

PROMOTION OF OVERLAND IN POSTPRIMARY SCHOOLS (SECONDARY COLLEGES)

Summary

1. Level of school courses relevant.
 2. Courses to which the magazine may be relevant.
 3. Specific information about course content from curriculum personnel.
 4. Targetting through specific articles relevant to those courses.
 5. Monitoring issues of the journal in relation to courses.
 6. Subject associations.
 7. Specific 'cutting edge' teachers in schools etc.
 8. Avoiding some of the textbook publisher traps.
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1. The nature of the content of Overland as a literary magazine with a certain social interest content, produced for adults, means that most of the content would not appeal to schools for use in junior and middle level classes. Hence we should be addressing those faculties, faculty heads, and teachers who are teaching the years 11/12. This in Victoria means those responsible for the new two-year VCE course, and in other states such as ACT, senior colleges.
 2. It is worth noting that in Victoria the current (old) VCE subject 'English Literature', including options on Australian Literature, is not a large subject in terms of students studying it. Hence, it might not be best to concentrate on the Australian Literature as literature aspect of Overland's content. Australian History would have more takers. The compulsory subjects, 'English' and 'Work and Australian Society' are worth putting most effort into.
 3. I don't think we'll get very far just sending out brochures mentioning in general terms the kind of articles in Overland which may be relevant to the various courses. In the area of English, starting with Victoria (and then extending possibly at first to South Australia, A.C.T. & Western Australia which have more flexible courses in English, and with whose curriculum groups many Victorian personnel have close contact at conferences etc.), it would be as well to:
 - (a) Contact Ministry Curriculum Officers and VCAB course designers regarding the content of particular courses, especially English, Work & Australian Society, Australian History & English Literature (particularly Australian literature options), and any other courses into which Overland's content might be incorporated.
 - (b) Copies of study design outlines should be available, giving some ideas about research required for course and of the kind of content involved.
- It is essential that we look carefully at which Overland articles will/could be of use to schools in this light. We will get off totally on the wrong foot if we start promoting the magazine only to have a lot of schools disgruntled because they get nothing they can use in their subscription year.
- If in fact it appears that recent and likely future issues of Overland are not of any likely value within school courses, there is very little point in promoting it to school libraries simply as possible reading matter. It seems realistic to face the fact that few students and teachers are going to pick up Overland from the school library to pursue their private reading interests, unless they have already done so in other contexts.

4. Assuming that the content of the magazine is seen as having strong relevance to some of the courses mentioned, there should be some very specific targetting:

- (c) Select some past issues of Overland which have articles which appear relevant to these courses and options and pass them on to any curriculum people willing to peruse and comment. Teachers and even librarians do not necessarily know where the kind of information their students need may be readily found, especially when it comes to individual research studies into various aspects of the subjects. Some either tend to try to slot research studies into areas that they do have info on or let the students try to get the info on their own, and some are floundering.
- (d) If there are are particular articles in back issues of Overland which could be of use, offprints of some of these could be sent to some particular schools (see 7), provided the articles have a very clear connection with a particular course. Articles which place Australian writing in social contexts, or searching (but not academic) reviews of particular books likely to be chosen as appealing to and having sufficient weight for senior students within the subject 'English' rather than in the subject 'English Literature' will be of greater value. I don't know about the cost of this, but teachers often respond well when someone gives them something they can use, rather than just telling them how wonderful some product is.
- (c) It is also important that articles chosen for this kind of publicity are lucid and not academic, verbose or overly subtle. I do not wish to suggest that any articles in Overland are badly written, but some writers who have something important to say have are more tortuous in the saying than others. It is no use sending teachers material which they can see their students would have too much difficulty understanding. The same might apply to articles which assume familiarity with, say, Australian/English literature in general, or background knowledge of the Australian cultural scene of say fifty, twenty, ten or even five years ago (when year 11/12 students would have been 12 or 13).

5. It would be nice, but probably unrealistic to hope that we might find sympathetic personnel among the curriculum resources and subject associations (see 6) people who would Overland with a view to noting articles of relevance to particular aspects of the Year 11/12 curriculum. Ideally, of course, such people should be doing so with many publications, but curriculum staffing has been considerably run down in recent years, and I doubt that they have time. If such people are to help, it might pay to either

- (a) donate a subscription, at least for a year, to the curriculum sections which deal with relevant subject areas - this may amount to only three such subs, since the Literature section would have close contact with the English people; in exchange, we could ask them to send their publications, such as the field-of-study and VCAB updates which would help us keep track of what kind of articles in Overland to 'sell';
- (b) send complimentary copies of particular issues of Overland (current or back numbers) which contain articles seen as relevant to the various courses; permission might be given (with authors' permission of course!) to reprint articles from issues some way back (especially if they are out of print), which would at least indicate Overland's willingness to help (a certain integrity in principles of promoting the 'bias Australian') as well as wanting to get more subs!

6. The relevant subject associations should also be given similar attention. An exchange subscription with their journals (and this often means a state and a national affiliate associations' journal) would have the double advantage of making sure they see Overland and making Overland people aware of what kinds of areas their members are interested in. Note, however, that at least for English, the membership is a relatively small proportion of the teachers teaching the subject, partly

because so many English teachers are also or even primarily teachers of something else, partly because school subscriptions cover many such teachers. I suspect however that, in Victoria, more senior year English teachers join VATE than do those who teach only junior levels, though this may be changing as more of the latter recognise VATE (and the National AATE, whose journal VATE members get) as having something to offer them.

7. Curriculum and subject association personnel may also be able to put Overland people in touch with teachers, faculty heads (and some tertiary staff, mainly in the institutes/colleges involved in teacher education) who are at the 'cutting edge' with the new courses, developing options, showing initiative in working within the new course guidelines, interested in looking at new content areas within their subjects, less conservative in the guidance they give students for option work, and also those who have a hand in selecting listed texts and references (who would be interested in, and able to recommend the use of, articles on particular writers or works). These sorts of people 'show and tell' about their work at conferences or in subject journals, are more likely to get their school to subscribe to Overland and promote its value abroad.

8. The textbook industry having been the backbone of Australian publishing in earlier years, and the Australian school market being quite a lucrative one for the multinational publishers, teachers have long been subjected to hard sells. A few years ago publishers were generous with complimentary copies of texts, but as their budgets tighten many are less so, but still inclined to flood schools with glossy advertising material. Hence:

- (a) Teachers are cynical about a lot of it. They appreciate salespeople who (a) know what they're talking about, that is their material and the courses it is designed for, (b) come to schools at convenient times, by appointment, to display their wares, (c) don't pester with repeated telephone messages and calls and (d) get to the point quickly, concisely and clearly. Seeing some of the key personnel mentioned above in person, with a product that you know is relevant (see 1-4 above) and knowing what it is relevant to, is essential, not generalities about Overland's contribution to Australian culture.
- (b) I don't think inserts in professional journals etc. are going to get far - they usually end up in a faculty file for the year or the WPB; if you're lucky a conscientious faculty head may table/mention them in a faculty meeting/bulletin. With the proliferation of meetings in schools these days, staff are only going to take to their meetings suggestions which have clear merits. Recommendation from a respected staff member will do most. Find the person who will be interested if at all possible in any faculty, or the library, and get material to him/her by name, either by letter or appointment.

At the moment this is about all I can think of. I do not as yet have information on the incoming VATE and AATE Council membership. I'll pass on this info when I get it. SAETA, ETAWA and AATE Councils could also be helpful, I'm not sure about ETANSW.

Anne Gunter 7/11/89

N.B. (After meeting on 7/11) There is no reason why this kind of action cannot start immediately, since (a) subject study designs are now quite firm (e.g. on content of courses) and (b) pilot schools are already trialling at year 11. We could find out which schools constitute the pilot groups for 1990/91, and thus get into action before all schools are running the courses. There have already been groups working on resource materials for courses (called by some horrible set of initials which I can follow up early 1990)