

Creative writing mentorship in Australia: a survey of activities and issues

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Published

2002

Journal Title

TEXT: The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs

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Creative Writing Mentorship in Australia: A survey of activities and issues

Abstract:

Literary mentorships in Australia: What is their history? What are their objectives? What do they entail for the mentor and the mentee? What are their problems?

This list of questions summarises a more detailed email questionnaire sent during June-July 2002 to major organisations around Australia involved in national and state government-funded creative writing mentorship programs. The survey aimed to map mentoring activities, discover issues, and ultimately bring light to a further question: How do these programs compare with university teaching and supervision in the creative writing field?

Introduction

The aim of this survey, undertaken from June to July 2002, was to find out where creative writing mentorship programs were conducted in Australia, what they were doing, and how they correlated with creative writing teaching and supervision in the tertiary education sector.

Responses to the survey instrument (a set of questions delivered mainly by email, with some telephone follow-up - see Appendix) were sought and received from the

Australian Society of Authors (ASA)
Australian Capital Territory Writers Centre (ACTWC)
Queensland Writers Centre (QWC)
New South Wales Writers Centre (NSWWC)

Northern Territory Writers Centre (NTWC)
South Australian Writers Centre (SAWC)
Tasmanian Writers Centre (TWC)
Varuna Writers Centre (Varuna)
Victorian Writers Centre (VWC)
Western Australian State Literature Centre (WASLC)

This list encompasses the majority of writers-representative bodies around Australia involved in the national mentorship scheme developed by the Australia Council - following the ASA's self-funded pilot program in 1996 ([Borghino \(b\) 32](#)) - and often further funded by State arts ministries.

Jill Jones, Senior Program Officer (Literature) with the Australia Council, describes the history of the scheme thus:

There would have been over 30 mentorship programs run in the last 3-4 years, involving around 120 individual mentorships, which have run either under our Young and Emerging programs or our Skills and Arts Development categories... They have been run mainly through State writers centres although other key bodies such as the ASA, the Australian National Playwrights Centre, Varuna, Express Media and the Australian Writers Guild, have also run programs. There have also been a couple of editorial mentorships as well. [The programs] cover a number of genres... Certainly a number of writers have gone on to publish the book they were working on (or have a script performed). The first one was a pilot program run by the (then) WA Literature Officer in 1997. (Jones 2002)

Through winning funds from the Literature Board and/or State arts funding offices on the basis of individual program proposals, the writers' bodies have run differing programs according to their genre/artform interest, and their particular constituencies (e.g. recruitment from national, state or special category catchments). A variety of methods for assessing, selecting and engaging mentors and mentees, and of linking them up, has been used. Duration of mentorships, rates of pay for mentors, the nature and frequency of contact, the provision of guidelines, and procedures for evaluation and acquittal, have also varied. In some cases differences are nuanced outcomes where one writers' centre has based its program on other centres' experience, making local adjustments. Elsewhere centres have developed new and innovative practices. The "scheme" is not a unified program dictated by the government funding bodies. In some respects (but not in others, e.g. the "Young and Emerging" category focus - see later) flexibility of objectives and processes has informed the granting of funds from the start.

An idea of the scope of mentoring activities may be gained from these brief examples:

the ASA has managed over 40 mentor-mentee partnerships since 1996;
the VWC has run 36 mentorships in five programs since 1997;
Varuna has run 20 mentorships per year since 1998 - all of them residential, each time 1 mentor assigned 4-5 mentees;

the NSWWC coordinated 20 mentorships in 1999-2001;
the TWC has managed 15 to date, and the QWC 14 to date.

Programs launched in 2002 involved a commitment of \$100,000 by the Australia Council (Borghino (b) 32). State-funded mentorship programs can be added to this. The survey estimates that some 50 mentorships will be funded around Australia in 2002. This might sound generous, but the popularity of these programs is astonishing. In 2002, the ASA expected "upwards of 130 applicants competing for fifteen Literature Board-funded mentorships" (Borghino (b) 32). The ASA's expectation was based on the experience of 105 applications for 10 mentorships in 2001. According to our survey, in 2002 the ASA actually received 167 applications for those 15 places. Similarly, the SAWC in 2000 received 44 applications for involvement with 3 mentors, and in 2001 the NTWC received 10 applications for 3 mentorships. In no part of Australia does there appear a lack of interest in mentoring activity.

Features of the Programs

Duration and Contact

A range of contact and duration patterns has been tried in various mentorship programs. Nevertheless, it can be recognised that a central model for mentorships has evolved - the ASA's one-to-one model - but also there are variations. The established ASA model involves 20 hours contact between mentor and mentee over a generalised 6-month period. (For this, the mentor is paid \$1000, i.e. \$50 per hour with no further payment for reading time.) Contact for these one-to-one mentorships occurs in face-to-face meetings (enhanced by email communication, etc).

However, most mentorships run by a single entity - as the above list indicates - have occurred at the Varuna Writers Centre, in the residency context of its mountain retreat west of Sydney. Here the contact takes place in forums with 4-5 writers of like interests accommodated together for a week in the company of a similarly-oriented mentor. Other centres, e.g. the QWC, have run similar get-together forums for their mentored writers over weekends.

While the ASA's model has provided the foundation for structures used by several bodies administering their own programs (and who don't have the benefit of accommodation facilities as does Varuna), local conditions have led to diverse cases, for example:

in 1998 the ACTWC offered 40-hour mentorships spread over any time from 1-6 months;
the VWC generally offers its mentorships at 20-24 hours of contact over 9-12 months;
in 1999 the SAWC paid mentors \$5,500 for 6-month involvements; they subsequently drew back in 2000 to the ASA model due to lack of funding;
the NTWC runs its mentorships for 18 months, and the WASLC for one year;
from 2002 onwards the NSWWC will offer to mentees a choice of 10 or 20 hour programs.

These variations from the basic ASA model have their funding implications and, in the last case mentioned, the NSWWC has gone wholly to mentee-pays mentorships because the previous work in arranging government funding and running the programs was too labour-intensive for the Centre to administer, and the Centre took no fee ([Dunn 2002](#)).

Mentor and Mentee Selection

Irina Dunn, perhaps jokingly, refers to the NSWWC procedures for selection and matching of mentors and mentees as "a kind of dating service" (Dunn 2002). Her perception is reflected in the ASA characterising itself as "a marriage broker" ([Borghino \(a\) 2002](#)) and the QWC describing the initial meeting between participants as "a literary blind date" (Beaton 2002). The seriousness of the mentor-mentee partnership is elaborated upon by Borghino:

[What we do is] like a marriage broker - two people have to work together and there are professional and personal outcomes, ego and emotion and possessiveness come into it; the two have to trust each other and have to work together. So we encourage people to meet and to read each other as much as possible and address any qualm early. (Borghino (a) 2002)

In dealing with this complex mix of personal and professional needs, the arranged marriage between mentor and mentee is arranged differently around Australia.

Mentee selection is often limited to the requirements of a particular program - on the basis of youth, indigeneity, emerging writer status, writing for young readership, etc. - and in some of these cases the range of mentors is limited by the program focus too. In all cases the mentors are recognised professionals, either writers or editors, although in some cases the managing centre has a stipulation that the mentor be a member of the centre, or a professional with an already established mentoring record. Some centres invite expressions of interest from mentors; others approach selected mentors directly.

Predictably, all processes involve applicant mentees providing a sample of their work. In many cases this must be excerpted from a finished draft (or be the whole draft) of a substantial work (e.g. a novel, a poetry collection, etc.). After the folio submission, the procedure pathway bifurcates. In some programs the emphasis is on the mentee choosing the mentor; in others the mentor gets to choose.

For example, two cases where the mentees do the choosing:

Each year the ASA newsletter calls for member writers to put themselves on the register of mentors. The applicant is given the list and asked to name their choices in order. If... the mentee wants a writer not on the list, the ASA will attempt to obtain that writer - the only proviso being they are an ASA member, or agree to join. (Borghino (a) 2002)

We called for submissions from interested mentees and chose...on merit. We let them choose from a number of mentors we had selected. They had an initial meeting to see whether they got along okay. ([Britton 2002](#))

The NSWWC is happy to ask mentees to nominate a mentor because "if they have no clue, it's warning bells. Have they read in their field?" (Dunn 2002).

For comparison, two examples where the mentors choose:

Emerging writers...submit a sample of their manuscript which should be substantial... The applicants are asked to discuss what they want to achieve through the mentorship. The VWC Director and all the mentors read through all the applications (relevant to the mentors' genre). The mentors select the manuscript or a shortlist of the manuscripts they feel have the potential to benefit from the mentorship with them. If there is a problem, the Director discusses the manuscripts with the mentors as an aid to selection. Basically, though, the choice is made by the mentors... Usually there is an initial meeting with the successful applicants and the mentors. If after that meeting the mentor or the mentee feels that the relationship may not work for them, the decision is renegotiated. We have never faced this situation...

I should have mentioned that prior to the application deadline we hold a free mentorship forum where interested writers can come along and meet the mentors who talk about their own work, their approach to mentoring, etc. We also invite past mentees who discuss their mentorships and the process and the issues raised during the mentorship. These forums work well to give writers a good idea about the process and the mentors they could be working with. ([McKenzie 2002](#))

The QWC process is similar to that of the VWC. After publicity in their newsletter and in Brisbane and regional media, a

"Literary Blind Date" is held where successful applicants meet prospective mentors and work for a day. This determines suitability. So far this has worked well. The day also includes industry perspectives given by various speakers. ([Beaton 2002](#))

Program Objectives

The basic objectives of mentoring programs are to produce a published or publishable work, develop the writer, and perhaps initiate the writer into the writing life. As Borghino describes:

All mentorship programs aim to give emerging and developing writers practical advice about their manuscripts, but, in the better ones, a mentor's input is not just technical (helping emerging authors with a few rhetorical tricks of the trade) or emotional (welcoming them into the community of authors), but also professional (making the manuscript more publishable, and sometimes even connecting the writer with a publisher). (Borghino (b) 2002)

The further objectives of mentoring programs fall into several categories, each of them indicating that government sees its role as meeting a need to provide support to perceived disadvantage areas of the creative writing culture. Thus specific genres have been supported, writers in specific age groups and social groups have been focused on, and writers at particular stages in their careers have been targeted. While there is the overall proviso of "literary excellence" associated with the Australia Council scheme, there has also been an overall requirement to emphasise youth - both youthful writers and writing for youthful readers.

Genres

The constituencies of the various program-managing bodies have influenced genre support. For example, the VWC has focused on fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry, young adult fiction, memoir and performance writing. The QWC has focused on fiction and nonfiction, and in the case of Indigenous writing, life stories. The situation is similar around Australia: State writers' bodies have indicated particular needs in applying for support, and the Literature Board has funded along those regional/local lines. However, across all genres, it seems that the non-apposite funding of young and emergent writing has been dominant. Areas such as poetry, experimental and radical forms, writing for new technologies, or writing in cross-artform contexts - easily identifiable as needy or developing - have not come in for special attention.

Groups

In 2002 the ASA offered mentorships in two categories: open (50%); young writers (under 35) and writers for the young (50%). Since 2000 the QWC has offered mentorships in young and emerging, and special indigenous categories. In addition to youth-oriented Australia Council funding, the VWC in 2001 "also offered an additional five mentorships funded through Arts Victoria which were specifically targeted to regional and indigenous writers" (McKenzie 2002). The Australia Council has stuck to its guns regarding support for young and emergent writers via mentorship funding. It appears that the Literature Board considers mentoring to be a replacement for the often-criticised New Writers Fellowship scheme of old.

Favoured Career Stage

While being an alternative to the concept of new writers' fellowships, mentoring schemes also give funding to established writers. Thus the funding of new writing (mentees) is spread to the incomes of older writers (mentors). However, in all responses to the survey, it was pointed out that older writers

who were not mentors were not catered for. The major focus, and thus the basic aim of the programs, seemed generally to be the publication of a new writer's first work.

Program Outcomes

There is competition among the managing writing bodies regarding outcomes for this level of government spending on mentorships. The ASA prides itself on its achievements:

There's no doubt about the value of mentorships. Those involved in the ASA's program have consistently rated it highly, and its book-publication success rate over the past three years stands at fifty per cent - a creditable figure, given the state of Australian publishing. The program can boast numerous success stories... (Borghino (b) 32)

Other bodies are not so boastful. Irina Dunn at NSWWC said (as quoted):

[For NSWWC there has been] not a huge outcome in terms of publications. A lot of dollars spent by funding bodies, rather than giving it all to young writers, would be better spent on assisting the publication of writers already published. (Dunn 2002)

The Literature Board itself is guardedly pleased with outcomes so far:

They cover a number of genres but the feedback we have received indicates that they have nearly universally been felt, by both mentors and mentees, to be of great benefit. Certainly a number of writers have gone on to publish the book they were working on (or have a script performed). ([Jones 2002](#))

Publication success is an overt objective, and programs have aimed at publication; thus folios regularly specify an already completed substantial draft (e.g. a whole novel). By this means, conventional entry into mentoring programs is oriented towards minimum time-lapse between mentorship and publication.

But most writers' centres in the survey commented negatively on overt publication criteria being the primary measure of success. The NSWWC had a broader view of outcomes: "What you learn in mentorship can carry on to all of writing in the future" (Dunn 2002). The ACTWC said: "We measured on the people's sense of improvement" (Britton 2002). The VWC elaborated:

[We take note of] how well the mentors and the mentees feel the process has gone along. Have they developed a constructive working relationship? Does the mentee feel their work has progressed? Does the mentor feel that they have been challenged and enriched by the relationship? Publication is a great outcome and there have been some publishing successes that acknowledge the VWC scheme and the mentors... [But is subsequent

publication the best measure?]. . . No. (McKenzie 2002)

Two more survey responses bring the notion of outcomes into fine focus:

. . . a successful mentorship is one in which the mentee has been inspired, learnt to evaluate their own work, improved their writing skills, finished a project and started working on the next one. ([Waite 2002](#))

The Australia Council most certainly thinks that success lies in publication. When we [the WASLC] advertise our programs we stress that publication is not guaranteed, but that the process should bring writers closer to producing publishable work. ([Hayes 2002](#))

Issues Summary

The survey identified a number of issues and problems. The following summarises the major issues raised across the board by the surveyed centres. It is difficult to assign priority to the problems since each centre's emphases and interests are different.

Issue 1: Mentorships are only for young and emerging writers

This is clearly a key issue and is cited by almost every group in the survey. In mentoring programs so far the main focus has concerned emergent writers and first novels (or other first literary monographs). Established, but slumped, mid-career writers don't qualify for support because they are not young and because they are not producing their first major work.

The idea of a "hot-house" policy forcing young writers into producing monographs is clearly debatable. There is, in fact, a very strong tradition in Australian writing of honing one's craft through the production of short works initially, and of developing more securely thereby. In this process, each new short piece provides a new learning experience with gradual building to a point of greater maturity at which a major work is tackled; the risky investment of time and emotion in a prematurely major work - "spending a long apprenticeship on the wrong project," ([Brewer 2002](#)) - is avoided. Attracting young writers to the task of producing first novels by offering mentorships is somewhat like attracting non-swimmers to the deep end of the pool and suggesting they dive in. . .

The survey indicated writers' centres advocating mentorship for mid-career writers: the neediness of this group was clear ("all those mid-30s/early-40s writers who've been rejected by publishers yet were SO close" [Hayes 2002]); and it was perceived they had a greater ability to effectively utilise the mentorship process. It was thought that this troubled group might have the most potential of all as practising Australian writers. Writers have long lives. Why should mentoring not be applied to the 35-years-plus

group? Mid-term writers can experience real crises. It was thought mentorship is a perfect remedy in this situation. The WASLC stressed the point that while

'Young and Emerging' content...can mean writing for young people... there is also a requirement for participating writers to be under a certain age. I have had problems with this (and voiced them to the OzCo) as it seems to me that young people are not short of opportunities to learn creative writing (the proliferation of tertiary programs, for example) whereas the over-35s are the ones who really need the help. (Hayes 2002)

In response to the problem, the Varuna Writers Centre has developed a special kind of mentorship for second novelists. This experience, for the frustrated successful writer seeking more development, involves workshopping with a more advanced writer and a publisher's editor. And the NSWWC, in pulling out of the Australia Council scheme, cites the emphasis on first novels as one of the reasons for its new approach: user-pays mentoring will allow some resources to be redirected to mid-career writers.

Issue 2: Mentorships place too great emphasis on publication

The survey indicated a general perception that the Australia Council was overly interested in publication as the outcome of mentorship programs. While some centres boasted about publication success rates, others questioned whether publication should be the only - or was the best - measure of mentorship. Several centres indicated they were attempting to change the emphasis on publication. For example, Varuna has begun programs that focus on first drafts, and second drafts - not final drafts, and in some cases sample folio submissions could be general writing, not completed drafts. Alongside this shift in emphasis was a greater concern for the reporting process at the end of the mentorship period. Varuna is developing an elaborated feedback system where evaluations are completed half-way through as well as at the end of the process. All other centres require reports at the end of the projects, and some of these centres emphasised that the value of the mentorship was to be found in these reports - in the benefit perceived by mentors and mentees, therefore not necessarily in publication. Of course, publication provides the most public accountability for the spending of taxpayers' money.

The increasing involvement of publishers' editors in the mentorship schemes was commented on. Following from the observation that publishers today do not invest in manuscript development and editing (structural or intensive) as they used to, talk in the centres about mentorships associating Penguin with the Australia Council (a \$20,000 grant for 10 "editorships" in 2001), HarperCollins with Varuna, and Fremantle Arts Centre Press with the WASLC was viewed with some concern.

The idea that, for example, mentorship money might be diverted to Penguin to pay its editors was alarming to some. It was thought that if publishers' "editorships" effectively replaced mentorship schemes then the result would be yet more conservative, market-driven publication lacking experimentation and edginess. Seeing as the current overall objective of mentorship programs is indeed publication, it is not illogical that publishers be given a greater role.

Issue 3: What is mentorship anyway?

In several areas the survey revealed mentorship-managing bodies themselves asking the question: "What is mentorship anyway?" Writers' centres are aware that each is doing the job differently, and some had considered the desirability of a standardised scheme across Australia. Others suggested that mentorships are done because the funding is there, not because there is a proven need. It was claimed that there were no guarantees that the schemes were getting to the right people, and that those who had most publicly benefitted (i.e. through publication) would have been published anyway. Some centres suggested that the centres themselves should liaise together better, to share experiences and visions, and especially to consider exactly what mentorship is. "Is it teaching, editing, counselling?" (Brewer 2002).

Comparison between mentorship programs and university teaching/supervision

The fact that writers' centres think their mentorships might be teaching programs is of interest to tertiary creative writing teachers. The cross-pollination is worthy of note. Many successful mentors have university backgrounds (see for example Jenny Pausacker, Rosie Scott, Garry Disher, Craig Cormick, etc). It is probably clear to any teacher that if the mentor places the emphasis solely on the development of the manuscript, then the work being done is editing, but if the mentor places the emphasis on the writer's development, then what's happening is teaching.

Interestingly, the WASLC reported in the survey that for their first program they accepted mentees who were also creative writing students at university. Then

in our second program [we announced] we would not take those enrolled in creative writing courses and got very few applicants. [For the next program] we did not stipulate and we got more again. (Hayes 2002)

Varuna reported that about 50% of those they take into their programs are creative writing students, but also claimed that the students say of their programs, "they are 'better than three years at uni'" (Brewer 2002).

These responses give rise to interesting questions: How are mentorships and creative writing courses different? Why might students want them both? And how might universities articulate with writers' centres to provide better learning experiences in the creative writing area? These questions can be addressed under several headings: funding, duration and contact, recruitment, editorship vs. education, articulation between the two systems, etc..

Funding

For a start, it is impossible for university undergraduate creative writing programs with HEFA funding to match the one-to-one 20-hour contact (at \$50 per hour for the mentor) characteristic of Australia Council-funded mentorships. \$50 per hour is what we pay sessional tutors with a class of more than 25! So compared with undergraduate university courses, mentorship programs are at something like a 25 times greater funding advantage! Of course, the undergraduate looks across from her crowded classroom at the intimacy and focus of the one-to-one mentorship program is clearly attracted.

Mentorship programs are more sensibly compared with postgraduate workshopping and one-to-one supervision in the Australian university context. Here there is greater likelihood of significant hours of personal contact, there is usually a focus on a single, and major, creative project (from scratch), and students can be selected with some sort of track record and some indication of developing professional maturity. As indicated above, there are detailed ways in which mentorships - in their benefits and their problems - are like postgraduate supervisions. But there are also ways in which postgraduate supervisions are less discriminatory, more broadly educational, better administered and with better acquittal processes.

University creative writing courses cost the student money - HECS, PELS or full-fee schemes apply. At present mentorships run at no cost to the mentee. This too makes them attractive. But if the mentorship industry follows the NSWWC trend, mentorships will become user-pays.

Duration and Contact

The ASA one-to-one style of mentorship is similar to supervision at university honours or one-year Masters levels where student and supervisor might decide to meet for an hour each week in 20 (or more) weeks of the enrolled year (the normal 2-semester length being 26 weeks plus holidays).

The Varuna style of mentorship - basically a week-long writers' workshop model - is somewhat familiar around Australia when run by small writers' societies in the form of client-pays, 1 or 2-day workshops with a visiting writer leading the group. However, in this context, a week-long retreat is less likely and the sense of an advanced or master class rarely occurs. Intensive mode workshops run by universities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels strive for the Varuna-style small-group, advanced-class profile, but rarely can an Australian university match the Varuna mentoring workshops' staff:student ratio (1:5) on a regular basis, even in full fee-pay intensive delivery.

While these similarities may be pointed out, it is true that there is little correlation between the mass-education nature of normal undergraduate creative writing courses and the personalised focus of mentorships. Any sensible and committed undergraduate would aspire to a mentorship's benefits.

At the same time, while mentorships correlate strongly with postgraduate contact practice, at that advanced stage the student is aware of the value of a broad spectrum of critical input. Thus a mentorship

looks like, to a postgraduate, yet another useful feedback situation.

Recruitment and Genre

People with the potential to write a good story or poem or script (based maybe on unsophisticated folios produced in high school) are sought after for undergraduate study just as are acclaimed authors (with half a dozen major publications under their belts) for postgraduate study. Universities have developed effective systems by which almost anyone in the community can study creative writing at levels that advance their skills and take them further towards their potentials.

University programs currently attempt to cover broadish form and genre ranges in writing, simply because this is good for business. They don't, as far as I am aware, institute groupist or ageist selectivities. This is because they are bound by national equity policies. Mature age and indigenous writing students are encouraged into university programs with as much enthusiasm as are the young and the white.

It can be noted that university programs have for years now been open to mid-career development cases. These include established people wanting to become better qualified, and also those wanting to become qualified in new areas. Similarly, established writers seeking developmental supervision (and further qualifications) as adjunct to their on-going writing careers have turned towards university creative writing departments. They have done this through the array of postgraduate awards that cater to various stages of academic development and also offer entry on the basis of industry standing. (Examples include Mandy Sayer, Inez Baranay, Craig Cormick and Kevin Roberts.)

These established writers have come back to university often purely for intellectual stimulus - a mid-career syndrome that relates to the need to get out of the garret and talk with peers about what's going on in the writing culture, how fast things are happening, and the writing of their own big one now. This is very different from someone who wants to get a first book published, wants surrogate editing, wants craft information, etc.

For the older-than 35 aspirant who is not already a writer, but wants to be, certificate courses that don't discriminate against mature age are available as is undergraduate entry itself. Mature-age wannabe writers with an unpublished manuscript or two, or modest published work, regularly say they don't want to do the degree for the qualification, but for the opportunity to work with a writer who happens to be also on the academic staff. The professional - not the academic - context is emphasised; these students admit they seek on-going mentorship.

Regarding postgraduate enrolment, it seems that in universities around Australia it is becoming less easy for supervisors to choose their honours and Masters students. In some departments, the decision about who you supervise is substantially made by the hierarchy above you. But the main mentorship processes involving recruitment of applicants, submission of folios to prospective mentors, and the follow-up

interviews, correlates (at least traditionally) with the way in which graduate enrolments usually get established in Australian universities.

Where the supervision will be one-to-one, long-term and close (as in the case of research higher degrees) there is about the academic admission process some similar sense of negotiability of a relationship that must survive "for better or worse". With established professionals (i.e. well-known writers, experienced editors, etc) now working in university creative writing programs, students can also often select a program in order to work with a particular supervisor/writer/editor. This is not blind-dating, it is identification of Dr Right.

Editorship and Education

It appears that mentorships, like the use of assessment services, have gained in significance because of the identifiable withdrawal of editors from publishing in recent years. (It must be noted, however, that the quality of editing can vary from publisher to publisher, writer to writer and book to book; there are still brilliant in-house and freelance editors.) The editing being done under the guise of mentorship suggests a scheme where mentors are doing work for publishers outsourced to government funding. Work done by university staff acting as supervisors for postgraduate students can be viewed in the same way. The deep significance is that government-funded mentors and postgraduate award supervisors now have key roles in the publishing industry, alongside the private enterprise version where a writer pays for their own editing through a manuscript services provider. Publishers having a greater role in mentorship (read editorship) are now getting a slice of the Australia Council cake. Should university supervision be assisted in like manner?

Mentorship and Teaching

Many creative writing courses focus on industry relevance, advanced matters of craft, and publishable products, as do mentorships. But university courses often go deeper than this - into areas of theory, of literature, of new media and cross-artform practice, of multi-skilling, of introducing the new writer not just to a community, but to whole cultures, and to the concept of life-long learning. University courses generally have at their disposal more than the 20 hours of time available in a mentorship. The strictures of the mentor-mentee partnership (usually focussing on just one manuscript) contrast with the broad scope possible in, say, a creative writing major.

University courses do, and ought to, teach more than just how to write a particular book. The notion of articulation between the two systems is relevant here. Perhaps university undergraduate courses could also aim at preparing novice writers so that they can make the most of a mentoring situation.

Mentorship and Supervision

Australian university programs (both undergraduate and postgraduate) have their different foci and emphases. This is often apparent from the backgrounds of the staff employed. Professional/wide-focus industry writing courses vie with creative arts writing and literature/theory-based courses. But just which university is the one to go to, to become assuredly a poet, a nonfiction writer, a young adult author, a playwright, a creative writer/theorist, etc., is not particularly clear. Australian university writing programs have not differentiated themselves sufficiently thus far for such choices to be made.

Still there is the "acclaimed supervisor" factor. With writers like Glenda Adams, Elizabeth Jolley, Antoni Jach, Amanda Lowrey, Kevin Brophy, Komninos, etc. working (or having worked) in creative writing schools, the motivation for a postgraduate student to apply to work directly with a particular supervisor is strong. What students are looking for here is very much a sense of "mentorship" and its focused experience.

It is often mentioned that mentorships (when seen in terms of apprenticeship to a master) have the potential to produce little writers in the mentor's image. It is thought that apprenticeship perpetuates only the old - reproducing existing ideas about what is good writing, about aesthetics, about fashion. Universities are very aware of this. The aim of supervision (which is not necessarily the aim of mentorship) is to allow the students to find their voice and write differently from the supervisor. Academics spend hours on this in their own teaching reflection; supervisors are aware that one of their jobs is to encourage the artistically uncomfortable, the new, the in-your-face. The fact that postgraduate programs aim with students for the *publishable* rather than the *published* means a lot here - it gives the academy freedom to generate new art.

Appendix

The Questionnaire used in the survey:

1. What writing mentorship programs have been and are conducted/facilitated by your centre?
2. When was the first? How often are mentorships offered? How many have there been?
3. How long does each mentorship last?
4. How do you select the mentors; how do you select the mentees; and how do you match them?
5. Are any/all of the mentorships for specific literary genres (e.g. novel, non-fiction etc)?
6. What ground rules/guidelines are laid down by the organiser/sponsoring body? Do you have written guidelines?

7. Have there been any changes in the practice or concept of mentorships since the first?
8. What do you require from the mentor and mentee (e.g. one written report at the end)?
9. How do you measure the success of the mentorship? Is subsequent publication the best measure?
10. Do you request/receive special funding for mentorship programs? How are they sponsored?
11. Other comments?

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