adoption of digital delivery in Australian educational publishing. In their inaugural year, 1994, categories in the Awards included Overall Winner; Primary – Single Book, Series, Other; Secondary – Single Book, Series, Other; TAFE Technical Series; and Tertiary Single Book (Wholly Australian). By 1999, new categories included those of Showcase – Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Technology (one for each sector). By 2000, websites had emerged as a category in their own right. The role of the awards in encouraging the uptake of new technologies is reflected in a statement as early as 2000 in the awards catalogue, which commented on the growing number of awards categories that showcased the use of new technologies in Australian educational publishing:

> The 2000 Awards introduce a new Australian educational website catalogue which will recognise the excellence of educational websites. This year's Awards also see the continuation of the technology showcase category, which was introduced in 1999 (Horsley 2000).

As an example of the types of digital publishing with which publishers were engaging in more than a decade ago in 1999 and 2000, the following table reflects the ancillary content that accompanied the four publications examined in the course of my research in 2001. Each title was a winning entry in in the Secondary school single book or Secondary series categories in the previous three years. The table lists the publications, their ancillary parts, and the school year of the learners for which the publications were intended.

Title/author/publisher of the printed textbook	Awards category	Print-based	CD-ROM	Web Site	Year	Other
Mirai 1 Coursebook by M Evans, Y Masano and S Taniguchi, published by Addison Wesley Longman (Pearson Education), Melbourne, 1999	1999 Secondary single title: Joint winner	✓	✓	✓	7-9	Language activity book, Teacher's book
Heinemann Science Links 2 by H Cochrane and J Devlin, published by Heinemann, Melbourne, 2001	2001 Secondary series title, Winner; also Joint overall winner	✓	✓	✓	8	Teacher's resource book
MathsQuest 11: Mathematical Methods, VCE Mathematics Units 1&2 by J Nolan, G Phillips, R Allen and D Phillips,	2000, Secondary book series: Sole	✓	✓	Hyper-Links on CD	11	Teacher's edition with CD-ROM

published by Jacaranda (John Wiley & Sons), Milton, 2000	winner					
Nelson Chemistry VCE Units 1 & 2 by J Sharwood, N Taylor, R Kronenberg, M McLaughlin, T Sweeney, D Corrigan and S Rodrigues, published by Nelson Thomson Learning, Melbourne, 2000	2000, Secondary single title: Joint winner	✓	✓	✓	11	Teacher's resource book

Table 1. Examples of digital publishing 1999-2000

With the convergence of print and digital technologies, awards categories have grown to reflect that change in publishing activity in Australia. The categories in 2013 were:

Primary School – Outstanding Digital Resource

Primary School – Student Resource – Arts/Science/Humanities

Primary School – Student Resource – English (Literacy/Literature/Language)

Primary School – Student Resource – Mathematics (Numeracy)

Primary School – Teaching Resource

Secondary School – Outstanding Digital Resource

Secondary School – Reference Resource

Secondary School – Student Resource – Junior

Secondary School – Student Resource – Senior

Secondary School – Teaching Resource

TAFE & Vocational Education – Student Resource

TAFE & Vocational Education – Teaching and Learning Resource

Tertiary Education (adaptation: 25%) – Student Resource

Tertiary Education (adaptation: 25%) – Teaching and Learning Resource

Tertiary Education (adaptation: 25%) – Teaching Resource

Tertiary Education (wholly Australian) – Teaching and Learning Resource

Tertiary Education (wholly Australian) – Scholarly Resource

Tertiary Education (wholly Australian) – Student Resource

Entry categories continue to reflect the state of educational publishing. In the 1990s, categories included Primary single book, Secondary single books, Secondary book series, and Primary book series. These categories reflected both publishing activity and the way that the publishing products were aligned with markets. Primary publishing moved to focus on literacy and numeracy kits and materials in the early 2000s. At the same time, the convergence of print and digital in the way that educational publishers designed products for the school market are reflected in the way that the categories are designed to reflect the main activities of publishers. For example, the 2013 categories reflect both the digital and print convergence and current open ended multipurpose nature of educational publishing.

Conclusion

The Australian Educational Publishing Awards have been, and continue to be, a driving force in raising awareness in the Australian educational publishing industry of

the importance of sound pedagogical design that embeds features to engage both students and teachers in the pursuit of knowledge acquisition and comprehension, and to enable students to become competent and skilled practitioners in their chosen fields of endeavour. If Australia is to remain committed to the ideal of the 'clever country' (Larkin 2008) then, in my view, the awards provide an excellent pathway in support of that ideology, and should be recognized for their unique and important contribution to not only to Australian educational publishing, but to Australian culture as a whole. They also provide a rich resource for research into this important area of publishing.

Endnote

1. The 2011 catalogue is also available at http://aepa2011.ligare.com.au.

Works cited

Cochrane, H & J Devlin 2001 *Heinemann science links 2* Melbourne: Heinemann

Dargusch, Joanne, Naya Persaud & Mike Horsley 2011 'Judging the quality of educational materials – a research project on student voice' *IARTEM e-Journal* 4: 2, 45–62

Evans, M, Y Masano & S Taniguchi 1999 *Mirai 1 Coursebook* Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman (Pearson Education)

Hall, Gillian 2012 *Briefing paper on eTextbooks and third party eLearning products and their implications for Australian university libraries* Council of Australian University Librarian**s,** at http://www.caul.edu.au/content/upload/files/learning-teaching/eTextbook2012report.pdf (accessed 1 September 2013)

Horsley, Mike 2000 *Australian awards for excellence in educational publishing* [catalogue] Sydney: Australian Publishers Association

Horsley, Mike 2001a *Australian awards for excellence in educational publishing* [catalogue] Sydney: Australian Publishers Association

Horsley, Mike 2001b *Teaching resources and textbook research unit*, September, at http://alex.edfac.usyd.au/LocalResource/TREAT/about.html (accessed 1 September 2013)

Horsley, Mike 2007 'Explorations in the economy of prestige: textbook competitions and the judgement of quality: the Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing' *9th IARTEM conference* Tonsberg: Norway

Larkins, Richard 2008 '*The education revolution: the lucky country can become the clever country*' Melbourne Press Club Address, Melbourne: Melbourne Press Club, 27 February, at http://www.go8.edu.au/__documents/media/go8-leaders/presentations/professor_larkins_press_club_270208.pdf on 17 October 2013 (accessed 1 September 2013)

Martin, Penny 2002 '*How are the new publishing technologies such as CD-ROMs and the World Wide Webused to complement textbook publishing in Australia, and to what effect*?' MA dissertation, Sydney: Macquarie U

Nolan, J, G Phillips, R Allen and D Phillips 2000 *MathsQuest 11: mathematical methods, VCE mathematics units 1&2* Milton: Jacaranda (John Wiley & Sons)

Sharwood, J, N Taylor, R Kronenberg, M McLaughlin, T Sweeney, D Corrigan & S Rodrigues 2000 *Nelson chemistry VCE units 1 & 2* Melbourne: Nelson Thomson Learning

Yen, Robert & Janet Hunter 1997 *New century mathematics* Melbourne: Nelson