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INTERVIEW  
WITH ENGLISH  
TEXTBOOKS AUTHORS

# It's Your Space

*Julia Keddle and Martyn Hobbs write English textbooks, especially for teenagers. They are interested in young people: What do they like doing? What makes them laugh? How do they speak? The answers to these questions helped them write their latest series of English textbooks – Your Space. PAVLA ŠTANCLOVÁ (CZ), ALASTAIR S. EDWARDS (UK)*

*Is Your Space your first textbook for students of English as a foreign language?*

J: We have been writing course books for over ten years now. Before that we taught English abroad. Publishers\* usually ask us to write a general language textbook which they then adapt. Sometimes they ask us to write for a specific country.

*Together with Cambridge University Press and Fraus*



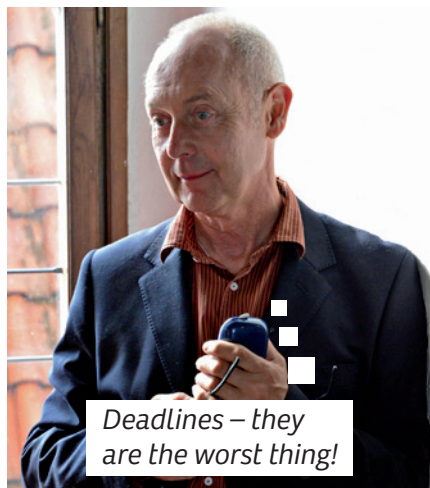


**Publishing you have just finished a unique\*\* project with the Your Space series. What is it?**

M: The Czech team from Fraus Publishing have created an electronic version of *Your Space* course books. It includes recordings, videos, tapescripts, interdisciplinary links to other subjects, and many more teaching materials.

**And what was your job in this project?**

M: For the electronic version, we only prepared the videos and recordings. Our main task was to write the books – and we loved it. *Your Space* is modern and teaches real language that is used by teenagers. We wanted to make a course book that is ‘educational’, and not



Deadlines – they are the worst thing!

full of articles about celebrities that will be ‘out’ soon. Students will both widen their horizons\*\*\* and learn English at the same time. (Similar to your magazine – *Drive* ☺)

**How long does it take you to write a Your Space book?**

J: Each book usually takes at least a year to write, design and illustrate ready for publication.

**Who else works on the textbooks?**

M: We work with a team – the publishing\* manager, editors<sup>1</sup>, graphic designers, artists and the production people. We have lots of meetings and we also write several drafts<sup>2</sup>. It's quite scary when the feedback<sup>3</sup> arrives. Did the editors like it? Will

we be asked to rewrite a lot? They sometimes forget that it's our ‘baby’!

**You are a married couple. How do you work together?**

M: We work from home. At breakfast, we usually read the newspapers or have a chat and we try not to talk about work. But after we've washed the dishes, it's writing time. Julia works in the house in her study.

**And Martyn?**

J: Martyn has a ‘very long’ journey to work – he has a studio at the bottom of the garden. We work all day and although we are so near to each other, we email and Skype each other! But we don't just write; we spend lots of time sending emails, making phone calls or having Skype meetings with editors. Or searching on the Internet, looking at books, and just looking out of the window and thinking! At the end of the day, Martyn usually cooks and I do a bit more writing. I often stop at 7pm. That's a typical day. But we work for ourselves, so we can take the day off<sup>4</sup> if we like or start late or stop early. No bosses!

**That sounds like a dream job. Are there any bad sides?**

M: Deadlines<sup>5</sup> – they are the worst thing! We work under pressure<sup>6</sup> and yet we have to be creative at the same time. That's difficult sometimes.

**What are your qualifications? What did you study?**

J: We both studied English literature at Sussex University and we met there, too. We have post-graduate teaching qualifications and Martyn has won awards<sup>7</sup> for his plays and screenplays<sup>8</sup>.



Oh, that's a good sentence, I'll have to remember it ...

**Can you live on<sup>9</sup> writing textbooks?**

M: We live on writing textbooks. Publishers usually pay us an ‘advance’. That's some money to live on while we are writing. For most of our books we get a ‘royalty’. That's a small percentage of the income the publisher gets for each book sold. We get a very small amount per book – so it's important for us that our books sell a lot of copies!

**Then we wish you good luck and big sales!**

**LANGUAGE NOTE**

- \* **to publish** ['pʌblɪʃ] – to produce books, magazines, newspapers and sell them to the public
- publisher** – the company that publishes books, magazines, newspapers
- publishing manager** – the person responsible for the book from the concept to the finished product
- \*\* **unique** [ju:'ni:k] – the only one of its kind
- \*\*\* **to widen** ['waɪdən] **your horizons** [hə'reɪzəns] – learn more about the world around you

**VOCABULARY**

- <sup>1</sup> **editor** ['editə] – redaktor
- <sup>2</sup> **draft** [dra:ft] – návrh, pracovní verze
- <sup>3</sup> **feedback** ['fi:d.bæk] – zpětná vazba, reakce
- <sup>4</sup> **day off** [deɪ ɒf] – volný den
- <sup>5</sup> **deadline** ['ded.laɪn] – konečný termín, uzávěrka
- <sup>6</sup> **pressure** ['preʃə] – tlak
- <sup>7</sup> **award** [ə'wɔ:d] – ocenění, cena
- <sup>8</sup> **screenplay** ['skri:n.pleɪ] – filmový scénář
- <sup>9</sup> **to live** [lɪv] (on something) – žít (z něčeho), žít se