

Editorial

Looking back along a long and winding road: twenty years of involvement with a journal.

The establishment of a periodical is a far from trivial undertaking, not least because, by definition, it is intended that the publication should continue over a number of years with all the ongoing financial commitment implied. The potential publishers need to be confident that there is a viable market for publication to allow that to happen, and it can be very difficult to convince them of this, especially in specialist markets. On top of that, in an era when the main subscribers to academic and specialist journals, namely libraries, were reducing expenditure on subscriptions, the omens for the successful launching of such a specialist journal as *Education for information* in the 1980s were far from promising.

History is full of happy coincidences when various events would have been unlikely to happen if the timing had not been right. The establishment of *Education for information* might well have been one of these happy coincidences. Although, as mentioned above, the general background of journal subscription reduction was not particularly encouraging, the very rapid technological developments within the information world focussed attention on information issues, not least those associated with education and training. At that time there was only one international periodical, the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science (JELIS)*, which devoted itself exclusively to education and training matters in the subject field. JELIS did publish material from non-American authors but the predominant issues raised were North American rather than from the rest of the world. That, at least, was the view of the founding editors. But there is quite a leap from holding such a view to persuading a commercial publisher that a viable market exists. This is perhaps where the happy co-incidence comes in. North-Holland publishers, a division of Elsevier, wished to develop a small portfolio of journals in the information field. *The Journal of Information Science and Information Services and Use* were already being published by North Holland, and the proposed new journal, later to be called *Education for information*, seemed to complement them very well. There was, though, more than happy coincidence in the decision to publish the journal, as two other commercial publishers were sufficiently convinced by the arguments put forward to also offer contracts to the founding editors.

The first issue of *Education for information* was published in March 1983. The final issue of Volume 18 is in preparation. One of the founding editors, Fred Guy, has chosen this moment to resign his editorship of the journal. Eighteen years is a long span of time and a long time to be an editor. Much has happened in that period as far as the journal is concerned. A recent editorial¹ provided a succinct analysis of

¹J.A. Large. LIS Education and training issues in the late twentieth century: a view from the pages of

the journal's content, and overviews of developments in LIS education and training have been provided in many issues of the journal.² What other aspects have affected the editors during the past 17 years? Needless to say some of these have been general and some more personal.

The editors of the journal might have remained constant until now but the same cannot be said about the publishers, and most certainly the desk editors employed by the publishers. Launched under the North-Holland imprimatur in 1983, this became Elsevier in 1989 when the North-Holland imprint was phased out. The Elsevier reign lasted only until 1991 and was undoubtedly the most traumatic period in the history of the journal. Happily, in 1991 publishing was taken over by IOS Press³ with the first issue appearing as Volume 9 No. 2. IOS Press is a small publishing house founded in 1997 by an ex-employee of Elsevier.

Desk editors play a vital role in helping to maintain the uniformity of presentation. Their job is not helped by the lack of uniformity of approach by editors of different journals. The editors of *Education for information*, clearly for their own very good reasons (!), chose to adopt a style of referencing unique to the journal. Few authors understood the style and consequently manuscripts (especially in the days before universal word processing) were littered with corrections. The desk editors were extremely good at picking up the style, but it seemed that no sooner were they masters and mistresses of it than they left the company and a new desk editor had to cope with learning a new system. That, despite these difficulties, the journal has managed to maintain a very acceptable level of uniformity and accuracy is a tribute to the many desk editors who have served over the 18 years.

The two founding editors were both employed at inception by the College of Librarianship Wales (now the Department of Information and Library Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth). Clearly working in the same institution assisted the joint editorial process greatly. In 1984, however, Fred Guy left to take up a position in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. This was less convenient but the distance was not so great that regular meetings could not be held in mutually convenient places throughout England. That was to change, though, when in 1989 Andy Large accepted a position in McGill University, Canada. Rather more effort and expense was incurred in meeting but even so over the years meetings were held in the US and Canada as well as the UK.

Just prior to the move of Andy Large to Canada the importance of attracting American authors was recognized, and Trudi Bellardo of the Catholic University of Washington, DC was appointed in 1989 as associate editor. As it happened, a change of employment led to the resignation of Trudi Bellardo in 1993; as one of the editors was by now in North America, the decision was taken not to appoint a new associate

Education for information. *Education for information* 18 (1) March 2000 pp. 1–51.

²*Education for information*. 18 (2–3) 2000. Editorial by K.J. McGarry and paper by D. Stoker.

³www.iospress.nl.

editor. In 1995, however, a dedicated Book Reviews editor, Dick Hartley, at that time employed by the University of Northumbria, was appointed.

One of the major factors which has affected, in a most positive way, the work of editing a journal has been first of all the widespread use of word processing and e-mail. Of course, technology is at the behest of humans (including editors!) who can, without a great deal of thought, create delays. In addition, not all potential authors have access to technology so there is still progress to be made. *Education for information* is still a printed publication and the sheer effort of turning electronic copy into paper still takes time. Undoubtedly the next 18 years will see major developments in the electronic publishing of *Education for information* but that will be for the current and any future editors to worry about.

A sign of aging, as the cliché goes, is to say that the years have flown by. It does hardly seem any time since the business plan for a new journal was prepared and submitted to potential publishers. It is very satisfying, though, to think back to those days of the early 1980s and see the products from that rather antiquated business plan still arrive (by post!) each quarter.

When you have been involved for so long with something, seen it through inception, early growth and then the dreaded “teenage” years, it is normal to have worries about the future after involvement ceases. I am delighted, though, that the book reviewer appointed in 1995, and who has made such a success of that section of the journal, has agreed to take over my position. Dick Hartley, now of the Manchester Metropolitan University, will take assume his editorial chair in good time for publication of Volume 19.

As for my fellow founding editor, Andy Large, what can I say but that it has been a great adventure for me and I hope also for him. There have been many highs and lows but one constant throughout has been Andy’s sense of humour which, thankfully, has not been dimmed by relocation and which has helped light up the darkest of hours.

My every good wish to Dick and Andy as they lead, what has become to be regarded as a major publication in the library/information world, into the new century.

Fred Guy
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