525 G Schymkiw

Attention ALRC

As a published author of over 30 published educational books I am writing to share  my thoughts and concerns regarding possible changes to copyright law as it now is.

From what I understand of the changes, they will result in a diminution of income for creators and publishers and a greater burden in collecting entitlements than is currently the case.

It would appear to me that a bean counter mentality is being applied here without any understanding of the negative educational impacts of such moves.

This is particularly the case for authors like me who choose to write enriching blackline master books (as opposed to generalist textbooks).

At a time when Australian identity is threatened with being swallowed up, especially through the dissemination of mass monoculture, these moves would significantly narrow and weaken Australian educational publishing. The return gained from sales in a small market like Australia would make the publication of such material unviable in terms of investment of time and effort for both authors and publishers.

Perhaps those flying the flag for the potential  dismantling Australian publishing in this way think that Foxtel or references on The Simpsons would fill the void.

When I began teaching in 1971 I remember being frustrated by the lack of Australian content support materials. The majority of support material was from USA. Apart from the linguistic differences ( words ending in *or* instead of *our* etc),  I remember reading material that informed my students of such things as *Bullfighting is popular in Spain, just as baseball is in our country.* Australia is a small fish in a large ocean. Generalist authors catering for larger markets would be unlikely to look for a particularly Australian slant in their content. With no-one catering for a particularly Australian view that view would most likely not gain exposure. Perhaps this is a generational thing in me but something inside me dies a little when I see a television talent show featuring Kevin and Colin, two rappers from Rockdale mimicking other cultural  influences, while people like Gurrumul and Percy Grainger go scarcely recognised.

Even with the current arrangements BLM writing in Australia is not a highly lucrative exercise. It generally provides the teacher with enrichment high interest niche learning material. I am currently writing a series of Australian identity BLMs. I hope it will help Australian children understand a little better what it means to be an Australian and how the current Australian identity has evolved. I’m certain that the Amazing Story Of Oskar Speck, The Days Of The Hawkers and The Tantanoola Tiger  (included with this letter and part of a book I am currently working on) won’t make it in any general history text. They are, however, genuinely and uniquely Australian and I would like Australian children to have the opportunity to read them and stories similar to them.

Without support from CAL it would simply not be worthwhile researching and writing such a book. I believe that publishers would become highly conservative if what is mooted was to become fact. Most chilling of all, I fear it could usher in a glorious golden age of compiled NAPLAN Test practice books - totally uninspiring and anti true understanding.

One of my publishers (RIC Publications in Perth) have presented BLM material authored by Australian teachers to international publishers and distributors. These books are actually preferred by international publishers. It really is another example of innovative Australians not being valued or supported in their own country.

Regards   Gunter Schymkiw