

Dianne Bates

In mid-2006, living in Wollongong NSW and feeling geographically isolated, I started an e-zine to keep in touch with my industry. *Buzz Words* (All the Buzz about Children's Books) is an e-zine of about 80 pages, targeted at people in the children's book industry (writers, illustrators, editors and librarians) e-mailed to subscribers on the first of each month. (Each issue costs \$3.60, or \$44 per annum.)

The content of *Buzz Words* is similar to a hard copy magazine. First, there is a section on general information about what's happening in the children's book industry both in Australia and overseas. This can range from stories about innovative titles (such as *TTYL* by Lauren Myracle, told entirely in text messages) to staff changes in publishing houses. It depends on what's happening.

I get a constant stream of review copies of books for children and young adults, as well as press releases about author tours and other book events. As a result, *Buzz Words* has a substantial section devoted to reviews, publishing between 30 and 40 book reviews each issue, which must make it one of the biggest and most informative review outlets in Australia!

As many of my subscribers are children's authors, both published and unpublished, *Buzz Words* features new markets, opportunities, competitions, awards, writing courses and workshops. I spend many hours searching for writing opportunities, subscribe to every relevant newsletter and magazine, and rely on friends and colleagues in the industry to supply material to help my subscribers. As well, I've begun offering competitions myself, such as the Kathleen Julia Bates Memorial Writing Competition for a short story suitable for readers of 7 to 10 years, with prizes totalling \$400. Every month there are at least two *Buzz Words*-initiated writing competitions offering book prizes; as well there are usually book giveaways.

Buzz Words also informs subscribers of upcoming festivals and conferences that feature children's authors, illustrators and editors. Each month there are at least three relevant articles: one issue, for example, offers articles on an author working in schools, book reviewing for young people, the American children's poet Jack Prelutsky, and a very interesting piece about a new writer's experience of taking afternoon tea with Robin Klein some years ago.

Each month, *Buzz Words* interviews people in the children's book industry, some from overseas and some local. To date, guest interviewees have included a teacher-librarian, a CBCA employee and author, a children's magazine editor, literary agents, a book publicist, a UK poetry anthologist, publishers and editors. A publishing house is always profiled and there are at least two interviews per issue with a children's author and/or illustrator. These have included Margaret Wild, Bill Condon, Mini Goss, Janette Brazel and Janeen Brian – to name just a handful.

A few months ago I was approached by a writer with an extensive background in librarianship. Pauline Deeves asked if she could contribute a monthly column

to *Buzz Words* called 'From the librarians'

desk'. When I read her first column, I knew *Buzz Words* had a valuable contributor indeed! Not only was Pauline's writing informative, it was also witty and memorable! I've found out, for example, there are books that young people refer to as 'vomit books'. They're called this because of a particular paste used in book construction. Kids won't read 'vomit books' because of the smell!

Finally, *Buzz Words* has a Useful Books and Web sites section, Letters to the Editor and, occasionally, Classifieds, such as books for sale or forthcoming classes.

If you would like to see a sample issue, please contact me at the e-mail address below.

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