520. D Baxter

Hi,

   we are the co-authors of a number of English text books that address the VCE English study market, in Victoria.

Our books, particularly one (The Issues Book) which focuses on the analysis of persuasive language element of the course, have occupied a corner of that market. In recent years, following teaching and market shifts, the publication has shifted from a print-run model to a customised order model.

Through different modes of publishing, however, one factor has remained constant: a regular cheque from the Copyright Agency, as a result of their regular surveys of school photocopy patterns which shows clearly that a wide number of teachers 'cherry-pick' favourite pages from a sample or sole/teacher copy of our texts, rather than buying a class or year-level set.

We believe the income from our work - we re-write our book every year, to make it current, relevant and entertaining to read - is already eroded through copying of our work that does not respect the primacy of our right to be remunerated for our creative endeavour.

These practices are only picked up by the current method, and would certainly not be reflected if the system required teachers to self-record their photocopy tallies and the texts used. Our experience is that, faced with a requirement to place several "administrivial" steps between copying and the classroom, teachers will just assume it's ok and do what's quickest. And cheapest. This already happens, to a large degree.

We believe that it is vital that author copyright be retained - reinforced, if anything. The advent of e-documents means that it is becoming easier and easier to (re-)generate copies of published texts. Abandoning statutory licences that safeguard authors' rights will also have a far greater impact on the smaller writers and publishers - those who cannot act assertively in their own interest where claiming and having legal rights enforced would become an expensive - unprofitable - exercise. There is simply no way we could track down who is using our books - particularly those who obtain single or small numbers of copies - and 'enforce' our rights. It would be impossible on any measure, including time.

We emphatically support the retention of a system which at least tries to make the "fair" in the term "fair use" mean something.

Yours,

David Baxter,

Warrick Wynne