FROM SAA, THE SOFTWARE AUTHORS GROUP

Ed. Note: In each issue of TAA Report we will try to publish something from and for each special interest group. In this issue, the co-chair, Doug Chute, starts it off for SAA. The following is a digest of an article that he wrote for the publication called The Department Chair, *published by Anker Publications. It appears here by permission.*

MULTIMEDIA: 20 QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE SOFTWARE AUTHORS

The validity of the following questionnaire is not guaranteed, but it will alert you to some issues, in case you contemplate working in Multimedia. Keep score by counting the "yes" answers.

1. Do you need someone to explain Multimedia so you know exactly what this is about?

2. Do you have a subscription to (and read) *New Media, Syllabus* and other relevant publications?

New Media's phone is 415-573-5170. *Syllabus* is related to the Macintosh and the phone is 408-573-2000. John Noon, the publisher, is a member of TAA and the co-chair of SAA.

3. Do you have access to a computer development infrastructure? Any project these days requires a "real programmer." You can't expect to be a text author and supply both the content and the programming and end up with a professional-looking project.

4. Do you have a well-defined pedagogical objective?

Playing with the new gadgets is a necessary experience, but you must be beyond that stage and have a good idea as to how a project will contribute to reaching your teaching goals.

5. Can you put together $50,000 for the first project, not counting labor?

You will need hardware for video and audio capture, video production, CD or Laser disc mastering and software development tools, plus the basic platform, such as a Macintosh IIfx or IBM 486. Producing multimedia is a team effort, but most publishers are not likely to provide up-front money, because they think of software as a give-away.

6. Does your university copyright and patent policy provide financial motivation?

The best situation is for the institution to treat the work as a textbook, so that the author gets all royalties. You can still answer "yes" if the university takes 25% or less.

7. Can you get "spin-off" rewards in your system?

Clear signals from upper university administration may justify proceeding. For example, they or a granting agency may refurbish your labs and supply equipment.

8. Can you "piggy-back" the project with university or extra-mural resources, or do you have friends in the software industry looking to do *pro-bono* work?

You may be able to find an experienced Multimedia developer that will work with you if you have key resources. Give yourself the point if you have a lot of good original footage, graphics, music or slides that are not encumbered by copyrights.

9. Do you have tenure or a secure source of income?

10. Can you provide travel time and dollars for the development team to go to conventions and developers' workshops?

11. Do you realize that you are not likely to be able to sell the product to publishers, schools or students?

In time the Apple/IBM agreement may make Multimedia more readily accessible, but it will be some time before Multimedia is commercially viable.

12. Do you have an established relationship with Apple. IBM or other manufacturer?

You will need a special arrangement with an original equipment and software manufacturer.

13. Do you have access to a TV studio and video production expertise?

Cinematographic expertise of video specialists will be needed. The reasons range from permissions problems to the triviality of using the computer simply to play movies or videos.

14. Do you have team players and a good manager?

A good manager is essential to see that deadlines are met. If you are the senior author of a successful multiple-author text, you can probably answer "yes."

15. Is the NIH syndrome absent among users of your previous intellectual efforts?

"NIH" stands for "not invented here." Some leading institutions feel that materials developed elsewhere are not up to their standards.

16. Can you wait two or three years for a product to appear?

As with a textbook, production takes a long time. If you are a textbook author, you know about this problem.

17. Will your Multimedia efforts be as slick as MTV or Lucas Films?

Students as consumers are pretty sophisticated, so that a "cottage industry" production just may not suit well. If ordinary video would do just as well as your effort, do not answer "yes."

18. Is there some commercial product that can satisfy at least some of your pedagogical goals and that you can get permission to modify and use?

Even if this is the only "yes" answer you may be justified in making a preliminary effort.

19. Do you have a clear idea of how students will actually be able to use your Multimedia efforts?

Will there be enough work stations, disk players, demonstration equipment and the like?

20. Do you think Multimedia is rejuvenating. neat, fun and exciting?

If you can't answer "yes" here you will most likely not succeed. There is a certain messianic commitment that seems to characterize successful implementations in this field.

FROM THE TAA EDITOR GROUP

Ed. Note: In each issue of TAA Report we will try to publish something from and for each special interest group. The effort is being kicked off, and quite well, by the co-chair of the editor group, Dudley Kay.

And the top story tonight .... Editorial membership in TAA has tripled since the Chicago convention! Our mailing to selected Executive Editors and senior editors, about 100 all told, and the "good vibes" resulting from the editors' representation on convention panels, resulted in 20 new members. Wow!' Wouldn't we ALL like a 20% response to our book mailings??!! We now number about 35 editors within TAA. Welcome aboard.

Our initial meeting of the Editors' Special Interest Group resulted in a very worthwhile project. This project is probably as much a test to see if we can pull together for common interest as to do something of service to aspiring authors everywhere. We decided to construct a "universal" book proposal form that would be a complete "walk through" for any author proposing his/her book idea to any publisher. In order to accomplish this, we now ask that participating editors forward their

Scoring

16-20 points: You are ready and able to develop a Multimedia project on your own.

11-15 points: You should consider getting some basic Multimedia capabilities and software in order to develop expertise. You should probably look for a software developer as a partner and try to interest a publisher in the project.

6-10 points: Before you jump into Multimedia, you probably need to try out some traditional academic software.

Less than 6: Multimedia is not for you, at least not now.

company's proposal form or directions to me. Obtain permission, by all means, if you think it is necessary. There is nothing clandestine afoot here; these documents tend to be "public domain" materials distributed freely anyway. From these various forms, and they do vary widely, we will set about constructing an annotated form, perhaps in booklet format. And if the muse strikes, and we garner a few volunteers to help, we may even add some examples of good and poor information (so save those rotten proposals that you get "over the transom").

To get the ball rolling, Dudley Kay (IEEE Press) and Irv Rockwood (Dushkin Publishing) will send every editorial member their book proposal (What to Submit and How) forms. You send us yours. For every editor who forwards a form, we will send back of copy of every form that we receive, just to be fair and upfront. Sounds like a chain letter, eh? From there we will try our hands at a rough draft. For those who are interested in helping, we will send the draft out for comments and refinements. If all goes well, we can meet in Las Vegas with a near-final draft for face-to-face discussion of fine points. And from there we should have a "living document" on the word processor with ongoing refinements over time. Would any editor not benefit from well-written book proposals, and does any of us think we have the perfect form? And should there not be a credit line to the editors and companies who labored over this boon to authors and publishers? Methinks so. Why shouldn't prospective authors know who gives a damn about them?

As TAA newsletter editor, Mike Keedy has urged us to have our own regular Editor's column. Great idea! Rather than a few of us pontificating, it would be a fine thought to allocate space for a "My Turn" section of the column whereby any one of us could reply to a previous newsletter item or editorial, shed some light on today's publishing constraints and business practices, or generally

help authors to understand the editor's dual role of book advocate and guardian of the company's investment, be that financial or human resources. Therefore, the floor is open. Submit your items to me or Mike, with byline or by "Name Withheld by Request." Likewise, if you are interested in editing this column, do let us know.

Congratulations to TAA Member Ed Murphy! From Saunders Biology Editor to C. V. Mosby Science Editorial Director to President of PWS-Kent. So, Ed, will we see a few more PWS-Kent editors among our ranks under your enlightened leadership? Best wishes in your challenging new position.

Las Vegas looms near on the horizon. Surely we need representation on the selection of convention sites! But besides that, we need your input on meaningful sessions for authors and agenda items for our own editorial meeting. Among the suggestions we've heard is a discussion of ancillaries, particularly software, which wreaks havoc with the acquisition editor's time management and bottom line? Test banks, simulations, on-line tutorials and reviews, etc., etc., etc. Ever-escalating packages and costs. Will it ever end, flatten out, or worsen? Also, somebody mentioned profit-sharing in lieu of royalties, as is the case with many journals. That is, the author(s) makes money only when the direct costs are recovered, but then that chunk of change is very big indeed. It's truly "Share the risk and share the reward." Anybody have any examples or thoughts on this? What do YOU want to see on the agenda?

Are any authors reading this column? We hope so! Given the excellent response we have had by editors to a small mailing, wouldn't it make sense for you to invite YOUR EDITOR to join TAA? Why not give it a try? Or, send us the name of your editor, and we'll send the invitation for you, with mention of your name.

Awright, Editors, go sign up some authors. And tell 'em about TAA.