

## Between the Lines: A legal guide for writers and illustrators

By Lynne Spender  
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Binding  
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After reading the first few pages of this book, I became gripped with fear about the possible ramifications of infringing Lynne Spender's moral rights in having her literary work protected from derogatory treatment. But, as the chapter progressed, I began to relax: I was not going to commit criminal defamation or treat Lynne Spender's book in a way that denigrated her reputation. The book was excellent. Although her description of the law of defamation as "arcane and legalistic" was a little harsh, I thought. I was half tempted to bang out a writ against the author just to see if this statement would attract the defence of truth or fair comment in court. But I am still convinced that Lynne Spender's "Between the Lines" would make an excellent Christmas gift for people other than lawyers - journalists and designers and illustrators involved in digital publications would definitely benefit from owning a copy, as would the budding romance novelist or community organisation involved in the production and distribution of indigenous art. I would also

recommend the book to post-graduate students and academics, as well as people considering working as freelance journalists or contract staff to government departments.

Spender's advice is broad and comprehensive - she contemplates diverse categories of cultural production - while being easy to understand. Most importantly, she provides contact details for different organisations concerned in the regulation of cultural production in Australia and abroad. Spender's sensitive and nuanced treatment of issues relating to indigenous identity, digitally recorded material and diverse cultural formations kept me engaged and challenged long after I'd finished reading her book. For the Arts graduates among us, Spender grapples with issues as nebulous as literary ethics and authorial identity. And even these parts of the book are peppered with case studies from Australian publishing history - the most up-to-date and fascinating ones to my knowledge - which enliven and contextualise the material (for non-Arts graduates). This successful blend of pragmatism and academic rigour underpins the entire book. For example: Spender devotes three

chapters to purely practical matters - including tax law and the legal framework surrounding grants such as those offered by the Australia Council - without causing her reader to lapse into unconsciousness. The fact that Spender has managed to produce a book only 272 pages long that draws all these disparate strands together testifies to her sensible, economic treatment of the subject matter. The major strength of this book is the way it functions as a portal to further, more specialised sources. It really is a testament to the adage that information is power.

The chapter that most appealed to me, however, was the final one, "Politics of Authorship," and the section entitled "Future Directions," which discusses the oft-quoted concept of the "information age" and the exciting possibilities this throws up for cultural life in the new millennium. Definitely - a book that will make you think.

- Robyn Curnow, solicitor with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions ①

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TEWLS has a free legal advice clinic every Wednesday night. Legal advice at these clinics is provided by our volunteers on a roster basis - usually, each Wednesday two volunteers see two clients each, starting at 5.15pm.

The Principal Solicitor is always on hand to assist and to sign off on all advice given. Clients present with a wide variety of interesting legal problems, from family to civil to criminal - and if you don't know the answer on the night it is OK, we can always get back to the client later.

For further information, please contact Joanna Martin at TEWLS on 8982 3000.①

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