

# Fishburgers or fishing tackle?

## The philosophy of Magazine Training International

by Sharon Mumper

“For 50 years we’ve been denied Christian literature. Now, we’re allowed to have it. But we don’t know the first thing about publishing.” The anguish was real. An open door stood before Eastern Europe’s newly-freed Christian community. But to many it seemed they could only gaze with longing at the shining possibilities before them.

The need was obvious and immediate in 1989 when I first met Christians involved in publishing in Eastern Europe. Their churches and societies needed quality Christian literature that spoke to the real needs and interests of people.

The easiest answer? Translate. There’s plenty of good material out there. Or even: Convince Christians from outside the region to come in and publish. After all, they have the experience and education in publishing.

The bottom line? Dish up the fishburgers.

But I believed then, as I still do, that although the going would be slower and the work harder, it would be more productive in the long run to give people the tools they need to publish materials for their own countries.

It has been many years since I first met Eastern Europeans with a vision to publish. Since then, I and dozens of coworkers and colleagues from around the world have organized more than 50 conferences and courses incorporating hundreds of training sessions on every conceivable topic related to publishing. We’ve held consulting sessions with staff members of scores of Christian magazines and provided thousands of copies

of printed resources. In all, more than 1000 staff members of about 350 Christian magazines have received some form of training in publishing.

But from the beginning I was determined to go even further. It was not enough to “teach fishing.” I wanted to train “fishing teachers.” Conferences over the last few years have demonstrated the viability of that goal. From the beginning, we have deployed regional publishers on training teams, but in recent years we have been able to depend more and more on local publishers to provide the training.

The development of teaching manuals to accompany courses has been an important step in enabling ordinary publishers to become professional trainers. Most publishing staff members who attend courses in which manuals are used afterwards state that they will use the material to teach others, either one-on-one or in groups.

We continue to deploy Christian publishing professionals from outside the region as necessary. But my focus is on preparing the region’s relatively new publishers to be the next generation of trainers.

If you would like to be involved in this program in some way, whether you have resources to offer or whether you need resources, please feel free to write me.

*Sharon Mumper is founder and president of Magazine Training International, a ministry dedicated to strengthening and equipping Christian publishers around the world.*