

## Editorial

This is the final issue of the Journal to appear under my editorship. Starting with the March 2006 issue, the editorship passes to Paul Jones of Liverpool John Moores University. Paul's name will already be familiar to many of our readers partly because of his research on the UK credit union movement, some of which has been published in this Journal, and partly because of the active role he has played in the UK Society for Co-operative Studies over recent years.

During my period as editor, the Journal has moved from its former A5 format to its present A4 style in an attempt to enhance its appearance and readability. These cosmetic changes have been accompanied by revisions to the guidelines for prospective authors designed to strengthen the bridge which the Society has always sought to provide between practitioners and academics interested in co-operative research, encouraging contributions from both sources. I would like to acknowledge the support of Gillian Lonergan, the Journal's Deputy Editor, who undertook the real work involved in developing the new format and of Rita Rhodes who has revived and enlivened the Journal's review section.

The current issue reflects the aim of the Journal to provide a link between practitioners and academics. Robert C Marshall's paper was commended by the reviewers for presenting the results of an anthropological study in a style which made it accessible to a wider audience than academic anthropologists. Similarly, Dr Ofell's paper, although based specifically on research on the Ghanaian co-operatives, raises issues about the relationships between members and management of co-operatives which have resonances throughout the co-operative movement. The short article on the Managed Biodiesel Production Facility reflects the collaboration of researchers and practitioners to identify and document potential innovative areas for co-operative development. The article presenting the Case Against Social Enterprise is a welcome contribution to the desire expressed in our revised guidelines for contributors encouraging potentially

controversial articles intended to stimulate thought and debate amongst our readers.

The changes to the Journal which have occurred during my period of editorship may prove to be only a prelude to a greater transformation. Increasingly, academic journals are not stored physically in University libraries. Instead, they are accessed on the web through specialist academic subscription services. At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the UK Society for Co-operative Studies, it was decided that we should investigate the feasibility of establishing such a web presence for this Journal. This would have considerable cost implications but it has been argued that our continued viability as an academic journal might require such a transformation. Not least amongst these cost issues is the fact that we would need to retain our printed journal for our practitioner members who would not have access to a web subscription service. However, if our print run were to be reduced significantly as a consequence of the migration of some of our academic readership to the online version, the unit production costs would rise. It is therefore important that any such development should be accompanied by a vigorous initiative to build our practitioner readership in order to maintain and preferably increase our print run.

A sub-group of the UKSCS committee has been established to research and cost the various options for the development of the Journal and this will report back in Spring 2006 so that, following consultations with the Society's membership, changes could be implemented in 2007. However, it seemed appropriate to keep readers informed throughout about these deliberations concerning our future development since at their core is the issue of how best to strengthen the dual role of the Journal as an academic periodical and as a stimulus to the development of co-operative practice.

Ian Pyper  
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