

# TEXT

## The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs

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### Editorial

#### An Allegory

During August, the *TEXT* office had a phone call from Professor Barry Goode of EUNAMIT University. Professor Goode had, on the face of it, a simple request. He needed to know who owned *TEXT* and where did the journal align itself.

The question about alignment could be answered quite simply. *TEXT* aligns itself:

- with the AAWP and its members;
- with those staff teaching writing in tertiary institutions in Australia;
- with those who donate their time to *TEXT* as referees, book reviewers, proofreaders, web consultants and the like;
- with all those who write and research for *TEXT* and with the executive of the AAWP;
- and finally, with the unselfish and discipline-committed furthering of the cause of teaching writing across Australia (and by extension, internationally).

But the question of ownership was another matter. This question had never been asked before. The editors themselves had never asked it.

*TEXT* was dreamt up by the current editors, and the concept was presented to delegates at the first AAWP conference at UTS in 1996. By way of preparation, Tess and Nigel had met with Cassandra Pybus (the originator of the *Australian Humanities Review*, the first Australian academic journal on the web) and had taken themselves off to learn HTML - a task easier than they anticipated.

In 1997, on an old 486 PC, they coded the first issue, and set up the contributions, refereeing and subscriptions procedures. Living strongly from support generated by delegates to the first AAWP conference, the initial issue was netcast from the Griffith University site, the host to all issues so far.

*TEXT* went from a small beginning to far greater strength. With the October issue of 2001 the journal completes its fifth year of publication, having in that time published 80 refereed articles, 19 creative pieces, 3 interviews, 34 reviews and 8 non refereed papers in the soapbox section we called "The Mouse". Additionally there have been three allied sites: a comprehensive Australia-wide Programs Guide and two special issues sites (Creative Nonfiction and Writing Online/Online Writing). All of this research material can be accessed from the comprehensive *TEXT* Index.

In the last five years, through all this endeavour, *TEXT* has established itself as a research site of extraordinary value. There is nothing like it in the rest of the world: a single site that covers theory, praxis and practice in the discipline.

During the five years, one of the editors moved from Griffith University to Deakin University and that institution now co-sponsors the publication in terms of recognition of academic time and equipment needs. No university actually gives the editors or the AAWP any up-front funds for the work involved in an issue. (For only one issue, a proofreader was paid by Griffith.) The AAWP itself has never provided funds to *TEXT* (and has never been asked to do so).

The editorial office PCs are kept up to date by two universities (Deakin and Griffith), and Griffith provides the server. The editors do the editing as part of their research activities but receive no DETYA points for doing so and no teaching relief. Like the others who referee or otherwise contribute to *TEXT*, they do it because they deeply believe in the importance of generating debate, discourse and vitality in a new field of study.

*TEXT* survives on the continuing widespread recognition of its research and the significance of its publishing (as reflected in the Australian National Library's continued archiving of the journal in the Pandora Project). Thirty-seven universities - through the commitment of their academic staff in editing, writing, refereeing and reading - keep *TEXT* up and running. This thirty-seven represents almost the entire complement of Australian universities.

*TEXT* is clearly, therefore, a national academic activity. It does not belong to any one university or campus. *TEXT's* domain comprises that umbrella domain defined by all the activity and representation of the Australian Association of Writing Programs.

So who owns *TEXT*?

Could the editors take *TEXT* and sell it, for example, to the SBS website as an important cultural activity? Could the AAWP replace the editors and take *TEXT* to another site, giving it another philosophy, another publishing 'look'? Could Griffith University claim it as theirs (as they have from time to time suggested when they have gone into the site and re-arranged its layout, or removed it from the server - our relationship with the Griffith sever has been a continual hassle)? Could Deakin claim 50% of *TEXT* - and if so what would it do with it?

Could another university buy out *TEXT* over the head of the AAWP? Or could another university simply state a claim and equally simply remove it to its own site?

If *TEXT* ran up a debt (we don't have any budget so there isn't much chance of this) who would have to pay it? If *TEXT* was sued (again unlikely) who would have to go to court or pay the costs?

Perhaps *TEXT* is owned by a number of stakeholders: the editors, the AAWP, the host universities? Or since no one has ever taken legal possession: do the contributors and their copyrights own it? Or might the actual owner simply turn out to be the next most aggressive, bullying, university cartel with a selfish takeover mentality and a useful budget?

All of this brings us back to Barry Goode's recent questions. He asked the questions because his colleague, Professor Maffeeya, at a recent meeting at Eunaymit University, claimed *TEXT* as one of his (Professor Maffeeya's) own assets.

Who is Professor Maffeeya, many of you may well ask, and what right does he have to claim a major stakeholding in *TEXT*? Has he ever contributed to *TEXT*? Is he a member of the AAWP? Has he ever attended an AAWP conference? Does he teach creative or professional writing?

Shouldn't academics with a view to taking over research domains have at least done something in that domain previously? Shouldn't they have established at least some credibility in the area? What are we up against here? A new academic stand-over group trying to gain territory by bluster, deception, big-noting and narcissism?

Professor Maffeeya, among other things, runs a website where innocuously he asked *TEXT* (and presumably a number of other online journals) to let him carry links from his gateway/index page. He was trying to collect or corral into one site various online publications based in Australia.

On the face of it, this is a good idea and not an unusual one. *TEXT* is frequently asked if this or that publication can offer a link to the site. After all, *TEXT* has been published online now for five years and is something of a flagship in online scholarly publication. But, the permission having been given, the link to *TEXT* suddenly made it one of Professor M's claimed 'assets'!

'Armed' thus with *TEXT* (and other website links), Professor Maffeeya then went on a rampage. He tried to rip Professor Goode's entire creative writing program off him! He tried to suggest that he owned *TEXT* and would set up a swag of courses in teaching creative writing around them as his personal-use website. He tried to suggest that the AAWP should come right in under his new umbrella - the flimsy one he had suddenly erected by his mere talking up. Being a Lilliputian in the world of creative writing research, he wanted to tie down the whole Australian industry and claim it for his own.

Out there in the world of university money and politics we are witnessing thinking and planning that involves sly manoeuvring, takeover bids, and asset-stripping. All this in the creative writing/teaching field! Not from writers, nor necessarily from those who teach writing; but from cultural studies personnel who see writing as a cash cow, it seems.

*TEXT* will resist these takeover bids, as will our AAWP president who is carrying the AAWP in its own right into the heart of the current debates regarding creative and research funding.

This editorial is written to inform readers and AAWP members of the existence of unsavoury developments around us. *TEXT* and the AAWP have made enormous efforts to unite the various approaches to the teaching of writing in the Australian university sector and to embrace colleagues in the TAFE sector. *TEXT* will resist upstart efforts from peripheral players keen to muscle in on the valuable advances already made in the creative writing discipline.

The upside of all this excitement is that subscribers to *TEXT* should be proud and active regarding how the AAWP and *TEXT* draw so much attention - how the two bodies, hand in hand, have generated a force and

voice of significance. This has been made possible by the number of people who have organised national conferences (we are about to have our sixth), nominated to the executive of the AAWP, organised forums, sent in comments and submissions, contributed to *TEXT*, refereed for *TEXT*, and generally promoted the discipline under the aegis of the AAWP umbrella.

The AAWP and *TEXT* need your continuing support as part of keeping the discipline independent and democratic.

Nigel Krauth  
Tess Brady

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**<http://www.griffith.edu.au/school/art/text/>**  
**Editors: Nigel Krauth & Tess Brady**  
**[Text@mailbox.gu.edu.au](mailto:Text@mailbox.gu.edu.au)**

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### The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs

#### Letters to the Editor

**from Mike Steinberg, Western Michigan University**

Dear Editors,

Thanks for sending me the latest issue of the journal. Thanks for publishing the interview. The articles and reviews are interesting. I'm getting a sense of what's going on over there in creative writing. It seems to be a vital and alive conversation. I'm happy to have contributed something to it.. Donna Lee Brien asked all the right questions. She made me think carefully about my answers. And in the process, I discovered some things I didn't know I knew. I plan to go next year's AWP conference in New Orleans. Perhaps someday I can make it to your AAWP. All best,

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**from Jenny Weight , University of South Australia**

Dear Editors

I was elected to the Board of ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology) on a platform of developing support for elit in Australia. I would welcome your ideas on what you would like to see developed in support of elit.

I am also thinking of setting up a little email 'list' (not a proper list), through which I will periodically pass on info about elit activities in Australia that come to my attention. I might call it 'Convergence'. It is not intended that it will have much traffic. If you would like to be on this 'list' can you let me know backchannel?

Please feel free to pass this email to other elit Australians. My email is Jenny.Weight@unisa.edu.au.

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**from Moya Costello, University of South Australia**

Dear Editors,

Anne Comte has two articles now in Text on an aesthetics/rhetoric of hypertext especially in relation to fiction writing online (October 2000 and 2001).

I welcome her discussion of Barbara Page's article 'Women Writers and the Restive Text: Feminism, Experimental Writing and Hypertext'. Page's article first appeared online in *Postmodern Culture* [vol. 6, no. 2. <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/issue.196/page.196.html>], and later in the book *Cyberspace Textuality*. When I first read it in 1996, I warmed to Page's original, inspiring and provocative discussion comparing hypertext and feminist experimental practice in print.

I have an article online that also uses Barbara Page's article. My article was published in *M/C Reviews* (A Journal of Media and Culture) in 2000. Entitled 'An Effort at Non-compliance', my article was about a feminist experimental writing practice, referring to Australian feminist writers such as Pam Brown and Marion Campbell and describing my own practice:  
<http://moby.curtin.edu.au/~ausstud/mc/reviews/features/women/effort.html>.

I also used Page's article in talks at the Sydney and Melbourne Writers' Festivals when I was a guest at them both in 2000 on panels respectively called 'Cyberpoetics' and 'The Shock of the New'. I made comparisons between an aesthetics of hypertext and that of feminist experimental practice.

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**from Nigel Starck, University of South Australia**

Dear Editors,

Goodbye! editor Steve Miller, quoted in [my article](#) in this edition of *TEXT*, has come close to being the subject of a candid obituary in his own magazine. He was on Level 55 of the World Trade Centre's north tower at 8.48am on September 11. In an email to members of the International Association of Obituarists, Miller has said that he was able to run down the fire escapes, then walked and ran across Brooklyn Bridge to his apartment, where he found the building closed by a bomb hoax.

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**[TEXT@mailbox.gu.edu.au](mailto:TEXT@mailbox.gu.edu.au)**