

Editorial

Is there a need for another journal?

The question we recently asked ourselves as editors was: Looking across the history of *TEXT*, can we identify any changing dynamics in the journal's publishing processes? With this sixteenth issue, *TEXT* has been running for eight years and has published

- 141 articles (133 refereed; 8 non-refereed)
- 55 reviews
- 29 refereed creative works
- 4 interviews.

That's a total of 229 pieces. In addition, the Special Issues of *TEXT* have published:

- 12 creative works
- 11 refereed articles
- 3 introductory essays.

The health of any journal can be measured in the number and quality of the submissions as much as in its subscription list. *TEXT* is no exception. In the current climate, the number of submissions means that we can only publish something like a third of papers submitted. The journal's selection criteria revolve around a perceived excellence in the paper - it may be well argued, well researched, covering new ground, or offering a fresh insight or avenue of investigation. The paper might be asking its readers to look in a new way or at a new area.

Writing as a discipline in the tertiary sector is mapping out not only its content but its methodology. It's not just the content of our investigations that generate research in our discipline but the way in which we look at, and talk about, that content. Over the years *TEXT* has supported various different approaches - experiments with fictocriticism, creative nonfiction and memoir are cases in point. Nevertheless the issue remains and only a proportion of the papers submitted make it through to publication.

Two current observations have bothered us as editors: 1) we reject or ask for re-working of more than twice the number of submissions that are accepted for publication; and 2) there has developed a longer lag time between contribution and publication.

Has it become more difficult to be published in *TEXT* or are we

receiving more under-worked submissions?

Here it might be construed that eight years ago it was easier than today to publish in *TEXT*. For example, was it easier for postgraduates to publish about the Exegesis seven years ago?

We question this. As with all research, there's no easy moment to do it. The early breakthroughs are difficult because nothing of assistance exists; but, equally, the later breakthroughs are difficult because what already exists may impede and constrain. It's not useful simply to claim that it's harder now to find publication for research papers.

Perhaps the issue arises because of the sheer weight of numbers. It can be noted that the annual AAWP conference (and similar) significantly fuels the numbers of submissions. Many, but certainly not all, contributions arrive as previously-delivered conference papers. But there's a difference between successful oral papers and their optimum versions for text publication. Simply put, with the text-publication version the reader (compared with the aural audience) has more time to question the validity of each statement being made, the way the statements build to a cohesive argument, and the referencing throughout. Clearly, CVs are enhanced by containing the oral delivery of the paper and its subsequent publication as a refereed article. But the two modes are very different - they involve different genres - and writing academics and researchers should be the first to understand this.

Another feature of *TEXT*'s eight-year history is that certain researchers have honed their skills at writing papers such that referees support them willingly. These contributors, noticeably, also have articles published in other refereed journals. There has been a growing maturity of research technique and writing skill amongst various multiply-published contributors, and a good proportion of these are (or were) postgraduate students.

But is *TEXT* becoming a club for a handful of researchers? The difficulty with such a scenario is that it becomes increasingly difficult for new researchers to find a platform for their opinions and voice. And yet as a discipline we exclude them at our peril. As editors we often see that rejected contributions have a valuable core-perception to contribute to the discipline. The problem resides in the development work needed to present authoritatively that promising idea.

Is there another way of looking at this? Do certain researchers have skills which could be shared? Perhaps we could further explore the mentoring option. In a number of cases, dual authorships have recurred; some of them supervisor-candidate partnerships. It might be worthwhile for more supervisors to consider developing longer-

term writing partnerships with their student colleagues - especially where the Exegesis debate is the focus. In previous years, as editors, we mentored various new researchers through to publication but with the current number of submissions we no longer have time for this close role. Perhaps it could be taken on by others. More one-with-one partnerships of new and established researchers might be envisaged - especially since schools and departments are now primed to understand the interactive postgraduate culture as one of the keys to RHD completion success.

Whatever solutions we find to the number of unpublished research papers, perhaps the most effective involves the realization that one journal cannot possibly hope to accommodate all the research in the discipline. We welcome the recent publication of Graeme Harper's *New Writing* journal from the UK. But wonder if that journal, like *TEXT*, might largely develop its own research culture.

With *TEXT* taking an increasingly international role, and with the number submissions it receives multiplying, we suggest that there is a place for another Australian journal or for occasional collections of readings generated at grass roots level from individual or collective writing schools.

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